



## Pine Hollow Placement Evaluation

### Picking the Right Program for Your Early Reader

Consider the level at which your student is working in their language arts and answer the following questions. Put a check mark next to those that are true for your student. Please read all of the questions, even if they appear to be beyond your student's level. If you are hovering in your answers near the very end of the "Progressing Reader" section, your student may be ready to shift their focus from reading and decoding to accelerating their comprehension skills and starting grammar and writing.

#### Beginning Reader Questions | Choose one or more in this section.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ My student shows very little interest in reading for themselves, although they enjoy listening to me read aloud.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ My student shows interest in trying to "read" words that they have really memorized from reading aloud.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ My student knows all the names of the letters of the alphabet, but none of the sounds.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ My student knows all the names of the letters of the alphabet, and some of the sounds. (Don't check #4 if #5 is true!)
5. \_\_\_\_\_ My student knows all the names of the alphabet, but knows some or none of the sounds, yet he is an older student. I have been waiting for them to show readiness before beginning, and they've begun to express interest in the alphabet and reading.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ My student is still quite young, but has been quick to pick up whatever I give them as far as any letter names, letter sounds, or word recognition. I think they might be self-teaching or learning from older siblings, too, because of how curious and motivated to learn they are in this area. I haven't really started a formal program, though.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ None of these are true for my student. They know all the names of the alphabet and all (or most) of the letter sounds.

## What makes Pine Hollow's reading methodology work?

### Others Use: Horizontal Phonics

Horizontal phonics introduces vowel and consonant sounds one at a time for each letter, so that your student would learn all the "soft" sounds of all the vowels, and all the "hard" sounds of all the consonants first before progressing on to the additional sounds each letter makes.

Thus a student would first learn that "a" as in "pan," and perhaps weeks or months later be taught that it also says "a" as in "pane," or "a" as in father. Horizontal phonics often do not teach longer phonograms that say one sound such as "oa" or "dge," etc.

### Pine Hollow: Vertical Phonics

Vertical phonics takes the approach that it better serves the child to learn all the most common sounds a letter makes at the time they first learn the letter, so that they can more easily decode and are willing to try different options to decode a new word.

Additionally, vertical phonics includes introduction of longer phonograms (like "oa" and "dge," etc.) that help eliminate many common spelling rules which are broken as often as they are kept.

## Handwriting Issues | Choose one in this section.

8. \_\_\_\_\_ My student recognizes letters of the alphabet by sight, but has difficulty writing the letters.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ My student knows all the sounds of the alphabet and can say them for me, but has difficulty with writing them.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ My student is progressing nicely in reading and comprehension, but clearly struggles with handwriting more than the other language arts skills.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ My student is progressing nicely in reading and comprehension, but is frustrated by handwriting and often ends up in tears when I ask them to do grade-level assignments.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ My student can write their letters, but they lack good formation and is having trouble (or I know they'd have trouble) writing them in the small lined paper provided with the program.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ My student is progressing well with their handwriting, and they are right where I'd expect them to be for their grade.

## Switching to Vertical Phonics

Pine Hollow methodology of vertical phonics has proven very successful in the long term as students using this method typically begin decoding complicated words more quickly and become confident spellers. If you are switching to vertical phonics from another approach, the investment will pay off!

## Progressing Reader Questions | Choose one in this section.

14. \_\_\_\_\_ My student has been completing a different phonics program, and I do not feel very confident about how well my student learned the sounds of the alphabet. I am thinking that I might need to start all over again.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ My student is now reading easy three-letter words such as bat, win, or pot, with the “soft vowel sounds,” but we are switching from another program and they do not know any other vowel sounds, such as the “a” in “wake” or the “a” in “father.”
16. \_\_\_\_\_ My student has been completing a horizontal phonics program and has learned only the “soft” or “first” vowel sounds and has also demonstrated gaps in learning other sounds.
17. \_\_\_\_\_ My student is now reading easy three-letter words such as bat, win, or pot with the “soft vowel sounds,” and we have completed a vertical phonics program (learning all the sounds a vowel or consonant makes) such as Pine Hollow, so they know most other sounds well, too.
18. \_\_\_\_\_ My student can read simple three-letter words and has progressed on to four-letter words, some including silent “e,” but does not decode words fluently or easily and is not really reading sentences yet.
19. \_\_\_\_\_ My student can read three- to five-letter words with ease and is reading simple sentences quite well, but slowly, and they are still in need of a lot of guidance to complete any reading.
20. \_\_\_\_\_ My student can read four- to six-letter words with ease and is reading simple sentences quite fluently, although they are still in need of my presence to complete any reading.
21. \_\_\_\_\_ My student can read three- to six-letter words and sentences with ease, yet if I ask them questions about what they have read, they are unable to tell me what the sentence meant.
22. \_\_\_\_\_ My student is reading sentences fairly well with guidance and is starting to be able to spell words aloud that they have encountered before in their reading.
23. \_\_\_\_\_ My student is reading short paragraphs with a little guidance, but is lagging behind in spelling and comprehension skills.
24. \_\_\_\_\_ My student is reading short paragraphs on their own, but I do feel that they are ahead in reading and I am concerned that their other language skills, such as spelling, comprehension, and advanced phonics are lagging behind.

