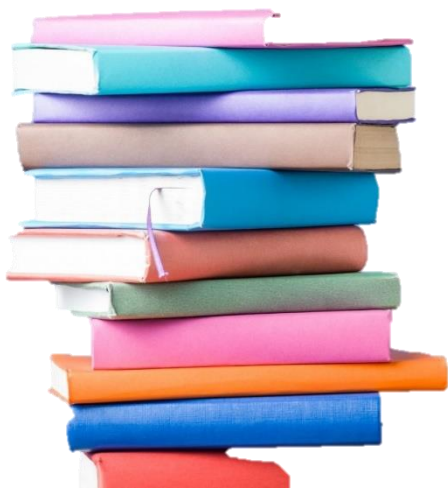
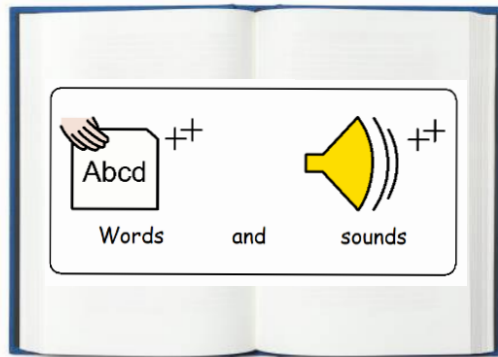


Literacy (reading)

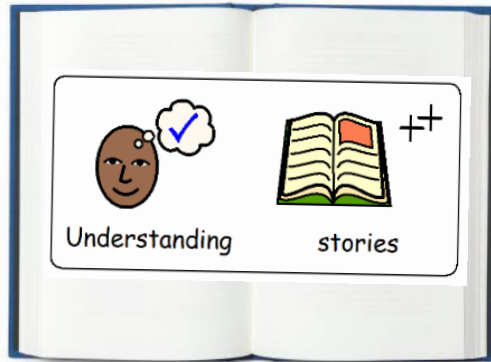
Level descriptors and home
learning ideas

Reading can be a gateway to understanding and navigating the world, as well as opening up opportunities for creativity, empathy, and exploration. There are lots of ways to practice reading at home, even if your young person might not always enjoy sitting down with a book. This booklet has some ideas, as well as a description of each gemstone level so you can track your young person's progress.

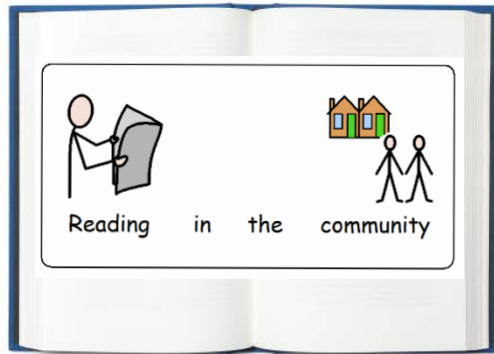




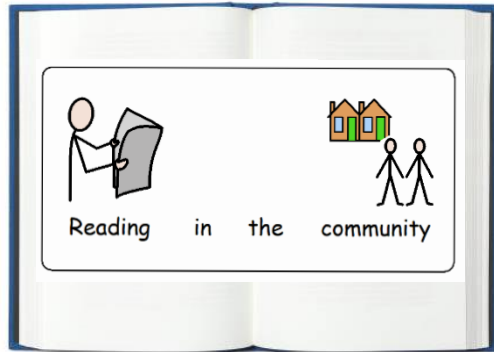
- Read in a variety of ways with your child: listen to them read, read together by reading a page of a book each, read as a family, taking it in turns. Even read the back of the cereal box at breakfast or the instructions for a new gadget. When your child is reading, you can help them with tricky words. When they follow the text whilst you are reading, the sound of a variety of **graphemes** (see phonics glossary) is being modelled for your child.
- Listen to an audio book but get your child to follow parts of the text at the same time. Again, this is good for modelling the pronunciation of a range of graphemes.
- Hide words on bits of paper around the house with words on for them to find, or with little messages for them to read.
- Write some tricky words on the outside of fruit with skin (bananas, oranges) or the packaging of a snack for them to find and read.
- If your child is having difficulty reading longer words, break them up into syllables by clapping on each syllable as the word is said and then thinking about how each part is written.
- Brainstorm some words with the same sound in them (e.g: ea) and write them down. Then put them into different spelling groups to see how the same sound can be written in different ways, e.g: **meat**, **heap**, **beat** / **sleep**, **peep**, **weep**/ **key**, **monkey**.



