

Back to School Family Guide

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Parents and caregivers have always wanted to know more about what their child is learning in school. After all, families are their child's first – and most important – teacher.

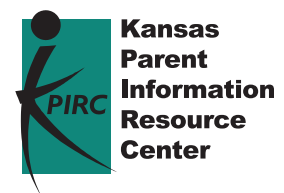
Parents, family members, grandparents, and other caregivers play a critical role in learning at home. So, we include all these people when we talk about how families can support kids.

This guide is meant to support families and students academically in literacy and math. Of course, students will be learning other subjects too, but literacy and math are the building blocks for everything else.

GRADE 1

THIS GUIDE INCLUDES

- **What Your Child Should Know & Be Able to Do** – What experts say is the most important content (knowledge and skills) for students to learn by the end of first grade.
- **Everyday Activities to Support Learning** – We've included some ways you can support your child in learning important content and skills in literacy and math.
- **Education Words** – Sometimes, you'll hear educators use a word that has a specific meaning in schools. Those words are **bolded**. Understanding those terms will help you speak the same language.
- **Tips for Talking with Teachers** – How you and your child's teacher can work together to help your child grow.
- **Tools and Resources to Help** – We've chosen a few internet resources that best match each grade's content.



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LITERACY

WHAT YOUR CHILD SHOULD KNOW AND BE ABLE TO DO



Throughout the school year, 1st grade students will spend the most time working on the following topics. They should understand them well by the end of the year.

Learning to read and write:

- Matching letters and sounds to sound out and write simple words. (This may include **inventive spelling** for writing). Students should be able to accurately decode and write all words with short vowel sounds, final -e, and common long vowel spellings.
- Recognizing, spelling, and properly using those little grammatical words that hold the language together (for example, “a”, “the”, “to”, “of”, “from”, “I”, “is”, “are”).
- Reading and rereading **decodable** words and sentences so that the reading is smooth.
- Writing in complete sentences.

Learning about the world through text:*

- Accurately asking and answering questions about stories and texts read aloud. Retelling what happened and explaining key ideas.
- Figuring out the meaning of unknown words by using pictures, context, glossaries, etc. (Children may need support with pronunciation.)
- Showing something new they have learned from a text or about a topic. This can be in any form: speaking and conversation, illustrations, letters, journals, stories, posters, or sentences on the page.
- Using a combination of drawing and writing to describe an event in a text. Children should include a title, an introductory sentence, examples, and a conclusion sentence.

**The texts used for this purpose are often read aloud, since they are more complex than the child could read alone. But texts children can read for themselves (with support as needed) may also be used.*



EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT LEARNING

- Read aloud to your child for 20 minutes each day. Talk about what is happening in the text. Ask what they are learning.
- Pick a topic to learn about together. Read books, look online, do things together. You can help your child build knowledge and develop a love of learning.
- Listen to your child read and reread **decodable** text. Do they move from decoding sound by sound to reading that is smooth and clear? Don't have your child simply look at pictures and guess. Be sure they are working to sound out words that contain sounds and spellings that they know.
- Have your child help with real-world writing. This can include grocery lists, reminder notes, chores, etc. Be sure your child can sound out the words and write the letters they've learned represent the sounds.



MATHEMATICS

WHAT YOUR CHILD SHOULD KNOW AND BE ABLE TO DO



Throughout the school year, 1st grade students will spend the most time working on the following topics. They should understand them well by the end of the year.

- Solving addition and subtraction word problems starting within 10 and progressing to within 20. (For example, “Five apples were on the table. I ate some apples. Then there were three apples. How many apples did I eat?”)
- Adding with a sum of 20 or less, and subtracting from a number 20 or less. A common strategy for these problems is based on the number 10. (For example, to add $9 + 4$, a student might first add 1 to 9, making 10, then add the remaining 3 to 10, making 13.) When subtracting, a student may use their addition knowledge. (For example, to solve $12 - 8$, if a student knows that $8 + 4 = 12$, then taking 8 away from 12 would mean 4 remain.)
- Mentally adding with a sum of 10 or less ($2 + 5$). Mentally subtracting with a sum of 10 or less ($8 - 4$). Students may also come to know some of these sums and differences from memory.
- Understanding what the digits mean in two-digit numbers (the number 42 refers to 4 tens and 2 ones).
- Understanding and practicing adding two, two-digit numbers by adding tens and tens and ones and ones. ($41 + 27 = 60 + 8 = 68$).
- Measuring lengths of objects by using a shorter object as a unit of length. (For example, “How many pencils long is this table leg?”)



EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT LEARNING

- As children engage with their world, ask addition and subtraction problems within 10. For example:
 - “You have three pencils in your bag, and I have six pencils in my bag. How many pencils do we have altogether?”
 - “There are six birds on the sidewalk. Some flew away. Now there are only four birds. How many birds flew away?”
 - “There are seven cookies in the green package and four cookies in the blue package. Which package has more cookies? How many more cookies does that package have?”
- Practice addition. Add ones and ones and add tens and tens for problems like $39 + 14$. Do the same thing for problems like $38 + 25$ that require making a ten using the ones. (Since $8 + 5$ is 13, the problem is the same as $30 + 20 + 13$.)
- Read books that include measurement as a topic or theme (<https://earlymath.erikson.edu/4-childrens-books-explore-measurement-concepts/>). Have your child lay objects down to compare their length. (For example, “One edge of the paper is longer than the other edge. If I place paper clips end to end along the one edge I have (this many) paper clips. That is more than when I place paper clips along the other edge. Then I need only (this many) paper clips.”)



EDUCATION WORDS



Sometimes, you'll hear educators use a word that has a specific meaning in schools. Understanding those terms will help you speak the same language!

Decodable

Decodable texts are those that are connected to sound and spelling patterns that have already been taught, so most words the students read will be ones they can decode based on what they have been taught. (For example, students who have learned the sounds /a/, /c/, and /t/ can decode "cat.")

Inventive spelling

Spelling a word using spelling attempts based on letters that the child knows to represent each sound. Accurate spelling is less important than ensuring that your child is using what they have been taught, and building up their ability to sound out words when writing.

Reading level

Teachers often determine the grade level at which a student is reading. But sometimes, children are then limited to reading texts at that level (typically a letter or number). This practice is one to be wary of, particularly if children are limited to reading only texts that are below the grade level goals, or texts that aren't **decodable** and don't match their phonics instruction.

Sight words

Sight words are any words that a child can read automatically.

TIPS FOR TALKING WITH TEACHERS

Literacy

- What are my child's strengths, and how do you use them in instruction?
- How do you select texts? Will my child see characters and topics that represent them, their background, and their identity? Will they learn new perspectives and about new and diverse characters through the texts you use in the classroom?
- What letters and sounds should my child have mastered at this point in the year? Has my child mastered these sounds? Does my child have a chance to read texts that help them practice decoding sounds they are learning? Be sure to talk about what you are seeing at home when you are helping your child.
- What topics are children learning about through reading? What should my child be able to understand and talk about as a result of what they have read?
- Is my child able to talk, draw, or write in ways that show you they understand what they are reading and learning about? If not, what challenges are they facing?
- What kind of book(s) is my child reading during independent reading? Are they limited to a specific **reading level**?





TIPS FOR TALKING WITH TEACHERS (continued)

Math



- What kinds of number problems are children learning to solve this year?
- Ask for specific updates on how your child is progressing in their understanding of the key content of the grade.
- How does my child approach challenging math tasks? What are some suggestions for me to encourage them in learning challenging content?
- What should my child be able to understand and talk about as a result of what they have learned?
- Is my child able to demonstrate to you that they understand what they are learning about? If not, what challenges are they facing?
- How can I support a positive approach to learning math?



TOOLS AND RESOURCES TO HELP



Literacy

- How to teach **sight words**
<https://www.literacyworldwide.org/blog%2Fliteracy-now%2F2016%2F06%2F23%2Fteach-ldquo-sight-words-rdquo-as-you-would-other-words>
- How to help your child read and understand
<https://www.pacer.org/pdf/ge/GE-3.pdf>
- These resources include downloadable texts and resources for beginning readers
<https://www.readingrockets.org/article/decodable-text-sources>
- What success in first grade reading looks like by the end of the year
<https://www.greatschools.org/gk/grades/1st-grade/>
- What first grade writing samples look like from the start of the year to the end
<https://www.greatschools.org/gk/category/milestones-topics/writing-samples/>
- These resources share guidance on using text sets (texts on the same topic) to promote a love of learning
<https://achievethecore.org/content/upload/Text%20Set%20Guidance.pdf>

