

Language Concepts

Overview Guide



Waterford Early Learning's **Six Instructional Strands for Literacy**



Research-Based Principles

Language concepts skills help students understand how written language is organized and are roughly aligned with the literary knowledge and language structures strands of the Reading Rope (Scarborough, 2001). These skills include knowledge of print concepts, parts of speech, punctuation, sentence structure, and text structures.

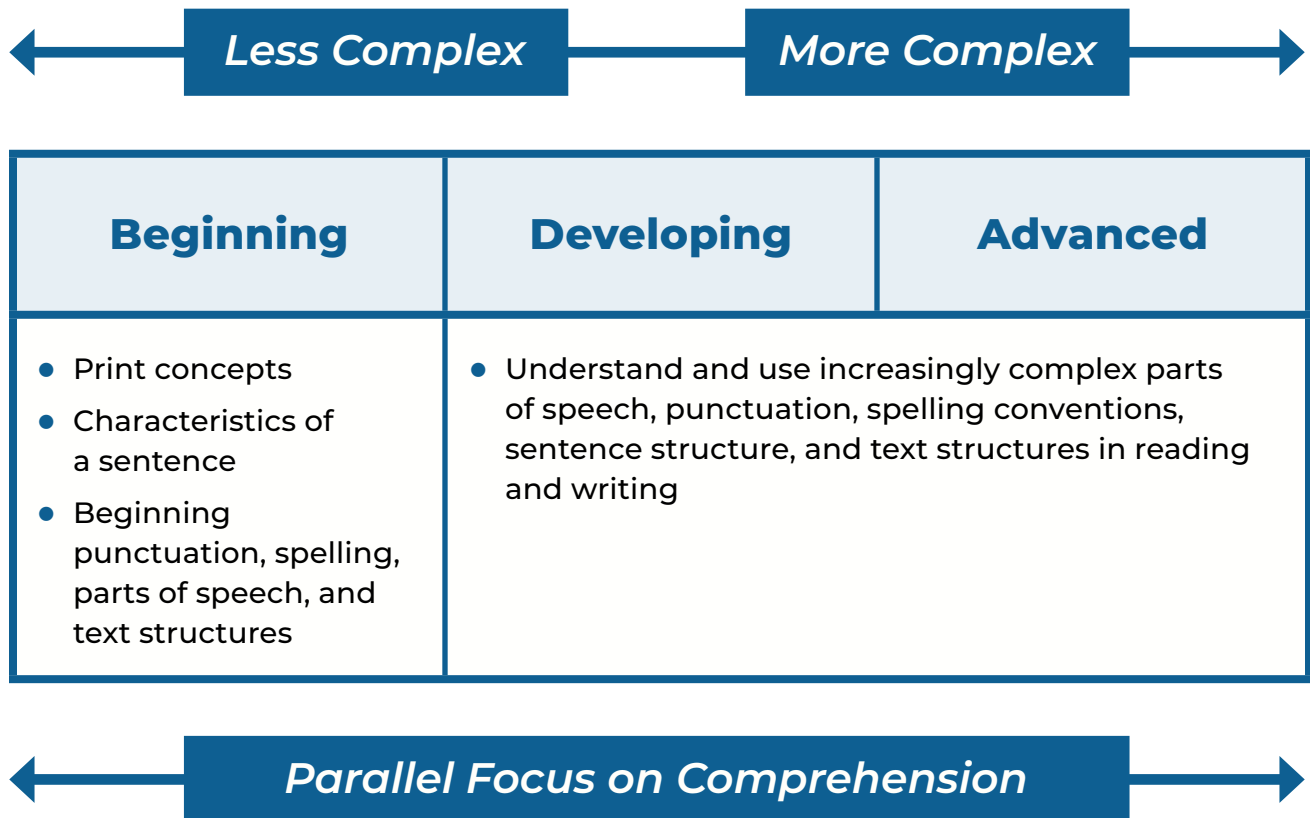
As part of a strong foundation for learning to read, students must develop print awareness (Adams, 1990). Through experiences with print, its nature and uses are revealed to young learners. They see how written language corresponds to spoken language and that readers follow print from left to right. They learn that spaces separate words and begin to understand how punctuation separates ideas. They become familiar with a variety of genres and purposes for reading.

