

Real Learning for Real Life

*A Gentle Approach to Teaching the 3 R's at Home- For
Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade*

By Amy Maryon

If you're holding this book, you're already taking a brave and beautiful step — and I want to start by saying *well done, Mama*.

Choosing to teach your child at home is one of the most important and rewarding decisions you'll ever make. In a world that feels more uncertain every day, creating a safe, loving space for learning is a gift you are giving not only to your child, but to future generations.

I know it can feel overwhelming at first. Maybe you're wondering if you're qualified, if you'll teach the "right way," or if you'll somehow leave gaps in your child's education. Let me encourage you from the very beginning:

- You are fully equipped for this journey.
- God has given you everything you need.
- You are exactly the teacher your child needs.

You don't need a teaching degree. You don't need a room full of curriculum packages.

What you *do* need is love, consistency, and a willingness to walk hand-in-hand with your child through these early years.

This book was created to give you simple, practical tools to teach the "3 R's" — Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic — the essential foundation for your child's learning journey.

You won't find complicated theories here.

You won't be pressured to spend thousands on fancy programs.

Instead, you'll find clear, doable steps that fit into real life — the life of a busy, loving, everyday homeschool family.

Reading, writing, and basic math are not complicated mysteries reserved for experts. They are natural skills your child can grow into with your gentle guidance and daily practice.

This book was inspired by timeless, foundational methods of teaching the early years, but has been completely reimagined for today's homeschooling families, told from the heart of a homeschooling mom.

Inside, you'll find a clear path:

- How to teach your child to read with confidence
- How to guide your child into writing with joy
- How to build a strong foundation in arithmetic, step-by-step

We'll take it one day at a time, one lesson at a time — and celebrate every little victory along the way.

Remember: the real goal isn't perfection. It's planting a deep love of learning and a solid foundation your child can build on for life.

You're not just teaching subjects.

You're shaping a heart.

You're strengthening a future.

And you're doing an amazing job already.

Now, let's get started together. 🌟

Dear Mama,

I want you to pause for a moment and take a deep breath.

You are about to embark on something truly beautiful.

Teaching your child at home is not just about lessons and worksheets. It's about growing hearts, building relationships, and planting seeds that will bloom for a lifetime.

You don't have to be perfect.

You don't have to have all the answers before you begin.

You just have to be willing — willing to love, to guide, to learn right alongside your child.

Every great teacher in history started somewhere — and your “somewhere” is right here, right now, at your kitchen table, on your living room floor, or snuggled together with a book in bed.

This journey of homeschooling isn't about recreating a school at home.

It's about creating a life of learning, a life of curiosity, a life rooted in family, faith, and freedom.

You are not alone.

Thousands of moms have walked this path before you — and thousands more are walking it with you right now.

There will be days when you feel unsure. There will be moments when you wonder if you're doing enough.

Let me remind you: You are enough.

The love you pour into your child matters more than you can imagine.

The time you spend, the patience you offer, the small victories you celebrate — these are the real treasures.

This little book is here to be a companion on your journey.

To remind you that you already have everything it takes.

To give you simple, practical tools to teach your child to read, to write, and to love numbers — all at a pace that fits your family and honors your child's unique story.

So take my hand, Mama. Let's walk this road together.

You're about to do something extraordinary — one small, faithful step at a time.

With love and encouragement,

Amy

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Reading

Introduction

You're Doing the Right Thing, Mama

First, let me just say *congratulations!* You've made a wonderful decision to teach your child at home. Especially with everything going on in the world today, I truly believe that home is one of the very best places for real learning to happen.

And listen, please don't feel like you're not enough. God has already equipped you with everything you need to teach your child. You don't need a fancy teaching degree or a closet full of expensive curriculum to make it work — not even close!

So many families pour hundreds of dollars into fancy programs and textbooks, thinking it's the only way their children will succeed. But the truth is, with just a little bit of time, love, and a few simple tools, you *can* teach your child to read — and you can do it practically for free.

What I'm about to share are five simple steps that take the fear and mystery out of teaching reading. Whether you're planning to homeschool full-time or you simply want to support what your child is learning in school, these steps will give you the tools you need.

As you read through this guide, you'll realize something important: teaching reading isn't complicated. It's not locked away behind a wall of theories and experts. It's really just about patience, consistency, and creating a love for learning — and you already have what it takes.

Learn these five steps, know the path you're walking, and watch your confidence grow. You *can* do this, mama. You are exactly who your child needs.

A Simple Path Through the Reading Maze

This little guide you're holding? It's one of the simplest and most practical reading guides you'll find. You won't find a bunch of complicated theories or endless arguments about how reading *should* be taught. There's no "ivory tower" advice here — just real, tried-and-true methods that have helped hundreds of children I've personally encouraged along the way.

When can you start? Honestly, as soon as you're familiar with the five steps!

If your child is very young — anywhere from birth to about four years old — you can begin right at Step 1 and move naturally through the others over time.

If your child is kindergarten or primary school age, you might find it helpful to jump in wherever it best fits their needs.

And if your child is a little older and hasn't had a strong foundation in reading yet, you can dip into these steps at any point, filling in the gaps as needed and helping them build skills with confidence.

How long can you use this guide?

Well, if we're thinking in grade levels (which, truthfully, I don't love — every child is uniquely made, after all), this method can take your child up through about a 4th-grade reading level. That's when they'll be able to use their reading skills to tackle subjects like history, science, or anything else found in books.

In terms of age, it varies widely — and that's the beauty of homeschooling. Every child moves at their own perfect pace. I'll share more about that inside each step.

What Curriculum or Books Will You Need?

One of the best parts of this homespun, natural approach is that you don't need expensive teaching materials.

In fact, you'll mostly need this guide and easy-to-find books you probably already have around the house or can pick up at your local library. I'll also include a few downloadable resources to help you along the way.

A big reason I encourage homemade flashcards is simple: you won't need them for long! When you tailor them specifically to your child's needs, you can teach a new concept, help them master it in a few days (or weeks), and then move right along without feeling tied to a pricey set of commercial cards.

The same idea goes for workbooks. When you spend money on a workbook, there's this little pressure to make your child fill out every single line — whether they need it or not. We end up teaching *the book* instead of teaching *the child*.

That's not what we're after. But don't worry — if you and your child happen to enjoy workbooks, you can absolutely sprinkle them in! You'll find that almost any material can fit nicely alongside the five simple steps.

How This Guide is Set Up

The guide is built around the five main steps to reading.

Each section gives you:

- A clear explanation of the step
- An overview of what you're aiming for
- Basic teaching methods
- Fun games and activities to mix things up (because learning should be fun!)

In the later steps, I'll also share ways to weave in writing and spelling skills, since these naturally grow alongside reading.

Before We Dive In: A Little Word of Caution

I know how easy it is to want to rush — we live in a world that celebrates achievement and speed. And as moms, we often feel the pressure to push ahead and get our kids "ahead" too.

But please hear my heart: the real victory isn't how quickly a child moves through these steps. It's in *how well* they master them.

There's a beautiful thing called *optimal timing* (we'll talk more about that later) — and it matters far more than rushing.

Quality matters. Thoroughness matters. *Enjoyment* matters.

Building a lifetime love of reading takes patience and care. Too much pressure can make a child dislike reading — and that's the very opposite of what we want.

So move at your child's pace. Enjoy the process. Cheer them on. Celebrate every little success.

You've got this. And now, let's get started with the five simple steps to teaching your child to read.

Step 1: Building the Foundation — Creating a Rich Learning Life Before Formal Reading

Teaching your child to read doesn't start with flashcards or phonics workbooks.

It actually begins much earlier — with all the everyday things you're probably already doing: loving them, talking with them, encouraging their natural curiosity, and helping them grow up confident and secure.

That's the real first step — **building a strong foundation for learning.**

If you're reading this guide, chances are you've already moved past the baby years and you're starting to wonder:

"When should I actually begin teaching my child to read?"

That's a great question — and an important one.

For years, there's been a lot of back-and-forth about when formal reading lessons should start.

Some parents go the "early start" route: they label the couch, the fridge, the table; they flash word cards to their toddlers and set up mini reading drills. Others are far more relaxed: they read aloud often, explore the outdoors, build things together, and don't worry if formal reading doesn't click until age six, seven, or even eight.

So who's right?

Honestly — neither extreme.

This guide will help you find a middle ground: a balanced, personalized path based on *your child* and *your family's rhythm*.

That said, we tend to lean slightly more toward the relaxed side — not because there's anything wrong with early interest in reading, but because we've seen more harm done by forcing it too soon.

When a child *genuinely* shows readiness to learn letters and sounds early, it's wonderful. But when reading is pushed on a child who isn't developmentally ready, it often leads to frustration, discouragement, and even strain between parent and child.

Sometimes learning happens naturally — an older sibling might "play school" with a younger one, teaching them letters while laughing and playing.

Or a child might sit at the table, pointing to cereal boxes or road signs, asking, "*What does that say?*"

These moments are beautiful because they are child-led, playful, and pressure-free.

But sometimes, well-meaning parents, anxious for their child to succeed, push reading instruction way too early — not because the child is asking for it, but because the parent feels pressured to "keep up" or "get ahead." That pressure can backfire, making learning feel like a chore instead of a joy.

Yes, some children can learn to read very early.

But just because they *can* doesn't always mean they *should*.

What the Research (and Real Life) Tells Us

Modern research and real-life homeschooling experiences tell the same story:

Rich life experiences in the early years set children up for stronger, faster, and more joyful reading later on.

Many forward-thinking schools and homeschool families have moved toward something called "**Experience First Learning.**"

Instead of pushing heavy early reading instruction, they fill those early years with:

- Nature walks
- Cooking and baking
- Building projects
- Singing songs
- Arts and crafts
- Deep conversations about the world

Instead of memorizing sight words at age three, kids are busy melting ice, growing gardens, painting masterpieces, helping mix pancake batter, and asking hundreds of "why" questions about everything they see.

The result?

By the time these children are seven or eight years old — the age when formal reading typically starts in this approach — they often learn to read **quickly, eagerly**, and with **better comprehension** than children who were drilled in early reading skills without meaningful life experience behind it.

Why?

Because they've built deep vocabularies.

They've developed strong critical thinking skills.

They have real-world knowledge that makes reading *matter* to them.

Meanwhile, children pushed to read before they are developmentally ready often become "word-callers" — able to sound out words, but struggling to understand or enjoy what they're reading.

