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Name:

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ALLAMA IQBAL OPEN UNIVERSITY, ISLAMABAD

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Level: Postgraduate Diploma in Early Childhood Education

Semester: Autumn 2026

Assignment No. 1 (Units 1–4)

Total Marks: 100 Pass Marks: 40

SOLVED ASSIGNMENT GUIDE

(For Study & Reference)

Note: This guide is prepared for study and reference purposes only. Students are advised to read the relevant units of the course book carefully and to write their assignments in their own words. Understanding the concepts and expressing them in your own language will earn better marks than copying any guide word for word.

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Question 1: Oral Language and Early Literacy Development (20 Marks)

Question: *Literacy development begins in the early years and is closely connected with children's language development. Explain the relationship between oral language and early literacy development. Discuss how listening, speaking, vocabulary, phonological awareness, reading, and writing support one another, with suitable examples from early childhood classrooms. (20)*

Introduction

Literacy is often described as reading and writing, but for a young child literacy begins much earlier, with the sounds, words and conversations of everyday life. Long before a child can decode a printed word or form a letter, she has been listening to voices, babbling, naming objects, asking questions, singing rhymes and telling small stories about her experiences. This spoken, or oral, language is the foundation on which all later reading and writing are built. Researchers and early childhood educators agree that children who enter school with rich oral language — a wide vocabulary, the ability to listen and understand, and confidence in speaking — learn to read and write more easily than children whose oral language is limited. Oral language and literacy are therefore not two separate subjects taught one after the other; they grow together, each feeding and strengthening the other throughout the early years.

This answer explains the relationship between oral language and early literacy development and then discusses, one by one, how listening, speaking, vocabulary, phonological awareness, reading and writing support one another. Classroom examples are given throughout, because in an early childhood setting these processes are never seen in the abstract: they are seen at the story mat, at the sand tray, in the home corner and during the ordinary talk of the school day.

Why Oral Language Comes First

A child learns language by living in it. From infancy, children hear the rhythm, sounds and sentence patterns of their home language, and they gradually learn that sounds carry meaning, that words stand for things, and that language can be used to ask, refuse, pretend, explain and persuade. By the age of three or four most children can speak in sentences, follow simple

instructions and hold a conversation, even though they cannot yet read a single word. This oral achievement is the raw material of literacy. Reading, in essence, is the task of connecting printed symbols to a language the child already knows in spoken form. If the spoken language is weak, the printed word has nothing solid to attach itself to; if the spoken language is strong, print becomes a new way of handling something familiar.

The relationship works in both directions. Talk prepares children for books, and books, once adults read them aloud, enrich talk. A child who hears stories gains new words, longer sentence structures and an understanding of how stories are organised — beginning, problem, ending — which she later uses both in her own storytelling and in her writing. Similarly, a child who is encouraged to talk about a picture book is practising comprehension, the very skill she will later need when she reads the words herself. Oral language is thus both the starting point of literacy and a skill that literacy activities continue to develop.

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Listening: The Receptive Foundation

Listening is the first language skill and the quiet support of all the others. Through listening, children absorb the sounds of their language, learn the meanings of words in context and discover how sentences are put together. A child cannot speak a word she has never heard, cannot recognise a sound in print that she cannot hear in speech, and cannot follow a story she has not learned to attend to. Listening also develops concentration and memory: holding the beginning of a story in mind while hearing the end is an early form of the working memory that reading comprehension will later demand.

In the classroom, listening is developed deliberately, not left to chance. When the teacher reads a story aloud and pauses to ask, “What do you think will happen next?”, children must listen carefully, remember what has happened and use language to predict. Listening games — following two-step instructions, identifying sounds with eyes closed, or playing “Simon Says” — train children to attend to the exact words spoken. Such activities directly support reading, because a child who listens well notices the difference between similar sounds and words, and notices when something she reads does not make sense.

Speaking: Practising Language for Thinking

Speaking turns the language a child has heard into language she can use. When children talk — describing, narrating, questioning, arguing and pretending — they practise organising thoughts into sentences, choosing suitable words and adjusting their message to a listener. This oral rehearsal is closely related to writing: very often a child can say a sentence long before she can write it, and teachers use this fact by asking children to “say it first, then write it”. Speaking also reveals understanding. A teacher listening to a child retell a story learns far more about that child's comprehension than from any worksheet.

Classrooms rich in talk produce children rich in literacy. In the home corner, two children negotiating who will be the shopkeeper are practising dialogue, sequence and vocabulary that will later appear in their story writing. Show-and-tell, circle-time discussions, puppet play and paired talk before writing all give speaking a central place. Importantly, talk supports reading comprehension as well: children who discuss a text with the teacher and with each other —

answering questions, giving opinions, connecting the story to their own lives — build the habit of making meaning, which is the true purpose of reading.

Vocabulary: The Bridge Between Speech and Print

Vocabulary, the store of words a child knows and understands, is perhaps the clearest bridge between oral language and literacy. When a beginning reader sounds out the printed word c-a-t, decoding only succeeds if the word "cat" is already in her spoken vocabulary; the letters then click into a known meaning. A child who decodes a word she has never heard may pronounce it, but she has not really read it. Large vocabularies also make comprehension possible: a reader who knows most of the words in a text can use the context to work out the few she does not know, whereas a reader who knows too few words is lost from the first line.

