SCHOLASTIC

Phonics *From* A *to* Z

A Practical Guide

BY WILEY BLEVINS

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Teaching Resources

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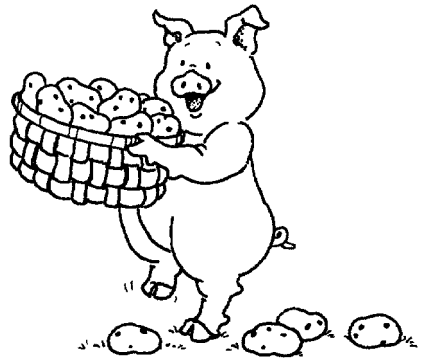
Dedication

I would like to dedicate this book to Jeanne Chall, Marilyn Adams, M. E. Curtis, and the many other professors, colleagues, and classroom teachers who have taught me so much about how children learn to read.



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What Is Phonics?

The sun beat down on me hotter than I had ever felt it. I could feel the steam sizzling up from the tarmac as I stepped off the plane. Here I was in Guayaquil, Ecuador. My charge was to teach a class of second graders—many of whom had limited English abilities—to read. It was my first year teaching and I had journeyed far from Coal City, West Virginia, where I had first learned about the mysteries of books. As I walked toward the airline terminal, the enormity of the challenge and responsibility I had accepted struck me. I suddenly felt even hotter!

Each year millions of teachers enter classrooms across our nation (and the world) with this same challenge. They have to make key decisions as they wrestle with the question of how best to teach children to read. Considerable discussion and debate center around answering this critical question. The debate rages on not only in classrooms, but in universities and at school board meetings everywhere. However, this book is not about that "great debate." It is designed to help you better understand our unique and sometimes complex language and how you can use that knowledge to better teach children to read. Its focus is on phonics—the relationship between sounds and their spellings—and how helping children understand this important piece of the reading "puzzle" can help develop fluent readers who have a passion for books and who understand how books can provide pleasure and information.

> "At one magical instant in your early childhood, the page of a book—that string of confused, alien ciphers—shivered into meaning. Words spoke to you, gave up their secrets; at that moment, whole universes opened. You became, irrevocably, a reader."
>
> —Alberto Manguel

Phonics: What and Why

According to a 1992 poll conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 62% of parents identified reading as one of the most important skills their children needed to learn. In 1994 the same polling firm conducted a survey for the American Federation of Teachers and the Chrysler Corporation and found that almost 70% of teachers identified reading as *the* most important skill for children to learn.

This is where it all began—my first class on my first day!

With such agreement on the importance of reading, how do we best teach children to read? What should be the goals of early reading instruction? The following goals are often cited:

1. automatic word recognition (fluency)
2. comprehension of text
3. development of a love of literature and a desire to read

The first goal—automatic word recognition—is the focus of this book. To become skilled readers, children must be able to identify words quickly and accurately. To do so, they must be proficient at decoding words. Decoding words involves converting the printed word into spoken language. A reader decodes a word by sounding it out, using context clues, using structural analysis, or recognizing the word by sight. In order to sound out words, a reader must be able to associate a specific spelling with a specific sound. Phonics involves this relationship between sounds and their spellings.

Phonics is not a specific teaching method. In fact, there are many ways to teach it. However, what most types of phonics instruction do have in common is that they focus on the teaching of sound-spelling relationships so that a young reader can come up with an approximate pronunciation of a word and then check it against his or her oral vocabulary.

Approximately 84% of English words are phonetically regular. Therefore, teaching the most common sound-spelling relationships in English is extremely useful for readers. As Anderson et al. (1985) write, "English is an alphabetic language in which there are consistent, though not entirely predictable, relationships between letters and sounds. When children learn these relationships well, most of the words in their spoken language become accessible to them when they see them in print. When this happens, children are said to have 'broken the code.'"

One of the arguments against teaching phonics is that the approximately 16% of so-called irregular English words appear with the greatest frequency in text (about 80% of the time). As you will discover throughout this book, these words are not as "irregular" as they may seem. Although they must be taught as sight words, the reader has to pay attention to their spelling patterns in order to store them in his or her memory. Some detractors of teaching phonics also contend that reading develops in the same way as speaking—naturally. Foorman (1995) responds by saying "humans are biologically specialized to produce language and have done so for nearly 1 million

The Connection Between Decoding and Comprehension

Phonics instruction helps the reader to map sounds onto spellings. This ability enables readers to decode words. **Decoding** words aids in the development of and improvement in word recognition. The more words a reader recognizes, the easier the reading task. Therefore, phonics instruction aids in the development of **word recognition** by providing children with an important and useful way to figure out unfamiliar words while reading.

When children begin to be able to recognize a large number of words quickly and accurately, **reading fluency** improves. Reading fluency refers to the ease with which children can read a text. As more and more words become firmly stored in a child's memory (that is, the child recognizes more and more words on sight), he or she gains fluency and **automaticity** in word recognition. Having many opportunities to decode words in text is critical to learning words by sight. The more times a child encounters a word in text, the more likely he or she is to recognize it by sight and to avoid making a reading error (Gough, Juel, and Roper-Schneider, 1983).

Reading fluency improves **reading comprehension**. Since children are no longer struggling with decoding words, they can devote their full attention (their mental energies) to making meaning from the text. As the vocabulary and concept demands increase in text, children need to be able to devote more of their attention to making meaning from text, and increasingly less attention to decoding. If children have to devote too much time to decoding words, their reading will be slow and labored. This will result in comprehension difficulties.

years. Such is not the case with reading and writing. If it were, there would not be illiterate children in the world."

Clearly, then, most children need instruction in learning to read. One of the critical early hurdles in reading instruction is helping children grasp the alphabetic principle. That is, to read, children must understand that this series of symbols we call the alphabet maps onto the sounds of our language in roughly predictable ways. This alphabetic principle is a key insight into early reading. Phonics instruction helps children to understand the alphabetic principle. And it enables children to get off to a quick start in relating sounds to spellings and thereby decoding words.

But isn't comprehension the most important part of reading? How does this ability to decode words help a reader understand a text? The flowchart on page 8 illustrates that strong decoding ability is necessary for reading comprehension. However, it is not the only skill a reader needs in order to make meaning from text. And sounding out words is not the only way to figure out an unfamiliar word while reading.

When they read, children need to be able to use three cueing systems. These systems represent signals in text that interact and overlap to help the reader understand what he or she is reading. The cueing systems are graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic.

1. **Graphophonic cues** involve a reader's knowledge of sound-spelling relationships. Phonics instruction helps children to use these cues.

2. **Syntactic cues** involve a reader's knowledge of the grammar or structure of language. This knowledge helps the reader to predict what type of word might appear in a certain place in a sentence. For example, it might be a naming word (noun), an action word (verb), or a describing word (adjective). This cueing system also involves an understanding of word order and the use of function words, such as *the* and *an*. For example, read the following sentence and choose a word to fill in the blank:

   We saw the _____ on the road.

   All possible words to fill in the blank must be naming words. You determined this from your knowledge of English syntax.

   When children enter school, most of them have an understanding of the basic syntactic structures of English. However, oral language is different from "book language." Written material might pose difficulties for some children because their oral language patterns differ so much from the more formal language patterns of text. Reading many books aloud will help these children gain an understanding of the more formal syntactic structures used for writing.

3. **Semantic cues** involve a reader's knowledge of the world. World knowledge helps the reader use cues in the text to discover the meaning of a word that fits into a specific place in a particular sentence. Readers use their semantic knowledge to determine whether a text makes sense.

Ten Important Research Findings About Phonics

Countless research studies have been conducted on phonics instruction. Much of this research has focused on the usefulness of phonics instruction and the best ways to teach children about sound-spelling relationships. Below are ten of the top research findings regarding phonics.

1 Phonics Instruction Can Help All Children Learn to Read

All children can benefit from instruction in the most common sound-spelling relationships in English. This instruction helps children decode words that follow these predictable relationships.

Phonics instruction is particularly beneficial for children at risk for learning difficulties—those children who come to school with limited exposures to books, have had few opportunities to develop their oral languages, are from low socioeconomic families, have below-average intelligence, are learning English as a second language, or are suspected of having a learning disability. However, even children from language-rich backgrounds benefit from phonics instruction (Chall, 1967). As Chall states, "By learning phonics, students make faster progress in acquiring literary skills—reading and writing. By the age of six, most children already have about 6,000 words in their listening and speaking vocabularies. With phonics they learn to read and write these and more words at a faster rate than they would without phonics."

Phonics instruction is therefore an essential ingredient in early reading instruction. The purpose of this instruction is to teach children how to read with accuracy, comprehension, fluency, and pleasure. The early ability to sound out words successfully is a strong predictor of future growth in decoding (Lundberg, 1984) and comprehension (Lesgold and Resnick, 1982). Weak decoding skills are characteristic of poor readers (Carnine, Carnine, and Gertsen, 1984; Lesgold and Curtis, 1981). Readers who are skilled at decoding usually comprehend text better than those who are poor decoders. Why this is so can be gleaned from the work of cognitive psychologists. They contend that we each have a set amount of mental energy to devote to any task. Since decoding requires so much of this mental energy, little is left over for higher-level comprehension. As decoding skills improve and more and more words are recognized by sight, less mental energy is required to decode words and more mental energy can be devoted to making meaning from the text (Freedman and Calfee, 1984; LaBerge and Samuels, 1974).

In addition, successful early decoding ability is related to the number of words a reader encounters. That is, children who are good decoders read many more words than children who are poor decoders (Juel, 1988). This wide reading results in greater reading growth.

Phonics instruction also helps to get across the alphabetic principle (that the letters of the alphabet stand for sounds) by teaching the relationships between letters and the sounds they represent. Beginning readers learn better when their teachers emphasize these relationships (Chall, 1996).

Three Golden Rules

Becoming a Nation of Readers (Anderson et al., 1985) makes the following three recommendations regarding phonics instruction:

1. Do it early.
2. Keep it simple.
3. Except in cases of diagnosed individual need, complete basic instruction by the end of second grade.

2 Explicit Phonics Instruction Is More Beneficial Than Implicit Instruction

According to Chall (1996), "systematic and early instruction in phonics leads to better reading: better accuracy of word recognition, decoding, spelling, and oral and silent reading

comprehension." The most effective type of instruction, especially for children at risk for reading difficulties, is **explicit** (direct) instruction (Adams, 1990; Chall, 1996; Honig, 1995; Stahl and Miller, 1989; Anderson et al., 1985; Snow et al., 1988). **Implicit** instruction relies on readers "discovering" clues about sound-spelling relationships. Good readers can do this; poor readers aren't likely to. Good readers can generalize their knowledge of sound-spelling relationships to read new words in which these and other sound-spellings occur. Poor readers must rely on explicit instruction.

Although explicit instruction has proved more effective than implicit instruction, the key element in the success of explicit phonics instruction is the provision of many opportunities to read decodable words (that is, words containing previously taught sound-spellings) in context (Stahl, Osborn, and Pearson, 1992; Juel and Roper-Schneider, 1985; Adams, 1990). In fact, students who receive phonics instruction achieve best in both decoding and comprehension if the text they read contains high percentages of decodable words (Blevins, 2000). In addition, by around second or third grade, children who've been taught with explicit phonics instruction generally surpass the reading abilities of their peers who've been taught with implicit phonics instruction (Chall, 1996).

3 Most Poor Readers Have Weak Phonics Skills and a Strategy Imbalance

Most poor readers have a strategy imbalance. They tend to over-rely on one reading strategy, such as the use of context and picture clues, to the exclusion of other strategies that might be more appropriate (Sulzby, 1985). To become skilled, fluent readers, children need to have a repertoire of strategies to figure out unfamiliar words (Cunningham, 1990). These strategies include using a knowledge of sound-spelling relationships, using context clues, and using structural clues. Younger and less skilled readers rely more on context clues than other, often more effective, strategies (Stanovich, 1980). This is partly due to their inability to use sound-spelling relationships to decode words. Stronger readers don't need to rely on context clues because they can quickly and accurately decode words by sounding them out.

Unfortunately, children who get off to a slow start in reading rarely catch up to their peers and seldom develop into strong readers (Stanovich, 1986; Juel, 1988). Those who experience difficulties decoding early on tend to read less and thereby grow less in terms of word recognition skills and vocabulary.

A longitudinal study conducted by Juel (1988) revealed an .88 probability that a child who is a poor reader at the end of first grade would still be a poor reader at the end of fourth grade. Stanovich (1986) refers to this as the "Matthew Effect" in which the "rich get richer" (children who are successful decoders early on read more and therefore improve in reading), and the "poor get poorer" (children who have difficulties decoding read less and less and become increasingly distanced from the good decoders in terms of reading ability).

4 Phonics Knowledge Has a Powerful Effect on Decoding Ability

Phonics knowledge affects decoding ability positively (Stanovich and West, 1989). Early attainment of decoding skill is important because this accurately predicts later skill in reading comprehension (Beck and Juel, 1995).

One way to help children achieve the ultimate goal of reading instruction, to make meaning of text, is to help them achieve automaticity in decoding words (Gaskins et al., 1988). Skilled readers recognize the majority of words they encounter in text quickly and accurately, independent of context (Cunningham, 1975–76; Stanovich, 1984). The use of graphophonic

cues (knowledge of sound-spelling relationships) facilitates word recognition abilities. In fact, a child's word recognition speed in first grade has been shown to be a strong predictor of reading comprehension ability in second grade (Lesgold and Resnick, 1982; Beck and Juel, 1995).

However, the inability automatically to recognize frequently encountered words affects reading in the following ways (Royer and Sinatra, 1994):

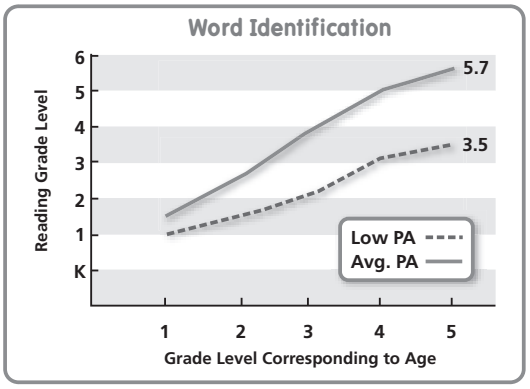
1. Since words can be stored in working memory for only a limited amount of time (approximately 10–15 seconds), slow decoding can result in some words "decaying" before a meaningful chunk of text can be processed.

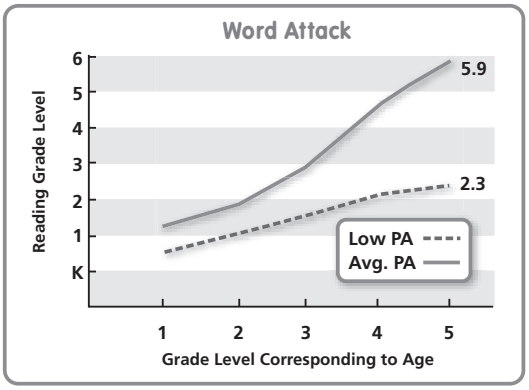
2. Devoting large amounts of mental energy to decoding words leaves less mental energy available for higher-level comprehension. This can result in comprehension breakdowns.

5 Good Decoders Rely Less on Context Clues Than Poor Decoders

Good readers rely less on context clues than poor readers do because their decoding skills are so strong (Gough and Juel, 1991). It's only when good readers can't use their knowledge of sound-spelling relationships to figure out an unfamiliar word that they rely on context clues. In contrast, poor readers, who often have weak decoding skills, over-rely on context clues to try to make meaning from text (Nicholson, 1992; Stanovich, 1986). Any reader, strong or weak, can use context clues only up to a certain point. It has been estimated that only one out of every four words (25%) can be predicted using context (Gough, Alford, and Holley-Wilcox, 1981). The words that are the easiest to predict are function words such as *the* and *an*. Content words—the words that carry the bulk of the meaning in a text—are the most difficult to predict. Researchers estimate that content words can be predicted only about 10% of the time (Gough, 1983). A reader needs to use his or her knowledge of phonics (sound-spelling relationships) to decode these words.

The charts to the right show the growth of sight word (word identification) and phonemic decoding (word attack) skills in children who begin first grade above (avg.) or below the 20th percentile in phonological awareness (PA). Those children who had sufficient phonemic awareness skills understood "how words work." That is, they were better equipped to sound out words while reading, and to spell words while writing.





From Torgeson and Mathes, *A Basic Guide to Understanding, Assessing, and Teaching Phonological Awareness*, Pro-Ed, 2000

The reading development of these children progressed at an expected rate. Those children with weak phonemic awareness skills did not have access to words in the same way. Therefore, they had to rely on memorizing words by sight. As the text became less patterned and repetitious (around grade 2), the reading skills of these students fell apart as you can see on the graphs. Look closely at grade 2 on the graphs. Not only did the reading growth of these students begin to level off, these students began to fall farther behind their grade-level peers, and the gap between their reading ability and that needed to handle grade-level reading demands increased dramatically.

> "The whole word method . . . may serve a student adequately up to about second grade. But failure to acquire and use efficient decoding skills will begin to take a toll on reading comprehension by grade 3."
>
> —Jeanne Chall

6 The Reading Process Relies on a Reader's Attention to Each Letter in a Word

Eye-movement studies have revealed that skilled readers attend to almost every word in a sentence and process the letters that compose each word (McConkie and Zola, 1987). Therefore, reading is a "letter-mediated" rather than a "whole-word-mediated" process (Just and Carpenter, 1987). Prior to these findings, it was assumed that readers did not process each letter in a word; rather they recognized the word based on shape, a few letters, and context.

Research has also revealed that poor readers do not fully analyze words; for example, some poor readers tend to rely on initial consonants cues only (Stanovich, 1992; Vellutino and Scanlon, 1987). Therefore, phonics instruction should help to focus children's attention on all the letters or spellings that make up words and the sounds each represents by emphasizing the full analysis of words. In addition, phonics instruction must teach children strategies to use this information to decode words. This attention to the spelling patterns in words is necessary for the reader to store the words in his or her memory. It also helps the reader to become a better speller because the common spelling patterns of English are attended to to a greater degree and thereby more fully learned (Ehri, 1987; Blevins, 2000).

7 Phonemic Awareness Is Necessary for Phonics Instruction to Be Effective

Before children can use a knowledge of sound-spelling relationships to decode words, they must understand that words are made up of sounds (Adams, 1990). Many children come to school thinking of words as whole units—*cat, dog, run*. Before they can learn to read, children must realize that these words can be broken into smaller units—and sounded out. Phonemic awareness is the understanding, or insight, that a word is made up of a series of discrete sounds. Without this insight, phonics instruction will not make sense to children.

When a child asks me how to spell a word, I first ask, "What have you tried?" This provides me with information on the child's ability to segment the word, the sound-spellings he or she has learned, and the ways the child approaches spelling. I base my feedback on the child's strategy use. For example, occasionally when a child attempts to spell a word, he or she overarticulates it. This drawing out of each sound can result in misspellings. I bring this to the child's attention and suggest that he or she say the word at a more natural speed to check the spelling. I ask, "Have you added any unnecessary letters?"

8 Phonics Instruction Improves Spelling Ability

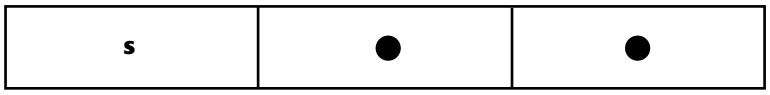
Reading and writing are interrelated and complementary processes (Pinnell, 1994). Whereas phonics is characterized by putting together sounds to read words that are printed, spelling involves breaking down spoken words into sounds in order to write them. To spell, or encode, a word, a child must match a spelling to each sound heard in the word.

Spelling development lags behind reading development. A word can generally be read before it can be spelled. The visual attention a child needs in order to recognize words is stored in his or her memory. This information—the knowledge of the spelling patterns of English, also known as orthographic knowledge—is used to spell. Spelling, however, requires greater visual recall than reading and places higher demands on memory.

Good spellers are generally good readers because spelling and reading share an underlying knowledge base. Poor readers, however, are rarely good spellers. Phonics is a particularly powerful tool in improving spelling because it emphasizes spelling patterns, which become familiar from reading. Studies show that half of all English words can be spelled with phonics rules that relate one letter to one sound. Thirty-seven percent of words can be spelled with phonics rules that relate groups of letters to one sound. The other 13 percent must be learned by memorization. Good spellers have not memorized the dictionary; they apply the phonics rules they know and have a large store of sight words.

Writing, in turn, supports a child's reading development because it slows the process by focusing the child's attention on how print works. Poor spellers experience difficulties in both writing and reading. Poorly developed spelling ability also hinders vocabulary development (Adams, Treiman, and Pressley, 1996; Read, 1986).

Research has revealed two techniques that are particularly powerful in connecting phonics and spelling instruction: Elkonin boxes (also known as sound boxes) and the use of dictation during phonics instruction. The Elkonin boxes technique, developed by Russian researcher D. B. Elkonin (1973), uses a simple grid of empty boxes and counters. Children are asked to segment a word into its constituent sounds. As they segment from one sound to the next, they drag one counter onto each box. This makes the counting of sounds in a word a kinesthetic and highly visual task, which is quite effective for struggling readers. Once the counters are in the boxes, each sound is identified, then the counter is removed and replaced with the letter or spelling that stands for the sound. For example, if the word *sat* is segmented, the child will place three counters, one in each of three boxes. Then the first sound will be identified: /s/. The child will remove the first counter and write the letter *s* in the box. In this way, children become skilled at taking apart and putting together words. This skill transfers to their free writing when they are using invented spelling to break apart and write words. Children with experience with Elkonin boxes make better choices when using invented spelling.



A 2000 study by Blevins revealed that children who received explicit phonics instruction, followed up by controlled-text reading (decodable text) and guided opportunities to spell words during dictation, outperformed those students in decoding and spelling tasks who did not receive this type of practice. During dictation, a teacher asks children to write letters, words, and simple sentences that are controlled based on what the child has been taught. The teacher guides the child by helping him or her break apart the word, or using some sort of prompt to guide the child to the correct answer. This might involve reminding the child of a mnemonic used to remember the letter-sound connection, directing the child to an alphabet wall frieze, or using Elkonin boxes to break apart a word. The following is a typical dictation exercise.

Part A: Write the letter for the sound I say.
/a/ /s/ /t/ /m/ /d/ /p/

Part B: Write the following words.
am at
Sam sat mat

Part C: Write the following sentences.
I am Sam.
Pam is sad.

9 A Teacher's Knowledge of Phonics Affects His or Her Ability to Teach Phonics

A teacher's knowledge of phonics has a strong effect on his or her ability to teach phonics (Carroll, 1990; Moats, 1995). This knowledge of the English language enables the teacher to choose the best examples for instruction, to provide focused instruction, and to better understand students' reading and writing errors in relation to their developing language skills.

Below are some examples of questions in Moats's Comprehensive Survey of Language Knowledge (2000). She uses this survey to determine the instructional needs of teachers prior to their teaching phonics to their students. How well would you do?

Question 3: A closed syllable is one that _____ .
An open syllable is one that _____ .

Question 5: What is the third speech sound in each of the following words?

joyful ____	should _____	talk ____
tinker ____	rouge ____	shower ____
square ____	start ____	
protect ____	patchwork ____	

Question 8: Underline the consonant digraphs.
spherical church numb shrink thought whether

Question 9: When is *ck* used in spelling?

Question 11: List all the ways to spell long *o*.

Question 14: How can you recognize an English word that came from Greek?

Answer Key

3. A closed syllable is one that ends in a consonant and has a short vowel sound. An open syllable is one that ends in a vowel and has a long vowel sound.

5. What is the third speech sound in each of the following words?
joyful /f/ should /d/
talk /k/ tinker /ng/
rouge /zh/ shower /r/
square /w/ start /ä/
protect /ō/
patchwork /ch/

8. spherical church numb shrink thought whether

9. after a short vowel in a one-syllable word

11. o, o_e, oa, oe, ow, ou, ough, ew, au, eau, eo, oh, oo, ot, owe, os, aux

10 It Is Possible to Overdo Phonics Instruction

Some teachers may unknowingly overdo phonics instruction (Stanovich, 1993–94; Chall, 1996). Likewise, some teachers may underemphasize phonics instruction to the point that they're doing a disservice to children by not providing them with a valuable decoding strategy.

For many children, a little phonics instruction can go a long way. The awareness these children have that sounds map onto spellings enables them to deduce other sound-spelling relationships from wide reading, especially if the material they read contains a large number of decodable words (Juel, 1991). However, some children (especially children at risk) need teaching that makes these relationships explicit through direct and systematic instruction.

In addition, phonics instruction should focus on applying learned sound-spelling relationships to actual reading, with smaller amounts of time spent on learning phonics rules or generalizations and out-of-context work. Overall instruction must be engaging, thought-provoking, purposeful, and applied.

History of Phonics Instruction in the U.S.

Phonics instruction has developed and changed throughout the history of reading instruction in the United States. At times, there has been an emphasis on teaching children sound-spelling relationships; at other times, phonics instruction has taken a backseat. The following time line highlights some important changes in the way phonics instruction has been treated throughout the history of U.S. reading education.

- **late 1600s:** The *New England Primer* was published in the colonies in the late 1600s. The instruction in this early reading book reflected a strong emphasis on phonics. Students first learned the alphabet, next practiced reading simple syllables, and finally read actual text. The Bible was the primary book students read, and reading was considered a serious matter. The "bottom-up" approach to reading, for which students began with sound-letter relationships, was consistent with the way the early colonists learned to read in other languages. From the time of the ancient Greeks, phonics had been taught to make written language accessible. It's no surprise then that the educated colonists, many of whom were schooled in classics such as Greek and Latin, would advocate phonics instruction. This method of instruction continued unchallenged for over a century and a half.

- **mid-1800s:** During the mid-1800s, things slowly began to change. Instead of only an elite few learning to read, attention began to focus on educating a larger portion of the population. Education of the masses was viewed as a necessity in order for this young democracy called the United States to grow and thrive. In addition, a larger number of published works were becoming available. Comprehension became the focus of educators' attention, and instruction in comprehension was seen as being at odds with phonics instruction. Part of the charge against phonics instruction was led by Horace Mann, the secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education. He saw phonics as detrimental to creating a nation of eager and skilled readers and advocated a whole-word method to reading instruction. Although his influence grew slowly, graded reading books emerged, and the instructional emphasis on comprehension over phonics continued. Although many teachers initially fought this notion, the reading books published began to contain more controlled vocabulary, and the ensuing instruction reflected this. In the late 1920s, this whole-word method, with its accompanying controlled-vocabulary readers, would firmly take root.

Wide reading is a critical and effective way to build children's reading skills. Provide children with lots of books at their independent reading levels and set aside at least 15 minutes each day for independent reading.

- **late 1920s–1940s:** In the late 1920s, the well-respected educator William S. Gray led the criticisms against what he described as the "heartless drudgery" of the existing phonics instruction. He recommended that it be replaced once and for all with the look-say method (also known as the sight-word or whole-word method). The Dick and Jane readers, which Gray helped to develop with Scott Foresman and Company, popularized the look-say method. These readers reflected significant changes in reading materials for children. For example, they contained full-color pictures and stories that appealed to children. The text was carefully controlled

so that sight words were used repeatedly to provide children with multiple exposures. This approach followed a "top-down" model in which students began with their prior experiences and knowledge of whole words. Any sound-spelling relationships children learned were learned incidentally. Phonics was seen as a last resort.

- **1955:** In 1955 Rudolph Flesch's *Why Johnny Can't Read* took the nation by storm. Flesch attributed decreases in reading abilities among U.S. students to the look-say method and harshly attacked it. He advocated a return to the "sensibility" of phonics. Although Flesch's ideas were certainly not new, his book received considerable attention because of its political tone and severe criticisms. The general public and media embraced the book, and it became an instant best seller. However, the academic community dismissed *Why Johnny Can't Read* because of Flesch's propaganda-style of writing, because his claims couldn't be substantiated by existing research, and because he oversimplified how children learn to read. Undaunted, Flesch continued his attacks, and the public listened with open ears. Here is a passage from *Why Johnny Can't Read:*

  > I say, therefore, that the word method is gradually destroying democracy in this country; it returns to the upper middle class the privileges that public education was supposed to distribute evenly among the people. The American Dream is, essentially, equal opportunity through free education for all. This dream is beginning to vanish in a country where the public schools are falling down on the job.

  Flesch went on to complain that the use of the whole-word method was like animal training; it treated children like dogs. He called it "the most inhuman, mean, stupid way of foisting something on a child's mind." Today, Flesch's book remains popular and is widely quoted. One negative aftermath of this book is the polarization of reading educators. If a teacher advocates phonics, it is assumed that he or she wants to return to the drudgery of the past and is antiliterature, anticomprehension, and antimotivation. If a teacher advocates a whole-language approach, it is assumed that he or she wants to return to the look-say methods of the past and is uninformed about how children learn to read. Neither extreme interpretation is, of course, accurate.

- **1967:** The U.S. government was not deaf to the cries being heard throughout the country as a result of Flesch's book and turned to the academic community for answers. One answer came in 1967 with the publication of Jeanne Chall's classic *Learning to Read: The Great Debate*. This book reflected a more scientific and balanced analysis of the reading issue facing our nation. It advocated including early and systematic phonics instruction in the elementary reading curriculum and supported this with a substantial amount of research data. Many follow-up studies by other researchers supported Chall's notion that direct phonics instruction was more beneficial to students than incidental learning. Although Chall's findings were greatly substantiated, phonics instruction received varying degrees of emphasis in the 1970s, '80s, and early '90s, and often took a backseat to an emphasis on quality literature and comprehension.

Ways to Get Parents Involved

It's important to involve students' families in the reading development of their children. Here are some tips:

- Communicate what you're doing in your classroom through newsletters, conferences, phone calls, and individual notes. Be specific about the phonics skills you are teaching.
- Provide families with lists of books appropriate for their children to read independently.
- Keep an open-door policy. Encourage family members to volunteer, visit your classroom, or simply offer feedback in writing.
- Send home learning kits filled with books and phonics activities for family members and children to enjoy together.
- Hold a reading workshop on a Saturday or weekday evening to answer questions about phonics and provide family members with strategies to help their children decode words. Videotape the session and send home the tape for parents who could not attend.

- **1985–1995:** With the publication of *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading* (Anderson et al., 1985) and Marilyn Jager Adams's now classic *Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning about Print,* the spotlight once again highlighted the importance of explicit phonics instruction. These authors described phonics as "*one* of the essential ingredients" in early reading instruction. However, they acknowledged the many other important aspects of early reading and advocated a more balanced, comprehensive approach to reading instruction. They also acknowledged that reading is neither a "bottom-up" nor a "top-down" process. Rather, they and other researchers proposed an "interactive model" of reading in which a reader uses in combination prior knowledge (background experiences) and knowledge of sound-spelling features of words, sentence structure, and word meanings to comprehend text. The instructional focus therefore should not be on one aspect of reading to the exclusion of others.

- **1995–2006:** In 2002, President Bush signed into law the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. This law provided increased funding and emphasis on reading instruction in Grades K–3. With this new law came new accountability. Soon, school districts across the nation began retraining their teachers in five key areas of reading instruction—phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. To assist schools in making research-based decisions about their reading instruction, many turned to *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children* (Snow et al., 1998) and the 2000 report published by the National Reading Panel. This group of reading authorities reviewed the highest-quality research on reading instruction and presented their findings in *Report of the National Reading Panel: Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction* (NICHD, 2000). Many states, such as California and Texas, have required an increased emphasis on phonics in the reading basals sold in their states as well as an increase in the training preservice teachers receive on phonics and basic linguistics. Most basals now contain controlled text based on decodability counts.

Stages of Reading Development: Where Phonics Fits In

Before I begin discussing current phonics instruction, I believe it is important for any teacher of reading to get a sense of the big picture. This understanding can help put phonics in its proper perspective and enable you to make instructional decisions based on each student's stage of reading development. I have chosen the stages of reading development proposed by Chall (1983) because it provides a clear and useful framework for how children learn to read. This framework includes six reading levels.

STAGE 0: Prereading

This stage lasts from birth to about age six. The most notable change is the child's growing control over language. By the time a child enters first grade (at around age six), he or she has approximately 6,000 words in his or her listening and speaking vocabularies. During this stage, children also develop some knowledge of print, such as recognizing a few letters, words, and environmental print signs. Many children are able to write their names. It is common to see children "pretend read" a book that has been repeatedly read to them. At this stage, children "bring more to the printed page than they take out."

STAGE 1: Initial Reading or Decoding

This stage generally lasts from grade 1 through grade 2. During this time children develop an

understanding of the alphabetic principle and begin to use their knowledge of sound-spelling relationships to decode words.

STAGE 2: Confirmation, Fluency, and Ungluing From Print

This stage generally lasts from grade 2 through grade 3. Children further develop and solidify their decoding skills. They also develop additional strategies to decode words and make meaning from text. As this stage ends, children have developed fluency; that is, they can recognize many words quickly and accurately by sight and are skilled at sounding out words they don't recognize by sight. They are also skilled at using context clues to predict words.

STAGE 3: Learning the New

This stage generally lasts from grade 4 through grade 8. During this stage, the reading demands change. Children begin to use reading more as a way to obtain information and learn about the values, attitudes, and insights of others. Texts contain many words not already in a child's speaking and listening vocabularies. These texts, frequently drawn from a wide variety of genres, also extend beyond the background experiences of the children.

STAGE 4: Multiple Viewpoints

This stage generally lasts throughout high school (grades 9 through 12). Readers encounter more-complex language and vocabulary as they read texts in more advanced content areas. Thus the language and cognitive demands required of the reader increase. Readers are also required to read texts containing varying viewpoints and to analyze them critically.

STAGE 5: Construction and Reconstruction

This stage, which generally lasts through college and beyond, is characterized by a "worldview." Readers use the information in books and articles as needed; that is, a reader knows which books and articles will provide the information he or she needs and can locate that information within a book without having to read it in its entirety. At this stage, reading is considered constructive; that is, readers take in a wide range of information and construct their own understanding for their individual uses based on their analysis and synthesis of the information. Not all readers progress to this stage.

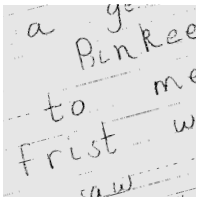
As Chall herself states, the value of this framework is that it "suggests that different aspects of reading be emphasized at different stages of reading development, and that success at the beginning is essential since it influences not only early reading achievement but also reading at subsequent stages of development." This framework highlights the need for beginning-reading programs to provide children with strong instruction in decoding words. It is also a warning that a prolonged stay in any one stage can result in serious reading problems.

As you read the information provided in this book and assess the reading development of your students, keep in mind the stages of reading development framework. Consider how it can be used to modify instruction. For example, what you do instructionally with a third-grade child stuck in Stage 1 is different from what you do with a third-grade child already in Stage 3.

Aside from providing balanced, strong reading instruction that meets the needs of all your children, the greatest gift you can give them is a love of reading. I am constantly reminded of Mrs. Fry, my fourth-grade teacher. Throughout the year she read to us the entire Little House series by Laura Ingalls Wilder. The words seemed to melt off the pages as she read. I can still remember the emotion and excitement in her voice. She made me want to read everything she picked up. Indeed, many of us purchased our own Little House sets of books or checked out of the library every book she recommended. She brought books to life! It is that love of literature we can and must share with our students in order to open the door for them to a world of amazing ideas.

Opening the Gate

for Reading Instruction: Alphabet Recognition and Phonemic Awareness



> "The two best predictors of early reading success are alphabet recognition and phonemic awareness."
>
> —Marilyn Jager Adams

The birth of my nephew, Trevor, was arguably the most exciting day in my family's history. After Trevor was born, my family and I spent the next five years singing the alphabet song to him; reading to him countless ABC, board, and picture books; praising his efforts to make sense of print ("Yes, Trevor, those golden arches do mean 'yummy burgers.' "); and sitting him in front of the television every time Sesame Street came on—all in an attempt to get him "ready" for school. Trevor's development was the topic of many discussions between my sister and me. "Am I reading to him enough?" my sister would ask. "Should I be doing more? Will he really be ready?" We waited to see if the seemingly hundreds of hours we spent getting him "ready" for school would pay off.

While my nephew did seem to benefit from our efforts, too many children enter school each year with limited exposure to books, small speaking and listening vocabularies, varied world knowledge, and only a vague sense of story. Yet it's the task of each kindergarten teacher to get all these children—those from both print-rich and print-poor environments—ready for formal reading instruction.

Powerful Predictors of Success

How can teachers ensure that all students are "ready" for formal reading instruction? And what are the essential prerequisites for learning to read? Two powerful predictors of early reading success are **alphabet recognition** (knowing the names of the letters and the sounds they represent) and **phonemic awareness** (understanding that a word is made up of sounds and the ability to manipulate sounds in spoken words) (Adams, 1990; Stanovich, 1992; Chall, 1996; Beck and Juel, 1995; Share, Jorm, Maclean, and Matthews, 1984). In essence, these two skills open the gate for early reading. Without a thorough knowledge of letters and an understanding that words are made up of sounds, children cannot learn to read.

In addition to alphabet recognition and phonemic awareness, reading-ready children need to have a sense of story, a basic understanding of the concepts of print, and a firm grasp of the language of instruction.

The Concepts of Print: These concepts, also referred to as "print awareness," include making sure children:

- know the difference between words and nonwords.
- know that print is print, no matter what form it appears in (uppercase, lowercase, manuscript, cursive, different fonts, different colors and sizes).
- know that print can appear by itself or with pictures.
- understand that print corresponds to speech, word for word.
- understand the purpose of the empty space between words (word boundaries).
- understand that words are read from left to right on a page.
- understand that lines of text are read from top to bottom on a page.
- can identify the front of a book and a page in it.

The Language of Instruction: This includes an understanding of the following terms: *word*, *letter*, *beginning*, *middle*, *end*, *base line*, *sentence*, *period*, *comma*, *question mark*, *sound*, and *syllable*.

- Tracking print can help children develop the concept of "word."
- Using sentence strips and pocket charts to have children match sentences with a given text can develop the concept of "sentence."
- Activities such as the those shown in the "Classroom Spotlight," at right, can help children understand the concept of "beginning, middle, and end."

Classroom Spotlight

Do these activities in the order they are given.

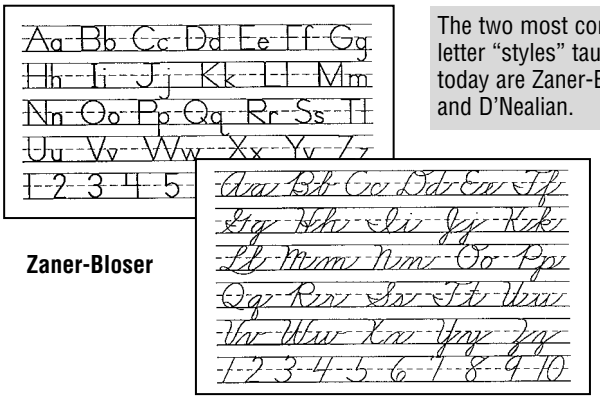
- Place three books in a row on the chalkboard ledge. Point out that the first book is at the beginning of the row, the second book is in the middle of the row, and the third book is at the end of the row. Ask a volunteer to identify the book at the beginning of the row. Continue with other positions and classroom objects.
- Arrange three students at the front of the room. Ask the class which student is at the beginning, middle, or end of the row.
- Write a three-letter word such as *sat* on the chalkboard. Ask a volunteer to circle the beginning letter in the word. Continue with other words and letter positions.

Alphabet Recognition: What It Is and Why It's Essential

English, like French, Spanish, and many other languages, is an alphabetic language. The invention of the alphabet is often said to be the most important invention in the social history of the world (Adams, 1990). It enabled people to communicate across places and times and to store those communications. However, the alphabet is a series of abstract symbols that by themselves are mere squiggles and lines. Identities and sounds have been attached to these symbols to give them purpose and utility. Together, they create something spectacular—printed words.

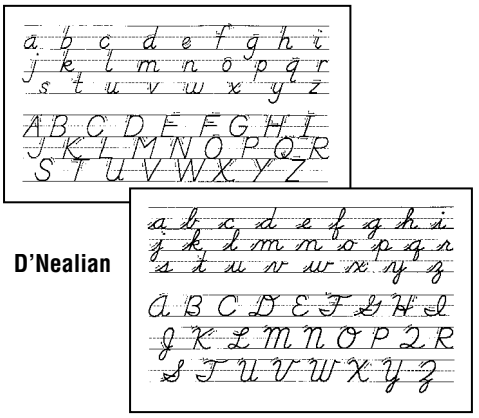
To read in any alphabetic language, students have to learn the intricacies of that alphabet and understand the alphabetic principle (that is, that this system of letters stands for a series of sounds). Students have to be able to recognize letters in their many contexts and forms. In fact, a child must memorize four sets of letters: uppercase manuscript, lowercase manuscript, uppercase cursive, and lowercase cursive.

In addition to learning these four forms of each letter, children need to learn to distinguish among similar-looking letters. For example, the letter *E* looks a lot like the letter *F*; the letter *d* looks like a flopped version of the letter *b*. The *d*/*b* distinction is particularly confusing for children



Zaner-Bloser

The two most common letter "styles" taught today are Zaner-Bloser and D'Nealian.



D'Nealian

Used with permission from Zaner-Bloser, Inc.

Used with permission from Scott, Foresman and Company.

because this is the first time they encounter the orientation of something changing its identity. Up until now, when children saw a pen it was always a pen, no matter how it was turned, flipped, or moved around. However, if we flop a *b* it is now called a *d*; if we flip an M it is now called a *W*. Learning these subtle differences in letters requires time, practice, and careful visual attention.

Letters can be distinguished according to their position on a line; their length; their size; whether they contain horizontal, vertical, diagonal, or curving lines; whether they have descenders (parts of the letter that extend below the base line); and their orientation. It was once believed that children who confused visually similar letters were at serious risk for reading disabilities. However, it is now generally agreed that children who have a problem with letter orientation probably just lack letter knowledge. Training and increased exposure will help them overcome most of these difficulties.

Beyond "Now I Know My ABC's"

Most children enter school being able to say the alphabet, having acquired the skill by about age four. However, being able to say the names of the letters is not the same as "knowing" the letters. In order to learn to read, children must also be able to rapidly identify the printed forms of the letters in and out of sequence and learn the most frequent sound that is attached to each letter. Instruction during the first two years of school should ensure that children know the alphabet and can use it with ease and efficiency.

Many children enter school already able to identify some of the names of printed letters. In one study, children entering kindergarten could identify on average 14 letters (Hiebert and Sawyer, 1984). The letters the children were most likely to know were those used most frequently or those with the most personal relevance to them (for example, the letters in their name). These children had learned letters by singing the alphabet song, being exposed to alphabet books, and having family members point out and identify letters in environmental print.

However, being able to name and quickly recognize letters is a critical step to learning to read for *all* children. Adams (1990) points out that:

- Children who can recognize letters with accuracy and speed have an easier time learning about the sounds associated with letters than those children who are struggling with alphabet recognition. Automatic recognition frees up students' "mental energies" so they can focus on learning sound-spelling relationships.

- Accuracy is only one aspect of alphabet recognition. Speed (automaticity) is another critical factor. Both accuracy and speed indicate how well children have learned the letters' identities. Thus, children need to overlearn (memorize) the letters. A child who hasn't memorized the letters

of the alphabet may become a "nonalphabetic" reader; that is, he or she will have to rely on sight words to read rather than using a knowledge of letters and the sounds they represent.

- As they learn the letters, children frequently become interested in learning more about them—their sounds and how to use them to write words.

How to Assess Alphabet Recognition

Assess children's knowledge of the alphabet at the beginning of kindergarten and grade 1. Begin any assessment by asking children to say the names of the uppercase and lowercase alphabet letters. Then continue by asking them to identify the letters in and out of sequence. See the next page for some appropriate assessments.

One of the key assessments currently being used to determine a child's speed and accuracy in recognizing letters in relation to grade-level expectations is DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills). For additional information on this assessment, go to http://dibels.uoregon.edu.

Teaching Alphabet Recognition

Teachers all across the country use a wide range of methods and activities to teach the alphabet. Jill Simpson, teaching in Florida, reads a lot of alphabet books to her students and has them create their own alphabet books as she introduces each new letter. Sadie Connor in Ohio fills her classroom with manipulatives—fuzzy letters, paint, letter cards, and more. She also sings the alphabet song every morning and designates a letter of the day that corresponds to a child's name in her class. Her activities for the day center around that letter and its corresponding sound. Matt Bingham in Maryland has his students write letters in the air, form letters with their bodies, make letters out of clay, and practice writing letters while writing stories. He stresses the sound that each letter stands for by introducing his class to an object (toy, classroom object, and so on) whose name contains the letter/sound being studied. His children then write about that object.

What do all these teachers have in common? They all understand that children learn the alphabet best through the "active exploration of the relationships between letter names, the sounds of the letter names, their visual characteristics, and the motor movement involved in their formation" (Bear et al., 1996). Educators agree that children learn these relationships through a combination of direct instruction and multiple exposures to print. However, there is some disagreement about the sequence in which the alphabet should be taught. Some educators believe that the letters should be taught in order, since the alphabet represents a system with a set sequence that serves a valuable organizational function. And they emphasize the importance of starting with the known when teaching any new skill. Since most children come to school able to sing the alphabet song—with the letters in order—these educators reason that learning the printed forms of the letters in the same order will be easier.

Other educators believe that children should first learn meaningful letters, such as those in their names. Since these letters are of greatest importance, they reason, young learners will internalize them more quickly. In addition, these educators think that the visually confusing letters, such as *b* and *d*, should be taught far enough apart that one can be learned before the other is introduced.

Sensible Sequencing

Since there is no consensus on a best sequence for teaching the alphabet, you'll have to decide what is best for you and your students. I recommend the following:

/b/ /d/ /f/ /g/ /h/ /j/ /k/ /l/ /m/ /n/ /p/ /r/ /s/ /t/ /v/ /w/ /y/ /z/ /ch/ /sh/ /th/ /th/
/hw/ /zh/ /ng/ /a/ /e/ /i/ /o/ /u/ /ā/ /ē/ /ī/ /ō/ /yōō/ /ə/ /ōō/ /o͞o/ /ou/ /oi/ /ô/ /û/ /â/ /ä/

Name _____ Date _____

Alphabet Recognition Assessment*

Directions: Have the child point to each letter in order as he or she says the letter's name for Uppercase Letters, Lowercase Letters, and Upper-/Lowercase Random Order Mix. Record the number correct and note the speed in the boxes on the left. For Upper-/Lowercase Letter Match, have the child draw lines to match the uppercase and lowercase letter in each box. Record the number correct and note the speed.

Uppercase Letters

Number correct: _____

Speed: ❑ slow/labored
❑ moderate
❑ fast

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	

Lowercase Letters

Number correct: _____

Speed: ❑ slow/labored
❑ moderate
❑ fast

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r
s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z	

Upper-/Lowercase Letter Match

Number correct: _____

Speed: ❑ slow/labored
❑ moderate
❑ fast

A	c	B	d	H	h	P	r	K	o	M	x
C	v	D	f	I	l	Q	z	O	k	N	y
G	a	E	e	J	i	R	q	S	t	W	w
V	u	F	b	L	j	Z	p	T	s	X	n
U	g									Y	m

Upper-/Lowercase Random Order Mix

Number correct: _____

Speed: ❑ slow/labored
❑ moderate
❑ fast

E	B	o	h	P	f	N	x	I
a	q	G	m	R	L	j	v	K
U	c	Z	W	d	T	y	s	

* NOTE: Monitor both accuracy and speed. Automaticity is the goal.

- **Teach children letter names first.** Most letter names are closely related to their sounds. In fact, 21 letters contain the most common sound assigned to them in their names. For example, *b* (/bē/) and *m* (/em/). The exceptions are *h, q, w, y, g,* and the short vowels. Knowing the names of the letters helps children grasp the alphabetic principle—the notion that each letter stands for a sound. In addition, knowing the names provides you with instructional labels that are familiar to children.

- **Put a new spin on a classic song.** Children generally learn the letter names not by seeing the letters but by singing the "Alphabet Song" to the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." Although a classic, the traditional alphabet song isn't without its shortcomings—most notably the so-called "elemeno" problem. When the song arrives at the letters *L, M, N,* and *O,* they are sung so quickly that they sound like the word "elemeno" instead of the pronunciations of four distinct letters. You can overcome this problem by choosing a different version of the alphabet song, or pointing to the letters on an alphabet chart while singing the song. Alternate versions are available on audiocassette and range from slight modifications of the traditional song (for example, one uses the traditional tune but provides pauses on the letters *N, Q,* and *T*) to an alphabet rap. Also available are alphabet book/cassette combinations, such as *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* (written by Bill Martin, Jr., and John Archambault; performed by Ray Charles, Simon & Schuster, 1991).

- **Next, teach the shapes and sounds of letters.** When children know the names of the letters, teach their shapes and the most common sound assigned to each. Although many children can say the names of the letters by age four, most need up to two years to learn the corresponding shapes (Adams, 1990). Some children can learn several letters a week; some may need a week to learn one (Ekwall and Shanker, 1993). "Learning the alphabet proceeds in much the same way as learning anything else—by categorizing features that are the same and contrasting those with other features that are different" (Bear et al., 1996).

- **Tailor your letter lessons to students' needs.** If you're working with children who have limited alphabet knowledge, don't teach both the uppercase and lowercase forms of the letters simultaneously. If children are in preschool, teach the uppercase letters first since those are easier to distinguish visually. Besides, these are the letter forms preschool children are most likely to have become familiar with outside the classroom because of their exposure to environmental print. If you are working with children in kindergarten and grade 1, focus on the lowercase letters since these are the letter forms most frequently encountered in text (Adams, 1990).

- **Help children to see differences and similarities among letters.** When teaching letter shapes, help children to discriminate small, but important, differences among letters. And remember that children need to be able to recognize letters in isolation and in the context of a word, the latter being more difficult (Clay, 1991). First help children see similarities in letters they know; then progress to pointing out letter differences and introducing other letters. For example, the letters *a* and *b* both contain small circles. Next point out and discuss the subtle differences among similar-looking letters. For example, letters differ in the direction of their extension (*b-p, d-g, q-d*), their left-right orientation (*b-d, q-p, g-p*), their top-bottom orientation (*m-w, n-u, M-W*), and their line-curve features (*u-v, U-V*).

  The following charts show letters that are visually similar and often confused by children. You need to pay special attention to teaching their differences. Don't teach these letter pairs in close proximity; be sure children have a firm grasp of the first one before you introduce the other. The letters that confuse children the most are those with reversible parts, such as *b-d, p-d, q-b, h-u,* and *i-l* (Popp, 1964).

The following four letter groups are particularly confusing for students and shouldn't be taught at the same time (Manzo and Manzo, 1993).

- e, a, s, c, o
- b, d, p, o, g, h
- f, l, t, k, i, h
- n, m, u, h, r

Confusable Letter Pairs

Lowercase				Uppercase	
a-d	c-o	h-n	n-u	C-G	M-N
a-o	d-q	h-u	p-q	D-O	M-W
b-d	d-g	i-j	u-v	E-F	O-Q
b-h	d-p	i-l	v-w	I-J	P-R
b-p	f-t	k-y	v-y	I-L	U-V
b-q	g-p	m-n		K-X	V-Y
c-e	g-q	m-w		L-T	

- **Provide support for children having difficulty discriminating letters.** The typical four- to four-and-a-half-year-old has the visual perceptual skill needed to distinguish lowercase letters (Rosner, 1993). However, some children will need extra help. One common letter-reversal problem involves *b* and *d*. Most children who have trouble identifying *b* and *d* can see that the letters are different, but they can't remember which is which (Rosner, 1993). Using memory devices and having an alphabet chart on each child's desk for easy reference helps.

Classroom Spotlight

You can use memory devices to help children distinguish one letter from another. Try these strategies to help children with the visually confusing *b-d*.

- Write the word *bed* on the chalkboard and point out that the word visually resembles a bed. Show children that the word begins with the letter *b* and ends with the letter *d* and that the letter *b* comes before the letter *d* in the alphabet and in the word *bed*.
- Write an uppercase *B* on the chalkboard. In another color, trace the lowercase *b* that is "hidden" (embedded) in the uppercase *B*. For the letter *d,* teach the letter *c* first. Then point out to children that they need only add a line to the letter *c* to form the next letter in the alphabet—the letter *d*.

- **Provide letter-writing practice.** To learn and recall the letter shapes, children need plenty of practice writing them as early as possible. Teach letter shapes along with teaching handwriting. If a child hasn't chosen which hand to write with (usually a preference emerges by age four), determine it now. To remember the intricacies of letter orientation, children should keep writing the letters with the same hand.

"Having children write the letters accurately, especially with encouragement to attend to their distinctive features, significantly helps letter recognition" (Clay, 1993). When teaching handwriting, be consistent. Choose only one style of manuscript. The two most common styles currently in use are Zaner-Bloser, which is characterized by straight lines and sharp edges, and D'Nealian, which is characterized by slanted lines and tails resulting in a close resemblance between its manuscript and cursive forms. Let children write the letters on unlined paper before they encounter the greater demands of lined paper. Be sure to spend adequate time helping them develop proper habits in forming the necessary line and curve strokes.