# Scoring the Pine Hollow Placement Evaluation

## Helping You Pick the Right Program for Your Student

Find the number of the questions you checked that best describe where your student is at, and use the table below to learn what program is most likely to fit their current skill level and help them progress.



STARTING READER QUESTIONS	
IF YOU CHECKED:	CONSIDER THIS:
1	<p>Consider waiting to start instruction with your child. Even if they are as old as five, you will most likely encounter enough resistance that you will find yourself and your student frustrated. Many children do better if formal phonics instruction waits until they are six years old.</p> <p>For now, keep reading aloud with your student and wait for cues that they are ready to begin. Cues include asking about what the letter's name is, how to spell one's own name or other familiar words, or trying to read a word for themselves.</p>
2 or 3 or 4	<p>Your student is ready to use our "Letters to Little Words" program. This program provides in-depth instruction in phonics that can be paced to meet a student's needs. Even if your student knows some of the sounds, there is enough instruction here that they will need this program and are not ready for our "Syllables to Sentences" program. This program includes advanced phonics instruction in 2- and even 3-letter phonograms, such as "ai," "oa," and "dge."</p>
5 or 6	<p>You can begin with our "Letters to Little Words" if you think you need to take it slow, HOWEVER, we'd really recommend that you start with our "Syllables to Sentences" program, which moves more quickly through the vowel sounds and then progresses to blends and more difficult phonograms towards the end of the year. This is an 18-week program that can be sped up or slowed down depending on your student.</p> <p>If your student progresses quickly through "Syllables to Sentences," the program that follows after it is "Paragraphs to Pages." This program focuses on more difficult phonograms and blends. It will also cover the vowel sounds but very briefly before moving on to more complex phonograms. Completing these two programs in a year or just over a year is perfect for older students who need to cover the basics. These shorter programs provide flexibility if your student needs to progress through the material at a faster rate as they demonstrate an eagerness and aptitude for language arts.</p>
7	<p>Your student is most likely progressing in their reading enough to move into a higher level of language arts. Use the advice in the "Progressing Reader Questions" section below to determine which language arts program is a fit.</p>

## HANDWRITING QUESTIONS

IF YOU CHECKED:	CONSIDER THIS:
8	<p>Your student may be experiencing a normal lag between a child's ability to recognize a shape and reproducing it in print. Your student is most likely in the earliest stages of their phonics instruction, so there's no reason to worry too much at this stage. Keep working on handwriting, but try to stop before your student reaches a point of frustration.</p>
9 or 10	<p>Many students experience some difficulty in producing letters, even as they progress in their reading and decoding. This is because writing is a fine motor skill, and many children do not gain proficiency in this skill until well after they are able to read and decode. It's always good advice to keep working on handwriting, so that you are still expecting the student to be exposed to the discipline, but try to stop before your student reaches a point of frustration.</p> <p>If you'd like to help your student progress in fine-motor development, pick up a book of mazes in which the routes are fairly small, and challenge your student to stay within the lines, utilizing the same fine-motor skills used when writing. <b>If you are quite worried, read the advice in the two boxes below.</b></p>
11	<p>Your student has not yet developed the fine-motor skills necessary for completing their handwriting assignments. Many parents attribute this behavior to a bad attitude or disinterest, but in the vast majority of cases it is a lack of fine-motor skills that is the culprit. Usually kids will do well in the other areas of language arts, but falter or get frustrated when called upon to write.</p> <p>Try not to force the issue early. Go slow in the area of writing until they are demonstrating the fine-motor skills essential to writing. You'll save both you and your student a lot of tears, frustration and early discouragement.</p> <p><b>Also--read the next box.</b></p>
12	<p>Many parents are concerned that their child's lack of writing proficiency is directly related to the size of the lines on the writing paper we provide. If, however, larger lined paper (3/4 to 1 inch) is used for learning writing skills, (such as the type you'd find in grocery store aisles), your student will not be using the fine-motor skills needed for proper letter formation. Instead, these larger lines allow (and in fact, force) students to use their shoulder and entire arm to produce letters, as the size of the lines requires them to do.</p> <p>This is not using proper technique for writing. Most writing is produced by movement of the fingers and wrists, not the arm and the shoulder. This is why garage sales signs often don't look as good as normal-sized handwriting).</p> <p>It isn't helpful for your child to train muscles they shouldn't be using to write by using larger lined paper, and it can be harmful to the student by forming habits that will be harder to break later. If your student is having trouble with small-lined paper, find ways to help him progress in his fine-motor skills. Get a book on mazes in which the routes are fairly small, and challenge your student to stay within the lines. Ed Emberly's books on drawing can also build these skills.</p>
13	<p>That's great! You'll probably be able to place your student with some of the statements in the last section on this form.</p>

# Choosing a Program for Your Progressing Reader

If you are new to the Pine Hollow reading program, chances are you are switching from another program. The answers below should help your transition.