Vocabulary grows mainly through talk and through being read to. Everyday classroom routines — naming the weather, describing the snack, discussing a caterpillar found in the garden — add useful words, but storybooks add far richer ones: words like enormous, whisper, brave and suddenly rarely occur in daily instructions but appear constantly in stories. Good teachers exploit this by pausing to explain a new word, acting it out, connecting it to children's experience and using it again during the week. Each new word learned orally becomes a word the child can later recognise in reading and use in writing, so vocabulary teaching is literacy teaching.

Phonological Awareness: Hearing the Sounds Inside Words

Phonological awareness is the ability to hear and play with the sounds of spoken language — to notice that words rhyme, that sentences break into words, that words break into syllables and,

at the most advanced level, that words are made of individual sounds or phonemes. It is a purely oral skill: no letters are involved. Yet it is one of the strongest predictors of success in learning to read, because reading an alphabetic script requires exactly this insight — that the spoken word "sun" is made of the sounds /s/ /u/ /n/, each of which can be represented by a letter.

Phonological awareness develops through playful oral activities. Clapping the syllables in children's names, singing rhymes, playing "I spy something beginning with /b/", and blending sounds spoken by the teacher ("What word am I saying: m-a-t?") all build sound awareness without a pencil in sight. It supports writing as much as reading: when a child wants to write "dog" and can hear its three sounds, she can choose letters for each sound and produce a readable attempt. In this way an oral skill becomes the engine of both decoding in reading and encoding in writing.

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How Reading and Writing Feed Back into Oral Language

The support is not one-way. Once children begin to read, reading itself enlarges their oral language: books expose them to vocabulary, sentence structures and ideas beyond their immediate environment, and children begin to use "book language" in their speech and play. Writing likewise sharpens oral language, because composing a sentence for others to read forces a child to choose words precisely, order ideas logically and consider her audience — skills that carry back into clearer speaking. Even the act of "reading" a picture book aloud to a friend, turning pages and narrating from the pictures, is oral language, memory and early reading behaviour woven into a single activity.

- **Listening supports reading and writing:** it builds attention, memory, sound discrimination and understanding of sentence patterns.
- **Speaking supports reading and writing:** it rehearses sentences, organises ideas and shows comprehension before print is involved.
- **Vocabulary supports reading and writing:** known words make decoding meaningful, comprehension possible and writing expressive.
- **Phonological awareness supports reading and writing:** hearing sounds in words prepares children to match letters to sounds in both directions.
- **Reading supports oral language:** books supply new words, structures and knowledge that enrich speech.
- **Writing supports oral language:** composing for a reader develops precision, sequence and audience awareness in talk.

Consider one ordinary classroom morning. During story time the teacher reads a tale about a lost puppy; children listen, predict aloud and learn the words lonely and searched (listening, speaking, vocabulary). Afterwards they sing a rhyming song about the puppy and clap the syllables in its name (phonological awareness). In the writing area, several children draw the puppy and attempt captions, sounding out words as they write (writing supported by phonological awareness). One child "reads" her picture to the class (reading behaviour and speaking together). No skill has been taught in isolation, yet every skill has been exercised and each has strengthened the others.

Conclusion

To conclude, oral language is not merely a preparation for literacy that is finished once reading begins; it is the living foundation on which literacy stands and with which it continues to interact. Listening supplies sounds, words and structures; speaking turns them into usable, organised thought; vocabulary connects print to meaning; phonological awareness unlocks the sound system that letters represent; and reading and writing, once begun, repay the debt by enriching speech in return. The practical lesson for the early childhood teacher is clear: a classroom full of conversation, stories, songs, rhymes and purposeful talk is not a distraction from literacy teaching — it is literacy teaching in its earliest and most powerful form.

Question 2: The Major Components of Reading and How Teachers Support Them (20 Marks)

Question: *A preschool teacher wants to help children become successful readers but finds that some children struggle with sounds, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension. Analyze the major components of reading and explain how a teacher can support the development of each component through classroom activities. (20)*

Introduction

Reading looks like a single act — eyes moving over print, meaning arising in the mind — but research on early literacy shows that it rests on several distinct components that develop together. When a young reader struggles, the difficulty usually lies in one or more of these components: she may not hear the sounds in words, may not connect letters with sounds, may

know too few words, may read so slowly that meaning is lost, or may decode accurately yet understand little. A teacher who can identify which component is weak can help precisely; a teacher who treats "reading" as one undifferentiated skill often practises the wrong thing. This answer analyses the major components of reading — phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics and decoding, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension, together with the closely related foundations of print awareness and alphabetic knowledge — and explains, for each one, how a preschool teacher can support its development through practical classroom activities.

It is important at the outset to stress that the components are interdependent. Comprehension is the goal of all reading, but comprehension depends on fluent decoding, and fluent decoding depends on sound and letter knowledge, while vocabulary supports both decoding and comprehension at once. Good early reading instruction therefore develops all the components in balance, through short, playful, daily activities rather than through long formal lessons, which are unsuitable for young children.

Print Awareness and Alphabetic Knowledge: Knowing How Books and Letters Work

Before children can read, they must understand what print is for and how it is organised: that print carries meaning, that books are handled in a particular way, that in English text runs from left to right and top to bottom, that words are separated by spaces and that letters are the building blocks of words. This is print awareness. Alongside it grows alphabetic knowledge — recognising letter shapes, knowing letter names and beginning to learn the sounds letters commonly make. A child who lacks these foundations may hold a book upside down, "read" the

pictures only, or be unable to point to a single word, and such a child is not yet ready for phonics lessons.