Bottom line:

Hands-on living in the early years doesn't delay real learning — it supercharges it.

Real-world experiences create real-world thinkers — and real-world thinkers make strong, joyful readers.

What Real Pre-Reading Looks Like in Your Home

Pre-reading instruction doesn't look like flashcards or worksheets.

It looks like everyday life, rich with conversation, wonder, and connection.

Here's what it might look like:

- Helping make breakfast and talking about measurements and nutrition
- Noticing the changes of the seasons on a morning walk
- Looking up at the night sky and talking about stars and constellations

- Solving real problems like, *"Where will Grandma sleep when she visits?"*
- Figuring out, *"How do we keep the toddler from chewing on crayons?"*
- Reading picture books aloud and asking lots of open-ended questions
- Singing silly songs together while folding laundry
- Sorting groceries, counting apples, and talking about prices at the store
- Talking about God's creation, family traditions, and everyday wonders

Every moment like this builds vocabulary, critical thinking, and a love for learning — which are the real building blocks for strong reading skills later.

And you're already doing so much of it.

But When Do I Actually Start "Real" Reading Lessons?

This is the part where many parents get antsy.

"I'm doing all this life learning... but when do I start phonics lessons?"

Here's the secret:

If you stay connected to your child, they'll show you when they're ready.

You might notice:

- They start asking, *"What letter is that?"*
- They memorize favorite books and pretend to "read" them aloud.
- They point at signs or menus and want to know what they say.
- They show interest when you casually introduce a letter or sound.

Think of these little moments as "invitation balloons" — not pressure, just invitations to learn.

You can float a new idea their way:

- *"Hey, did you know this letter makes the 'ssss' sound?"*
- *"Wow, that word starts with the same sound as your name!"*

If your child shows excitement or curiosity, it's a good sign they're ready to dip into more formal learning.

If they shrug, get frustrated, or wander away, no worries — give it more time.

Trust the process.

Trust your child.

Trust yourself.

Your job isn't to force reading to happen on a schedule — it's to walk alongside your child, gently opening doors and celebrating each step they take.

In the next step, we'll talk about what those early reading lessons look like — and I'll show you a gentle, natural method that fits beautifully with how young children are wired to learn.

Let's keep going together.

Step 2: Sounds Before Letters — Laying the Groundwork for Real Reading

When most people think about teaching reading, they imagine a child memorizing the alphabet from A to Z.

But here's the truth:

Sound comes first.

Long before a child can name letters, they can hear and recognize the sounds those letters make.

And that, my friend, is the real foundation of reading — matching sounds to symbols.

You don't have to drill letter names or fill their day with worksheets.

You can teach reading in a way that feels natural, playful, and part of everyday life.

Shifting the Focus: From Names to Sounds

Think about it:

When your child reads the word *cat*, what matters is not that they can name the letters “C-A-T” — but that they know the /k/, /a/, and /t/ sounds and can blend them together.

That's why, in this early stage, we focus on helping your child connect sounds to their everyday world first — naturally and joyfully — before worrying about formal letter names.

You're teaching the heart of reading, not just the appearance of knowing.

A Simple Way to Begin

Start with what your child already loves — their own name, favorite foods, family members, favorite animals.

Real, meaningful words make learning exciting.

For example, if your child's name is Ellie, you could say:

"This sound — /e/ — is the start of your name, Ellie!"

Show her the letter E, let her trace it with her finger or a marker, and talk about the /e/ sound she hears.

Don't worry yet about how tall the letter should be or if she writes it perfectly.

Let her *feel* the shape first — neatness can come later.

Once she recognizes a sound in her name, branch out to familiar words:

- Elephant
- Eggs
- Engine
- Envelope

Celebrate every connection she makes — joy is a key part of early learning!

Everyday Sound Adventures

Instead of setting up "reading time," weave sound learning into your day:

- **Storytime Spark:**
While reading a favorite book like *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie*, point out the /m/ sound in "Mouse" and "Milk."
(Skip anything too academic. Just a simple, joyful notice: "Hey, those both start the same!")
- **Grocery Games:**
While shopping, challenge your child:
"Can you find something that starts with /b/?" (Banana, bread, broccoli!)
- **Nature Walk Sounds:**
On a walk, see if you can spot things with a target sound: birds, breeze, bark, beetles.

- **Chalk It Out:**

Outside with sidewalk chalk, write a few starting letters and have your child jump onto the one that matches the sound you call out. ("Find the /s/ sound!" and they hop to the letter S.)

- **Kitchen Conversations:**

Cooking dinner?

"We're making soup — what sound do you hear at the beginning of soup?"

Everyday talk becomes a sound safari!

Fun Activities for Building Sound Awareness

Here's a full set of fun activities you can rotate through:

1. Sound Safari Challenge

Walk around the house, yard, or store hunting for items that start with a specific sound.

Turn it into a race if your child loves competition: *"How many /t/ things can you find in two minutes?"*

2. Jump and Shout

Write different starting sounds on sticky notes or tape them to the floor.

When you call out a sound, your child jumps to the matching letter and shouts a word that starts with it!

3. Silly Sound Scrapbook

Make a "Sound of the Week" notebook.

Each day, find pictures from magazines, newspapers, or print online images that start with that sound and glue them in.

At the end of the week, flip through and celebrate how many words they've learned!

4. Dinner Table Detective

Create place cards with the first sound of each family member's name. At dinner, have your child "guess" whose place card matches whom — or have them write full names if they're ready.

5. Mystery Sound Bag

Fill a bag with random household objects. Let your child pull one out, name it, and say the first sound. Then see if they can think of something else that starts with the same sound!

6. Chalk Races

Draw simple letters on your driveway or patio. Call out a sound, and your child races to find the matching letter! Switch it up: sometimes call out a letter and let them make the sound instead.

Why Sound-First Matters

By focusing on sounds before names, you're helping your child understand the true structure of language. You're not just preparing them to pass a test — you're giving them the key to unlock reading naturally, joyfully, and confidently. Later, yes — we'll fold in letter names and neat handwriting. But right now, we're laying a foundation that makes real reading **make sense** — and makes it something your child *wants* to do.

***You're not just teaching letters.
You're building a lifelong love of words.***

And you're doing it in a way that's joyful, relaxed, and exactly how learning was meant to be.

Free Printable: Letter Sounds Find Game

To help you put this into practice, I've created a simple printable game for you!

You can download the **Letter Sounds Find Game** in the **Free Downloads Section** that goes with this book.

In this playful activity, your child will listen to the sounds you say aloud, find the matching letter, and mark it using a crayon, a bingo marker, or a dry-erase marker if you place it inside a plastic sleeve.

This simple, joyful practice builds strong listening skills and sound recognition — key foundations for confident, natural reading later on.

You'll find the download link in the Free Downloads Section at the back of this book.

Have fun with it!

Learning at this stage is meant to be light, playful, and full of happy discovery.

Simple daily moments lead to big learning milestones.

Enjoy the journey — you're doing a beautiful thing.

Step 3: Blending Sounds into Words — Opening the Door to Real Reading

Now that your child has started recognizing a few letter sounds, it's time to take the next exciting step: **blending those sounds into words**.

This is where reading truly begins to come alive!

In Step 2, you didn't have to teach every letter yet — and that was on purpose.

Rather than overwhelming your child with memorization, you were laying a strong, joyful foundation.

Now, we'll build on that by helping your child discover how sounds work together to create words.

Why Start with Short Sounds and Simple Words?

When beginning to blend sounds, it's important to start small and simple. We use short vowel sounds first — like the short /a/ sound in "apple" — because they are the most common and easiest to hear clearly.

Starting with short, familiar sounds helps your child succeed without overloading their memory.

It's another way we keep learning joyful instead of stressful.

By blending just two or three sounds together at first, your child will experience that thrilling "aha!" moment:

"I can read a word!"

And that discovery builds true confidence.

How to Start Blending

Suppose your child knows the /a/ sound and a few consonant sounds like /n/ and /t/.

You can start blending practice right away:

1. Write the letters a, n, and t on a piece of paper, whiteboard, or chalkboard.
2. Point to each letter slowly and say the sound: /a/, /n/, /t/.
3. Blend them together smoothly to form *ant*.

To make this even more hands-on and fun, you can also use **letter tiles** — either store-bought ones like magnetic letters, or simple homemade versions.

(Just cut squares of cardstock or foam and write one letter on each.)

Letter tiles are great because your child can physically move them around to create different word combinations, helping them "see" how sounds come together to make words.

Whether you use a whiteboard, paper, or tiles, the focus stays the same: blending sounds gently into real, simple words.

What If It's Not a Real Word?

Sometimes the first blends won't make a real word — and that's okay!

If your child sounds out *apn* instead of *nap*, simply smile and say, *"That's a silly one! Let's mix them a different way."*

The goal right now is practicing the *skill* of blending — not just reading real words yet.

Tips for Early Blending

- Stick with **short vowel sounds** at first (/a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/).
- Start with just a few familiar consonants.
- Use **hands-on tools** like letter tiles or sticky notes to physically move letters around.
- Make silly words part of the fun — laughter builds learning!

Everyday Opportunities to Practice Blending

- **Storytime Sound-Outs:**

When reading favorite books, occasionally pick out an easy word to sound out together (like *cat*, *sun*, or *pot*).

- **Sidewalk Word Race:**

Write letters on the driveway with chalk.

Call out a word and have your child race to touch the letters in order.

- **Magnet Board Blending:**

Put magnetic letters on the fridge or a small cookie sheet.

Slide letters together to form simple words.

- **Kitchen Conversations:**

Sound out short words around the house — mug, pan, pot, bed.

Activities for Step 3

Fun, hands-on ways to blend and learn:

1. Sound Slide Game

Make a simple chart or line up letter tiles.

Point to the sounds slowly, sliding your finger along them.

Have your child say each sound, then blend them into a word.

2. Jump and Blend

Lay out letter cards or tiles across the floor.

Say a word like *cat* — your child jumps onto C, then A, then T!

Mix it up: jump into *bat*, *pat*, or *mat* next.

3. Mystery Word Builder

Use letter tiles or homemade cards.

Pick three random sounds and challenge your child:

"Can you make a word out of these?"

If they can — awesome! If not — laugh and remix!

4. Dice Blending Fun

Make two dice: one with vowels, one with consonants.
Roll and blend the sounds together.
(Example: Roll "b" and "a" — blend into *ba*; add "t" — make *bat*.)