- **Use memory devices to help children write letters.** Memory devices can help children learn and remember each letter's distinguishing features. One commercially-available program (*Scholastic Spelling,* 1998) employs clever rhymes. For example:

> **For teaching E:**
> Pull straight down, just like me. (*Pull down straight.*)
> Then slide to the right: one, two, three. (*Pull across from left to right three times.*)

For teaching g:
There's a gopher in my garden,
See him going round. (*Half-circle up and left.*)
Oops! Now the gopher sees me,
And he pops down in the ground! (*Pull down straight. Curve up left.*)

- **Use copying and tracing appropriately.** Independent writing is the most effective way of teaching children to form the shapes of each letter. But copying and tracing have their place. Having children write the letter while saying its name, and/or the sound associated with it, ensures that they are focusing on the subtle differences in each letter and thinking about it in terms of its name and/or sound. For example, the child says /f/, /f/, /f/ while writing *f f f*. Copying and tracing also help to develop children's fine-motor skills. So emphasize independent writing and use copying and tracing according to each child's needs.

- **Use key words and pictures when you introduce sound-spelling relationships.** After you teach the names of the letters (and possibly the shapes) in sequence, teach the most common sound-spelling relationship for each. Use a sequence that will allow you to form simple CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words early on and model the principle of blending. Starting in kindergarten, children need to be shown how their letter knowledge applies to the actual reading of words. To help students see this, associate a key word and picture with each letter. For example, when teaching the letter *s*, you might use the word *sun* and a corresponding picture of a sun. Research has shown this letter/key word/key picture combination to be highly effective (Ehri, 1992). You'll find a listing of key words and pictures for each letter in the "Learning About Sounds and Letters" section (page 60) of this book.

- **Adjust the pace of instruction according to students' needs.** Children who have a limited alphabet knowledge upon entering school may have trouble gaining the all-important alphabet recognition skills through the traditional "letter-a-week" method. Without the necessary memorization, early reading instruction becomes cumbersome and difficult. As Adams (1990) writes, "For children who haven't cut their teeth on alphabet letters and picture books, one letter per week is a mere drop in the bucket against the 1,000- to 1,700-hour advantage of their peers." For these children, you'll have to provide lots of extra practice saying the names and identifying the shapes of the uppercase and lowercase letters in and out of sequence as you introduce sound-spelling relationships.

- **Include multisensory activities.** On pages 30–34, you'll find tactile (touch), visual, auditory, and kinesthetic (movement) activities for teaching the alphabet. Remember to include letter-recognition activities throughout your daily instruction. For example, point out target letters while reading a Big Book and look for letters in environmental print.

Classroom Spotlight

You may need to help children who are having difficulty forming letters by holding the pencil with them and guiding them to form the letter. Think aloud about how you are forming the letter, discussing the unique visual characteristics of the letter. You may want to have children whose manual dexterity is developing more slowly write on unlined paper. For one of my second graders who was having trouble fitting his letters on lined paper, I made a photocopy enlargement. That way, I could both teach him how to use the base line and dashed lines as guides for correctly forming letters and accommodate his inability to write letters in that small a space.

An Alphabet-Recognition Timetable

The following benchmarks can be used to monitor students' progress in alphabet recognition (Honig, 1996).

Preschool
- Child has been exposed to the letter names.
- Child can recognize his or her name in print.
- Child can identify ten letters.

Kindergarten
- Child knows all letter names.
- Child recognizes all letter shapes (upper- and lowercase)

Grade 1 (Fall)
- Child knows all letter names, shapes, and sounds.

- **Read a lot of alphabet books.** Provide opportunities for children to hear, see, say, and write the alphabet in a variety of contexts and for a variety of purposes.

Alphabet Books Play a Role

Alphabet books, those popular picture books that present the letters of the alphabet in order, fill elementary classrooms everywhere. Many alphabet books center around a common kid-pleasing theme or concept, such as an animal alphabet or a city alphabet. You can use alphabet books to develop alphabet recognition and to build vocabulary. Some of the books, such as *Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions* by M. Musgrove, promote multicultural awareness. Alphabet books are valuable because:

- they support beginning readers' oral language development.
- they help children learn letter sequence.
- they help children associate a sound with a letter.
- they can help children build vocabulary and world knowledge. Children's knowledge of the world, referred to as "semantic domain" (Lindfors, 1987), grows substantially during the elementary school years. Alphabet books can be extremely beneficial for children with limited world knowledge.
- they can be vocabulary builders for students learning English as a second language.
- they are appealing to at-risk readers who might be intimidated by books containing denser text.

Tips for Teaching With Alphabet Books

Here are some suggestions for using alphabet books as part of your weekly instruction.

- Read the book the first time in its entirety, without pauses, so that children can enjoy the language and illustrations.
- Reread the book and discuss items of interest, such as finding the objects in the illustration that begin with the sound the letter on that page represents. Keep the discussion playful and gamelike, limiting the letters you focus on to one or two each day.
- Create letter charts, using the words and pictures in the alphabet book. Have children identify words and pictures with a target letter/sound to add to each chart.
- Have children create their own alphabet books using the pattern of the book you just read.

For additional alphabet books, see J. H. Chaney, "Alphabet Books: Resources for Learning." *The Reading Teacher* 47 no. 2 (1993): 96–104.

Alphabet Books A to Z

A, B, See! by T. Hoban (Greenwillow, 1982)

A, My Name Is Alice by J. Bayer (Dial, 1994)

The ABC Bunny by W. Gag (Sandcastle, 1978)

ABC: Egyptian Art From The Brooklyn Museum by F. C. Mayers (Harry N. Abrams, 1988)

Abracadabra to Zigzag by N. Lecourt (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1991)

Alfred's Alphabet Walk by V. Chess (Greenwillow, 1979)

Alison's Zinnia by A. Lobel (Greenwillow, 1990)

All in the Woodland Early: An ABC Book by J. Yolen (Boyd Mills, 1991)

Alphabears: An ABC Book by K. Hague (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1984)

An Alphabet of Animals by C. Wormell (Dial, 1990)

An Alphabet of Dinosaurs by W. Barlowe (Scholastic, 1995)

Alphabet Out Loud by R. G. Bragg (Picture Book Studio, 1991)

Alphabet Puzzle by J. Downie (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1988)

Alphabet Soup by A. Zabar (Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1990)

Alphabet Times Four: An International ABC by R. Brown (Dutton, 1991)

Alphabetics by S. Macdonald (Bradbury Press, 1986)

Animal Alphabet by B. Kitchen (Dial, 1984)

Animalia by G. Base (Abrams, 1987)

Anno's Alphabet: An Adventure in Imagination by A. Mitsumaso (HarperCollins, 1975)

The Ark in the Attic: An Alphabet Adventure by E. Doolittle (David Godine, 1987)

Ashanti to Zulu: African Traditions by M. Musgrove (Dial, 1976)

Aster Aardvark's Alphabet Adventures by S. Kellogg (William Morrow, 1987)

C Is for Curious: An ABC of Feelings by W. Hubbard (Chronicle Books, 1990)

The Calypso Alphabet by J. Agard (Henry Holt, 1989)

Chicka Chicka Boom Boom by B. Martin, Jr., and J. Archambault (Simon & Schuster, 1989)

City Seen From A to Z by R. Isadora (Greenwillow, 1983)

Crazy Alphabet by L. Cox (Orchard Books, 1990)

David McPhail's Animals A to Z by D. McPhail (Scholastic, 1989)

The Dinosaur Alphabet Book by J. Pallotta (Charlesbridge Publishing, 1991)

Eating the Alphabet: Fruits and Vegetables from A to Z by L. Ehlert (Harcourt, 1994)

Eight Hands Round: A Patchwork Alphabet by A. W. Paul (HarperCollins, 1991)

Erni Cabat's Magical ABC Animals Around the Farm by E. Cabat (Harbinger House, 1992)

A Farmer's Alphabet by M. Azarian (David Godine, 1981)

From Acorn to Zoo and Everything in Between in Alphabetical Order by S. Kitamura (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1992)

From Letter to Letter by T. Sloat (Dutton, 1989)

The Graphic Alphabet by D. Pelletier (Orchard, 1996)

Geography From A to Z: A Picture Glossary by J. Knowlton (HarperCollins, 1988)

Gretchen's ABC by G. D. Simpson (HarperCollins, 1991)

Gyo Fujikawa's A to Z Picture Book by G. Fujikawa (Grosset & Dunlap, 1974)

The Handmade Alphabet by L. Rankin (Dial, 1991)

The Icky Bug Alphabet Book by J. Pallotta (Charlesbridge Publishing, 1986)

It Begins with an A by S. Calmenson (Hyperion, 1993)

Jambo Means Hello: Swahili Alphabet Book by M. Feelings (Dial, 1974)

The Monster Book of ABC Sounds by A. Snow (Dial, 1991)

My Alphabet Animals Draw Along Book by D. Heath (Knight, 1994)

Pierrot's ABC Garden by A. Lobel (Western, 1993)

Pigs from A to Z by A. Geisert (Houghton Mifflin, 1986)

Quentin Blake's ABC by Q. Blake (Knopf, 1989)

The Sesame Street ABC Book of Words by H. McNaught (Random House/Children's Television Workshop, 1988)

Texas Alphabet by J. Rice (Pelican Publishing, 1988)

Tomorrow's Alphabet by G. Shannon (Greenwillow, 1995)

26 Letters and 99 Cents by T. Hoban (Greenwillow, 1987)

Uncle Shelby's ABZ Book by S. Silverstein (Simon & Schuster, 1961)

Wild Animals of Africa ABC by H. Ryden (Dutton, 1989)

The Wildlife A-B-C: A Nature Alphabet Book by J. Thornhill (Simon & Schuster, 1988)

The Z Was Zapped by C. Van Allsburg (Houghton Mifflin, 1987)

35 Quick-and-Easy Activities for Developing Alphabet Recognition

Use these games and activities as warm-ups for the day's formal reading instruction. Many also work well for learning centers. I suggest keeping a learning center chart on which you mark the centers each child has visited. I replace the games the first day of each month so that children have many opportunities to play them all. Display an alphabet chart on a classroom wall for students' reference as they use the games and activities to reinforce their alphabet skills.

1 Alphabet Corner

Set up an alphabet corner in your classroom. Stock it with letters to trace, plastic letters for word building, alphabet stamps, alphabet puzzles and games, picture cards, alphabet books from your library, materials to make letters (pipe cleaners, glue, stencils), alphabet flash cards, dry-erase boards or mini-chalkboards, alphabet cassettes and cassette player, clay, paints, and any other materials you want to include. Allow children time to explore and use the materials in the Alphabet Corner throughout the week.

2 Alphabet Concentration

This classic game can be played with almost any skill. Limiting the game to 8–12 cards, make a set of letter cards—one letter to a card, two cards for each letter. Place the cards facedown on the desk, table, or floor. Have children turn over two cards at a time. If the cards match, children keep them. The object of the game is to make as many matches as possible. You can have children match uppercase letters only, lowercase letters only, or a mix of upper- and lowercase letters.

3 Touch It

Provide each letter being studied in a variety of forms (magnetic, foam, and sandpaper letters) for children to trace. To give children a fun way to form their own letters, place hair styling gel (add food coloring to clear gel) in small plastic bags that can be zipped shut. Children will delight in forming the letter they're learning by writing it with their fingers on the outside of the bag. They can then "erase" the letter and continue with other letters.

4 Name Scramble

Have children use letter cards to spell their names. Then have them scramble the cards and reform their names. Next have each child ask a classmate to unscramble his or her name. Make sure the student's name card is on the desk for reference. When the name is formed, ask the student to identify each letter in the classmate's name. TIP: Some children might need a support clue to help them remember the correct orientation of each letter. For them, draw a small red dot in the upper right-hand corner of each letter card. Point out that this dot tells where the top of the letter card is.

5 Sign Up

To practice writing letters, have children write their names on a large sheet of paper when you take attendance, when they sign out a book from the classroom library, or when they get a restroom pass. Or ask children to write the "letter of the day" on a large sheet of paper for some predetermined purpose such as lining up for lunch. Provide crayons and markers of many colors. Collect the pages to form an alphabet Big Book.

6 Match It

Distribute letter cards, one card per student. Then write a letter on the chalkboard. Ask the children whose cards match the letter to step to the front of the classroom. Have a volunteer name the letter and review the sound that the letter represents. Provide feedback such as "That's right. That's the letter *s* as in *sun*. It stands for the /s/ sound."

7 Singled Out

Write on the chalkboard a CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) word that children have recently encountered in a story. Say the name of one letter in the word and invite a volunteer to circle that letter. Review the sound that the letter stands for. Ask children if it is the beginning, middle, or ending sound in the word.

8 Let's Go on a Hunt

Write the upper- and lowercase forms of each letter on large note cards. Distribute one note card to each child. Have children find their letter in magazines and newspapers. Suggest that they cut them out and paste them to the back of the card. They might also want to add pictures whose names begin with the sound that the letter represents.

9 Alphabet Walk

Take children on a walk around the school or neighborhood. Have them look for, and identify, learned letters in environmental print.

10 Round 'em Up

Write a letter on the chalkboard in red or some other distinguishing color. Then write a series of letters beside it in yellow or white chalk. Many of the letters should be the same as the one written in red. Ask volunteers to circle the letters that are the same as the one in red. As each letter is circled, have the class

state the name of the letter. Finally, have the class count the number of letters circled.

EXAMPLE: *s s t s s s m s*

11 Word Roundup

Write a series of simple words on the chalkboard. Most of the words should begin with the same sound. Read the words aloud. Then have volunteers circle the words that begin with the same letter.

EXAMPLE: *sat sun sad*
top sick mop

12 Word Pairs

Write a word pair on the chalkboard, such as *sat* and *mat*. Read the words aloud. Ask children to identify the letter that is different in each word.

13 Hide-and-Seek

Hide letter cards throughout the classroom. Have children search the room for them. When each child has found a card, he or she can return to his or her seat. Then have children share the letter on the card they found as they write it on the chalkboard.

14 Through-the-Year Alphabet Book

Have the children use large sheets of colored construction paper to create a personal alphabet book throughout the year. They should write the upper- and lowercase forms of each letter on one page, then paste or draw pictures of objects whose names begin with the sound the letter stands for and add words that begin with that letter.

15 Body Letters

Divide the class into groups of three to five students. Assign each group a letter to form with their bodies. They might form the letter individually (each child forming it), or use the entire group to form it (four children might lie on the floor to form the letter *E*).

16 Letter Path

Create a construction paper "stone" path around the classroom with one letter written on each stone. Laminate the stones for durability. Have children "walk the alphabet" each day, saying aloud each letter name.

Variation: As you call letters, have children stand on the appropriate stones.

17 Disappearing Letters

Using a small, wet sponge, write a letter on the chalkboard. Challenge children to identify the letter before it disappears. Have children sponge on letters for classmates to identify.

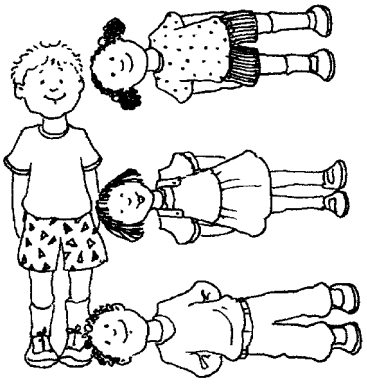
18 Letter Snacks

As you introduce a letter, choose a snack whose name begins with or contains the sound the letter stands for. This yummy treat will serve as a memory device to help children associate the letter with its sound. Following are snack possibilities for most of the letters.

NOTE: Choose whether you will introduce the long- or short-vowel sounds first, and be consistent with your snacks. You might have to choose snacks with the vowel sound in the middle of its word.

EXAMPLE:

apples/cake
bananas
carrots/cookies
donuts
eggs/green beans
fish crackers
gum
hamburgers
milk
noodles/nachos
oatmeal cookies
pizza/peaches
raisins
soup/salad
toast/tacos
upside-down cake



ice cream, dip
Jell-O™/juice
Kool-aid™
lemonade
vegetables
watermelon
yogurt
zucchini bread

19 Alphabet Partner

Divide the number of children in your classroom in half. Use this number to determine the number of letters you will use to make a letter card set. The letter card set should contain two cards for each letter—one uppercase, one lowercase. Then give each child a card. Have children find their upper- or lowercase match.

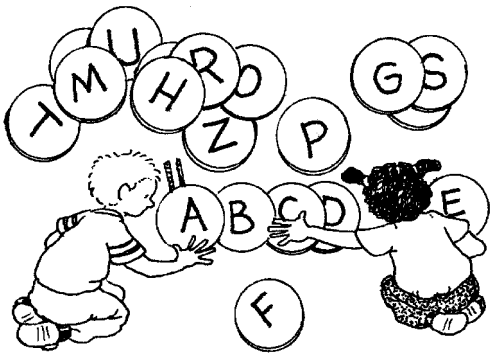
20 Tongue-Depressor Alphabets

On each of a set of tongue depressors write one letter. Have children arrange the tongue depressors in alphabetical order.

Variation: Write words for children to alphabetize on the tongue depressors.

21 Alphabet Caterpillar

Children will have fun creating this letter-perfect creature. Write each letter of the alphabet on a paper circle. Mix the circles and spread them out on the table or floor. Have children work in pairs or small groups to form the caterpillar by placing its body parts (circles) in alphabetical order. Attach antennae to the *A* circle for the caterpillar's head.



22 Connect the Dots

Gather pages of connect-the-dot pictures from children's activity books and laminate them. Children can use a wipe-off marker to connect the dots and form the picture.

Variations: (1) Make multiple copies of each page to keep in a learning center. (2) Create your own connect-the-dot pictures by lightly tracing over pictures in workbooks or coloring books with a pencil and placing dots at intervals along the outline with a pen or marker. Then assign a letter to each dot in the order in which it should be connected. Add any connecting lines, such as curves, necessary to complete the picture, erase your tracing, and photocopy the page.

23 Letter Pop-up

Distribute letter cards, one or two per child. Call out a letter. The children holding that letter's cards should pop up from their seats and hold up their cards so you can quickly check for accuracy.

24 Moon and Stars

Using construction paper, cut out 26 stars and 26 crescent moons. On each moon, write an uppercase letter. On each star, write a lowercase letter. Have children match the moons and stars.

Variation: Use other objects that might go together—chicken and egg, dog and doghouse, leaf and tree.

25 Special Name Day

Write children's names on note cards and place them in a decorated box or can. Each day, choose one name, which will be the "special name of the day." Spend time having the class identify each letter in the chosen name, write the name on a sheet of paper, group the name with names selected from previous days (for example, by first letter, by boy and girl names, and so on), clap the number of syllables in the name, add the name to a name book organized in alphabetical order, and count the number of letters in the name.

26 Play with Names

Have children write their names in various ways. For example, ask them to write their names using only uppercase letters, using pipe cleaners and glue, or using clay.

27 ABC Time

Distribute a set of letter cards, one card per student. Say a series of three or four letters. Have the children holding a matching letter card come to the front of the classroom as their letters are called. Then have the group of three or four children holding the cards place themselves in alphabetical order. The rest of the class can offer feedback and determine the group's accuracy.

28 Word Wheel

Create a spinning wheel using two cardboard circles of different sizes and a brass fastener. On the outside of one wheel (circle) write the uppercase letters; on the other write the lowercase letters. Then punch a hole in the center of each wheel and attach them using the fastener. Children will spin the top wheel to match upper- and lowercase letters.

29 Classroom Labels

As you teach each letter of the alphabet, add labels to objects in your classroom whose names begin with the sound the letter stands for. Invite volunteers to suggest objects to label.

30 Alphabet Spin

Write the uppercase letters on a spinner and the lowercase letters on note cards, one to a card. Have small groups of children take turns spinning the spinner, identifying the letter, and finding the letter match in the card pile. Use a timer to make the game more engaging. Decrease the amount of time allowed to find the matching card after each round.

31 Alphabet Tic-Tac-Toe

This form of Tic-Tac-Toe is played like the regular game—with one exception. Here, each child is assigned a different letter. Pairs of students play the game using their assigned letters. When most pairs have finished, assign new letters and continue play.

32 Alphabet Book Tape

Make a tape recording of an alphabet book to place in a learning center or take-home activity pack. After reading the text for each page (or series of pages), give activity directions ("Find the letter *s* on page 22. Point to it and say *s*. Write the letter with your finger. Next, find the picture of the sun. The word *sun* begins with the letter *s*. The letter *s* stands for the /s/ sound. Say /s/. That's right—sssssssss!")

The blockbuster quality is still there. A huge pile of red silk flowers dominates the stage. When the entire hill is pushed perilously close to the audience in pursuit of a man who escapes up the aisle, the effect is as amazing as when a geyser of flowers becomes the visual equivalent of the fireworks

33 Newspaper Search

Distribute a few pages of an old newspaper to each child and assign each a letter. Have the child circle the letter every time it appears on the page. You might want to have children stop after finding five occurrences of the letter.

34 Letter Actions

Teach children an action for each letter they learn. As you introduce the letter, model the action and have children perform it. In later weeks, tell children you will hold up a letter card, and they should perform or pantomime the action associated with the letter shown. Here are some possible actions (Cunningham, 1995).

All the Right Moves

bounce	hop	nod	vacuum
catch	jump	paint	walk
dance	kick	run	yawn
fall	laugh	sit	zip
gallop	march	talk	

35 Alphabet Cereal Sort

Place a pile of alphabet cereal on a napkin on each child's desk. Give children time to sort the cereal letters. Have them count the number of times they found each letter. Use these tallies to create a class chart. Children will enjoy a tasty letter treat when the activity is completed.

Try It Out

- Select one activity from the Quick-and-Easy Activities for Developing Alphabet Recognition to try out with your students.
- Assess your students to determine what stage of reading development each is in. Ask yourself, "How does that compare to the reading demands each child encounters? What can I do to move each child to the next stage of reading development?"
- Assess five students using the Alphabet Recognition Assessment. Compare their speed and accuracy scores with their reading level. .

Phonemic Awareness: Playing With Sounds

Phonemic awareness is the understanding or insight that a word is made up of a series of discrete (separate) sounds. Each of these sounds is called a phoneme. This awareness includes the ability to pick out and manipulate sounds in spoken words. A related term, often confused with phonemic awareness, is *phonological awareness*. Phonological awareness is an umbrella term that includes phonemic awareness, or awareness of words at the phoneme level. It also includes an awareness of word units larger than the phoneme. Phonological awareness includes the following (Eldredge, 1995):

- words within sentences
- rhyming units within words
- beginning and ending sounds within words
- syllables within words
- phonemes, or sounds, within words (phonemic awareness)
- features of individual phonemes such as how the mouth, tongue, vocal cords, and teeth are used to produce the sound

Phonemic awareness is not the same thing as phonics. Phonemic awareness deals with sounds in spoken words, whereas phonics involves the relationship between sounds and written symbols. Phonics deals with learning sound-spelling relationships and is associated with print. Most phonemic awareness tasks are purely oral. However, recent research shows that the combination of letter work and phonemic awareness is quite powerful.

According to Adams (1990), there are five basic types of phonemic awareness tasks or abilities. Each task type includes activities that become progressively more complex. Although some of the tasks can be more accurately labeled phonological awareness tasks, the goal of most of them is awareness at the phoneme level. These task types and sample activities include the following:

Task 1—Rhyme and alliteration

1. **Rhyme**
   EXAMPLE: I once saw a cat, sitting next to a dog. I once saw a bat, sitting next to a frog.
2. **Alliteration**
   EXAMPLE: Six snakes sell sodas and snacks.
3. **Assonance**
   EXAMPLE: The leaf, the bean, the peach—all were within reach.

Task 2—Oddity tasks (phoneme categorization)

1. **Rhyme**
   EXAMPLE: Which word does not rhyme: *cat*, *sat*, *pig*? (*pig*)
2. **Beginning consonants**
   EXAMPLE: Which two words begin with the same sound: *man*, *sat*, *sick*? (*sat*, *sick*)
3. **Ending consonants**
   EXAMPLE: Which two words end with the same sound: *man*, *sat*, *ten*? (*man*, *ten*)
4. **Medial sounds (long vowels)**
   EXAMPLE: Which word does not have the same middle sound: *take*, *late*, *feet*? (*feet*)
5. **Medial sounds (short vowels)**
   EXAMPLE: Which two words have the same middle sound: *top*, *cat*, *pan*? (*cat*, *pan*)
6. **Medial sounds (consonants)**
   EXAMPLE: Which two words have the same middle sound: *kitten*, *missing*, *lesson*? (*missing*, *lesson*)

Task 3—Oral blending

1. **Syllables**
   EXAMPLE: Listen to these word parts: *ta . . . ble*. Say the word as a whole. What's the word? (*table*)
2. **Onset/rime**
   EXAMPLE: Listen to these word parts: /p/ . . . *an*. Say the word as a whole. What's the word? (*pan*)
3. **Phoneme by phoneme**
   EXAMPLE: Listen to these word parts:/s/ /a/ /t/. Say the word as a whole. What's the word? (*sat*)

Task 4—Oral segmentation (including counting sounds)

1. **Syllables**
   EXAMPLE: Listen to this word: *table*. Say it syllable by syllable. (*ta . . . ble*)
2. **Onset/rime**
   EXAMPLE: Listen to this word: *pan*. Say the first sound in the word and then the rest of the word. (/p/ . . . *an*)
3. **Phoneme by phoneme (counting sounds)**
   EXAMPLE: Listen to this word: *sat*. Say the word sound by sound. (/s/ /a/ /t/) How many sounds do you hear? (3)

Task 5—Phoneme manipulation*

1. **Initial sound substitution**
   EXAMPLE: Replace the first sound in *mat* with /s/. (*sat*)
2. **Final sound substitution**
   EXAMPLE: Replace the last sound in *mat* with /p/. (*map*)
3. **Vowel substitution**
   EXAMPLE: Replace the middle sound in *map* with /o/. (*mop*)
4. **Syllable deletion**
   EXAMPLE: Say *baker* without the *ba*. (*ker*)
5. **Initial sound deletion**
   EXAMPLE: Say *sun* without the /s/. (*un*)
6. **Final sound deletion**
   EXAMPLE: Say *hit* without the /t/. (*hi*)
7. **Initial phoneme in a blend deletion**
   EXAMPLE: Say *step* without the /s/. (*tep*)
8. **Final phoneme in a blend deletion**
   EXAMPLE: Say *best* without the /t/. (*bes*)
9. **Second phoneme in a blend deletion**
   EXAMPLE: Say *frog* without the /r/. (*fog*)

* These tasks are best done using letter cards.

Tips on Sequencing Phonemic Awareness Instruction

- The first four phonemic awareness task types should be a part of the kindergarten curriculum, although not all children will master all the task types.
- Rhyming, alliteration, and oddity task activities (with picture clues) are relatively easy for kindergartners. Most children are able successfully to complete rhyming and alliteration tasks by the age of five; some children can do these tasks as early as age three (Maclean, Bryant, and Bradley, 1987).
- Segmenting words sound by sound (phoneme counting) is critical for spelling words, and approximately 70% of children acquire the skill by the end of first grade (age six) (Mann, 1991).
- Phonemic manipulation tasks are more complex. Many of these tasks are difficult even for second graders, though some kindergartners can master some of the easier phoneme-deletion tasks (Task 5—4 and 5) (Treiman, 1992). However, I recommend focusing on these tasks no earlier than middle to late first grade.
- Note that it's not essential for students to master each task type before moving on to the next. Rather, a mix of appropriately sequenced activities throughout lessons keeps children engaged and provides ample practice with all types of phonemic awareness tasks. However, instruction in oral blending (Task 3) should begin before instruction in oral segmentation (Task 4).

In addition to these five task types, phonemic awareness exercises include phoneme discrimination (speech perception) activities, which also help children to focus on specific sounds in words. For example, you might ask students to listen for vowel sounds. Since vowel sounds are necessary for decoding, and children's early invented spellings often omit vowels, they'll need lots of practice in hearing and distinguishing these sounds in words.

The following chart represents a suggested scope and sequence for 20 weeks of instruction. The scope and sequence is designed for the second semester of kindergarten but can be modified for first grade.

Skill	Scope and Sequence ● = 1 week																		
	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8	Week 9	Week 10	Week 11	Week 12	Week 13	Week 14	Week 15	Week 16	Week 17	Week 18	Week 19	Week 20
Rhyme/Alliteration	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●										
Oddity Tasks		●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●								
Oral Blending			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Oral Segmentation								●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Phonemic Manipulation																	●	●	●	●
Linking Sounds to Spellings																			●	●

Articulation

Articulation exercises help children attend to the differences in mouth formation when making sounds. Research has shown that these exercises assist children in orally segmenting words and in spelling (Castiglioni-Spalten and Ehri, 2003). They are also effective with English-language learners as they help these learners focus on the unique and subtle differences in the sounds of English. See the charts that follow.

Vowel Sounds Mouth Position Chart

Smile Sound

The long-*e* sound is a "smile sound." We look like we are smiling when we say this sound. The lips are close together, but not closed. Ask children to say the sound with you, noticing your mouth position. Have children place their hand under the chin as they say each of the following sounds in sequence: /ē/, /i/, /ā/, /e/, /a/, /ī/, and /o/. Help them to notice how their mouth opens slightly with each sound.

Doctor Sound

The short-*o* sound is an "open sound." The lips form a circle. Ask children to say the sound with you, noticing your mouth position. Remind them that the letter *o* stands for the /o/ sound. When making this sound, your mouth is in the shape of an *o*. The sound you make is the same as when you are at the doctor's office and he is checking your tonsils.

Surprise Sound

The /o͞o/ sound is a "surprise sound." This is the sound you make when you see fireworks on the Fourth of July. The lips are close together and oval in shape. Have children practice the sound as they look in a mirror. Help them to notice how their mouth opens a bit as they move from the /o͞o/ sound to the /o/ sound.

Consonant Sounds Mouth Position Chart

/t/*t*
/d/*d*
/n/*n*
/l/*l*
(tongue pressed against roof of mouth behind top teeth)

/p/*p*
/b/*b*
/m/*m*
(lips closed)

/k/*k*
/g/*g*
(tongue pressed against bottom of mouth)

/th/*th*
(tongue between teeth)

/f/*f*
/v/*v*
(top teeth on bottom lip)

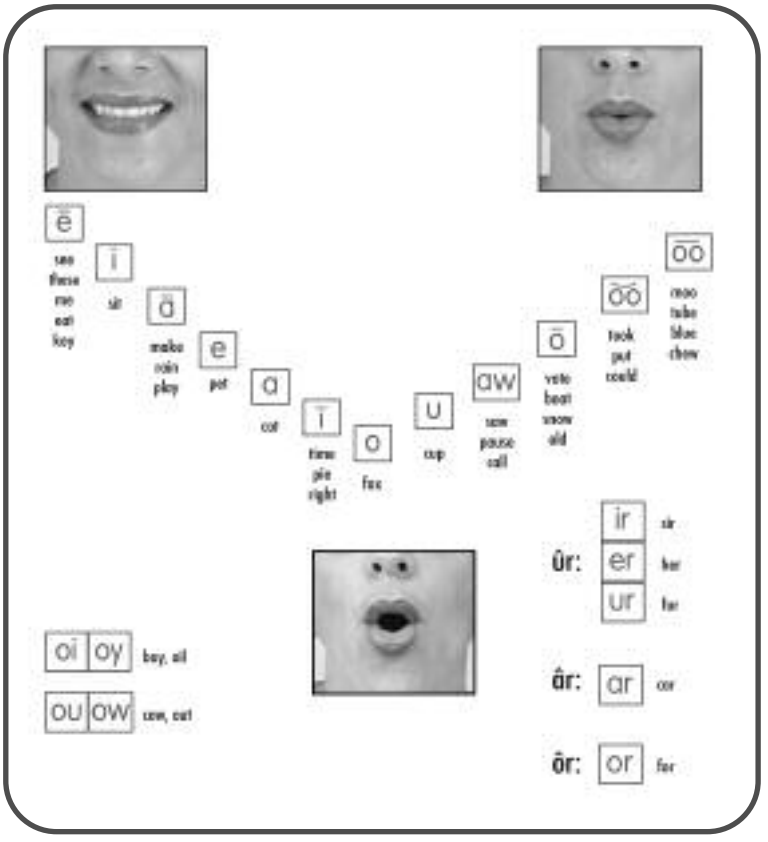
/ch/*ch*
/j/*j*
/sh/*sh*
(lips stuck out)

/s/*s*
/z/*z*
(teeth together, lips apart)

The 25 consonant phonemes on the chart on the top of page 41 are "closed" sounds in the English language—those that are made with some obstruction of the air stream during speech production. They are grouped by their place and manner of articulation. Phonemes that are produced similarly tend to be more confusable than phonemes that are pronounced differently. Many children need direct instruction to learn the identity of these sounds, the letters that represent them, and a key word that has the sound in it.

	Lips	Lips/ Teeth	Tongue Between Teeth	Tongue Behind Teeth	Roof of Mouth	Back of Mouth	Throat
stop	/p/ /b/			/t/ /d/		/k/ /g/	
nasal	/m/			/n/		/ng/	
fricative		/f/ /v/	/th/ /th/	/s/ /z/	/sh/ /zh		
affricate					/ch/ /j/		
glide					/y/	/hw/ /w/	/h/
liquid				/l/	/r/		

Vowels are a class of open speech sounds that are not consonants. Every syllable in English has a vowel sound. The 15 vowels on this chart (excluding the r-controlled vowels on the lower right) are arranged by place of articulation, from high, roof of mouth to the front position at the top of the mouth. Say them in order, looking in a mirror, to feel how the mouth position shifts one step at a time. The diphthongs /oi/ and /ou/ are separate because they glide in the middle and do not have one place of articulation. Some linguists also consider the long-*i* sound a diphthong.



Why Phonemic Awareness Is Important

Children sometimes come to school unaware that words consist of a series of discrete sounds. Phonemic awareness activities help them learn to distinguish individual sounds, or phonemes, within words. They need this skill in order to associate sounds with letters and manipulate sounds to blend words (during reading) or segment words (during spelling). "It is unlikely that children lacking phonemic awareness can benefit fully from phonics instruction since they do not understand what letters and spellings are supposed to represent" (Juel, Griffith, and Gough, 1986).

Many children have difficulties with phonics instruction because they haven't developed the prerequisite phonemic awareness skills that other children gain through years of exposure to rhymes, and songs, and being read to. Phonemic awareness training provides the foundation on which phonics instruction is built. "Children who begin school with little phonemic awareness will have trouble acquiring the alphabetic principle, which will, in turn, limit their ability to decode words" (Ball and Blachman, 1991).

Thus, children need solid phonemic awareness training for phonics instruction to be effective. For example, phonics instruction that begins by asking a child what sound the words *sit, sand,* and *sock* have in common won't make sense to a child who has difficulty discriminating sounds in words, cannot segment sounds within words, or does not understand what is meant by the term *sound*. Children must be able to segment and auditorily discriminate /s/ in the words *sit, sand,* and *sock* before it makes sense to them that the letter *s* stands for this sound in these written words. In addition, children must be able to segment the sounds in a word such as *sit* (/s/ /i/ /t/) in order to spell the word. Once children gain a basic level of phonemic awareness, and formal reading instruction begins, this instruction increases children's awareness of language. "Thus, phonemic awareness is both a prerequisite for and a consequence of learning to read" (Yopp, 1992).

Research indicates that approximately 20% of children lack phonemic awareness (Shankweiler and Liberman, 1989). Without early preventive measures, many of these children end up being labeled learning disabled or dyslexic and continue to fall behind their peers in reading development (Snider, 1995). They'll be forced to rely on memorizing words rather than fully analyzing them, which quickly becomes cumbersome and inefficient. In addition, these struggling readers tend to read less, have less exposure to words, and are less likely to memorize a large number of these words—further complicating their reading difficulties. However, this doesn't have to be the scenario. Promising phonemic awareness training studies have revealed two important points:

1. Phonemic awareness can be taught.
2. It doesn't take a great deal of time to bring many children's phonemic awareness abilities up to a level at which phonics instruction begins to make sense.

In fact, some studies (Honig, 1995) have shown that as few as 11–15 hours of intensive phonemic awareness training spread out over an appropriate time period produces results. Overall, a number of studies have shown that training in phonemic awareness has important effects on children's ability to master word-reading skills (Ball and Blachman, 1991; Fox and Routh, 1975; Torgesen, Morgan, and Davis, 1992). Alexander et al. (1991) showed how intensive phonemic awareness instruction helped a group of children with severe reading disabilities achieve average levels of reading abilities. "The purpose of training is to help children respond to reading instruction more effectively. Specifically, it helps children understand how spoken language is represented by the alphabetic system" (Torgesen and

Student Name _____ Date _____

Phonemic Awareness Assessment

Rhyme

A. Ask the child if the following word pairs rhyme.

1. cat/hat yes
2. pig/wig yes
3. box/lip no
4. can/man yes
5. let/pen no
6. sun/run yes

B. Say the following rhyming word pairs. Ask the child to provide another rhyming word.

1. rack, sack _____
2. pop, hop _____
3. wing, king _____
4. goat, coat _____
5. wide, hide _____
6. bake, lake _____

Oddity Tasks

C. Make picture cards for the following word sets. Display each picture-card set. Ask the child to find the two pictures whose names **begin** with the same sound. Circle the child's choices.

1. sun sock fish
2. mop sun man
3. pig leaf log
4. pig pan dog
5. dog ten top
6. fan leaf fish

D. Make picture cards for the following word sets. Display each picture-card set. Ask the child to find the two pictures whose names **end** with the same sound. Circle the child's choices.

1. bat rock nut
2. cup top pen
3. ten fan cup
4. bus glass bat
5. sock cup rake
6. dog leg leaf

Oral Blending

E. Say the first sound of a word and then the rest of the word. Have the child say the word as a whole.

1. /s/…at sat
2. /m/…op mop
3. /f/…ish fish
4. /l/…ock lock
5. /t/…ape tape
6. /b/…ox box

F. Say each word sound by sound. Ask the child to say the word as a whole.

1. /m/ /ē/ me
2. /s/ /ā/ say
3. /f/ /ē/ /t/ feet
4. /s/ /u/ /n/ sun
5. /m/ /ā/ /k/ make
6. /l/ /ā/ /z/ /ē/ lazy

Oral Segmentation

G. Say each word. Ask the child to clap the number of syllables he or she hears in each word.

1. pencil 2
2. map 1
3. tomato 3
4. bookmark 2
5. elephant 3
6. rock 1

H. Say each word. Have the child say the first sound he or she hears in each word.

1. sun /s/
2. mop /m/
3. leaf /l/
4. top /t/
5. candle /k/
6. yellow /y/

I. Say each word. Have the child say the last sound he or she hears in each word.

1. bat /t/
2. hop /p/
3. red /d/
4. take /k/
5. glass /s/
6. leaf /f/

J. Say each word. Have the child say each word sound by sound.

1. see /s/ /ē/
2. my /m/ /ī/
3. lake /l/ /ā/ /k/
4. rain /r/ /ā/ /n/
5. tub /t/ /u/ /b/
6. rocks /r/ /o/ /k/ /s/

Phonemic Manipulation

K. Say each word. Have the child say the word without the first sound.

1. sun un
2. mat at
3. leaf eaf
4. ship ip
5. bike ike
6. stop top

L. Say each word. Have the child replace the first sound in the word with /s/.

1. mad sad
2. run sun
3. cat sat
4. pick sick
5. hand sand
6. chip sip

Bryant, 1994). The goal is awareness of how words work. Therefore it is unnecessary to spend a lot of instructional time on phonemic awareness once children have a solid understanding of how to blend and segment words.

* One special note: when children begin learning letter-sound relationships, combining phonemic awareness and phonics work can accelerate children's progress (Ehri, 2005).

How to Assess Phonemic Awareness

I suggest that phonemic awareness assessment begin in midyear kindergarten and continue throughout the elementary grades. Use the assessment on page 43 or give one of the following commercially available assessments.

- Lindamood Auditory Conceptualization Test in Lindamood and Lindamood (1979)
- Test of Auditory Analysis Skills in Rosner (1979)
- Test of Phonological Awareness (TOPA) in Torgesen and Bryant (1994)
- Scholastic Phonemic Awareness Assessment in Scholastic Phonemic Awareness Kit (1997)
- Yopp-Singer Test of Phonemic Awareness in Yopp (1995)
- DIBELS (Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills). Go to http://dibels.uoregon.edu or www.sopriswest.com.

Phonemic Awareness and Writing

In addition to formal assessments, you can assess students' developing phonemic awareness abilities through their writings. When children write they practice many of the skills important to reading (Clay, 1985). My students' writings have provided me with some of my most valuable assessment information. Not only do these writings reveal the sound-spelling relationships that the children have learned, they show how, or if, they are segmenting words. I can use this information to tailor my instruction in the areas of phonics and phonemic awareness. Lots of opportunities to write using inventive spellings can benefit children with weak phonemic awareness skills because when they write, children have to turn spoken language into written language (Griffith and Klesius, 1992). The more children practice writing and receive instruction in mapping sounds to spellings, the better they can become at segmenting sounds in words (Griffith and Olson, 1992).

Researchers Mann, Tobin, and Wilson (1987) developed a system for scoring kindergartners' inventive spellings. They dictated a list of words for children to spell, then gave each word a score from 1 to 4 based on the correctness of the child's attempts. For example, if the word *name* was dictated, the following scores would be given:

4 points: The word *name* is spelled in the conventionally correct way. (*name*)

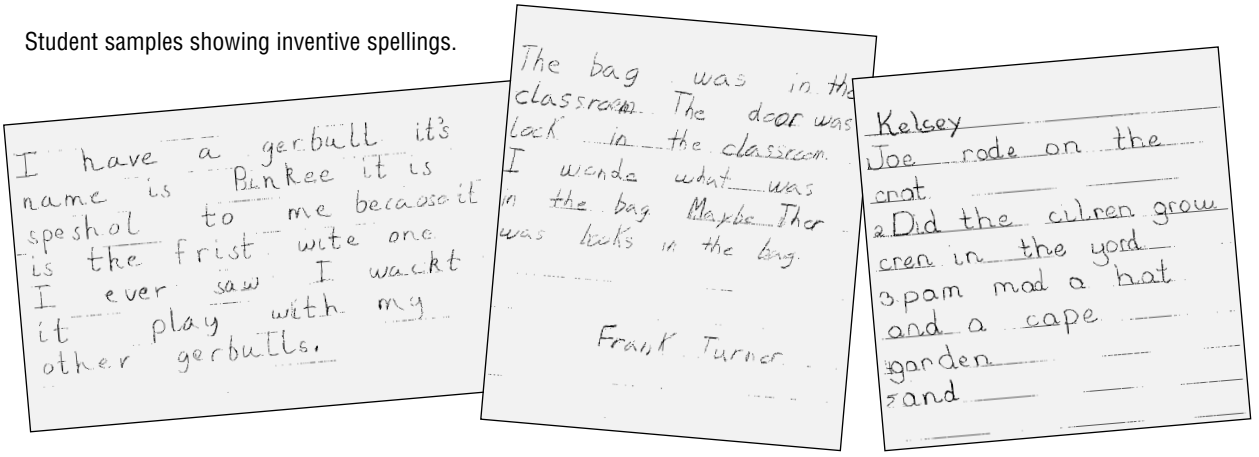
3 points: The word *name* is spelled in a way that captures the entire phonological structure of the word. However, the word is not spelled in the conventional manner. (*nam*)

2 points: The word *name* is spelled in a way that captures part of the phonological structure of the word. (*na* or *nme*)

1 point: The word *name* is spelled in a way in which only the initial sound is shown. (*n*)

Mann, Tobin, and Wilson used the scores on this assessment to predict first-grade reading achievement. You might give a similar assessment to kindergartners in the middle of the year to determine which children need additional phonemic awareness training. But keep in mind that a child's ability to spell words correctly also involves his or her knowledge of sound-spelling relationships. Therefore, any assessment of a child's early inventive spellings must take into account the sound-spelling relationships previously taught to that child. For example, if a child has not learned that the letter *t* stands for /t/, then a misspelling such as *dp* for the word *top* means more than the child is simply unable to segment the word.

Student samples showing inventive spellings.



How Inventive Spelling Fits In

Inventive spelling is a stage of spelling development. Whenever we, as adult skilled readers and writers, attempt to spell unfamiliar words, we rely on our abilities to segment words sound by sound and map a spelling onto each sound. This is inventive spelling. When students are writing their first draft of a story or informational paragraph, encourage them to try to spell each word they want to use. You don't want them to feel limited by their word choices because they are unsure of a word's spelling. Nevertheless, the goal is always to move children toward the use of standard spellings. Spelling words correctly *is* important and should be valued in the classroom. Attention to correct spelling in appropriate situations (such as writing final drafts, letters to people in the community, and so on) and direct instruction are the key to achieving this goal. You'll need to explain to parents the importance, and correct use, of inventive spelling. And make sure that students' work that you display in the classroom (that is, final drafts) reflects the highest standards, including correct spelling.

Blevins Phonemic Awareness-Phonics Quick Assessment

Administer this quick spelling survey to your students during the first week of Grade 1. Read each word aloud and have the students write it on their paper. Collect the papers and compare each child's answers to the rubric provided. The assessment can be used to determine a child's phonemic awareness and phonics needs and better inform you as you group students for small-group instruction.

Form A
1. sat
2. big
3. rake
4. coat
5. flower

Form B
1. sad
2. bit
3. rope
4. chain
5. grower

Scoring Rubric

5	4	3	2		1
A	B	C	D	E	F
1. sad 2. big 3. rakce 4. cote 5. flowre	1. sad 2. bag 3. rak 4. kot 5. flar	1. sd 2. bg 3. lk 4. kt 5. fw	1. S 2. B 3. D 4. F 5. F	1. seivne 2. bog 3. rigvet 4. tetvai 5. levneia	1. ephah 2. pebl 3. ehplr 4. siehgt 5. cseph

Points to Consider

Student A: This child's spelling reveals strong phonemic awareness and phonics skills. The use of the final *e* in the spellings for *rake* and *coat* reveal an advanced level of phonics. Since a child's spelling ability lags behind reading ability, this reveals that Student A can read words with final *e* and beyond. This assessment provided information on the types of reading materials appropriate for Student A and the spelling instruction necessary to move this child to the next level (for example, a focus on long-vowel spellings).

Student B: This child's spellings are typical of a child beginning grade 1. This child has strong phonemic awareness skills as evidenced by the spelling of *flower*, in which more letters are used to represent the increase in sounds (all the other words have three sounds).

Student C: This child's lack of attention to vowel sounds and spellings is also typical of many first graders. The use of Elkonin boxes (see page 47) to segment words by sound using counters along with minimal contrast reading practice as shown below will help this child progress.

I have a green _____ .

hot hat hit

Students D–F: These children have weak phonemic awareness skills. They show no sense of providing more letters for more sounds in a word or any consistency in relating the sounds to letters. In addition, these children have weak phonics skills. Students D and E show some signs of initial sound knowledge. However, Student F uses only the letters in her name. These students are below level and will require immediate and intensive intervention to get back on track for reading success.

Teaching Phonemic Awareness

Teaching phonemic awareness to children is one of my favorite classroom activities because the exercises are fun. Children delight in playing with language using rhymes, songs, word games, and puppets. In many ways, these activities are extensions of the language play many children had at home in their preschool years. Although children might think they're just having fun, phonemic awareness exercises have an important place in your reading instruction and make nice warm-up activities at the beginning of your daily reading period. Research has shown that **explicit phonemic awareness instruction increases reading and spelling achievement** among preschoolers, primary-grade children, and students with learning disabilities (Ball and Blachman, 1991; Lundberg, Frost, and Petersen, 1988; Yopp, 1992).

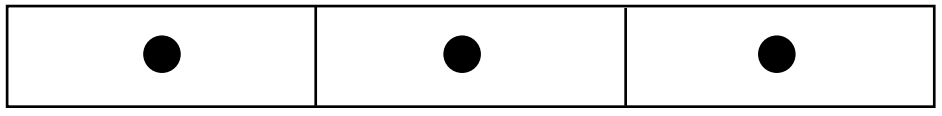
Most phonemic awareness instructional activities are oral and provide an engaging way for children to discriminate the sounds that make up words. The two main types are oral blending and oral segmentation.

Oral blending exercises help children hear how sounds are put together to make words. They prepare children to decode (sound out or blend) words independently. Children who have trouble blending words orally have trouble blending, or sounding out, words while they read. Oral blending exercises begin with blending larger word parts, such as syllables, and progress to blending onsets and rimes, and finally whole words sound by sound. The earliest oral blending exercises should use words that begin with continuous consonants (those that can be sustained without distortion) such as *s, m, l, f, r,* and *z*. This makes it easier for children to hear the distinct sounds and more efficient to model the principle of oral blending, because all the sounds in the words can be "sung" together in a more natural manner. For example, you can stretch out the word *sat* and sing it like this, *sssssss-saaaaaaaaat*. And you can add movements to help children notice when you go from one sound to the next as you say a word. Many children benefit from these visual cues.

Oral segmentation activities help children to separate words into sounds. These exercises should begin with a focus on syllables, which are easier to distinguish than individual sounds. Segmentation activities prepare children for spelling, for which they begin segmenting words into their component sounds in order to write them. Children who can't orally segment words have difficulty breaking them apart in order to spell them. You can tell if a child is developing the necessary segmentation skills when he or she begins asking questions, such as "What makes the /a/ sound in *cat*?" or "What makes the /sh/ sound in *shop*?"

Phonemic awareness training, including oral blending and segmentation instruction, can have a significant impact on reading and writing development. And phonemic awareness continues to develop as phonics instruction begins. In fact, some aspects of phonemic awareness continue to develop through high school. Once a basic level of phonemic awareness is achieved and phonics instruction can be effective, the research shows that phonics and phonemic awareness enjoy a reciprocal relationship, benefiting from each other. Indeed, the combination of blending and segmenting sounds and learning sound-spelling relationships has proved to be very powerful.

Use Elkonin boxes, also known as sound boxes, to help children segment words (Elkonin, 1973). Begin by making sure children can stretch a word. For example, tell the children that you want to stretch the word *sat* like a rubber band. Say *ssssaaat* as you move your hands in a stretching motion. Then tell children that you want to mark each sound in the word. To do so, you will stretch the word again. Then you will drag one counter onto each box on the Elkonin boxes as you move from sound to sound. Ask children to repeat using their Elkonin boxes and counters.



Sample Elkonin box for the word *sat*.

Some Ideas to Keep in Mind

- **Don't stress written words or letters.** Even though a child can possess some level of phonemic awareness before knowing the alphabet, written words or letters should not be the focus of phonemic awareness activities until he or she can readily identify the letters. But once children know the alphabet, these visual cues benefit many children. This generally happens in the second half of kindergarten. At this point, **the combination of phonemic awareness and phonics instruction is a powerful union** (Fox, 1996). Before that, using print may distract from the purposes of the activities or cause confusion for children.

- **Keep the tone fun and informal.** Although the phonemic awareness activities give you evaluative information about children's progress, avoid using the activities as assessments. It is important that children be engaged in playing with language, not concerned about being assessed. Respond favorably and enthusiastically to their attempts.

- **Monitor each child's progress.** In small groups, all children can participate in and enjoy these language play activities. However, children progress through the phonemic awareness activities at varying rates. Some catch on quickly; others do not. Continue informally to monitor children throughout the year. Watch for patterns of difficulty over time.

- **Model, model, model!** Continually model for children how to accomplish the various phonemic awareness tasks. And provide corrective feedback. Much of the learning occurs through this feedback. Following are some sample models for rhyming, oral blending, and substituting sounds (phonemic manipulation).

Sample Phonemic Awareness Teaching Models

Rhyme Model: Explain to students that rhyming words are words that have the same ending sound, such as *pop* and *mop.* Model how to make a rhyme. For example, you might say, "The words *pop* and *mop* rhyme because they both end with /op/. Listen: /p/ . . . *op, pop*; /m/ . . . *op, mop*. I can make another word that rhymes with *pop* and *mop*. This word begins with /h/ and ends with /op/. It's *hop*. Can you make a word that rhymes with *pop* and *mop*?"

Oral-Blending Model: Model how to blend sounds into words. For example, you might say, "I'm going to say a word very slowly, sound by sound. Then I'll say the word a bit faster. Finally I'll say the word the way it is usually said. For example, if I hear the word parts /m/ /a/ /t/, I can blend them together like this: *mmmmmaaaaaat, mmaat, mat.*"

Begin blending models with short CVC words (e.g., *sat, sun, map*) that start with continuous consonants such as *m, s, l, f,* and *r*. To help children visually note when you change from sound to sound as you blend the word, add movements. For example, you might move your hands from right to left as you change from sound to sound. You might also want to point out the mouth position (lips, tongue) and throat vibration (if applicable) when making each sound.

Phonemic Manipulation Model: Model how to substitute a sound and make a new word. For example, explain to children that you are going to take a word and make new words using it. You might say, "I can make a new word. I can take the /s/ off *sit*, put on a /p/, and I have a new word—*pit*. Can you take the /s/ off *sat* and put on a /m/ to make a new word? What is the new word?" *(mat)*

- **Keep assessing phonemic awareness.** Most poor readers—whatever their grade level—have weak phonological sensitivity (phonemic awareness skills), which may be standing in the way of their becoming good readers and writers. So intermediate-level teachers should be aware of the importance of phonemic awareness, assess the skills of their poor readers, and provide any needed training.

- **Provide lots and lots of language experiences.** Nothing can take the place of reading, writing, and listening to stories in an early literacy program. So whatever you do with phonemic awareness, do it within the context of a print-rich environment with multiple language experiences.