- Write a summary of a story
- Retell a story to a partner
- Make a film of a favourite story
- Make a book of a favourite story including illustrations.
- Discuss stories, films, audiobooks, TV shows, even YouTube videos! Ask: 'Who are the main characters? What are they like? What do they look like? Personality? Can you describe where the story is set? Can you summarize the plot?'
- When reading a book, ask questions that require a quick-fire piece of information (e.g: 'How old is the main character?' 'What is the name of the farm they visit?').
- Link character experiences in a story with personal experience, e.g: 'It says in the text the girl burst with excitement. Can you think of a time you felt when you burst with excitement?'
- After a story is read, draw a series of pictures (no words) to create a story board of the main plot points. Use the visuals as prompts to retell the main parts of the story to a partner without looking back at the text.



- There is always so much to read in the environment: sentences, phrases, logos, words, single letters and numbers. They can be found on signs, front doors, bus timetables, city maps, number plates and in shop windows. When looking at a map, a route for a walk could be planned to link in with maths skills.
- Games could include: a treasure hunt for a letter, e.g: S The hunt could be limitless and part of a walk, or it could have boundaries, e.g: 'Can you spot the letter S ten times during our walk?'
- In a café, you could ask your child to read the menu to you.
- If you are waiting anywhere that has magazines, read them together or to each other or alongside each other.
- Go on a walk and collect a bank of words, by reading them in the environment and then writing them down. When you get home, see if your child can use all the words in a story or poem to connect their reading to their writing.



- Play rhyming eye spy to practise recognising **phonemes** (see phonics glossary), e.g: 'I spy with my little eye, something that rhymes with ... toad (road)'.
• When getting dressed to go outside, read the labels inside shoes and coats.
- When shopping at the supermarket, let your child read the receipt whilst you are loading the shopping into your car.
- Read price labels and then count out money to buy things in shops to link reading with maths.
- Read the logos on people's shopping bags when out and about to see which shops they have visited.
- Visit your local library or closest bookshop to browse at the books but also the poster boards.
- Go to the cinema to read what films are showing and then plan a trip to see the film of most interest. Write a review of the film to link the experience to writing.

Note: for words in **bold** see phonics glossary. We recognize some children may be 'whole-word' readers (i.e. they recognize a whole word at a time rather than breaking it down into sounds) and this will not prevent them progressing through our levels.



Sapphire	Pearl	Silver	Gold	Emerald	Jet	Diamond
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Ruby

- Applies phonic knowledge and skills to decode words
- Responds with the correct sound to **graphemes**
- Reads accurately by **blending** sounds in unfamiliar words
- Reads 'tricky' words
- Listens to and discuss a range of poems, stories and non-fiction text
- Links what they have read to their own experiences
- Retells key stories, fairy stories and traditional tales
- Joins in with predictable phrases



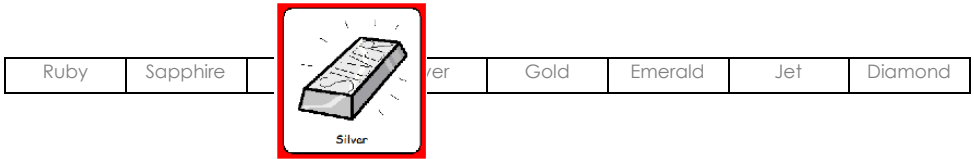
Sapphire

- Reads words containing –s, –es, –ing, –ed, –er, and –est endings
- Reads words with contractions e.g. I'm
- Reads aloud books that are within their developing phonic knowledge
- Re-reads to build up fluency and confidence
- Recites rhymes and poems
- Discusses word meanings
- Discusses the significance of the title and events
- Makes inference (guesses) based on what has been said or done
- Predicts what might happen based on what has been read so far
- Participates in discussion about what is read, taking turns and listening to what is said



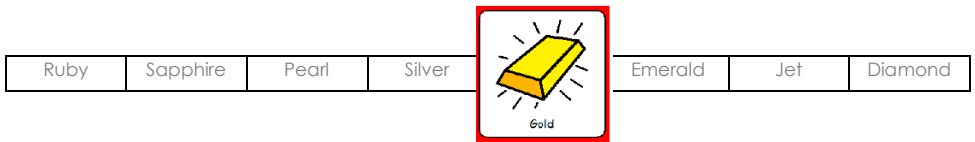
Pearl

- Reads accurately by blending including recognising alternative sounds for **graphemes**
- Reads words containing common suffixes (-est, -ed, -less, -ful).
- Reads words quickly and accurately, without having to say each sound separately
- Reads aloud books matched to their improving phonic knowledge, sounding out unfamiliar words automatically
- Discusses the sequence (order) of events in books
- Retells a range of stories, fairy stories and traditional tales
- Begins reading non-fiction books that are structured in different ways
- Asks questions related to text