A Word About Timing

Some children catch on to blending right away.
Others need lots of play, practice, and time.

If blending feels frustrating, step back and spend a little more time with storytelling, playing games, or exploring sounds informally.

Remember: reading is a journey, not a race.
Celebrate each little step — you're helping build something beautiful.

You're doing an incredible job — and Step 4 will build even more on this solid start!

Beginning Blending Chart

Vowels	Consonants to Start With	Example Simple Words
a (as in apple)	m, n, p, t, s	mat, sat, pan, nap, tap
e (as in bed)	b, d, p, t	bet, pet, net, bed
i (as in sit)	b, m, p, t, s	bit, pit, sit, sip, tip
o (as in pot)	c, m, p, t	cot, pot, mop, top
u (as in cup)	b, p, t, m	but, pup, mutt, tub

Tip:
Start with just one vowel (like short a) and 3–4 consonants for early blending games.
Add more sounds as your child grows in confidence!

To give your child even more joyful practice with early reading, I've created a set of **Cut-Up Mini-Books** that you can download and assemble!

Each mini-book focuses on one short vowel sound (A, E, I, O, U) and uses simple, blendable words that your child will soon recognize and read on their own.

The books are designed to be printed on regular paper, cut apart into small pages, and stapled into fun little storybooks.

Children can illustrate the pages themselves, making each book personal and special!

You'll find these free printable mini-books — like *Sam the Cat* and *Meg the Pet* — in the **Free Downloads Section** at the back of this book.

They're a perfect, gentle way to build blending confidence and spark pride as your child becomes a reader!

Step 4: Decoding

Now that your child can blend sounds into simple words, you've reached a really exciting milestone: it's time for **decoding**!

This is the part where reading opens up — and it's easier than you think.

In Step 4, we'll start teaching letter combinations (like "ck" and "th"), and introduce vowel teams (like "ai" or "ea") when your child is ready.

If your child already knows most of the letter sounds from earlier steps, you're perfectly set up for this next stage.

Why We Waited Until Now

You might wonder: why didn't we jump into letter combinations and rules earlier?

Two important reasons:

- **Mental Readiness:**

Children need time for their brain to organize basic sounds before layering on new ones. Once they're confident in single sounds, they're ready to handle more without confusion.

- **Efficiency:**

It's much faster and smoother to teach these skills *after* children already understand the connection between sounds and letters. No wasted time on memorizing endless rules they can't use yet.

We're following the natural pattern of learning: hearing → blending → decoding → reading real words.

How to Approach Decoding

Teach new combinations slowly and clearly.

Introduce a few at a time, and review them often through games, reading, and writing practice

Only move as fast as your child comfortably can.

If they need extra time, that's okay — confidence matters more than speed.

Keep lessons multi-sensory.

Use crayons, magnet letters, whiteboards — anything that keeps hands and minds engaged together.

Connect sounds to real life.

Use real words (like “duck” for “ck” or “ship” for “sh”) instead of random nonsense syllables whenever possible.

Celebrate small wins!

Each new sound they conquer is a big step toward true, independent reading.

Vowel and Consonant Chart

Vowel

- a cat, map, tap
- e bed, red, pen
- i sit, pig, lid
- o pot, dog, top
- u sun, cup, mug

Vowel Teams and R-Controlled Vowels

- | | |
|------------|----------------|
| ai, ay | rain, play |
| ee, ea | tree, leaf |
| oa, oe | boat, toe |
| ar | car, star |
| er, ir, ur | her, bird, fur |

Consonant or Combo Example Words

b	bat, big
c	cat, cup
d	dog, dig
f	fan, fog
g	goat, gum
h	hat, hop
j	jam, jog
k	kit, kid
l	lip, lap
m	map, mat
n	nap, net
p	pan, pet
qu	quit, quick
r	rat, rip
s	sit, sun
t	tap, top
v	vet, van
w	win, wet
x	box, fox
y	yes, yell
z	zip, zigzag
ch	chip, chat
sh	ship, shop
th	thin, this
wh	when, whip
ck	duck, back
ng	sing, king

Using the Vowel and Consonant Sound Charts

The charts provided in this book are intentionally simple. They focus on the most common vowel patterns, consonant sounds, and early blends that young children need for reading success.

There are, of course, many larger and more detailed charts available — some listing dozens of rules, exceptions, and rare combinations. However, experience shows that trying to teach too many at once can overwhelm both you and your child.

The goal at this early stage is confidence and fluency with the basic, most useful patterns first.

Once your child understands these, more complex sounds and exceptions can be added naturally, as they are needed.

Think of this chart as a practical starting point, not a final destination. It's enough to carry your child confidently through beginning reading and much of independent first-grade level reading without confusion or frustration.

How to Use the Sound Charts in Daily Life

You don't need special materials or a formal "lesson time" to practice these sounds.

You can simply weave them into your everyday conversations and activities.

For example

- If you are reading a bedtime story and come across the word boat, you might pause and say, "Boat — that 'oa' together says the long O sound. Boat."
- If you are fixing lunch and pull out a ham, you might casually say, "Ham — that has short A in the middle, like cat and bat."
- Walking outside and hearing a bird singing, you could point out, "Bird — that 'ir' makes the same sound as in 'stir' and 'girl.'"

Real-world, casual teaching moments like these are often far more powerful than formal drills.

Children learn best when they are relaxed and when language feels natural, connected to real experiences.

Practicing Sounds at Home

You might want to:

- **Create simple flashcards** with one vowel team or consonant pair per card, using crayon and paper.
- **Post a small chart on the fridge** and read a few words off it together during breakfast.
- **Play a "word hunt" game** around the house, finding objects that match certain sounds (like finding three things with the "sh" sound: shoes, shampoo, shelf).
- **Write short silly sentences together**, filled with target sounds. For example:
"The ship shops for shells" when practicing "sh."

There is no need to rush or test.

The purpose is simply to build **awareness** — to help your child notice patterns and hear how sounds work together in real words.

You are simply helping your child become a word detective, gently pointing out how letters and sounds are connected.

A Note on Out-of-Order Teaching

You might notice that not all sounds fit into neat categories.

Sometimes children encounter words like sigh or thought before they have been taught those specific patterns formally.

That's okay.

You can simply explain as you go.

For example, when reading the word sight, you might say,

"This word has 'igh' together. It makes the long I sound, just like in 'light' and 'night.'"

Or when you come across a word like cough, you might say,

"This is one of those tricky words — the 'ough' here sounds like 'off.' It's different in some other words. We'll just learn it when we need it."

Phonics is important, but flexibility is important too.

If your child is excited about a word that doesn't fit a rule, don't ignore it — use it as a chance to expand their understanding naturally.

Learning to read should feel like unlocking the world, not like memorizing endless charts.

Sight Words

While most words in English can be sounded out using phonics, there's always a handful that just don't follow the normal rules.

These are often called **sight words** — words we want children to recognize quickly, without having to stop and decode every time.

Learning sight words isn't about memorizing endless lists.

It's about giving your child a few helpful shortcuts to smoother, faster reading.

How to Teach Sight Words the Simple Way:

- Start with just a few at a time — maybe 5–10 words your child will see often in simple books.
- Make little flashcards (handwritten is perfect) and review them in short, happy sessions.
- Group sight words that sound alike or look similar to help memory stick faster.

The following sight words are based on the **Dolch Word List**, a trusted collection of high-frequency words commonly used in early reading.

They are **grouped by suggested grade level** (Pre-Primer through 3rd Grade) to help you introduce them in a natural, age-appropriate way.

Feel free to move through the lists at your child's pace, adding new words as they are ready.

Early Starter Sight Words (Pre-Primer Level)

a, and, away, big, blue, can, come, down, find, for, funny, go, help, here, I, in, is, it, jump, little, look, make, me, my, not, one, play, red, run, said, see, the, three, to, two, up, we, where, yellow, you

Primer Sight Words

all, am, are, at, ate, be, black, brown, but, came, did, do, eat, four, get, good, have, he, into, like, must, new, no, now, on, our, out, please, pretty, ran, ride, saw, say, she, so, soon, that, there, they, this, too, under, want, was, well, went, what, white, who, will, with, yes

First Grade Sight Words

after, again, an, any, as, ask, by, could, every, fly, from, give, going, had, has, her, him, his, how, just, know, let, live, may, of, old, once, open, over, put, round, some, stop, take, thank, them, then, think, walk, were, when

Second Grade Sight Words

always, around, because, been, before, best, both, buy, call, cold, does, don't, fast, first, five, found, gave, goes, green, its, made, many, off, or, pull, read, right, sing, sit, sleep, tell, their, these, those, upon, us, use, very, wash, which, why, wish, work, would, write, your

Third Grade Sight Words

about, better, bring, carry, clean, cut, done, draw, drink, eight, fall, far, full, got, grow, hold, hot, hurt, if, keep, kind, laugh, light, long, much, myself, never, only, own, pick, seven, shall, show, six, small, start, ten, today, together, try, warm

Practical Tip:

Once you introduce new sight words, weave them into your daily reading and simple writing games.

Instead of endless drilling, **use the words naturally** — when you're writing notes, labels, shopping lists, or telling silly stories together.

It's all about making words *mean something* to your child.

A Word About Reading Progress

One of the most important things you can do for your child right now is to **relax and trust the process**.

It's so easy to feel pressure when you hear about what other children are doing — but the truth is, every child learns to read at their own pace.

There's no behind.

There's no race.

Your child's journey is uniquely theirs.

Focus on finding books that **they can read easily and enjoy**.

The goal at this stage is not to push them into harder books just because of their age or grade.

The goal is to **build confidence, fluency, and a love for reading**.

There are many wonderful book lists online, and I've included several curated lists for you on my website as well — feel free to browse and find what fits your family best.

A Note About Reading Comprehension

At this early stage, you don't need to assign worksheets or drill them with long questions.

You don't even need to formally “teach comprehension” yet.

Comprehension happens naturally when children enjoy what they are reading.

Simple ways to check comprehension right now:

- Ask, “What did you hear in the story?”
- Ask, “Was there a funny part that made you laugh?”
- Let them retell a small part of the story in their own words.

If your child can share a part they liked, or even react to something funny, they are comprehending!

Save the formal reading paragraphs and written comprehension questions for later — after their confidence and fluency have had time to grow.

If Your Child Is Still Struggling...

If reading still feels hard for your child, don't worry.

That's completely normal for many children.