Commercial Training Programs

Children with weak phonemic awareness skills benefit from a complete phonemic awareness training program. If your reading program is not as strong as you'd like in phonemic awareness, you might want to integrate one of the handful of commercially available training programs that focus on these skills. These are:

- *Auditory Discrimination in Depth* developed by C. H. Lindamood and P. C. Lindamood. Allen, TX: DLM/Teaching Resources Corporation, 1984.

- *Phonological Awareness Training for Reading* developed by Joseph K. Torgesen and Brian R. Bryant. Austin, TX: PROD-ED, Inc., 1994.

- *Scholastic Phonemic Awareness Kit* written by Wiley Blevins. New York: Scholastic, 1997.

- *Sound Foundations* developed by B. Byrne and R. Fielding-Barnsley. Artarmon, New South Wales, Australia: Leyden Educational Publishers, 1991.

- *Sound and Letter Time* written by Michal Rosenberg and Wiley Blevins. New York: Scholastic, 2006.

Using Literature to Develop Phonemic Awareness

One of the easiest and most accessible ways to improve children's sensitivity to the phonemes that make up our language is to use children's books that play with speech sounds through rhyme, alliteration, assonance, and phonemic manipulation (Griffith and Olson, 1992; Yopp, 1995). Use classroom collections of rhymes or any trade books that spotlight these skills. The following books are excellent resources. Read and reread the books so that children can enjoy their playful language. While reading the books, discuss the language. For example, you might comment on words that rhyme or a series of words that begin with the same sound. Many of the books can be extended by having children create additional rhyming verses or writing another version of the story, using rhyme or alliteration.

Books With Rhyme

Bears in Pairs by N. Yektai (Bradbury, 1987)

Bears on the Stairs: A Beginner's Book of Rhymes by M. and L. Kalish (Scholastic, 1993)

Buzz Said the Bee by W. Lewison (Scholastic, 1992)

Carrot/Parrot by J. Martin (Simon & Schuster, 1991)

Catch a Little Fox by Fortunata (Scholastic, 1968)

Chicken Soup with Rice by M. Sendak (Scholastic, 1962)

Each Peach Pear Plum by J. and A. Ahlberg (Puffin Books, 1986)

Father Fox's Pennyrhymes by C. Watson (Scholastic, 1987)

A Giraffe and a Half by S. Silverstein (HarperCollins, 1964)

Hop on Pop by Dr. Seuss (Random House, 1987)

Hunches in Bunches by Dr. Seuss (Random House, 1982)

The Hungry Thing by J. Slepian and A. Seidler (Scholastic, 1988)

I Can Fly by R. Krauss (Western Publishing, 1992)

I Saw You in the Bathtub by A. Schwartz (HarperCollins, 1989)

If I Had a Paka by C. Pomerantz (Mulberry, 1993)

Is Your Mama a Llama? by D. Guarino (Scholastic, 1992)

It Does Not Say Meow and Other Animal Riddle Rhymes by B. Schenk de Regniers (Houghton Mifflin, 1972)

Jamberry by B. Degen (Harper & Row, 1983)

Jesse Bear, What Will You Wear? by N. Carlstrom (Scholastic, 1986)

Miss Mary Mack and Other Children's Street Rhymes by J. Cole and S. Calmenson (Morrouno, 1990)

101 Jump-Rope Rhymes by J. Cole (Scholastic, 1989)

Pat the Cat by C. Hawkins and J. Hawkins (Putnam, 1993)

Pickle Things by M. Brown (Parents Magazine Press/Putnam & Grosset, 1980)

The Random House Book of Poetry for Children (Random House, 1983)

See You Later, Alligator by B. Strauss and H. Friedland (Price Stern Sloan, 1986)

Sheep in a Jeep by N. Shaw (Houghton Mifflin, 1986)

Sing a Song of Popcorn by B. Schenk de Regniers, M. White, and J. Bennett (Scholastic, 1988)

Street Rhymes Around the World by J. Yolen (Wordsong, 1992)

Yours Till Banana Splits: 201 Autograph Rhymes by J. Cole and S. Calmenson (Beech Tree, 1995)

Books With Alliteration

A, My Name Is Alice by J. Bayer (Dial, 1994)

All About Arthur (*an absolutely absurd ape*) by E. Carle (Franklin Watts, 1974)

Alphabears by K. Hague (Henry Holt, 1984)

Animalia by G. Base (Abrams, 1987)

Aster Aardvark's Alphabet Adventures by S. Kellogg (Morrow, 1987)

Busy Buzzing Bumblebees and Other Tongue Twisters by A. Schwartz (Harper & Row, 1982)

Dinosaur Chase by C. Otto (HarperCollins, 1993)

Dr. Seuss's ABC by Dr. Seuss (Random House, 1963)

Faint Frogs Feeling Feverish and Other Terrifically Tantalizing Tongue Twisters by L. Obligade (Viking, 1983)

Six Sick Sheep: 101 Tongue Twisters by J. Cole and S. Calmenson (Beech Tree, 1993)

Tongue Twisters by C. Keller (Simon & Schuster, 1989)

Zoophabets by R. Tallon (Scholastic, 1979)

Books With Phonemic Manipulation

The Cow That Went Oink by Bernard Most (Harcourt, 1990)

Don't Forget the Bacon by P. Hutchins (Morrow, 1976)

There's a Wocket in My Pocket by Dr. Seuss (Random House, 1989)

Zoomerang a Boomerang: Poems to Make Your Belly Laugh by C. Parry (Puffin Books, 1993)

For additional books, see "Read-Aloud Books for Developing Phonemic Awareness: An Annotated Bibliography" by Hallie Kay Yopp. *The Reading Teacher* 48, no. 6, March 1995.

35 Quick-and-Easy Activities for Developing Phonemic Awareness

Activities to Develop Rhyme

1 Favorite Rhyme

Write a favorite rhyme on chart paper. Read it aloud as you track the print. Reread the rhyme doing one or all of the following:

- Have children point out the rhyming words in the poem. Then frame the rhyming words as you reread the poem. Now have children clap every time you read one of the rhyming words. In later readings, pause before the rhyming words and let children provide them.
- Substitute poem words. For example, using a self-sticking note, substitute the first word in a rhyming pair. Children then suggest a rhyming word to replace the second word in the pair. Write the word on a self-sticking note and place it in the appropriate place in the poem. Help children read the "new" poem.
- Have children clap the rhythm of the poem as you read it aloud.
- Have children substitute the syllable *la* for every syllable they hear in the poem.

2 Do You Know?

Write the song "Do You Know?" on chart paper. Sing it to the tune of "Muffin Man." Track the print as you sing. Sing the song several times, asking children to suggest one-syllable rhyming words to replace the words *king* and *ring*. Write the words on self-sticking notes and place them in the appropriate places in the song.

Do You Know?
Do you know two rhyming words,
Two rhyming words,
Two rhyming words?
Oh, do you know two rhyming words?
They sound a lot alike.

King and ring are two rhyming words,
Two rhyming words,
Two rhyming words.
King and ring are two rhyming words.
They sound a lot alike.

3 Extend the Rhyme

Explain to children that you're going to say aloud three rhyming words (such as *cat*, *hat*, and *sat*). Tell them you want them to listen carefully to the words and then suggest other words that rhyme with those words. For example, children might respond with *bat*, *fat*, *mat*, and *pat*. Continue with other sets of rhyming words.

4 Create a Rhyme

Using the following incomplete poem, have students create rhymes by suggesting words to fill in each blank. Write the words they suggest on self-sticking notes and place them in the rhyme. Then help the class to read the rhyme they created. You can do the same activity with rhymes from your classroom collection. Write the rhyme on chart paper, replacing the second word in a rhyming pair with a blank.

Once I Saw
Once I saw a cat,
And it wore a funny little _____.
Tra-la-la, la-la-la-la-la-la
Silly little cat.

Once I saw a goat,
And it wore a funny little _____.
Tra-la-la, la-la-la-la-la-la
Silly little goat.

5 Silly Sentences

Help children to create silly alliterative sentences. For example, "Six snakes sell sodas." Create an alliteration book using the sentences and have each child illustrate his or her sentence.

6 Round-Robin Rhyme

Invite children to sit in a circle. Tell them that you're going on an imaginary trip. Explain that you will tell them one item that you want to take on the trip and they are to take turns repeating that item name and then name another item that rhymes. For example, if you say, "I'm going to the park and I'm taking a *mat*," the next child in the circle might say, "I'm going to the park and I'm taking a *mat* and a *hat*." Continue around the circle until children run out of items with rhyming names.

Variation: Have children say aloud items whose names begin with the same sound. For example, "I'm going to the park and I'm taking a ball, a bat, a basket, a blanket, and a banana."

7 Picture Rhyme

Have children each fold a piece of paper in half. Ask them to draw pictures of two things whose names rhyme. For example, a *hat* and a *bat*. Help children label the pictures with the items' names. Gather the drawings and bind them into a rhyme book for the class library. TIP: Provide children who are struggling with this activity with the name of one item to draw, such as a *star*, *pan*, *pig*, *pen*, or *coat*. Then have them come up with the second item.

8 Rhyme Book

Paste a different picture at the top of enough pages for each child in the class. Pass out the pages and have each child draw (or find in a magazine) a picture of an object whose name rhymes with the picture on his or her page. Then gather the pictures and bind them into a class book.

Oddity Task Activities

9 Picture Cards

Make a set of picture cards (pictures only, no words) using index cards and drawings or magazine pictures. (Picture cards are particularly helpful for younger children. The visual cues allow them to think about the sounds in words without having to store a lot of information in their memory.) Then display a picture card set such as the following: *fan, feet, man, mop, six, soap*. Mix the cards and have volunteers pick the two cards whose picture names begin with the same sound. When two cards are selected, say aloud the name of each picture and ask children to tell you what sound each begins with. Then have children suggest other words that begin with the same sound as the two picture names.

Variations: You can also use picture cards for distinguishing rhymes, ending consonant sounds, and medial vowel sounds. (A list of 500 picturable items can be found on page 195.)

10 Picky Puppet

Distribute a set of picture cards evenly among the children. Each child should have at least two cards. Then, using a classroom puppet or a sock puppet, explain to children that this puppet is a "sound puppet" who likes only things whose names begin with a sound it chooses. For example, if the puppet likes licorice, it will also like other things whose names begin with the /l/ sound. Tell children that the sound puppet will name an object it likes. If they have any picture cards whose names also begin with the first sound in the object's name, they should hold up those cards. Have the puppet provide corrective feedback by reiterating the beginning sound of each card to check children's responses.

EXAMPLE:

PUPPET: I like marshmallows.

One child holds up the mop *picture card.*

PUPPET: I see a mop. M-m-mop. *Mop* begins with /m/, just like *mmmmmarshmallows*.

11 Find Your Match

Make picture cards using large index cards. Punch holes in the top two corners of each card and string a piece of yarn through them to create a picture card necklace. Distribute one picture card to each child. Have children find their match by finding the classmate whose picture card begins with the same sound, ends with the same sound, or rhymes (according to the skill you are working on).

12 Stand, Sit, and Turn Around

Using children's names, say a sound, such as /s/. Ask all the children whose names begin with /s/ to stand up, sit down, turn around, jump and clap, or some other movement. Continue the activity using picture cards.

Activities for Oral Blending

13 Put It Together

For this activity you say a word in parts. Children should listen carefully and orally blend the parts to say the word as a whole. For example, if you say /m/ /a/ /n/, children are to respond with *man*.

Variation: Use a classroom puppet to make the activity more playful. Explain to children that the puppet likes to say only whole words. Tell them that you'll say a word in parts and they should guess what the puppet will say. The puppet can then provide corrective feedback and model blending, when necessary.

14 Sound It Out

Write the song "Sound It Out" on chart paper. Sing the song to the tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It." At the end of the song, say a word in parts for children to orally blend. For example, /s/…*at*. Then sing the song several

times. At the end of each singing, point to a child to provide word parts for the class to blend.

Sound It Out
If you have a new word, sound it out.
If you have a new word, sound it out.
If you have a new word,
Then slowly say the word.
If you have a new word, sound it out.

15 Old MacDonald Had a Box

Write the song "Old MacDonald Had a Box" on chart paper. Explain to children that this is a different version of the popular song "Old MacDonald Had a Farm." Track the print as you sing. Sing the song several times. During each singing, orally segment a different one-syllable word for children to orally blend. You might segment the word by onset and rime (/k/…an) or phoneme by phoneme (/k/ /a/ /n/), according to children's instructional level. Here are word parts whose words you can substitute for *can* in the song:

- /p/…en
- /s/…ock
- /m/…op
- /h/…at
- /r/ /o/ /k/
- /t/ /o/ /p/
- /f/ /a/ /n/
- /b/ /a/ /t/

Old MacDonald Had a Box
Old MacDonald had a box, E-I-E-I-O.
And in the box he had a /k/…an, E-I-E-I-O.
With a can, can here
And a can, can there,
Here a can, there a can,
Everywhere a can, can.
Old MacDonald had a box, E-I-E-I-O.

Variation: Sing the original version of "Old MacDonald Had a Farm." Then have children change the E-I-E-I-O part by singing a rhyming counterpart, such as SE-SI-SE-SI-SO or ME-MI-ME-MI-MO.

16 Guess It!

Guess It! can be played in many ways. In this version, you orally segment the name of an animal. Children guess the animal's identity. For example, you might tell children that you are thinking of the names of farm animals. Children must guess each animal's name.
EXAMPLE:
TEACHER: I'm thinking of an animal. It's a /p/…*ig*. What am I thinking of?
CHILDREN: A pig!

Extension: Continue with other categories such as zoo animals, classroom objects, numbers, colors, or household items.

Variation: Place picture cards in a bag. Draw out one picture at a time, not showing it to children. Tell children that you see, for example, a /k/…at. Ask them to orally blend the word parts to guess the picture name. Then display the card so that children can check their responses. Finally, invite children to be the "teacher" and segment the words for the class to guess. When children become skilled at segmenting and blending words by onset and rime, repeat the activity, asking them to segment and blend the words phoneme by phoneme.

17 Break the Code Game

Divide the class into teams of three to five players. Say a word in parts and ask one of the teams to "break the code." For example, if you say the word parts /s/…*ad*, the team should respond with the word *sad*. If that team gets it wrong, give other teams the opportunity to provide the correct answer, modeling how to string together the word parts to say the word as a whole. Teams get one point for each code they break. Play until one team has ten points.

18 Draw It

Have each child fold a sheet of paper into fourths. Then orally segment the name of an easily drawn object, such as a hat. Ask children to orally blend the word parts and then draw a picture of the word in one section of their paper. In the early exercises, segment the words by onset and rime, such as /h/…at. In later exercises, segment the words phoneme by phoneme, such as /h/ /a/ /t/. Begin with two- or three-phoneme names (for example, *tie*—/t/ /ī/; kite—/k/ /ī/ /t/) and progress to four-phoneme names (for example, *box*—/b/ /o/ /k/ /s/).

19 Name Game

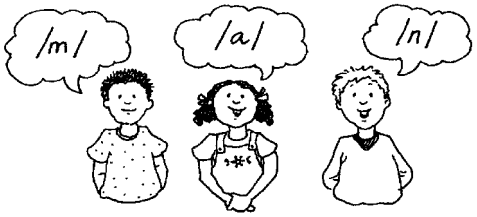
When you're lining up children for recess or lunch, practice blending. Say a child's name in parts, such as /s/…*am*. That child can get in line as the class blends the word parts to say the child's name as a whole. (This is a great transition activity.)

20 Blend Baseball

Divide the class into two teams. Say aloud a word in parts, such as /s/ /a/ /t/. If the child can blend the word, he or she can go to first base. Play the game just like baseball.

21 Team Sound-Off

Divide the class into teams of three or four children. Assign each team a sound, such as /s/. Then call to the front of the classroom three children, for example one child from the /s/



group, one child from the /a/ group, and one child from the /t/ group. Have the three children sequence their sounds to form a word. Then they should say the sounds and ask the rest of the class to blend together the sounds to form the word. Teams take turns answering, and each team that guesses correctly gets one point.

Activities for Oral Segmentation

22 First Sound First

Ask children to listen to the following set of words: *sat, send, sick*. Point out that all these words start with the same sound. This sound is /s/. Tell children that you want them to listen carefully to each new set of words you say and then tell you what the first sound is. Finally ask them to volunteer other words that begin with that sound.

EXAMPLE:

"Can you tell me what the first sound is in *fish, foot, fan*? That's right, it's /f/. What other words do you know that begin with /f/?"

Extension: Have children listen for the last sound.

EXAMPLE:

"Can you tell me what the last sound is in *foot, bat, pet*? That's right, it's /t/. What other words do you know that end with /t/?"

23 What's the Sound?

Write the song "What's the Sound?" on chart paper. Sing it to the tune "Old MacDonald Had a Farm." Track the print as you sing. Sing the song several times, encouraging children to join in. During later singings, replace the words *sad* and *silly* with the following:

- *mop* and *money*
- *leaf* and *lucky*
- *ten* and *table*

What's the Sound?
What's the sound that these words share?
Listen to these words.
Sad and silly are these two words.
Tell me what you've heard. (*sssssssss*)
With a /s/, /s/ here, and a /s/, /s/ there,
Here a /s/, there a /s/, everywhere a /s/, /s/.
/s/ is the sound that these words share.
We can hear that sound!

24 Sound Roll

Place a small group of children in a circle and give each child a picture-card necklace (see activity 11). Roll a ball to one child. That child rolls the ball to another child in the circle whose picture card's name also begins, ends, or rhymes with his or her picture card's name. Limit the picture cards in each group to two or three sounds or rhymes.

25 Segmentation Cheer

Write "Segmentation Cheer" on chart paper and teach children the cheer. Each time you say the cheer, change the words in the third line. Have children segment this word, sound by sound. You might want to use these words in subsequent cheers: *soap, read, fish, lime, make, mop, ten, rat, pig, cat, dog, lip*.

Segmentation Cheer
Listen to my cheer.
Then shout the sounds you hear.

Sun! Sun! Sun!
Let's take apart the word *sun*!
Give me the beginning sound.
(*Children respond with /s/.*)
Give me the middle sound.
(*Children respond with /u/.*)
Give me the ending sound.
(*Children respond with /n/.*)
That's right!
/s/ /u/ n/—Sun! Sun! Sun!

Classroom Spotlight

Elkonin boxes and counters can be used to help children segment the sounds in words. I always begin by drawing two connected boxes on a sheet of paper, stating aloud a two-sound word such as *see*, and dragging one counter to each box as I say each sound in the word. I am careful to string together the sounds, instead of pausing between each sound. For example, I say *ssssseeee* instead of /s/ pause /ē/ pause. Slowly, I allow children to take over the dragging of the counters. Eventually, I progress to using three- and four-sound words.

26 Secret Sound

Explain to children that you're going to play a word game. You'll say three words, and you want them to listen closely and tell you what sound they hear that is the same in all the words. For example, if you say *teeth, bean,* and *feet*, children respond with /ē/. Make sure the target sound is in the same position (initial, medial, or final) in all the words.

27 Where Is It?

This activity helps children differentiate sound position in words. Distribute one counter to each child. Then have children each draw three connected boxes on a sheet of paper (see sample below). Explain that you're going to say a list of words that all contain /s/. Some words contain /s/ at the beginning, some in the middle, and some at the end. Tell children that if they hear /s/ at the beginning of the word, they should place the counter in the first box. If they hear /s/ in the middle, they should place their counter in the center box. And if they hear /s/ at the end, they should place their counter in the last box. You'll be able to check quickly for accuracy. Use the following word list: *send, missing, sock, bus, less, passing, messy, safe*. On subsequent days, continue with other sounds and word lists such as the following:

- /p/—pack, mop, happy, pocket, hope, open, pudding, trap, pencil, keep
- /m/—man, moon, ham, summer, room, hammer, made, dream, lemon
- /d/—dog, duck, pad, pudding, middle, door, toad, read, puddle, dig

28 Count the Sounds

Distribute five counters to each child. Then have children each draw a series of three connected boxes on a sheet of paper. Explain that you're going to read aloud a word. Tell them that they should count how many sounds they hear in the word and place one counter on a box on their paper for each sound they hear. For example, if you say the word *sat*, children should place three counters on their paper, one on each box. You might need to extend the sounds in each word to be sure children hear each discrete sound. For example, you might need to say *ssssaaaaat* for children having difficulty distinguishing the sounds in the word *sat*. And you might want to add movements. For example, move your hands from right to left as you say the word, emphasizing when you change from one sound to another.

Have children segment each of the three related words in each column listed on page 57 before moving on to the next column. Help them understand that only one sound is different in each new word in the column. Ask them which sound in each new word is different. Use these and other words:

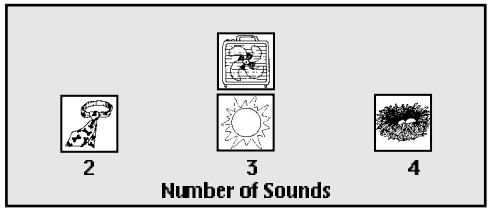
at	mop	run	in	cup
sat	map	sun	pin	cap
sit	tap	bun	pan	cat

Variation to the segmentation boxes:
Have children do one of the following:

- Slap their knee the number of sounds they hear in a word.
- Walk in place or march the number of syllables or sounds they hear in a word.
- Play on a musical instrument one note for each sound they hear. For example, beat on the drum one time for each sound in a word.

29 Graph It

Display the following picture cards: *bee*, *tie*, *sun*, *mop*, *fan*, *leaf*, *glass*, *nest*. Have children sort the cards according to the number of sounds each picture name contains. Then create a graph using the cards.



Phonemic Manipulation Activities

30 Initial Sound Switch

Explain to children that you're going to play a word game. They're going to make new words by replacing the first sound in each word you say with /s/. For example, if you say the word *hand*, children are to say *sand*. Continue with these and other words: *hit*, *well*, *funny*, *bun*, *mad*, *bend*, *rat*, *rope*.

Extension: After children become skilled at substituting initial consonant sounds, have them substitute final consonant sounds (i.e., replace the last sound in *man* with /p/—*map*) and then medial vowel sounds (i.e., replace the middle sound in *ride* with /ō/—*rode*).

31 Row Your Boat

Write the song "Row Your Boat" on chart paper. Have children sing the song a few times. Then tell them that you'll sing it again, but this time you'll change the line "Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily," to "Serrily, serrily, serrily, serrily." To illustrate this, write the word *merrily* on the chalkboard, erase the letter *m* and replace it with the letter *s*. Pronounce the nonsense word formed. This will show children that replacing one sound in a word creates a new word. Continue singing the song. Each time, change the first letter in the word *merrily* to create a new third line. You might choose to use the nonsense words *werrily*, *jerrily*, and *berrily*.

Row Your Boat
Row, row, row your boat,
Gently down the stream.
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,
Life is but a dream.

You can do this same type of phonemic manipulation with other popular children's songs. For example:

- "I've Been Working on the Railroad": substitute the initial sounds in "Fe-Fi-Fiddly-I-O" to make "Me-Mi-Middly-I-O" or "Se-Si-Siddly-I-O" and so on.

- "Happy Birthday": substitute the initial sound throughout with /b/ to create lines such as "Bappy Birthday bo boo." In addition, you might substitute each syllable in the song with *la*, *lo*, *pa*, *bo*, or *ta*.

32 Sound Switcheroo

Explain to children that you want them to listen carefully to the sounds in the word you're going to say. Tell them that you'll then play switcheroo (change one sound in the word—the beginning, middle, or ending sound) with one of these sounds. Children should then tell you which sound was switched. For example, if you say *mat* and then *sat*, children should respond that /m/ was switched with /s/. Continue with these and other word pairs:

- man/pan
- fan/fat

- run/sun
- pick/pack
- leaf/loaf
- fish/dish
- tap/tape
- zip/lip
- hot/hop
- hat/hot
- ball/bell
- pig/pin
- gate/game
- van/ran
- cup/cap

33 Consonant Riddles

Explain to children that they're going to play a consonant riddle game. You'll say a word. Then they think of a word that rhymes with your word and starts with a given sound.

EXAMPLE:

TEACHER: What rhymes with *pat* and starts with /s/?

CHILDREN: *sat*

Continue with these and other riddles:

- What rhymes with *hit* and starts with /s/? (*sit*)
- What rhymes with *land* and starts with /h/? (*hand*)
- What rhymes with *pick* and starts with /s/? (*sick*)
- What rhymes with *fun* and starts with /r/? (*run*)

34 Sound of the Day

Select a sound of the day, such as /l/. Throughout the day, say children's names with that sound in place of the first sound. Peter will be called "Leter," Bonnie will be called "Lonnie," and Harry will be called "Larry." You may want to take attendance this way and may want to encourage each child to experiment with saying his or her classmates' names with the sound of the day.

35 Picture Search

Display a picture or turn to a favorite page in a trade book. Explain to children that you will say the name of an object, animal, or person in the picture, but that you'll say the name without its first sound. You want them to guess the correct name. For example, if you see a picture of a dog, you'd say *og*.

For additional phonemic awareness activities, see *Phonemic Awareness Activities for Early Reading Success* (Scholastic, 1997) and *Phonemic Awareness Songs and Rhymes* (Scholastic, 1999), both by Wiley Blevins.

Try It Out

- Select one activity from the Quick-and-Easy Activities for Developing Phonemic Awareness to try out with your students.
- Examine samples of student writing for evidence of phonemic awareness development. Look at the students' invented spellings and assess their ability to segment words and attach accurate spellings to each sound.
- Assess five students using the Phonemic Awareness Assessment. Determine instructional modifications based on student results.

Learning About Sounds and Letters

Why is the most common vowel sound in English the colorless murmur we refer to as the schwa (/ə/) sound? Why do the vowels *e*, *i*, *o*, and *u* act as consonants in words such as *azalea*, *onion*, *one*, and *quick*; and the consonants *w* and *y* act as vowels in words such as *snow* and *fly*? Why don't the word pairs *five/give*, *low/how*, *paid/said*, and *break/speak* rhyme?

These and other questions might cause one to reconsider the teaching of reading and writing because of the seemingly irregular and unpredictable nature of the English language. However, 84% of English words conform to "regular" spelling patterns. Of the remaining 16%, only 3% are highly unpredictable, such as *colonel* and *Ouija* (Bryson, 1990). Given the high degree of regularity of spelling, it's apparent why it's important to teach children the most common sound-spelling relationships in English and help them attend to common spelling patterns in words. As teachers, we need to have a working knowledge of the many sounds in our language and the even greater number of spellings that can represent them.

"... knowledge is power. The teacher with some knowledge of linguistics can be a far better kidwatcher, as well as be able to participate more learnedly in conversations and debates about teaching methodology."

—Sandra Wilde

Teachers and Linguistics

In 1995, Louisa Moats examined teacher preparation in the areas of reading and learning disabilities and surveyed teachers' background knowledge of language. Five of the fifteen survey items follow (answers provided).

1. How many speech sounds are in the following words?

ox (3)	boil (3)
king (3)	thank (4)
straight (5)	shout (3)
though (2)	precious (6)

2. Underline the consonant blends: doubt, known, first, pumpkin, squawk, scratch.
3. What letters signal that a "g" is pronounced /j/? (*e, i, y*)
4. List all the ways you can think of to spell "long a." (*a, ai, a-e, ey, ay, eigh*)
5. Account for the double "m" in comment or commitment. (*The first* m *closes the syllable to make it short;* com *is a Latin morpheme—the smallest unit of meaning in language—as are* ment *and* mit.)

The results of her survey showed that the majority of teachers could benefit from additional training in linguistics. Only about half of the teachers surveyed could successfully answer most of the questions. Knowledge of phonics was particularly weak. Only about 10–20% of the teachers could identify consonant blends; almost none could consistently identify digraphs; less than half could identify the schwa sound in words; and only 30% knew the conditions in which the letters *ck* were used to stand for the /k/ sound. Moats contends that some of her survey results can be attributed to:

1. a lack of teacher training in phonics and linguistics.
2. the fact that most adult readers think of words in terms of spellings instead of sounds. Therefore, their knowledge of print may stand in the way of attending to individual sounds in words—a skill they no longer need because they have acquired automaticity.
3. the fact that some adults have underdeveloped metalinguistic skills. That is, the skills they have acquired are sufficient for reading but not for explicit (direct) teaching of reading and spelling.

During my years as a teacher, I've improved my ability to assess children's reading and writing skills as I've increased my understanding of the English language. The more I learn about English, the more regular its spelling seems. For example, at one time I thought of words such as *love* and *come* as being "irregular" since they didn't follow the typical *o_ e* spelling for the long-*o* sound. But when I realized the large number of words that follow a similar spelling pattern (*shove, glove, above, some,* and so on), a regularity began to emerge. The *o_ e* spelling pattern is not random; rather, it can represent either the /ō/ sound or the /u/ sound in words. Now, these are the two sounds I try out when confronted with this spelling pattern in an unfamiliar word. In addition, the more I learn about English and its spelling patterns, the more my students' reading and writing errors make sense. This knowledge has helped me target specific difficulties students have had and to design appropriate instruction. If you have a basic knowledge of phonics and linguistics you'll be able to help your students in the following ways (Moats, 1995):

1. **Interpreting and responding to student errors.** You can use student mistakes to modify instruction. For example, when a student substitutes *k* for *g* in a word, knowing that the sounds these two letters represent are formed in almost the same manner helps to explain the student's error. You can instruct students in the major difference between these two sounds (voicing).
2. **Choosing the best examples for teaching decoding and spelling.** You can help children distinguish auditorially confusing sounds such as /e/ and /i/, and use words for instruction that provide the clearest, simplest examples.
3. **Organizing and sequencing information for instruction.** You'll be able to separate the introduction of auditorially confusing sounds such as /e/ and /i/, and teach easier concepts before more complex ones (such as teaching consonants before consonant clusters).
4. **Using your knowledge of morphology to explain spellings.** You can use your knowledge of roots (Latin, Greek) to explain spelling patterns and guide children to figure out word meanings.
5. **Integrating the components of language instruction.** You'll be able to take better advantage of the "teachable moment" and more completely integrate the language arts.

Linguistics is the formal study of language and how it works. You don't have to be a linguist to be an effective teacher of reading and writing. However, a deeper understanding of our language can enhance any teacher's abilities. This chapter begins by defining a few basic terms associated with linguistics and another related area of study—phonetics (the study of speech sounds). It concludes by providing brief information on each sound in the English language, its most common spellings, and word lists for instruction.

The Sounds of English

A **phoneme** is a speech sound. It's the smallest unit of sound that distinguishes one word from another. The word *phoneme* is derived from the root *phon* (as in the word *telephone*), which refers to "voice" or "sound." The following pairs of words differ by only one phoneme, the first—*cat/hat, men/pen*.

Since sounds cannot be written, we use letters to represent or stand for the sounds. A **grapheme** is the written representation (a letter or cluster of letters) of one sound. For example, the /b/ sound can be represented by the letter *b*; the /sh/ sound can be represented by the letters *sh*. The word *sat* has three phonemes (/s/ /a/ /t/) and three graphemes (*s, a, t*). The word *chop* also has three phonemes (/ch/ /o/ /p/) and three graphemes (*ch, o, p*).

Linguists disagree on the actual number of sounds in the English language. The number varies according to dialect, individual speech patterns, changes in stress, and other variables. However, for the sake of our study, we will deal with the 44 phonemes commonly covered in elementary school reading programs.

The 44 English phonemes are represented by the 26 letters of the alphabet individually and in combination. Therefore, a letter can sometimes represent more than one sound. For example, the letter *a* can stand for the different sounds heard in such words as *at, ate, all, any, was,* and *father*. Likewise, a phoneme can sometimes be represented by more than one grapheme. For example, the /f/ sound can be represented by *f* (fan), *ph* (phone), or *gh* (laugh).

Adding to the complexity, some letters do not represent any sound in a word. For example, the letter *k* in the word *knot* is silent. In addition, some letters do not represent a unique or distinctive sound. For example, the letter *c* stands for either the /s/ sound (usually represented by the letter *s*), or the /k/ sound (represented by the letter *k*). The letters *q* and *x* also represent no distinctive sound.

To distinguish between a letter and a sound in writing, sounds are placed between **virgules**, or slashes. For example, to indicate the sound that the letter *s* stands for, we write /s/. Other markings aid us in representing sounds in written form. These markings are called diacritical marks. The chart on page 63 shows some of the most common **diacritical marks**.

The 44 Sounds of English

Consonant Sounds		Vowel Sounds	
1. /b/	(bat)	26. /ā/	(cake)
2. /d/	(dog)	27. /ē/	(feet)
3. /f/	(fan)	28. /ī/	(bike)
4. /g/	(gate)	29. /ō/	(boat)
5. /h/	(hat)	30. /yo͞o/	(cube)
6. /j/	(jump)	31. /a/	(cat)
7. /k/	(kite)	32. /e/	(bed)
8. /l/	(leaf)	33. /i/	(fish)
9. /m/	(mop)	34. /o/	(lock)
10. /n/	(nest)	35. /u/	(duck)
11. /p/	(pig)	36. /ə/	(alarm)
12. /r/	(rock)	37. /â/	(chair)
13. /s/	(sun)	38. /û/	(bird)
14. /t/	(top)	39. /ä/	(car)
15. /v/	(vase)	40. /ô/	(ball)
16. /w/	(wagon)	41. /oi/	(boy)
17. /y/	(yo-yo)	42. /ou/	(house)
18. /z/	(zebra)	43. /o͞o/	(moon)
19. /ch/	cheese)	44. /o͝o/	(book)
20. /sh/	(shark)		
21. /zh/	(treasure)		
22. /th/	(thumb)		
23. /ŧh/	(the)		
24. /hw/	(wheel)		
25. /ng/	(ring)		

The two most common are the macron and the breve. The macron (¯) is used to represent long-vowel sounds, such as the /ā/ sound in *gate*. The breve (˘) is used to represent short-vowel sounds such as the /ă/ sound in *hat*. Short-vowel sounds can also be written using only the letter between virgules, such as /a/. The International Phonetic Alphabet has conventionalized the symbols for every sound of every language in the world. These differ somewhat from the symbols commonly found in dictionaries. For the sake of consistency, this book deals with only those markings and symbols commonly found in children's dictionaries and taught in elementary reading programs.

Diacritical Marks

Marking	Symbol	Example
macron	¯	/ā/ as in *cake*
breve	˘	/ă/ as in *cat*
tilde	~	/ñ/ as in *piñon*
dieresis	¨	/ä/ as in *car*
circumflex	^	/ô/ as in *ball*

Phonics instruction involves teaching the relationship between sounds and the spellings used to represent them. There are hundreds of spellings that can be used to represent the 44 English phonemes. Only the most common need to be taught explicitly. Throughout this book I refer to these most common sound-spelling relationships. I choose the term *sound-spelling* instead of the more common *sound-symbol* because it is more accurate. Many sound-spelling relationships are represented by more than one symbol or letter. For example, the /ch/ sound is represented by the letters, or spelling, *ch*; the /ē/ sound can be represented by the spellings *e*, *ea*, or *ee*. When teaching phonics, we want children to pay attention to these spelling patterns to develop their understanding of English **orthography**, the spelling system of our language.

The 44 English sounds can be divided into two major categories—consonants and vowels. A **consonant** sound is one in which the air flow is cut off either partially or completely when the sound is produced. In contrast, a **vowel** sound is one in which the air flow is unobstructed when the sound is made. The vowel sounds are the music, or movement, of our language.

Classroom Spotlight

Try this technique to help students understand how sounds are produced. Have them form a specific sound while looking into small, individual mirrors. Ask them to note the position of the mouth and tongue. For some children this is an "aha"—they realize that different sounds are formed in different ways and, further, that words are made up of a series of different, discrete sounds. Some children focus on mouth and tongue positions to determine each sound in a word as they attempt to write it. They then attach a spelling to each sound to write the word. Some commercially available programs that train children to attend to mouth and tongue positions (i.e., Auditory Discrimination in Depth) give sounds kid-friendly labels, such as "lip poppers" and "scrapers," to help children remember specific sounds and their corresponding spellings.

Consonants

Of the 26 letters in the English alphabet, 21 are generally considered consonants. These include *b*, *c*, *d*, *f*, *g*, *h*, *j*, *k*, *l*, *m*, *n*, *p*, *q*, *r*, *s*, *t*, *v*, *w*, *x*, *y*, and *z*. The letters *w* and *y* sometimes act as vowels, as in the words *my*, *happy*, and *show*. Of the 44 English phonemes, 25 are consonant phonemes. (See the chart on page 62.) Eighteen of these phonemes are represented by a single letter, such as /b/ and /m/; seven are identified by a digraph, such as /sh/ and /ch/. A **digraph** is a letter cluster that stands for one sound. The letters *c*, *q*, and *x* do not have a unique phoneme assigned to them. The sounds that they represent are more commonly represented by other letters or spellings.

Consonants can be further categorized according to (1) how they are produced, (2) where they are produced in the mouth, and (3) whether they are voiced. The five major categories of consonants based on their manner of articulation include the following:

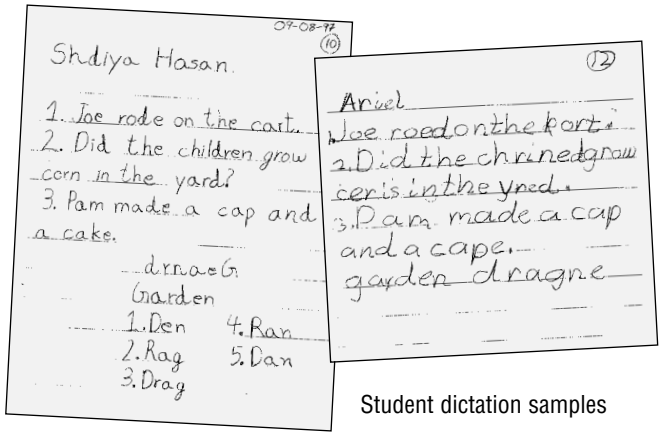
1. **plosives (stops):** formed by closing or blocking off the air flow and then exploding a puff of air (EXAMPLES: /b/, /p/, /d/, /t/, /g/, /k/). Place your hand in front of your mouth when producing these sounds. Do you feel a burst of air?
2. **fricatives:** formed by narrowing the air channel and then forcing air through it—this creates friction in the mouth (EXAMPLES: /f/, /v/, /th/, /ŧh/, /z/, /s/, /zh/, /sh/). A subgroup of this is the **affricative**, which is a sound produced by the

sequence of a stop followed by a fricative (EXAMPLES: /ch/, /j/).

3. **nasals:** formed when the mouth is closed, forcing the air through the nose (EXAMPLES: /n/, /m/, /ng/). These sounds are also referred to as nasal stops.
4. **liquids:** formed by interrupting the airflow slightly, but no friction results (EXAMPLES: /l/, /r/).
5. **glides:** sometimes called semivowels because they are formed in similar ways as vowels (EXAMPLES: /w/, /y/, /h/).

In addition to how sounds are produced, where they are produced in the mouth distinguishes one sound from another. For example, the fricative /v/ is formed using the lips and teeth. Therefore, it is referred to as a **labiodental** (labio = lips; dental = teeth). The fricative /z/ is formed using the front of the mouth. Therefore, it is referred to as an **alveolar**; the alveolar ridge is the front of the mouth where the teeth arise. Similarly, the fricative /sh/ is formed using the roof of the mouth. Therefore, it is referred to as a **palatal**; the hard palate is the roof of the mouth. Other labels you might encounter include **velar** (the velum, or soft palate, is the back of the mouth) and **bilabial** (the lips).

The chart below shows most of the consonant sounds according to where they are articulated. It also divides sounds according to those that are **voiced** and those that are **unvoiced**. When you produce a voiced sound, the vocal cords vibrate. When you produce an unvoiced sound, there's no vibration. To test this, place your hand on your throat. Then make the /b/ sound. You'll feel a vibration because this is a voiced sound. Now make the /p/ sound, the voiceless counterpart of /b/, and you won't feel vibration.



Student dictation samples

One aspect of consonant sounds that must be addressed is the issue of allophones. An **allophone** is a slightly different version of each phoneme. It generally results from the ease (or lack of ease) in articulating a sound in relation to its surrounding sounds. For example, pronounce the words *late* and *later*. The *t* in *later* sounds more like /d/. Pronounce the words *like* and *pill*. The *l* in *like* is pronounced with greater force and clarity than the *l* in *pill*. Therefore, when sounds are coarticulated, the surrounding sounds and the ease with which the mouth must move to form each sound affect the resulting sound. These slight sound variations don't bother us when we read, but children's invented spellings often reflect them.

Most of the consonant phonemes are highly reliable, or dependable. That is, when we see the most common letter or spelling for each consonant sound, it generally stands for that sound. These regularities result in several generalizations that are helpful for the teacher of reading. The list on page 66 shows several of the most reliable consonant generalizations (Groff, 1977; Henderson, 1967; Mazurkiewicz, 1976). It's not necessary to teach these generalizations to children. It's better to point them out at appropriate moments to help students clarify and organize their understanding of English spelling patterns. (On the following pages, you'll find more information on how to use these generalizations with students.)

Place of Articulation	Voiced	Unvoiced	Nasal
lips (bilabial)	/b/ (plosive)	/p/ (plosive)	/m/
front of mouth (alveolar)	/d/ (plosive) /z/ (fricative)	/t/ (plosive) /s/ (fricative)	/n/
back of mouth (velar)	/g/ (plosive)	/k/ (plosive)	/ng/
lips and teeth (labiodental)	/v/ (fricative)	/f/ (fricative)	
teeth (dental)	/ŧh/ (fricative)	/th/ (fricative)	
roof of mouth (palatal)	/zh/ (fricative) /j/ (affricative)	/sh/ (fricative) /ch/ (affricative)	

Consonant Sounds Mouth Position Chart

/t/*t*
/d/*d*
/n/*n*
/l/*l*
(tongue pressed against roof of mouth behind top teeth)

/p/*p*
/b/*b*
/m/*m*
(lips closed)

/k/*k*
/g/*g*
(tongue pressed against bottom of mouth)

/th/*th*
(tongue between teeth)

/f/*f*
/v/*v*
(top teeth on bottom lip)

/ch/*ch*
/j/*j*
/sh/*sh*
(lips stuck out)

/s/*s*
/z/*z*
(teeth together, lips apart)

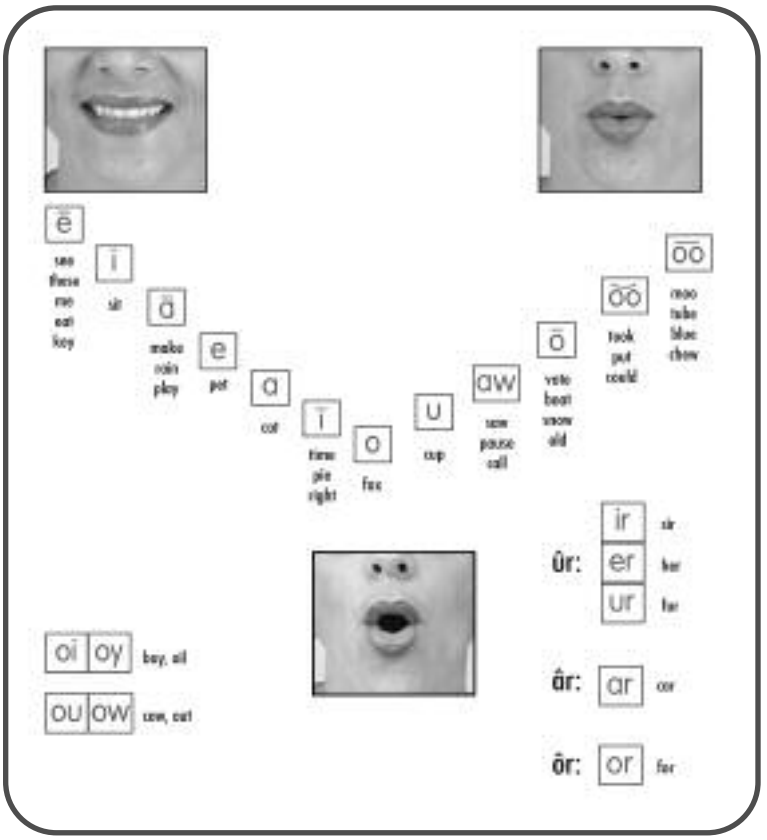
Consonant Generalizations

1. Some letters represent no sound in words.
2. Some sounds are almost always represented by the same spelling, such as *th*, *v*, and *h*.
3. Some spellings appear to be purely arbitrary, such as *igh* in *night* and *eau* in *beau*.
4. The English spelling system often uses doubled letters, especially in the middle of words. However, only one sound is produced unless the sounds cross morpheme boundaries, such as *bookcase* or *unknown*.
5. Certain letters are almost never doubled: *j*, *k*, *q*, *w*, *x*, and *v*.
6. English spellings have been influenced by other languages, such as *qu* and *th* from Latin-French, *ou* and *ch* from French, and *ps* from Greek.
7. When the letter *c* comes before *e*, *i*, or *y* in a word, it usually represents the /s/ sound (EXAMPLES: *cent*, *city*, *cycle*).
8. When double *c* comes before *e* or *i* in a word, it usually represents the two sounds /ks/ (EXAMPLE: *success*).
9. When the letter *g* comes before *e*, *i*, or *y* in a word, it usually represents the /j/ sound.
10. When the letters *c* and *g* are followed by *e* at the end of words, they are usually pronounced /s/ and /j/, respectively (EXAMPLES: *race*, *cage*).
11. When the letter *h* appears after *c* in a word, the letter pair can be pronounced /ch/, /k/, or /sh/. Try /ch/ first. Note that *ch* before another consonant is usually pronounced /k/ (EXAMPLE: *chlorine*).
12. The letters *sh* and *ph* almost always represent one sound—/sh/ and /f/, respectively.
13. The letters *gh* represent /g/ at the beginning of words and /f/ at the end of words. However, *gh* is often silent, as in *night*.
14. The digraph *th* has two pronunciations—/th/ and /ŧh/.
15. The digraph *wh* is pronounced /hw/. However, when it appears before the letter *o*, only the *h* is pronounced (EXAMPLE: *whole*).
16. The letters *se* indicate that the *s* may be pronounced /s/ or /z/. Try /z/ first, as in *these*.
17. When the letter *s* is followed by *y*, *i*, or *u* in the middle of words, it may be pronounced /zh/ or /sh/. Try /zh/ first (EXAMPLES: *measure*, *fission*).
18. When the letter *i* follows *c*, *s*, *ss*, *sc*, or *t* in the last part of a word, it is usually silent and indicates that these graphemes represent /sh/ (EXAMPLE: *nation*).
19. When the letter *e* follows *v* and *z* at the end of words, it is silent and indicates that *v* and *z* rarely come at the end of words.
20. When the letter *e* follows *ng* at the end of words, it indicates that *ng* stands for /nj/ (EXAMPLE: *strange*).
21. When the letters *le* appear at the end of a word, the *l* is pronounced /ul/ (EXAMPLE: *table*).
22. When a word ends in *dure*, *ture*, *sure*, or *zure*, the first letter in each ending is pronounced /j/, /ch/, /sh/, /zh/, respectively.

Consonants can appear by themselves or in combination with other consonants. Two consonants that appear together can be a cluster or a digraph. A **cluster** refers to two or more consonants that appear together in a word, each consonant retaining its own sound. For example, the cluster *sn* in *snail* represents the /sn/ sounds. The sounds that the cluster stands for is called a **blend**. In contrast, sometimes when two consonants appear together in a word, they stand for one sound that is different from either sound of each individual consonant. This is called a **digraph**. The digraph *sh* stands for the /sh/ sound. This sound is not a combination of the /s/ and /h/ sounds; rather it is a new and unique sound. There are both consonant and vowel digraphs. An example of a vowel digraph is *oa*, which stands for the /ō/ sound.

Vowels

Nineteen of the 44 English phonemes are vowel phonemes. (See the chart on page 62.) The letters *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, and *u* are classified as vowels. These five letters are used to represent many different sounds. Therefore, each vowel is used for a variety of purposes. For example, the letter *o* has at least ten distinct sounds assigned to it (*on*, *old*, *son*, *corn*, *room*, *look*, *word*, *lemon*, *out*, *oil*) and is used in more than thirty different ways (*oasis*, *old*, *road*, *though*, *shoulder*, *snow*, *on*, *gone*, *thought*, *soldier*, *one*, *son*, *enough*, *does*, *other*, *look*, *could*, *room*, *through*, *to*, *two*, *buoy*, *oil*, *boy*, *buoyant*, *out*, *how*, *drought*, *lemon*, *word*, *colonel*, *Ouija*, *board*).



In addition, the consonants *w* and *y* often act as vowels, as in the words *show*, *fly*, and *happy*. The letter *y* acts as a vowel when it appears at the end of a word or syllable. The letter *w* acts as a vowel when it is used in combination with another vowel, as in the words *few*, *how*, *slow*, *thaw*, and *threw*. As vowels, the letters *w* and *y* do not represent distinctive sounds.

The most important distinguishing characteristic of a vowel is its place of articulation. Vowels can be produced in the front, central, or back part of the mouth. This refers to the approximate place in the mouth in which part of the tongue is raised. In addition, the degree to which the tongue is raised distinguishes sounds. The sounds can be produced with the tongue raised to a high, mid, or low degree. The chart at right illustrates this.

Vowel Sounds

	Front	Central	Back
High	/ē/ /ī/		/o͞o/ /o͝o/
Mid	/ā/ /e/	/ə/ (schwa) /ər/ (schwar)	/ō/ /ô/
Low	/a/	/u/	/o/

Missing from this chart are the diphthongs. A **diphthong** is a sound in which the position of the mouth changes from one place to another as the sound is produced. The sounds /oi/ and /ou/ are commonly classified as diphthongs. In addition, two so-called long-vowel sounds—long *i* (/ī/) and long *u* (/yo͞o/)—are often classified as diphthongs. The long-*u* sound is actually a combination of a consonant and vowel sound. To note the difference between a diphthong and other vowel sounds, say aloud the /ā/ sound as in *gate*. Notice that the mouth, tongue, and lips remain in the same position while the sound is produced. Now try the /oi/ sound as in *boy*. Note how the mouth, especially the lips, change position while the sound is being produced. This is characteristic of a diphthong. Interestingly, Southern dialects generally produce most of their vowels as diphthongs. This helps to explain the singsong, rhythmic nature of Southern speech.

In basal reading programs, vowels are generally grouped in the following categories:

1. **long-vowel sounds:** The macron (¯) is the diacritical mark used to represent long-vowel sounds. The word *macro* means "long" or "great." Long-vowel sounds are also referred to as glided sounds. The long-vowel sounds covered in most basal reading programs include /ā/, /ē/, /ī/, /ō/, and /yōō/, although long *i* and long *u* are generally classified as diphthongs by linguists. Common long-vowel spelling patterns include CVCe (*race*) and VCe (*age*). Long-vowel sounds are often represented by vowel digraphs such as *ai, ay, ee, ea, oa, ow, ey, igh,* and *ie*. The vowel sound in an open syllable is generally a long-vowel sound (*ti/ger, a/pron*). An open syllable is a syllable that ends in a vowel.
2. **short-vowel sounds:** The breve (˘) is the diacritical mark used to represent short-vowel sounds. Often no mark is used. The short-vowel sounds include /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/ and /u/. Short-vowel sounds are also referred to as unglided sounds. The most common short-vowel spelling pattern is CVC (*cat*). Short-vowel sounds are usually represented by the single vowels *a, e, i, o,* and *u*. The vowel sound in a closed syllable is often a short-vowel sound (*bas/ket*). A closed syllable is a syllable that ends in a consonant.
3. **other vowel sounds:** The other vowel sounds include diphthongs (/oi/, /ou/), variant vowels (/o͞o/, /o͝o/, /ô/, /ä/), schwa (/ə/), and *r*-controlled vowels (/ôr/, /ûr/, /âr/). In addition to the letter *r*, the letters *l* and *w* also affect the vowel sound that precedes or follows.

Many vowel generalizations are unreliable. For example, the commonly taught generalization "When two vowels go walking, the first does the talking" has been found to be only about 45% reliable. However, if you limit the generalization to the vowel digraphs *ai, ay, ee,* and *oa*, it becomes a highly useful generalization. The list that follows shows several of the most reliable vowel generalizations (Groff, 1977; Henderson, 1967; Mazurkiewicz, 1976). It's not necessary to teach these generalizations to children. Point them out at appropriate moments to help students clarify and organize their understanding of English spelling patterns. (You'll find more information on using these generalizations with students on page 175.)

Vowel Generalizations

1. A single vowel followed by one or two consonants usually stands for a short sound. However, it may be a long sound. Try the short sound first.
2. The letter *e* following a vowel and a consonant (other than *c, g, l, ng, s, th, v, z,* and *ur*) usually indicates that the vowel represents a long sound.
3. The letter *a* before *l* in a word, and in the spellings *au* and *aw*, usually represents the /ô/ sound.
4. When the vowel digraphs *ai, ay, ee,* and *oa* appear together in a word, the first vowel usually represents its long sound.
5. The letter *y* usually represents the long-*i* sound at the end of short words (*fly*), but the letters *y* and *ey* usually stand for the long-*e* sound in longer words (*happy, monkey*).
6. Some vowel spellings are used in reading to distinguish word meanings (*meat/meet*) but cause problems in spelling.
7. The final *e* (silent *e*, *e*-marker) accounts for many of the sound distinctions in words.

All the vowels, except *a*, can also act as consonants.