Later, students learn to encode or spell according to the conventions of English orthography. This happens in parallel with the development of decoding skills. In the words of Linnea Ehri, spelling and reading are “mutually facilitative and reciprocal” (2000, p. 34). There is also a clear overlap here with fluency development—decoding and encoding are both part of the brain’s orthographic mapping process that enables the development of a large sight-word bank.

As developing readers, students build knowledge of grammar, including knowledge about how sentences are constructed and how to identify parts of speech. Research shows that an understanding of grammar supports reading comprehension (Silva & Cain, 2015).



Language Concepts Skills Development



Waterford Early Learning Instruction

→ Language Concepts Skills Taught and Scope & Sequence

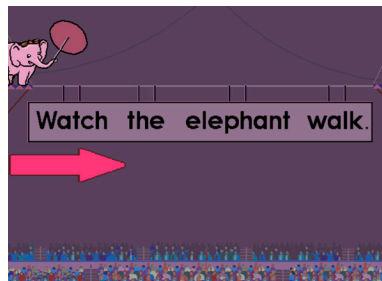
View example language concepts activities from Waterford Early Learning's adaptive learning path → [here](#).

Waterford Early Learning's Language Concepts strand teaches students how written language is organized. Print concepts, parts of speech, punctuation, spelling conventions, sentence structure, and text structures are taught and practiced in this strand.

Print concepts are explicitly taught and are modeled in Waterford Early Learning book experiences in the adaptive learning path.



Text highlights match narration word by word, demonstrating print directionality and the connection between speech and print.



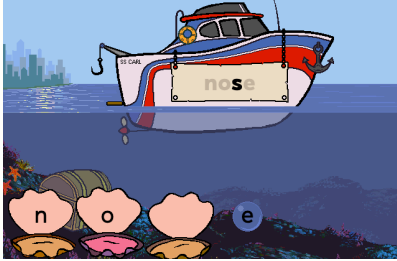
Explicit instruction teaches how we read: turning pages and reading left to right. Students learn that letters combine to form words and words combine to form sentences.



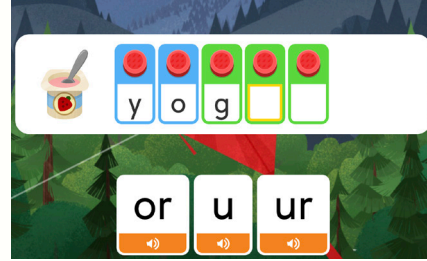
Concepts of print are reinforced and reviewed as each new book is introduced. Waterford Early Learning books are available in PDF and interactive digital formats to be used for instruction, practice, and review.



Students learn to spell (encode) according to the conventions of English orthography. This happens in parallel with the decoding instruction they experience in the Phonics strand.

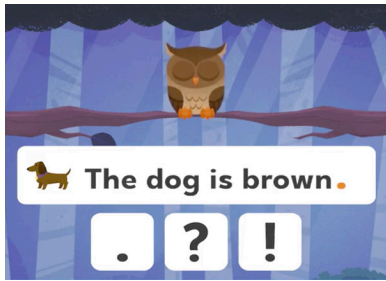


Students determine the number of sounds in a word, then see the word and, finally, determine which letters represent each sound.

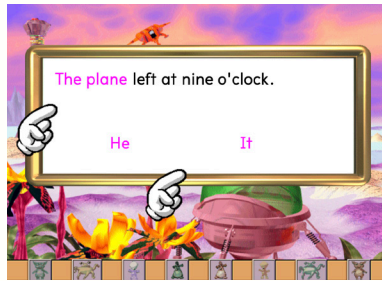


Students apply their word mapping skills and knowledge of English orthography as they spell multisyllabic words that include more complex patterns.