Just keep it simple and steady:

- Spend **5 to 15 minutes a day** reading aloud to them,
- Invite them to read a little back to you,
- Smile often, encourage even the small wins, and stay consistent.

Over time, those small moments will add up to real progress.

They will get it.

And when they do, they'll be stronger for having grown at their own perfect pace.

Free Resources to Help You Along the Way

To make this process even easier, I've included free printable resources to support you:

- **Sight Word Flashcards:**
Print and store them in a small envelope. Review a few at a time to keep practice fun and light.
- **Blank Bingo Sheets:**
Write the words your child is learning in the squares.
Use a bingo dauber, crayon, or marker to make reviewing sight words into a fun game.
- **Printable Early Fluency Readers:**
Download ready-to-use books from Levels 1, 2, and 3.
These short books are designed to build success, fluency, and love for reading — one page at a time.

You can find all these free downloads linked in the Free Resources section of this book and also on my website.

Final Encouragement

The most important thing you can give your child right now is **the gift of joy around books**.

Create memories of cozy reading together, laughing at silly stories, and

discovering new places through words.

That love for reading will carry them farther than any workbook ever could.

You are doing a beautiful job.

Stay steady. Keep reading. Keep smiling.

You're planting seeds that will grow into a lifelong love of learning.

Little by little, a strong reader is built —

with love, time, and patience.

Beginning Arithmetic with Confidence

Step 1

A Fresh Start with Arithmetic

Math doesn't have to feel scary, stressful, or overwhelming — for you or your child!

Too often, kids (and adults!) grow up thinking they're "bad at math" when really, they just needed someone to walk alongside them in a patient and practical way.

In this section, we're going to focus on creating the right attitude toward math — from both you and your child — so learning arithmetic can be smooth, steady, and even enjoyable.

You can make all the difference.

Your child's experience with math doesn't have to look like what you might remember from school.

Here, it's going to be simple, relational, and confidence-building — not anxiety-producing.

Four Keys to a Strong Start in Math

1. Your Attitude Toward Arithmetic

Sometimes parents feel nervous about teaching math because they didn't enjoy it themselves growing up.

If that's you — take a deep breath. You don't have to hide from math or feel like you aren't "good enough" to teach it.

You're an adult now — and basic elementary arithmetic is well within your reach!

The truth is, if you can stay positive and willing to learn alongside your child when needed, you'll model exactly what they need most: **confidence, not fear.**

A relaxed attitude about math will go a long way in helping your child develop the same confidence.

2. Your Attitude Toward Your Child

Some parents accidentally transfer pressure onto their kids without realizing it — pushing too hard, comparing them to others, or worrying too much

about fast progress.
Let's step away from that.

Remember: **your child is not a score or a competition.**
They are a whole person growing at their own pace.

If your child struggles with a concept, it doesn't mean you have failed or they have failed. It simply means they need a little more time or a new way of seeing it.
Stay steady, stay encouraging, and stay on the same team with your child.

3. Your Attitude Toward Teaching

Teaching math at home doesn't have to look like a rigid classroom model. You don't need complicated charts or "scientific" teaching methods.

You can teach math with common sense, patience, and simple tools. The goal is not to rush through a curriculum but to help your child **truly understand** and **use** numbers.

- Use real-life examples.
- Teach concepts gently and in order.
- Let your child think, ask questions, and try things without fear of "getting it wrong."

Good math learning feels like a natural extension of life — not just worksheets and drills.

4. Your Attitude Toward Testing

In traditional classrooms, frequent testing is often used to measure and sort students.
At home, it doesn't have to be that way.

You don't need to constantly test your child to know if they are learning. You'll see it in their daily work, in their questions, and in their growing confidence.

If you do choose to use tests, keep them light and positive —

- You can use small quizzes to celebrate what your child knows.

- You can use unit tests to show progress when a child enjoys that sense of completion.
- Always use testing, if at all, as a **tool to build up** — never to shame or compare.

Self-testing (choosing to measure their own progress) becomes a powerful and motivational tool around second or third grade.

Until then, learning should feel natural, steady, and supportive.

Final Encouragement

Math doesn't have to feel heavy or stressful.

It can feel like an exciting adventure — discovering patterns, solving puzzles, and learning skills that will bless your child for a lifetime.

Stay patient. Stay steady.

Celebrate effort, progress, and those lightbulb moments when it all starts to click.

You are fully capable of guiding your child to a confident start in arithmetic — and you're building something far greater than just math facts.

You're building a foundation of confidence that will last for years to come.

Step 2

Understanding How Children Learn Math

Modes of Thinking in Early Math

Children grow into math skills through **three stages of thinking**:

- Working with real objects,
- Visualizing in their minds,
- Thinking abstractly with numbers and symbols.

Knowing these stages helps you teach math naturally — without stress or rushing.

You'll be able to decide if your child needs to spend more time using real things or if they're ready to move on to mental math or symbols.

1. The Hands-On Stage (Manipulative Mode)

At first, children need **real objects** to "see" math happening.

Think of counting marbles, setting the table, dividing snacks, or sorting toys. Any time you ask questions like:

- "How many more spoons do we need?"
- "Do we have enough chairs for everyone?"

You're helping your child build real math understanding with their hands and eyes.

Children naturally think this way — even three- and four-year-olds can solve real math problems if they can touch and move the objects.

This is a beautiful, important stage.

Don't skip it — it builds the foundation for all future math skills!

2. The Mental Picture Stage (Mental Image Mode)

After lots of hands-on experience, children start to "see" math in their minds.

They no longer need to actually move objects around.

They can **picture** five apples in one group and two apples in another, and imagine putting them together to find seven.

This is where mental math really begins.

Your child starts solving problems in their head without needing a physical model every time.

Some kids reach this stage early, some later — it's completely normal to move through it at different speeds!

3. The Abstract Stage (Symbol Mode)

In the final stage, kids think about numbers without needing to "see" anything.

They can think of " $5 + 3 = 8$ " just as numbers and symbols on paper.

This is where traditional math worksheets and textbooks usually begin — but children need time in the earlier stages first to truly understand what the numbers **mean**.

Rushing kids into abstract thinking too soon leads to confusion, frustration, and the dreaded "I hate math" feelings.

It's okay if your child needs more time playing with real objects and building mental images before they work only with numbers on a page.

How to Use These Stages When Teaching

The key to teaching math well is to **start with real objects** — not abstract symbols.

Stay in the hands-on stage for as long as your child needs.

Move slowly into the mental picture stage.

And only then, when they are confident, introduce more abstract work.

Daily conversations, real-life situations, and small playful math moments are the best way to grow through these stages naturally.

No need to rush.

Children can be in more than one stage at a time depending on the skill!

You are building real understanding — not just rote memorization.

Step 3

Real-Life Math Happens Every Day in Early Math Learning

Math is woven into daily life.

You don't have to create elaborate lessons — you just have to **notice** and **invite** your child into the moments.

Here are some easy, natural ways to practice early math every day:

Supermarket Math

- Count how many apples you need.
- Compare prices for different sizes.
- Talk about "half-price" sales and what that means.

Kitchen Math

- Measure ingredients for recipes together.
- Compare sizes of pans or spoons.
- Read numbers in cookbooks or on food packages.

Around the House

- Set the table and figure out how many forks and plates are needed.
- Talk about time — "How long until dinner?"
- Sort laundry by colors or sizes.

In the Car

- Read street signs and speed limits.
- Look for patterns in license plates.
- Talk about distance and time on trips.

Game Time

- Play games that involve counting spaces, money, or scores.
- Practice fair sharing and turn-taking — important math thinking!

Television and Screens

- If you allow some screen time, practice math by planning viewing times.
- Read program schedules together to see numbers in action.

Final Thought on Early Math

Real math happens best in **real life**.

Keep it light, playful, and tied to what your child sees and touches every day.

Math doesn't have to be dry drills or endless worksheets.

If you focus on conversations, curiosity, and real-world examples, your child will grow a true understanding of numbers — and even better, a love for math that will last a lifetime.

Math Moments Checklist for Young Learners

Each day, look for easy, natural ways to invite math into your child's life. Check off what you notice or do — no pressure, just playful practice!

Did we...

- Count real objects (toys, plates, apples, socks)?
- Compare sizes, amounts, or distances?
- Add or subtract with real things (forks, chairs, snacks)?
- Talk about numbers while cooking or measuring?
- Sort items by color, shape, or size?
- Talk about time (minutes, hours, "how long until...")?
- Notice numbers on clocks, calendars, or signs?
- Play a board game that used counting, adding, or moving spaces?
- Read numbers together (books, menus, packages, price tags)?
- Talk about money, costs, or saving for something fun?
- Look for patterns (colors, shapes, rhythms)?
- Estimate or guess (How many steps to the door? How many apples in the bag?)?
- Solve a real-world problem ("How many plates do we need for dinner?")?

Bonus Math Moments:

- Read a math storybook.

- Sing a counting or number song.
- Draw simple addition or subtraction problems.
- Play a “how many more” or “what’s missing” game with toys.

Reminder:

Math is all around us.

It doesn't have to be formal lessons — little daily moments build real skills!

You are planting seeds of understanding every day.

Keep it joyful, light, and connected to real life!

50 Simple Homemade Math Games for Little Learners (Ages 3–6)

1. Egg Carton Counting

Write numbers 1–12 inside an egg carton. Drop beans or buttons to match the number.

2. Cup Stack Counting

Stack numbered cups in order to build a tower.

3. Clothespin Number Line

Clip numbered clothespins onto a string or paper line.

4. Button Sorting

Sort buttons by color, size, or number of holes.

5. Spoon Patterns

Create patterns with spoons and forks. Let your child extend the pattern.

6. Shape Hunt

Find circles, squares, rectangles, and triangles around the house.

7. Sock Match and Count

Pair up socks and count the sets.

8. Toss and Count

Toss balls into a basket and count how many land inside.

9. Count and Touch

Count toys, blocks, or spoons as you touch each one.

10. Roll and Count

Roll one die, count the dots out loud.

11. Number Hunt

Tape numbers around the house. Call out a number and find it.

12. Snack Math

Count crackers, raisins, or cereal pieces during snack time.

13. Big vs. Small

Compare household objects: "Which is bigger?" "Which is smaller?"

14. Find That Number

Ask your child to find 5 toys, then 8 toys, etc.

15. Jump to the Number

Lay out numbered plates or papers. Jump to the correct number.

16. Color and Count

Sort crayons or markers by color, then count them.

17. Puzzle Counting

Count puzzle pieces while building a simple puzzle.