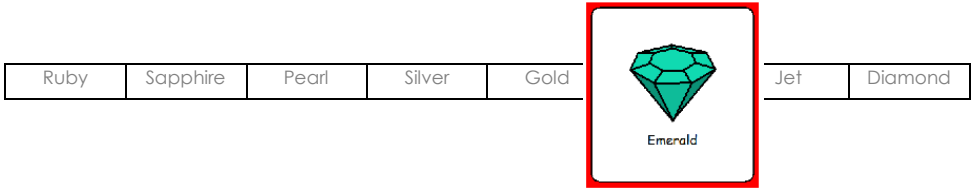
Silver

- Demonstrates phonic knowledge secure enough that reading is fluent
- Re-reads books to demonstrate fluency and confidence
- Listens to, discusses and expresses views about a range of contemporary and classic poetry, stories and non-fiction text
- Discusses favourite words and phrases
- Answers questions using inference (guessing and predicting)
- Explains and discusses understanding of text, both those that they listen to and those that they read themselves



Gold

- Reads out loud to a group
- Confidently reads words that they have never seen before
- Reads a range of different types of stories and non-fiction texts
- Finds out the meaning of new words using a dictionary
- Retells stories that they have read before out loud
- Asks questions to help them to understand a text
- Checks that what they are reading makes sense and explains what they are reading
- Predicts what might happen from details stated
- Points out the words that best describe a character



Emerald

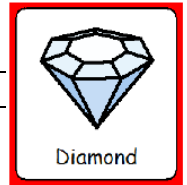
- Discusses how different stories are structured
- Discusses the theme of some books
- Prepares a poem for performance
- Prepares a play for performance
- Summarises the main ideas in a text of more than one paragraph
- Knows the difference between fact and opinion



Jet

- Explains the meaning of new words
- Confidently reads unusual and unfamiliar words
- Reads and understands differently structured books (e.g. diaries, collections of letters)
- Reads and discusses books written for different purposes
- Recommends books to others and explains why they like them
- Infers information about the feelings, thoughts and motives of characters from the text
- Imaginatively predicts what might happen from details stated and implied
- Discusses and evaluates how authors use language to impact the reader
- Retrieves, records and presents information from non-fiction
- Explains and discusses what they have read through formal presentation
- Provides a reasoned argument to support their views
- Use quotes directly from the text to support their ideas in writing

Ruby	Sapphire	Pearl	Silver	Gold	Emerald	Jet
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Diamond

- Discusses a wide range of fiction, poetry, plays, non-fiction and reference/text books confidently, contributing their own ideas
- Identifies and discusses themes and conventions in stories
- Recites poetry
- Takes part in and leads extended drama activities
- Re-reads their own work over several paragraphs to sense-check it for meaning
- Explains how the language, structure and presentation add to the meaning of a text
- Understands and explains how texts fit into a historical context

Phonics guide

At Castle we know every child learns to read and write in their own way, and the phonics approach doesn't suit every child. However, some of our levels refer to phonics, so we've included a glossary here which includes some terms you might come across.

Word	What Does It Mean?
blend	Saying the individual sounds that make up a word and then merging or blending the sounds together to say the word – used when reading.
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CVC words	Abbreviation used for consonant-vowel-consonant words, used to describe the order of sounds. Some examples of CVC words are: cat, pen, top, chat (because ch makes one sound). Other similar abbreviations include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• VC words e.g. on, is, it.• CCVC words e.g. trap and black.• CVCC words e.g. milk and fast.

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grapheme	Written letters or a group of letters which represent one single sound (phoneme) e.g. a, l, sh, air, ck.
phoneme	A single sound that can be made by one or more letters – e.g. s, k, z, oo, ph, igh.
pure sound	Pronouncing each letter sound clearly and distinctly without adding additional sounds to the end e.g. 'f' not 'fuh.'
segment	This is the opposite of blending (see above). Splitting a word up into individual sounds – used when spelling and writing.
tricky words	Words that are difficult to sound out e.g. said, the, because.
trigraph	Three letters which go together make one sound e.g. ear, air, igh, dge, tch.
vowel	The letters a, e, i, o, u.



Literacy (writing)

Level descriptors and home
learning ideas

Writing is an important life skill – whether it's sending text messages, writing a shopping list, or coming up with poems and stories. Learning to write can feel intimidating, but it doesn't have to be – there are lots of opportunities for developing writing skills at home. This booklet has some ideas, as well as a description of each gemstone level so you can track your young person's progress.





