

# Guide to Student Learning in First Grade



*The student learning guide provides valuable information on what students learn in first grade.  
Use this information to support and reinforce learning at home.*

At primary schools, all students will acquire foundational literacy and math skills in child-centered learning environments. The primary school program engages students in a variety of literacy experiences and interactions that introduce and reinforce essential literacy skills and strategies.

Classroom instruction is shaped by the guiding principle that all students must acquire the foundational reading and writing skills necessary to be strategic readers, thinkers, and writers. Language, reading, and writing skills are explicitly taught during English Language Arts instruction. Social studies and science instruction are used to apply and reinforce literacy skills as students use oral language, reading, and writing skills to learn essential understanding.

Information and communication technology instruction is embedded into all content areas. The district provides each student with a device to introduce students to the use of technology tools for communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking.

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## English Language Arts (ELA)

In first grade, students will become established as readers and writers and will be given ample opportunities to reinforce and build on their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills through a balanced literacy approach. A focus on the elements of modeled, shared, guided, and independent reading and writing experiences is essential in order to build the skills necessary to become solid readers and writers. In addition, literacy skills will be integrated into science, social studies and health instruction. Students will have ample opportunities to read, write, listen and speak in order to further understand the grade-level content.

**READING:** First graders will use strategies to increase their decoding and comprehension of text. A variety of text and genres will be used including fiction, informational text, and poetry. Students will continue to foster their working knowledge of concepts of print, the alphabetic principle, and other basic foundational skills necessary as a part of an effective, comprehensive literacy program.

**WRITING:** Grade one students use the writing process to write for different purposes and audiences in a variety of genres including narrative, informational, and opinion. Students will apply their writing skills in a variety of ways including “how to” books, stories, and shared resource projects.

**SPEAKING AND LISTENING:** Students will understand that being competent in speaking and listening will allow them to take advantage of new opportunities for communication. Students will listen and speak to understand, to interact socially, to extend discussion, and to discuss content.

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# Mathematics

In first grade, instructional time is focused on four critical areas that will enable students to:

Develop an understanding of strategies for addition and subtraction within 20:

- Students develop strategies for adding and subtracting whole numbers.
- Students model mathematical situations of joining together and take apart to develop understanding of addition and subtraction.
- Students use properties of addition to add whole numbers and develop the strategy of making a ten to solve addition and subtraction problems within 20.
- Students build an understanding of the relationship between addition and subtraction.

Develop an understanding of whole number relationships and place value, including grouping in tens and ones:

- Students develop, discuss, and use efficient, accurate, and generalizable methods to add within 100 and subtract multiples of 10.
- Students compare whole numbers (at least to 100) to develop understanding of and solve problems involving their relative sizes.
- Students begin to think of whole numbers between 10 and 100 in terms of tens and ones (especially recognizing the numbers 11 to 19 as composed of a ten and some ones).
- Through activities that build number sense, they understand the order of the counting numbers and their relative magnitudes.

Develop an understanding of linear measurement and measuring lengths as iterating length units:

- Students develop an understanding of the meaning and processes of measurement, including underlying concepts such as iterating (the mental activity of building up the length of an object with equal-sized units) and the transitivity principle for indirect measurement.

Reason about attributes of, and composing and decomposing geometric shapes:

- Students compose and decompose plane or solid figures (e.g., put two triangles together to make a quadrilateral) and build understanding of part-whole relationships as well as the properties of the original and composite shapes.
- As they combine shapes, students recognize them from different perspectives and orientations, describe their geometric attributes, and determine how they are alike and different.

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# Science

In first grade, science instruction will help to foster an understanding of scientific facts, concepts, and methods.

Children will participate in activities to acquire skill and knowledge in the areas of:

- Waves: Light and Sound
- Weather and Space Systems: Patterns and Cycles
- Organisms: Structure, Function, and Information Processing

While engaged in these units of study, first grade students will:

- Sort objects into groups based on a specific property.
- Describe the properties of living and non-living organisms.
- Make predictions about specific objects.
- Record and discuss observations.
- Conduct experiments by following simple directions.

Students will also engage in reading informational texts and writing tasks based on their reading. Each child is an active participant in science. Their experiences in science center around a “hands-on” approach using various kits of materials and conducting experiments.

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## Social Studies

In first grade, students learn about families and develop an awareness of cultural diversity within the American culture. Students learn about how families live and work in the United States and elsewhere; explore aspects of the economy such as jobs, transportation, stores and shops, income, spending, and saving; begin to learn the concepts of city, state, and nation; practice the democratic processes such as making rules and decisions; learn inquiry skills such as becoming aware of a problem, knowing how to gain information, being able to organize and analyze information, and finding solutions.

As a part of their learning, first grade students will:

- Create an accurately sequenced family tree to show how families have a history and change over time.
- Describe similarities and differences in families, customs, and traditions.
- Discover more about the community they live in.
- Learn that a map is a picture of a place.
- Learn the important features of a map.
- Understand the difference between need and want.
- Learn about prosperity and scarcity.
- Learn about citizenship.
- Recite the Pledge of Allegiance.
- Learn about famous Americans and national holidays.

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## Health

In first grade, the health curriculum will teach children about physical wellness and emotional balance, and promote positive self-esteem. Children will acquire information on a variety of topics and develop a greater understanding of how to set goals and make decisions that lead to a healthy life.

Helping students learn to respect themselves and to respect others is an important component of health education at all grade levels.

First grade students will learn about:

- Recognizing and controlling emotions and feelings.
- Germs, hand washing, and healthy behaviors.
- Dental hygiene.

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## Physical Education

During physical education class, first grade students begin to build body-space awareness, eye-hand coordination, and rhythm through simple games and sports, gymnastics, and dance. The units of study for first grade are:

- Fitness
- Fundamental movement skills/games
- Low organizational and recreational games
- Music/movement/rhythms
- Bowling
- Educational gymnastics
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

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## Music

In first grade, students learn to differentiate between speaking, whispering, shouting and singing. They learn to play instruments and use manipulatives to reinforce music concepts. Students learn about the music elements: rhythm, melody, harmony, and form. They are able to echo and repeat rhythmic and melodic patterns, reading very simple notation, such as sol-mi and quarter-eighth notes. Students create music as a class and learn to improvise rhythm patterns and with their singing voice. They learn to tell the difference between beat and rhythm, and explore music concepts through contrasts, such as high-low, loud-soft, fast-slow, and contrasting A-B sections of music. Students begin to learn a repertoire of music that helps to establish routines, impart information, and connects to content learned in other classes. They learn American folk songs and multicultural songs and perform for each other and their teachers. They listen to and describe music examples played in class.



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## Art

In first grade art, students will build their art vocabulary to discuss art, describe the process of making art and explain their perceptions and feelings about art. They will continue to draw, paint, and create forms while expanding the variety of media and tools they use. Students learn about the art elements: line, shape, color, form, texture, and space. Students this age are interested in familiar subjects, such as family and animals, and may use these as subjects in their art work. Students are introduced to famous artworks that exemplify the use of line types, geometric shapes, primary colors, real texture, and overlapping objects. With teacher guidance, students begin to analyze works of art and explore cross-curricular connections. In so doing, they are inspired to create original artworks from their imagination that incorporate these elements.