18. Story Problems

Make up mini story problems at the table or in the car.

19. Calendar Counting

Mark off days and count down to a special event.

20. Board Game Counting

Play board games that involve dice and counting spaces.

21. How Many Steps?

Estimate and then count how many steps it takes to get somewhere.

22. Set the Table Math

How many plates, forks, and cups are needed for dinner?

23. Measure with Hands or Feet

How many hands long is the table? How many feet long?

24. Stack and Count Blocks

Stack blocks or cups and count as you go.

25. Race to 10

Roll a die and add until you reach 10 (or 20!).

26. Toy Graphing

Sort toys into groups (cars, animals, dolls) and see which group is biggest.

27. Coin Sort and Count

Sort pennies, nickels, dimes, and count them.

28. Number Hopscotch

Draw a hopscotch board with chalk or tape indoors and jump to numbers.

29. Number Bingo

Create a simple bingo board with numbers. Cross them off as you call them out.

30. Pattern Bracelets

Make a bracelet with beads or cereal pieces in a repeating pattern.

31. Tiny Snack Patterns

Lay out crackers or fruit snacks in repeating color or shape patterns.

32. Estimate and Check

Guess how many beans are in a jar, then count to see.

33. Water Pouring

Practice pouring water between containers of different sizes.

34. Matching Games

Flip over number cards and match pairs.

35. Make a Clock

Use a practice clock to show different times ("What time do we eat?").

36. Time Me!

Use a timer to time how fast they can pick up 10 toys or jump 5 times.

37. Draw and Number

Draw 3 circles, 5 squares, 2 triangles. Count as you go.

38. Laundry Counting

Count shirts, socks, or towels while folding laundry.

39. Bean Toss Numbers

Label bowls or baskets with numbers. Toss beans and match the number.

40. Weather Graph

Track sunny, rainy, cloudy days on a simple graph for a month.

41. Hand Trace Math

Trace your child's hand and count fingers. Draw hands showing numbers.

42. Lego Patterns

Use Legos to make color patterns or towers of 5, 10, etc.

43. Grocery Store Math

Help bag produce and count fruits or veggies.

44. Snack Addition

Give 3 crackers, add 2 more, count the new total.

45. Matching Socks Race

Set a timer and race to match socks as fast as possible.

46. How Many Left?

Start with 5 cookies, eat 2. How many are left?

47. Real Money Store

Set up a pretend store with prices and have your child "buy" items with real or play money.

48. Counting Nature Walk

Find and count rocks, leaves, sticks, or flowers.

49. Tally Marks

Draw tally marks for things you see — like counting cars that drive by.

50. Which is More?

Hold two piles of blocks or crackers. Ask: "Which pile has more?"

Many Simple Games to Practice Real Life Everyday Math.

Gentle Reminders:

- 5–10 minutes a day is enough!

- Focus on smiles, movement, talking — not drills.
- Real life math builds deep understanding naturally!

Step 4

First Grade Overview

Math goals for first grade can vary depending on the curriculum or resources you use — and that's okay!

There's no one perfect plan every child must follow.

Instead of worrying about strict schedules, think of this year as a guide to help your child **grow steadily and confidently** in basic math skills.

If you've already spent time building real-world number sense in preschool and kindergarten, you'll probably find your child naturally ready for much of this material — and maybe even ahead in some areas.

Use this year to build strong, practical math skills — without the pressure.

What to Focus on in First Grade Math

Numbers

- Counting confidently up to 100.
- Understanding what numbers mean (not just reciting them!).
- Recognizing place value basics (knowing the difference between ones, tens, etc.).
- Pointing to the fourth person in line, counting groups of objects, reading numbers around them.

Groups and Early Multiplication Ideas

- Grouping objects by 2s, 5s, and 10s using real objects like buttons, coins, or dominoes.
- Beginning to understand concepts like "How many groups of five?" naturally through play.

Measurement

- Reading clocks (start with hours first, then move to half-hours).
- Using measuring tools like rulers, cups, scales in daily life.
- Learning about money — handling real coins (pennies, nickels, dimes).

Vocabulary Growth

- Expanding math language: bigger, smaller, taller, shorter, longer, heavier, lighter.
- Talking about shapes, sizes, patterns, and comparing objects.

+ Addition and – Subtraction

- Adding and subtracting numbers within 10 easily.
- Understanding what it means to "take away" or "add more" using real objects.
- Moving gradually into sums up to 20 if your child is ready.

Notation

- Learning to write basic number sentences (e.g., $4 + 2 = 6$).
- Seeing math not just as spoken but written in simple forms.

First Grade Teaching Tips

- Stay hands-on: use blocks, beans, pennies, measuring cups — real objects make math stick.
- Keep lessons short (10–15 minutes a day is powerful at this age).
- Talk about numbers naturally in daily conversations.
- If you use a workbook, keep it light — the goal is understanding, not page completion.
- If your child already knows a skill, move forward. If not, slow down. Flexibility is key.

Remember: **it's better to go slowly and master skills** than to rush through material and cause frustration.

Real-Life Activities for Practicing First Grade Math

Here are some easy, everyday ways to practice math skills at home:

- Play matching games like dominoes, memory cards, or simple board games.
- Use snack time to divide items equally ("How many crackers do we each get?").

- Sort laundry by color or size while counting items.
 - Measure ingredients while baking (half cups, full cups, tablespoons).
 - Follow directions for simple crafts (counting pieces, measuring, comparing sizes).
 - Play store with real coins and prices.
 - Plan small trips using maps, measuring distance by counting blocks or miles.
 - Talk about time during daily activities (setting timers, reading clocks together).
-

50 Fun and Simple Math Games and Activities

1. Roll and Add – Roll two dice and add the numbers together.
2. Roll and Subtract – Roll two dice and subtract the smaller number from the bigger.
3. Number Hunt – Hide numbers around the house and have them find and put them in order.
4. Bean Bag Toss Math – Toss bean bags into baskets labeled with numbers and add up points.
5. Grocery Store Math – Pretend to buy items and use play money to pay.
6. Number Line Hop – Tape a number line on the floor; hop to solve problems.
7. Shape Scavenger Hunt – Find circles, squares, rectangles, and triangles around the house.
8. Build a Number Tower – Stack blocks to match a number you call out.
9. Pattern Chains – Make color or shape patterns with beads, cereal, or paper links.
10. Math Memory Match – Match addition facts to their answers (like $3+4$ matches 7).
11. Story Problem Drawing – Listen to a story problem and draw it out.
12. Ball Toss Skip Counting – Toss a ball back and forth while skip counting by 2s, 5s, or 10s.
13. Measuring Hunt – Find things that are longer than your arm or shorter than your shoe.
14. Sock Sorting – Match and count socks, then sort by size or color.
15. Tally Mark Race – Race to 20 tally marks using dice rolls.

16. Cup Stack Math – Solve a math problem to earn a cup; stack into a tower.
17. Shape Building Challenge – Build different shapes out of popsicle sticks.
18. Calendar Math – Use a calendar to find dates, count how many days until a birthday, etc.
19. Race to 100 – Roll a die and move up a number chart to 100.
20. Clock Bingo – Draw clock faces showing different times and match them during Bingo.
21. Build a Graph – Graph favorite colors, foods, or toys using stickers or tally marks.
22. Money Sort – Sort real or play coins by type and size.
23. Addition Bowling – Roll a ball to knock down pins; add how many fell.
24. Magic Number Hat – Pull numbers from a hat and add or subtract them.
25. Estimate and Count – Guess how many beans in a jar, then count to check.
26. Hopscotch Math – Write math problems in each hopscotch square.
27. Dice War – Each player rolls a die; whoever has the higher number wins.
28. Penny Toss – Toss pennies into bowls labeled with numbers; add the scores.
29. Cooking Fractions – Measure and talk about $\frac{1}{2}$ cups, $\frac{1}{4}$ cups, and simple parts while baking.
30. Math Story Time – Read math-themed picture books and talk about the math ideas in the stories.
31. Play Store – Set up a pretend "store" and practice counting out exact money.
32. Measuring With Feet – Walk heel-to-toe across the room and count how many "feet" long it is.
33. Telling Time Game – Move clock hands to match the time you say aloud.
34. Flashlight Find It – Shine a flashlight on numbers or math facts taped to the wall.
35. Guess My Number – Give clues like "I'm bigger than 10 but smaller than 20."
36. Domino Math – Add up the two sides of each domino.
37. Build Shapes With String – Lay string on the floor to create large shapes.

38. Water Bottle Bowling Math – Add or subtract the number of bottles knocked down.
39. Make Your Own Board Game – Create a path game where solving problems moves you forward.
40. Greater Than, Less Than Hunt – Compare numbers around the house.
41. Candy Bar Graph – Sort candies by color and graph them.
42. What's Missing? – Lay out numbers 1-20, take one away, and guess which one is missing.
43. Tug of War Math – Solve a problem to move closer to winning the "tug of war."
44. Color by Number Facts – Create a coloring page where certain sums are different colors.
45. Sock Money Counting – Put coins in socks; feel them and guess the amount before checking.
46. Musical Math Chairs – Play music, stop it, and solve a math problem taped to a chair.
47. Weather Chart Math – Track sunny, cloudy, and rainy days and graph the results.
48. Clothespin Number Line – Clip clothespins onto a string in number order.
49. Pizza Fractions – Cut a paper pizza into slices to show halves, thirds, and fourths.
50. Mystery Bag Counting – Put objects in a bag, guess how many by feeling, then count to check.

Encouragement for the Parent

First grade math doesn't need to be complicated.

It's about giving your child plenty of real experiences with numbers, patterns, measurements, and simple calculations — all at a pace that fits them.

If you feel the need to add a little more structure, I've included a free download of 36 weeks of simple math worksheets (three days per week) to gently guide your practice.

Remember: worksheets are there to support you — not to overload your child. If your child is tired of writing numbers or feeling frustrated, it's perfectly okay to pause and take a break. Math at this age should stay joyful and relaxed.

The real goal is steady exposure, hands-on play, and building confidence over time. You are providing a rich and meaningful foundation simply by talking about math during everyday life and doing small activities together.

At the end of the year, you can use the First Grade Math Skills Checklist to help you see which areas your child has mastered — and which ones may need a little more time and practice.

You're doing a wonderful job — trust the process, keep it fun, and enjoy this season of learning together!