**SWITCHING TO VERTICAL PHONICS?** If you are switching to vertical phonics from another approach, you may need to spend some time with your student in learning alphabetical sounds or phonograms they didn't learn earlier, but the investment will pay off as begin decoding complicated words more quickly and become confident spellers!

PROGRESSING READER QUESTIONS	
IF YOU CHECKED:	CONSIDER THIS:
14	<p>If you are not sure about what sounds your student has, or has not mastered, take the time to go through the alphabet with them and evaluate what they are truly able to recall. Also, determine whether or not the program used horizontal or vertical phonics. (See definitions on the front page.) Once you've determined how many of the alphabet letter sounds they know well, consider going one of these two routes.</p> <p><b>Our 1st Choice: Best if student knows &lt;50% of alphabetical sounds and a K student</b> Start back with "Letters to Little Words" program, which will provide some fantastic review of all the sounds and will lay an excellent foundation even though it contains some review. Your student would likely complete the program in under a year.</p> <p><b>Our 2nd Choice: Best if student knows &gt;50% of alphabetical sounds and 1st Grade+</b> Purchase our Phonics Cards set, and review and teach your student to resolve any gaps in learning. Then, move on to "Syllables to Sentences" when you are confident your student has mastered all the alphabet sounds in the Phonics Cards set.</p>
15 or 16	<p>Your student is technically ready to begin our "Syllables to Sentences" program, however, you may encounter some bumps along the way because of the differences between the horizontal and the vertical phonics methods (see definitions on front page). We would recommend that you purchase the "Syllables to Sentences" program with the Phonics Learning Set, and start using the Phonics Cards set ahead of when you begin the program. You can review and teach through the phonics cards to resolve any gaps in learning. Games in the Phonics Cards set will add some fun.</p>
17 or 18	<p>Your student will move easily into the "Syllables to Sentences" program this year.</p>
19	<p>Your student would technically be placed somewhere in the middle of our "Syllables to Sentences" program, but will rapidly be ready for our "Paragraphs to Pages" program. We would recommend purchasing both programs as your student will need to cover the phonograms covered in the latter half of the "Syllables to Sentences" program. Your student may progress quickly through this program but the additional reading practice and phonogram coverage will be vital in developing in your student's decoding skills and reading comprehension. As each of these are 18-week programs, your student can complete both in a year.</p>
20	<p><b>First read Answer #19 above</b>, as the answer for this question is basically the same as for #19. However, having chosen #20 as better describing your student, there is more reason to believe that you should place your child in "Paragraphs to Pages" and continue with "Stories to Short Chapters" when he is ready. It is unlikely that your student would be challenged sufficiently by "Syllables to Sentences."</p>

## PROGRESSING READER QUESTIONS (Continued)

IF YOU CHECKED:	CONSIDER THIS:
21	<p>Your student’s decoding skills have outrun his comprehension skills, so it’s time to slow down. This may be a good time to simply practice reading and decoding with some easy readers. If your student hasn’t completed our “Syllables to Sentences” program, try purchasing only the “Romp in Pine Nut Park Readers Set,” and ask them questions as they are reading, and after they finish their reading for each session. In this way, you can help train your student to be thinking about what they are reading, and slow them down in their decoding enough to absorb the meaning. It’s time right now to break these habits and replace them with good reading comprehension. When you feel they are back on the right track, start the “Paragraphs to Pages” program, which also works quite heavily on comprehension skills.</p>
22	<p>Your student should be able to move seamlessly into “Stories to Short Chapters.” In this program, students will be expected to read 2-4 pages containing 1-2 paragraphs each with guidance. In the unlikely event that you find your student has trouble with decoding some of the words as you begin, purchase our Phonics Cards set, and review and teach your student so that any gaps in learning are resolved as you move along with “Stories to Short Chapters.”</p>
23	<p>Your student is experiencing a jump in their reading skills, but that does not always mean they are keeping pace with the other “lateral” language arts skills. These “lateral” skills are always a little behind the reading skills (after all, you can read a word before you can spell it or understand it, etc.), but they should still keep a general pace with reading skills. If your student’s reading skills continue to progress, but those “lateral” skills do not improve, your student will have increasing difficulty completing their language arts program. It is at this time that you should begin choosing your program not just on reading ability, but based upon all the language arts skills.</p> <p>Your student should be able to move fairly well into “Stories to Short Chapters.” In this program students will be expected to read 2-4 pages containing 1-2 paragraphs each with guidance. HOWEVER, you should expect to spend extra time on spelling and comprehension skills. You can work on comprehension skills with the strategies outlined in <b>Answer #21</b>, and “Stories to Short Chapters” offers a lot of work on comprehension. As to spelling, oral or written drill or games will usually do the trick.</p>
24	<p><b>First read Answer #23 above</b>, as the answer for this question is basically the same. However, having chosen #24 as better describing your student, there is more reason to believe that but you may want to be more aggressive in working on the skills that you feel are in question for your student.</p> <p>Use the strategies mentioned in <b>Answer #23</b>, but also consider purchasing one or more resources from “Paragraphs to Pages” (if you’ve not completed it) in areas that you feel do need work. Supplement throughout the year, or before the school year begins with these resources and move into the “Stories to Short Chapters” program.</p>