Grammar concepts are taught systematically. For example, students learn about basic characteristics of a sentence before learning about parts of speech.



Sentence marks



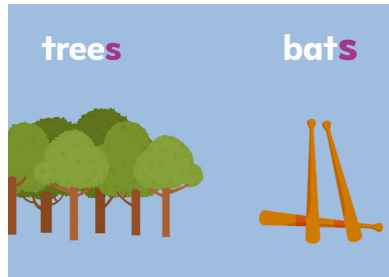
Sentence structure and pronouns



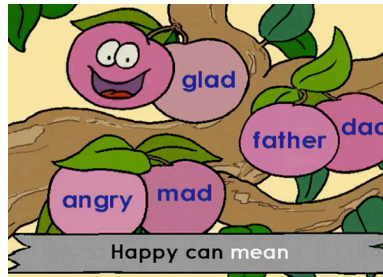
Irregular verbs



Engaging songs introduce students to many of the concepts in this strand. These songs help students understand and remember the new ideas as they move on to explicit instruction and practice for each concept.



Plural Nouns



Synonyms



Early Morphology
Prefixes



Resources

Resources to support language concepts skills development in the classroom and at home include the following:

- [Print Concepts Teacher Observation Tool](#)
- [Print Concepts Activities](#)
- [Sentence Builders](#)
- [Sentence Starters](#)
- [Closely Related Verbs](#)
- [Distinguish Meaning Among Verbs](#)
- [Using Words \(adjectives and adverbs\)](#)
- In [Resources & Activities](#),
 - FILTER for **View>All Playlists**, and SEARCH for “**Waterford language concepts songs.**”
 - FILTER for **Resource Type>WEL Activity** and **Subject & Strand>Literacy>Language Concepts.**
 - find many Waterford Early Learning books to use for print concepts instruction and assessment at **Resource Type>Books (PreK–2).**
- [Book Readability](#)

Playlists

- In [Resources & Activities](#), FILTER for **View>All Playlists** and **Subject & Strand>Literacy>Language Concepts.**

A Waterford account is required to access program hyperlinks (displayed in orange). If you do not have an account, you can request a demo account [here](#).



Family Resources

- [Family Fact Sheet: Language Concepts](#)
- [Hoja de datos familiares—Conceptos de Lenguaje](#)
- [Family Video: Language Concepts](#)
- [Video de elemento de instrucción de conceptos de lenguaje](#)

Decodable Books

- [Beginning Readers and Decodable Books](#)
- In [Resources & Activities](#), go to
 - **Collections>Books: Read With Me**
 - **Collections>Books: Foldables**
 - **Collections>Books: Readables**



Instructional Routines

The following instructional routines can serve as frameworks for whole-class, small-group, and individual instruction. These routines leverage the elements of effective instruction that are built into the adaptive learning path for Waterford Early Learning.

Print Concepts

Use the → [Print Concepts Observation Tool](#) as a guide for instruction and modeling and to assess students' understanding of print concepts.

Embed print concepts instruction in the larger context of authentic experiences with text and a clear focus on meaning and comprehension.

Parts of Speech

Use this instructional routine to build students' understanding of the parts of speech.

1. Define the part of speech. For example, plural nouns can be defined as follows: "A *noun* is a word that names a person, place, thing, or animal. A *plural noun* is a noun that tells us there is more than one."
2. Share pictures that illustrate nouns and plural nouns. For example, pictures of one bird/two birds or one chair/a group of chairs.
3. Watch → [More Than One](#), encouraging students to participate by singing along.
4. With assistance from students, recall and write the nouns and plural nouns featured in the song. Brainstorm more examples to expand the list.
5. Discuss the patterns students see. Which plural nouns are formed by adding -s? Which ones are formed by adding -es? Help students discover the rule for when -es must be added.
6. Guide students' attention to plural nouns in connected texts during read-aloud experiences or as they read independently.