Step 5

Second Grade Math Overview

Every second-grade year starts with one important reminder: Children often need time to review and strengthen what they learned in first grade — and that's completely normal! Rather than rushing ahead, it's wise to **gently review basic skills** like addition, subtraction, measuring, and number games at the start of the year. This early time of refreshing will set your child up for faster, more confident growth later on.

In second grade, we continue to build on the first-grade foundation, aiming to **strengthen** and **expand** key math skills — not to overwhelm with speed or pressure.

It's also important to remember:

If your child learned to count to 100 in first grade, we don't suddenly expect them to count to 200 now. Second-grade math is about practicing and mastering numbers up to 200 little by little, while diving deeper into new ideas like grouping, measurement, fractions, and basic problem solving.

As with first grade, you don't need fancy workbooks to teach these skills. A little bit of structured practice, mixed with plenty of real-life application, is the best combination. Focus on real understanding — not just worksheets.

Second Grade Math Knowledge and Skills

Numbers

- Read, write, and count numbers up to at least 200.
- Recognize and use ordinal numbers (first, second, third) up to "tenth."
- Some children may also naturally extend their skills up to numbers like 139 or higher — that's wonderful, but not required.

Place Value

- Begin to understand tens and ones.
- Recognize that numbers like 23 are made of "2 tens and 3 ones."
- This is just an introduction, setting the stage for more formal place value work in third grade.

Groups and Counting by Sets

- Count by tens and fives up to at least 30.
- Some children will count by twos, fives, and tens all the way to 100 or beyond.
- Use real objects like sticks, blocks, coins, and games to make grouping visual and fun.

Measurement

- Understand time in hours and half-hours on an analog clock.
- Compare and measure lengths in inches and feet (no fractions needed yet).
- Get familiar with everyday measurements like cup, pint, quart, and dozen.
- Handle coins like pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters.

Vocabulary and Math Language

- Understand words like *subtract*, *minus*, *plus*, *add*, and *equals*.
- Use comparison words like *longer*, *shorter*, *heavier*, *lighter*, *more*, *less*.
- Practice directional language: left/right, top/bottom.

Fractions

- Learn simple fractions like $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, and sometimes $\frac{1}{3}$.
- Experience fractions through real objects like cutting sandwiches or candy bars — no written fraction work is needed yet!

Addition

- Confidently add two numbers up to sums of 12.
- Some children will begin adding three small numbers together.
- Start to notice vertical addition (stacking numbers) as a way to add more efficiently.

Subtraction

- Subtract smaller numbers and find what's left.

- Learn to "think backward" — if you know the answer, can you find the missing number?
- Children ready for more can try two-digit subtraction without carrying.

Multiplication and Division Foundations

- Begin exploring the ideas of "groups of" (times) and "sharing evenly" (division).
- Practice these ideas through real play (bundles of sticks, groups of blocks) rather than worksheets.

Problem Solving

- Start solving simple story problems by listening carefully and figuring out if they need to add, subtract, or compare.
- Talk about strategies out loud and use drawings to show thinking.

Homemade Math Games for Second Grade Learning

You don't need expensive programs or fancy apps to teach your child math at this age. Simple, playful activities teach skills even better — and keep learning joyful!

50 Fun and Simple Math Games

1. Roll and Add – Roll two dice and add the numbers together.
2. Roll and Subtract – Roll two dice and subtract the smaller from the bigger.
3. Number Hunt – Hide numbers around the house to find and put in order.
4. Bean Bag Toss – Toss into baskets labeled with numbers and add up points.
5. Grocery Store Math – Pretend shopping using real coins.
6. Number Line Hop – Hop along a taped number line to solve problems.
7. Shape Hunt – Find circles, squares, and rectangles around the house.

8. Tower Building – Stack blocks to match a number you call out.
9. Pattern Chains – Make repeating patterns with cereal or beads.
10. Math Memory Match – Match addition facts to their sums.
11. Story Problem Drawing – Draw pictures to solve word problems.
12. Skip Count Ball Toss – Toss a ball while skip counting by 2s, 5s, or 10s.
13. Measuring Hunt – Find objects longer than your arm or shorter than a shoe.
14. Sock Sorting – Match socks and count totals.
15. Tally Mark Races – Use dice rolls to race to 20 tallies.
16. Cup Stack Math – Earn a cup for each problem solved and build a tower.
17. Shape Building – Create shapes with popsicle sticks or toothpicks.
18. Calendar Math – Find today's date and count days to a special event.
19. Race to 100 – Roll dice and move markers on a number chart.
20. Clock Bingo – Match drawn clock times to the correct clock face.
21. Graph It – Survey family members' favorite colors or foods and graph the results.
22. Coin Sort – Sort real coins by type.
23. Addition Bowling – Knock over pins and add up your score.
24. Magic Number Hat – Pick numbers and solve addition or subtraction facts.
25. Estimate and Count – Guess how many objects are in a jar, then count to check.
26. Hopscotch Math – Solve a problem to advance in hopscotch.
27. Dice Wars – Roll dice; higher number wins.
28. Penny Toss – Toss pennies into numbered cups and add scores.
29. Cooking Fractions – Practice halves, thirds, and fourths while baking.
30. Math Story Time – Read math-focused books and talk about them.
31. Play Store – Set up a pretend store to practice making change.
32. Foot Measuring – Walk heel-to-toe and count steps to measure distances.
33. Tell the Time Game – Move clock hands to match the time you call out.
34. Flashlight Find It – Find hidden math problems using a flashlight.
35. Guess My Number – Play "hot and cold" with number clues.
36. Domino Math – Add up domino dots.
37. String Shapes – Create giant shapes using string on the floor.

38. Water Bottle Bowling – Subtract pins knocked down from a starting number.
39. Board Game Creation – Make a homemade math board game.
40. Greater Than, Less Than Hunt – Compare numbers you find around the house.
41. Candy Graphing – Graph different colors of candies.
42. Missing Number – Lay out a number line and remove one number; guess which is missing.
43. Math Tug of War – Solve problems to move closer to "winning" a game line.
44. Color by Number Facts – Solve facts and color pictures by the answer.
45. Sock Coin Guessing – Guess coin amounts hidden in socks.
46. Musical Math Chairs – Solve a math problem taped to a chair when the music stops.
47. Weather Charting – Track sunny, cloudy, and rainy days.
48. Number Line Clothespins – Hang numbers in order on a line.
49. Pizza Fractions – Cut a paper pizza into halves, thirds, and fourths.
50. Mystery Bag Counting – Feel inside a bag and guess the number of items.

Encouragement for the Parent

Second grade math doesn't need to be complicated. It's about giving your child plenty of real experiences with numbers, patterns, measurements, and simple calculations — all at a pace that fits them.

If you feel the need to add a little more structure, I've included a free download of 36 weeks of simple math worksheets (three days per week) to gently guide your practice.

Remember: worksheets are there to support you — not to overload your child. If your child is tired of writing numbers or feeling frustrated, it's perfectly okay to stop and take a break. Math at this age should stay joyful and relaxed. The real goal is steady exposure, hands-on play, and building confidence over time. At the end of the year, you can use the Second Grade Math Skills Checklist to help you see which areas your child has mastered — and which ones may need a little more practice.

You’re doing a wonderful job — trust the process, keep it fun, and enjoy this season of learning together!

All Things Language

Step 1

The Writing Method that Works in Real Life

The Gentle Power of the Natural Learning Method

As a parent, you may not realize it, but you've already been your child's most effective language teacher. Just listen to how much your little one has picked up simply by being with you. By age five or six, they're speaking in full sentences, asking thoughtful questions, and even telling you wild stories—without a single formal lesson.

That's not a small thing. That's the power of what I call the natural learning method. And it's what we're going to use to help your child grow into a confident, capable writer.

Think about it this way—if you were dropped into a foreign country with no lessons but full immersion, you'd eventually start picking things up just by listening, watching, and trying. That's how your child learned to speak. And now, we're going to take that same powerful approach and apply it to writing.

How the Natural Method Works

This isn't a new trend or a fancy educational program. It's the same timeless method great writers have always used—starting with what they love, copying what works, and building skill through meaningful, real-world use.

When children begin school, though, we often replace that natural process with textbooks and drills. But the truth is, the method of learning through imitation, observation, and doing is still the most effective—and it's how most of us learned to speak in the first place.

So instead of relying only on grammar rules and worksheets, this method focuses on listening, copying, dictation, rewriting, and gradually forming writing skills through real examples and repetition.

How to Do a Lesson

Here's what a natural writing lesson might look like in the early years:

- Your child starts by tracing their name or copying a simple sentence.
- Eventually, they move to copying full sentences from books or dictation.
- Over time, they begin to write from memory, improve structure, and add their own thoughts.

Writers like Jack London and Benjamin Franklin taught themselves this way—by reading good writing, copying it by hand, and eventually using it as a springboard for their own ideas.

This works because it mirrors how children learn to talk: first listening, then repeating, then creating.

A Gentle Progression

To help guide you, here's a simple progression of writing exercises, moving from easy to more advanced:

1. Trace or copy a single letter or word.
2. Copy a sentence or two from a model.
3. Rewrite a sentence from memory, checking for accuracy.
4. Dictate a sentence and have your child write it.
5. Dictate a new sentence your child hasn't seen. Compare and edit.
6. Write a paragraph from memory after hearing it several times.
7. Read and copy a full paragraph, then rewrite it in their own words.
8. Study a passage they love. Talk about what makes it good.
9. Write their own version using the same structure or idea.
10. Dictate short essays, stories, or personal letters. Encourage creativity.

These exercises help children become confident writers without pressure. You're giving them the tools and space to grow naturally, just like they did with speaking.

Why It Works

This approach works because it starts with the whole—the meaning—rather than isolated parts. Your child hears and sees real writing in context before breaking it down into grammar, spelling, and sentence structure.

Grammar isn't ignored—it's learned along the way. Kids start noticing punctuation, capital letters, and patterns in word use as they go. And because they're seeing it used in real writing, they remember it.

From Whole to Part (Not the Other Way Around)

Curriculum developers often focus on breaking things down into small steps. But with writing, it's better to start with meaning and work backward. Instead of memorizing noun lists, children copy and understand full thoughts. If a sentence mentions General Washington, you can talk about the person and the noun at the same time.

By starting with complete thoughts, you build understanding. This creates a stronger foundation for learning the grammar rules later on—and they'll remember them better because they were attached to something meaningful.