1. The letter *e* stands for the /y/ sound in the word *azalea*.
2. When the letter *i* follows *c, s, ss, sc, t,* and *x*, it stands for the /sh/ sound (*nation*). The letter *i* can also stand for the /y/ sound as in *union, opinion, senior, brilliant, civilian, junior, onion, million, spaniel,* and *stallion*.
3. The letter *o* stands for the /w/ sound as in *one* and *once*.

4. The letter *u* when it follows *s* and *ss* stands for the /zh/ sound (*measure*). The letter *u* also stands for the /w/ sound as in *liquid*, *quiet*, *quick*, *queen*, *quill*, *quilt*, *suite*, *suave*, *language*, and *penguin*.

Pages 70–109 detail each of the 44 English sounds. Information on how each sound is produced, the common spelling patterns used to represent each sound, and **word lists for instruction are included**. The notable exclusions from this section are the consonants *c*, *q*, and *x*, and the digraphs *gh* and *ph*. These consonants and digraphs do not represent distinctive sounds. However, word lists for each can be found under the most common sound it represents. Some additional information on each of these includes the following:

The letter *c*

The letter *c* can stand for many sounds. It can stand for the /k/ sound as in *cat*. The letter *c* generally stands for the /k/ sound when it comes before the letter *a*, *o*, or *u* in a word (*cat*, *cot*, *cut*). This is sometimes referred to as the "hard" sound of *c*. The letter *c* can also stand for the /s/ sound as in *city*. The letter *c* generally stands for the /s/ sound when it comes before the letter *e*, *i*, or *y* in a word (*cent*, *cinder*, *cycle*). This is sometimes referred to as the "soft" sound of *c*. The word *cello* is an exception. In this word, the letter *c* stands for the /ch/ sound. In addition, the letter *c* usually stands for the /k/ sound when it is followed by a consonant, as in *cliff* and *cry*. The consonant digraph *ck* also stands for the /k/ sound. Many consider the *c* silent in this digraph. The most notable exception to this is when the letter *c* is followed by the letter *h*. The letters *ch* can stand for the /k/ sound as in *chemistry* and *school* or the /ch/ sound as in *cheese*. When the letter *c* follows the letter *s*, the two letters combined can stand for the /sk/ sounds as in *scold* and *scream*; or the *c* can be silent as in *science* and *scene*. When the letter *c* is doubled in a word, one of the *c*'s is usually silent. When they come before the letters *u* or *o*, the double *c*'s usually stand for the /k/ sound as in *occupy* and *tobacco*. When they come before the letters *e* or *i*, they usually stand for the /ks/ sounds as in *success*, *accident*, *access*, and *accept*. The *c* before *i* and *e* in these words stands for the /sh/ sound: *conscious*, *special*, *ocean*, *official*, *social*, *delicious*, *racial*. Note that the letter *i* is silent in these words.

The letter *q*

The letter *q* can be deleted from our alphabet and replaced with the letter *k*. The letter *q* almost always represents the /k/ sound and is usually followed by the letter *u*. In some words the letter *u* is silent (*antique*, *bouquet*, *croquet*). In most words the *u* stands for the /w/ sound (*quack*, *quail*, *quake*, *quart*, *quarter*, *queen*, *question*, *quick*, *quiet*, *quill*, *quilt*, *quirk*, *quit*, *quite*, *quiz*, *require*, *request*, *square*, and *squash*).

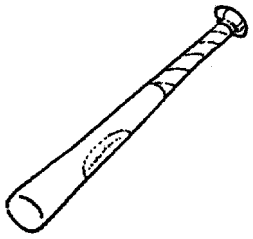
The letter *x*

The letter *x* frequently stands for the /ks/ sounds as in *ax*, *box*, *fix*, *flax*, *fox*, *lox*, *mix*, *ox*, *sax*, *six*, *tax*, and *wax*. It also stands for the /gz/ sounds as in *exact*, *exit*, *exist*, *exam*, *auxiliary*, *exhaust*, and *exhibit*. We generally use /gz/ when the letter *x* appears between two vowels. The letter *x* can also stand for the /z/ sound as in *xylophone*, *anxiety*, *xylem*, and *Xerox*. There are words in which we pronounce the name of *x*, as in *x ray* and *x-ograph* (/eks/). Other sounds that the letter *x* represents include: /ksh/ *anxious*, *anxiously*; /k/ *excite*, *exceed*, *excellent*, *except*, *excuse*; and /kzh/ *luxury*. The letter *x* is silent in the word *Sioux*.

The digraphs *gh* and *ph*

The digraphs *gh* and *ph* can stand for the /f/ sound (*tough*, *phone*). The digraph *gh* can also be silent as in *light*. The digraph *ph* almost always stands for the /f/ sound as in *phone* and *graph*. However, in the word *diphthong*, the *p* stands for the /p/ sound and the letter *h* is silent.

/b/ as in *bat*



How formed: The /b/ sound is a voiced bilabial plosive (stop). Its voiceless counterpart is /p/. To make the /b/ sound, lightly press the lips together. Then exert a steady pressure. This creates a tone that results from the vibration of the vocal cords and the lips. The /b/ sound is not completed until the lips open for a puff of breath.

Spellings: The /b/ sound is most frequently represented by the letter *b* as in *bat* or *cab*. The letter *b* is a very reliable letter for this sound. That is, when you see the letter *b* in a word there is a great probability that it stands for the /b/ sound. Also, the letter *b* has no other sound assigned to it. However, sometimes the letter *b* is silent. For example, one *b* is silent when *b* is doubled in words such as *lobby* and *rubber*. In addition, the letter *b* is silent when it follows the letter *m*, as in *climb*, *lamb*, and *bomb*, or comes before the letter *t*, as in *doubt* and *debt*. An exception to this is a word such as *limber*, in which the *m* and the *b* are in different syllables.

Other spellings of the /b/ sound include: *bh* (*Bhutan*), *pb* (*cupboard*).

Classroom Spotlight

Ways to use word lists

You can use the words (primarily one-syllable) in the word lists throughout this section during phonics and spelling instruction in the following ways:

- to create word lists for blending practice
- to create connected text for reading practice
- to create word lists for word sorts
- to create word lists to be sent home for reading practice
- to create words lists to add to a word wall
- to create word lists for dictation (spelling)
- to create activity pages

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

Initial Position

back	batch	beg	bit	boss	bunch
bad	bath	bell	bite	botch	bunk
badge	bathe	belt	boar	both	bunt
bag	beach	bench	boast	bottle	burn
bait	bead	bend	boat	bound	burst
bake	beak	bent	bog	bow	bus
ball	beam	best	boil	bowl	but
balloon	bean	bet	bold	box	butterfly
ban	bear	bib	bolt	boy	button
band	beast	bid	bond	buck	buzz
bank	beat	big	bone	bud	by
bar	bed	bike	book	budge	
barn	bee	bill	boom	bug	
base	beech	bin	boost	bull	
basket	beef	bind	boot	bum	
bass	been	birch	bop	bump	
bat	beet	bird	born	bun	

Final Position

bib	club	dab	lab	scrub	tub
Bob	crab	grab	rib	sob	
cab	crib	job	rob	sub	
cob	cub	knob	rub	tab	

/d/ as in *dog*

How formed: The /d/ sound is a voiced alveolar plosive (stop). Its voiceless counterpart is /t/. To make the /d/ sound, place the front of the tongue in back of the upper front teeth while slightly opening the jaws.

Spellings: The /d/ sound is most frequently represented by the letter *d* as in *dog* or *bed*. The letter *d* is a pretty reliable letter for this sound. However, one *d* is silent when *d* is doubled in words such as *ladder* and *sudden*. The letter *d* can also stand for other sounds such as the /t/ sound in *hoped* and *looked*, or the /j/ sound in *graduate*, *soldier*, and *badge*.

Other spellings of the /d/ sound include: *dh* (*dhurrie*), *ed* (*called*), *ld* (*should*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

Initial Position

dad	debt	dig	disk	door	dune
damp	deck	dill	dive	dose	dunk
Dan	deep	dim	do	dot	dusk
dark	deer	dime	dock	down	dust
dash	den	dine	doe	doze	dye
date	dent	ding	dog	duck	
dawn	desk	dip	doll	due	
day	dew	dirt	dollar	dug	
deaf	did	dirty	dome	dull	
deal	die	dish	done	dump	

Final Position

bad	did	hood	mud	red	spud
bead	fad	kid	need	rid	stead
bed	fed	lad	nod	road	steed
bid	feed	laid	pad	rod	stood
bird	food	lead	paid	sad	toad
braid	freed	led	plead	said	wed
bread	glad	lid	plod	seed	weed
bud	good	load	pod	sled	wood
cloud	greed	loud	pond	slid	word
cod	hand	mad	raid	sod	
creed	hid	mood	read	speed	

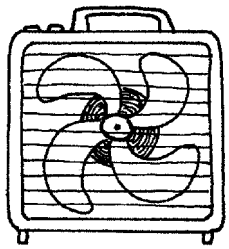
Classroom Spotlight

Ways to use sound formation information

Use the information on how each sound is formed to assess students' writings. For example, knowing that the letters *d* and *t* are so closely related might help you make sense of spelling errors in which students switch these two sounds. Here are some other ways sound formation information can help with assessment:

- As you read a student's writings, keep in mind the student's dialect or accent (how he or she might articulate specific words).
- Be aware that some children overarticulate sounds when trying to segment words to spell them. This will help you understand other spelling errors
- If you are working with mirrors (see page 40–41) to focus children's attention on mouth position and the vocalization of sounds, use this information to help you explain to students how each sound is formed.

/f/ as in *fan*



How formed: The /f/ sound is a voiceless labiodental fricative. Its voiced counterpart is /v/. To make the /f/ sound, place the lower lip slightly under the upper teeth. The sound is created when breath seeps out between the edge of the teeth and the lower lip.

Spellings: The /f/ sound is most frequently represented by the letter *f* as in *fan* or *if*. The letter *f* is a pretty reliable letter for this sound. However, one *f* is silent when the letter *f* is doubled in words such as *muffin* and *off*. The letter *f* also stands for the /v/ sound in the word *of*. The other common spellings for the /f/ sound are the digraphs *ph* as in *phone* and *gh* as in *cough*. The digraph *gh* can cause confusion because it can also be silent as in *knight* or *sigh*, or just the letter *h* can be silent in words such as *ghost*. Generally, the letters *gh* stand for the /f/ sound when they appear in the final position and are preceded by *au* (*laugh*) or *ou* (*enough*).

Other spellings of the /f/ sound include: *pph* (*sapphire*), *lf* (*calf*, *half*), *pf* (*pfennig*), *ft* (*often*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

Initial Position

fad	fan	feel	fine	foil	force	fuse
fade	far	fell	fire	fold	fork	fuzz
fail	farm	fence	first	folk	form	
faint	fast	few	fish	fond	fort	
fair	fate	fib	fist	food	four	
fake	feast	fig	fit	fool	fowl	
fall	feather	fight	five	foot	fox	
false	fed	file	foam	football	fun	
fame	feed	film	foe	for	fur	

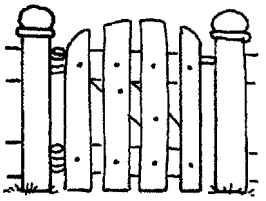
Final Position

beef	deaf	hoof	leaf	proof	scarf	wolf
brief	elf	huff	life	puff	shelf	
chef	goof	if	loaf	reef	spoof	
chief	grief	knife	off	roof	wife	

Other Spellings

alphabet	hyphen	phone	telegraph	laughter
autograph	nephew	phoneme	triumph	rough
digraph	orphan	phonics	trophy	tough
elephant	pamphlet	photo	cough	
emphasis	pharmacy	photograph	enough	
graph	pheasant	phrase	laugh	

/g/ as in *gate*



How formed: The /g/ sound is a voiced velar plosive (stop). Its voiceless counterpart is /k/. To make the /g/ sound, raise the back part of the tongue and press it against the front part of the soft palate. This rising of the tongue is a sort of bunching backward. The nasal passage is blocked, thus forcing all of the air to emerge through the mouth. The vocal cords are vibrating and the throat muscles exert pressure. You can feel this by placing your hand against your throat.

Spellings: The /g/ sound is most frequently represented by the letter *g* as in *goat* or *bag*. This sound is sometimes referred to as the "hard sound" of *g*. The letter *g* usually represents the /g/ sound when it is at the end of a word (*bag*), or when it is followed by *a* (*gate*), *o* (*got*), *u* (*gum*), or any consonant (*green*). The letter *g* is not a very reliable letter. It can stand for several other sounds. It can stand for the /j/ sound as in *gentle*. This is sometimes referred to as the "soft sound" of *g*. The letter *g* usually represents the /j/ sound when followed by *e* (*gem*), *i* (*giant*), or *y* (*gym*); when it appears in the medial position (*magic*, *agent*); or when it appears at the end of a word and is followed by the letter *e* (*age*, *page*). The most notable exceptions include *girl*, *get*, *give*, *gill*, and *gift*. Note that in words such as *guard* and *guilt*, a seemingly unnecessary letter *u* has been inserted to aid in proper pronunciation. The letter *g* can also be silent when doubled in words such as *giggle* or *egg* (exceptions include *exaggerate* and *suggest*); when it appears before the letter *n* as in *gnat*, *sign*, or *foreign*; or when it appears with *h* in words such as *night* and *though*. In addition, the letter *g* is a part of the digraphs *gh* (*tough*) and *ng* (*ring*). In words borrowed from French, the letter *g* can stand for the /zh/ sound as in *garage* and *rouge*.

Other spellings of the /g/ sound include: *gh* (*ghost*, *spaghetti*), *gue* (*plague*), ½*x* (*exact*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

Initial Position

gain	gate	gift	goal	gone	gum
game	gave	gill	goat	good	gun
gap	gear	girl	goes	goof	gush
gas	geese	give	gold	goose	gust
gasp	get	go	golf	guitar	

Final Position

bag	drag	hug	Meg	rug	tug
big	drug	jig	mug	sag	twig
bog	dug	jug	nag	shag	wag
bug	fig	keg	peg	shrug	wig
chug	flag	lag	pig	smug	zag
clog	fog	leg	plug	snag	zig
dig	frog	log	rag	snug	
dog	hog	lug	rig	tag	

Classroom Spotlight

Most teachers read aloud to their students every day for 10–15 minutes. This provides an opportunity for teachers to share their love of literature and introduce children to a wide range of genres and concepts. When you introduce a new sound-spelling, I suggest choosing a book that focuses on that sound-spelling that day. For example, when introducing the /g/ sound spelled *g*, you might read aloud the classic story *Go Dog Go!* by Phil Eastman. Encourage children to listen for words with the /g/ sound as you read the story. After you read, allow children to share these words and search for them in the book.

/h/ as in *hat*

How formed: The /h/ sound is a voiceless glottal (pharyngeal) fricative. The sound is simply a breath. It is always made with the vowel sound that follows it as in *hat*, or with the /w/ sound as in *what* (/hw/). In words containing the digraph *wh*, the /h/ sound is vocalized before the /w/ sound. In many English dialects, the breathy quality of this digraph is disappearing. People speaking these dialects don't distinguish the /hw/ sound in *what* from the /w/ sound in *wet*.

Spellings: The /h/ sound is most frequently represented by the letter *h* as in *hat*. The only other notable spelling of the /h/ sound is *wh* as in *who*, *whom*, and *whose*. The letter *o* follows *wh* in all these words. The letter *h* is a pretty reliable letter when it appears at the beginning of a word. However, sometimes it is silent as in *heir*, *honor*, *honest*, and *hour*. The letter *h* is also silent when it appears at the end of a word following a vowel such as *oh*, *hallelujah*, and *hurrah*; when it follows the letters *g*, *k*, and *r* as in *ghost*, *rhyme*, and *khaki*; when it appears between a consonant and a following unstressed vowel as in *shepherd* and *silhouette*; and when is appears after *ex* as in *exhaust* and *exhibit* (one exception is *exhale*).

The letter *h* is an extremely useful letter. It is used in combination with other consonants to form the following six digraphs: *sh*, *th*, *wh*, *ch*, *ph*, and *gh*. The digraph *gh* may cause confusion. Sometimes is stands for the /f/ sound as in *enough* and *laugh*; other times it is silent as in *night* and *though*.

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

Initial Position

hair	hare	hear	high	hold	horse	hurt
half	has	heard	hill	hole	hose	husk
hall	hat	heart	him	home	hot	hut
halt	hate	heat	hip	hood	house	
ham	have	heel	his	hoof	how	
hammer	hay	help	hit	hook	hum	
hand	he	hem	hive	hop	hung	
hang	head	her	hoe	hope	hunt	
hard	heal	here	hog	horn	hurl	

Word Walls are a great way to display learning. And children can refer to them during reading and writing. Periodically review the words on the Word Wall. You might have the class chorally read all the words under a specific letter, or have children quiz each other by pointing to words in random order as a partner reads them aloud. Encourage children to add words throughout the year. Use the word lists provided to add words that might be useful to children when they're reading or writing.

/j/ as in *jump*

How formed: The /j/ sound is a voiced affricative. It is a combination of the /d/ and /zh/ sounds. Its voiceless counterpart is /ch/. The /j/ sound is made like the /ch/ sound, with the lips slightly rounded and stuck out. The teeth are together and the tongue is pressed against them. The teeth spring apart and the tongue is so unwilling to remove itself to let the vibrating breath emerge that we almost, but not quite, hear a sound of /d/ in conjunction with the /j/ sound.

Spellings: The /j/ sound is frequently represented by the letter *j* as in *jump*. The letter *j* is a very reliable letter; it almost always stands for the /j/ sound. The most notable exception is the word *hallelujah*, in which the letter *j* stands for the /y/ sound. The letter *j* sometimes stands for the /h/ sound in words borrowed from other languages, such as *San Juan*, *José*, *junta*, and *Navajo*. The letter *j* is almost never in the final position in words. There are several other spellings that can represent the /j/ sound. The most frequent include *dg* (*judgment*) or *dge* (*judge*, *knowledge*, *edge*) at the end of a word or syllable, and *g* (*gentle*, *huge*). The letter *g* generally stands for the /j/ sound when it comes before the letters *i*, *e*, or *y*.

Other spellings of the /j/ sound include: *d* (*graduation*, *education*), *di* (*soldier*), *ch* (*Greenwich*), *gg* (*exaggerate*), *jj* (*Hajji*), *de* (*grandeur*), *dj* (*adjust*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

Initial Position

jab	jam	jeep	jog	joy	jump rope
jacket	jar	jerk	join	jug	June
jacks	jaw	jet	joint	juice	junk
jade	jay	jig	joke	July	jury
jail	jeans	job	jolt	jump	just

Medial/Final Position

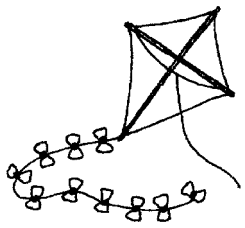
badge	dodge	fudge	ledge	ridge
bridge	edge	gadget	lodge	smudge
budge	fidget	grudge	nudge	wedge

Other Spellings

garage	geography	gym	damage	manager	stingy
gee	George	gypsy	danger	message	strange
gem	geranium	age	engineer	orange	stranger
general	germ	bulge	forge	package	urgent
generous	giant	cabbage	fringe	page	village
genius	gigantic	cage	hinge	passage	wage
gentle	ginger	change	huge	pigeon	
gentleman	gingerbread	collage	large	rage	
genuine	giraffe	courage	magic	stage	

Classroom Spotlight

Word sorts are a great way to focus children's attention on spelling patterns, particularly when you're teaching sounds that have many common spelling patterns such as the /k/ sound *(c, ck, k)*. There are two types of word sorts—open and closed. In open sorts, children are provided with a list of words and allowed to sort them in any way they choose—by number of syllables, common spelling patterns (phonograms), initial sounds, final sounds, medial sounds, and so on. In closed sorts, children are provided with a list of words and you decide how they must be sorted. I prefer allowing children to sort words in any way they choose before I establish a specific sort. In that way, children are more engaged as they must consider all possible similarities among words in terms of sounds and spellings.



/k/ as in *kite*

How formed: The /k/ sound is a voiceless velar plosive (stop). Its voiced counterpart is /g/. The /k/ sound is made very much like the /g/ sound. The back part of the tongue is raised and pressed against the front part of the soft palate. The nasal passage is blocked, thus forcing all of the breath to emerge through the mouth. The difference between the /g/ and /k/ sounds is that the vocal cords are not vibrating when the /k/ sound is made.

Spellings: The /k/ sound is sometimes represented by the letter *k* as in *kite* and *look*. The letter *k* is a very reliable letter. It has no other sound assigned to it. However, sometimes the letter *k* is silent when it comes before the letter *n* in a word or syllable as in *knee*, *knife*, *knob*, and *unknown*. The other most frequent spellings of the /k/ sound include *ck* at the end of a word or syllable (*sock*, *rocket*); *c* when followed by *a*, *o*, or *u* (*cat*, *cot*, *cut*); or *q* (*queen*, *quick*). The letter *q* is almost always followed by the letter *u*. In words such as *queen* and *quit*, the letter *u* stands for the /w/ sound (a consonant sound); in words such as *opaque*, *mosque*, *antique*, and *plaque*, the letter *u* is silent.

Other spellings of the /k/ sound include: *ch* (*chorus*, *chloroform*, *chemistry*, *school*), *lk* (*talk*, *walk*), *que* (*opaque*), *cc* (*account*), *cch* (*bacchanal*), *cq* (*acquaint*), *cqu* (*lacquer*), *cque* (*sacque*), *cu* (*biscuit*), *gh* (*lough*), *kh* (*Sikh*, *khaki*), *q* (*Iraq*), *qu* (*liquor*), *sc* (*viscount*), *x* (*except*), ½*x* (*next*), ½*xi* (*noxious*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

Initial Position

kale	keen	kelp	kettle	kid	kilt	king	kit	kitten
kangaroo	keep	kept	key	kill	kind	kiss	kite	

Medial/Final Position

bank	leak	soak	buck	duck	muck	racket	sock	tick
beak	look	steak	bucket	jack	neck	rock	socket	tock
bike	milk	think	checkers	jacket	nickel	rocket	speck	track
bleak	oak	took	chick	kick	pack	sack	stack	trick
book	peak	weak	chicken	lack	package	shack	stick	truck
break	peek	week	click	lick	pick	shock	stock	tuck
cook	seek	back	clock	lock	pocket	sick	stockings	wick
desk	shook	black	crack	locker	quack	slack	stuck	wreck
fork	sink	block	deck	locket	quick	slick	suck	
hook	skunk	brick	dock	luck	rack	snack	tack	

Other Spellings

cab	cane	cart	coal	coin	cool	cough	cub
cage	cap	case	coast	cold	cope	could	cube
call	cape	cash	coat	colt	cord	count	curl
came	car	cast	cob	comb	corn	court	curve
camp	card	cat	cod	come	cost	cove	cut
can	care	cave	coil	cone	cot	cow	cute

/l/ as in *leaf*

How formed: The /l/ sound is a voiced alveolar lateral (resonant). It generally has a "light" sound at the beginning of a word (*look*) and a "dark" sound at the end of a word or syllable (*ball*). To make the /l/ sound, lightly touch the front of the tongue behind the upper front teeth while allowing vibrating breath to emerge.

Spellings: The /l/ sound is most frequently represented by the letter *l* as in *leaf* and *goal*. The letter *l* is a very reliable letter; it has no other sound assigned to it. However, sometimes the letter *l* is silent in words. For example, one *l* is silent when doubled in words such as *yellow* and *bell*. The letter *l* is also silent when it is followed by the letters *f*, *m*, *k*, or *d* in the same syllable as in *calf*, *calm*, *yolk*, and *could*. However, careful speakers pronounce the /l/ sound in words such as *milk* and *bold*.

Other spellings of the /l/ sound include: *tle* (*castle*), *½le* (*people*), *lle* (*faille*), *sl* (*lisle*, *island*), *cle* (*muscle*), *ln* (*kiln*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

Initial Position

lab	lane	least	lie	list	loose
lace	lap	leaves	life	lit	lose
lack	lash	left	lift	live	lot
lad	last	leg	light	loaf	love
ladder	latch	lemon	like	loan	luck
lag	late	lend	limp	loaves	lug
laid	leaf	less	line	log	lump
lake	leak	lest	link	lone	lunch
lamp	lean	let	lion	long	lunchbox
land	leap	lick	lip	look	

Final Position

bail	hail	pool	tool	dull	tell
boil	heal	pretzel	towel	fell	till
bowl	heel	rail	veal	fill	well
camel	jail	sail	veil	gill	will
coal	mail	school	wheel	gull	yell
coil	meal	seal	wool	hill	
cool	nail	shovel	bell	kill	
fail	nickel	soil	bill	mill	
feel	owl	steal	cell	pill	
foil	pail	steel	dill	sell	
goal	pencil	tail	doll	sill	

/m/ as in *mop*

How formed: The /m/ sound is a voiced bilabial nasal. To make the /m/ sound, press the lips together lightly and vibrate slightly while the breath is emerging through the nasal passage. The /m/ sound is one of three nasal sounds (/m/, /n/, /ng/). These sounds are responsible for resonance in the voice.

Spellings: The /m/ sound is most frequently represented by the letter *m* as in *mop* and *ham*. The letter *m* is a very reliable letter; it has no other sound assigned to it. However, sometimes the first *m* is silent when *m* is doubled in words such as *hammer* and *common*. The letter *m* is sometimes silent in technical words such as *mnemonics*.

Other spellings of the /m/ sound include: *mb* (*lamb*), *chm* (*drachm*), *gm* (*paradigm*), *lm* (*calm*), *mn* (*hymn*), ½*m* (*criticism*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

Initial Position

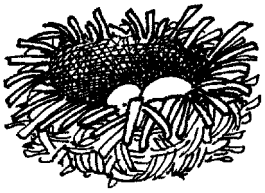
mad	marble	meat	mill	moat	much
made	march	men	mind	monkey	muck
maid	mash	mend	mine	moon	mud
mail	mask	mesh	mirror	mop	mug
main	mat	mess	miss	more	mush
make	match	met	mist	most	musk
man	math	mice	mitt	motorcycle	must
mane	may	mild	mitten	mouse	mute
many	meal	mile	mix	mouth	mutt
map	mean	milk	moan	move	my

Final Position

beam	hum	team
boom	jam	whom
broom	loom	worm
bum	mom	yam
clam	plum	yum
dream	ram	zoom
drum	roam	
farm	room	
firm	Sam	
gem	scream	
gloom	seam	
gram	seem	
gum	slam	
ham	steam	
him	sum	

Computers can be used to assist children during independent reading. Many stories are available on computer, and most programs today offer features that allow children to highlight and hear confusing words read aloud. Computers also offer a motivational factor that is important when working with struggling readers. This girl is reading a story that focuses on the /m/ sound.

/n/ as in *nest*



How formed: The /n/ sound is a voiced alveolar nasal. To make the /n/ sound, press the tongue tightly against the upper gum. This prevents the vibrating breath from emerging through the mouth. The /n/ sound is one of three nasal sounds (/m/, /n/, /ng/). These sounds are responsible for resonance in the voice.

Spellings: The /n/ sound is most frequently represented by the letter *n* as in *nest* and *can*. The letter *n* is a very reliable letter and is the only letter that is assigned this sound. However, sometimes the letter *n* can be silent. For example, one *n* can be silent when *n* is doubled in words such as *runner* and *dinner*. The letter *n* can also be silent when it follows the letter *m* as in *column* or *hymn*. The letter *n* is also a part of the digraph *ng*, which stands for the /ng/ sound as in *king* and *sing*. The letter *n* by itself can also stand for the /ng/ sound as in *think* and *sank*. When the letters *n* and *g* appear together in a word but in different syllables, both the /ng/ and /g/ sounds are pronounced instead of the /ng/ sound. Words in which this occurs include *finger* and *kangaroo*. In words such as *ungrateful*, the prefix *un* represents one syllable and the letter *n* is pronounced as /n/, the letter *g* as /g/.

Other spellings of the /n/ sound include: *kn* (*knife*), *gn* (*gnat*, *sign*), *mn* (*mnemonic*), *pn* (*pneumatic*, *pneumonia*), ½*gn* (*vignette*), *mp* (*comptroller*), ½*n* (*cañon*), *nd* (*handsome*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

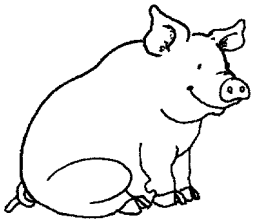
Initial Position

nab	neck	next	nix	not
nag	need	nice	no	note
nail	needle	nick	nod	now
name	nest	nickel	noise	nub
nap	net	night	noon	nurse
napkin	new	nine	north	nut
near	newspaper	nip	nose	

Final Position

apron	clown	green	mean	run	train
balloon	coin	grin	men	seen	twin
ban	corn	hen	mitten	seven	van
bean	den	horn	moon	skin	violin
been	down	in	pain	spin	wagon
bin	drain	jean	pan	spoon	when
brain	fan	join	pen	sun	win
bun	fin	lawn	pin	tan	
button	flown	lemon	plan	ten	
can	fun	lion	pumpkin	then	
chain	gain	main	rain	thin	
clean	gown	man	ran	tin	

/p/ as in *pig*



How formed: The /p/ sound is a voiceless bilabial plosive (stop). Its voiced counterpart is /b/. To make the /p/ sound, close and press the lips together. Then quickly open the lips to emit a puff of breath.

Spellings: The /p/ sound is most frequently represented by the letter *p* as in *pig* or *map*. The letter *p* is a very reliable letter for this sound. However, sometimes the letter *p* is silent. For example, one *p* is silent when *p* is doubled in words such as *supper*, *happy*, and *dripped*. In addition, *p* is usually silent when followed by the letters *n*, *s*, or *t* as in *pneumonia*, *psychology*, and *ptomaine*. The letter *p* is also a part of the digraph *ph*, which stands for the /f/ sound as in *phone* and *photograph*.

Another spelling of the /p/ sound is *ph* (*diphthong*, *diphtheria*).

P is for Parents

One critical issue in phonics instruction is communicating to students' families what you are doing. Here are some ways to help parents understand:

- At open house and in family letters, share with students' families why and how you teach phonics.
- At open houses, display phonics charts and other work that reflect phonics instruction.
- In family letters, provide a regular feature that lists the skills you have worked on that week and an activity for families to do at home to reinforce the skill.

Sending home reading material with specific suggestions for involving parents helps them to see their children's growing reading abilities and the importance you place on reading as the ultimate goal and focus of all skills instruction.

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

Initial Position

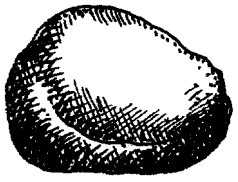
pack	past	peg	pin	pork	purse
pad	pat	pen	pine	port	push
page	patch	pencil	pint	post	put
pail	paw	penny	pipe	potato	putt
pain	pay	pet	pit	pour	puzzle
paint	pea	pickle	pod	puddle	
pal	peach	pie	point	puff	
pale	peak	pig	poke	pull	
pan	pear	pike	pole	pumpkin	
pant	pedal	pill	pond	punt	
pass	peel	pillow	pop	puppet	

Final Position

cap	drop	lap	rap	stamp	weep
cheap	flap	leap	rip	step	whip
chip	flip	lip	sap	stop	wrap
chop	flop	map	sheep	sweep	zap
clip	heap	mop	sip	tap	zip
crop	hip	nap	skip	tip	
cup	hop	peep	sleep	top	
deep	jeep	pep	slip	trap	
dip	keep	pop	snap	trip	
drip	lamp	pup	soap	up	

/r/ as in *rock*

How formed: The /r/ sound is a voiced, resonant consonant sound in most American pronunciations. To make the /r/ sound, open the jaws enough for the tip of the tongue to rise toward the top of the mouth. Then immediately drop the tongue tip back down as if to get ready for the next sound.



Spellings: The /r/ sound is most frequently represented by the letter *r* as in *rock* or *car*. The letter *r* is a very reliable letter. It has no other sound assigned to it. The other most common spelling for the /r/ sound is *wr* as in *write* or *wrong*. In this spelling, the letter *w* is silent.

Other spellings of the /r/ sound include: *rhy* (*rhyme*), *rrh* (*myrrh*), *l* (*colonel*), *rps* (*corps*), *rt* (*mortgage*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

Initial Position

rabbit	ramp	ray	ring	rocket	row
race	ranch	real	rink	rod	rub
rack	range	red	rip	roll	rude
radio	rank	rent	ripe	roof	rug
rag	rap	rib	rise	room	rule
rail	rat	rich	road	root	run
rain	rate	ride	roast	rope	rush
raise	rattle	rig	rob	rose	rust
rake	rave	right	robe	rot	
ram	raw	rim	rock	round	

Final Position

bear	deer	four	her	letter	zipper
car	door	guitar	jar	pear	
chair	finger	hammer	ladder	spider	

Other Spellings

wrap	wreck	wring	write	wrote
wreath	wrench	wrist	wrong	

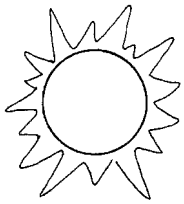
Classroom Spotlight

Non-English Speakers

Children whose primary language is not English may have difficulties pronouncing some of the sounds in English. For example:

- Children speaking Japanese or Mandarin may have difficulty distinguishing between the /l/ and /r/ sounds.
- Children speaking Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, and Laotian may substitute the /b/, /w/, or /p/ sounds for the /v/ sound.
- Children who speak the many languages that either do not contain consonant blends or contain only a small number of blends may have trouble learning these sound-spellings in English.

For additional information on challenges children learning English as a second language face, consult *The ESL Teacher's Book of Lists* by Jacqueline E. Kress, pages 131–151.



/s/ as in *sun*

How formed: The /s/ sound is a voiceless alveolar fricative. Its voiced counterpart is /z/. To make the /s/ sound, place the blade of the tongue near the alveolar ridge. Then force air through the narrow groove formed by the tongue. The breath stream strikes the teeth to produce a hissing sound.

Spellings: The /s/ sound is frequently represented by the letter *s* as in *sun* or *bus*. The letter *s* is quite unreliable because it can stand for several sounds. In addition to the /s/ sound, the letter *s* can stand for the /z/ sound as in *rose*, *is*, *dogs*, *dessert*, and *reason*; the /sh/ sound as in *sure*, *sugar*, and *pressure*; and the /zh/ sound as in *measure* and *pleasure*. In addition, the letter *s* is a part of the digraph *sh*, which stands for the /sh/ sound, and it is a part of many consonant clusters, such as *sc*, *sk*, *sl*, *sm*, *sn*, *sp*, *st*, *sw*, and *str*. When *s* is followed by the letter *c*, the two letters can stand for the /sk/ sounds as in *scold*, or the *c* can be silent as in *science* or *scent*. The letter *s* can also be silent when doubled in words such as *kiss*, *lesson*, *dress*, and *kindness*. Another common spelling for the /s/ sound is *c* when followed by *i*, *e*, or *y* as in *circle*, *cent*, *cycle*, and *face*.

Other spellings of the /s/ sound include: *ps* (*psychology*), *sch* (*schism*), *st* (*listen*), *sth* (*isthmus*), *tsw* (*boatswain*), ½*x* (*next*), *z* (*waltz*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

Initial Position

safe	sand	say	self	side	sink	soar	soot	sub
sag	sandwich	sea	sell	sieve	sip	sock	sore	such
sage	sang	seal	send	sigh	sir	sod	sort	sue
said	sap	see	sent	sight	sit	soft	soul	suit
sail	sat	seed	serve	sign	six	soil	sound	sum
sake	sauce	seek	set	silk	size	some	soup	sun
sale	save	seem	seven	sill	so	son	sour	surf
salt	saw	seen	sew	since	soak	song	south	
same	sax	seep	sick	sing	soap	soon	sow	

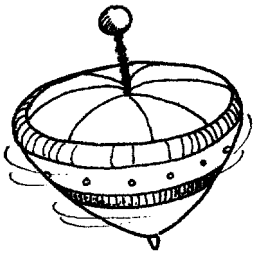
Final Position

boss	circus	kiss	loss	miss	octopus	plus	toss	yes
bus	gas	less	mess	moss	pass	this	us	

Other Spellings

ceiling	cereal	city	chance	force	mice	peace	since	voice
celery	cigar	ace	choice	glance	mince	pencil	slice	
cell	cinch	advice	concert	grace	notice	place	space	
cellar	cinder	Alice	dance	groceries	office	pounce	spruce	
cement	circle	bounce	face	ice	officer	prince	trace	
cent	circus	brace	fancy	lace	ounce	race	truce	
center	citizen	Bruce	fence	mercy	pace	rice	twice	

/t/ as in *top*



How formed: The /t/ sound is a voiceless alveolar plosive (stop). Its voiced counterpart is /d/. To make the /t/ sound, separate the teeth and the tongue. Then press lightly against the inside of the upper jaw. The unvocalized breath is briefly held above the tongue. Then quickly drop the tongue and allow the breath to escape with a sharp, explosive sound.

Spellings: The /t/ sound is frequently represented by the letter *t* as in *top* or *cat*. The letter *t* is fairly reliable. However, sometimes the letter *t* is silent. For example, one *t* is silent when *t* is doubled in words such as *bottom* and *little*. The letter *t* is also silent when it follows the letters *f* or *s* as in *often* and *listen*. In addition, the letter *t* is silent in words borrowed from French, such as *bouquet*, *beret*, *debut*, and *ballet*. The letter *t* also appears in the digraph *th*, which can stand for the /th/ (*thing*, *with*) or /ŧh/ (*that*) sounds, and *tch*, which stands for the /ch/ sound (*watch*, *pitch*). In the *tch* digraph, the letter *t* is silent. The letter *t* can stand for other digraph sounds /ch/ and /sh/ when it is followed by the letters *i*, *e*, or *u* as in *question*, *righteous*, *picture*, and *natural*.

Other spellings of the /t/ sound include: *th* (*Thomas*, *thyme*), *bt* (*doubt*, *debt*), *cht* (*yacht*), *ct* (*ctenophore*, *indict*), *ed* (*talked*, *asked*), *ght* (*bought*), *phth* (*phthisic*), *tw* (*two*), *pt* (*receipt*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

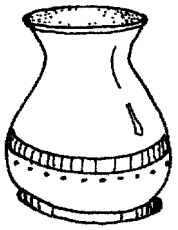
Initial Position

tab	tan	tee	till	tomato	touch	tuck
table	tap	teen	time	ton	tough	tug
tack	tape	telephone	tin	tone	tour	tune
tag	tar	tell	tip	tool	tow	turn
tail	tea	ten	tire	toothbrush	towel	turtle
take	teach	tent	to	top	town	
talk	team	tick	toad	torn	toy	
tall	tear	tide	toe	toss	tub	
tame	tease	tie	toll	tote	tube	

Final Position

bat	coat	goat	lot	pat	sat	what
beat	cot	got	mat	pet	seat	wheat
beet	cut	great	meat	pit	set	yet
bet	dot	greet	meet	pleat	shut	
bit	eight	hat	met	point	sit	
blot	fat	heat	moat	pot	sleet	
boat	feet	hit	neat	put	spot	
boot	fit	hot	nest	quit	sweet	
but	flat	hut	net	rat	tent	
carrot	float	jacket	not	rocket	vote	
cat	foot	jet	nut	rot	wait	
cheat	get	let	paint	rut	wet	

/v/ as in *vase*



How formed: The /v/ sound is a voiced labiodental fricative. Its voiceless counterpart is /f/. To make the /v/ sound, place the lower lip slightly under the upper teeth. Then vibrate the vocal cords. You should be able to feel the vibration of the lip against the teeth.

Spellings: The /v/ sound is most frequently represented by the letter *v* as in *vase* or *give*. The letter *v* is a very reliable letter for this sound and has no other sound assigned to it.

Other spellings of the /v/ sound include: *f* (*of*), *ph* (*Stephen*), *vv* (*flivver*), *lv* (*halve*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

Initial Position

valentine	vain	vat	vent	view	vote
van	van	vault	verse	vine	
vase	vane	veal	very	visit	
violin	vase	vein	vest	voice	

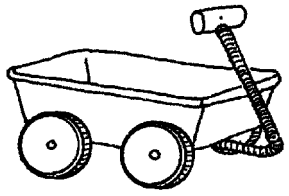
Final Position *

alive	dive	give	leave	rave	wave
arrive	dove	glove	live	save	weave
brave	drive	grave	love	serve	wove
carve	drove	grove	move	shave	
cave	five	have	pave	sleeve	
cove	gave	hive	prove	stove	

* Note: Words ending in the /v/ sound are written using the letter *v* followed by an *e*. Point this out to students.

Connect phonics practice to the real world. In addition to reading books, engage children in reading newspapers, magazines, and environmental print. These children are searching the newspaper for words with the sound-spelling relationship they are learning.

/w/ as in *wagon*



How formed: The /w/ sound is a voiced semivowel (resonant). To make the /w/ sound, close the lips but do not press them together. Then vibrate the vocal cords. You should be able to feel the vibration of the lips. In words with *w* in which the lips do not meet (*throw*, *answer*), there is no vocal cord vibration and therefore no /w/ sound.

Spellings: The /w/ sound is frequently represented by the letter *w* at the beginning of a word or syllable as in *wagon* or *always*. The letter *w* is not a very reliable consonant letter because it can also act as a vowel when it follows another vowel as in *throw*. In addition, the letter *w* is silent in words that begin with *wr* (*write*) or *who* (*whose*). It is also silent in the word *two*. The letter *w* is a part of the digraph *wh* as in *which* and *why*. The digraph *wh* stands for the /hw/ sound. In some foreign words, the letter *w* stands for the /v/ sound as in *Wagner*.

In addition to the consonant *w*, the vowels *o* and *u* can stand for the /w/ sound. The vowel *o* stands for the /w/ sound in words such as *one*, *once*, and *choir*. The vowel *u* stands for the /w/ sound when it follows the letter *q* in words such as *quick* and *queen*.

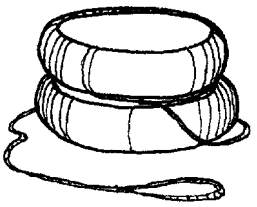
Other spellings of the /w/ sound include: *ju* (*marijuana*), *ou* (*Ouija*, *bivouac*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

Initial Position

wad	ware	wealth	wet	wipe	work
wade	warm	wear	wick	wire	world
wag	warn	weave	wide	wise	worm
wage	wash	web	wife	wish	worry
wagon	wasp	weed	wig	wishbone	worst
waist	waste	week	wild	wit	would
wait	watch	weep	will	with	
wake	water	weigh	wilt	woke	
walk	wave	weird	win	wolf	
wall	wax	weld	wind	won	
wand	way	well	window	wood	
want	we	went	wing	wool	
war	weak	west	wink	word	

/y/ as in *yo-yo*



How formed: The /y/ sound is a voiced palatal semivowel (resonant). To make the /y/ sound, separate the teeth and press the sides of the tongue against the upper teeth. Raise the middle of the tongue to create an obstruction to the flow of air that passes over the arched tongue. The lips should be stretched from side to side while making the sound.

Spellings: The /y/ sound is represented by the letter *y* as in *yellow* or *beyond*. The /y/ sound can also be represented by the vowels *i* (*onion*) and *e* (*azalea*). The letter *y* is not a reliable letter for the /y/ sound. It represents the consonant sound /y/ about 3% of the time. This occurs when the letter *y* appears at the beginning of a word or syllable. When the letter *y* appears elsewhere in a word, it represents a vowel sound. The letter *y* is used as a vowel 97% of the time and can stand for the /ī/ sound (*fly*), /i/ sound (*lymph*), /ē/ sound (*baby*), or be a part of a long vowel digraph *ay* (*play*).

Other spellings of the /y/ sound include: *j* (*hallelujah*), *ll* (*tortilla*), ½*gn* (*vignette*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

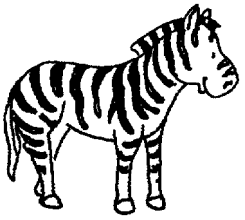
Initial Position

yacht	yard	yeast	yoke	your
yak	yarn	yellow	yolk	yowl
yam	yawn	yes	you	yo-yo
yank	year	yield	young	yuck

Classroom Spotlight

One activity my students enjoy when working with the /y/ sound is the yarn toss. As we sit in a circle, I say a word that begins with /y/ and toss a ball of yarn to a student in the circle. The student then says another word that begins with /y/ as he or she tosses the yarn ball while holding on to the end piece of the yarn. The activity continues as a yarn web is created connecting all the students. As each student says a word, I write it on the chalkboard and we check to see if the /y/ sound is represented by the letter *y*. At the end of the activity, we have a ready-made list for our Word Wall.

/z/ as in *zebra*



How formed: The /z/ sound is a voiced alveolar fricative. Its voiceless counterpart is /s/. To make the /z/ sound, let a vocalized breath emerge over the tongue in a steady stream. You should be able to feel the tongue vibration.

Spellings: The /z/ sound is sometimes represented by the letter *z* as in *zebra* and *quiz*. The letter *z* is not a commonly used letter. The letter *s* as in *does*, *nose*, and *dogs* represents the /z/ sound more frequently than the letter *z*. The letter *z* is a moderately reliable letter. Sometimes the letter *z* is silent. For example, one *z* is silent when doubled in words such as *jazz* and *dizzy*. The letter *z* can also stand for the /s/ sound as in *quartz*, *pretzel*, or *mezzo*; and the /zh/ sound as in *azure*. In those words containing *tz*, the /s/ sound is easier to pronounce than the /z/ sound.

Other spellings of the /z/ sound include: *ss* (*scissors*), *x* (*xylophone*, *Xerxes*), *sc* (*discern*), *cz* (*czar*), *si* (*business*), *sp* (*raspberry*), *sth* (*asthma*), *thes* (*clothes*), ½*x* (*exact*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

Initial Position

zag	zebra	zinc	zipper	zoo
zap	zero	zing	zone	zoom
zeal	zest	zip	zonk	

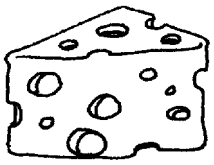
Medial/Final Position

blizzard	daze	freeze	prize	snooze
breeze	doze	froze	quiz	squeeze
buzz	dozen	fuzz	size	trapezoid
buzzard	fizz	hazy	sneeze	whiz

Other Spellings

amuse	chose	girls	pause	suppose
as	close	has	please	tease
because	daisy	his	praise	these
birds	dogs	hose	raise	those
boys	easy	is	rise	was
cars	excuse	noise	rose	wise
cheese	fuse	nose	shoes	

/ch/ as in *cheese*



How formed: The /ch/ sound is a voiceless palatal affricative. It is a combination of the /t/ and /sh/ sounds. Its voiced counterpart is /j/. To make the /ch/ sound, slightly round and stick out the lips, close the teeth, and press the tongue against them. The teeth spring slightly apart to let the breath explode.

Spellings: The /ch/ sound is frequently represented by the digraph *ch* as in *cheese* or *lunch*. *Ch* is not a very reliable digraph. It can also stand for the /k/ sound in words of Greek origin such as *chemical*, *character*, *chorus*, *orchestra*, *stomach*, and *school* (the word *ache* is of Anglo-Saxon origin); or the /sh/ sound in words of French origin as in *Chicago*, *chiffon*, and *machine*.

Other spellings of the /ch/ sound include: *t* (*nature*, *situation*), *tch* (*match*, *catch*), *c* (*cello*), *che* (*niche*), *te* (*righteous*), *tu* (*natural*), *th* (*posthumous*), *ti* (*question*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

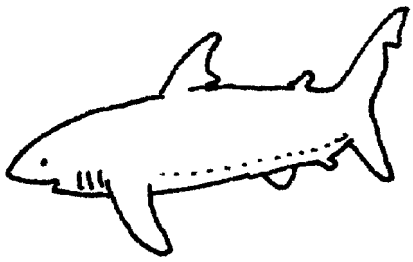
Initial Position

chain	chart	cheep	chew	chin	chow
chair	chase	cheerful	chick	chip	chuckle
chalk	chat	cheese	chicken	chipmunk	chug
change	cheap	cheeseburger	child	chirp	chum
chap	cheat	cherry	children	chocolate	chunk
chapter	check	chess	chilly	choose	churn
charge	checker	chest	chime	chop	
charm	checkup	chestnut	chimney	chose	

Final Position

beach	hunch	quench	trench	itch	stitch
bench	inch	ranch	batch	latch	stretch
branch	lunch	reach	catch	match	switch
bunch	much	rich	clutch	notch	watch
church	munch	sandwich	crutch	patch	witch
clinch	peach	search	ditch	pitch	
couch	perch	such	fetch	scratch	
crunch	pinch	teach	hitch	sketch	
each	punch	touch	hutch	snatch	

/sh/ as in *shark*



How formed: The /sh/ sound is a voiceless palatal fricative. Its voiced counterpart is /zh/. To make the /sh/ sound, the lips are slightly rounded and stuck out. The teeth are together and the tongue is relaxed. The air emerges in a steady stream.

Spellings: The /sh/ sound is frequently represented by the digraph *sh* as in *shark* and *fish*. The digraph *sh* is a very reliable spelling for this sound. Whenever we see the letters *sh* together in a word they stand for the /sh/ sound unless they appear in separate syllables, such as in *mishap* or *dishonor*. The /sh/ sound can be represented by many other spellings such as *s* (*sure*, *sugar*), *ti* (*nation*), *ch* (*machine*), and *ci* (*special*). The *ch* spelling for the /sh/ sound occurs mostly in words of French origin such as *chalet*, *chamois*, *chef*, *machine*, *parachute*, *sachet*, *cliché*, *chic*, *Chevrolet*, *Michigan*, and *Chicago*.

Other spellings of the /sh/ sound include: *sch* (*schwa*), *ce* (*ocean*), *c* (*oceanic*), *chs* (*fuchsia*), *psh* (*pshaw*), *sci* (*conscience*), *se* (*nauseous*), *si* (*mansion*), *ss* (*tissue*, *issue*), *ssi* (*mission*), *sc* (*crescendo*), *t* (*negotiate*), ½*x* (*luxury*), ½*xi* (*noxious*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

Initial Position

shack	shape	shed	shin	shop	shove
shade	share	sheep	shine	shore	shovel
shadow	shark	sheet	ship	short	show
shake	sharp	shelf	shirt	shorts	shower
shall	shave	shell	shock	shot	shuck
shallow	shawl	sherbet	shoe	should	shut
shame	she	shield	shoelace	shoulder	shy
shampoo	shear	shift	shoot	shout	

Final Position

ash	clash	fish	lash	push	trash
blush	crash	flash	leash	rash	wash
brush	crush	fresh	mash	rush	wish
bush	dash	gash	mesh	smash	
cash	dish	gush	mush	splash	

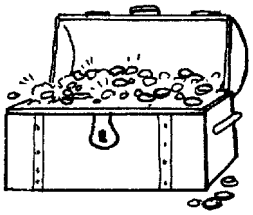
Other Spellings

action	fraction	vacation	suspicion
addition	nation	patient	delicious
attention	station	social	vicious

Classroom Spotlight

Provide quiet time each day for children to do independent reading. I suggest at least 10–15 minutes. During independent reading time, model good reading habits by reading a book of your choice. Share your excitement about the book and encourage children to share the books they are enjoying. Periodically, you might want to use this time to conduct student conferences or circulate around the room to help any children experiencing decoding difficulties. Question the child about what strategy he or she is using and why. You might want to point out an alternative strategy, explain why it can be used, and model how to use it.

/zh/ as in *treasure*



How formed: The /zh/ sound is a voiced palatal fricative. Its voiceless counterpart is /sh/.

Spellings: The /zh/ sound is never represented by the letters *zh*. This letter combination doesn't appear in English words. The /zh/ sound is, instead, represented by a wide range of spellings including: *si* (*vision, occasion*), *s* (*pleasure, measure*), *g* (*rouge, garage*), *z* (*azure*), *zi* (*brazier*), *ssi* (*scission*), *ti* (*equation*), ½*x* (*luxurious*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

Medial Position

Asia	decision	luxurious	rouge	treasure
azure	equation	measure	sabotage	usual
bon jour	exposure	occasion	seizure	vision
casual	garage	pleasure	television	

/ŧh/ as in *the* (voiced)

How formed: The /ŧh/ sound is a voiced dental fricative. To make the /ŧh/ sound, place the tip of the tongue between the teeth. Force the air through the front of the tongue while the tongue vibrates.

Spellings: The /ŧh/ sound is most frequently spelled by the digraph *th* as in *the* or *that*. Most of the words containing the /ŧh/ sound are of higher frequency in English than those containing the /th/ sound. The digraph *th* represents two sounds—the voiceless /th/ sound as in *thin* and the voiced /ŧh/ sound as in *the*. The letters *th* are fairly reliable for these two sounds. However, sometimes the letters *th* stand for the /t/ sound as in *Thomas* and *thyme*, and sometimes they are silent as in *isthmus*. When the letters *th* appear together in a word, but are in separate syllables (EXAMPLE: *boathouse*), the *t* stands for /t/ and the *h* stands for /h/.

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

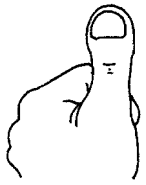
Initial Position

than	the	them	there	they	those	thus
that	their	then	these	this	though	

Medial/Final Position

bathe	gather	smooth	together	whether

/th/ as in *thumb* (voiceless)



How formed: The /th/ sound is a voiceless dental fricative. To make the /th/ sound, place the tip of the tongue between the teeth. Force the air through the front of the tongue without vibration.