The teacher supports these foundations by making print visible and interesting. During shared reading with a big book, she points to words as she reads, occasionally draws attention to the title, the author and the direction of reading, and asks children to find a known letter or word on the page. Labels on classroom objects, children's names on pegs and cubbies, a daily message written in front of the class, alphabet friezes at child height and letter games with magnetic letters all build alphabetic knowledge in context. Name recognition is a powerful starting point: most children first recognise and later "read" and write their own name, and the letters in it become their first known letters.

Phonological and Phonemic Awareness: Hearing Sounds in Words

Phonological awareness is the umbrella ability to hear the sound structure of spoken language — rhymes, syllables and, at the deepest level, individual phonemes. Phonemic awareness, the most advanced part, is the ability to identify, blend, segment and manipulate phonemes: to hear that "cat" begins with /k/, that /m/ /a/ /p/ blends into "map", and that "sun" without /s/ becomes "un". Children who struggle with sounds, like some in the teacher's class described in the question, typically have weak phonemic awareness, and without it phonics instruction makes little sense, because the child cannot hear the sounds the letters are supposed to represent.

Support is oral, playful and brief — five to ten minutes daily is enough. Rhyming games and nursery rhymes draw attention to sound patterns; clapping syllables in names and words builds

word awareness; “odd one out” games (which word does not rhyme?), sound-blending games with a puppet that “talks in sounds”, and segmenting games (stretching a word like a rubber band: sssuuunnn) develop blending and segmenting. The teacher should move from larger units (words and syllables) to smaller ones (onset–rime, then phoneme), and should always keep the activity a game, because young children learn sound structure best through songs, chants and movement.

Phonics and Decoding: Connecting Letters to Sounds

Phonics is the knowledge of the systematic relationships between letters and sounds, and decoding is the act of using that knowledge to work out unfamiliar printed words. Where phonemic awareness is about hearing sounds, phonics adds print: the child learns that the letter m usually represents /m/, that sh represents a single sound, and blends letter-sounds together to read words. Children who cannot decode are forced to guess from pictures or memorise every word as a whole shape, strategies that collapse as texts grow harder.

In a preschool and early-years classroom, phonics should be systematic but short and multisensory. The teacher introduces a small set of letter-sounds at a time, in a planned sequence, and gives children daily chances to use them: tracing letters in sand while saying the sound, building simple words with letter cards, sorting picture cards by their beginning sound, and reading very simple decodable texts that contain mainly the letter-sounds already taught. Crucially, phonics is taught alongside meaning — children read real words and short sentences, not endless drills — and alongside phonemic awareness games, so that hearing sounds and seeing letters develop as one insight rather than two.

Vocabulary: Knowing the Words Being Read

Vocabulary knowledge affects reading in two ways. First, it makes decoding checkable: a child sounding out a word can confirm it against the words she knows, and self-correct when the result is nonsense. Second, and more importantly, it makes comprehension possible, because a text can only be understood if most of its words are understood. Children with small vocabularies — often those with fewer books and less conversation at home — therefore struggle twice over, and vocabulary gaps widen over time as strong readers read more and learn still more words.

The teacher builds vocabulary mainly through interactive read-alouds and rich talk. Before reading a story she introduces two or three important new words with child-friendly explanations and examples; during reading she pauses briefly to clarify; after reading, children use the words in discussion, drama or drawing, and the words are revisited across the week on a word wall or in a class word book. Thematic teaching helps too: a unit on “the seaside” naturally recycles words like wave, shell, tide and splash across stories, songs, play and displays. Teachers should also deliberately teach the language of books and school — words such as character, predict, compare — because academic vocabulary is rarely picked up from playground talk alone.

Fluency: Reading Accurately, Smoothly and with Expression

Fluency is the ability to read text accurately, at a reasonable pace and with appropriate expression (prosody) — phrasing, stress and intonation that show the reader understands what the text means. Fluency matters because attention is limited: a child who spends all her mental

energy identifying individual words has nothing left for meaning, and typically forgets the beginning of a sentence before reaching its end. This is why slow, word-by-word reading and poor comprehension so often appear together. In the preschool years fluency is seen in embryonic form: joining in with the repeated lines of a familiar story, "reading" a memorised book smoothly to a friend, and using expression when retelling.

Teachers build fluency chiefly through volume and repetition of easy, enjoyable reading. Rereading favourite storybooks, shared reading of big books in which children join in with refrains, echo reading (the teacher reads a line, children echo it), paired reading with a buddy, songs and rhymes read from charts, and giving children time to "read" familiar books independently all develop smooth, confident reading. The texts must be easy enough for success: fluency grows from reading material the child can handle almost effortlessly, not from struggling through hard text. Modelling matters as well — every teacher read-aloud is a demonstration of fluent, expressive reading.

Comprehension: Making Meaning from Text

Comprehension — constructing meaning from text — is the purpose of reading and the component in which all the others meet. A comprehending reader predicts, visualises, asks questions, connects the text to her own experience, notices important ideas and monitors whether things make sense. Young children comprehend long before they can decode: they understand stories read to them, often deeply. The teacher's task is to build these oral comprehension habits so strongly that they transfer to the child's own reading as decoding develops.