It Encourages Creativity

Some worry that copying or following models stifles creativity. But actually, it does the opposite. By writing from good examples, your child absorbs the rhythms, structure, and beauty of excellent writing—and then uses those tools to create their own work.

Eventually, they'll move from copying to creating naturally. And when they're ready, they'll write their own stories, letters, or reports using what they've learned.

One of the best things you can do is encourage your child to write about what matters to them. "What I Did on My Summer Vacation" and "If I Had a

Million Dollars” are great prompts, but so are stories about family, adventures, or even silly made-up tales. What matters is that they feel confident in expressing themselves.

A Track Record You Can Trust

This isn’t a theory. It’s how generations of students learned before worksheets and workbooks took over. Kids used to learn by reading good writing, copying it, and slowly mastering the art of communication. It worked then—and it still works now.

Families who are returning to this method are seeing beautiful results. Kids enjoy writing again. They don’t dread the workbook. And they’re learning to express their thoughts clearly and confidently.

So if someone ever asks, “But won’t this hold back their creativity?” you can confidently answer:

“The natural method leads to more creativity, not less.”

Step 2

Grammar Comes Later (And That's Okay)

A Gentle Path to Language Learning by Grade

In most schools, grammar instruction begins early and tends to dominate language lessons. But as homeschooling parents, we have the unique freedom to teach language the way children naturally learn—by using it, hearing it, seeing it, and slowly growing into it.

In our home, we don't believe that early grammar drills are the secret to great writing. In fact, research and experience show us that children become strong communicators when they're allowed to focus first on speaking well and writing with meaning. Grammar can come later—once they have a reason to care.

Here's a general look at what language learning might look like in first through third grade, using a relaxed and natural approach. You won't see rigid grammar worksheets or heavy rule memorization here. Instead, you'll see connection, creativity, and conversation.

First Grade: Building Language Through Life

- **Speaking:** Encourage full thoughts. Let your child tell you stories, share their ideas, and ask questions. Model good speech by using kind words and complete sentences.
- **Listening:** Read aloud often. Focus on stories, poems, and picture books that build vocabulary and spark imagination. Have your child follow simple directions and repeat back what they understand.
- **Writing:** Begin with copying simple sentences or dictating what your child says. Let them write about something they care about—what they saw outside, what they made for lunch, or their favorite animal.
- **Mechanics (Light Introduction):** Talk about punctuation in everyday writing. When you send a birthday card or write a note, mention periods and capital letters casually. No drills needed.

Second Grade: Growing in Expression

- **Speaking:** Help your child grow more expressive. Encourage them to explain how something works, describe what they're feeling, or retell a favorite memory.
- **Listening:** As you read aloud, talk about the story. Ask "Why do you think that happened?" or "What might happen next?" Build comprehension naturally.
- **Writing:** Continue using copywork or guided dictation. Let your child write short letters, make lists, or describe events. Keep the tone fun and pressure-free.
- **Vocabulary & Usage:** Introduce words gently as they arise. If your child says "goed," you can smile and say, "That's a good try! The word is actually 'went.'" Learning happens through use.

Third Grade: Writing with Purpose

- **Speaking:** Encourage clear explanations. Practice giving instructions, telling stories in order, or answering questions fully.
- **Listening:** Read longer stories. Ask for summaries, predictions, or their opinion about characters. Help them grow in attention and understanding.
- **Writing:** By now, your child may be ready to write small paragraphs, simple stories, or letters. Let them choose topics they care about. The more meaningful the writing, the more willing they'll be to do it.
- **Mechanics (Naturally Introduced):** As your child writes, talk about punctuation and sentence structure gently. Instead of formal grammar lessons, show them how to fix mistakes as they go. For example, if they forget a capital letter, say, "Let's make that name stand out—what do we do with names?" Then help them correct it.

A Note About Grammar

We will not be using formal grammar curriculum in these early years. That doesn't mean grammar is ignored—it just means it's learned naturally, in context, when it makes sense.

Children who read and write frequently will slowly absorb sentence patterns, parts of speech, punctuation, and vocabulary. When they're older—and when they have something meaningful to write about—we can introduce grammar terms if needed.

But for now, let them enjoy the gift of language. Let them love words and ideas. Let them learn freely and deeply, without worrying about whether they've diagrammed a sentence or passed a grammar test.

Remember, freedom in learning doesn't mean a lack of structure. It means choosing a path that builds confidence, curiosity, and real skill—without rushing or pushing too soon.

Step 3

Spelling with Purpose, Not Pressure

Teaching Spelling Naturally and Gently

In our home, spelling isn't a separate subject with tests and pressure. It's something that grows slowly and meaningfully through reading, writing, and conversation. Just like learning to speak, spelling takes time, repetition, and purpose—not drills or fear of mistakes.

When we treat spelling as something to master early, we often take away a child's joy in writing. They get stuck worrying about getting every letter right instead of sharing their thoughts and stories. But when we let spelling come alongside natural learning, we build confident, capable writers who aren't afraid to try.

Why We Wait on Formal Spelling

Young children are already working hard learning how to:

- Recognize letters and sounds
- Form letters correctly
- Use punctuation and spacing
- Capitalize properly
- Express ideas clearly

Adding spelling rules and memorized word lists too early often leads to frustration. Instead, we suggest saving structured spelling instruction until around fourth grade, when your child is reading fluently and writing more regularly. Until then, you can gently correct mistakes as they arise and teach spelling as needed in the moment.

Two Helpful Approaches to Teaching Spelling

There are two simple, effective ways to teach spelling:

1. The Phonics-Based Approach

This method teaches spelling through sound patterns and letter combinations. As your child learns a new sound, you gently teach them to:

- Read words with that sound
- Write those words
- Recognize that same sound in everyday reading

For example: If you're learning the sound of /x/, try words like box, fix, mix, ax, then stretch into axle, extra, excuse once they're ready.

You can create little spelling families—groups of words that share the same sound or ending. Kids love noticing patterns! This helps them start to "hear" spelling more naturally.

Here are a few gentle spelling rules you can introduce over time:

- Short vowel rule: CVC words like cat, win, hop usually have a short vowel.
- Silent e rule: Adding an e changes the vowel to long: hop → hope, bit → bite.
- Double consonants: In short vowel words like hop, double the consonant when adding endings: hopping.
- Drop the silent e before -ing/-ed: make → making, ride → riding.
- i before e except after c or when sounding like /ay/: believe, receive, neighbor.
- y to i before adding endings (when y follows a consonant): happy → happiest.
- ough makes many sounds: though, rough, through. Just learn them naturally as they arise.

To support this phonics-based method, I've included a free printable resource with word families and gentle spelling rules you can review each week. You'll find it in the Free Downloads section of this book.

2. The Common Word Approach

The English language includes a handful of everyday words your child will see again and again—words like the, said, have, from, was. Rather than memorizing big lists, let them absorb these words through copywork, dictation, and their own writing.

Did you know that just 100 words make up the majority of what we write every day?

Instead of memorizing obscure words, focus on the most commonly used ones. These are perfect for:

- Reading aloud
- Simple copywork
- Dictation practice
- Spotting during daily conversation

I've included a printable list of the 100 most commonly used English words in the Free Downloads section. You can also find this resource on my website. It's a great tool for gentle review, games, and word wall activities.

Natural Spelling Methods You Can Use

Rather than using a workbook or formal spelling program, try one of these relaxed, effective methods:

1. **One-on-One Word Talks** If your child misspells a word, gently correct it in conversation. Have them write the correct version once or twice, then continue writing. These small moments add up.
2. **Mini Lessons from Real Writing** Use your child's own stories, journals, or letters as a springboard. When you notice a recurring mistake, pause and explore that word's spelling together.
3. **Word Walls and Personal Lists** Keep a mini spelling journal or whiteboard with common words your child is learning. Add to it as

needed—not weekly or by force, but when the word matters to them.

4. **Build Sound Lists** Have your child collect words with the same spelling sound (like ar words: car, start, farm, alarm). Create a notebook section for each pattern.
5. **Use Movement and Play** Write spelling words on index cards and:
 - Lay them on the floor and jump to the correct one
 - Tape them to stairs and read aloud as they climb
 - Turn it into a relay or matching game
6. **Let Them "Discover the Rule"** After showing two columns of words (like hop / hope, bit / bite), ask them what they notice. Often, they will spot the pattern before you need to explain it.

Spelling Without Stress

The goal isn't to be perfect. It's to build confidence, foster awareness, and give our children the tools to grow at their own pace.

- Don't test every week.
- Don't make spelling feel like a punishment.
- Use mistakes as teaching moments, not proof of failure.

Let spelling grow naturally alongside writing, reading, and curiosity.

In Summary: Spelling the Gentle Way

- Let reading and writing do most of the teaching.
- Focus on common, useful words in real-life use.
- Offer correction kindly and in the moment.
- Avoid heavy spelling lists and formal programs in the early grades.
- Use conversation, observation, and joy.

In your homeschool, you have the freedom to wait, to simplify, and to trust the process. Spelling doesn't need to be another subject to fear. It can be a natural outcome of loving words—and using them every day.

Simple & Fun Ways to Practice the 100 Most Common Words

1. Copywork from Real Life

Choose 3–5 words from the list each week and have your child:

- Copy them in neat handwriting
- Use them in short sentences they create
- Write them on sticky notes and post around the house

Tip: Keep it short and sweet—just a few words per day.

2. Word Hunt in Books

Pick a picture book or early reader and say,

“Let’s see how many times we can find the word *the* today!”

Have your child highlight or point to the common words as they read.

3. Write a Letter or Note

Let them write a short letter to a grandparent or friend using as many common words as possible. Help them check and correct spellings together.

4. Word Matching Game

Make a set of word cards (print or handwrite them). Play:

- **Memory match:** Match word-to-word
- **Sight and say:** Flip over a card and read it out loud
- **Build a sentence:** Pick 3–4 cards and form a silly sentence

5. Cut-and-Paste Word Collage

Have your child cut words out of magazines, newspapers, or printouts. Glue them onto a poster titled “Words We See Everywhere!”

6. Rainbow Words

Let them write the same word using a different crayon or marker color for each letter. This helps build muscle memory while having fun.

7. Say It, Spell It, Clap It

Say the word aloud, spell it together while clapping each letter, then say the full word again.

Example: *"Said. S-A-I-D. Said!"*

Use jumping, stomping, or beanbag tossing instead of clapping for fun variations.

8. Word Box of the Week

Create a small box with 5–7 word cards each week. Use them during:

- Morning review
- Sentence building
- Reading time ("Can you spot a word from the box today?")