Spellings: The /th/ sound is most frequently spelled by the digraph *th* as in *thin* or *bath*. The digraph *th* represents two sounds—the voiceless /th/ sound as in *thin* and the voiced /ŧh/ sound as in *the*. The letters *th* are fairly reliable for these two sounds. However, sometimes the letters *th* stand for the /t/ sound as in *Thomas* and *thyme*, and sometimes they are silent as in *isthmus*. When the letters *th* appear together in a word, but are in separate syllables (EXAMPLE: *boathouse*), the *t* stands for /t/ and the *h* stands for /h/.

Another spelling of the /th/ sound is *chth* (*chthonian*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

Initial Position

thank	theme	thief	think	thirteen	thought	through	thunder
Thanksgiving	thermometer	thimble	third	thirty	thousand	throw	
thaw	thermos	thin	thirst	thistle	three	thumb	
theater	thick	thing	thirsty	thorn	thread	thump	

Final Position

bath	booth	cloth	fourth	math	north	Ruth	teeth	with
Beth	both	death	growth	moth	oath	sixth	thief	worth
birth	broth	fifth	length	mouth	path	south	tooth	wreath

/hw/ as in *wheel*

How formed: The /hw/ sound is rapidly disappearing from the English language. Many dialects do not distinguish the /hw/ sound in *whether* from the /w/ sound in *weather*. Listen carefully as you say aloud these words. Do you pronounce the beginning sound differently? When making the /hw/ sound, /h/ (just a puff of air) is vocalized before /w/. The jaws are apart to produce /h/, then close as the lips come closer together to produce /w/. You should be able to feel a slight vibration of the lips.

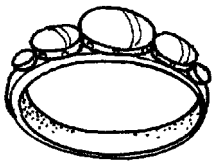
Spellings: The /hw/ sound is represented by the digraph *wh*. This spelling appears only at the beginning of a word or syllable. The digraph *wh* can also represent /h/ as in *who*, *whom*, *whose*, and *whole*.

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

Initial Position

whack	wheel	wherever	whim	whirl	whittled
whale	wheelbarrow	whew	whimper	whisk	whiz
wham	wheelchair	whey	whine	whisker	whoops
what	when	which	whinny	whisper	whopper
whatever	whenever	whiff	whip	whistle	why
wheat	where	while	whir	white	

/ng/ as in *ring*



How formed: The /ng/ sound is a voiced velar nasal. To make the /ng/ sound, raise the back of the tongue toward the top of the mouth similar to the production of the /g/ and /k/ sounds. However, relax the soft palate to allow the air to flow through the nose. The /ng/ sound is one of three nasal sounds (/m/, /n/, /ng/). These sounds are responsible for resonance in the voice.

Spellings: The /ng/ sound is frequently represented by the letters *ng* as in *ring*. This sound never occurs at the beginning of a word or syllable and always follows a vowel sound. The letters *ng* are only moderately reliable for this sound.

At the end of words, the letters *ng* always stand for the /ng/ sound. However, within words the two letters *n* and *g* can cause confusion. For example, the letter *n* alone may stand for the /ng/ sound and the *g* for /g/ as in *finger*; or the letter *n* may stand for the /n/ sound and the *g* for the /g/ sound as in *ungrateful*, *ongoing*, or *engulf*. The letters *ng* can also stand for the /n/ and /j/ sounds as in *angel*, *change*, *plunge*, and *ranger*.

The letter *n* alone can represent the /ng/ sound when followed by *k* as in *pink*, *rank*, *think*, and *sink*. In the words *linger* and *mango* you also hear the /g/ sound after /ng/.

Other spellings of the /ng/ sound include: *ngg* (*mah-jongg*), *ngue* (*tongue*), *nd* (*handkerchief*).

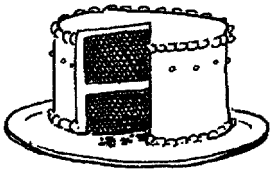
WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

Medial/Final Position

angry	king	sprung	bank	rank
bang	linger	strangler	brink	sank
clang	long	strong	drink	shrunk
clung	longer	strength	drunk	sink
finger	rang	thing	honk	sunk
gang	ring	wing	ink	tank
gong	rung	wrangler	junk	thank
hang	sang	wringer	link	wink
hung	sing	young	mink	
hunger	song		pink	

/ā/ as in *cake*

How formed: The /ā/ sound is referred to as the long-*a* sound. To make the /ā/ sound, the front part of the tongue is midheight in the mouth. The lips are unrounded and the facial muscles are relatively tense.



Spellings: The most common spellings of the /ā/ sound include *a_e* (*cake*), *ai* (*pain*), and *ay* (*say*).

Other spellings of the /ā/ sound include: *eigh* (*eight*), *a*(*r*) (*vary*), *ai*(*r*) (*fair*), *ey* (*they*, *obey*), *ae* (*Gael*), *ag* (*champagne*), *aig* (*campaign*), *aigh* (*straight*) *ao* (*gaol*), *au* (*gauge*), *é* (*exposé*), *e* (*suede*), *ea* (*steak*), *ee* (*matinee*), *eh* (*eh*), *ei* (*veil*), *eig* (*feign*), *eigh* (*sleigh*), *eilles* (*Marseilles*), *er* (*dossier*), *es* (*demesne*), *et* (*beret*), *hei* (*heir*), *ie* (*lingerie*), *ué* (*appliqué*), *uet* (*bouquet*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

bake
blade
brace
brake
brave
cage
cake
came
case
cave
chase
date
face
fade
flake
flame
game
gate
gave
grace
grade
grape
lake
late
made
make
male
maze
name
page
place
plate
race
rake
sale
same
save
shade
shake
shape
skate
space
stage
take
tale
tape
trace
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vase
wade
wake
wave
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faith
frail
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maid
mail
main
nail
paid
pail
pain
paint
plain
praise
raid
rain
rail
raise
sail
snail
Spain
stain
strain
tail
trail
train
vain
waist
wait
bay
birthday
clay
day
gay
gray
hay
jay
lay
may
maybe
pay
play
player
pray
ray
say
spray
stay
stray
sway
today
tray
way

/ē/ as in *feet*

How formed: The /ē/ sound is referred to as the long-*e* sound. To make the /ē/ sound, the front part of the tongue is high in the mouth. The lips are unrounded and the facial muscles are relatively tense.

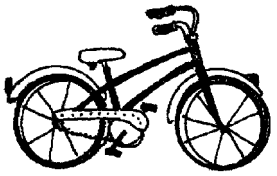
Spellings: The most common spellings of the /ē/ sound include *e* (*we*), *ee* (*feet*), *ea* (*heat*), *y* (*lazy*), and *ie* (*field*).

Other spelling of the /ē/ sound include: *ey* (*key*), *uay* (*quay* pronounced "key"), *ae* (*Caesar*), *e'e* (*e'en*), *e_e* (*precede*), *ei* (*receive*), *eip* (*receipt*), *eo* (*people*), *i_e* (*machine*), *is* (*debris*), *oe* (*amoeba*), *ea_ue* (*league*), *it* (*esprit*), *ui* (*mosquito*), *agh* (*shillelagh*), *ois* (*chamois*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

be	peek	weep	lean	weak	lady	thirty
me	peel	wheel	leap	wheat	lately	tiny
we	peep	beach	leash	yeast	lobby	tricky
bee	queen	bead	least	zeal	lucky	ugly
beech	reef	beak	meal	any	many	windy
beef	screech	beam	mean	baby	mommy	babies
beep	screen	bean	meat	beauty	muddy	belief
beet	see	beat	neat	bunny	navy	believe
cheek	seed	bleach	pea	candy	ninety	berries
cheep	seek	bleak	peach	carry	only	brief
cheese	seem	cheap	peak	chilly	party	brownie
creep	seen	cheat	plead	city	penny	Charlie
deed	seep	clean	pleat	county	plenty	chief
deep	sheep	cream	reach	daddy	pony	cities
deer	sheet	deal	read	daisy	pretty	cookies
fee	sleep	dear	real	dirty	puppy	field
feed	sleet	dream	scream	dizzy	quickly	fierce
feel	speech	each	sea	dusty	sandy	grief
feet	speed	east	seal	duty	seventy	niece
flee	steel	eat	seam	easy	shiny	parties
free	steep	feast	seat	eighty	silly	pennies
greed	street	flea	sneak	family	sixty	pierce
green	sweep	gleam	speak	forty	sleepy	relief
greet	sweet	heal	steal	fifty	slowly	shield
heed	teen	heap	steam	funny	smoothly	shriek
jeep	teeth	heat	stream	fuzzy	sticky	siege
keep	three	jeans	tea	gravy	story	thief
knee	tree	lead	teach	happy	strawberry	yield
meet	weed	leaf	team	jelly	sunny	
need	week	leak	treat	kitty	thirsty	

/ī/ as in *bike*



How formed: The /ī/ sound is referred to as the long-*i* sound. Many linguists categorize this sound as a diphthong.

Spellings: The most common spellings of the /ī/ sound include *i_e* (*bike*), *y* (*my*), *i* (*child*), *ie* (*tie*), and *igh* (*high*).

Other spellings of the /ī/ sound include: *ais* (*aisle*), *ay* (*kayak*), *aye* (*aye*), *ei* (*stein*), *eigh* (*height*), *ey* (*geyser*) *eye* (*eye*), *is* (*island*), *uy* (*buy*), *ye* (*lye*), *ia* (*diamond*), *oy* (*coyote*), *ui_e* (*guide*).

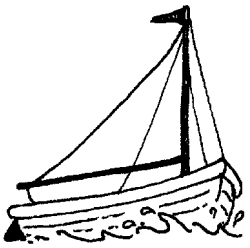
WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

bike	like	size	cry	kind	fight
bite	lime	slice	dry	mild	flight
bride	line	slide	fly	mind	fright
chime	live	spice	fry	rind	high
chive	mice	spike	my	wild	knight
dime	mile	splice	pry	wind	light
dine	mine	stride	shy	cries	might
dive	nice	strive	sky	die	night
drive	nine	tide	sly	died	right
fine	pike	time	spy	dries	sigh
fire	pine	tire	try	flies	sight
five	pipe	twice	why	fries	slight
grime	price	twine	bind	lie	thigh
hide	rice	whine	blind	pie	tight
hike	ride	white	child	skies	
hive	ripe	wide	climb	spies	
ice	rise	wife	find	tie	
kite	shine	wise	grind	tries	
life	side	by	hind	bright	

While reading Big Books to students, mask a word that contains a sound-spelling you want to review. Have children predict the word based on context and picture clues. Then reveal one letter at a time in the word as children confirm or change their predictions based on their knowledge of sound-spelling relationships. This is an excellent way of providing opportunities for children to use all three cueing systems—semantic (meaning), syntactic (grammar), and graphophonic (sound-spellings).

/ō/ as in *boat*

How formed: The /ō/ sound is referred to as the long-*o* sound. To make the /ō/ sound, the back part of the tongue is midheight in the mouth. The lips are rounded and the facial muscles are relatively tense.



Spellings: The most common spellings of the /ō/ sound include *o* (*go*), *o_e* (*home*), *oa* (*boat*), *ow* (*show*), and *oe* (*toe*).

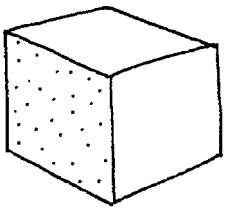
Other spellings of the /ō/ sound include: *ou/ough* (*boulder/though*), *ew* (*sew*), *au* (*mauve*), *aut* (*hautboy*), *aux* (*faux pas*), *eau* (*beau*), *eaux* (*Bordeaux*), *eo* (*yeoman*), *oh* (*oh*), *ol* (*yolk*), *oo* (*brooch*), *ot* (*depot*), *owe* (*owe*), *os* (*apropos*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

bold	choke	pose	float	bowl	yellow
bolt	chose	robe	foam	crow	doe
cold	close	rode	goal	flow	foe
colt	clothes	rope	goat	flown	goes
fold	clove	rose	groan	glow	hoe
go	code	slope	Joan	grow	Joe
gold	cone	smoke	load	grown	toe
hold	cope	spoke	loaf	know	woe
jolt	cove	stone	loan	known	
mold	dome	stove	moan	low	
no	dose	stroke	moat	mellow	
old	doze	those	oak	mow	
poll	drove	throne	oats	pillow	
pro	froze	tone	roach	row	
roll	globe	vote	road	shadow	
scold	grove	whole	roam	show	
scroll	hole	woke	roast	shown	
so	home	wrote	soak	slow	
sold	hope	yoke	soap	snow	
stroll	hose	zone	throat	sparrow	
told	joke	boat	toad	stow	
toll	lone	cloak	toast	swallow	
troll	nose	coach	whoa	throw	
volt	note	coal	below	thrown	
alone	phone	coast	blow	tow	
bone	poke	coat	blown	willow	
broke	pole	croak	bow	window	

/yo͞o/ as in *cube*

How formed: The /yo͞o/ sound is referred to as the long-*u* sound. It is a combination of a consonant and a vowel. Some linguists categorize this sound as a diphthong.



Spellings: The most common spellings of the /yo͞o/ sound include *u_e* (*cube*), *u* (*music*), *ew* (*few*), and *ue* (*cue*).

Other spellings of the /yo͞o/ sound include: *eu* (*feud*), *ueue* (*queue* pronounced "cue"), *eau* (*beauty*), *hu* (*huge*), *ieu* (*purlieu*), *iew* (*view*), *yew* (*yew*), *you* (*you*), *yu* (*Yule*), *ewe* (*ewe*), *ut* (*debut*).

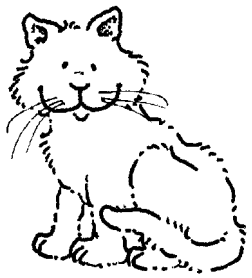
WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

cube	bugle	pupil	few	fuel
cute	community	regular	hew	hue
fume	future	uniform	mew	rescue
fuse	human	union	pew	value
huge	humid	unit	preview	beautiful
mule	humor	united	review	beauty
muse	January	university	view	
mute	menu	unusual	argue	
puke	museum	usual	continue	
use	music	Utah	cue	

Use the word lists when you're creating sentences for Daily Oral Language practice. Write two sentences on the chalkboard, each containing grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors. Have children, as a class, suggest ways to correct the sentences. Though this daily exercise should take no more than five minutes, these small review sessions significantly reinforce basic grammar, spelling, and punctuation skills. TIP: During student writing conferences, remind children of what they have reviewed in Daily Oral Language as you focus their attention on specific sentences with errors. Then give them an opportunity to correct their writing errors before you correct them.

/a/ as in *cat*

How formed: The /a/ sound is referred to as the short-*a* sound. To make the /a/ sound, the front part of the tongue is low in the mouth. The lips are unrounded.



Spellings: The most common spelling of the /a/ sound is *a* (*cat*).

Other spellings of the /a/ sound include: *a_e* (*have*), *ai* (*plaid*), *al* (*half*), *au* (*laugh*), *aa* (*baa*), *a'a* (*ma'am*), *ach* (*drachm*), *ag* (*diaphragm*), *ui* (*guimpe*), *ah* (*dahlia*), *i* (*meringue*), *ua* (*guarantee*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

act
add
am
as
at
back
bad
bag
ban
band
basket
bat
batch
bath
black
blast
bran
branch
brand
brass
cab
camp
can
cap
cast
cat
catch
champ
chat
clam
clamp
clan
clap
clash
class
crack
craft
cramp
crash
dab
dad
damp
dash
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jazz
lack
lad
lag
lamp
land
lap
lash
last
latch
mad
man
map
mash
mask
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mast
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math
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nap
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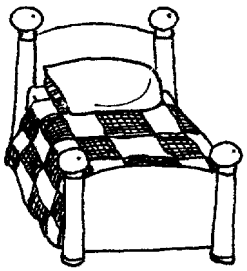
Pam
pant
pants
pass
past
pat
patch
path
plan
plant
quack
rack
rag
ram
ramp
ran
rant
rap
rash
rat
sack
sad
sag
sand
sap
sat
scratch
slab
slack
slam
slant
snap
span
splash
stack
stamp
stand
strand
tab
tack
tag
tan
tap
task
than
that
track
trap
van
vat
wag
yam

/e/ as in *bed*



How formed: The /e/ sound is referred to as the short-*e* sound. To make the /e/ sound, the front part of the tongue is midheight in the mouth. The lips are unrounded and the facial muscles are lax.

Spellings: The most common spellings of the /e/ sound include *e* (*bed*), *ea* (*head*), *e_e* (*ledge*).

Other spellings of the /e/ sound include: *ai* (*said*), *a_e* (*care*), *a* (*any*), *ae* (*aesthete*), *ay* (*says*), *eg* (*phlegm*), *ei* (*heifer*), *eo* (*leopard*), *ie* (*friend*), *u* (*bury*), *ue* (*guess*).

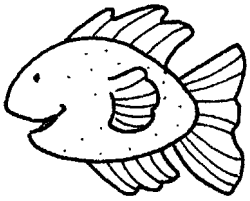
WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

bed	chest	help	met	shed	them
beg	crest	hem	neck	shelf	then
bell	deck	hen	nest	shell	vest
belt	den	jet	net	sled	vet
bench	desk	kept	peck	slept	web
bend	dress	led	peg	smell	well
bent	egg	left	pen	spell	went
best	elf	leg	pest	spend	wept
bet	elm	lend	pet	spent	west
bled	end	less	press	stem	wet
blend	fed	lest	red	step	when
bless	fell	let	rest	stress	wreck
cell	fled	men	sell	tell	yell
cent	fresh	mend	send	ten	yes
check	gem	mesh	sent	tent	yet
chess	get	mess	set	test	

OTHER WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

ahead	health	read	weather	tense
bread	heaven	ready	dense	wedge
breakfast	heavy	spread	fence	
dead	instead	sweater	hedge	
dread	lead	thread	ledge	
feather	leather	wealth	pledge	
head	meant	wealthy	sense	

/i/ as in *fish*



How formed: The /i/ sound is referred to as the short-*i* sound. To make the /i/ sound, the front part of the tongue is high in the mouth. The lips are unrounded and the facial muscles are lax.

Spellings: The most common spelling of the /i/ sound is *i* (*fish*).

Other spellings of the /i/ sound include: *y* (*gym*), *i_e* (*give*), *a_e* (*damage*), *e* (*pretty*), *ee* (*been*), *ei* (*counterfeit*), *ia* (*marriage*), *ie* (*sieve*), *o* (*women*), *u* (*busy*), *ui* (*build*), *ai* (*mountain*), *u_e* (*minute*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

bib
bid
big
bill
bit
blimp
blink
brick
chick
chill
chin
click
clip
crib
crisp
did
dig
dill
dim
dip
dish
disk
drink
drip
fib
fig
fill
fin
fish
fist
fit
fix
flick
flip
gift
gig
gill
glint
hid
hill
him
hip
his
hiss
hit
in
ink
inn
is
it
kick
kin
kiss
lick
lid
lift
link
lip
list
lit
milk
mill
miss
mitt
mix
nip
pick
pig
pill
pin
pink
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rib
rich
rid
rig
rim
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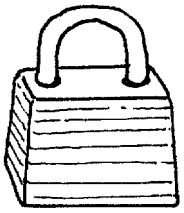
shift
ship
sill
sink
sip
sit
six
skin
skip
skit
slick
slid
slim
slip
splint
sprint
stick
stink
swim
thin
think
this
tick
tip
trick
trim
trip
twig
which
whip
wick
wig
will
win
wink
wish
wit
zip

/o/ as in *lock*

How formed: The /o/ sound is referred to as the short-*o* sound. To make the /o/ sound, the central part of the tongue is low in the mouth. The lips are rounded.

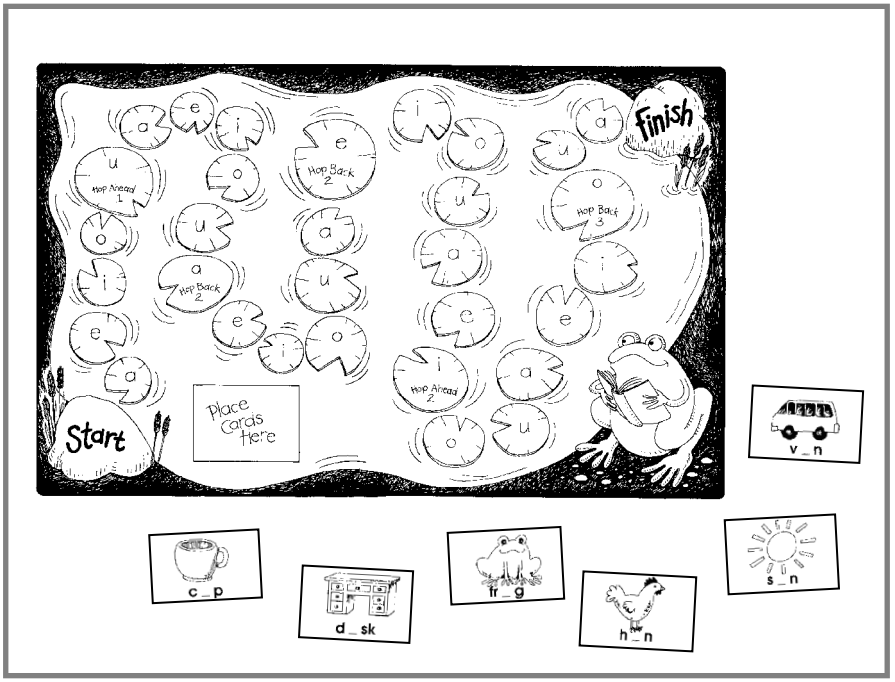


Spellings: The most common spelling of the /o/ sound is *o* (*lock*).

Other spellings of the /o/ sound include: *a* (*watch*), *o_e* (*gone*), *ach* (*yacht*), *au* (*astronaut*), *eau* (*bureaucracy*), *ou* (*cough*), *ho* (*honor*), *oh* (*John*), *ow* (*knowledge*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

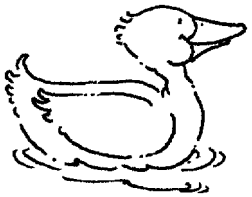
blob	dock	hog	mom	pop	slot
block	doll	hop	mop	pot	sob
blot	dot	hot	nod	prop	sock
bop	drop	job	not	rob	sod
box	flock	jog	on	rock	spot
chop	flop	knob	ox	rod	stop
clock	fog	knock	plod	rot	tock
cob	fox	knot	plop	shock	top
cod	frog	lock	plot	shot	trot
cot	gob	log	pod	shop	
crop	got	lot	pond	slop	



Games and learning center activities are a fun way to practice and reinforce skills after initial instruction.

/u/ as in *duck*

How formed: The /u/ sound is referred to as the short-*u* sound. To make the /u/ sound, the central part of the tongue is midheight in the mouth. The lips are unrounded and the facial muscles are lax.



Spellings: The most common spelling of the /u/ sound is *u* (*duck*).

Other spellings of the /u/ sound include: *o* (*son*), *o_e* (*some*), *ou* (*double*), *oe* (*does*), *oo* (*blood*), *u_e* (*judge*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

bluff	clunk	fuzz	muck	rug	sub
blunt	clutch	glum	mud	run	such
blush	crust	grub	mug	runt	suds
brush	cub	gruff	mush	rush	sum
buck	cuff	gum	musk	rust	sun
bud	cup	gust	must	rut	truck
buff	cut	hug	mutt	shun	trunk
bug	drug	hum	nut	shrub	tub
bum	drum	hunt	pluck	shut	tuck
bump	duck	hush	plug	skunk	tug
bun	dug	husk	plum	slug	tusk
bunch	dull	hut	plus	slump	up
bunt	dump	jug	puff	snub	us
bus	dunk	jump	pump	snug	
but	dusk	just	punt	struck	
buzz	dust	luck	pup	strum	
chunk	fluff	lug	putt	stub	
club	fun	lump	rub	stuck	
clump	fuss	much	ruff	stump	

/ə/ as in *alarm*

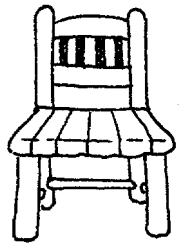
How formed: The /ə/ sound is referred to as the schwa sound or murmur sound. It is graphically represented by an upside-down *e*. Some linguists don't consider it a sound, rather a phonetic variant or allophone. To make the /ə/ sound, the central part of the tongue is midheight in the mouth. The lips are unrounded and the facial muscles are relatively tense.

Spellings: The /ə/ sound can be spelled with any vowel—*a* (*alone*), *e* (*happen*), *i* (*direct*), *o* (*gallop*), *u* (*circus*). Several multisyllabic words beginning with *a* as their first unaccented syllable contain this sound. Below is a list of these words. The schwa sound appears in most multisyllabic words and is the most common sound in English.

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

about	afraid	alarm	anew	ashamed	awake
above	again	alas	annoy	ashore	aware
account	ago	alone	another	aside	away
adult	agree	along	apart	asleep	awhile
afloat	ahead	America	appear	avoid	awoke
afoot	ajar	among	applause	await	

/â/ as in *chair*



How formed: The /â/ sound is an *r*-controlled vowel sound. The diacritical mark above the *a* is known as a circumflex.

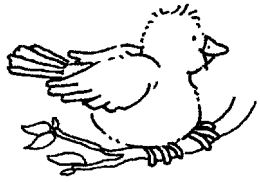
Spellings: The most common spellings of the /â/ sound include *air* (*chair*), *are* (*bare*), and *ear* (*wear*).

Other spellings of the /â/ sound include: *eir* (*their*), *ere* (*where*), *ayer* (*prayer*), *aire* (*doctrinaire*), *eer* (*Myneer*), *ey're* (*they're*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

air	pair	dare	mare	spare	swear
chair	stair	fare	pare	square	wear
fair	bare	flare	rare	stare	
flair	blare	glare	scare	bear	
hair	care	hare	share	pear	

/û/ as in *bird*



How formed: The /û/ sound is an *r*-controlled vowel sound. The diacritical mark above the *u* is known as a circumflex.

Spellings: The most common spellings of the /û/ sound include *ur* (*burn*), *er* (*verb*), and *ir* (*bird*).

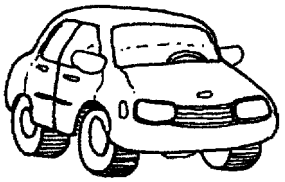
Other spellings of the /û/ sound include: *ear* (*learn*), *err* (*err*), *eur* (*poseur*), *or* (*work*), *our* (*scourge*), *urr* (*purr*), *yr* (*myrtle*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

blur	purr	circle	squirm	fern	person
burn	purse	circus	squirt	germ	river
burst	spur	dirt	stir	her	serve
church	surf	dirty	swirl	herd	sister
churn	Thursday	fir	third	jerk	stern
curb	turkey	firm	thirst	letter	swerve
curl	turn	first	twirl	merge	term
curse	turtle	flirt	whirl	mother	under
curve	urge	girl	after	nerve	verb
fur	bird	quirk	better	other	verge
hurt	birth	shirt	certain	over	verse
nurse	birthday	sir	clerk	perch	water
purple	chirp	skirt	ever	perk	winter

/ä/ as in *car*

How formed: The /ä/ sound is often an *r*-controlled vowel sound. The diacritical mark above the *a* is known as a dieresis.



Spellings: The most common spelling of the /ä/ sound is *a* (*car*, *father*).

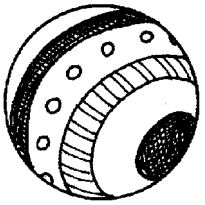
Other spellings of the /ä/ sound include: *à* (*à la mode*), *aa* (*bazaar*), *ah* (*hurrah*), *al* (*calm*), *as* (*faux pas*), *at* (*éclat*), *ea* (*hearth*), *oi* (*reservoir*), *ua* (*guard*), *e* (*sergeant*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

arch	barn	dart	jar	part	star
Arctic	car	far	lard	party	start
ark	card	farm	large	scar	starch
arm	cart	garden	march	scarf	tar
art	charge	guard	mark	shark	tart
artist	charm	hard	marsh	sharp	yard
bar	chart	harm	mart	smart	yarn
bark	dark	harp	park	spark	

/ô/ as in *ball*

How formed: The /ô/ sound is referred to as the broad *o* sound. The diacritical mark above the *o* is known as a circumflex. To make the /ô/ sound, the back part of the tongue is midheight in the mouth.



Spellings: The most common spellings of the /ô/ sound include *o[r]* (*for*), *a[l]* (*walk*), *a[ll]* (*tall*), *au* (*haul*), and *aw* (*hawk*).

Other spellings of the /ô/ sound include: *ou* (*cough*), *oa* (*broad*), *o* (*toss*), *ah* (*Utah*), *as* (*Arkansas*), *augh* (*caught*), *ough* (*sought*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

bore	horse	sport	all	because	vault	lawyer
born	more	store	ball	caught	awful	paw
chore	morning	stork	call	cause	bawl	pawn
chord	north	storm	fall	clause	brawl	raw
cord	or	sword	hall	daughter	caw	saw
core	porch	swore	mall	dinosaur	claw	shawl
cork	pore	sworn	small	fault	crawl	slaw
corn	pork	thorn	stall	fraud	dawn	sprawl
door	port	torch	tall	haul	draw	squawk
dorm	scorch	tore	wall	haunt	drawn	straw
for	score	torn	halt	launch	fawn	strawberry
force	scorn	wore	malt	laundry	flaw	thaw
fork	shore	worn	salt	Paul	gnaw	yawn
form	short	chalk	audience	pause	hawk	
fort	snore	stalk	August	sauce	jaw	
forth	sore	talk	author	sausage	law	
horn	sort	walk	autumn	taught	lawn	

/oi/ as in *boy*

How formed: The /oi/ sound is a diphthong.

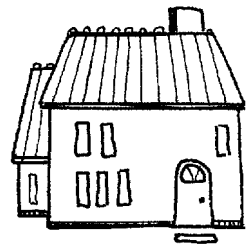
Spellings: The most common spellings of the /oi/ sound include *oi* (*boil*) and *oy* (*toy*).

Other spellings of the /oi/ sound include: *eu* (*Freud*), *ois* (*Iroquois*), *uoy* (*buoy*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

avoid	hoist	point	annoy	enjoy	soy
boil	join	poison	boy	joy	toy
broil	joint	rejoice	cowboy	joyful	voyage
choice	moist	soil	coy	loyal	
coil	moisture	spoil	decoy	ploy	
coin	noise	toil	destroy	Roy	
foil	oil	voice	employ	royal	

/ou/ as in *house*



How formed: The /ou/ sound is a diphthong.

Spellings: The most common spellings of the /ou/ sound include *ou* (*shout*) and *ow* (*town*).

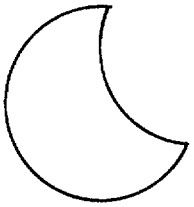
Other spellings of the /ou/ sound include: *au* (*landau*), *ough* (*bough*), *hou* (*hour*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

about	grouch	pouch	spout	crown	plow
bounce	ground	pound	sprout	down	powder
bound	hound	pout	trout	drown	power
cloud	house	proud	allow	fowl	prowl
couch	loud	round	bow	frown	sow
count	mound	scout	brow	gown	towel
crouch	mouse	shout	brown	growl	tower
doubt	mouth	snout	chow	how	town
flour	noun	sound	clown	howl	vow
foul	ouch	sour	cow	now	wow
found	out	south	crowd	owl	

/o͞o/ as in *moon*

How formed: The /o͞o/ sound is referred to as the long sound of *oo*. To make the /o͞o/ sound, the back part of the tongue is high in the mouth. The lips are rounded and the facial muscles are tense.



Spellings: The most common spellings of the /o͞o/ sound include *oo* (*moon*), *u* (*ruby*), *ue* (*true*), *ew* (*chew*), and *u_e* (*tune*).

Other spellings of the /o͞o/ sound include: *o* (*do*), *ou* (*soup*), *ui* (*suit*), *o_e* (*move*), *eu* (*maneuver*), *ieu* (*lieu*), *oe* (*canoe*), *ou* (*route*), *ug* (*impugn*), *ooh* (*pooh*), *ough* (*through*), *oup* (*coup*), *ous* (*rendezvous*).

Classroom Spotlight

Two oos

The letters *oo* can stand for two sounds about the same percentage of time. Therefore, I often advise children to try both sounds when confronted with an unfamiliar word that contains this spelling. If the word is in their speaking or listening vocabularies, then the approximation resulting from trying one of the sounds will help the students figure out the word. On the Word Wall, I write the /o͞o/ words on moon shapes and the /o͝o/ words on book shapes as visual reminders of the sound the letters *oo* stand for in each word listed.

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

balloon
bloom
boo
boom
boot
broom
coo
cool
coop
doom
food
fool
gloom
goose
groom
hoof
hoop
hoot
igloo
kangaroo
loom
loop
loose
loot
moo
mood
moon
moose
noon
ooze
pool
proof
roof
room
root
school
scoop
scoot
shampoo
shoo
shoot
sloop
smooth
snoop
soon
spook
spool
spoon
stool
too
tool
toot
tooth
troop
zoo
zoom
blue
clue
due
glue
sue
true
blew
brew
chew
crew
dew
drew
flew
grew
knew
new
news
screw
shrew
stew
threw
crude
flute
June
prune
reduce
rude
rule
tube
tune
duty
July
junior
numeral
solution
truth
tuna

/o͝o/ as in *book*

How formed: The /o͝o/ sound is referred to as the short sound of *oo*. To make the /o͝o/ sound, the back part of the tongue is high in the mouth. The lips are rounded and the facial muscles are lax.

Spellings: The most common spellings of the /o͝o/ sound include *oo* (*book*) and *u* (*pull*, *put*, *push*).

Other spellings of the /o͝o/ sound include: *oul* (*could*), *o* (*wolf*), *oui* (*bouillon*).

WORDS FOR INSTRUCTION

afoot	good	rook	woof
book	good-bye	rookie	wool
brook	hood	shook	
cook	hoof	soot	
cookie	hook	stood	
crook	look	took	
foot	nook	wood	
football	notebook	wooden	

Try It Out

- Use the word lists to create speed drills or individualized student practice sheets.
- Create phonics games and activities for learning centers using the word lists.
- Connect the word lists to your phonics instruction. Use the word lists for blending practice prior to reading stories, or to create sentences and passages for reading practice.

Creating Lessons for Success

"The question as to whether phonics should, or should not, be taught has been bandied about a good deal for several years."

—Mary Dougherty
from 1923

Many years ago, Flintstones lunch box in hand, I entered a small, rural classroom in a school building I had occasionally passed by and frequently wondered about. The large, brick building was old and run-down, but memories of the brightly illustrated books and seemingly fun activities my older sister brought home piqued my interest. On my first day of grade one, my teacher (Mrs. Wershaw) distributed to each of us eager, neatly dressed six-year-olds a basal reader and introduced us to three characters we would grow to love—Dick, Jane, and Sally. In addition, she gave us a phonics workbook whose plaid cover had the same design as the girls' skirts at the Catholic school in a neighboring town. Mrs. Wershaw's combined approach to teaching us how to read (sight-word and phonics methods) was the key that unlocked the mysteries of print for me. And, even though some argue about the lack of engaging text in these early readers, I was enthralled by the ability to take those strange looking lines and squiggles on the page and turn them into something that made sense. This early success was my motivation!

My strongest memory of the impact of these stories came one Friday afternoon. Mrs. Wershaw had a strict rule that we could not read ahead in our basals. So on Friday when Sally fell headfirst into a clothes hamper, and I couldn't turn the page to discover the outcome, I had a weekend of tremendous anxiety. On Monday I raced into school to see if Sally was okay. She was! It was my first taste of suspense in books, and I was forever hooked.

Repeated readings of familiar stories help children to develop fluency and increase reading rate.

But I wonder how children are being taught to read today. Are teachers using a sight-word method? Are they using a phonics method? Or, as I believe, are they using some combined approach? And what role does phonics play in that instruction? In this chapter I focus on the ways phonics can be taught, provide recommendations for phonics instruction, and give you sample lessons and word lists to help you plan your phonics instruction.

How Phonics Is Taught

When the topic of phonics instruction is raised, I am always reminded of stories I heard, while living in the Appalachian Mountains of West Virginia, about two feuding families—the Hatfields and the McCoys. The two families were so engulfed in their bitter dispute that they had forgotten why they were even fighting. It seems the fight, and declaring a side to support, was more important than dealing with the cause of the disagreement. For a brief period, when Johnson ("Johnse") Hatfield fell in love with Rose Anna McCoy, the common bond between the two groups became apparent. They weren't as different as they had supposed. This romance, however, was eventually stopped so that the battle could rage on. When educators discuss phonics they frequently seem adamant about being either a Hatfield ("phonics will save the world") or a McCoy ("phonics will destroy the world"). Yet it has been my experience that many classroom teachers are neither; rather, they are a mix of the two—a McField, if you like.

Unfortunately, some teachers are forbidden to use phonics materials, and when no one is looking, they sneak them out of the closets and drawers in which they hide. So how is phonics generally taught in classrooms across this country, and what are the best approaches to teaching it?

There are two major approaches to phonics instruction—synthetic and analytic.

The **synthetic approach** is also known as **direct** or **explicit phonics**. This method follows a bottom-up model of learning to read. That is, children begin by learning to recognize letters, then blend words, and finally read connected text. Instruction roughly follows this sequence:

1. The letter names are taught.
2. The sound that each letter stands for is taught and reviewed. Some rules or generalizations might be discussed.
3. The principle of blending sounds to form words is taught.
4. Opportunities to blend unknown words in context are provided.

The following model lesson illustrates how to introduce the /s/ sound using the synthetic approach:

Model: Write the letter *s* on the chalkboard. Explain to children that the letter *s* stands for the /s/ sound, such as the first sound heard in the word *sat*. Write the word *sat* on the chalkboard and have a volunteer circle the letter *s*. Slowly blend the word as you run your finger under each letter. Then ask children for other words that begin with the /s/ sound. List these words on the chalkboard. Have volunteers circle the letter *s* in each word. Continue by providing children with simple words containing the /s/ sound to blend. Make sure these words can be decoded based on the sound-spelling relationships previously taught.

The **analytic approach,** also known as **indirect** or **implicit phonics,** is sometimes referred to as the "discovery method." With this approach, children begin with words and are asked to deduce the sound-spelling relationship that is the focus of the current lesson. Instruction in this method roughly follows this sequence:

1. A list of words with a common phonic element is shown. For example, the words *sat, send,* and *sun* might be written on the chalkboard.
2. Children are asked to examine the words and discover what they have in common, focusing on finding a similar sound.
3. When the common sound is discovered, the spelling that stands for the sound might be discussed.
4. Children are asked to verbalize a generalization about the sound and spelling, such as "The letter *s* stands for the /s/ sound."

The analytic approach gained popularity with teachers who believed that if children discovered these principles for themselves, they'd better internalize them. However, one of the drawbacks of this method is that it relies on a child's ability to orally segment words. It isn't effective for children who can't break off the first sound in a given word, or who don't understand what is meant by the term *sound.* These children lack the phonemic awareness skills they need for the analytic approach to have meaning. And the method has proved least effective with students at risk for reading disorders.

In addition to these two methods, some teachers use the Tactile-Kinesthetic approach. In this method, based on the learning styles research of Carbo (1988) and others, children are asked to examine words using a variety of learning modalities such as visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile. Tactile refers to touch. Tactile learners might be asked to make letters out of clay and trace them with their fingers. Kinesthetic refers to hand or body movements. Kinesthetic learners might be asked to form letters with their bodies, jump when they hear a particular sound, or use letter cards to build words.

Current research supports a combined approach to teaching phonics, with a heavy emphasis on synthetic (explicit) instruction (Anderson et al., 1985; Adams, 1990). Before I share other recommendations for phonics instruction, it will be helpful to take a brief look at how children's decoding abilities develop. This will help to form the big picture, within which you can make instructional decisions.

During the primary grades, most children are at a stage of reading development referred to as the Initial Reading, or Decoding, Stage (Chall, 1983). It is at this stage that children are taught sound-spelling relationships and how to blend sounds to form words. (For more information on reading development stages, see pages 18–19.) Within each stage of reading development, children progress in roughly predictable ways. Several researchers (Biemiller, 1970; Juel, 1991) have looked at how children progress through the Initial Reading Stage. Juel has outlined three stages, or levels of progression, within the Initial Reading Stage. She calls these the Stages of Decoding.

The Stages of Decoding

1. **Selective-cue stage:** Readers learn about print and its purposes. Activities to help children gain this insight include labeling classroom objects, reading aloud Big Books, group writing exercises such as shared and experience writing, and reading patterned/predictable books. To read words, children rely on three possible cues: (1) **random cues**, which include almost any visual clue that will help the child to remember the word. It can be something as abstract as a thumbprint or smudge next to the word (Gough, 1991); (2) **environmental cues**, which include where the word is located on the page; and (3) **distinctive letters,** such as the *y* in *pony* or the two *ll*'s in *yellow*.

2. **Spelling-sound stage:** Readers focus on graphophonic cues to learn sound-spelling relationships and the importance of attending to each letter in a word. They learn how to blend words and make full use of their growing knowledge of sound-spelling relationships. Phonics instruction plays a crucial role at this stage.
3. **Automatic stage:** Readers use both contextual (meaning) and graphophonic (phonics) cues. It's at this point that readers develop fluency (accuracy and speed in decoding). Fluency is critical and comes with "overlearning" (automaticity results, which is an outcome of constant review and repetition using sound-spelling knowledge to blend words in context). This acquired automaticity enables readers to focus on the meaning of increasingly complex passages instead of on the mechanics of reading.

Sound-Spelling Cards should be on constant display.

When you think about these stages, it's important to ask yourself, "What do my children need instructionally in order to progress effectively through each of these stages?" Each stage has instructional implications, and an emphasis on any one stage without consideration of the others can cause problems. Well-designed instruction is the key to moving children through these stages efficiently and effectively. For example, one of the instructional problems I see frequently is the failure to connect the sound-spelling relationships children have been taught and the text they are given to practice using these relationships to decode words. That is, few words in the stories contain the same sound-spelling relationships children have been taught during phonics lessons or are decodable based on the sound-spellings learned. Therefore, when children encounter words in the stories, they have few opportunities to use their growing knowledge of sound-spelling relationships. If this happens, children are likely to undervalue the importance of the phonics they're learning. Why should they pay attention during phonics lessons when they rarely use what they learn? As a result, these children don't gain fluency, are forced to rely on meaning cues such as context and pictures, and lose out on important blending practice. Many researchers have found that most poor readers over-rely on meaning cues. They're likely stuck in an earlier stage of decoding, unable to progress because of flawed instruction (Stanovich, 1980).

Characteristics of Strong Phonics Instruction

Active. Social. Reflective. These three words best express the phonics instruction to strive for in your classroom. Look to design a program that makes children aware of what they're doing, why they're doing it, and how they're progressing. This type of phonics instruction can be described as "metaphonics"—phonics combined with metacognition. As you develop a phonics program, never lose sight of your goal to give children a basic understanding of the alphabetic principle and how to use this insight to read for pleasure and information. "The purpose of phonics instruction is not that children learn to sound out words. The purpose is that they learn to recognize words, quickly and automatically, so that they can turn their attention to comprehension of text" (Stahl, 1992).

You can use the following checklist to evaluate your phonics instruction. It's based on guidelines established by research and practice over the past several decades (Stahl, 1992; Chall, 1996; Vacca, 1995; Beck and McCaslin, 1978).

EVALUATION CHECKLIST

Your Phonics Instruction . . .

- ❑ doesn't last too long. *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (Anderson et al., 1985) recommends that formal phonics instruction be completed by the end of second grade. Note that this refers to basic phonics skills. Students in grades 3 and up will continue to require instruction in multisyllabic words.
- ❑ builds on a foundation of phonemic awareness and knowledge of how language works.
- ❑ is clear, direct, and explicit.
- ❑ contains instruction in blending.
- ❑ is integrated into a total reading program. Reading instruction must include these goals: decoding accuracy and fluency, increased word knowledge, experience with various linguistic structures, knowledge of the world, and experience in thinking about texts. Phonics is one important element.
- ❑ focuses on reading words and connected text, not learning rules.
- ❑ may include invented spelling practice.
- ❑ develops independent word-recognition strategies, focusing attention on the internal structure of words.
- ❑ develops automatic word-recognition skills (fluency) so that students can devote their attention to comprehension.
- ❑ contains repeated opportunities to apply learned sound-spelling relationships to reading and writing.

Warnings

Some phonics instructional programs fail because (Chall, 1996; Beck and McCaslin, 1978):

- ◆ instruction is hit-or-miss, instead of systematic.
- ◆ instruction is too abstract.
- ◆ children are not taught how to blend words.
- ◆ instruction is not connected to actual reading.
- ◆ there is not enough review and application.
- ◆ too many rules and sound-spelling relationships are taught.
- ◆ the pace of instruction is too fast.
- ◆ phonics is taught as the only way to figure out unfamiliar words.
- ◆ too much time is spent on tasks that have little relationship to reading; for example, children are asked to identify pictures of objects whose names contain a target sound, instead of looking at the letter and responding with its corresponding sound (Bateman, 1979).

About Scope and Sequence

One of the most difficult decisions to make when developing any phonics program is the order, or **sequence**, in which the sound-spelling relationships are taught. Educators have considerable debates about this issue. One of the key areas of dissent is the teaching of vowel sounds. Some argue that long-vowel sounds should be taught first since these sounds are easier to discriminate auditorily than short-vowel sounds. In addition, the long vowels "say their names." One drawback to this approach is that there are many long-vowel spellings, and introducing children to such complexities before they have gained key insights into how the "system" works might create serious problems. Others argue that short-vowel sounds and their one key spelling should be taught first because many simple CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words (such as *cat, sun, hit*) can be generated. Many of these words appear in early reading materials (high utility), and the ease with which the "system" can be taught is increased.

I recommend the following regarding sequence:

- **Teach short-vowel sounds before long-vowel sounds.** Efficiency and ease of learning are critical. The simplicity of using short-vowel spellings and CVC words is beneficial to struggling readers.

- **Teach consonants and short vowels in combination so that words can be generated as early as possible.** Phonics is useless if it can't be applied, and what is not applied is not learned. By teaching short vowels and consonants in combination, you can create decodable, connected text so that children can apply their knowledge of learned sound-spelling relationships.

- **Be sure that the majority of the consonants taught early on are continuous consonants**, such as *f, l, m, n, r,* and *s*. Because these consonant sounds can be sustained without distortion, it's easier to model blending.

- **Use a sequence in which the most words can be generated.** For example, many words can be generated using the letter *t*; however, few can be generated using the letter *x*. Therefore, higher-frequency sound-spelling relationships should precede less-frequent ones.

- **Progress from simple to more complex sound-spellings.** For example, consonant sounds should be taught before digraphs (*sh, ch, th, wh, ph, gh, ng*) and blends (*br, cl, st,* and so on). Likewise, short-vowel sound-spellings should be taught before long-vowel sound-spellings, variant vowels, and diphthongs. Here is a suggested sequence:

  - short vowels and consonants in combination
  - digraphs (*ch, sh, th, wh*)
  - blends (*r*-blends, *s*-blends, *l*-blends)
  - final *e* (*a_e, e_e, i_e, o_e, u_e*)
  - long vowels (multiple spellings)
  - variant vowels (*oo, au, aw*) and diphthongs (*ou, ow, oi, oy*)
  - silent letters, inflectional endings (*-ed, -s, -ing*)

Following are the grade 1 phonics skill sequences used in two current basal reading programs known for their strong phonics instruction. Note the similarities. Also note how the sound-spellings taught are highly generative (many words can be formed from them) in the early part of the year.

PROGRAM A

m, a, -ad, l, t, s, o, -ot, -op, h, i, -id, p, -og, f, n, c, b, -ill, w, j, -ab, z, d, r, -op, e, -en, -et, g, x, k, ck, -ap, -ick, u, -un, th, /z/s, -in, y, v, -ut, q, sh, -ob, a-e, -ace, -ake, i_e, o_e, u_e, long e (e, ea, ee), -eat, r-blends, l-blends, s-blends, ch, wh, long a (ai, ay), -ain, /ô/ (all, aw, au), -ed, long o (o, ow), long e (ey, y), long o (oa), /o͝o/, /o͞o/, /ou/ (ou, ow), -ink, -ing, -ank, -unk, long i (igh, y), -ild, -ind

PROGRAM B

m, a, t, h, p, n, c, d, s, i, b, r, f, g, o, x, ar, ck, u, z, l, e, ea, y, w, wh, r-controlled vowels (er, ir, ur), sh, th, ch, tch, k, long a (a, a_e), j, dge, ge, gi, long i (i, i_e), ce, ci, long o (o, o_e), /z/s, v, long u (u, u_e), long e (e, e-e, ea, ee), q, long vowels plus r, long e (y, ie), long a (ai, ay), long i (igh, y, ie), ng, long o (oe, ow, oa), long u (ew, ue), /ou/ (ou, ow), /ô/ (aw, au), /o͝o/ (oo, ue, u_e, u, ew), /o͞o/, kn, /oi/ (oi, oy), wr, ph

Another primary decision is the **scope** of instruction: deciding which sound-spelling relationships are important enough to warrant instruction and which, because of their lower frequency in words, can be learned on an as-needed basis. The chart on page 117 shows the most frequent spellings of the 44 sounds covered in this book. These are the sounds and spellings covered in most basal reading programs.

The percentages provided in parentheses are based on the number of times each sound-spelling appeared in the 17,000 most frequently used words (Hanna et al., 1966). These included multisyllabic words.

In addition to sound-spelling relationships, other aspects of phonics knowledge, such as word analysis and syllabication, must be covered. You'll find a recommended scope of skills for each grade on page 118 (Chall, 1996; Blevins, 1997).

After decisions about scope and sequence are made, my last recommendation is that the instruction be systematic. What do I mean by this? **Systematic instruction** follows a sequence that progresses from easy to more difficult. Systematic instruction includes constant review and repetition of sound-spelling relationships, application to reading and writing, and focus on developing fluency through work with reading rate and decoding accuracy. Just because a program has a scope and sequence doesn't mean it is systematic. The instruction must be cumulative. The cumulative nature of children's growing knowledge of sound-spellings should be reflected in the types of literature they are given to practice using these sound-spellings to decode words. In addition, the instruction should help children understand how words "work." That is, how to use knowledge of sound-spellings to blend the sounds in words. In essence, the system should not only be in the reading program, it should be in the children. The type of instruction you give them should enable them to internalize how the "system" works.

The Most Frequent Spellings of the 44 Sounds of English

	Sound	Common Spellings
1.	/b/	b (97%), bb
2.	/d/	d (98%), dd, ed
3.	/f/	f (78%), ff, ph, lf
4.	/g/	g (88%), gg, gh
5.	/h/	h (98%), wh
6.	/j/	g (66%), j (22%), dg
7.	/k/	c (73%), cc, k (13%), ck, lk, q
8.	/l/	l (91%), ll
9.	/m/	m (94%), mm
10.	/n/	n (97%), nn, kn, gn
11.	/p/	p (96%), pp
12.	/r/	r (97%), rr, wr
13.	/s/	s (73%), c (17%), ss
14.	/t/	t (97%), tt, ed
15.	/v/	v (99.5%), f (of)
16.	/w/	w (92%)
17.	/y/	y (44%), i (55%)
18.	/z/	z (23%), zz, s (64%)
19.	/ch/	ch (55%), t (31%)
20.	/sh/	sh (26%), ti (53%), ssi, s, si, sci
21.	/zh/	si (49%), s (33%), ss, z
22.	/th/	th (100%)
23.	/th/	th (100%)
24.	/hw/	wh (100%)
25.	/ng/	n (41%), ng (59%)
26.	/ā/	a (45%), a_e (35%), ai, ay, ea
27.	/ē/	e (70%), y, ea (10%), ee (10%), ie, e_e, ey, i, ei
28.	/ī/	i_e (37%), i (37%), igh, y (14%), ie, y-e
29.	/ō/	o (73%), o_e (14%), ow, oa, oe
30.	/yōō/	u (69%), u_e (22%), ew, ue
31.	/a/	a (96%)
32.	/e/	e (91%), ea, e_e (15%)
33.	/i/	i (66%), y (23%)
34.	/o/	o (79%)
35.	/u/	u (86%), o, ou
36.	/ə/	a (24%), e (13%), i (22%), o (27%), u
37.	/â/	a (29%), are (23%), air (21%)
38.	/û/	er (40%), ir (13%), ur (26%)
39.	/ä/	a (89%)
40.	/ô/	o, a, au, aw, ough, augh
41.	/oi/	oi (62%), oy (32%)
42.	/ou/	ou (56%), ow (29%)
43.	/ōō/	oo (38%), u (21%), o, ou, u_e, ew, ue
44.	/ŏŏ/	oo (31%), u (54%), ou, o (8%), ould

Scope of Skills

Kindergarten

- concepts of print
- alphabet recognition
- phonemic awareness
- blending (CVC pattern)
- sense of story
- building world knowledge

Grade 1

- phonemic awareness
- blending and word building
- short vowels (*a, e, i, o, u*—CVC pattern)
- consonants
- final *e* (*a_e, e_e, i_e, o_e, u_e*—CVCe pattern)
- long-vowel digraphs (*ai, ay, ea, ee, oa, ow,* etc.)
- consonant clusters (*br, cl, st,* etc.)
- digraphs (*sh, ch, th, wh,* etc.)
- some other vowels such as *oo, ou, ow, oi, oy*
- early structural analysis: verb endings (*-ing, -ed*), plurals, contractions, compound words
- connected text reading
- vocabulary development/world knowledge

Grades 2–3

- grade 1 skills review
- more complex vowel spellings
- more structural analysis (compound words, affixes, etc.)
- multisyllabic words
- syllabication strategies
- connected text reading
- vocabulary development/world knowledge

What Does a Good Phonics Lesson Look Like?