- **Before reading:** look at the cover, predict from the title and pictures, recall related experiences, and set a purpose for listening or reading.
- **During reading:** pause to predict, clarify puzzling words or events, visualise scenes, and check earlier predictions.
- **After reading:** retell the story in sequence, sequence picture cards, answer and ask questions, act out scenes, draw favourite parts and connect the story to real life.
- **Ongoing:** teach children to notice when meaning breaks down and to reread, look at the picture or ask — the beginnings of comprehension monitoring.

Discussion is the heart of comprehension teaching. Open questions ("Why do you think the bear did that?") produce more thinking than closed recall questions, and children learn comprehension strategies by hearing the teacher think aloud: "That surprised me — I thought the fox was friendly, but now I am not so sure." Story maps, character discussions and comparing two stories on the same theme all deepen understanding. Finally, the teacher should remember that comprehension instruction does not wait for decoding: every read-aloud is a comprehension lesson.

Putting the Components Together in Daily Practice

Table 1: Components of reading, common difficulties and classroom support

Component	Signs of difficulty	Classroom support
Phonemic awareness	Cannot hear rhymes; cannot blend /c/-/a/-/t/	Rhymes, syllable clapping, blending and segmenting games
Phonics / decoding	Guesses words; does not use letter-sounds	Systematic letter-sound teaching, word building, decodable texts
Vocabulary	Knows few words;	Interactive read-alouds, word

	misunderstands stories	walls, thematic teaching, rich talk
Fluency	Slow, word-by-word reading; no expression	Rereading favourites, shared and echo reading, easy texts
Comprehension	Decodes but cannot retell or answer questions	Prediction, questioning, retelling, discussion, think-alouds

A balanced daily programme touches every component briefly: a phonemic awareness game at carpet time, a short phonics activity, a vocabulary-rich read-aloud with discussion, shared reading that builds fluency and print awareness, and independent "reading" of familiar books. Assessment should match this balance: the teacher observes which component is holding each child back and targets support there, rather than simply giving the struggling child more of everything.

Conclusion

In conclusion, successful reading is built from identifiable components — print awareness and alphabetic knowledge, phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics and decoding, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension — and children struggle in reading when one or more of these components is underdeveloped. The preschool teacher's most powerful response is diagnostic and balanced: identify the weak component, support it with short, playful, daily activities of the kinds described above, and keep all the components growing together within meaningful encounters with real books and real talk. Taught in this integrated way, the components cease to be separate hurdles and become, as they are in the skilled reader, a single fluent act of making meaning.

Question 3: Bottom-Up, Top-Down and Interactive Models of Reading (20 Marks)

Question: *Compare the bottom-up, top-down, and interactive models of reading. Explain the assumptions of each model and discuss why an interactive approach can be useful in developing children's reading skills. (20)*

Introduction

How does a reader get meaning from a page? Over the past half-century, reading researchers and teachers have answered this question in three broad ways, known as the bottom-up model, the top-down model and the interactive model. These models are not merely academic theories: each one implies a different view of what reading is, what a beginning reader needs, and therefore how reading should be taught. A teacher who believes reading starts with letters will organise her classroom differently from a teacher who believes reading starts with meaning. This answer describes each model and its assumptions, compares them directly, and then explains why the interactive model — which combines the strengths of the other two — is generally considered the most useful guide for developing children's reading skills.

The Bottom-Up Model: From Letters to Meaning

In the bottom-up model, reading is pictured as a process that starts with the smallest units on the page and builds upward: the reader recognises letters, blends them into sounds and words, combines words into sentences, and only at the end arrives at meaning. Information flows in one direction, from the print to the mind, much as water is built up from drops. The text is seen

as the authority: the meaning is in the print, and the reader's job is to extract it accurately. This model underlies traditional phonics-first teaching, in which children master letter-sounds and decoding rules in a strict sequence before being given much real text.

The assumptions of the bottom-up model are clear. First, accurate decoding is the foundation of reading, and comprehension will follow automatically once words are recognised. Second, reading development is linear and part-to-whole: letters before words, words before sentences, sentences before meaning. Third, the reader is a relatively passive decoder whose prior knowledge matters little; two children with equal decoding skill should read the same text equally well. Fourth, reading errors are chiefly decoding errors and should be corrected at the word level. The model's great strength is its insistence that letter-sound knowledge is essential — a truth confirmed by research — but its weakness is equally clear: skilled readers plainly do more than decode, and children taught only to "sound out" sometimes read words aloud without understanding them, a pattern sometimes called "barking at print".

The Top-Down Model: From Meaning to Print

The top-down model reverses the direction. Associated with scholars such as Kenneth Goodman, who called reading a "psycholinguistic guessing game", it holds that reading is driven by the reader's knowledge, expectations and purposes. The reader approaches a text with ideas about its topic and language, samples the print just enough to confirm predictions, and constructs meaning largely from what she already knows. In this view, fluent readers do not examine every letter; they predict, sample and confirm, using context, pictures, syntax and

background knowledge as their main tools. Whole-language teaching approaches grew largely from this model.

Its assumptions are the mirror image of the bottom-up view. First, meaning is primary and decoding is secondary; the reader's background knowledge and language competence are the main engines of reading. Second, learning to read is seen as natural, like learning to speak, provided children are immersed in real, meaningful texts. Third, miscues (departures from the printed words) are not simply failures but windows into the reader's meaning-making, acceptable when meaning is preserved. The model's strengths are its respect for meaning, motivation and real books, and its recognition that context genuinely helps readers. Its weakness, shown by later research, is that it underestimates decoding: beginning readers who are encouraged to guess from pictures and context, without solid letter-sound knowledge, often develop fragile reading that fails when pictures disappear and texts become harder.