9. Build It with Blocks or Magnets

Use letter tiles, Scrabble pieces, or magnetic letters to build high-frequency words.

10. Make It Musical

Sing the words to a familiar tune like "Twinkle Twinkle" or "Bingo." You can make up rhymes or silly songs with the word in it.

BONUS: Common Word BINGO

Make a simple BINGO board with common words in each square. Call out the word and have your child find and mark it. Add small rewards or prizes if you'd like!

Step 4

From Copywork to Confidence: A Gentle Guide to Writing

Teaching Language Through Real Books and Gentle Lessons

Simple Lessons That Grow with Your Child

You don't need a formal curriculum to teach language well. You simply need meaningful words, a bit of structure, and a child who's ready to grow. In our home, we use real books—classics, Scripture, poetry, and even library favorites—to create beautiful, simple writing lessons that build confidence and connection over time.

This chapter offers a flexible way to teach writing, spelling, grammar, and sentence structure—without worksheets or endless rules. The lessons are short, meaningful, and can be easily adapted for children in the early grades.

Why Use Real Books?

Children learn best through words that matter to them. When we use literature, rhymes, or familiar stories, they engage with the content more deeply. They begin to **notice how language works**—where commas go, how sentences are built, and what good writing feels like. And they begin to imitate it naturally.

You can pull short passages from:

- A Bible verse
- A favorite storybook or library chapter
- A poem or nursery rhyme
- A fable or familiar family read-aloud

Even a single sentence can teach spelling, punctuation, structure, and meaning—all at once.

A Gentle 3-Day Lesson Rhythm

Here's a simple routine you can reuse with any passage:

Day 1 – Read & Talk

Read the sentence or short paragraph aloud. Ask a gentle question:

“What do you think this means?” or “Why do you think the author said it that way?”

Day 2 – Copywork

Your child copies the passage carefully. This builds handwriting, attention to detail, and awareness of punctuation.

Day 3 – Dictation

Read the same passage aloud slowly, and have your child write it from memory. Then check it together and kindly fix any mistakes.

Optional: Chat about spelling or grammar as it comes up—keep it natural and light.

Grade-Level Suggestions (Kindergarten–3rd Grade)

These ideas help you see how lessons can grow gently with your child. You don't need to follow them exactly. Go at your own pace!

Kindergarten – 1st Grade

Start with short, familiar sentences, rhymes, and Scripture. Choose selections with rhythm or repetition.

Examples:

- “Jesus loves me, this I know.”
- “Jack and Jill went up the hill...”
- “I am Sam. Sam I am.” (*Green Eggs and Ham*)

Skills to focus on:

- Proper letter formation
- Copying short lines

- Recognizing sight words
- Beginning dictation (just a few words)

2nd Grade

Move into single-sentence fables, Bible verses, or lines from early readers and chapter books.

Examples:

- “The fox jumped but could not reach the grapes.”
- “The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” (Psalm 23:1)
- Lines from *Frog and Toad*, *Little Bear*, or *Ribsy*

Skills to build:

- Neat paragraph copying
- Full sentence dictation
- Punctuation and capitalization
- Light grammar discussion (like verbs or rhyming)

3rd Grade

Introduce longer sentences or short paragraphs from real books. Let your child practice full dictation and discuss parts of the passage.

Examples:

- “Heidi looked up at the snowy mountains and smiled.” (*Heidi*)
- “Benjamin Franklin once said, ‘A republic... if you can keep it.’”
- Passages from *Charlotte’s Web*, *Aesop’s Fables*, or Psalms

Skills to focus on:

- Copying longer sections
- Dictation with punctuation

- Identifying sentence types
- Gentle editing and rewriting

Sample Passages for Use (Public Domain & Easy to Start With)

Mother Goose (Kindergarten–1st Grade)

Jack Sprat could eat no fat.
His wife could eat no lean.
And so, between them both,
They licked the platter clean.

Use it to explore rhyming, pacing, or capital letters.

Aesop’s Fable (2nd–3rd Grade)

“One day a hungry fox jumped up to steal a big bunch of purple grapes. The fox jumped and jumped, but the grapes were too high. He could not reach them. At last he said, ‘I can see that those grapes are sour.’”

Great for teaching quotation marks and storytelling rhythm.

Bible Verse (1st–3rd Grade)

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.” — Psalm 23:1
Simple, comforting, and rich for discussion.

Heidi by Johanna Spyri (3rd Grade)

“The sun was just ready to go down behind the mountains, and Heidi sat quietly on the ground, gazing at the bluebells glowing in the evening light.”

Excellent for descriptive writing and talking about imagery.

Benjamin Franklin Quote (2nd–3rd Grade)

“A lady asked Benjamin Franklin, ‘Well, doctor, what have we got—a republic or a monarchy?’ The wise old man replied, ‘A republic... if you can keep it.’”

A springboard for discussion, civics, and copywork.

Teaching Tips for Real Life

If your child loves a specific book, don't hesitate to pull from it! Use sentences from *The Boxcar Children*, *Amelia Bedelia*, *Bear Snores On*—whatever lights them up. Real writing comes from real interest.

- Let them choose a favorite line to copy.
- Read it together, then try writing it blind.
- Chat about what words mean or what makes it sound good.

What If I'm Teaching More Than One Child?

Keep it simple! Use the same passage for everyone, but scale expectations:

- A younger child might copy the first sentence.
- An older one might write the whole thing from dictation.
- You can even have them quiz or edit each other's work!

Final Thoughts

The beauty of this method is in its simplicity. You're not rushing. You're not testing. You're teaching language in a way that connects deeply and makes sense.

You don't need a box set. You need:

- A book
- A pencil
- A moment each day
- And a heart for helping your child grow

With these tools, you're already giving them the strongest start.

Step 5

Writing with the Word: Using Scripture to Teach Language Naturally

Why Use the Bible for Writing Practice?

The Bible is one of the richest sources of beautiful, meaningful language available to us. It's filled with truth, rhythm, clarity, and wisdom—making it a powerful tool for teaching writing naturally. These verses help children develop strong language habits while also strengthening their hearts.

You can teach grammar, punctuation, capitalization, vocabulary, sentence flow, and even spelling—just from writing Bible verses consistently. And what better way for children to absorb language than by copying and meditating on God's Word?

Rather than assigning worksheets or memorizing rules, children learn to write well by writing something *worth* writing.

How to Use Bible Verses in Writing Lessons

You can follow a simple 3-day rhythm, similar to copywork or dictation practice:

Day 1 – Read & Talk

Choose one Bible sentence and read it aloud together. Ask, “What does this verse mean to you?” or “Why is this verse important?”

Day 2 – Copywork

Your child copies the verse neatly, paying attention to capital letters, punctuation, spelling, and spacing.

Day 3 – Dictation

You read the verse aloud slowly, and your child writes it from memory. Then gently correct and talk about any errors together.

Optional: You can discuss grammar naturally by asking questions like:

- What is the subject of this sentence?
- Can you find the verb?

- Where does the quotation start?
- Why is this word capitalized?

Skill Levels by Writing Confidence

These verses are grouped by general difficulty level, starting with short, encouraging sentences and progressing to longer ones with more complex grammar or vocabulary.

Easy – Best for Beginners

(Short, clear structure and vocabulary)

- "I love the Lord." (Psalm 116:1)
- "Love one another." (1 John 4:7)
- "Be kind to one another." (Ephesians 4:32)
- "You must be born again." (John 3:7)
- "Let your light shine before others." (Matthew 5:16)
- "Trust in the Lord with all your heart." (Proverbs 3:5)

Medium – For Growing Writers

(More punctuation, prepositions, or longer ideas)

- "Believe in God, and also believe in me." (John 14:1)
- "God gives grace to the humble." (James 4:6)
- "Let us love not with words but with actions and truth." (1 John 3:18)
- "Jesus said, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life.'" (John 14:6)
- "God is our refuge and strength, always ready to help in times of trouble." (Psalm 46:1)
- "The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need." (Psalm 23:1)

Difficult – For Stronger Writers or Older Students

(Longer sentences, multiple clauses, or deeper vocabulary)

- "Do not be conformed to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." (Romans 12:2)
- "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him." (Romans 8:28)
- "The Lord your God is with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9)
- "For we live by believing and not by seeing." (2 Corinthians 5:7)
- "Speak the truth in love, growing in every way more like Christ." (Ephesians 4:15)
- "Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them." (Ephesians 4:29)

Additional Ideas

- Have your child illustrate the verse after writing it.
- Add one vocabulary word each week from the verse and look it up together.
- Practice identifying parts of speech in the sentence.
- Use the verse as a journaling prompt: "What does this verse mean to you today?"
- Challenge your older child to change the sentence structure or rewrite it in their own words (without changing the meaning).

A Note on Versions & Memorization

You can use whatever Bible version your family prefers. I've used the **New Living Translation (NLT)** for simplicity and modern language, but the **ESV** or **NIV** work beautifully too.

Don't feel pressured to memorize every verse. Let the language settle in through repetition, copywork, and gentle review. If your child does memorize it over time, that's just a bonus!

You'll find a free printable version of all these Bible copywork verses, organized by level, in the Free Downloads section on my blog.

Final Thoughts

When you use the Bible to teach writing, you're doing more than building grammar skills. You're planting truth. You're shaping hearts and minds. And you're giving your child meaningful language to carry with them for life.

So let the Word of God be the foundation for writing in your homeschool—it's the best grammar book you could ever choose.

Final Words: You Are Enough

Mama, you've made it to the end of this guide—and I hope you're leaving it not with more pressure, but with more peace.

You don't need to have all the answers. You don't need a shelf of curriculum or a strict schedule to follow. You just need a willing heart, a little consistency, and the deep love you already carry for your child.

You've seen how simple it can be to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic in a way that feels meaningful and manageable. You've learned that a rich life of learning begins at your kitchen table, during nature walks, while baking together, and through slow moments with good books and God's Word.

Homeschooling is not about doing school at home—it's about creating a life where learning is woven into everything you do.

So take what you've read, use what fits, and let go of anything that feels like a burden. Trust the process. Trust your child. And trust the Lord who called you to this.

You are doing something beautiful.

You are doing something brave.

And you are not alone.

Keep going, one gentle step at a time. You've got this.

With love and faith,

—Amy

Get all the free printables mentioned in this book at:

<https://plainandnotsoplain.com/real-learning-for-real-life-downloads/>