As I've visited classrooms across the country, I've seen a wide range of activities and instructional methods used to teach phonics. Many of these activities and methods have fallen under the umbrella of "explicit" phonics instruction. I've chosen those that are the most effective to help you develop your own guidelines for writing phonics lessons. Here are a few general dos and don'ts of phonics instruction (Groff, 1977; Blevins, 1997).

Phonics Lesson Dos

- **Use a logical sequence.** Begin with phonemic awareness, then teach sound-spelling relationships. Progress to guided blending practice and conclude with reading and writing opportunities.

- **Be explicit in your introduction of sound-spelling relationships.** Some educators fear that explicit phonics instruction detracts from making meaning from text. They point to students' reading errors to support this notion—nonsense errors that reveal a strong focus on sound-spelling knowledge but less attention to meaning. Research suggests that making these nonsense errors is a stage that children will pass through as they become more accurate and faster decoders and learn how to use other cues to figure out unfamiliar words (Biemiller, 1970).

- **Provide frequent, daily lessons.**

- **Keep the lessons relatively brief and fast-paced.**

- **Keep the lessons focused.** Cover only a small segment at a time.

- **Begin lessons with what children know.**

- **Create a classroom environment in which children become active word watchers** or word detectives. Encourage a curiosity about words.

- **Provide a built-in review** of previously taught sound-spellings in each lesson. Use blending exercises, repeated readings, and so on.

- **Adjust the pace or scope of learning according to children's needs.** Don't set absolute deadlines for how much should be covered in a given time.

- **Regroup children according to their needs.**

- **Link phonics instruction to spelling** using dictation and freewriting activities.

- **Make learning public** by creating word walls, making letter charts, and sharing student writing.

- **Provide instruction that is reflective.** Gaskins et al. (1997) use the "Talk-To-Yourself Chart" with children to engage them in thinking about words. Here is a completed chart for the word *high*.

  1. The word is *high*.
  2. Stretch the word. I hear _2_ sounds.
  3. I see _4_ letters because *igh* stands for one sound.
  4. The spelling pattern is *igh*.
  5. This is what I know about the vowel: *It is the long-i sound—/ī/.*
  6. Another word on the Word Wall with the same vowel sound is *light*.

Phonics Lesson Don'ts

- Avoid having children continually wait for turns. Instead, use small groups and every-pupil response cards.
- Avoid instruction that neglects to tell children directly what you want them to perceive and how you want them to respond.
- Avoid immediately correcting children's errors. Provide feedback only after you give children an opportunity to self-monitor and self-correct.
- Avoid inadequately addressing exceptions to the generalizations children are learning.
- Avoid using incorrect language or terminology. EXAMPLES:

1. Instead of saying, "You can hear the *f* sound," say, "You can hear the /f/ sound." *F* is a letter, not a sound.
2. Instead of saying "What sounds do you see at the end of *mint?*" say, "What sounds do you hear at the end of the word *mint?*" You see letters; you hear sounds.
3. Instead of saying, "The letter *t* makes the /t/ sound," say, "The letter *t* stands for or represents the /t/ sound." Letters are inanimate objects, they do not make sounds.
4. Instead of saying, "The blend *st* stands for the /st/ sound," say, "The letters (cluster) *st* stand for the /st/ sounds." Cluster refers to a group of letters; blend refers to a group of sounds.
5. Instead of saying, "The letters *oi* are a diphthong," say, "The vowel pair (digraph) *oi* stands for the /oi/ sound." A diphthong is a sound; a vowel pair or digraph is a group of letters.

Based on the above guidelines, a phonics lesson should contain the following components, many of which I discuss in depth later.

- **Repeated readings.** Begin each lesson by having children reread a passage or brief story to develop fluency and reading rate. Repeated readings increase automaticity and improve comprehension (Samuels, 1988).
- **Phonemic awareness exercises.** Phonics instruction won't make much sense to children who haven't discovered the insight that a word is made up of a series of discrete sounds. For them, provide phonemic awareness training. For children who do have this insight, use oral blending and oral segmentation exercises as warm-up activities to reinforce it. (For additional information on phonemic awareness, refer to pages 35–51.)
- **Explicit introduction of sound/spelling relationship.** Directly state the relationship between the sound and the spelling that is the focus of the lesson. To help children remember the relationship, many programs provide some type of memory device, such as a key picture/word or a story. (See page 122 for guidelines on selecting key pictures/words.) In addition, provide a word familiar to children that contains the lesson's sound-spelling relationship. Use the word in a sentence. Then write the word on the chalkboard. (You'll find sample lessons on pages 135–157.)

In your writing center, provide word lists and prompts that focus on specific phonics skills.

- **Blending opportunities.** Model for children how to blend words using the new sound-spelling and provide lists of decodable words for children to practice blending. (See below for additional information on blending.)

- **Word-building opportunities.** Children need opportunities to play with sounds and spellings. Provide each child with a set of letter cards he or she can use for word building throughout the year. Following each lesson, distribute four to eight cards containing spellings previously taught to each child and allow children time to make as many words as possible. Circulate around the room and help children blend the sound that each spelling stands for to form a word.

- **Controlled text reading opportunities.** Many types of text are necessary in an elementary reading program. One of these is connected text in which a high proportion of the words are decodable based on the sound-spelling relationships previously taught. Provide repeated reading opportunities of this text. This strategy honors what children are learning by providing a direct connection between the skills taught and actual reading (Adams, 1990; Taylor and Nosbush, 1983).

- **Dictation.** In order to make the reading-writing connection, children need guided opportunities to use the sound-spelling relationships in writing. In addition to this structured writing exercise, provide children with freewriting opportunities. (Additional information on dictation is provided in the sample lessons on pages 135–157.)

Classroom Spotlight

A Daily Schedule

In addition to your daily 10–15 minute formal phonics lesson, you can embed sound-spelling relationship instruction in many of the activities you do throughout the day. Here's a sample daily schedule from a second-grade classroom. I've underlined the time periods in which the teacher embedded phonics instruction.

8:45–9:00	Attendance, Calendar, Lunch Count, Daily Oral Language
9:00–10:30	Reading/ Language Arts Block
10:30–10:45	Recess
10:45–11:00	Phonics
11:00–11:15	Spelling and Handwriting
11:15–11:30	Read Aloud Big Book or Trade Book
11:30–12:00	Lunch
12:00–1:00	Math
1:00–2:00	Science/Social Studies
2:00–2:40	Specials (Physical Education, Music, Art)
2:40–3:00	Silent Reading
3:00–3:20	Extra Language Arts, Scholastic News, Daily Wrap-Up

Memory Devices: Choosing the Best

Many reading programs provide key pictures and words for each sound-spelling relationship to help children. Careful selection of the key picture/word is important because some of the most commonly used key pictures/words can cause confusion for children. The vowel sounds are particularly problematic. For example, *egg* is often used for the short-vowel sound /e/. However, many dialects pronounce the *e* in *egg* more like an /ā/ sound than an /e/ sound. Another short-*e* word, *elephant*, is also problematic. Many children perceive the first sound in the word elephant as "l." Other key words are simply too long, and children have difficulty focusing on the target sound. I recommend the following in choosing key pictures/words:

- Use simple, short words.
- For consonants, avoid words that begin with blends (for example, use *fish* instead of *frog*).
- For vowels, choose CVC or CVCe words because it is difficult to find picturable words in which the vowel sound is the first sound.

In addition, Moats (1995) suggests that the following words be avoided

Vowel	Words to Avoid
/a/	ant, bag, air
/e/	egg, elephant
/i/	igloo, Indian, ink
/o/	on, off
/u/	umbrella, uncle

See the "Learning About Sounds and Letters" section of this book for key words and pictures for each sound.

Some reading programs embed memory devices in an introductory story by associating actions or characters with the target sounds or spellings. An example of one such story (the first and last sections only) used in a basal reading series (*Collections for Young Scholars*, Open Court Publishing, 1995) follows. Note that the sound is a key component of the story. In fact, at the end of the story, children are asked to produce the sound. They are then shown a card with a picture of the story's character (the gopher) and the spellings for the target sound (/g/). This picture card can be prominently displayed in the classroom for easy reference.

sample

Gary's a gopher.
He loves to gulp down food.
/g/ /g/ /g/ /g/ /g/, gulps the gopher.

Gary the Gopher gobbles in the garden
Until everything is gone.
What sound does Gary the Gopher make?
(*Ask children to join in*) /g/ /g/ /g/ /g/ /g/

Blending: Teaching Children How Words Work

Blending is a primary phonics strategy (Resnick and Beck, 1976). It is simply stringing together the sounds that each spelling stands for in a word to say the word. This **phonic blending** (visual blending) is different from oral blending (auditory blending). Oral blending is a phonemic awareness skill and doesn't involve print, whereas phonic blending involves the printed word. Oral blending exercises help children understand how sounds can be blended to form words, and these exercises make nice warm-up activities for phonics instruction.

Model blending daily.

Some children seem to develop the ability to blend sounds in words naturally (Whaley and Kirby, 1980), whereas other children need to be taught this skill explicitly. This instruction is critical to enabling these children to generalize sound-spelling relationships to new words (Golinkoff, 1978). And phonics instruction will be of limited value until a child can blend the component sounds in words. Research has revealed that students whose teachers spend more than the average amounts of instructional time on modeling and reinforcing blending procedures achieve greater than average gains on first- and second-grade reading achievement tests (Rosenshine and Stevens, 1984; Haddock, 1978).

Two blending procedures that have the greatest reading payoff are final blending and successive blending (Resnick and Beck, 1976).

Final blending. Using this strategy, the sound of each spelling is stated and stored. The whole word isn't blended until all the sounds in the word have been identified and pronounced. For example, for the word *sat:*

1. Point to the letter *s* and say /s/.
2. Point to the letter *a* and say /a/.
3. Slowly slide your finger under the letters *sa* and say /sa/ slowly.
4. Then quickly slide your finger under the letters *sa* and say /sa/ quickly.
5. Next, point to the letter *t* and say /t/.
6. Slowly slide your finger under *sat* and say /sat/ slowly.
7. Circle the word with your finger and say, "The word is *sat*."

The major advantage of this procedure is that you can determine where a student is having difficulty as he or she attempts to blend an unfamiliar word. For example, if the student doesn't provide the correct sound for the spelling *s*, you know how to target further instruction. Final blending also helps you determine which students lack the ability to orally string together sounds. For example, if a child correctly identifies /s/ for the letter *s* and /a/ for the letter *a*, but pronounces these two sounds in combination as "suh-aa," the student isn't able to blend the sounds.

Successive blending. Using this strategy, the sounds that each spelling stand for are produced in sequence, without pauses. For example, for the word *sat*:

1. Point to the beginning of the word *sat*.
2. Run your finger under each letter as you extend the sound that each letter stands for. For example, say *ssssaaaat*. Do not pause between sounds. Do not say /s/ (pause) /a/ (pause) /t/. If the first sound is not a continuous consonant sound, quickly blend the first sound with the vowel sound that follows. For example, say *baaaat*.
3. Slowly compress the extended word. Therefore, go from *ssssaaaat* to *ssaat* to *sat*.
4. Circle the word with your finger and say, "The word is *sat*."

Both blending procedures are best introduced in phonics lessons using simple CVC words. These lessons should be the first lessons children are provided. It is the principle of stringing together sounds that is so critical and that students must master. Therefore, teach and model it in the most efficient manner. Some reading programs have children blend only initial consonants onto phonograms (word parts). For example, children might be asked to blend *s* and *at*, *m* and *at*, and *b* and *at*. The phonogram is treated as a unit to be memorized, and little attention is given to the actual sound-spelling relationship between the letter *a* and the /a/ sound, and the letter *t* and the /t/ sound. This type of blending isn't as effective as the final and successive blending procedures.

Controlled Text: What Is It?

The goal of teaching phonics is to develop students' ability to read connected text independently" (Adams, 1990). Classrooms are filled with a variety of books ranging from wordless picture books to chapter books. Three types of text that should be included in an early reading program are:

1. **Decodable (controlled) text:** The vocabulary is controlled based on knowledge of sound-spelling relationships.
2. **Predictable/patterned text:** The vocabulary is predictable based on such factors as repeated text patterns; familiar concepts; match of text with illustrations; rhyme, repetition, and alliteration; cumulative pattern; and familiar story, or sequence. A sample of predictable text follows:

   PAGE 1: I see a black car.

   PAGE 2: I see a black hat.

   PAGE 3: I see a black bird.

   PAGE 4: I see a black bat.

3. **Trade books:** Trade books come in a wide range of genres and formats. To build children's vocabularies and sense of story, read these to children, or have children read them independently. I recommend that you read a nonfiction selection aloud to children on at least two out of every five days in order to increase their vocabularies and world knowledge. This increase yields tremendous payoffs in later years when children use the knowledge as background information to read more sophisticated texts.

Some say that variety is the spice of life. Variety is not only the spice of life, it is the spice of early reading instruction and a necessity because one text type cannot meet all your instructional goals. Select each text you use based on what you want it to accomplish. For example, if you have just completed a phonics lesson and want children to practice using their newly taught phonics skill, decodable text is the appropriate choice. If you want to develop children's awareness of syntax and help them to rely on their semantic knowledge, then predictable text is a better choice. Predictable texts are less useful for practicing phonics skills.

Juel and Roper-Schneider (1985) explain why text selection is so critical:

> The selection of text used very early in first grade may, at least in part, determine the strategies and cues children learn to use, and persist in using, in subsequent word identification. . . . In particular, emphasis on a phonics method seems to make little sense if children are given initial texts to read where the words do not follow regular letter-sound correspondence generalizations. . . . [T]he types of words which appear in beginning reading texts may well exert a more powerful influence in shaping children's word identification strategies than the method of reading instruction.

This is a powerful statement. If we provide children with an award-winning phonics lesson, then give them text to apply the phonics skills that contains few decodable words, our efforts have been in vain. Why? Let's assume you've just taught students that the letter *s* stands for the /s/ sound. It is early in the year and you've taught only a handful of other sound-spelling relationships. If you then give children a story in which there are a lot of words that begin with *s*, such as *sand, sister, sandwich,* and *silly*, yet none of these words are decodable based on the sound-spelling relationships you've previously taught, how will children read these words? Well, they'll use context clues and picture clues—not their phonics knowledge—to try and figure out the words. Over time, because they aren't using their phonics skills, children will undervalue their knowledge of sound-spelling relationships and over-rely on context and pictures. Most poor readers overrely on these types of clues, which quickly become less efficient as the text demands increase and the picture clues decrease (Stanovich, 1989).

Thus, a direct connection between phonics instruction and reading is essential. "Like arithmetic without application, phonics without connected reading amounts to useless mechanics. And like the arithmetic that we never did understand well enough to do the word problems, it is easily forgotten altogether" (Adams, 1990).

Unfortunately, much of the text children are given to read in today's reading programs has little connection to the phonics skills they are learning. This has been an issue for decades (Beck, 1981). One of the reasons publishers have been so hesitant to create this type of text is the great criticism it often receives. Many educators feel that the decodable text of the past was stilted and incomprehensible. And it's true that much of this text bore little resemblance to children's oral language. Therefore, even though children might have been able to decode the words in these stories, they struggled with making sense of the text—assuming that it made sense.

In 1985, the government document *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (Anderson et al.) provided a set of criteria for creating controlled/decodable text. Three mandates required that the text be:

- **Comprehensible.** Vocabulary must be understandable and natural sounding. Words must be derived from children's speaking and listening vocabularies.

- **Instructive.** The majority of the words must be decodable based on the sound-spellings previously taught. A strong connection between instruction and text must exist.

- **Interesting.** Connected text must be engaging enough for students to want to read them again and again. Children need to revisit this text to develop fluency and increase reading rate.

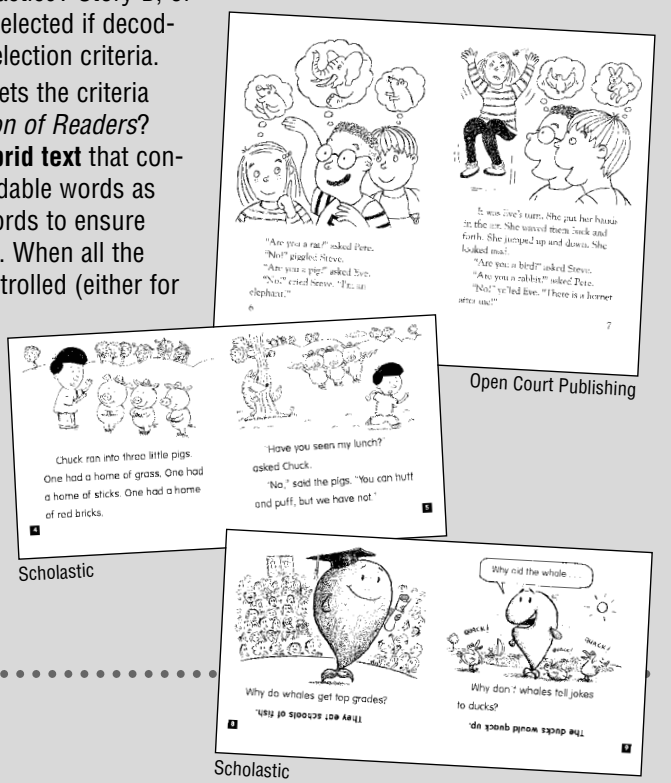
These criteria came with the following warning:

> The important point is that a high proportion of the words in the earliest selections children read should conform to the phonics they have already been taught. Otherwise, they will not have enough opportunity to practice, extend, and refine their knowledge of letter-sound relationships. However, a rigid criterion is a poor idea. Requiring that, say, 90% of the words used in a primer must conform would destroy the flexibility needed to write interesting, meaningful stories.

Another Warning

I want to add to the *Becoming a Nation of Readers* warning. Currently, there is a tendency to measure a text's quality for phonics instruction by the percentage of decodable words it includes. Relying solely on numbers to determine text quality and appropriateness is dangerous. For example, Story A could be written so that on each page the word "run" appears. And on each page, the art would show a different animal running. Let's assume that the word *run* is decodable. Therefore, this text would receive a decodable score of 100%. Story B could be written so that it read something like this: "The cat can run. The dog can run. The rat can run. The man can run." Let's assume that every word in these sentences—except the high-frequency word *the,* which is considered "irregular"—is decodable based on the sound-spellings previously taught. This text would receive a decodable score of 75% because one out of every four words is not decodable. But which story would provide children with the most decoding practice? Story B, of course. Still, Story A might be selected if decodable percentages are the only selection criteria.

So what type of text best meets the criteria established in *Becoming a Nation of Readers*? The answer is a new type of **hybrid text** that contains a large proportion of decodable words as well as some high-frequency words to ensure that the text is natural sounding. When all the words in the text have been controlled (either for sound-spelling pattern or direct teaching of high-frequency words included), children can be held accountable for it because it reflects exactly what they have learned.



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Decodable Text—Does It Really Matter?

In 2000, I conducted a study to examine the effectiveness of decodable text in promoting word identification skills, phonics and spelling abilities, as well as positive reading attitudes in early readers. Previous research on the influence of basal readers had indicated that the types of words that appear in beginning reading texts exert a powerful influence in shaping children's word identification strategies (Juel, Roper-Schneider, 1985). However, there had been no research on the direct effects of decodable texts on early reading growth. In my study, I hypothesized that students receiving reading practice with decodable (controlled) text would achieve greater mastery in early reading skills than students who continued reading with standard classroom trade literature as follow-up reading to phonics instruction. I defined decodable text as text in which the vocabulary is controlled based on knowledge of previously taught sound-spelling relationships. Trade literature refers to books with a variety of genres and formats designed for children to build their vocabularies and read independently. These trade books are not controlled for phonic elements.

Research Questions

My research questions included:

- Does practice with decodable text in conjunction with a systematic phonics program accelerate word identification skills for first-grade students?
- Do first graders who use decodable text demonstrate significantly greater gains in word identification skills than a comparison group of students who use trade literature?

Sample

Two New York City Public Schools participated in my study from September of 1999 to February of 2000. There were two first-grade classrooms selected at each school—one experimental classroom using decodable text and one control classroom using trade literature. A total of 101 children in first grade participated in this research. The selected schools were in the lowest third of the district based on achievement scores. 90% of the students in this district qualify for free or reduced lunch. 62% of the students were classified as below grade level and 80% of the students in the district were identified as Latino. Both schools used the same systematic and explicit phonics instruction covering the identical phonics scope and sequence. The only difference between the experimental and control classrooms was the type of text used for reading practice: the decodable text or the standard trade literature series.

Program Background

The decodable texts used in the study were written to directly address the requirements outlined in *Becoming a Nation of Readers*. In 1985, the government document Becoming a Nation of Readers (Anderson et al., 1985) provided a set of criteria for creating controlled/decodable text. These criteria mandated that controlled text be:

- Comprehensible—vocabulary must be understandable and natural sounding
- Instructive—the majority of the words must be decodable based on the sound-spellings previously taught

- Interesting—connected texts must be engaging enough for students to want to read them again and again.

Students in both groups read a major piece of literature for the week and received phonics lessons follow-up practice five days a week. First graders in the experimental group practiced reading with decodable (controlled) text for their phonics lessons follow-up. The controlled texts were 100% controlled for phonics and sight words (for example, *Sam sat. Sam sat in the sand. Sam sat and sat.*). The major reading text was 80% controlled for phonics and sight words, as well as being specially written and illustrated.

In comparison, the control group's phonics lessons follow-up included patterned and predictable text (for example, *Sam sees a sandwich. Sam sees a snake. Sam sees a sailor. Sam sees a lot!*). For their major reading text the control group used popular first-grade books written by well-known authors. Many of these texts were approximately 35% decodable.

Controlled text percentages were determined through a decodability analysis I did based on a clear scope and sequence of phonics skills. In addition, a review of Marcy Stein's pivotal study "Analyzing Beginning Reading Programs: The Relationship Between Decoding Instruction and Text" (Stein, Johnson, and Gutlohn, 1999) confirmed controlled text percentages for both the experimental and control groups of students.

Professional Development

I conducted an initial training session with experimental group teachers on how to incorporate the decodable text into their comprehensive reading program. Each participating classroom was visited and observed four days per week—two days by me and two days by my research assistant. This method ensured that all teachers stayed on pace, taught the phonics lessons as intended, and read the required books. Detailed anecdotal notes of these sessions were kept. In addition, each classroom was formally observed for two weeks to develop classroom profiles.

Assessment Measures

This study included four assessment measures:

- The Woodcock Reading Mastery Test (WRMT)—Word Identification sub-test: Required children to look at printed words and read them aloud.

- The Blevins Phonics-Phonemic Awareness Quick Assessment: A simple, 5-word spelling test administered at the start of school. Students fall into three categories—below level, on level, and above level. This test quickly identifies students in need of intervention and provided information about students' phonemic awareness and phonics proficiency.

- Decoding Assessment: A phonics mastery assessment developed specifically for the study. It consisted of 20 words, all decodable based on the phonics scope and sequence. Ten of the words presented on the assessment appeared multiple times (four or more) in the reading selections read by both groups of students. The other ten words never appeared in the stories read by both groups, or they appeared only once. Ability to decode 75% of the words or more was necessary to receive a "passing" score.

- Reading Attitudes Survey: An informal interview-style assessment, which evaluates how children feel about learning to read, as well as how they perceive themselves as readers.

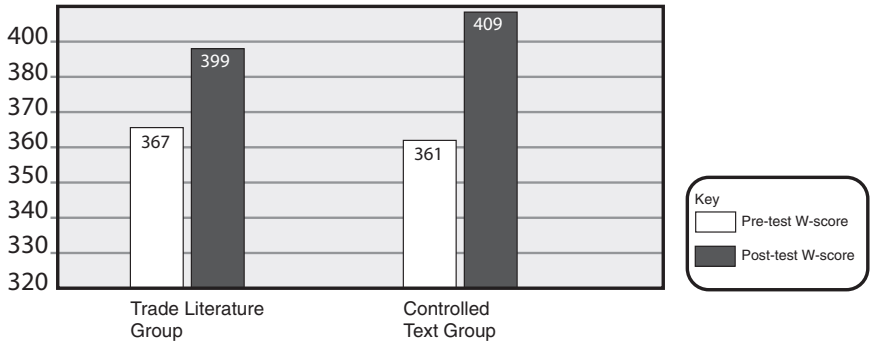
This study included a pre- and posttest design for the WRMT, the Blevins Phonics-Phonemic Awareness Quick Assessment, and the Reading Attitudes Survey. Pretesting was conducted in September, 1999, and posttesting was conducted in February, 2000. The Decoding Assessment was only administered at the end of the study, in February of 2000.

Data Analysis

WRMT—Word Identification Sub-Test Results

Results revealed that students in the experimental group significantly outperformed students in the control group on the WRMT. Analysis determined that W-score differences were statistically significant at F (1.69)=12.954, p<.001. The Effect Size was determined to be ES=.16. See the graph below.

Graph 1: Changes in Pre-test W-scores on the WRMT-Word Identification test



Analysis of Variance reveals that students in the controlled group achieved significantly higher WRMT W-scores than students in the trade literature group.

Furthermore, results revealed that a significantly greater number of students using the decodable text for their reading practice achieved on-level WRMT mastery: 72% decodable text students vs. 54% trade literature students. The controlled text group made a significant leap from 28% on-level mastery at the beginning of the year to 72% mastery in February. In contrast, the trade literature group only increased WRMT on-level mastery from 40% in September to 54% in February. Some students in the controlled text group achieved as much as two years' growth in one half year. The average student growth for this group was one year of growth during one half year of school.

Phonics-Phonemic Awareness Quick Assessment Results

Findings revealed that a significantly greater number of decodable text students vs. trade literature students achieved mastery on the Phonics-Phonemic Awareness Quick Assessment: 92% decodable text students vs. 66% trade literature students. 92% of controlled text students were able to spell all five words correctly.

Decoding (Phonics Mastery) Assessment Results

Results revealed that 87% of the students using the decodable text achieved mastery (75% or higher score) on the Decoding Assessment as compared with only 54% of the students in the trade literature group.

Reading Attitudes Assessment Results

Findings revealed that significantly fewer students reading decodable text vs. trade literature reported a dislike of reading or identified themselves as poor readers. Only 3% of decodable text students reported that they didn't enjoy reading vs. 11% of trade literature students. The percentage of students in the controlled text group who reported a dislike of reading decreased during the study from 14% in September to only 3% in February. I attribute this to their growing sense of confidence and control in their reading. In comparison, the percentage of students in the trade literature group who reported a dislike of reading actually increased during the study from 6% in September to 11% in February.

Classroom Observation Results

Classroom observations revealed that working with controlled/decodable text carried over to other important areas of teaching, such as read-aloud modeling and writing activities. In general, teachers were observed over time to pay more attention to words and specifically how words work.

As further evidence of the power of controlled text, classroom observations also revealed that children in the controlled-text group were more confident in tackling difficult books for their read at-home reading choices. It was observed that children in the experimental group would examine the words in books before selecting a story to take home. Conversely, children in the control group were observed to have difficulty choosing books with appropriate text for their reading level.

Discussion

Overall, students in the controlled-text group were more prepared to transfer their phonics skills to new words presented to them in formal assessments. In addition, these results reinforce what previous research by motivation experts has revealed: reading success breeds reading self-confidence and enjoyment of reading. This study also reinforces that the type of text for beginning readers does matter. Students who use decodable/controlled text in their early reading instruction get off to a stronger start in their reading development.

High-Frequency Words

Since high-frequency words play an important role in the new hybrid controlled texts, it's important to define what they are and to examine how to teach them. Of the approximately 600,000-plus words in English, a relatively small number appear frequently in print. **Only** 13 words (*a, and, for, he, is, in, it, of, that, the, to, was, you*) account for more than 25% of the words in print (Johns, 1980), and 100 words account for approximately 50% (Fry, Fountoukidis, and Polk, 1985; Adams 1990; Carroll, Davies, and Richman, 1971). About 20% of the 250 most frequently used words by children are function words such as *a, the*, and *and.* These 250 words make up 70–75% of all the words children use in their writing (Rinsland, 1945).

Although high-frequency word lists disagree on the rank order of words, and many lists contain different words, there is general agreement on the majority of those that are used most frequently. Many of the word lists are based on textbooks used in grades 1–8 (Harris and

Jacobson, 1972). The Dolch Basic Sight Vocabulary (see page 133) contains 220 words (no nouns). Although this list was generated more than 40 years ago, these words account for a large proportion of the words found in textbooks today. In addition to this list, I've provided a list of the 150 most frequent words (in order of frequency) in printed school English according to the *American Heritage Word Frequency Book* (see page 132).

Knowledge of high-frequency words is necessary for fluent reading. Although many high-frequency words carry little meaning, they affect the flow and coherence of text. Many of these words are considered "irregular" because they stray from the commonly taught sound-spelling relationships. Research shows that readers store these "irregular" words in their lexical memory in the same way as they store so-called regular words (Gough and Walsh, 1991; Treiman and Baron, 1981; Lovett, 1987). That is, readers have to pay attention to each letter and the pattern of letters in a word and associate these with the sounds that they represent (Ehri, 1992). Therefore, instruction should focus attention on each letter and/or letter pattern.

However, children don't learn "irregular" words as easily or quickly as they do "regular" words. Early readers commonly confuse the high-frequency words *of, for,* and *from*; the reversible words *on/no* and *was/saw*; and words with *th* and *w* such as *there, them; what, were; their, then; what, where; this, these; went, will; that, this;* and *when, with* (Cunningham, 1995). Therefore, children need to be taught "irregular" high-frequency words with explicit instruction. I suggest the following sequence:

- State aloud the word and use it in a sentence.
- Write the sentence on the chalkboard. Underline the high-frequency word as you reread the sentence.
- Discuss the word and any special features that it contains. For example, point out known sound-spelling or similarities to other words (for example, *there/where, came/same*).
- Have children spell aloud the word as you point to each letter.
- Then have children write the word in the air.
- Have children spell aloud the word again as they write it on a piece of paper.
- Finally, write the word on a note card and display the card on the wall for future reference. Periodically review the note card and any other high-frequency word cards displayed.

For children having trouble with high-frequency words, use associative learning by associating the target word with a picture. For example, display a picture of a box of cereal. Write underneath the picture the label "box of cereal" and underline the target word *of*. Then have children create their own picture card and label, writing the target word in the label in red or some other distinguishing color. You might also have these children create word banks that they can refer to when reading or writing.

The Most Frequent Words

This chart contains the 150 most frequent words (in order of frequency) in printed school English according to the *American Heritage Word Frequency Book*.

the	could	they	use
of	no	at	may
and	make	be	water
a	than	this	go
to	first	from	good
in	been	I	new
is	long	have	write
you	little	or	our
that	very	by	used
it	after	one	me
he	words	had	man
for	called	not	too
was	just	will	any
on	where	each	day
are	most	about	same
but	know	how	right
what	get	up	look
all	through	out	think
were	back	them	such
when	much	then	here
we	before	she	take
there	also	many	why
can	around	some	things
an	another	so	help
your	came	these	put
which	come	would	years
their	work	other	different
said	three	its	away
if	word	who	again
do	must	now	off
into	because	people	went
has	does	my	old
more	part	made	number
her	even	over	
two	place	did	
like	well	down	
him	as	only	
see	with	way	
time	his	find	

Dolch Basic Sight Vocabulary 220

a	don't	in	pick	those
about	down	into	play	three
after	draw	is	please	to
again	drink	it	pretty	today
all	eat	its	pull	together
always	eight	jump	put	too
am	every	just	ran	try
an	fall	keep	read	two
and	far	kind	red	under
any	fast	know	ride	up
are	find	laugh	right	upon
around	first	let	round	us
as	five	light	run	use
ask	fly	like	said	very
at	for	little	saw	walk
ate	found	live	say	want
away	four	long	see	warm
be	from	look	seven	was
because	full	made	shall	wash
been	funny	make	she	we
before	gave	many	show	well
best	get	may	sing	went
better	give	me	sit	were
big	go	much	six	what
black	goes	must	sleep	when
blue	going	my	small	where
both	good	myself	so	which
bring	got	never	some	white
brown	green	new	soon	who
but	grow	no	start	why
buy	had	not	stop	will
by	has	now	take	wish
call	have	of	tell	with
came	he	off	ten	work
can	help	old	thank	would
carry	her	on	that	write
clean	here	once	the	yellow
cold	him	one	their	yes
come	his	only	them	you
could	hold	open	then	your
cut	hot	or	there	
did	how	our	these	
do	hurt	out	they	
does	I	over	think	
done	if	own	this	

Other Popular Techniques for Developing High-Frequency and Decodable Word Knowledge

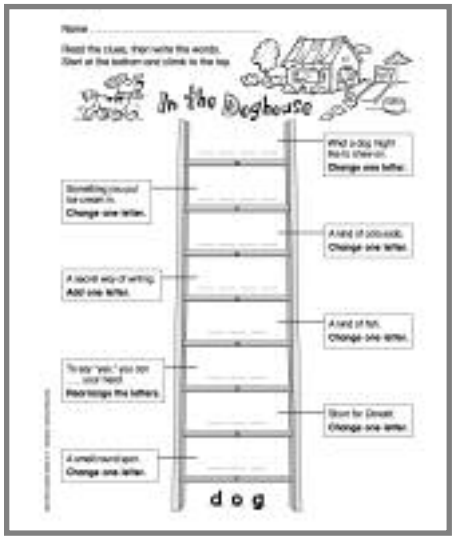
Word Building

This technique, developed by Isabel Beck, asks students to form words using letter cards. The students are assisted as needed throughout the process. Then students are either (a) asked to change one letter in the word and read aloud the word, or (b) provided a new word to spell that requires at least one change in letter. This exercise helps students attend to each letter and sound in a word, fully analyze words, and increase their understanding of basic phonics skills. A sample word building sequence follows:

Write *sad*.
Change one letter in *sad* to form *mad*.
Change one letter in *mad* to form *map*.
Change one letter in *map* to form *mop*.

Word Ladders

This technique, perfected by Timothy Rasinski, asks students to form words based on spelling patterns and meaning. As students move up the ladder rungs, they focus on individual differences in the sound and spelling of each word. This technique is an ideal way to merge phonics, spelling, and vocabulary practice.



Flash Cards With a Purpose

Flash cards have been used for decades, with mixed results. The hope is that students will transfer their knowledge of isolated sight words to reading words in connected text. However, this is not always the case. To accelerate students' sight-word recognition and ensure the transfer to connected text, write the word on one side of an index card. Then work with students to create and write a meaningful phrase or sentence using the word on the other side of the card. Students, therefore, practice reading the words in isolation and in context.

Sample Lessons

The following sample lessons are set up as templates for you to use when writing your phonics lessons. They follow a simple five-step procedure:

Step 1: repeated reading and warm-up

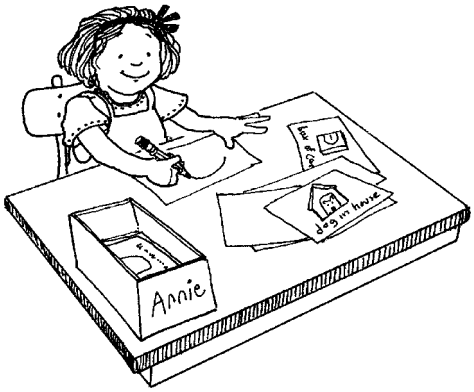
Step 2: explicit instruction of sound-spelling relationship

Step 3: blending and word-building exercises

Step 4: reading connected text

Step 5: dictation and writing

Some components of the lessons, such as the warm-up exercises and connected-text reading, will be determined by the materials you have available.



High-frequency word cards can be used as individual flash cards, or placed on a Word Wall for periodic review.

Consonants

Guidelines:

- Teach only the most common spelling or spellings for each consonant sound.
- Separate the teaching of visually confusing letters (b/d) or auditorially confusing sounds (/g/, /k/).
- Use simple CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words in the lessons before teaching words with consonant clusters, consonant digraphs, or multisyllabic words. (Word lists for instruction can be found on pages 70–92.)
- Begin instruction with continuous consonants (*f, l, m, n, r, s, v, z*), those whose sounds can be sustained without distortion. This makes it easier to model blending.

The following lists the rank order of consonants based on their utility in terms of word frequency and ease of teaching blending (Groff, 1972; Dolby and Resnikoff, 1963; Hanna et al., 1966; Blevins, 1997).

1. s	**6.** b	**11.** w	**16.** k	**21.** q
2. t	**7.** l	**12.** n	**17.** v	
3. m	**8.** c	**13.** d	**18.** z	
4. f	**9.** h	**14.** g	**19.** x	
5. r	**10.** p	**15.** j	**20.** y	

SAMPLE LESSON

Consonants

Phonic Principle: The letter *s* stands for the /s/ sound.

Step 1: Reread Begin by having children reread a story or passage containing previously taught sound-spelling relationships. Then provide phonemic awareness exercises (such as oral blending) for children needing this support.

Step 2: Introduce Sound-Spelling Explain to children that the letter *s* stands for the /s/ sound as in the word *sock*. Write the word *sock* on the chalkboard as you display a picture of a sock. Make sure the picture is labeled. Then blend the word *sock* aloud as you run your finger under each letter. Have a volunteer underline the letter *s*. Point to the letter s and ask students to state the sound that the letter stands for. Continue by having children generate a list of words containing the /s/ sound. List these words on the chalkboard.

Step 3: Blend Words Write the following words and sentences on the chalkboard. Note that all the words are decodable based on the sound-spelling relationships previously taught. The first line focuses on words with the new sound-spelling. The second line reviews previously taught sound-spellings. The sentences contain some high-frequency words previously taught.

- sat sad sock
- mad mat rock
- Sam is sad.
- I sat on the rock.

Now distribute the following letter-card set to each child: *a, o, i, s, t, m*. Have children build as many words as possible. Ask them to write the words on a sheet of paper. Circulate around the room and model blending when necessary.

Step 4: Apply to Text Provide students with connected reading practice. Choose a book in which many of the words are decodable based on the sound-spelling relationships previously taught.

Step 5: Dictate and Write Dictate the following words and sentence. Have the children write the words and sentence on a sheet of paper. For students who're having difficulty segmenting the sounds in each word, extend the word. You might wish to clap on each sound to provide another clue. Then write the words and sentence on the chalkboard. Have the children self-correct their papers. Do not grade this dictation practice. It's designed to help children segment words and associate sounds with spellings.

- sat sock
- I am sad.

Provide a freewriting opportunity. For example, have children select an object's name that begins with the /s/ sound. Then have them write a sentence about that object. Or have children generate a list of words that begin with the letter *s*. Record the words on chart paper. Then use the words to create a class story. Begin with a title, such as "The Silly Snake."

Many series of decodable books featuring words with consonants, consonant digraphs, consonant clusters, and silent letters have been published in recent years. I recommend those books produced by Scholastic Inc. (Scholastic Phonics Readers and Scholastic Phonics Chapter Books), Open Court Publishing (Step-by-Step Stories and Phonics Minibooks), and Red Brick Learning (Nonfiction Phonics series). In addition to these high-quality series, decodable books have been produced by Teacher Created Materials, Inc. and many other publishers.

Consonant Digraphs

Guidelines:

- Consonant digraphs are two consonants that appear together in a word and stand for one sound. The consonant digraphs are *sh*, *ch*, *th*, *wh*, *ph*, *gh*, and *ng*.
- Teach the consonant digraphs after the children have learned the single consonants. Help your students become aware of these unique letter pairs by challenging them to be on the lookout for the digraphs in words.

SAMPLE LESSON

Consonant Digraphs

Phonic Principle: The digraph *sh* stands for the /sh/ sound.

Step 1: Reread Begin the lesson by having children reread a story or passage containing previously taught sound-spelling relationships. Then provide phonemic awareness exercises (such as oral blending) for children needing this support.

Step 2: Introduce Sound-Spelling Explain to children that when we see the letters *s* and *h* together in words, they often stand for a new sound. Point out that the letters *sh* stand for the /sh/ sound as in the words *ship* and *dish*. Write the words *ship* and *dish* on the chalkboard as you display a picture of each. Make sure the pictures are labeled. Then blend each word aloud as you run your finger under each letter. Have a volunteer underline the letters *sh*. Point to the letters *sh* and ask students to chorally state the sound that the letters stand for. Continue by having children generate a list of words containing the /sh/ sound in the initial and final position. List these words on the chalkboard in separate columns.

Step 3: Blend Words Write the following words and sentences on the chalkboard. Note that all the words are decodable based on the sound-spelling relationships previously taught. The first line focuses on words with the /sh/ sound in the initial position. The contrast provided focuses children's attention on the importance of each letter in a word. The second line focuses on words with the /sh/ sound in the final position. The sentences contain some high-frequency words previously taught.

- sack shack hop shop
- dish fish mash rush
- The ship is big.
- I wish I had a red dish.

Next distribute the following letter-card set to each child: *a*, *i*, *o*, *sh*, *m*, *f*, *w*, *p*. Have children build as many words as possible. Ask them to write the words on a sheet of paper. Circulate around the room and model blending when necessary.

Step 4: Apply to Text Provide students with connected reading practice. Choose a book in which many of the words are decodable based on the sound-spelling relationships previously taught.

Step 5: Dictate and Write Have children write the following words and sentence on a sheet of paper as you dictate them. For students who are having difficulty segmenting the sounds in each word, extend the word. You might want to clap on each sound to provide another clue. Then write the words and sentence on the chalkboard. Have children self-correct their papers. Don't grade this dictation practice. It is designed to help children segment words and associate sounds with spellings.

- shot sack fish
- We like to shop.

Provide freewriting opportunities. You might have them write a group story, or you might display a picture of an object whose name contains the target sound (such as a *fish*) and have children write about it.

Being in Touch With Families

Communicate with parents frequently and openly. Let them know the skills you are teaching and send home books and activities for them to enjoy with their children. Keep in mind the following guidelines for communication with parents (Shalaway, 1989):

- Recognize that schools and homes have shared goals.
- Respect parents and communicate that respect.
- Acknowledge the changes in the American family. Use the word *families* instead of *parents.* Many children today do not live with both parents; some don't live with either parent.
- Understand the different types of school-family communication and the advantages and limitations of each. Decide which type is best to accomplish your goal (newsletter, phone call, activity, family booklet, etc.).
- Tailor communications to your audience.
- Be sure to check written material for spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Nothing is as upsetting to families as errors in materials you create. It decays trust in your abilities.
- Get expert help if you need it. If you are facing a specific issue in your classroom, consult experts at the district level or at a local college or university.
- Communication is a two-way street. Invite responses when communicating with families. Provide opportunities for families to get involved. I always leave a response space on my family newsletters for children to return to me.

Consonant Clusters

Guidelines:

- Consonant clusters are two consonants that appear together in a word, with each retaining its sound when blended. The sounds that each cluster stands for is called a blend. Therefore, the term *cluster* refers to the written form and the term *blend* refers to the spoken form.
- The clusters are highly reliable; that is, when we see these letter combination in words they almost always stand for the blended sounds of each consonant. The one major exception is *sc*. It can stand for the /sk/ sounds as in *scare* or the *c* can be silent as in *science*. In addition, the consonant cluster *ck* stands for one sound, the /k/ sound.
- There are three major categories of consonant clusters—*r*-blends (*br, cr, dr, fr, gr, pr, tr*), *s*-blends (*sc, sk, sl, sm, sn, sp, st, sw*), and *l*-blends (*bl, cl, fl, gl, pl*). In addition, a few other consonant clusters, such as *tw* and *qu*, can be formed. There are also three-letter consonant clusters such as *str, spr, thr, chr, phr,* and *shr*. The clusters *thr, chr, phr,* and *shr* are made up of a digraph and a consonant. The cluster *ngth* as in *strength* is made up of two digraphs—*ng* and *th*.
- Teach the consonant clusters after children have learned the single consonant sound-spellings.

Sometimes I pair students for the rereading portion of the lesson. In addition, I often have students read to children in lower grades. Many struggling readers enjoy this because it provides them with an opportunity to be the "expert."

SAMPLE LESSON

Consonant Clusters

Phonic Principle: *s*-blends

Step 1: Reread Begin the lesson by having children reread a story or passage containing previously taught sound-spelling relationships. Then provide phonemic awareness exercises (such as oral blending) for children needing this support.

Step 2: Introduce Sound-Spelling Write the words *snake*, *stone*, and *spot* on the chalkboard. Underline the letters *sn*, *st*, and *sp* in each word. Explain to children that these letters stand for the /sn/, /st/, and /sp/ sounds, respectively. Point out that often when *s* and another consonant appear together in a word, the sounds that both letters stand for are blended together. Blend each word aloud as you run your finger under each letter. Have a volunteer underline the letters *sn*, *st*, and *sp*. Point to each of these clusters and ask students to chorally state the sounds that the letters stand for. Continue by having children generate a list of words containing these sounds. List these words on the chalkboard.

Step 3: Blend Words Write the following words and sentences on the chalkboard. Note that all the words are decodable based on the sound-spelling relationships previously taught. The first line contains contrasts to focus children's attention on the importance of each letter in a word. The sentences contain some high-frequency words previously taught.

- sell spell sack stack
- sneak speak stop spot
- Will you spell it?
- I need a stamp.

Next distribute the following letter-card set to each child: *a*, *o*, *e*, *s*, *m*, *p*, *t*, *sh*. Have children build as many words as possible. Ask them to write the words on a sheet of paper. Circulate around the room and model blending when necessary.

Step 4: Apply to Text Provide students with connected reading practice. Choose a book in which many of the words are decodable based on the sound-spelling relationships previously taught.

Step 5: Dictate and Write Have children write the following words and sentence on a sheet of paper as you dictate them. For students having difficulty segmenting the sounds in each word, extend the word. You might want to clap on each sound to provide another clue. Then write the words and sentence on the chalkboard. Have children self-correct their papers. Do not grade this dictation practice. It's designed to help children segment words and associate sounds with spellings.

- snack top stop
- I can smell the cake.

Provide freewriting opportunities. For example, have children write a different ending for the story they just read.

r-blends

br		**cr**	**dr**	**fr**	**gr**	
brace	broil	crab	drab	frail	grab	grill
Brad	broke	crack	draft	frame	grace	grim
braid	bronco	cradle	drag	frank	grade	grime
brain	bronze	craft	dragon	freak	graft	grin
braise	brood	crane	drain	freckles	grain	grind
brake	brook	crash	drake	free	gram	grip
bran	broom	crawl	drank	freeze	grand	grit
branch	broth	crayon	drape	freight	grandfather	groan
brand	brother	crazy	draw	fresh	grandmother	groceries
brass	brought	creek	dread	Friday	grant	groom
brat	brown	creep	dream	friend	grape	grouch
brave	browse	crib	dress	fright	grapes	ground
brawl	bruise	cricket	drew	frill	graph	group
bray	brush	cried	drift	fringe	grasp	grow
bread		croak	drill	frizz	grass	growl
break		crook	drink	frog	grasshopper	grown
breath		crop	drip	from	grate	grub
breathe		cross	drive	front	grave	grudge
breeze		crow	droop	frost	gravity	gruff
brew		crowd	drop	frozen	gravy	grump
brick		crown	drove	fruit	gray	
bride		crumb	drug	fry	graze	
bridge		crunch	drum	frying	grease	
bright		crust	dry		great	
brim		cry			greed	
bring					green	
brisk					greet	
broad					grew	
					grid	

pr				**tr**		
practice	pretzel	problem	protect	trace	tree	trough
praise	price	prod	proud	track	trek	trout
prance	pride	produce	prove	trade	tribe	truck
pray	priest	product	prowl	trail	trick	true
prayer	prince	professor	prune	train	trim	truly
precious	princess	program	pry	tramp	trip	trumpet
prepare	principal	project		trap	troll	trunk
present	print	promise		trash	tromp	trust
president	prison	pronoun		tray	troop	truth
press	prisoner	pronounce		tread	trot	try
pretty	prize	proof		treat	trouble	
	probably	prop				
	probe	propeller				

l-blends

bl		**cl**			**fl**	
blab	blink	clack	clerk	clothes	flag	flint
black	blip	clad	click	clothing	flake	flip
blackboard	blizzard	claim	cliff	cloud	flame	float
blade	blob	clam	climate	clove	flap	flock
blame	block	clamp	climb	clown	flare	flood
blank	blonde	clan	cling	club	flash	floor
blanket	blood	clang	clink	cluck	flashlight	flop
blast	bloom	clap	clip	clue	flat	floss
blaze	blossom	clash	cloak	clump	flaw	flour
bleach	blot	clasp	clock	clutch	flea	flow
bleat	blouse	class	clod		fleck	flower
bleed	blow	claw	clog		fleet	flu
bleep	blue	clay	clomp		flesh	fluff
blend	bluff	clean	close		flew	fluid
bless	blunt	clear	closet		flex	fluke
blew	blush	cleat	cloth		flick	flunk
blind					flight	flush
					fling	flute
						fly

gl		**pl**		**sl**		
glad	gloom	place	pleasant	slab	slept	slope
glance	gloss	plaid	please	slack	slice	slot
glare	glove	plain	pleat	slam	slick	slow
glass	glow	plan	pledge	slant	slid	slowly
gleam	glue	plane	plenty	slap	slide	slug
glee		planet	plink	slate	slight	slump
glide		plank	plod	sled	slim	slush
glitch		plant	plot	sleek	slime	sly
gloat		plate	plow	sleep	sling	
glob		play	plug	sleepy	slip	
globe		player	plum	sleet	slipper	
		plead	plump	sleeve	slit	

Other Consonant Clusters

tw		**thr**	**qu**		
tweed	twin	thrash	quack	quartz	quill
tweet	twine	thread	quail	queen	quilt
tweezers	twinkle	thrill	quake	quench	quirk
twelve	twirl	throat	quality	quest	quit
twenty	twist	throb	quarrel	question	quiz
twice		throne	quart	quick	quote
twig		through	quarter	quiet	
		thrush			

s-blends

sc		**sk**	**sm**	**sn**		**sp**	
scab	scoot	skate	smack	snack	snore	space	spill
scald	scooter	sketch	small	snag	snout	span	spin
scale	scope	ski	smart	snail	snow	spare	spine
scallion	scorch	skid	smash	snake	snug	spark	spire
scallop	score	skill	smear	snap	snuggle	spat	spirit
scalp	scour	skillet	smell	snare		speak	spoil
scamp	scout	skin	smile	snarl		spear	spoke
scan	scuba	skip	smock	snatch		speck	sponge
scar	scuff	skirt	smog	sneak		speech	spoon
scarce		skit	smoke	sneeze		speed	sport
scare		skull	smooth	sniff		spell	spot
scarf		skunk	smudge	snip		spend	spout
scat		sky		snob		spent	spur
scold				snoop		spike	spy
scoop							

st				**sw**		**scr**	**squ**
stable	stare	step	stone	swallow	swift	scram	square
stack	starfish	stereo	stool	swam	swim	scramble	squash
stadium	start	stew	stoop	swamp	swine	scrap	squat
staff	starve	stick	stop	swan	swing	scrape	squeak
stage	state	sticky	store	swap	swish	scraper	squeal
stain	station	stiff	storm	swarm	switch	scratch	squeeze
stair	stationery	still	story	swat	swollen	scrawl	squid
stake	statue	stilt	stove	swatch	swoop	scream	squint
stale	stay	sting	style	sway		screech	squirm
stalk	steady	stingy		sweat		screen	squirrel
stall	steak	stink		sweater		screw	squirt
stamp	steal	stir		sweep		scribble	squish
stand	steam	stirrup		sweet		script	
staple	steel	stitch		sweeten		scroll	
stapler	steep	stock		swell		scrub	
star	steer	stocking		swept			
starch	stem	stomach		swerve			

str				**spr**		**spl**
straight	strawberry	strict	strong	sprain	sprinkle	splash
strain	stray	stride	stronger	sprang	sprinkler	splendid
strainer	streak	strike	struck	sprawl	sprint	splint
strand	stream	string	struggle	spray	sprout	splinter
strange	street	strip	strum	spread	spruce	split
stranger	strength	stripe		sprig		
strap	stretch	stroke		spring		
straw	stretcher	stroll		springboard		

Ending Consonant Clusters

ct	**ft**		**ld**		**lp**	**lt**	
act	cleft	raft	bald	mild	help	belt	jolt
duct	craft	rift	bold	mold	gulp	bolt	kilt
fact	draft	shaft	build	old	scalp	built	knelt
pact	drift	shift	child	scald	yelp	colt	melt
	gift	sift	cold	scold		dealt	pelt
	graft	soft	field	shield		fault	quilt
	left	swift	fold	sold		felt	salt
	lift	thrift	gold	told		guilt	tilt
	loft	tuft	held	weld		halt	welt
			hold	wild			

mp		**nd**		**nk**		**nt**	
blimp	pump	and	hound	bank	sank	ant	scent
bump	ramp	band	kind	blank	sink	bent	sent
camp	romp	bend	land	blink	skunk	bunt	spent
champ	shrimp	bind	lend	bunk	stink	cent	splint
chimp	skimp	bland	mend	chunk	stunk	dent	tent
chomp	slump	blend	mind	drank	sunk	faint	tint
clamp	stamp	blind	mound	drink	tank	front	want
clump	stomp	blond	pound	dunk	think	grant	went
cramp	stump	bond	round	frank	trunk	hint	
crimp	swamp	bound	sand	honk	wink	hunt	
damp	thump	brand	send	hunk		lent	
dump	tramp	end	sound	ink		lint	
grump	tromp	find	spend	junk		meant	
hump	trump	found	stand	link		mint	
jump	trumpet	friend	strand	mink		paint	
lamp		grand	tend	pink		pint	
limp		grind	trend	plank		plant	
lump		ground	wand	plunk		print	
plump		hand	wind	rank		rent	
		hind	wound	rink		runt	

pt	**rd**	**rk**	**sk**	**sp**	**st**		
apt	bird	ark	ask	crisp	best	ghost	past
kept	board	bark	desk	gasp	blast	gust	pest
slept	cord	clerk	disk	wasp	boast	jest	post
wept	guard	dark	dusk		bust	just	quest
	hard	fork	mask		cast	last	rest
	heard	hark	risk		chest	least	roast
	herd	jerk	task		coast	list	rust
	lard	lark			cost	lost	test
	sword	mark			crust	mast	toast
	toward	park			dust	mist	trust
	word	perk			east	most	twist
	yard	stork			fast	must	west
		work			fist	nest	wrist

Silent Letters

Most of the letters in our alphabet are silent in words at one time or another. Frequently consonants are silent because the pronunciation of a particular word has changed over time, but the spelling has remained constant. Silent consonants also occur in words borrowed from other languages. Our inner speech seems to ignore silent letters when we read.