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The Interactive Model: Both Directions at Once

The interactive model, associated with David Rumelhart and widely accepted today, proposes that reading uses bottom-up and top-down processes simultaneously and interactively. As the reader works through a text, information from many levels — letter features, letter-sound patterns, word meanings, sentence structure, background knowledge and the purpose for reading — is processed at the same time, and each level can support or correct the others. If a word is hard to decode, context helps; if the context is ambiguous, careful decoding resolves it. The skilled reader is neither a pure decoder nor a pure guesser but a flexible coordinator of many sources of information.

The assumptions of the interactive model follow from this picture. Reading is an active, constructive process in which print and reader knowledge are both indispensable. The balance between processes shifts with the reader and the text: beginners lean more heavily on decoding, fluent readers more on rapid word recognition and prediction, and everyone leans on decoding again when the text is difficult. Teaching, therefore, must develop all the contributing processes — decoding, vocabulary, background knowledge, comprehension strategies — and must teach children to coordinate them, for example by cross-checking: "Does that word look right, sound right and make sense?"

A Direct Comparison of the Three Models

Table 1: Comparison of bottom-up, top-down and interactive models of reading

Feature	Bottom-up model	Top-down model	Interactive model
Starting point	Letters and sounds on the page	Reader's knowledge and predictions	Print and reader knowledge together
Direction of processing	Part to whole; print to meaning	Whole to part; meaning to print	Both directions simultaneously
Role of decoding	Central; must be mastered first	Secondary; sampling is enough	Essential, but works with context
Role of prior knowledge	Minor	Central	Central, alongside print information
View of the reader	Passive decoder	Active predictor / guesser	Active coordinator of many cues
Typical teaching emphasis	Systematic phonics, drills, graded decoding texts	Real books, whole language, prediction from context	Phonics plus real books, strategies and cross-checking
Main weakness	Can produce decoding without understanding	Can produce guessing without accurate word reading	Demands more of teachers: balance and diagnosis

The table shows that the three models are best understood as a debate about where reading "begins" and what should be emphasised first. The bottom-up and top-down models each capture a genuine part of the truth — print really must be decoded, and knowledge really does drive comprehension — but each, taken alone, distorts teaching by neglecting the other's truth. The interactive model is less a compromise than a fuller description of what readers actually do.

Why the Interactive Approach Is Useful for Children

The interactive approach is useful in developing children's reading skills for several practical reasons. First, it matches how children actually learn: a beginner simultaneously uses the picture, the remembered pattern of a familiar story, the first letter of a word and her knowledge of the topic, and interactive teaching legitimises and strengthens all of these instead of forbidding some of them. Second, it protects against the two classic failure patterns — the child who decodes without understanding and the child who guesses without decoding — because the teacher systematically develops both word recognition and comprehension from the start.

Third, the interactive approach gives teachers a diagnostic language. When a child stalls on a word, the teacher can ask which source of information the child is neglecting: Is she ignoring the letters (a bottom-up weakness)? Is she ignoring meaning and reading nonsense without noticing (a top-down weakness)? Prompts follow naturally: "Look at the first letters", "What would make sense here?", "Check the picture and the letters together." Fourth, it supports motivation and transfer: children read real, interesting books (the top-down contribution) with steadily improving accuracy (the bottom-up contribution), so success and enjoyment grow

together. Finally, it fits the evidence that effective early reading programmes combine systematic phonics with rich language and literature experiences — precisely the combination the interactive model prescribes.

A Classroom Illustration

Imagine a child reading the sentence "The horse ran into the barn" and first saying "house" for horse. A purely bottom-up response would drill the word horse in isolation. A purely top-down response might accept "house" because animals and buildings are loosely related. An interactive teacher does something better: she prompts the child to cross-check — "House begins with the same sound, but look at the middle letters, and think: can a house run?" The child uses letter information, word meaning and sentence sense together and self-corrects to horse. That small episode — decoding checked by meaning, meaning checked by decoding — is the interactive model in action, repeated hundreds of times until it becomes the child's independent habit.

Conclusion

To conclude, the bottom-up model rightly insists that reading begins with accurate decoding of print but wrongly implies that meaning follows automatically; the top-down model rightly insists that readers bring knowledge and prediction to texts but wrongly undervalues the letter-sound system that beginners must master. The interactive model unites both truths: reading is the simultaneous, coordinated use of print information and reader knowledge, each checking and supporting the other. For the teacher of young children, this is the most useful model because it justifies a balanced programme — systematic attention to sounds and letters within

a rich environment of real books, talk and meaning-making — and because it equips her to diagnose and prompt each reader at exactly the point where that reader's processing breaks down.

Question 4: Stages of the Writing Process and Moving Children Toward Independent Writing (20 Marks)

Question: *Writing develops gradually and requires appropriate support from teachers. Explain the stages of the writing process and discuss how teachers can move children from teacher-supported writing toward independent writing. Include examples of planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing activities. (20)*

Introduction

Writing is the most demanding of the language skills for a young child, because it requires her to manage several things at once: ideas to express, words to express them, sounds and letters to encode those words, and the physical act of forming letters on a page. It is therefore not surprising that writing develops gradually, over years, and that children pass through recognisable forms of writing — scribbles, letter-like shapes, strings of letters, invented spellings — before they write conventionally. Skilled writers, moreover, do not produce finished text in one attempt; they work through a process of planning, drafting, revising, editing and publishing. Teaching children this process, with strong teacher support at first that is gradually withdrawn, is the most reliable route to independent writing. This answer explains each stage

of the writing process with classroom examples, and then discusses how teachers move children along the path from fully supported to independent writing.

