

Understanding Second Graders' Development

Most second graders are 7-8 years old. At this age, there are big leaps in language and cognitive development, as well as in how they feel and get along with others. Second graders now begin to care more about how others see them. They are likely to worry, be self-critical, and display a lack of confidence in their abilities more than they have in the past.

What They Learn

In second grade, students are practicing the basic skills they already have in reading, writing and math. But they're also building and developing them into more sophisticated skills. They tackle more and more texts in and out of the classroom as they work to become rapid and accurate readers. Second graders are working on fluent reading (reading without stopping to figure out words). That's why spending lots of time reading aloud to them—and modeling fluent reading—is so important!

What you should know about second graders

There's a lot of variation in the pace at which kids develop throughout second grade. Communication skills are closely tied to and affected by cognitive, social, and emotional development, so it is important to be aware of how your student mentee is growing and developing.

Developmental Milestones	Implications for Reading Mentors
<p>Physical development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is in period of slow, steady growth • Have more stamina • Has more control of large muscles than small • Has improved eye-hand coordination, but not ready for close, fine work 	<p>Physical development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build in opportunities for physical activities, or take breaks for some physical activity (even if just pausing to stretch during your mentoring sessions). • Ask your student to act out key elements of a story. This provides some physical activity and gives students practice in identifying the important parts of the story. • When appropriate, ask your student to act out definitions of new words you've encountered while reading. How do you <i>frolic</i>? Act <i>sluggish</i>?
<p>Cognitive development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is inquisitive and curious • Has a short attention span but often a good memory • Significant growth in listening skills, enjoys talking, developing ability to express self 	<p>Cognitive development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Like projects to work and may try hard to make work perfect. Keep things short so your student can finish without time pressure. Don't insist on finishing a book or project.

- Likes to demonstrate ability to make choices
- Increased ability to generalize, organize, and reason
- Is interested in magic, puzzles, collecting
- Enjoys nonfiction, fairy tales, comics, and stories about other children
- Like to classify and sort

- Like to read books in a series—in order. Familiar characters are comforting.
- For the most part, your second grader will love facts. Collect facts as you read together about your student’s favorite topics of interest. Then help your student create books of facts on “Frogs,” “Planets,” or “Minecraft.”
- Your student will respond better to doing things together than to “just talking.” Take turns telling stories about real and imaginary events, talking about your week and their week—what happened, what was surprising, what was funny. Also try making up stories together and writing them down.
- Weave word play and word games into reading sessions. Try playing "[Higglety Pigglety](#)" or a word association game where you and your student think of words and phrases that have a common word: beach=beach ball, Beach Boys, beachcomber, etc.

Social and emotional development

- Is confused by sudden changes; prefers order
- Dislikes taking risks and making mistakes
- Sets unrealistic goals then feels frustrated
- May be moody, prone to complain and sulk
- Pretends not to hear when guidance is given
- Concerned about treatment received from others
- Concerned about being good
- Is eager to please and sensitive to praise
- Sees the teacher as paramount in school
- Likes to imitate adults and peers
- May be careless of others’ property but protective of own
- Make change friendships quickly
- Does not always respond promptly
- Shows race and group consciousness

Social and emotional development

- Show appreciation and understanding of your student. Your private conversations and support mean a great deal.
- Help lighten moods with humorous stories.
- Leave words out, call characters by the wrong name, etc., and laugh when your student corrects you.
- Positively reinforce your student’s good qualities and new skill development.
- Your consistent attendance, predictable schedule, and relationship help provide needed security. Give your student notice of any change in your schedule.

Curricular topic of focus in Second Grade

Plants Everywhere!

Extreme Weather

Then and Now

The Earth: Geology

Activism

Exploring Our Neighbors: Canada and Mexico

Got the Message: Fables and Folktales

Good titles to read aloud with Second Graders

Many second graders enjoy funny stories or titles filled with facts. Try both picture books and chapter books.

The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs by Jon Scieszka

Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears by Verna Aardema

Lon Po Po: A Red-Riding Hood Story From China by Ed Young

President Taft Is Stuck in the Bath by Mac Barnett

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day by Judith Viorst

Toys Go Out by Emily Jenkins

If I Built a Car by Chris Van Dusen

Freckle Juice by Judy Blume

Virgie Goes to School with Us Boys by Elizabeth Fitzgerald Howard

The Magic School Bus series by Joanna Cole

Clementine series by Sara Pennypacker

Alvin Ho series by Lenore Loo

The World According to Humphrey series by Betty G. Birney

Dog Man series by Dav Pilkey

5,000 Awesome Facts (About Everything) by National Geographic Kids

Other recommended books to choose from:

[Great Read Alouds for Second Graders](#) booklist from Reading Rockets

[50 of the Best Books for Second Grade](#) from We Are Teachers

Second

Grade