Guidelines:

The following list, based on Hanna's 17,000 most frequent words (Burmeister, 1971), shows the 15 most frequent silent-letter spellings and their corresponding sounds.

1. tch /ch/ (hatch)
2. dg /j/ (lodge)
3. wr /r/ (write)
4. kn /n/ (know)
5. gn /n/ (gnaw, sign)
6. mb /m/ (lamb)
7. ps /s/ (psychology)
8. lk /k/ (talk)
9. lm /m/ (calm)
10. rh /r/ (rhino)
11. dj /j/ (adjust)
12. wh /h/ (who)
13. bt /t/ (debt)
14. gh /g/ (ghost)
15. mn /m/ (hymn)

This chart below shows the conditions under which each letter is silent and provides some sample words for instruction.

Letter(s)	Condition	Sample Words
b	• silent before *t* and after *m* unless this letter and the *b* are in separate syllables (EXAMPLE: timber)	debt, doubt, subtle, lamb, climb, comb, crumb, dumb, tomb, thumb, plumb, numb
c	• silent in the cluster *ck* • silent occasionally after *s* • silent in a few other words	back, pick, sack, lick science, scene Connecticut, indict
ch	• rarely silent	yacht
d	• rarely silent (sometimes a result of lazy pronunciation)	Wednesday, grandmother, handkerchief
g	• silent when it comes before *n* or *m*	gnat, gnaw, gnarl, gnu, sign, design, assign, resign, phlegm
h	• silent when it follows *r* or *k* • sometimes silent when it follows *x* • often silent between a consonant and the unstressed vowel • silent after vowels at the end of a word • sometimes silent at the beginning of a word	rhyme, khaki exhaust shepherd oh, hurrah honor, hour, heir
k	• silent before *n* at the beginning of a word or syllable	know, knife, knee, knob, kneel, knew, knapsack, knack, knight, knit, knock, knot, knowledge
l	• silent usually before *f, k, m,* or *v* • silent in the *-ould* spelling pattern	calf, talk, calm, salve would, could, should
m	• rarely silent	mnemonic
n	• silent after *m* (considered morphophonemic; the *n* is maintained in all derivatives of the word and pronounced in many other forms of the word such as *hymnal*)	autumn, hymn
p	• silent before *n, s,* or *t*	pneumonia, psychology, ptomaine
s	• silent sometimes when it follows *i* • silent in the word *Arkansas*	island, debris, aisle
t	• silent in words with *-sten* and *-stle* • silent in words borrowed from French that end in *-et, -ot,* or *-ut*	fasten, listen, castle, whistle bouquet, ballet, depot, debut
th	• rarely silent	asthma, isthmus
u	• silent sometimes when it follows *g* or *q*	guard, opaque
w	• silent before *r* at the beginning of a word or syllable • silent in words beginning with *who-* • silent in a few other words	wrong, write who, whose, whole two, answer, sword
x	• rarely silent	Sioux
z	• rarely silent	rendezvous

SAMPLE LESSON

Silent Letters

Phonic Principle: silent letter spelling *wr*

Step 1: Reread Begin the lesson by having children reread a story or passage containing previously taught sound-spelling relationships. Then provide phonemic awareness exercises (such as oral blending) for children needing this support.

Step 2: Introduce Sound-Spelling Explain to children that sometimes a letter stands for no sound in a word; it is silent. Point out that when the letters *wr* appear together at the beginning of a word such as *write*, the letter *w* is silent. Write the word *write* on the chalkboard. Then blend the word *write* aloud as you run your finger under each letter. Have a volunteer underline the letters *wr*. Point to the letters *wr* and ask students to chorally state the sound that the letters stand for. Continue by having children suggest words that begin with *wr*. Encourage them to become "word explorers" and search through classroom books for words. List these words on the chalkboard.

Step 3: Blend Words Write the following words and sentences on the chalkboard. Note that all the words are decodable based on the sound-spelling relationships previously taught. The sentences contain some high-frequency words previously taught.

- rap wrap wing wring
- wreck wrong wrist wrinkle
- He will wrap the gift.
- I like to write letters.

Next distribute the following letter-card set to each child: *wr, a, e, i, s, t, p, ck*. Have children build as many words as possible. Ask them to write the words on a sheet of paper. Circulate around the room and model blending when necessary.

Step 4: Apply to Text Provide students with connected reading practice. Choose a book in which many of the words are decodable based on the sound-spelling relationships previously taught.

Step 5: Dictate and Write Have children write the following words and sentence on a sheet of paper as you dictate them. For students having difficulty segmenting the sounds in each word, extend the word. You might want to clap on each sound to provide another clue. Then write the words and sentence on the chalkboard. Have children self-correct their papers. Do not grade this dictation practice. It's designed to help children segment words and associate sounds with spellings.

- write read wreck
- Did you wrap that up?

Provide freewriting opportunities. Have children generate a list of words with the target sound-spelling. List these words on the chalkboard. Then, in small groups, have children create a story using as many of the words as possible.

Short Vowels

Guidelines:

- Teach the short vowels using simple CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words such as *cat*, *sun*, and *big*. Word lists for instruction follow.
- Separate the teaching of the auditorily confusing sounds /e/ and /i/. I suggest this sequence for introducing short vowels: *a*, *i*, *o*, *e*, *u* or *a*, *o*, *i*, *u*, *e*.

CVC Words for Instruction

short *a*		**short *e***	**short *i***	**short *o***	**short *u***
bad	tag	bed	bib	box	bud
bag	tan	bet	big	cob	bug
bat	tap	fed	bit	cot	bun
cab	van	get	did	dot	bus
can	wag	hen	dig	fog	but
cap		jet	dip	fox	cub
cat		led	fin	got	cup
dad		leg	fit	hog	cut
fan		let	hid	hop	dug
fat		men	him	hot	fun
gas		met	hip	job	gum
had		net	hit	jog	hug
ham		pen	kid	log	hut
hat		pet	kit	lot	jug
jam		red	lid	mom	mud
lap		set	lip	mop	mug
mad		ten	lit	not	nut
man		vet	pig	pod	pup
map		web	pin	pop	rub
mat		wet	pit	pot	rug
nap		yes	rib	rod	run
pad		yet	rid	sob	sub
pal			rip	top	sum
pan			sit		sun
pat			six		tub
rag			tip		tug
ram			wig		
ran			win		
rap			zip		
rat					
sad					
sat					

Books Featuring Short Vowels

The following lists are ideal for independent and instructional reading. In addition to these books, I recommend the decodable book series previously recommended (see page 136).

Short *a*

Addie Meets Max by Joan Robins (Harper & Row, 1985)

Alex and the Cat by Helen Griffith (Greenwillow, 1982)

Amanda and April by Bonnie Pryor (Morrow, 1986)

Angus and the Cat by Marjorie Flack (Doubleday, 1931)

A Birthday Basket for Tia by Pat Mora (Macmillan, 1992)

Caps for Sale by Esphyr Slobodkina (Addison-Wesley, 1940)

The Cat in the Hat by Dr. Seuss (Random House, 1957)

The Fat Cat by Jack Kent (Scholastic, 1971)

The Gingerbread Man by Karen Schmidt (Scholastic, 1985)

I Can by Susan Winter (Dorling Kindersley, 1993)

Jack and Jake by Aliki (Greenwillow, 1986)

The Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry, and the Big Hungry Bear by Don Wood (Child's Play, 1990)

Millions of Cats by Wanda Gag (Putnam, 1977)

My Friends by Taro Gomi (Chronicle Books, 1990)

There's an Ant in Anthony by Bernard Most (Morrow, 1980)

Who Took the Farmer's Hat by Joan Nodset (Harper & Row, 1963)

Short *e*

Elephant in a Well by Marie Hall Ets (Viking, 1972)

Emma's Pet by David McPhail (Dutton, 1988)

An Extraordinary Egg by Leo Lionni (Knopf, 1994)

Get Set to Wreck! by Robert Rector Krupp (Macmillan, 1988)

Hester the Jester by Ben Shecter (Harper & Row, 1977)

I Don't Believe in Elves by Jane Thayer (Morrow, 1975)

The Little Red Hen by Paul Galdone (Scholastic, 1973)

Shoes from Grandpa by Mem Fox (Orchard Books, 1992)

Ten Pennies for Candy by Henry Ritchet Wing (Holt, 1963)

Yeck Eck by Evaline Ness (Dutton, 1974)

Short *i*

Bit by Bit by Steve Sanfield (Putnam, 1995)

Call for Mr. Sniff by Thomas P. Lewis (Harper & Row, 1981)

The Doorbell Rang by Pat Hutchins (Greenwillow, 1986)
Fix-it by David McPhail (Dutton, 1984)
Gilberto and the Wind by Marie Hall Ets (Viking, 1966)
Inch by Inch by Leo Lionni (Astor-Honor, 1962)
Is It Dark? Is It Light? by Mary D. Lankford (Knopf, 1991)
My Brother, Will by Joan Robins (Greenwillow, 1986)
Small Pig by Arnold Lobel (Harper & Row, 1969)
This Is . . . by Gloria Patrick (Carolrhoda, 1970)
Titch by Pat Hutchins (Macmillan, 1971)
Two Crazy Pigs by Karen Nagel (Scholastic, 1992)
Whistle for Willie by Ezra Jack Keats (Viking, 1964)
Willy the Wimp by Anthony Browne (Knopf, 1984)

Short *o*

All About You by Catherine Anholt and Laurence Anholt (Viking, 1992)
Animal Tracks by Arthur Dorros (Scholastic, 1991)
Big Frogs, Little Frogs by Patricia Miller and Ira Seligman (Holt, 1963)
Drummer Hoff by Barbara Emberley (Prentice-Hall, 1967)
Flossie & the Fox by Patricia McKissack (Dial, 1986)
Fox in Socks by Dr. Seuss (Random House, 1965)
I Need a Lunch Box by Jeannette Caines (HarperCollins, 1993)
Mogwogs on the March! by Olivier Dunrea (Holiday House, 1985)
Mop Top by Don Freeman (Viking, 1955)
Oscar Otter by Nathaniel Benchley (Harper & Row, 1966)
School Bus by Donald Crews (Morrow, 1993)

Short *u*

Big Gus and Little Gus by Lee Lorenz (Prentice-Hall, 1982)
The Cut-Ups by James Marshall (Viking, 1984)
Donald Says Thumbs Down by Nancy E. Cooney (Putnam, 1987)
Fun/No Fun by James Stevenson (Greenwillow, 1994)
Hunches and Bunches by Dr. Seuss (Random House, 1982)
Scrawny, the Classroom Duck by Susan Clymer (Scholastic, 1991)
Seven Little Ducks by Margaret Friskey (Children's Press, 1940)
Thump and Plunk by Janice May Udry (Harper & Row, 1981)
The Ugly Duckling retold by Lillian Moore (Scholastic, 1988)
Umbrella by Taro Yashima (Viking, 1958)
Where's the Bunny? by Ruth Carroll (Henry Z. Walck, 1950)

SAMPLE LESSON

Short Vowels

Phonic Principle: The letter *a* stands for the /a/ sound.

Step 1: Reread Begin the lesson by having children reread a story or passage containing previously taught sound-spelling relationships. Then provide phonemic awareness exercises (such as oral blending) for children needing this support.

Step 2: Introduce Sound-Spelling Explain to children that the letter *a* stands for the /a/ sound as in the word *cat*. Write the word *cat* on the chalkboard as you display a picture of a cat. Make sure the picture is labeled. Then blend the word *cat* aloud as you run your finger under each letter. Have a volunteer underline the letter *a*. Point to the letter *a* and ask students to chorally state the sound that the letter stands for. Continue by having children generate a list of words containing the /a/ sound. List these words on the chalkboard.

Step 3: Blend Words Write the following words and sentences on the chalkboard. Note that all the words are decodable based on the sound-spelling relationships previously taught. The sentences contain some high-frequency words previously taught.

- at sat mat cat
- am mad lap sad
- Sam is sad.
- The cat sat on my lap.

Next distribute the following letter-card set to each child: *a*, *s*, *t*, *m*, *c*, *d*, *p*. Have children build as many words as possible. Ask them to write the words on a sheet of paper. Circulate around the room and model blending when necessary.

Step 4: Apply to Text Provide students with connected reading practice. Choose a book in which many of the words are decodable based on the sound-spelling relationships previously taught. Lists of books containing short-vowel sounds are available in many basal reading series.

Step 5: Dictate and Write Have children write the following words and sentence on a sheet of paper as you dictate them. For students having difficulty segmenting the sounds in each word, extend the word. You might want to clap on each sound to provide another clue. Then write the words and sentence on the chalkboard. Have children self-correct their papers. Do not grade this dictation practice. It's designed to help children segment words and associate sounds with spellings.

- sat am
- I am sad.

Provide freewriting opportunities. For example, display pictures of objects or animals whose names contain the target short-vowel sound. Have children write a sentence describing each picture.

A Note About Silent *e*

The silent *e* is important in English spelling (Moats, 1995). For example, the silent *e* helps to keep some words from looking like plurals (*please,* not *pleas;* and *house,* not *hous*). Since the letter *v* doesn't appear at the end of words, the silent *e* in words such as *dove, love, shove,* and *above* gives them orthographic regularity. Although this silent *e* doesn't indicate that the preceding *o* stands for the long-*o* sound, it does indicate that the preceding *o* is **not** a short-*o* sound. In essence, the silent *e* helps to create a spelling pattern that is consistent and far from random. The final *e* also indicates when the letter *g* or *c* stands for its "soft" sound *(page, race).*

Long Vowels

Guidelines:

- **Begin instruction with simple, one-syllable words.** Start with CVCe (consonant-vowel-consonant-e) words since this pattern is an extremely useful and unencumbered long-vowel pattern. (Word lists are provided on page 151.) The silent *e* (also known as final *e* or the *e*-marker) acts as a diacritical mark, alerting the reader that the preceding vowel probably stands for a long-vowel sound. There are four basic one-syllable patterns in the English language, including the CVCe pattern (Eldredge, 1995).

  1. The **closed syllable pattern** is the most common. There's one vowel in the syllable, and the syllable ends with a consonant. Most of the words using this pattern contain short-vowel sounds. There are 13 variations: CVCC (*hand*), CVC (*cup*), CCVCC (*fresh*), CCVC (*trip*), CVCCC (*match*), CVCCe (*judge*), CCVCCC (*crutch*), CCVCCe (*grudge*), CCCVCC (*script*), VCC (*add*), VC (*in*), CCCVC (*scrap*), VCCC (*inch*).

  2. The **vowel team (vowel digraph) pattern** is the second most common. There are 12 variations: CVVC (*heat*), CCVVC (*treat*), CVVCC (*reach*), CVV (*pay*), CCVV (*play*), CVVCe (*leave*), CCVVCC (*bleach*), CCVVCe (*freeze*), CCCVVC (*sprain*), VVC (*oat*), VVCC (*each*), CCCVV (*three*).

  3. The **vowel-consonant-silent *e* pattern** is the third most common. There are four variations: CVCe (*race*), CCVCe (*shave*), CCCVCe (*strike*), VCe (*ate*).

  4. The **open syllable pattern** is the fourth most common. There's only one vowel in the syllable, and the syllable ends with the vowel's sound. There are two variations: CCV (*she*), CV (*we*).

- **Use contrasts in instruction** (*rat/rate; hat/hate*) so that children can see how one letter can make all the difference in a word's vowel sound. Below is a list of contrasts for CVC and CVCe words. You can also make contrasts for words with vowel digraphs (*pan/pain, cot/coat, red/read*).

Contrasts

bit/bite	cod/code	dim/dime	fin/fine
grad/grade	hop/hope	man/mane	pal/pale
past/paste	rag/rage	rip/ripe	scrap/scrape
slid/slide	spin/spine	twin/twine	wag/wage
can/cane	cub/cube	fad/fade	glob/globe
hat/hate	kit/kite	mat/mate	pan/pane
pin/pine	rat/rate	rob/robe	shin/shine
slim/slime	strip/stripe	us/use	
cap/cape	cut/cute	fat/fate	
hid/hide	mad/made	not/note	
plan/plane	rid/ride	rod/rode	
slop/slope	tap/tape	van/vane	

VCe Words for Instruction

a_e (long *a*)	ace	cape	flame	haze	page	safe	snake	vane
	age	case	frame	jade	pale	sake	space	vase
	bake	cave	game	lace	pane	sale	spade	wade
	base	chase	gate	lake	paste	same	stage	wage
	blade	crane	gave	lame	pave	save	stake	wake
	blame	crate	gaze	lane	place	scale	stale	wave
	blaze	date	glaze	late	plane	scrape	state	waste
	brace	daze	grace	made	plate	shade	take	whale
	brake	drape	grade	make	quake	shake	tale	
	brave	face	grape	male	race	shame	tame	
	cage	fade	grate	mane	rage	shape	tape	
	cake	fake	grave	mate	rake	shave	taste	
	came	fame	haste	name	rate	skate	trace	
	cane	flake	hate	pace	rave	slate	trade	

EXCEPTIONS: advantage, are, average, breakage, cabbage, climate, courage, delicate, furnace, have, manage, message, palace, passage, private, purchase, senate, separate, surface, village

i_e (long *i*)	bike	drive	lice	nice	ripe	spike	twice	write
	bite	file	life	nine	rise	spine	twine	
	bride	fine	like	pile	shine	stride	vine	
	chime	five	lime	pine	side	strike	while	
	crime	glide	line	pipe	slice	stripe	white	
	dice	hide	live	price	slide	swine	wide	
	dime	hike	mice	pride	slime	tide	wife	
	dine	hive	mile	rice	smile	tile	wipe	
	dive	kite	mine	ride	spice	time	wise	

EXCEPTIONS: active, aggressive, automobile, determine, engine, examine, expressive, favorite, figurine, give, justice, live, machine, magazine, massive, native, notice, office, opposite, police, practice, promise, representative, routine, service

o_e (long *o*)	bone	code	hole	lone	pole	slope	stove	whole
	broke	cone	home	mole	robe	smoke	stroke	woke
	choke	dome	hope	nose	rode	spoke	those	zone
	chose	drove	hose	note	rope	stole	tone	
	close	globe	joke	poke	rose	stone	vote	

EXCEPTIONS: above, become, come, done, glove, gone, improve, lose, love, lovely, move, movement, none, purpose, remove, shove, some, something, welcome, whose

u_e (long *u*)	cube	cute	fuse	mule	use

EXCEPTIONS: assure, conclude, crude, duke, dune, flute, include, June, measure, pleasure, prune, rude, rule, sure, treasure, tube, tune

- **In addition to silent *e*, many vowel spellings are formed by vowel digraphs,** also known as vowel pairs or vowel teams. These include *ea, ee, oa, ai, ay,* and others. The following chart shows the predictability of various vowel digraphs, many of which are long-vowel digraphs (Burmeister, 1968).

Vowel Digraph	Predictability
ai	/ā/ (pain) 74%, air (chair) 15%
ay	/ā/ (say) 96%
ea	/ē/ (seat) 51%, /e/ (head) 26%
ee	/ē/ (feet) 86%, eer (steer) 12%
ey	/ē/ (key) 58%, /ā/ (convey) 20%, /ī/ (geyser) 12%
oa	/ō/ (boat) 94%
ow	/ō/ (snow) 50%, /ou/ (how) 48%
oi	/oi/ (soil) 98%
oy	/oi/ (boy) 98%
ou	/ə/ (trouble) 41%, /ou/ (house) 35%
au	/ô/ (haul) 94%
aw	/ô/ (hawk) 100%
oo	/o͞o/ (food) 59%, /o͝o/ (foot) 36%
ei	/ā/ (reign) 40%, /ē/ (deceit) 26%, /i/ (foreign) 13%, /ī/ (seismic) 11%
ie	/ē/ (chief) 51%, /ī/ (lie) 17%, /ə/ (patient) 15%
ew	/yo͞o/ (few) 95%
ui	/o͞o/ (fruit) 53%, /i/ (build) 47%

Books Featuring Long Vowels

Long *a*

Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain by Verna Aardema (Dial, 1981)
The Lace Snail by Betsy Byars (Viking, 1975)
Moira's Birthday by Robert Munsch (Firefly, 1987)
Owl at Home by Arnold Lobel (HarperCollins, 1975)
The Pain and the Great One by Judy Blume (Bradbury, 1974)
The Paper Crane by Molly Bang (Greenwillow, 1985)
Sheila Rae, the Brave by Kevin Henkes (Greenwillow, 1987)
Taste the Raindrops by Anna G. Hines (Greenwillow, 1983)

Long *e*

Arthur's Funny Money by Lillian Hoban (HarperCollins, 1981)
Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? by Bill Martin, Jr. (Holt, 1967)
Clifford's Puppy Days by Norman Bridwell (Scholastic, 1989)
Have You Seen Trees? by Joanne Oppenheim (Young Scott Books, 1967)
Jenny's Journey by Sheila White Samton (Puffin Books, 1993)

Little Bo Peep by Paul Galdone (Clarion/Ticknor & Fields, 1986)
Miss Nelson Has a Field Day by Harry Allard (Houghton Mifflin, 1988)
Never Tease a Weasel by Jean Soule (Parents Magazine Press, 1964)
Pierre: A Cautionary Tale by Maurice Sendak (HarperCollins, 1991)
The Screaming Mean Machine by Joy Cowley (Scholastic, 1994)
"Stand Back," Said the Elephant, "I'm Going to Sneeze!" by Patricia Thomas (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1971)
Ten Sleepy Sheep by Holly Keller (Greenwillow, 1983)
We Scream for Ice Cream by Bernice Chardiet and Grace Maccarone (Scholastic, 1992)

Long *i*

The Bike Lesson by Stan and Jan Berenstain (Random House, 1964)
If Mice Could Fly by John Cameron (Atheneum, 1979)
Jamaica's Find by Juanita Havill (Houghton Mifflin, 1987)
Night Sounds, Morning Colors by Rosemary Wells (Dial, 1994)
No Fighting, No Biting! by Else E. Minarik (HarperCollins, 1978)
Tight Times by Barbara Hazen (Viking, 1979)
When the Tide Is Low by Sheila Cole (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1985)
Why Can't I Fly? by Rita Gelman (Scholastic, 1979)
Wild Wild Sunflower Child Anna by Nancy White Carlstrom (Macmillan, 1991)
Winter Coats by Margo Mason (Bantam, 1989)

Long *o*

The Adventures of Mole and Troll by Tony Johnston (Putnam, 1972)
Bob the Snowman by Sylvia Loretan (Viking, 1991)
The Giant's Toe by Brock Cole (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1986)
Going Home by Margaret Wild (Scholastic, 1994)
Lost! by David McPhail (Little, Brown, 1993)
A New Coat for Anna by Harry Ziefert (Knopf, 1988)
New Shoes for Sylvia by Johanna Hurwitz (Morrow, 1993)
Night Noises and Other Mole and Troll Stories by Tony Johnston (Putnam, 1977)
One Monday Morning by Uri Shulevitz (Scribner, 1967)
Osa's Pride by Ann Grifalconi (Little, Brown, 1990)
Roll Over! by Mordicai Gerstein (Crown, 1984)
Snowsong Whistling by Karen Lotz (Dutton, 1993)
Toad on the Road by Jon Buller and Susan Schade (Random House, 1992)
When I Am Old With You by Angela Johnson (Orchard Books, 1993)
White Snow, Bright Snow by Alvin Tresselt (Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1947)

Long *u*

"Excuse Me—Certainly!" by Louis Slobodkin (Vanguard Press, 1959)
Tell Me a Trudy by Lore Segal (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1977)
The Troll Music by Anita Lobel (Harper & Row, 1966)

SAMPLE LESSON

Long Vowels

Phonic Principle: The letters *ea* and *ee* stand for the /ē/ sound.

Step 1: Reread Begin the lesson by having children reread a story or passage containing previously taught sound-spelling relationships. Then provide phonemic awareness exercises (such as oral blending) for children needing this support.

Step 2: Introduce Sound-Spelling Explain to children that the letters *ee* and *ea* can stand for the /ē/ sound as in *feet* and *seat*. Write the words *feet* and *seat* on the chalkboard. Then blend the words aloud as you run your finger under each letter. Have a volunteer underline the letters *ee* or *ea*. Point to the letters and ask students to chorally state the sound that the letters stand for. Continue by having children generate a list of words containing the /ē/ sound. List these words on the chalkboard. Have volunteers circle the letters *ee* or *ea* in all the words containing these spellings for the /ē/ sound.

Step 3: Blend Words Write the following words and sentences on the chalkboard. Note that all the words are decodable based on the sound-spelling relationships previously taught. The first line focuses on short-vowel/long-vowel contrasts. The sentences contain some high-frequency words previously taught.

- bet beat fed feed
- leaf need bean deep
- My team will win!
- Keep the seeds in the bag.

Next distribute the following letter-card set to each child: *ee, ea, s, d, t, p, k, l.* Have children build as many words as possible. Ask them to write the words on a sheet of paper. Circulate around the room and model blending when necessary.

Step 4: Apply to Text Provide students with connected reading practice. Choose a book in which many of the words are decodable based on the sound-spelling relationships previously taught. Lists of books containing long-vowel sounds are available in many basal reading series.

Step 5: Dictate and Write Have children write the following words and sentence on a sheet of paper as you dictate them. For students having difficulty segmenting the sounds in each word, extend the word. You might want to clap on each sound to provide another clue. Then write the words and sentence on the chalkboard. Have children self-correct their papers. Do not grade this dictation practice. It's designed to help children segment words and associate sounds with spellings.

- red feed heat
- We need to eat.

Provide freewriting opportunities. For example, have children write a dramatic version of a story they've just read. Children will enjoy performing these plays for the class.

Other Vowel Sounds

Guidelines:

Some vowel digraphs stand for sounds that are not commonly classified as long or short vowels. These include the following, which I've classified according to the way they are grouped in most basal reading programs.

Variant Vowels

/o͞o/ (f**oo**d), /o͝o/ (f**oo**t), /ô/ (b**a**ll, c**au**se, cl**aw**, f**or**)

Note that the *o* in *for* can also be classified as an *r*-controlled vowel (see below). The vowel digraph *oo* has a long and a short sound assigned to it. The long sound is more frequent in words than the short sound. Therefore, when children encounter this vowel digraph in a word, they should try the long sound first. The only way for children to know which sound is correct is to try both sounds and see which forms a word that is in their speaking or listening vocabularies (assuming they have heard the word before).

Diphthongs

/oi/ (b**oi**l, b**oy**), /ou/ (h**ou**se, c**ow**)

Diphthongs are vowel sounds formed by a gliding action in the mouth. That is, unlike other vowel sounds, the tongue and lip positions often change as the sound is formed. For example, say and extend the /a/ sound. Notice the position of the lips and tongue. Do they change while forming the sound? No. Now say the /oi/ sound. Notice how the lips are thrust forward and close together as the sound begins but quickly retract and open slightly as the sound is concluded. This gliding action is characteristic of diphthongs. Many linguists also consider the long-*i* and long-*u* sounds diphthongs.

r-controlled vowels

/âr/ (ch**air**), /ûr/(f**er**n, b**ir**d, h**ur**t), /är/ (p**ar**k), /ôr/ (h**or**n)

The letter *r* affects the sound of the vowel that precedes it in many ways. The following is a suggested sequence for teaching *r*-controlled vowels based on frequency and predictability of spellings (Groff, 1977; Blevins, 1997): **1.** /ûr/ (ir, er, ur) **2.** /ôr/ (or, ore, oar) **3.** /är/ (ar) **4.** /âr/ (are, air, eir, ear). In addition to the letter *r*, the letters *l* and *w* have effects on the vowels that precede or follow them (e.g., **wa**ter, f**all**, t**alk**). Instead of trying to explain to children the intricacies of how the vowel sound is affected by these consonants, it's best to teach the sounds as spelling patterns such as *ar, er, ir, or, ur, air, ear, are, all, alk,* and *wa.*

Schwa

/**ə**/ (**a**lone, happ**e**n, d**i**rect, gall**o**p, circ**u**s)

Some linguists don't consider this a separate sound, but rather an allophone—a variant of a particular sound caused by a reduction in stress on that sound in a word. The schwa is also known as a murmur or neutral sound. Up to 22 different spellings of the schwa sound have been identified (Hanna et al., 1966). It's difficult to teach children rules for identifying this sound in words. Some educators suggest telling children to try the short sound of a questionable vowel when decoding multisyllabic words (Chall and Popp, 1996); others suggest telling children to say "uh" for every vowel sound in a word they are unsure of. They believe that this approximation will be close enough for the child to identify the word if it is in his or her speaking or listening vocabulary.

Books Featuring Other Vowels

Everybody Cooks Rice by Norah Dooley (Carolrhoda, 1992)
Good News by Barbara Brenner (Bantam, 1991)
Michael Bird-Boy by Tomie dePaola (Simon & Schuster, 1987)
A Place for Grace by Jean Davies Okimoto (Sasquatch, 1993)
Sally's Room by M. K. Brown (Scholastic, 1992)
Song and Dance Man by Karen Ackerman (Knopf, 1988)
This Is Baseball by Margaret Blackstone (Henry Holt, 1993)
Too Many Babas by Carolyn Croll (HarperCollins, 1994)

r-Controlled Vowels

The Berenstain Bears and the Sitter by Dan and Jan Berenstain (Random House, 1987)
A House for Hermit Crab by Eric Carle (Picture Books Studio, 1991)
Ox-Cart Man by Donald Hall (Puffin, 1983)
Sheep Dreams by Arthur A. Levine (Dial, 1993)

Diphthongs /ou/ and /oi/

Baseball Ballerina by Kathryn Cristaldi (Random Books for Young Readers, 1992)
The Boy of the Three-Year Nap by Dianne Snyder (Houghton Mifflin, 1988)
The Boy Who Didn't Believe in Spring by Lucille Clifton (Viking, 1992)
Counting Cows by Woody Jackson (Harcourt Brace, 1995)
The Cow Who Wouldn't Come Down by Paul Brett Johnson (Orchard Books, 1993)
Fox on Wheels by Edward Marshall (Puffin, 1993)
The Leaving Morning by Angela Johnson (Orchard Books, 1992)
She'll Be Comin' Round the Mountain adapted by T. and D. H. Birdseye (Holiday, 1994)
Too Much Noise by Ann McGovern (Houghton Mifflin, 1992)
The Wheels on the Bus by Paul Zelinsky (Dutton, 1990)

SAMPLE LESSON

Other Vowel Sounds

Phonic Principle: The letters *oi* and *oy* stand for the /oi/ sound.

Step 1: Reread Begin the lesson by having children reread a story or passage containing previously taught sound-spelling relationships. Then provide phonemic awareness exercises (such as oral blending) for children needing this support.

Step 2: Introduce Sound-Spelling Explain to children that the letters *oi* and *oy* stand for the /oi/ sound as in *boil* and *boy*. Write the words *boil* and *boy* on the chalkboard. Then blend the words aloud as you run your finger under each letter. Have a volunteer underline the letters *oi* or *oy*. Point to the letters and ask students to chorally state the sound that the letters stand for. Continue by having children generate a list of words containing the /oi/ sound. List these words on the chalkboard.

Step 3: Blend Words Write the following words and sentences on the chalkboard. Note that all the words are decodable based on the sound-spelling relationships previously taught. Contrasts are given in the first line. The sentences contain some high-frequency words previously taught.

- box boy pint point
- coin joy toys noise
- The boy will enjoy the game.
- I found five coins.

Next distribute the following letter-card set to each child: *oi*, *oy*, *b*, *l*, *c*, *n*, *j*. Have children build as many words as possible. Ask them to write the words on a sheet of paper. Circulate around the room and model blending when necessary.

Step 4: Apply to Text Provide children with connected reading practice. Choose a book in which many of the words are decodable based on the sound-spelling relationships previously taught.

Step 5: Dictate and Write Have children write the following words and sentence on a sheet of paper as you dictate them. Then write the words and sentence on the chalkboard. Have children self-correct their papers. Do not grade this dictation practice. It's designed to help children segment words and associate sounds with spellings.

- boy point coil
- Do you like your new toy?

Provide freewriting opportunities. For example, have children write a poem using as many words with the target sound as possible.

Phonograms

Provide frequent review of challenging sound-spelling relationships for children needing additional support.

Throughout the past two decades, increased attention has been paid to phonograms and their use in early reading instruction. In the classrooms I visit, I see more and more Word Walls containing word lists primarily organized around phonograms. A **phonogram** is a letter (or series of letters) that stands for a sound, syllable, or series of sounds without reference to meaning. For example, the phonogram *-ay* contains two letters and stands for the long-*a* sound. It can be found in words such as *say*, *may*, and *replay*. The phonogram *-ack* contains three letters, stands for two sounds (/a/ /k/), and can be found in words such as *pack*, *black*, and *attack*. Phonograms are often referred to as word families. The words *face*, *space*, and *replace* belong to the same word family because they all contain the ending *-ace*. The ending *-ace* is a phonogram.

A linguistic term sometimes substituted for phonogram is **rime**. Rime is generally used in combination with the term **onset**. Onset and rime refer to the two parts of a syllable. In a syllable, a rime is the vowel and everything after it. For example, in the one-syllable word *sat*, the rime is *-at*. The onset is the consonant, consonant blend, or digraph that comes before the rime in a syllable. In the words *sat*, *brat*, and *chat*, the onsets are *s*, *br*, and *ch*, respectively. A two-syllable word, such as *pancake*, has two onsets and two rimes. What are the onsets in the word *pancake*? (*p*, *c*) What are the rimes? (*-an*, *-ake*) Some words, such as *at*, *out*, and *up*, contain no onset.

Phonograms Provide Early Reading Boosts

Phonograms have been used in early reading and spelling instruction dating as far back as the *New England Primer* and *Webster's Blue Back Spelling Books* of the 1600s, 1700s, and 1800s. Phonograms have been used for spelling instruction because word patterns are the most effective vehicle for teaching spelling. Phonograms can also provide a boost to early reading instruction. Many children enter first grade with a fair grasp of consonants and the sounds they represent. By learning a phonogram such as *-at*, they can generate a number of primary-level words such as *bat*, *cat*, *fat*, *hat*, *mat*, *pat*, *rat*, and *sat*. Students can then use these words in early independent writing and to read connected text. And children will encounter these words in many primary-level stories. Teaching children that words contain recognizable chunks and teaching them to search for these word parts or patterns is an important step to developing reading fluency. As children encounter more and more multisyllabic words, they gain an understanding that words may contain recognizable parts (phonograms, suffixes, prefixes, smaller words). This insight is critical for decoding the words quickly and efficiently.

Another value of phonograms is that they are **reliable and generalizable**. Of the 286 phonograms that appeared in the primary-level texts reviewed in one classic study, 272 (95%)

were pronounced the same in every word in which they were found (Durrell, 1963). In addition, these 272 reliable phonograms can be found in 1,437 of the words common to the speaking vocabularies of primary-age children (Murphy, 1957).

Many educators have noted the utility of phonograms in early reading instruction. In fact, a relatively small number of phonograms can be used to generate a large number of words. According to Wylie and Durrell (1970), nearly 500 primary-grade words can be derived from only 37 phonograms:

ack	ank	eat	ill	ock	ump
ail	ap	ell	in	oke	unk
ain	ash	est	ine	op	
ake	at	ice	ing	or	
ale	ate	ick	ink	ore	
ame	aw	ide	ip	uck	
an	ay	ight	ir	ug	

Wylie and Durrell also discovered some important instructional considerations about phonograms:

- Long-vowel phonograms (*-eat, -oat*) were as easy to learn as short-vowel phonograms (*-ed, -op*).
- Long-vowel phonograms with final *e* (*-ake, -ide, -ope*) were as easy to learn as other long-vowel phonograms.
- Phonograms containing variant vowels (*-ood, -ook*), *r*-controlled vowels (*-ear, -are*), and diphthongs (*-out, -oint*) were almost as easy to learn as long- and short-vowel phonograms.
- Phonograms ending in a single consonant (*-at, -ot*) were easier to learn than phonograms ending in consonant clusters (*-ast, -imp*).

Teaching With Phonograms

Decoding by analogy is one instructional method that uses phonograms (Cunningham 1975–76; Wagstaff, 1994; Fox, 1996). When decoding by analogy, children look for recognizable chunks within a word to help them figure it out. Cunningham (1995) contends that the brain works as a "pattern detector." As we develop as readers and our knowledge of English orthography increases, we detect more and more of these spelling patterns. Teaching children to decode by analogy helps make them aware of the patterns in our written language. The sidebar at right shows how a teacher might model the use of analogies to decode the word *stick*.

Using phonograms in phonics instruction can also help children gain access to more complex phonics concepts, such as *r*-controlled vowels (Wagstaff, 1994). To explain to children how the *r* in the word *far* affects the sound that the *a* stands for is difficult. However, teaching children the phonogram *-ar* and providing them practice reading words such as *bar, car, far, jar,* and *star* is simpler and arguably more efficient.

Model: When I look at this word, I see two parts that remind me of other words I know. First I see the letters *st*, as in the word *stop*. These two letters stand for the /st/ sounds. I also see the word part *-ick* as in the word *pick*. If I blend together these two word parts, I get the word *stick*.

Phonogram Cautions

Although phonograms can provide a boost to early reading instruction, I offer a **strong word of caution**. Phonograms should never be the sole focus of early reading instruction because they provide the developing reader only limited independence in word analysis. Some educators refer to the use of phonograms in phonics instruction as "rudimentary phonics" (Roswell and Natchez, 1971). They found that beginning readers who rely primarily on phonograms to decode by analogy are less skilled at word identification than beginning readers who analyze words fully (Bruck and Treiman, 1990). Why is this so? Because beginning readers are taught to remember phonograms by sight. Little attention is paid to the actual sound-spelling relationship of the vowel, and almost no attention is paid to the ending consonant sound-spelling relationship. This places fewer phonemic awareness and phonics demands on the reader. When readers use phonograms, they need to focus on only the initial consonant, consonant blend, or digraph. Therefore, when teachers use phonograms to teach vowel sounds, children get little practice in learning vowel sound-spelling relationships. What they are actually practicing are the consonant sound-spelling relationships. But fully analyzing words focuses children's attention on all of the word's sound-spelling relationships.

As you can see, analyzing words in their entirety is essential. Much of what children learn about English orthography (spelling patterns) comes from the constant analysis of words and exposure to an abundance of print. Eventually, multiple exposures to words enable the reader to recognize words by sight and recognize common spelling patterns in unfamiliar words—an important goal in developing reading fluency. The best explanation of how this happens can be gleaned from the work of Ehri (1995). She provides us with a clear model of the **phases children go through in making every word a sight word**. This model includes four phases:

1. **Pre-alphabetic phase (logographic):** Children recognize symbols, such as the "golden arches" of McDonald's, and attach a word or meaning to them. Or they recognize a special feature of a word. For example, a child might remember the word *yellow* because it contains two "sticks" in the middle.

2. **Partial alphabetic phase:** Children are beginning to learn sound-spelling relationships, yet they are using only some phonics cues to figure out words. For example, a child guesses the word *kitten* based on his knowledge of the sounds associated with the letters *k* and *n*, and his use of picture clues. However, this same child would probably not be able to distinguish the word *kitten* from the word *kitchen* because the word is not being analyzed fully.

3. **Full alphabetic phase:** Children are using their knowledge of sound-spelling relationships and analyzing words in their entirety. Much practice decoding and multiple exposures to print help children to begin to develop an awareness of spelling patterns.

4. **Consolidated alphabetic phase (orthographic):** Children's awareness of spelling patterns is stronger, and they're beginning to use this knowledge to quickly and accurately decode unknown words. For example, a child sees the word *stack*. Instead of analyzing the word sound by sound, she almost instantly recognizes the familiar *st* combination from words such as *step* and *stop*, and the word part *-ack*. The efficiency with which this child decodes words is greater than in the previous phase and occurs as a result of many opportunities to fully analyze words, decode many words, and pay attention to word parts within words.

As children repeatedly encounter words, they learn many as sight words. This is the ultimate goal of fast, efficient decoding. Some children require as few as 4–5 exposures to new words to learn them by sight. For struggling readers, the number of exposures that are needed jumps to 50–100 (Honig, 1996). Learning words by sight requires analyzing many words in their entirety and wide reading. Beginning readers who are taught to look only for phonograms or other word chunks are being treated as skilled readers instead of the developing readers they are. In addition, no reading program can teach the vast number of phonograms children will encounter in words. Therefore, although the use of phonograms to decode by analogy is useful, it is not sufficient. Children must be able to use a variety of decoding strategies including decoding by analogy, blending, recognizing sight words, and using context clues, to figure out the complete range of words in the English language.

Another caution associated with phonograms is the over-reliance on them to create reading materials for phonics practice. Text with a high proportion of phonograms should be avoided (Perfetti and McCutcheon, 1982). This type of text, once common in the so-called linguistic readers of decades ago, is illustrated by the following example:

Fat cat. Fat cat sat.
Fat cat sat on bat.
Pat fat cat.

This type of text—with its minimal contrasts and repetition of phonograms—reads more like a tongue twister than the connected text that enables a child to gain meaning. Though it was designed to help early readers, it often caused serious confusion and lack of comprehension. It's important that early reading text be closer to children's oral language than that used in the "linguistic" readers. However, by including high-frequency words and words with other patterns, this type of text can be restructured to be more natural sounding.

How to Use Phonogram Lists

You can use the phonogram lists on pages 162–174 to develop word lists for phonics and spelling instruction. These lists are based on the work of researchers (Fry et al., 1993), textbook publishers, and my tireless searching through children's dictionaries. The lists contain one-syllable words and are organized by vowel sound. Within each list, the words are listed in alphabetical order beginning with single consonant words, then proceeding to words beginning with consonant clusters or digraphs.

Use the lists with care. They can provide a valuable source of words for activities such as word sorts and word building. However, some of the words on the lists may not be appropriate for your instructional needs. For example, if you're working with first and second graders, a few of the words such as *vat, span,* and *plot* may not be in your students' speaking or listening vocabulary. Avoid using these words, particularly when you're developing sentences, stories, or any other types of connected text. I have tried to weed out most of the words not common to young children's books or vocabulary. And remember to introduce words beginning and ending with single consonants before words with consonant clusters or digraphs.

Long-*a* Phonograms

-ace	**-ade**	**-age**	**-aid**	**-ail**	**-ain**
face	fade	age	laid	bail	main
lace	jade	cage	maid	fail	pain
mace	made	gage	paid	Gail	rain
pace	wade	page	raid	hail	vain
race	blade	rage	braid	jail	brain
brace	glade	sage		mail	chain
grace	grade	wage		nail	drain
place	shade	stage		pail	grain
space	spade			quail	plain
trace	trade			rail	slain

-ail	**-ain**
sail	Spain
tail	sprain
wail	stain
flail	strain
frail	train
snail	
trail	

-aint	**-aise**	**-ait**	**-ake**	**-ale**	**-ame**	**-ane**
faint	raise	bait	bake	bale	came	cane
paint	praise	gait	cake	Dale	dame	Jane
saint		wait	fake	gale	fame	lane
taint		strait	Jake	male	game	mane
quaint		trait	lake	pale	lame	pane
			make	sale	name	sane
			quake	tale	same	vane
			rake	scale	tame	wane
			sake	stale	blame	crane
			take	whale	flame	plane
			wake		frame	
			brake		shame	

-ake	**-ale**
drake	
flake	
shake	
snake	
stake	

-ange	**-ape**	**-ase**	**-aste**	**-ate**	**-ave**
range	cape	base	baste	date	cave
change	gape	case	haste	fate	Dave
grange	nape	vase	paste	gate	gave
strange	tape	chase	taste	hate	pave
	drape		waste	Kate	rave
	grape			late	save
	scrape			mate	wave
	shape			rate	brave

-ate	**-ave**
crate	crave
grate	grave
plate	shave
skate	slave
state	

-ay			**-aze**	**-eak**	**-eigh**	**-ey**
bay	say	stray	daze	break	neigh	hey
day	way	sway	faze	steak	weigh	grey
gay	clay	tray	gaze		sleigh	prey
hay	fray		haze			they
jay	gray		maze			whey
lay	play		raze			
may	pray		blaze			
nay	slay		craze			
pay	spray		glaze			
ray	stay		graze			

Long-*e* Phonograms

-e	**-ea**	**-each**	**-ead**	**-eak**	**-eal**
be	pea	beach	bead	beak	deal
he	sea	leach	lead	leak	heal
me	tea	peach	read	peak	meal
we	flea	reach	knead	weak	peal
she	plea	teach	plead	bleak	real
		bleach		creak	seal
		breach		freak	teal
		preach		sneak	veal

-eak	**-eal**
speak	zeal
squeak	squeal
streak	steal
tweak	

-eam	**-ean**	**-eap**	**-ear**	**-ease**
beam	bean	heap	dear	cease
ream	dean	leap	fear	lease
seam	Jean	reap	gear	crease
team	lean	cheap	hear	grease
cream	mean		near	
dream	wean		rear	

-ear	**-ease**
tear	
year	
clear	
shear	
smear	
spear	

-east	**-eat**	**-eath**	**-eave**	**-ee**	**-eech**
beast	beat	heath	heave	bee	beech
feast	feat	sheath	leave	fee	leech
least	heat	wreath	weave	knee	breech
yeast	meat		cleave	Lee	screech
	neat		sheave	see	speech
	peat			tee	
	seat			wee	

-eat	**-ee**
bleat	flee
cheat	free
cleat	glee
pleat	spree
treat	three
wheat	tree

-eed	**-eek**	**-eel**	**-eem**	**-een**	**-eep**
deed	leek	feel	deem	keen	beep
feed	meek	heel	seem	queen	deep
heed	peek	kneel	teem	seen	jeep
need	reek	peel		teen	keep
reed	seek	reel		green	peep
seed	week	steel		screen	seep
weed	cheek	wheel			weep
bleed	creek				cheep
breed	Greek				creep
creed	sleek				sheep

-eed	**-eep**
freed	sleep
greed	steep
speed	sweep
tweed	

-eer	**-eet**	**-eeze**	**-iece**	**-ief**	**-ield**
deer	beet	breeze	niece	brief	field
jeer	feet	freeze	piece	chief	yield
peer	meet	sneeze		grief	shield
queer	fleet	squeeze		thief	
sneer	greet	tweeze			
steer	sheet	wheeze			
	skeet				

-eet	**-ield**
sleet	
street	
sweet	
tweet	

Long-*i* Phonograms

-ibe	**-ice**	**-ide**	**-ie**	**-ied**	**-ier**	**-ies**	**-ife**
bribe	dice	hide	die	died	brier	dies	fife
scribe	lice	ride	lie	lied	crier	lies	knife
tribe	mice	side	pie	cried	drier	pies	life
	nice	tide	tie	dried	flier	ties	rife
	rice	wide	vie	fried		cries	wife
	vice	bride		spied		dries	strife
	price	glide		tried		flies	
	slice	pride				skies	
	splice	slide				spies	
	thrice	snide				tries	
	twice	stride					

-igh	**-ight**	**-ike**	**-ild**	**-ile**	**-ime**	**-ind**	**-ine**
high	fight	bike	mild	file	dime	bind	dine
nigh	knight	dike	wild	mile	lime	find	fine
sigh	light	hike	child	Nile	mime	hind	line
thigh	might	like		pile	time	kind	mine
	night	Mike		tile	chime	mind	nine
	right	pike		vile	crime	rind	pine
	sight	spike		smile	grime	wind	vine
	tight	strike		while	prime	blind	shine
	blight				slime	grind	shrine
	bright						spine
	flight						swine
	fright						whine
	plight						
	slight						

-ipe	**-ire**	**-ise**	**-ite**	**-ive**	**-uy**	**-y**	**-ye**
pipe	fire	guise	bite	dive	buy	by	bye
ripe	hire	rise	kite	five	guy	my	dye
wipe	tire	wise	mite	hive		cry	eye
gripe	wire		quite	jive		dry	lye
snipe	spire		rite	live		fly	rye
stripe			site	chive		fry	
swipe			white	drive		ply	
			write	strive		pry	
			sprite	thrive		shy	
						sky	
						sly	
						spy	
						try	
						why	

Long-*o* Phonograms

-o	**-oach**	**-oad**	**-oak**	**-oal**	**-oam**	**-oan**	**-oast**
go	coach	load	soak	coal	foam	Joan	boast
no	poach	road	cloak	foal	loam	loan	coast
so	roach	toad	croak	goal	roam	moan	roast
pro	broach					groan	toast

-oat	**-obe**	**-ode**	**-oe**	**-oke**	**-old**	**-ole**	**-oll**
oat	lobe	code	doe	coke	old	dole	poll
boat	robe	lode	foe	joke	bold	hole	roll
coat	globe	mode	hoe	poke	cold	mole	toll
goat	probe	node	Joe	woke	fold	pole	droll
moat		rode	toe	yoke	gold	role	knoll
bloat		strode	woe	broke	hold	stole	scroll
float				choke	mold	whole	stroll
gloat				smoke	sold		troll
throat				spoke	told		
				stoke	scold		
				stroke			

-olt	**-ome**	**-one**		**-ope**	**-ose**	**-ost**	**-ote**
bolt	dome	bone	prone	cope	hose	host	note
colt	home	cone	shone	dope	nose	most	quote
jolt	Nome	hone	stone	hope	pose	post	rote
molt	Rome	lone		mope	rose	ghost	vote
volt	chrome	tone		nope	chose		wrote
	gnome	zone		pope	close		
		clone		rope	prose		
		drone		scope	those		
		phone		slope			

-ove	**-ow**		**-own**
cove	bow	crow	known
wove	know	flow	mown
clove	low	glow	sown
drove	mow	grow	blown
grove	row	show	flown
stove	sow	slow	grown
trove	tow	snow	shown
	blow	stow	thrown

Short-*a* Phonograms

-ab	**-ack**		**-act**	**-ad**	**-aft**	**-ag**	**-am**
cab	back	slack	fact	bad	daft	bag	dam
dab	hack	smack	pact	dad	raft	gag	ham
gab	Jack	snack	tact	fad	waft	jag	jam
jab	knack	stack	tract	had	craft	lag	Pam
lab	lack	track		lad	draft	nag	ram
nab	Mack	whack		mad	graft	rag	Sam
tab	pack			pad	shaft	sag	tam
blab	quack			sad		tag	yam
crab	rack			tad		wag	clam
drab	sack			Brad		brag	cram
flab	tack			Chad		crag	gram
grab	black			clad		drag	scam
scab	clack			glad		flag	scram
slab	crack					shag	sham
stab	shack					snag	slam
						stag	swam

-amp	**-an**		**-ance**	**-anch**	**-and**	**-ang**	**-ank**
camp	ban	plan	dance	ranch	band	bang	bank
damp	can	scan	lance	blanch	hand	fang	Hank
lamp	Dan	span	chance	branch	land	gang	lank
ramp	fan	than	France		sand	hang	rank
vamp	man		glance		bland	pang	sank
champ	pan		prance		brand	rang	tank
clamp	ran		stance		gland	sang	yank
cramp	tan		trance		stand	clang	blank
scamp	van				strand	slang	clank
stamp	bran					sprang	crank
tramp	clan					twang	drank
							flank

-ant	**-ap**		**-ash**		**-ask**	**-asm**	Frank
pant	cap	chap	bash	brash	ask	chasm	plank
rant	gap	clap	cash	clash	cask	plasm	prank
chant	lap	flap	dash	flash	mask	spasm	spank
grant	map	scrap	gash	slash	task		thank
plant	nap	slap	hash	smash	flask		
scant	rap	snap	lash	stash			
slant	sap	strap	mash	thrash			
	tap	trap	rash	trash			
	yap	wrap	sash				

-asp	**-ast**	**-at**		**-atch**	**-ath**	**-ax**
gasp	cast	bat	vat	batch	bath	lax
hasp	fast	cat	brat	catch	math	Max
rasp	last	fat	chat	hatch	path	tax
clasp	mast	gnat	flat	latch	wrath	wax
grasp	past	hat	scat	match		flax
	vast	mat	slat	patch		
	blast	pat	spat	scratch		
		rat	that	snatch		
		sat		thatch		

Short-*e* Phonograms

-ead	**-ealth**	**-eath**	**-eck**	**-ed**	**-edge**	**-eft**
dead	health	death	deck	bed	hedge	left
head	wealth	breath	heck	fed	ledge	cleft
lead	stealth		neck	led	wedge	theft
read			peck	Ned	dredge	
bread			check	red	pledge	
dread			fleck	Ted	sledge	
spread			speck	wed		
thread			wreck	bled		
tread				bred		
				fled		
				Fred		
				shed		
				shred		
				sled		
				sped		

-eg	**-eld**	**-elf**	**-ell**	**-elp**	**-elt**	**-em**
beg	held	self	bell	help	belt	gem
keg	meld	shelf	cell	kelp	felt	hem
leg	weld		dell	yelp	knelt	stem
Meg			fell		melt	them
peg			jell		pelt	
			Nell		welt	
			sell		dwelt	
			tell			
			well			
			yell			
			dwell			
			shell			
			smell			
			spell			
			swell			

-en	**-ence**	**-ench**	**-end**	**-ength**	**-ense**	**-ent**	**-ep**
Ben	fence	bench	end	length	dense	bent	pep
den	hence	clench	bend	strength	sense	cent	rep
hen	pence	drench	fend		tense	dent	prep
Ken	whence	French	lend			gent	step
men		quench	mend			Kent	
pen		stench	send			lent	
ten		trench	tend			rent	
yen		wrench	vend			sent	
Glen			blend			tent	
then			spend			vent	
when			trend			went	
wren						scent	
						spent	

-ept	**-esh**	**-ess**	**-est**	**-et**	**-etch**	**-ext**
kept	mesh	Bess	best	bet	fetch	next
wept	flesh	guess	jest	get	sketch	text
crept	fresh	less	lest	jet	wretch	
slept		mess	nest	let		
swept		bless	pest	met		
		chess	rest	net		
		dress	test	pet		
		press	vest	set		
		stress	west	wet		
			zest	yet		
			blest	Chet		
			chest	fret		
			crest			
			quest			
			wrest			

Short-*i* Phonograms

-ib
bib
fib
rib
crib
glib

-ick
Dick
kick
lick
Nick
pick
quick
Rick
sick
tick
wick
brick
chick
click
flick
slick
stick
thick
trick
wick

-id
bid
did
hid
kid
lid
mid
rid
grid
skid
slid
squid

-iff
cliff
sniff
stiff
whiff

-ift
gift
lift
rift
sift
drift
shift
swift
thrift

-ig
big
dig
fig
gig
jig
pig
rig
wig
brig
sprig
swig
twig

-ilk
milk
silk

-ill
ill
bill
dill
fill
gill
hill
Jill
kill
mill
pill
quill
sill
till
will
chill
drill
frill
grill
skill
spill
still
thrill
trill
twill

-ilt
kilt
tilt
wilt
quilt
stilt

-im
dim
him
Jim
Kim
rim
Tim
brim
grim
prim
slim
swim
trim
whim

-imp
limp
blimp
chimp
crimp
primp
skimp

-in
bin
fin
kin
pin
tin
win
chin
grin
shin
skin
spin
thin
twin

-ince
mince
since
prince

-inch
inch
cinch
finch
pinch
clinch
flinch

-ing
bing
ding
king
ping
ring
sing
wing
zing
bring
cling
fling
sling
spring
sting
string
swing
thing
wring

-inge
binge
hinge
singe
tinge
cringe
fringe

-ink
kink
link
mink
pink
rink
sink
wink
blink
brink
clink
drink
shrink
slink
stink
think

-int
hint
lint
mint
tint
glint
print
splint
sprint
squint
stint

-ip
dip
hip
lip
nip
quip
rip
sip
tip
zip
blip
chip
clip
drip
flip
grip
ship
skip
slip
snip
strip
trip
whip

-is
is
his

-ish
dish
fish
wish
swish

-isk
disk
risk
brisk
frisk
whisk

-isp
lisp
wisp
crisp

-iss
hiss
kiss
miss
bliss
Swiss

-ist
fist
list
mist
wrist
twist

-it
bit
fit
hit
kit
knit
lit
pit
quit
sit
wit
flit
grit
skit
slit
spit
split

-itch
ditch
hitch
pitch
witch
switch

-ive
give
live

-ix
fix
mix
six

Short-*o* Phonograms

-ob		**-ock**		**-od**	**-oft**	**-og**	**-omp**
Bob	glob	dock	flock	cod	loft	bog	pomp
cob	slob	hock	frock	mod	soft	cog	romp
gob	snob	knock	shock	nod		dog	chomp
job	throb	lock	smock	pod		fog	stomp
knob		mock	stock	rod		hog	
lob		rock		sod		jog	
mob		sock		clod		log	
rob		tock		plod		clog	
sob		block		prod		flog	
blob		clock		trod		frog	
		crock				smog	

-ond	**-op**		**-ot**		**-otch**	**-ough**	**-ox**
bond	bop	drop	cot	rot	botch	cough	ox
fond	cop	flop	dot	tot	notch	trough	box
pond	hop	plop	got	blot	blotch		fox
blond	mop	prop	hot	clot	crotch		lox
	pop	shop	jot	plot			pox
	sop	slop	knot	shot			
	top	stop	lot	slot			
	chop		not	spot			
	crop		pot	trot			

Many popular rhymes and songs feature phonograms.