Two ideas run through the answer. The first is that the stages are recursive, not a rigid staircase: a writer may plan, draft a little, rethink, draft more and revise as she goes, and young children should not be forced through all five stages for every piece of writing. The second is the principle of gradual release of responsibility: the teacher first does the writing while children watch and contribute (modelling), then shares the pen with them, then guides them as they write with support, and finally lets them write alone, intervening only when needed.

Stage 1: Planning — Deciding What to Say

Planning is the stage at which the writer decides what to write about, for whom, and in what order. For young children, planning is mostly oral and pictorial: talking about an experience, drawing a picture and telling a partner about it, brainstorming words, or looking at photographs and objects that spark ideas. Drawing deserves special emphasis, because for a five-year-old the drawing is not a decoration added after writing; it is the plan and often the first draft, holding the ideas steady while the child struggles with letters.

Examples of planning activities include: a class discussion and word bank before writing about a school trip; children drawing their weekend news and talking it through with a partner before writing a sentence about it; making a simple story map with boxes for beginning, middle and end; collecting topic words on a chart during a science observation (the caterpillar is…, it eats…, it changes…); and the teacher thinking aloud as she plans her own writing on the board — “First I will write how we planted the seeds, then what happened after a week.” Good planning

prevents the commonest problem in young children's writing, the blank page accompanied by “I don't know what to write”.

Stage 2: Drafting — Getting Ideas Down

Drafting is the stage of getting ideas onto paper in a first rough version, where the emphasis is on meaning rather than correctness. Children should be encouraged to write freely, using the spelling they can manage — invented or developmental spelling — rather than stopping at every unknown word. A child who writes “I wt to the prk” (I went to the park) is doing real writing: she has segmented the sounds in words and represented them with letters. Correcting every such attempt at the drafting stage teaches children to write only words they can spell, which impoverishes their writing.

Examples of drafting activities include: daily short writing in journals or “news books”; writing captions for drawings; first drafts of a class story composed on large paper; free writing after a story or an event, with word walls, alphabet charts and personal word books available as supports; and “have-a-go” pads on which children try spellings before committing them to the draft. The teacher's role during drafting is to confer briefly, encourage risk-taking with words, and help children keep going — supplying a needed spelling on request without turning the conference into a correction session.

Stage 3: Revising — Making the Writing Better

Revising means re-seeing the draft with fresh eyes and improving its content: adding missing details, reordering events, choosing livelier words and checking that the reader will understand. Revising is about meaning, not mechanics, and it is the stage young children find hardest,

because they tend to assume that what they meant is what they wrote. It must therefore be taught explicitly and kept very small in scale: improving one sentence or adding one detail is genuine revision for a six-year-old.

Examples include: the teacher modelling revision on her own draft — reading it aloud, saying "That part is not clear; I need to add where it happened", and inserting a phrase with a caret; partner reading, in which a child reads her draft aloud and the partner says what they liked and asks one question; "add one more thing" challenges, where each child adds a describing word or an extra sentence; and using a simple prompt card — Does it make sense? Did I say everything? Which is my best part? Author's chair sessions, where a child shares a draft and receives kind, specific comments, teach the whole class that writing is improved by thinking again, not merely finished by writing "The End".

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Stage 4: Editing — Making the Writing Correct

Editing is the stage at which attention turns to correctness: spelling of known and taught words, capital letters, full stops, spacing and legibility, so that the reader can read the piece easily. Editing comes after revising, because there is no point polishing sentences that may be changed or removed. For young children the editing load must be strictly limited to what they have actually been taught — for example, checking capital letters and full stops and the spelling of words on the word wall — otherwise editing becomes overwhelming and discouraging.

Examples of editing activities include: a simple individual checklist with pictures (capital letter? full stop? finger spaces? words from the wall spelled correctly?); children reading their draft slowly, pointing to each word, to catch omissions; the teacher modelling editing on a shared

text, thinking aloud as she fixes a capital letter; partner editing, in which pairs hunt together for full stops; and mini-lessons on one convention at a time, followed immediately by children applying it to their own drafts. Editing should be presented positively, as “helping our reader”, never as punishment for earlier mistakes.

Stage 5: Publishing — Sharing Writing with a Real Audience

Publishing is the stage at which the finished piece is presented neatly and shared with readers beyond the writer: copied into a class book, displayed on the wall, read aloud to another class, sent home, or performed. Publishing gives writing its purpose. Children revise and edit willingly when they know real readers are waiting, and they experience the central truth of literacy — that writing communicates across distance and time. Not every piece should be published; writers choose their best or favourite work, and the rest remains valuable practice in folders or journals.

Examples include: a class anthology of poems or animal reports, typed or neatly handwritten, with a cover designed by the children; a “young authors” display in the corridor; letters actually posted to a real recipient; a class newspaper recording the term's events; children reading their published stories to a younger class; and celebration events where parents are invited to hear children read their own books. Even simple publishing — mounting one corrected poem on card — transforms a child's attitude: she begins to call herself a writer, and that identity sustains effort through the long work of learning conventions.

