

Early Literacy Behaviours

Description Children demonstrate that they know and can use the following conventions related to print:

- ▶ Finding specific words within a text
- ▶ Matching words they hear with words they read

You Need

- ▶ Any Level B or C book from the *Benchmark Assessment System 1*
- ▶ Early Literacy Behaviours Assessment–Individual Record form
- ▶ Early Literacy Behaviours Assessment–Class Summary form

Why Use It This assessment will help you learn whether children can think about a specific known word and how it looks and then locate it in a text. You will also learn whether children can think about an unknown word, say it, think about the sounds and letters and use visual features to find the word within the lines of text.

One key early behaviour for the young reader to master is the coordination between spoken and written language. The reader must understand and demonstrate that one spoken word is matched with one printed word (cluster of letters defined by white space). If a child knows where to start reading (on the left) and where to go after that (returning to the left to start a new line), then some important orienting behaviours are under control. If he can point to the words while you read the story, then he is gaining control of the directional behaviours needed for reading.

You will also want to know if the reader can recognise and use letters within print. A reader may learn a letter in isolation and even connect it with a sound, but it is an additional challenge to locate letters that are embedded in print. You will want to know whether the reader can distinguish individual letters by their features and can distinguish between letters and words (clusters of letters). Finally you will learn whether a reader is beginning to notice important graphic signs such as punctuation, which help in parsing language (paragraphs into sentences and sentences into phrases).

All of these understandings are key to the reader's developing an early system for processing print and they are foundational to taking on and understanding longer texts. The information from this added assessment will guide your teaching in ways that can help emergent readers automatically apply understandings such as left to right directionality and word by word matching.

How to Use It

- ▶ Select a Level B or C book from the *Benchmark Assessment System 1* that you do not plan to use for assessment.
- ▶ Read the book to the child.
- ▶ Turn back to the front of the book and look at the second or third page. Ask:
 1. Where do I start reading? [The child should point to the left margin on line 1.]
 2. Where do I go after that? [The child should point to the left margin on line 2.]
 3. Find [word] on this page. [Select a word that the child has recognised on the word test. If no words were recognised, skip this item.]

4. Find [word] on this page. [Have the child locate another known word. If the child does not recognise 2 words, skip this item.]
5. Say [word.] Find [word] on this page. [You may want to turn to another page. Select a word that the child did not recognise on the word test and that begins with a consonant. Have the child say it slowly and then locate it on the page.]
6. Point while I read. [Read the page, asking the child to point. The child should match one spoken word with one word in print.]
7. Find the letter _____. [Have the child locate a letter after you say it.]
8. Find the letter _____. [Have the child locate another letter after you say it.]
9. Find a word that starts with [letter.] [Using any letter, have the child locate a word that starts with it.]
10. What's this? [Point to an ending mark (full stop or exclamation mark). Ask the child to tell what it means.]

What to Notice As you interact with the child around a simple text, notice:

- ▶ behaviours that seem quick and automatic
- ▶ speed in locating words and letters
- ▶ ability to connect letters, sounds and words
- ▶ ability to match one spoken word with one written word
- ▶ ability to distinguish letter features when they are embedded in words
- ▶ ability to understand the difference between letters and words
- ▶ ability to read left to right and return to left margin