

EARLY LITERACY OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

For Early Years & Primary Educators | Ages 4 to 8 | Grades Nursery to Grade 3

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How to use this checklist

Observe the same child across 3 to 4 weeks before concluding. Tick any indicator you observe consistently. Two or more ticks across different sections warrant a closer conversation with the child's family and your school's academic coordinator. This checklist is an observation tool — not a diagnostic instrument.

Child's name: _____	Age / Grade: _____
School / Centre: _____	Observation period: _____
Educator's name: _____	Date of first concern: _____

✓	Observation Indicator	Notes / Date First Observed
1 Sign 1 — Avoidance of oral reading		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consistently avoids volunteering to read aloud in class	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Asks to leave the room or changes the subject before reading activities	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Follows along by watching classmates' lips rather than reading independently	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Becomes visibly anxious, tearful, or withdrawn when asked to read aloud	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Refuses to participate in paired or group reading activities	
2 Sign 2 — Letter, sound & phonological difficulties		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Persistently reverses letters (b/d, p/q, was/saw) beyond age 6.5	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cannot reliably isolate the first sound in a spoken word	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Struggles to blend individual sounds into a word (c-a-t → cat)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reads the same word differently on different occasions	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Difficulty segmenting words into syllables or sounds	

<input type="checkbox"/>	Does not recognise or produce rhymes consistently	
3 Sign 3 — Spoken language outpaces reading ability		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Communicates verbally with confidence and detail but reads haltingly	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Gives rich oral answers but produces minimal written work	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reads word by word with significant effort and no fluency	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Loses meaning of a sentence by the time they reach the end	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Appears exhausted or frustrated after short reading tasks	
4 Sign 4 — Copies accurately but cannot read back what is written		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Copies from the board neatly but cannot read back what they have written	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Copies letter by letter or word by word rather than in meaningful phrases	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Written work looks complete but child cannot decode any part of it independently	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Writing contains correct letters but in incorrect or inconsistent order	
5 Sign 5 — Physical or emotional signals around reading tasks		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reports headaches, stomach aches, or tiredness specifically before reading sessions	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Becomes irritable, tearful, or emotionally dysregulated during literacy blocks	
<input type="checkbox"/>	The pattern of physical complaints is consistent and specific to reading/writing tasks	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Avoidant behaviour is increasing in frequency over time	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Child expresses negative self-talk about reading ('I'm stupid', 'I can't read')	

Summary & recommended next steps

Total indicators observed: _____ Sections with 2+ ticks: _____

If you have ticked 2 or more indicators across different sections:

- Speak with the child's family — early, gently, without alarm
- Consult your school's academic coordinator or learning support team
- Consider a referral to a qualified literacy or learning specialist
- Differentiate your literacy instruction in the meantime — reduce shame, increase support

Educator notes / observations:

Created by Uma Chandrakala | Education Consultant & Early Years Advisor | happyclassrooms.in
This checklist is for classroom observation purposes only and does not constitute a clinical diagnosis. For specialist assessment, please consult a qualified professional.

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