From Teacher-Supported to Independent Writing: Gradual Release

Table 1: The gradual release of responsibility in writing

Mode	Teacher's role	Children's role	Classroom example
Modelled writing	Writes and thinks aloud; holds the pen alone	Watch, listen, suggest ideas	Teacher composes the morning message, voicing decisions about words and spelling
Shared writing	Holds the pen; scribes and negotiates the text	Contribute sentences, words and spellings	Class composes a recount of the school trip together on chart paper
Interactive writing	Shares the pen with children for selected letters/words	Write parts of the shared text	Children come up to write known letters and words within the class composition
Guided writing	Teaches a small group with a common need; prompts	Write own texts with support at hand	Teacher works with five children on adding detail to drafts
Independent writing	Confers briefly; observes; teaches from what she sees	Plan, draft, revise, edit and publish alone	Daily writing time; children choose topics and use classroom resources

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The movement across these modes is gradual and reversible: a child may write independently on a familiar topic yet need shared support for a new kind of writing, such as a report. Three conditions make the journey succeed. First, daily writing time, so that writing is a habit, not an event. Second, a resource-rich environment — alphabet charts, word walls, word books, varied paper and tools — that lets children solve problems without waiting for the teacher. Third, feedback that praises the writing behaviour (the idea attempted, the sound heard, the revision made) rather than only perfect products. Teachers withdraw support deliberately: helping less with spellings children can attempt, expecting skills already taught to appear in independent work, and lengthening the writing children are asked to sustain.

Conclusion

In conclusion, writing develops through a process — planning, drafting, revising, editing and publishing — and children learn that process best when the teacher first carries most of the load and then hands it over, stage by stage and mode by mode, through modelled, shared, interactive and guided writing toward independence. Planning gives children something to say, drafting frees them to say it, revising teaches them to improve meaning, editing teaches them to respect the reader, and publishing gives the whole effort purpose. A teacher who protects this process — and resists the temptation to demand a perfect final product from the first attempt — produces children who not only can write, but who choose to write, which is the true mark of independent writers.

Question 5: Developing Early Numeracy Through Everyday Classroom Activities (20 Marks)

Question: *Early numeracy can be developed through children's everyday experiences rather than only through formal mathematics lessons. Design a set of classroom activities that develop counting, one-to-one correspondence, geometry, measurement, and sorting/classifying skills among young children. Explain what children would learn through each activity. (20)*

Introduction

Young children are doing mathematics long before anyone teaches them a formal lesson. They share biscuits and protest when a share is unfair, they notice that a tower falls when it grows too tall, they line up shoes in pairs, sort buttons, chant counting rhymes on the stairs and argue

about who has more. Early numeracy — the cluster of understandings about number, quantity, shape, space and measurement that underpin later mathematics — grows out of exactly these everyday experiences when a thoughtful teacher plans activities that draw children's attention to the mathematics inside play and routine. This answer designs a set of concrete classroom activities for five foundational skills — counting, one-to-one correspondence, geometry, measurement, and sorting and classifying — and explains, for each activity, what children would actually learn.

Three principles guide the design. First, children learn number concepts through handling real objects: counting blocks, pouring water and comparing lengths teach more than chanting numbers or completing worksheets. Second, the teacher's language matters: questions such as "How do you know there are enough?" and words such as more, fewer, equal, longer, heavier and between turn play into mathematical thinking. Third, the activities are embedded in ordinary settings — snack time, tidy-up time, the block area, the water tray, outdoor play — so that children meet mathematics repeatedly, briefly and joyfully every day.

Counting: Rote Counting, Cardinality and Number Sense

Counting involves more than reciting number names in order. A child who truly counts understands that the number sequence is stable, that the last number named tells how many objects there are (cardinality), that numbers can count anything — objects, claps, jumps — and that the answer is the same however the objects are arranged. Activities must therefore move children from chanting to meaningful counting of real sets.

- **Counting steps, claps and jumps:** the class counts aloud as a child climbs steps or as everyone jumps; children learn the stable order of number words and connect numbers with actions.
- **The counting jar:** each day a jar holds a small number of objects (shells, large beads); children estimate, then count together and record the numeral; they learn cardinality — the last word tells the total — and begin estimating.
- **Number rhymes and songs with actions.** "Five Little Ducks" and similar songs, acted out with fingers or props; children learn counting backwards and the idea of one less as each duck disappears.
- **Counting collections:** each child counts a small collection (buttons, sticks) and finds a way to record it with a drawing or numeral; children learn to keep track of counted objects and that the same set can be arranged and counted in different orders with the same result.

Through these activities children learn the counting sequence, the cardinality principle and early number sense — a feeling for how large quantities are — which later supports addition and subtraction, because a child who knows that seven is five and two more is already reasoning about number composition.

One-to-One Correspondence: Matching and Fair Sharing

One-to-one correspondence is the understanding that each object can be matched with exactly one other object, one number word or one place. It underlies accurate counting (each object touched once, named once) and the concept of equal sets. Its most natural classroom form is

fair distribution: enough cups for every child, one straw per drink, one chair per person at the table.