- Write a postcard from your holiday, or from a weekend day trip. Think about who to send it to, and how you can make them really jealous! You can also use this to practice how to write an address.
- Write the shopping list before you go shopping. As an extra motivator, you could ask your young person to add an extra item to the shopping list of their choice!
- Write a note to a friend, a party invitation, or a birthday card.
- Write a diary to record what happens every day.
- Write a recipe or some instructions for someone to follow. You could write down a recipe with silly food combinations to make a yucky potion.

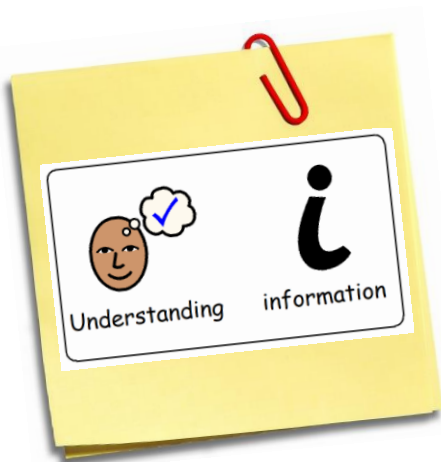
When writing, see if you can use capital letters, full stops, question marks and exclamation marks. Learners towards the higher gemstone levels should try to use a capital letter for the personal pronoun 'I' and join sentences using 'and'.



- When on a walk, think of adjectives to describe the environment and feelings e.g. **snowy** sky, **icy** fingers.
- Make a picture bank of favourite pictures. Pick three favourite pictures (e.g. a dragon, a racing car and a treasure box). Write a story including all three pictures. Use the pictures to help with descriptive writing in the story.
- Plan ideas before writing by using a spider diagram/a list of things to be included.
- Go on a walk and write down some words seen in the environment. When at home, try to put the words together in an interesting way to make a poem (add in small words like: the, in, on, is because etc).
- Read or listen to some poetry and write your own poems.



- Make up sentences, a song or rhyme with words that have the same phonetic sound (I **ea**t **swee**ts and **mea**t and drink **tea**. Then write and underline the different ways to spell the same sound.
- Use Look, Cover, Spell, Check technique to learn new spellings. Students look at a word for a few minutes, cover the word up, write the word and then check if it is written correctly.
- Use a dictionary to check spelling.
- Practise lower case and uppercase letters with a range of writing resources: e.g. chalks, chunky pens, in the condensation on a window! Say the letter names out loud.
- Use a finger to put a space between words.



- Listen to a TV / radio programme of interest and take notes.
- Write about an event that has happened at home as a newspaper article, using headlines, headings, sub-headings. Add in a picture.
- Read a chapter of a book, a newspaper article or longer piece of writing and then write a summary, picking out the most important points.
- Make up an advert and record the audio or present on video. Listen to it and write down all the words / phrases instinctively used to persuade an audience to buy. Reflect on what other persuasive language could have been used and add to the list.



Sapphire

Pearl

Silver

Gold

Emerald

Jet

Diamond

Ruby

- Can write lower case **(a)** and capital **(A)** letters
- Plans a sentence out loud before writing it
- Uses adjectives (describing words)
- Can name the letters of the alphabet
- Joins words and phrases using and
- Separates words with spaces
- Use capital letters for names and the pronoun 'I'
- Uses capital letters, full stops, question marks and exclamation marks



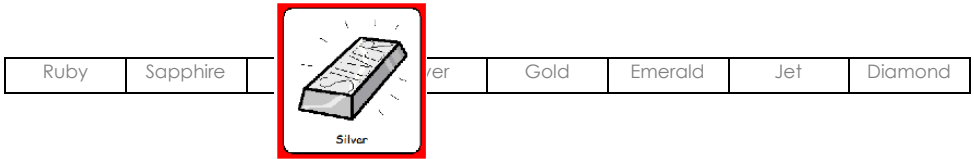
Sapphire

- Puts one sentence after another to form short stories or accounts
- Re-reads what they have written to check it makes sense
- Discusses what they have written
- Spell words containing each of the 40+ **phonemes** (see phonics glossary)
- Adds -s or -es to make nouns plural (e.g. cat, **cats**)
- Uses -ing, -est, -er, -ed where there is no change needed in the root word, e.g. changing **play** to **played**
- Writes from memory simple sentences spoken aloud by an adult that include 'tricky' words



