

COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY GUIDES

Grades K-6

Read Alouds | Shared Reading | Small Group Reading Instruction
| Vocabulary | Fluency | Writing | Phonological Awareness | Phonics |
Oral Language | Independent Reading



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OVERVIEW

Oral language encompasses both speaking and listening. Oral language skills include learning how spoken words sound, what words and sentences mean, and how to communicate ideas. Nurturing oral language skills provides a strong foundation for learning to read.

Source: <https://www.readingrockets.org/reading-101/reading-and-writing-basics/oral-language>

CURRICULUM CORRELATIONS

Oral Language Organizing Idea

Listening and speaking form the foundation for literacy development and improve communication, collaboration, and respectful mutual understanding.

- **Kindergarten Learning Outcome:** Children explore listening and speaking skills through a variety of literacy experiences
- **Grade 1 Learning Outcome:** Students develop listening and speaking skills through sharing stories and information.
- **Grade 2 Learning Outcome:** Students examine and adjust listening and speaking to communicate effectively.
- **Grade 3 Learning Outcome:** Students examine and apply listening and speaking skills, processes, or strategies in a variety of formal and informal interactions.
- **Grade 4 Learning Outcome:** Students examine and demonstrate how listening and speaking support connections and clarify understandings.
- **Grade 5 Learning Outcome:** Students investigate how oral language can be designed to communicate ideas and information.
- **Grade 6 Learning Outcome:** Students connect the efficacy of oral communication to oral language skills.

CONSIDERATIONS - PLANNING

Oral Language instruction includes the following components:

- Developing listening and responding skills
- Promoting auditory memory and teaching students to hear their “inner voice”
- Playing with language - building vocabulary - using linking and signal words
- Teaching a variety of spoken texts and using talk as a “performance” (e.g., plays, speeches, oral reports, debates, storytelling, sharing circles, procedures, role plays/interviews, conversations, reading aloud and reader’s theatre
- Using talk as a way to discuss, think aloud and extend conceptual knowledge
- Recounting and retelling, presenting information, and developing speaking skills (formal and informal) with thought given to how to engage the audience and support listening
- Creating a supportive social environment that involves learning to talk and listen as well as learning about talking and listening quality.

Oral language development is an active process that begins at birth and expands throughout a lifetime. Listening and speaking form the foundation for literacy development as students participate in oral language experiences and share in the oral traditions of their families and communities. These skills are further developed and applied in a variety of oral language experiences in English language arts and literature that include oral storytelling, discussions, drama, and presentations. Students learn to be active listeners, and they explore and purposefully select a variety of digital or non-digital forms and tools to enhance presentation delivery and capture the attention of an audience. (Alberta Curriculum Grades K-6 ELAL, 2023)



CONSIDERATIONS FOR BEST PRACTICE IN ORAL LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

- Consider the arrangement of desks in the classroom. Do they allow for partner or group conversations? Is there room for students to get up, walk around and pair up with new partners?
- Facilitate frequent conversations (adult to child and child to child) for varying purposes: questioning, explaining, persuading, describing, comparing, collaborating, formulating ideas, negotiating/ reaching a consensus, conversing and entertaining.
- Teach students how to participate in an interactive conversation and develop their interpersonal skills. For example, what positive cues look like (body position, eye contact, body language), how to take turns, change the subject, ask for clarification, ask questions, agree/disagree respectfully with speaker, honour all points of view, address errors, add to the points, paraphrase, summarize, wrap up the conversation and thank each other. Consider using a strategy such as Talking Chips to manage turn taking ([Described at bottom of article, Strategy #6](#))
- Many students equate listening with not talking, but it requires far more active involvement. This skill should be explicitly taught and students should be given daily attentive listening opportunities (e.g. read alouds) as well as time to reflect, monitor others and self-assess their progress. Provide strategies for ways of listening, recall, constructing meaning, and identifying speaker's perspective.
- Prior to listening tasks, students need relevant background information, a purpose for listening and an understanding of what they will be asked to do after. For example, a listening task might focus on listening for the gist, searching for specific information, following oral directions, sensing mood and perspective, considering text type/structure, eliciting questions, being invited to challenge what is heard, or simply be designed for enjoyment.
- As teachers, we need to model good listening by stopping and really hearing our students, getting down to their eye level and paraphrasing what they say (correcting any grammatical errors in our recasts). We can also help students to have more "silent conversations" with themselves (metacognition).
- Build auditory memory skills, e.g., memorize songs, retell stories and create learning activities where children repeat what others have said and then respond with their own thoughts.
- Use accountable talk protocols such as Think-Pair-Share - students are given a prompt, provided think time and then are invited to share thoughts with a partner in equal amounts of time (e.g. use a timer) See [The Big List of Discussion Strategies | Cult of Pedagogy](#)
- Record/videotape learners or use handheld talking devices (Toobaloo/WhisperPhone) so they can hear themselves.
- Students will talk and listen in a more animated manner when they encounter engaging cross-curricular content and participate in inquiry-based learning.
- Explore the use of cooperative learning structures that allow all students to be actively discussing and listening to one another concurrently rather than where one child speaks at a time (e.g., Kagan Cooperative Learning).
- Stock classroom with creative tools that promote oral exploration, e.g. costumes, puppets, and props.
- Anchor Charts and Word Walls can support the development of oral language skills.
- When preparing speeches, help students build their confidence and understand the thinking processes anticipating audience knowledge about familiar and unfamiliar words, managing gestures, creating a hook, summarizing, etc. Help students to anticipate what to do in the event of a slip up or error. Guide them on how to respond to questions.
- Consider ways to provide students with a wider audience: create a digital story to share with peers (e.g., Toontastic app); present to other classes, school administrators, parents, special guests, and/or secret judges; record and post videos on classroom blog with links for grandparents, etc.