7. Provide opportunities for students to use plural nouns in their writing.
8. Revisit → [More Than One](#) for engaging review and reinforcement.

Sentence Sense

Use these instructional routines to build students' knowledge of sentence structure.

Elaborate Simple Sentences

1. Begin with a simple sentence. For example, "The dog ran." Remind students that sentences have two parts. "The dog" tells us *who* and "ran" tells us *what happened*.
2. With the whole group, model how the sentence can be expanded to be more engaging and to share more information. Prompt ideas through questioning. For example, "What does the dog look like? Where did the dog run? Why did the dog run?" Use students' responses, adding their ideas one at a time. For example:
 - My dog ran.
 - My shaggy dog ran.
 - My shaggy brown dog ran.
 - My shaggy brown dog ran across the grass.
 - My shaggy brown dog ran across the grass to chase his ball.
 - My shaggy brown dog ran across the grass to chase his favorite red ball.
3. Expanding the sentence can include changing word choice to convey more detail. For example:
 - My shaggy brown dog dashed across the grass to chase his favorite red ball.
4. When students have had sufficient experience with expanding sentences as a group, share a simple sentence for guided practice. Provide guidance and support as students work independently to expand the sentence.



5. Maintain a focus on meaning by allowing time for students to illustrate their sentences.
6. Invite students to share their illustrated sentences.

Unscramble Sentences

1. Select a sentence from a story that is familiar to students from a recent read-aloud experience. For example, from [*The Little Red Hen*](#), “Who will help me plant this wheat?”
2. Write the sentence on a sentence strip and cut to create individual word cards.
3. Scramble the cards and show them to students. Say, “Do you remember what the Little Red Hen asked her friends?” Guide students to recall that the hen asked, “Who will help me plant this wheat?” Explain that all of the words needed to build the question are on the cards.
4. As a group, unscramble the words. Engage students in active participation to put the cards in the correct order. Draw students’ attention to clues. The word with a capital letter must be the first word. The word that is followed by a question mark must be the last word.
5. When the sentence is unscrambled, draw attention back to the meaning of the larger story. For example, read the sentence and say, “How did the Little Red Hen’s friends answer this question?” Invite students to call out the answer, “Not I!”
6. Follow the same steps with a similar sentence. For example, “Who will help me harvest this wheat?”
7. For a challenge, try one or more of the following:
 - Do not include a capital letter in the first word. Do not include the end punctuation with the last word. Add the capital letter and end punctuation after the words are unscrambled.
 - Follow the process with more complex sentences. Some complex sentences can be unscrambled in more than one way. Look for more than one solution!



8. When students have had sufficient practice with unscrambling sentences with a group, engage them in guided practice with additional sentences.

Corrective Feedback

Corrective feedback has been shown to be a particularly powerful form of feedback (Hattie & Jaeger, 1998). It has a substantial effect size, meaning it can significantly improve learning outcomes. Within Waterford Early Learning's adaptive learning path, corrective feedback helps students build new understandings through productive struggle.

As you engage students in the instructional routines outlined above, provide corrective feedback that

- is immediate and timely;
- is targeted and specific;
- is asset-based and encouraging;
- provides additional information, as applicable (e.g., creating an anchor chart with lists of interesting adjectives students can use in their writing);
- approaches the task in a new way, as applicable (e.g., working on expanding sentences in reverse by finding a complex sentence in a mentor text and analyzing how the author used words to elaborate the basic message);
- is shared through multiple modalities (e.g., visual and auditory); and
- does not simply provide the correct answer, but instead guides students to confirm or self-correct their thinking to arrive at the correct answer.



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→ A full list of references is included in the [*Educator Overview Guide for Waterford Early Learning: Reading Curriculum.*](#)