- **Setting the snack table:** children place one plate, one cup and one spoon for each chair; they learn matching, and discover leftovers or shortages as concrete signs that sets are unequal.
- **Posting letters:** each child posts one letter into each numbered mailbox or matches picture cards to identical partners; they learn exact matching and checking by pairing.
- **Teddy bears' picnic:** in the home corner, children give each teddy a plate, a cup and a cake; they learn to distribute fairly and to correct unequal shares — the seed of division.
- **Touch-and-count routines:** when counting objects, children move each object into a "counted" pile as they say its number word; they learn the counting discipline that prevents double-counting and skipping.

Children learn from these activities that quantities can be compared by matching even before they can count reliably: a child who pairs cups with children knows whether there are enough without knowing any totals. This is a powerful early form of mathematical reasoning.

Geometry: Shapes, Space and Position

Geometry for young children is about recognising and describing shapes (two- and three-dimensional), noticing shape in the environment, and using positional language — in, on, under, behind, next to, between. It develops through building, fitting, turning and describing, not through naming shapes on flashcards alone.

- **Block building with a challenge:** "Can you build a bridge for the car?" or "Build a tower as tall as you"; children learn how shapes fit, balance and enclose space, and use words like flat, edge, corner and roll.
- **Shape hunt:** children search the classroom and playground for circles, squares, rectangles and triangles — clock, window, book, roof; they learn that shapes appear in real objects and in different sizes and orientations.
- **Feely-bag and posting boxes:** children identify a shape by touch, or post 3-D shapes through matching holes; they learn the properties of shapes (a ball rolls, a cube stacks) through direct experience.
- **Obstacle course and positional games:** children go over, under, through and around equipment, while the teacher and children narrate positions; they learn positional vocabulary essential for later geometry and for following instructions generally.

Through geometry activities children learn to analyse shapes by their features rather than by overall look, to compose and decompose shapes (two triangles make a square in a puzzle), and to describe space — foundations for later work in geometry, measurement and even map reading.

Measurement: Comparing Length, Weight, Capacity and Time

Measurement begins not with rulers and units but with comparison: longer and shorter, heavier and lighter, full and empty, before and after. Young children first compare directly (placing two ribbons side by side), then measure with non-standard units (hand spans, blocks,

cupfuls), which prepares them for standard units later. Everyday routines — cooking, water play, gardening — are full of measurement.

- **Water and sand play with containers:** children fill, pour and compare jugs, bottles and cups, predicting which holds more; they learn capacity language (full, empty, more, less) and the conservation insight that pouring into a different-shaped container does not change the amount.
- **Measuring with footsteps and blocks:** "How many footsteps long is our classroom?" or measuring a plant2019s growth in blocks each week; children learn that measuring means repeating an equal unit and counting the units, and that results can be compared and recorded.
- **Balance scales in the shop corner:** children weigh fruit, parcels or blocks against each other; they learn heavier, lighter and balances (equal), and begin informal addition as they combine weights to balance the scale.
- **Cooking activities and daily routines:** spoonfuls in a simple recipe, and sequencing the day with a visual timetable; children learn measurement in cooking and the measurement of time through order and duration — first, next, after lunch, longer, shorter.

These activities teach children that attributes can be compared and quantified, that a unit must be repeated consistently, and that measurement answers real questions — Is there enough? Which is bigger? Has it grown? — which is the spirit of all later mathematical measurement.

Sorting and Classifying: Finding Attributes and Making Sets

Sorting and classifying involve grouping objects by attributes — colour, size, shape, texture, function — and explaining the rule used. This is foundational logical thinking: it prepares children for pattern work, for data handling (surveys and simple graphs) and for number itself, since counting requires deciding what belongs to the set being counted.

- **Tidy-up sorting:** children sort mixed collections into trays by their own rule and explain it — "These are all red", "These can roll"; they learn to choose, apply and verbalise a classification rule.
- **Nature table collections:** leaves, stones and shells sorted by size, smoothness or shape, and re-sorted a different way: children learn that the same objects can be classified in several ways — an important, flexible insight.
- **Odd one out and guessing games:** the teacher shows a set with one intruder, or sorts secretly and children guess the rule; children learn to attend to attributes and to test hypotheses.
- **People sorting and pictographs:** the class sorts itself — children with laces and without, those who walked to school and those who came by bus — and records the result as a pictograph; children learn that classification leads to counting, comparing and presenting information.

Across all five areas, the teacher's observing and questioning turn activity into learning, and a summary of the planned provision is given below.

Table 1: Summary of everyday numeracy activities

Skill	Everyday setting	Key learning
Counting	Counting jar; songs; collections	Number sequence, cardinality, estimation
One-to-one correspondence	Snack table; teddy picnic; posting games	Matching, equal sets, fair sharing
Geometry	Blocks; shape hunt; obstacle course	Shape properties, positional language
Measurement	Water play; scales; measuring plants	Comparison, repeated units, capacity, weight, time
Sorting / classifying	Tidy-up; nature table; pictographs	Attributes, rules, early data handling

Conclusion

In conclusion, early numeracy does not need to wait for formal mathematics lessons, because young children's everyday world is already mathematical. Deliberately planned activities — counting jars and songs, fair sharing at snack time, block building and shape hunts, pouring, weighing and measuring with simple units, and sorting collections by rules children can explain — develop counting, one-to-one correspondence, geometry, measurement and classification in ways that are concrete, playful and meaningful. Children learn that numbers tell how many, that matching shows equality, that shapes and spaces can be described, that attributes can be compared and measured, and that objects can be organised by rules. Built in this way, through experience and language, early numeracy becomes a firm and confident foundation for all the mathematics that follows.

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