DESIGNERS OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TIPS

- Ask more open-ended questions.
- Show and Tell could be modified to Show and Ask where students think of good questions to ask after a student has shared.
- Enhance wait time so all children have time to formulate a response.
- Consider using a talking/listening prop (e.g. a teddy bear or First Nations talking stick).



- Keep discussion short - honour their attention spans (e.g. brain can focus approximately the number of minutes that correspond to their age: 7 years = 7 minutes).
- Incorporate listening and speaking tasks across content areas.
- Minimize question-response interactions: facilitate conversation that springs from what another student says, listening, linking and building on ideas.
- Model speaking, listening, and presentation skills so students see it in action.
- Build repertoire of discussion strategies (fishbowl, think-pair-share, etc).

STRATEGIES TO TARGET LISTENING & SPEAKING SKILLS

1. Help students learn to chunk the content of a message, particularly relevant for learners who may have processing difficulties or may not have a deep background of vocabulary and grammar to access such as English Language Learners. Students listen to a text by seeking familiar words and referring to their bank of grammatical knowledge in order to work out the relationships between the main ideas and the sentences. This process is called bottom-up processing. Classroom exercises that support bottom-up

processing include helping students to retain input, recognize key words and transitions, and to listen for stress and intonation. Dictation, cloze listening, and multiple choice questions that zoom in on detailed recognition can develop these skills.

2. Students should be encouraged to **draw on what they already know** and access schema to help them make sense of new texts. This type of processing is called top-down processing. It is particularly helpful to provide students with background knowledge and let them know what to expect when they hear a new text.

In order to develop top-down processing skills, teachers can guide students to anticipate questions related to the topic or situation and to infer the setting of a text, the role of the subjects in the text, causes or effects, and unstated details of a situation.

3. "Question of the day" is an engaging prompt designed to kick-start conversation among a group of people: 100 'question of the day' examples for work - Nulab
4. Readers' Theatre encourages readers to read text out loud with expression and intonation. Readers Theatre
5. **Prediction strategies** could help students access schema. For example, prior to listening, students might generate a set of questions they expect to hear and then confirm their predictions afterwards. They could generate a list of things they already know about a topic. They could read one speaker's part in a conversation and predict the other speaker's part, then listen and compare. Similarly, students could listen to part of a story or news event, predict or write an expected ending and compare.
6. At the outset, students might simply "notice" features or keywords in an aural text. To extend learning, students could advance to **restructuring activities**. For example, they might try out and experiment with the newly noticed language forms in order for it to become part of their repertoire. After listening, students might also benefit from tasks such as sequencing, true-false comprehension, picture identification, and summarizing.

ASSESSMENT

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is characterized by an abundance of specific, descriptive feedback that is provided at a time while the learning is still taking place. Through formative assessment processes, teachers also gain valuable information to help with planning for instruction.

Summative assessment

Teachers need to be cognizant that performance is only based on what the student demonstrates relative to curricular outcomes. While other factors such as behaviour or work habits can be reported, these factors must be kept separate from the demonstration of outcomes.

[Authentic Performance Assessments - Alberta Assessment Consortium](#)

PLANNING & ASSESSMENT

Learn Alberta, Inclusive Education Library - [Div 1 and 2 Listening, Speaking and Working with Others Rubrics](#)

[Speaking Rubric Div. 1](#) - from LearnAlberta - Making a Difference

[Rubric Materials](#) - Alberta Assessment Consortium

[English Language Proficiency Oral Screener](#) - The Consortium - Alberta Professional Learning Consortium (APLC)

MODIFICATIONS, SUPPORTS, & TECHNOLOGY TOOLS

[Considerations for children who have hearing loss](#)

Considerations for English Language Learners:

- <https://www.brown.edu/academics/education-alliance/teaching-diverse-learners/about/oral-language>
- <https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/oral-language-development-and-ells-5-challenges-and-solutions>
- https://www.learnalberta.ca/content/eslapb/printable_benchmarks.html

[Understand More about Expressive Language Disorder \(difficulty using spoken language\)](#)

[Understand More about Receptive Language Disorder \(difficulty understanding spoken language\)](#)

[ERLC Website: Technologies to support students with disabilities](#)

SEE IT IN ACTION



[Videos of Oral Language Teaching - Search](#)

[Slam Poetry - Search Videos](#)



RESOURCES

[Listening and Speaking](#) - First Steps into Literacy - Support document for Kindergarten Teachers, 2008, Manitoba

Classroom Supports - [Empowering the Spirit](#)



[Listening Skills & Speaking Practice: Activities for Students | Scholastic](#)

[Walking Together The Oral Tradition pdf](#)

Palmer, E. (2014). Teaching the Core Skills of Listening & Speaking. ASCD - In addition to strategies shared in his book, Erik Palmer's website contains sample mini lessons and rubrics: <http://pvlegs.com/effectiverubrics/>



Scholastic, Literacy Place for the Early Years, Oral Language Developmental Checklist: http://www.scholastic.ca/education/lpeyx_teaching_support_grade1/images/pdfs/

[Audio Broadcasts and Podcasts: Oral Storytelling and Dramatization - Read Write Think](#)

[Oral Language: The Foundation for Reading and Writing - Keys to Literacy International Literacy Association Resources](#)

[Oral Language Resources - The Consortium - Alberta Professional Learning Consortium \(APLC\)](#)

[Oral Language Resources - Seomra Ranga](#)