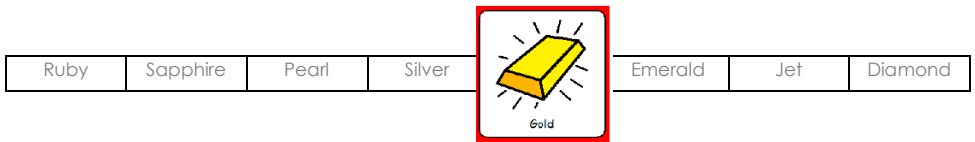
Pearl

- Writes lower case letters of the correct size
- Writes capital letters of the correct size and the right way up, in proportion to lower case letters
- Uses correct-sized spaces between words
- Writes about personal experience and those of others (real and fictional)
- Writes about real events
- Uses **prefixes** and **suffixes** such as “use**less**”, “colour**ful**”, “**un**wrap”
- Spells some words with silent letters e.g. knight
- Checks the spelling of words using a dictionary
- Uses commas to list information in a sentence (e.g. “We bought cheese, beans, potatoes and coleslaw”).



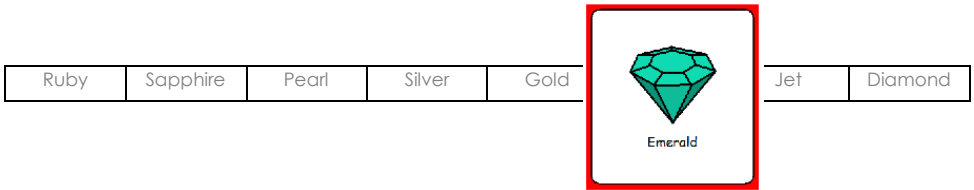
Silver

- Writes poetry
- Writes for different purposes
- Plans what they are going to write about including ideas and key words
- Checks their writing and looks for ways to improve
- Consistently the right tense, e.g. "yesterday I played **ed** football"
- Understands words used for casual and formal speech and writing
- Links ideas across paragraphs
- Uses headings, subheadings, columns, and bullet points to structure writing
- Uses colons and semi-colons



Gold

- Can explain what a prefix and a suffix are
- Can write lots of words that sound the same but are spelled differently
- Uses similes, e.g. “**as** light **as** a feather”
- Uses expanded noun phrases, e.g. “the shining stars”
- Plans their writing by discussing it before they start
- Creates settings, characters and a plot for a story
- Reads their work out loud in front of the class
- Presents work clearly and appropriately (with joined up handwriting)
- Uses speech marks correctly
- Uses pronouns correctly, e.g. his, hers, its, theirs



Emerald

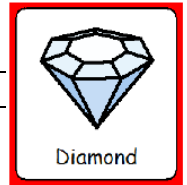
- Uses the possessive apostrophe (e.g. John's ball)
- Uses metaphors (e.g. "his fingers were frozen icicles")
- Uses adverbial phrases (e.g. "he looked at me with an evil stare")
- Links ideas using different paragraphs
- Uses headings and sub-headings
- Checks and edits their work, checking for spelling and vocabulary errors
- Writes sentences with more than one clause, e.g. "We went to meet our teacher, who was very friendly"
- Uses lots of conjunctions like when, if, because, although
- Uses the present perfect tense ("I have seen")
- Uses adverbs, conjunctions and prepositions to express time and cause
- Uses fronted adverbials ("Yawning and stretching, he climbed out of bed")

Ruby	Sapphire	Pearl	Silver	Gold	Emerald		Diamond
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Jet

- Identifies an audience for their work and writes with them in mind
- Drafts their work, developing initial ideas and researching where necessary
- Considers how authors have developed characters and settings
- Writes a short summary of a longer passage
- Uses subordinating conjunctions (if, when, because)
- Writes persuasively using rhetorical questions and logical connectives (so, therefore)
- Uses organisational and presentational devices to structure text
- Punctuates direct and indirect speech
- Uses modal verbs and adverbs confidently
- Punctuates bullet points

Ruby	Sapphire	Pearl	Silver	Gold	Emerald	Jet
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Diamond

- Assesses the effectiveness of their own and other people's writing
- Suggests changes to the vocabulary, grammar and punctuation they have used to improve the writing
- Independently checks their work for spelling and punctuation and grammatical errors
- Uses passive verbs ("he was hit by the flying object")
- Uses the past perfect tense ("I had seen")
- Uses expanded noun phrases ("The tall girl standing by the window...")
- Uses relative clauses ("The boy, who had not done his homework...")
- Uses hyphens, brackets and dashes
- Uses semi-colons, colons and dashes as boundaries between independent clauses

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