

Seven Steps to Reading

	Necessary Learning Interaction	Explication of Necessity	System Conditions
1	In early years of life, the child needs to be raised in a nurturing, stimulating and caring environment.	The quality of childcare and stimulation in the early years directly affects the child's imagination, curiosity, and language processing skills. Early intervention, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, is essential to address early reading deficiencies.	Parental illiteracy combined with socioeconomic deprivation result in parents being unable to provide a caring, nurturing environment to the young child. For poorer parents, access to childcare facilities is limited to state run creches and Anganwadi centers, which are inadequate in number. For children who do have access to childcare facilities, the quality of care is inadequate. Anganwadi centers and creches focus more on child health care, and not on the cognitive and linguistic development of the child.
2	The child needs access and exposure to and demonstration of reading and stimulating visual materials including books, electronic media and environmental print during the early language	At the pre-reading stage, the child requires access to visually stimulating literacy material as well as examples of reading demonstrated by adults. These allow a child to intuitively understand concepts of print such as directionality of script, holding a book, visual representation of sounds, and so on. The literacy levels of relevant others such as parents, especially mothers, has a direct impact on the literacy and academic performance of the child.	Illiteracy among adults is a factor that contributes to the poor development of basic literacy concepts among preschool age children. Children from economically weaker households do not have access to pre-primary schooling, which impacts their language and reading skills during formal schooling. Outside the home, communities lack resources such as libraries or media centers for introducing children and parents to early concepts of literacy. The problem of finding appropriate literacy materials in the community or the general environment of the child becomes more acute in hard to reach and remote areas.
3	The child needs to receive skilled guidance within a supportive, encouraging environment to develop basic reading skills ranging from phonemic association to syntactical awareness, semantics, and comprehension.	Developing proficiency in the oral and aural aspects of a language is an organic, natural process, unlike acquiring basic reading skills in the language. For a child to acquire basic reading skills that allow her or him to string together characters, words and ultimately sentences to create meaning from text, she or he requires careful, skilled guidance and a supportive, encouraging environment.	There is a lack of importance given to the teaching of reading in schools. This is reflected in the lack of a dedicated reading program in teacher training as well as the paltry amount of time dedicated to language teaching in schools. In schools, teacher student interaction, important for acquisition of basic and proficient reading skills, is impacted by various issues such as a high pupil teacher ratio and teacher responsibilities including managing multi-grade classrooms. Also, schools are often focused on completing prescribed syllabi, leaving little room to focus on the disparate skill levels and needs of children.
4	Literacy skills already acquired by the child need to be reinforced through practice and continued learning.	Core literacy and reading skills will be lost if they are not reinforced continuously over several years of a reader's early childhood. Seen in the context of school dropouts and out of school children, this poses a challenge in the retention and development of reading skills.	Certain populations of children, such as street children, working children, and girls, are less likely to be enrolled in formal schools. There are few provisions for non-formal schooling or reading programs for children who are not in school. Bridge programs exist for children who are dropouts or long term absentees, but these are few in number and often insufficient to prepare the child to return to her or his age-appropriate grade.
5	The child requires instruction and opportunity to engage in deeper interpretations of read material including literary, analytical and logical interpretations of the text.	Tapping into the child's prior knowledge is essential for him or her to go beyond literal interpretations of the text. This also allows the child to build a sense of identity and confidence, promoting individual interpretations of read material. However, teachers do not often explain the meaning of the text, which results in stunted reading comprehension skills.	High student-teacher ratio and varying levels of skills in the same classroom negatively impact the teacher-student interaction. In most classrooms, teacher-student interaction is unidirectional, with children not encouraged to develop and express their interpretations of the read material beyond the requirements of the syllabus. Children are rarely encouraged to understand read material beyond what is required as answers to textbook questions. Relating texts to the sociocultural interactions of the child does not take place, limiting the child's motivation and ability to achieve deeper interpretation of texts and involvement in reading.
6	The child at the stages of basic and proficient reading, needs access to a variety of stimulating texts on various subjects and in a range of formats.	A child at the basic and proficient reading stages requires access to a variety of stimulating reading materials in a range of formats and subjects. This helps the child build interest as well as fluency in reading, eventually leading her or him to view reading as a cognitively pleasurable activity, and not just a skill.	Making extra-curricular reading material such as books, computers, etc., available to children and encouraging them to access it is uncommon in schools as well as community spaces including homes.
7	It is essential for the child to have access to and participate in a community of reading, either through her or his peer group or across generations.	To develop reading as a skill and as a behavior, especially among children from disadvantaged and oral culture communities, children need to have access to peers and family members who indulge in and encourage reading and other literary activities. Social interactions around reading can eventually translate into a culture of reading.	Given the proportion of illiterate adults in the country, there is a dire need for community-based reading and language resources and programs that promote adult and child reading. There is also insufficient immediate incentive for parents from lower income households to encourage children to read rather than to contribute to economic and domestic requirements.