Short-*u* Phonograms

-ome	**-on**	**-ough**	**-ove**	**-ub**			**-uch**
come	son	rough	dove	cub	rub	grub	much
some	ton	tough	love	dub	sub	scrub	such
	won	slough	glove	hub	tub	shrub	
			shove	nub	club	snub	
			above		flub	stub	

-uck	**-ud**	**-udge**	**-uff**	**-ug**		**-ulk**	**-ull**
buck	bud	budge	buff	bug	slug	bulk	cull
duck	cud	fudge	cuff	dug	smug	hulk	dull
luck	dud	judge	huff	hug	snug	sulk	gull
muck	mud	nudge	puff	jug	thug		hull
puck	crud	drudge	ruff	lug			lull
suck	spud	grudge	bluff	mug			mull
tuck	stud	sludge	fluff	pug			skull
Chuck	thud	smudge	gruff	rug			
cluck		trudge	scuff	tug			
pluck			sluff	chug			
stuck			snuff	drug			
struck			stuff	plug			
truck				shrug			

-um	**-umb**	**-ump**	**-un**	**-unch**	**-ung**	**-unk**	**-unt**
bum	dumb	bump	bun	bunch	hung	bunk	bunt
gum	numb	dump	fun	hunch	lung	dunk	hunt
hum	crumb	hump	gun	lunch	rung	hunk	punt
mum	plumb	jump	pun	munch	sung	junk	runt
sum	thumb	lump	run	punch	clung	sunk	blunt
chum		pump	sun	brunch	flung	chunk	grunt
drum		rump	shun	crunch	sprung	drunk	stunt
glum		chump	spun	scrunch	stung	flunk	
plum		clump	stun		strung	plunk	
scum		frump			swung	shrunk	
slum		grump			wrung	skunk	
strum		plump				slunk	
swum		slump				spunk	
		stump				stunk	
		thump				trunk	
		trump					

-up	**-us**	**-ush**	**-ust**	**-ut**	**-utch**	**-utt**
cup	bus	gush	bust	but	Dutch	butt
pup	plus	hush	dust	cut	hutch	mutt
sup	thus	lush	gust	gut	clutch	putt
		mush	just	hut	crutch	
		rush	must	jut		
		blush	rust	nut		
		brush	crust	rut		
		crush	thrust	glut		
		flush	trust	shut		
		plush		strut		
		slush				
		thrush				

Variant Vowel /âr/ Phonograms

-air	**-are**		**-ear**
air	bare	blare	bear
fair	care	flare	pear
hair	dare	glare	wear
lair	fare	scare	swear
pair	hare	share	
chair	mare	snare	
flair	pare	spare	
stair	rare	square	
	ware	stare	

Variant Vowel /ûr/ Phonograms

-eam	**-erb**	**-erge**	**-erk**	**-erm**	**-ern**	**-erve**	**-ir**
earn	herb	merge	jerk	germ	fern	nerve	fir
learn	verb	serge	clerk	term	stern	serve	sir
yearn		verge				swerve	stir
							whir
-ird	**-irk**	**-irl**	**-irst**	**-irt**	**-irth**	**-ur**	**-urb**
bird	quirk	girl	first	dirt	birth	fur	curb
third	shirk	swirl	thirst	flirt	girth	blur	blurb
	smirk	twirl		shirt		slur	
		whirl		skirt		spur	
				squirt			
-urge	**-url**	**-urn**	**-urk**	**-urse**	**-urt**		
urge	curl	burn	lurk	curse	curt		
purge	furl	turn	murk	nurse	hurt		
	hurl	churn		purse	blurt		
		spurn			spurt		

Variant Vowel /är/ Phonograms

-ar	**-ard**	**-arge**	**-ark**	**-arm**	**-arn**	**-arp**	**-art**
bar	card	barge	bark	arm	barn	carp	cart
car	guard	large	dark	farm	darn	harp	dart
far	hard	charge	hark	harm	yarn	tarp	mart
jar	lard		lark	charm		sharp	part
mar	yard		mark				tart
par			park				chart
tar			Clark				smart
char			shark				start
scar			spark				
spar			stark				
star							

Variant Vowel /ô/ Phonograms

-all	**-alk**	**-alt**	**-aught**	**-aunch**	**-aunt**	**-ault**	**-aw**
all	balk	halt	caught	haunch	daunt	fault	caw
ball	talk	malt	naught	launch	gaunt	vault	gnaw
call	walk	salt	taught	paunch	haunt		jaw
fall	chalk		fraught	staunch	jaunt		law
hall	stalk				taunt		paw
mall					flaunt		raw
tall							saw
wall							claw
small							draw
squall							flaw
stall							slaw
							squaw
							straw

-awl	**-awn**	**-ong**	**-oss**	**-ost**	**-oth**	**-ought**
bawl	dawn	bong	boss	cost	moth	ought
brawl	fawn	dong	loss	lost	broth	bought
crawl	lawn	gong	moss	frost	cloth	fought
drawl	pawn	long	toss		froth	sought
scrawl	yawn	song	cross		sloth	brought
shawl	brawn	tong	floss			thought
	drawn	prong	gloss			
	prawn	strong				
		wrong				

(/ô/ With r)

-oar	**-oor**	**-orch**	**-ord**	**-ore**			
boar	door	porch	cord	bore	more	wore	snore
roar	floor	torch	ford	core	pore	chore	spore
soar		scorch	lord	fore	sore	score	store
			chord	gore	tore	shore	swore
			sword				

-ork	**-orm**	**-orn**		**-ort**		**-our**
cork	dorm	born	worn	fort	snort	four
fork	form	corn	scorn	port	sport	pour
pork	norm	horn	sworn	sort		
York	storm	morn	thorn	short		
stork		torn				

Diphthong /oi/ Phonograms

-oil	-oin	-oint	-oise	-oist	-oy
oil	coin	joint	noise	foist	boy
boil	join	point	poise	hoist	coy
coil	loin			moist	joy
foil	groin				Roy
soil					soy
toil					toy
broil					ploy
spoil					

Diphthong /ou/ Phonograms

-ouch	-oud	-ounce	-ount	-ound		-our	-ouse
couch	loud	ounce	count	bound	sound	our	house
pouch	cloud	bounce	mount	found	wound	hour	louse
vouch	proud	pounce		hound	ground	sour	mouse
crouch		trounce		mound		flour	blouse
grouch				pound		scour	spouse
slouch				round			

-out		-outh	-ow		-owl	-own
out	scout	mouth	bow	chow	fowl	down
bout	shout	south	cow	plow	howl	gown
(about)	snout		how		growl	town
gout	spout		now		prowl	brown
pout	sprout		sow		scowl	clown
rout	stout		vow			crown
tout	trout		brow			drown
clout						frown

Many trade books feature words with phonograms. These books can be used for independent reading.

Variant Vowel /o͞o/ Phonograms

*** These words contain the long-*u* sound, /yo͞o/.**

-ew	**-o**	**-oo**	**-ood**	**-oof**	**-ool**	**-oom**
dew *	do	boo	food	goof	cool	boom
few *	to	coo	mood	roof	fool	doom
knew *	who	goo	brood	proof	pool	loom
new *		moo		spoof	tool	room
pew *		too			drool	zoom
blew		woo			school	bloom
brew		zoo			spool	broom
chew		shoo			stool	gloom
						groom

-oon	**-oop**	**-oose**	**-oot**	**-ooth**
boon	coop	goose	boot	booth
loon	hoop	loose	hoot	tooth
moon	loop	moose	loot	
noon	droop	noose	moot	
soon	scoop		root	
croon	sloop		toot	

-ooze	**-oup**	**-ube**	**-uce**	**-ude**	**-ue**	**-uke**
ooze	soup	cube *	spruce	dude	cue *	duke
snooze	croup	lube	truce	rude	due	puke *
	group	tube		crude	hue *	fluke
				prude	Sue	

-ule	**-ume**	**-une**	**-ure**	**-use**	**-ute**	**-uth**
mule *	fume *	dune	cure *	use *	cute *	Ruth
rule	plume	June	lure	fuse *	jute	truth
Yule		tune	pure *	muse *	lute	
		prune	sure	ruse	mute	

Variant Vowel /o͝o/ Phonograms

-ood	**-ook**	**-oot**	**-ould**	**-ull**	**-ush**
good	book	foot	could	bull	bush
hood	cook	soot	would	full	push
wood	hook		should	pull	
stood	look				
	nook				
	took				
	brook				
	crook				
	shook				

What About Rules?

Use *i* before *e* except after *c*. When two vowels go walking, the first does the talking. Don't stand on that table! Sit up straight, Wiley! These and other rules swim around in my head when I think about my early school days. Although I do sit up straight today and avoid standing on tables, when it comes to reading I often wonder how many rules I actually recall and use as a skilled reader and writer. This list is probably quite small. So how useful are these rules, and should we spend much instructional time teaching them?

"Effective decoders see words not in terms of phonics rules, but in terms of patterns of letters that are used to aid in identification" (Stahl, 1992). **Through phonics instruction that focuses children's attention on each letter in a word, teaches blending, and highlights common spelling patterns, children will begin to internalize rules, or generalizations, about words.** For example, when children encounter words in which the letter *c* stands for either the /s/ sound or the /k/ sound, we want them to be able to generalize the conditions under which each is likely to occur. Rules can be used to help children attend to this specific spelling pattern or organize their thinking about it. As time progresses and children are provided more opportunities to review and apply this rule, they will internalize it.

In addition, teachers of reading need to be aware of rules so that they can verbalize them for children who would benefit from this instruction (Durkin, 1993). However, since few rules are 100% reliable, they should never be taught as absolutes. That is one reason why I prefer the term *generalization* rather than *rule*.

Guidelines for Using Rules/Generalizations

- **Don't make rules/generalizations the emphasis of phonics instruction.** Instead, use them as one tool to help children focus on important spelling patterns and recognize unfamiliar words.

- **Teach only those rules/generalizations with the most utility.** For example, teaching children that the spelling pattern *-ough* can stand for up to six sounds is wasteful. In addition, avoid generalizations that are wordy or full of technical language.

- **Emphasize applying the rules/generalizations** rather than verbalizing them. Remember that once children can apply the generalizations, there is no need to spend instructional time on them.

- **Don't teach the rules/generalizations too soon or too late.** Teach them at a point when children can best understand and apply them.

- **Never teach rules as absolutes.** Since children tend to think of rules as absolutes, it's better to use the term *generalization*. And be sure to make the children aware of important exceptions to generalizations.

The classic study on generalizations and their utility was conducted in 1963 (Clymer). Clymer examined 45 generalizations (rules) taught by basal reading programs. He found that many of these generalizations were of limited value. In fact, less than half of the rules worked as much as 75% of the time. The chart below shows the generalizations he examined. I've updated the wording of some of the generalizations so that they're consistent with the language used in today's basals.

Consonant Generalizations

1. When two of the same consonants appear side by side in a word, only one is heard.
   EXAMPLE: berry EXCEPTION: suggest
   99% Utility

2. When the letter *c* is followed by the letter *o* or *a*, the *c* stands for the /k/ sound.
   EXAMPLE: cat
   100% Utility

3. The digraph *ch* is usually pronounced /ch/ as in *watch* and *chair*, not /sh/.
   EXAMPLE: batch EXCEPTION: machine
   95% Utility

4. When the letters *c* and *h* appear next to each other in a word, they stand for only one sound.
   EXAMPLE: rich
   100% Utility

5. The letter *g* often has a sound similar to that of the letter *j* in *jump* when it comes before the letter *i* or *e*.
   EXAMPLE: ginger EXCEPTION: give
   64% Utility

6. When the letter *c* is followed by the letter *e* or *i*, the /s/ sound is likely to be heard.
   EXAMPLE: cent EXCEPTION: ocean
   96% Utility

7. When a word ends in the letters *ck*, it has the /k/ sound as in *book*.
   EXAMPLE: sick
   100% Utility

8. When the letters *ght* appear together in a word, the letters *gh* are silent.
   EXAMPLE: fight
   100% Utility

9. When a word begins with the letters *kn*, the letter *k* is silent.
   EXAMPLE: know
   100% Utility

10. When a word begins with the letters *wr*, the letter *w* is silent.
    EXAMPLE: write
    100% Utility

Vowel Generalizations

11. If there is one vowel in an accented syllable, it has its short sound.
    EXAMPLE: city EXCEPTION: lady
    61% Utility

12. When a word has only one vowel, the vowel sound is likely to be short.
    EXAMPLE: lid EXCEPTION: mind
    57% Utility

13. When two vowels appear together in a word, the long sound of the first one is heard and the second is usually silent.
    EXAMPLE: seat EXCEPTION: chief
    45% Utility
    This is the old "When two vowels go walking, the first does the talking" rule.

14. When a vowel is in the middle of a one-syllable word, the vowel is short.
    EXAMPLE: best EXCEPTION: gold
    62% Utility

15. The letter *r* gives the preceding vowel a sound that is neither long nor short.
    EXAMPLE: torn EXCEPTION: fire
    78% Utility

16. When there are two vowels, one of which is final *e*, the first vowel is long and the *e* is silent.
EXAMPLE: hope EXCEPTION: come
63% Utility

17. The first vowel is usually long and the second silent in the digraphs *ai*, *ea*, *oa*, and *ui*.
nail/said 64%
bead/head 66%
boat/cupboard 97%
suit/build 6%
66% Utility

18. When a word ends with silent *e*, the preceding *a* or *i* is long.
EXAMPLE: bake EXCEPTION: have
60% Utility

19. When the letter *y* is the final letter in a word, it usually has a vowel sound.
EXAMPLE: dry EXCEPTION: tray
84% Utility

20. When the letter *y* is used as a vowel in words, it sometimes has the sound of long *i*.
EXAMPLE: fly EXCEPTION: funny
15% Utility

21. When *y* or *ey* appears in the last syllable that is not accented, the long-*e* sound is heard.
EXAMPLE: baby
0% Utility

22. The letter *a* has the same sound (/ô/) when followed by *l*, *w*, and *u*.
EXAMPLE: fall EXCEPTION: canal
48% Utility

23. The letter *w* is sometimes a vowel and follows the vowel digraph rule.
EXAMPLE: snow EXCEPTION: few
40% Utility

24. When there is one *e* in a word that ends in a consonant, the *e* usually has a short sound.
EXAMPLE: pet EXCEPTION: flew
76% Utility

25. In many two- and three-syllable words, the final *e* lengthens the vowel in the last syllable.
EXAMPLE: invite EXCEPTION: gasoline
46% Utility

26. Words having double *e* usually have the long-*e* sound.
EXAMPLE: feet EXCEPTION: been
98% Utility

27. The letters *ow* stand for the long-*o* sound.
EXAMPLE: own EXCEPTION: town
59% Utility

28. When the letter *a* follows the letter *w* in a word, it usually has the sound that *a* stands for as in *was*.
EXAMPLE: watch EXCEPTION: swam
32% Utility

29. In the vowel spelling *ie*, the letter *i* is silent and the letter *e* has the long-vowel sound.
EXAMPLE: field EXCEPTION: friend
17% Utility

30. In *ay*, the *y* is silent and gives *a* its long sound.
EXAMPLE: play EXCEPTION: always
78% Utility

31. If the only vowel letter is at the end of a word, the letter usually stands for a long sound.
EXAMPLE: me EXCEPTION: do
74% Utility

32. When the letter *e* is followed by the letter *w*, the vowel sound is the same as represented by *oo* (/o͞o/).
EXAMPLE: blew EXCEPTION: sew
35% Utility

33. When the letter *a* is followed by the letter *r* and final *e*, we expect to hear the sound heard in *care*.
EXAMPLE: dare EXCEPTION: are
90% Utility

34. When the letter *i* is followed by the letters *gh*, the letter *i* usually stands for its long sound and the *gh* is silent.
EXAMPLE: high EXCEPTION: neighbor
71% Utility

Syllable Generalization

35. If the first vowel sound in a word is followed by two consonants, the first syllable usually ends with the first of the two consonants.
EXAMPLE: bullet EXCEPTION: singer
72% Utility

36. If the first vowel sound in a word is followed by a single consonant, that consonant usually begins the second syllable.
EXAMPLE: over EXCEPTION: oven
44% Utility

37. In a word of more than one syllable, the letter *v* usually goes with the preceding vowel to form a syllable.
EXAMPLE: cover EXCEPTION: clover
73% Utility

38. If the last syllable of a word ends in *le*, the consonant preceding the *le* usually begins the last syllable.
EXAMPLE: tumble EXCEPTION: buckle
97% Utility

39. When the first vowel in a word is followed by *th*, *ch*, or *sh*, these symbols are not broken when the word is divided into syllables, and they may go with either the first or second syllable.
EXAMPLE: dishes
100% Utility

40. In most two-syllable words, the first syllable is accented.
EXAMPLE: famous EXCEPTION: polite
85% Utility

41. When the last syllable is the sound *r*, it is unaccented.
EXAMPLE: butter EXCEPTION: appear
95% Utility

42. In most two-syllable words that end in a consonant followed by *y*, the first syllable is accented and the last is unaccented.
EXAMPLE: baby EXCEPTION: supply
96% Utility

43. If *a*, *in*, *re*, *ex*, *de*, or *be* is the first syllable in a word, it is usually unaccented.
EXAMPLE: above EXCEPTION: insect
87% Utility

44. When *tion* is the final syllable in a word, it is unaccented.
EXAMPLE: nation
100% Utility

45. When *ture* is the final syllable in a word, it is unaccented.
EXAMPLE: picture
100% Utility

Structural Analysis: Using Word Parts

When they begin reading increasingly complex texts, children encounter growing numbers of multisyllabic words. Teaching word analysis provides strategies to help them tackle these longer, more difficult words. These lessons can begin as early as first grade and should continue throughout the elementary grades. The following section provides guidelines and word lists for introducing the following word analysis skills in the primary grades:

1. Compound words
2. Prefixes
3. Suffixes (including plurals and inflectional endings)
4. Homophones
5. Syllabication

Children in fourth grade and above should also receive instruction in Latin and Greek roots and how to use them to read and spell words. For more information, see *Teaching Phonics and Word Study in the Intermediate Grades* (Blevins, 2001).

Compound Words

Guidelines:

- A **compound word** is a word made up of two smaller words. Often the meaning of a compound word can be derived from the meaning of the two smaller words. For example, a *doghouse* is a "house for a dog." However, there are notable exceptions, such as *butterfly*.

- There are three types of compound words: open (fire drill), closed (doghouse), and hyphenated (send-off).

- Encourage children to look for smaller words in larger words to help them pronounce—and sometimes figure out the meanings of—the larger words. Compound word instruction introduces this concept. However, guide children to look for words with more than two or three letters in a larger word. Identifying a two-letter word isn't always helpful. For example, finding the word *to* in *town* or *tornado* is useless for determining either pronunciation or meaning.

- Point out to children that when a compound word is divided, each remaining smaller word must be able to stand on its own.

Compound Words

after all	basketball	bullfrog	downstairs	fireplace
afternoon	bath mat	butterfly	downtown	fire station
aftershave	bathrobe	buttermilk	dragonfly	fire truck
air bag	bathroom	buttonhole	dressmaker	firewood
airhole	bathtub	bypass	driveway	fireworks
airmail	bathwater	campfire	drumstick	flowerpot
air mattress	beanbag	campground	dugout	football
airplane	beanpod	candlelight	eardrum	footbridge
airsick	beanpole	candle maker	earthquake	footpath
airtight	bed rest	candlestick	electric guitar	footprint
anteater	bedroll	cardboard	everybody	footrest
anthill	bedroom	cheerleader	everyday	footstep
anybody	bedside	classroom	everyone	footstool
anyhow	bedspread	clothespin	everything	give-and-take
anyone	bedspring	clubhouse	everywhere	goldfish
anything	bedtime	coal mine	eyeball	grapevine
anywhere	beehive	collarbone	eyeglasses	grasshopper
applesauce	beeline	cookbook	eyelid	greenhouse
armchair	birdbath	cornbread	eyesight	grown-up
armrest	birdcage	corncob	faraway	headstand
back away	birdcall	cornfield	farmhouse	hairbrush
backboard	bird dog	countdown	father-in-law	haircut
backbone	birdhouse	cowboy	finger bowl	hairnet
backdoor	birdseed	crossword	finger hole	hairpiece
backfield	birthday	cupcake	fingernail	hairpin
background	blackbird	daydream	finger paint	hairstyle
backpack	blackboard	daylight	fingerprint	hand-feed
back room	blindfold	diving board	fingertip	handbag
backseat	blueberry	doghouse	fireboat	handball
backstage	bluebird	dollhouse	fire drill	handbook
backstop	blueprint	doorbell	fire-eater	handmade
backstroke	boathouse	doorknob	fire engine	handpick
backyard	book bag	doormat	fire escape	handsaw
bagpipe	bookcase	doorstep	firefighter	handshake
bandleader	bookmark	doorway	firefly	handstand
barnyard	broomstick	doubleheader	firehouse	handwrite
baseball	bulldog	downhill	firelight	headache

Compound Words

headband	milkshake	roadside	snowman	toothpaste
headphone	moonbeam	roof garden	snowplow	townspeople
henhouse	moonlight	rooftop	snowshoe	treetop
high chair	mother-in-law	rosebud	snowstorm	tugboat
high jump	motorboat	rosebush	snowsuit	underground
high noon	motorcycle	rowboat	somebody	underwater
high-rise	mousetrap	sailboat	someday	upstairs
high school	music box	sandbox	someone	wallpaper
hilltop	newspaper	sandpaper	something	washcloth
homegrown	nightgown	saucepan	someway	watchdog
homemade	notebook	sawdust	spaceship	waterfall
home plate	outdoors	scarecrow	spacesuit	whatever
homeroom	outfield	scrapbook	springtime	wheelchair
home run	outside	sea breeze	starfish	windmill
homesick	overlook	sea captain	starlight	windpipe
hometown	overnight	seacoast	starship	windshield
homework	overtake	seafood	steamboat	wintertime
horseback	pancake	seagull	stepladder	wishbone
horsefly	passer-by	sea horse	storehouse	without
horseshoe	peanut	seaport	storeroom	workbench
hotdog	pillowcase	seashell	storyteller	workday
houseboat	pinecone	seashore	sunburn	worktable
iceberg	pinwheel	seaside	sunflower	wristwatch
ice skate	playground	seat belt	sunlight	
inside	playhouse	seaweed	sunrise	
jellyfish	playpen	send-off	sunset	
keyhole	pocketbook	shopkeeper	sunshine	
lawn mower	poison ivy	shoreline	supermarket	
lifetime	polar bear	sidewalk	swimming pool	
lighthouse	popcorn	sideways	tablespoon	
living room	postcard	skyline	teacup	
lookout	railroad	skyscraper	teaspoon	
loudspeaker	rainbow	smokestack	toenail	
lunchroom	raincoat	snapshot	toe shoe	
mailbox	raindrop	snowball	toolbox	
masterpiece	rainfall	snowfall	toothache	
merry-go-round	ringmaster	snowflake	toothbrush	

Prefixes

Guidelines:

- **A prefix is a group of letters that appears at the front of a word.** A prefix affects the meaning of the root or base word to which it is attached. To determine whether a group of letters is a prefix, remove them from the word. If a known word remains, you have a prefix. For example, remove the letters *un* from the following words: *unhappy*, *untie*, *uncle*, *uninterested*. In which word are the letters *un* not a prefix? (*uncle*)

- **Make students aware of the following warnings about prefixes.**

  1. **Most prefixes have more than one meaning.** For example, the prefix *un* can mean "not" as in *unhappy*, or "do the opposite of" as in *untie*. Teach the multiple meanings of the most common prefixes and use careful language during lessons, such as "the prefix *un* sometimes means '*not*.'"

  2. **Be careful of letter clusters that look like prefixes but aren't.** For example, when the letters *un* are removed from *uncle*, no recognizable root or base word is left. And when the letters *in* are removed from *invented*, the word that remains is not related to the whole word. The prefixes that are most troublesome are *re*, *in*, and *dis*.

  3. **Don't rely solely on word-part clues.** Students should use context clues as well as examine prefixes to verify a word's meaning. For example, a student might think the word *unassuming* means "not assuming/not supposing" instead of its actual meaning, "modest." It is estimated that about 15–20% of the prefixed words students encounter share this complexity (White et al., 1989).

- **Teach only the most common prefixes.** The chart below shows the most common prefixes, based on a count of prefixed words appearing in the *Word Frequency Book* (Carroll, Davies, and Richman, 1971). The prefix *un* alone accounts for almost one-third of the total. The top three account for more than half. In first through third grades, only the prefixes *un* and *re* need to be formally taught since these have the highest utility and are the most likely to appear in primary-level materials.

The Most Common Prefixes

Rank	Prefix	Meaning	%	Rank	Prefix	Meaning	%
1	un	not, opposite of	26	12	inter	between, among	3
2	re	again	14	13	fore	before	3
3	in, im, ir, ill	not	11	14	de	opposite of	2
4	dis	not, opposite of	7	15	trans	across	2
5	en, em	cause to	4	16	super	above	1
6	non	not	4	17	semi	half	1
7	in, im	in or into	4	18	anti	against	1
8	over	too much	3	19	mid	middle	1
9	mis	wrongly	3	20	under	too little	1
10	sub	under	3				
11	pre	before	3				

All other prefixes (approximately 100) accounted for only 3% of the words.

Suffixes

Guidelines:

- **A suffix is a letter or group of letters that is added to the end of a root or base word.** Common suffixes include *s, ed, ing, ly,* and *tion*. A suffix changes the meaning of the root or base word and often, the part of speech. Therefore, children need to understand the meaning of a suffix and how it affects the word it's attached to. By helping children quickly identify a suffix and visually remove it to identify the base word, you'll help them figure out the meaning of the whole word.

- **Adding a suffix sometimes changes the spelling of a base word.** It's important to teach those suffixes that cause spelling changes directly. The three most common spelling changes caused by adding suffixes are:

  1. **consonant doubling (*runner, running*):** The consonant is doubled so that the first syllable will form a CVC pattern. Most CVC words contain a short-vowel sound. Therefore, the second consonant—acting as a diacritical mark—ensures that the short-vowel sound of the base word is maintained.

  2. **changing *y* to *i* (*flies, happiest, loneliness*):** The letter *y* at the beginning of a word or syllable acts as a consonant and stands for the /y/ sound. However, the letter *y* at the end of a word either stands for a vowel sound (*fly*) or is part of a vowel digraph (*play*). The change from *y* to *i* ensures that the vowel sound the *y* stands for in the word is maintained.

  3. **deleting the silent *e* (*making*):** When a word ends in silent *e*, the letter is usually removed before the suffix (except *s*) is added because most common suffixes begin with vowels and a double vowel would create a vowel digraph and cause confusion.

- **Teach only the most commonly used suffixes.** This chart shows the 20 most frequent suffixes, based on a count that appears in the *Word Frequency Book* (Carroll, Davies, and Richman, 1971). The suffixes *s, es, ed,* and *ing* account for almost two-thirds of the words. The suffixes *s* and *es* are used to form the plurals of most nouns. The suffixes *ed* and *ing* are inflectional endings added to verbs to change their tense. These four suffixes are generally introduced to children in first grade.

The Most Common Suffixes

Rank	Suffix	Meaning	%
1	s, es	plurals	31
2	ed	past-tense verbs	20
3	ing	verb form/present participle	14
4	ly	characteristic of	7
5	er, or	person connected with	4
6	ion, tion, ation, ition	act, process	4
7	ible, able	can be done	2
8	al, ial	having characteristics of	1
9	y	characterized by	1
10	ness	state of, condition of	1
11	ity, ty	state of	1
12	ment	action or process	1
13	ic	having characteristics of	1
14	ous, eous, ious	possessing the qualities of	1
15	en	made of	1
16	er	comparative	1
17	ive, ative, itive	adjective form of a noun	1
18	ful	full of	1
19	less	without	1
20	est	superlative	1

All other suffixes (approximately 160) accounted for only 7% of the words.

Homophones

Guidelines:

- Homophones are words that sound the same but have different meanings and spellings. Each homophone contains the same number of phonemes but different graphemes. The spellings of homophones are critical because they provide clues to the word's meaning.
- Homophones can be taught as early as first grade. Some of the simplest homophones students will encounter are listed here. It is helpful to have children write and read these words in multiple contexts.

Homophones for Instruction

aloud/allowed	made/maid	so/sew
ate/eight	mail/male	some/sum
bear/bare	main/mane	son/sun
beat/beet	meet/meat	stare/stair
blew/blue	night/knight	steal/steel
brake/break	not/knot	tale/tail
by/buy	oh/owe	there/their/they're
cent/sent	one/won	through/threw
deer/dear	peace/piece	tied/tide
do/due/dew	peak/peek	toe/tow
fare/fair	pear/pair	two/to/too
flour/flower	plain/plane	waist/waste
for/four	read/reed	way/weigh
hair/hare	real/reel	weak/week
heal/heel	red/read	wear/where
heard/herd	right/write	weight/wait
here/hear	road/rode	which/witch
horse/hoarse	roll/role	whole/hole
hour/our	rose/rows	wood/would
I/eye	sail/sale	wrap/rap
knew/new	see/sea	
know/no	seem/seam	
knows/nose	seen/scene	

Syllabication

Guidelines:

- **A syllable is a unit of pronunciation.** Each syllable contains only one vowel sound. Finding the vowels in a word is an important starting point for breaking it apart by syllables. However, each syllable may have more than one vowel letter. For example, the word *boat* contains one vowel sound, therefore one syllable. However, the vowel sound is represented by the vowel digraph *oa*.
- **Whether a group of letters forms a syllable depends on the letters that surround it** (Adams, 1990). For example, the letters *par* form a syllable in the word *partial* but not in the word *parade*.
- **One syllable in a multisyllabic word receives more emphasis or stress.** The vowel sound in this syllable is heard most clearly. Stress is indicated in dictionary pronunciation keys by

accent marks. In addition to one primary accent, some words have one or more secondary accents. Vowels in unstressed syllables become schwas (/ə/). Generally, in words with prefixes and suffixes, the prefix or suffix forms a separate syllable and the accent falls on the root or base word. In compound words, the accent generally falls on or within the first word. The accent in most two-syllable words falls on the first syllable.

- **To decode multisyllabic words, children must be able to divide words into recognizable chunks.** Some readers develop a sense of syllabication breaks independently through their exposures to print, while others have great difficulty and need instruction (Just and Carpenter, 1987). For some children, their phonics skills break down when confronted by multisyllabic words because they cannot readily identify syllable boundaries (Eldredge, 1995).

- **Children need training in dividing words according to syllables.** They must first understand how to figure out the vowel sound in one-syllable words. (Teach them common one-syllable spelling patterns such as CVC and CVCe.) Then they must understand that a syllable has only one vowel sound, but that vowel sound may be spelled using more than one vowel.

- **Children can use syllabication strategies to approximate a word's pronunciation.** This approximation is generally close enough for the reader to recognize the word if it is in the reader's speaking or listening vocabularies. This is another reason why developing children's speaking and listening vocabularies and combining the development of background knowledge with vocabulary instruction are so critical.

- **Some words can be divided in more than one way.** For example: *treat-y, trea-ty, tr-ea-ty*. However, the fewer the chunks, the easier it is to decode the word.

- **Traditional syllabication strategies can be ineffective.** For example, clapping syllables doesn't work because the child has to already know the word in order to clap the syllables (Johnson and Bauman, 1984). Likewise, memorizing countless syllabication rules has little effect on a child's ability to decode multisyllabic words. (Note: *syllabication* and *syllabification* are synonymous terms.)

- **Few syllabication generalizations are very useful to children, but some are worth pointing out.** These include the following (Chall and Popp, 1996). State them in simple, clear terms; focus on their application, not their recitation.

  1. If the word is a compound word, divide it between the two smaller words. If either or both of the smaller words have more than one syllable, follow the syllabication generalizations below.

  2. Inflectional endings such as *ing, er, est,* and *ed* often form separate syllables. The remaining portion of the word is the root or base word. Looking for these and other

meaning units in words is known as morphemic analysis. A morpheme is a meaning unit. There are free morphemes—whole words that can stand alone and cannot be divided into other meaning units (base words). And there are bound morphemes—word parts that cannot stand alone and must be combined with a free morpheme (suffixes and prefixes). Bound morphemes alter the meaning of the free morphemes to which they are attached (EXAMPLE: *un* + *happy* = *unhappy*).

3. When two or more consonants appear in the middle of a word, divide the word between them (CVC•CVC) (EXAMPLE: *basket*). Then try the short sound for the vowel in the first syllable. This generalization does not apply if the two consonants form a digraph such as *ch*, *tch*, *ph*, *sh*, or *th*. These digraphs cannot be separated across syllable boundaries.

4. When only one consonant appears between two vowels, divide the word before the consonant. Then try the long sound of the first vowel (EXAMPLES: *tiger*, *pilot*). This works about 55% of the time. If a recognizable word is not formed using the long sound, divide the word after the consonant and try the short sound for the first syllable (EXAMPLES: *exit*, *second*). This works about 45% of the time.

5. When a two-syllable word ends in a consonant plus *le*, the consonant and *le* form the last syllable. If the preceding syllable ends in a consonant, try the short sound of the vowel (EXAMPLES: *wiggle*, *sample*). If the preceding syllable ends with a vowel, try the long sound of the vowel (EXAMPLES: *table*, *bridle*).

6. When a two-syllable word ends in a consonant plus *re*, the consonant and *re* form the last syllable. If the preceding syllable ends with a vowel, try the long sound of that vowel (EXAMPLE: *acre*).

7. Never break apart vowel digraphs or diphthongs across syllable boundaries.

- There are **six basic syllable spelling patterns** in English that children should be familiar with (Moats, 1995):

  1. **closed:** These syllables end in a consonant. The vowel sound is generally short (EXAMPLES: *rab bit*, *nap kin*).

  2. **open:** These syllables end in a vowel. The vowel sound is generally long (EXAMPLES: *tiger*, *pilot*).

  3. ***r*-controlled:** When a vowel is followed by *r*, the letter *r* affects the sound of the vowel. The vowel and the *r* appear in the same syllable (EXAMPLES: *bird*, *turtle*).

  4. **vowel team:** Many vowel sounds are spelled with vowel digraphs such as *ai*, *ay*, *ea*, *ee*, *oa*, *ow*, *oo*, *oi*, *oy*, *ou*, *ie*, and *ei*. The vowel digraphs appear in the same syllable (EXAMPLES: *boat*, *explain*).

  5. **vowel–silent *e*:** These syllables generally represent long-vowel sounds (EXAMPLES: *compete*, *decide*).

6. **consonant + *le*:** Usually when *le* appears at the end of a word and is preceded by a consonant, the consonant + *le* form the final syllable (EXAMPLES: *table, little*). The chart at right shows consonant + *le* words that can be used for instruction.

- Begin syllabication instruction in first grade by pointing out compound words, words with double consonants, and words with common prefixes and suffixes such as *un-, re-, -s, -es, -ing,* and *-ed.* In later grades, focus instruction on additional prefixes and suffixes, as well as common base words. Having children practice recognizing common syllabic units is beneficial.

- Teach syllabication strategies using known words, then provide ample opportunities for students to apply each strategy in context.

- Most dictionaries divide words according to how the word should be hyphenated when it's breaking across lines. This sometimes has little to do with the division of the word into its syllables for pronunciation. Therefore, use dictionaries with caution.

Consonant + *le* Words

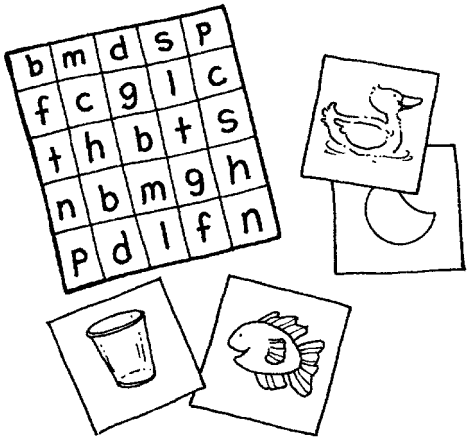
bubble	bridle	angle	battle
double	bundle	bugle	bottle
fable	fiddle	eagle	cattle
marble	handle	giggle	gentle
noble	kindle	jungle	kettle
pebble	middle	shingle	little
rumble	needle	single	mantle
stubble	puddle	struggle	rattle
tumble	saddle	wiggle	settle
			title
circle	ankle	apple	dazzle
uncle	crinkle	maple	fizzle
vehicle	sparkle	purple	muzzle
	sprinkle	sample	puzzle
	wrinkle	simple	
		steeple	
		temple	

35 Quick-and-Easy Phonics and Word Analysis Games

Many wonderful educational games and activities providing phonics practice are available from educational supply companies. But you can prepare countless simple and engaging activities yourself. Here are some of the easiest and best activities I have used, or collected, over the years.

1 Sound Bingo

Make copies of a 5-square-by-5-square Bingo game board. Use the letters that follow to fill in the cards: **Game 1:** *b, c, d, f, g, h, l, m, n, p, s, t;* **Game 2:** *l, t, s, k, n, g, sh, f, p.* Use each letter at least twice per game board (see illustration). Put the letters in a different order for each card. Also place picture cards in a bag. The picture names must contain the sounds that the letters represent. Sound Bingo is played just like regular Bingo. Before the game begins, give each player a game board and ample space markers. The caller (teacher) draws one picture card from the bag and displays it. If a player's game board contains the letter that begins the picture's name, he or she places a marker over the space. The first player to get five markers in a row either vertically,

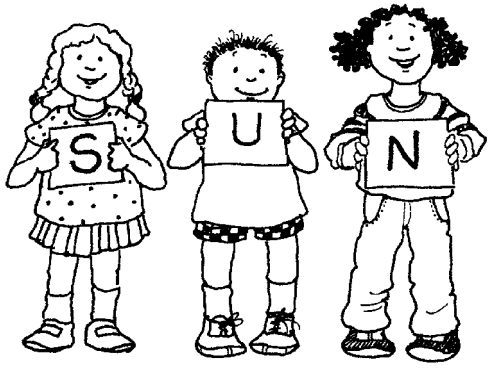


horizontally, or diagonally, yells "Sound Bingo!" The player then states aloud the letter and sound it stands for as the caller checks it against the picture cards drawn from the bag. If these match, the player wins. Players then clear their boards, the

picture cards go back in the bag, and a new game begins. (Game 2 is played in the same way but focuses on ending sounds.)

2 Living Words

Write on large note cards letters or spellings you want to review. Distribute one card to each student. Then have three students stand in front of the class. Ask them to stand in a sequence that forms a word. Each group must determine its word. For example, you might call on the students with the *s*, *u*, and *n* cards. When the students have formed the word *sun*, ask a volunteer to read aloud the word. Show children how to blend the word. Continue by forming a new word or substituting letters in the existing word (for example, have the student with the *b* card replace the student with the *s* card and blend the new word formed).

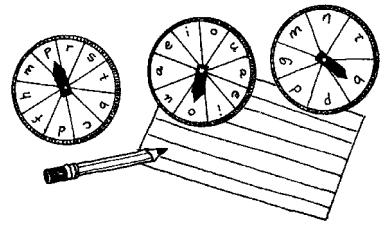


3 Change-a-Letter

Write an incomplete sentence on the chalkboard, such as "I like to pet my _____." Then write a word that is one letter away from being the correct answer, such as *cab*. Ask a volunteer to change one letter in the word to form a word that will complete the sentence. Have the student write the word on the blank. (*cat*) Continue with other incomplete sentences and change-a-letter words.

4 Spin It!

Cut out three spinners and dials (see illustration). On the outside edge of the first spinner write the letters *t*, *b*, *c*, *d*, *f*, *h*, *m*, *p*, *r*, and *s*. On the outside edge of the second spinner, write the letters *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, and *u* two times. On the outside edge of the third spinner, write the letters *m*, *n*, *t*, *b*, *p*, *d*, and *g*. Paste the spinners in sequence on a piece of tagboard or the inside of a folder. Using a brass fastener, attach the dials to the spinners. Then have each student spin all three spinners. If a word can be formed, the student writes the word on a sheet of paper. Each word is worth one point. Students can continue until they've formed five words, or they can challenge each other to see who can form the most words. As the year progresses, replace the short-vowel spellings with long-vowel spellings, and the consonants with clusters and digraphs.



5 Phonogram Families

Distribute letter cards to each student. On each letter card write a consonant, cluster, or digraph. Then display a phonogram card. Students come to the front of the classroom if they're holding a card that when combined with the phonogram card can form a word. These are members of this phonogram's "family." Invite each student to place his or her card in front of the phonogram card and blend aloud the word formed.

6 Build It

Draw a picture of a house or pyramid on a sheet of paper. Divide the house or pyramid into smaller segments, such as squares or rectangles. Make enough copies of the page for each student to have one. Then make several sets of word-building cards. On each card, write a consonant, cluster, digraph, vowel, or phonogram, depending on the phonics skills you are reviewing. Make enough cards for each so that many words

can be formed. Now divide the class into small groups, distribute a pyramid page to each child, and place a set of cards facedown on the table or floor in front of each group. One at a time, each student in the group draws a set of five cards and builds as many words as possible. The student writes each word in one segment of the house or pyramid, or colors in one segment for each word. The student who builds (completes) the house or pyramid first wins.

7 Sound Checkers

Write a word on each square of an old checkerboard. Each word should contain a spelling that you want children to review. The game is played just like checkers, except player must read the word on each space he or she lands on. If a player cannot read the word, he or she returns to the original space.

8 Sound Hunt

Assign each student a letter or spelling that you want to review. (You might want to have students work with partners or in small groups.) Then have children search for objects in the classroom whose names contain the sound represented by the letter or spelling. Provide time for students to share their findings.

Variation: Have students also search through books, magazines, and newspapers for words that contain the letter or spelling.

9 Environmental Print Boards

As you teach each sound and spelling, challenge children to find examples of the sound-spelling relationship in words on signs, cereal boxes, advertisements, junk mail, and other environmental print items. Have children bring these items to class (suggest they take a photo or draw a picture if it's a large sign) and attach them to an environmental-print bulletin board to refer to throughout the week.

10 Letter Tic-Tac-Toe

Make copies of tic-tac-toe game boards. On each game board write incomplete words. For example, you might write each word, leaving a blank for the first letter. Then place the game boards in a folder. Have pairs of children each select a game board. The game is similar to a standard game of tic-tac-toe. Each player chooses to be X or O. In turn, each player marks an X or O on one square of the grid. But in order to mark an X or O on a square, the player must complete the square's word by writing the missing letter and reading aloud the completed word. The winner is the first player to get three X's or three O's in a row horizontally, vertically, or diagonally.

11 Graph It

Have children create graphs to combine language arts with math concepts. For example, students might search a passage for all the words with short *a*, *i*, and *u* and list them. Then, using their word list, they can create a bar graph showing the number of words found.

Variation: Have students examine the length of words (start with the length of their names) to create a graph. For example, how many students' names contain four letters? Five letters? Display the graphs throughout the room.

12 Word Baseball

Word baseball can be played much like the original game. Divide the class into two teams. One at a time, each player is up at bat. Show the child a word card. If the player reads the word card, he or she goes to first base. If the player is unable to read the word, the team receives an out. The team at bat continues until it receives three outs. The winning team is the one that earns more points after nine innings. (You might want to limit the game to fewer innings.)

Variation: To make the game more exciting, make some word cards worth a base hit, others worth a double or triple, and a few worth the treasured home run. You might also ask the player at bat to read the word, then state a word that rhymes with it or that contains the same vowel sound.

13 Sound Hopscotch

Using chalk, create several large hopscotch grids on a paved area of your playground (or use masking tape on the floor of your classroom). In each section of the boards, write a sound-spelling (EXAMPLE: *ay*) you want to review. Then read aloud a word or call out a sound. Students hop to the space on the hopscotch board that contains the spelling called out. If you are calling out a word, designate the position (initial, medial, final) in which the sound occurs in the word.

14 Concentration

This classic game can be played by two or three students to review almost any skill. Make a set of 12 to 20 playing cards. On each card write a word. For example, if you are reviewing compound words, you will write words that, when combined, can form compound words. Place the cards facedown on the table or floor. Each player chooses two cards. If the cards form a compound word, the player keeps them. The player with the most cards at the end of the game wins. When reviewing vowel sounds, make a set of cards in which rhyming word pairs can be found.

15 Word Wall

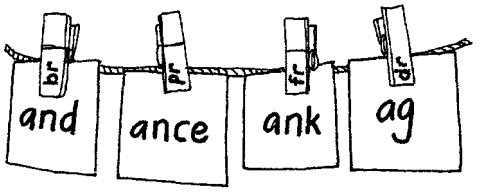
As each sound-spelling is introduced, place a large card showing it on the wall and add words to the card that contain the sound-spelling. These words can be revisited throughout the week by having the class chorally read them, and they can be referred to by students while reading or writing. In addition to grouping words by common sound-spellings, add cards to the Word Wall containing high-frequency words.

16 Word Toss

Tape several plastic foam or paper cups to the floor close together. This should resemble the setup commonly seen at carnivals with the goldfish bowls and Ping-Pong balls. Inside each cup, write a letter or spelling. Have each child toss a button into the mass of cups. When his or her button lands in a cup, the child states a word that contains the sound that the letter or spelling in the cup stands for. Continue until each child has had multiple turns.

17 Pin It

String a long clothesline across one section of your classroom. Place clothespins along the clothesline at various intervals. On each clothespin write the beginning part of a word, such as a consonant, cluster, or digraph. On note cards, write the ending part of a word (phonogram). Have children form words by pinning each note card to a clothespin.

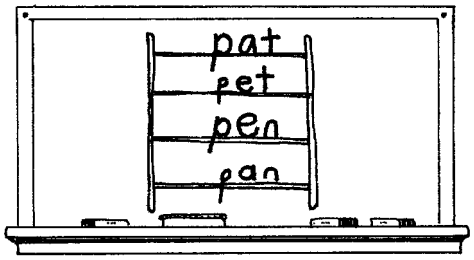


18 High-Frequency Box

Place a set of high-frequency word cards in a shoebox. Throughout the day, ask volunteers to select a card, spell aloud the word, read it, and use it in a sentence. The rest of the class must write the word on a sheet of paper as they say each letter aloud. Then display it in a pocket chart. At the end of the day, collect the students' papers and have the class read the word cards in the pocket chart chorally. By the end of the week, this small set of words will have been reviewed many times.

19 Word Ladders

Draw a ladder on the chalkboard. On the first step, write a word. Then ask a volunteer to change one letter in the word to form a new word. Write the new word on the second step. Continue until the ladder is completed.



20 Fish for It

Make word cards using decodable words or high-frequency words you want to review. Glue a small bar magnet on the back of each card, or attach a paper clip. Then make a fishing pole, with a paper clip or magnet for a hook. Divide the class into teams. Place the word cards in a bag. One student from each team must "fish" for a word card. When the card is drawn, the student spells the word aloud, then blends it. The rest of the class determines whether the word is correct. If it is correct, the team earns one point. Play until one team earns ten points.

21 Sound Play

Throughout the year, help children create letter cards. For each sound-spelling relationship you teach, distribute an index card to each student. Have students write the spelling on the card and add the card to their growing set. Several times a week, provide time for students to play with the cards by combining them to form words. Circulate around the room and help children blend the words they have formed.

22 What Am I?

Select a classroom object and provide clues to help children guess its identity. For example, you might say, "The name of this object begins with /ch/." Then write students' guesses on the chalkboard. Continue with other clues. After you give each new clue, allow the students to modify their guesses. When the class agrees on the item, confirm its identity.

23 Password

Provide a set of word cards, each containing a decodable word. One student of a pair selects a card, then provides clues for his or her partner to figure out the word. For example, if a student draws the word card "sun," he or she might say, "My word begins with the letter *s*. It has three letters and describes something very bright." The student provides clues until the partner figures out the word. Then partners change roles.

24 What's Missing?

Display a picture of an animal or object and, leaving out one letter, write its name on the chalkboard. For example, display a picture of a cat and write "c_t" on the chalkboard. Then have a volunteer fill in the missing letter. Continue with other pictures representing spellings you want to review.

25 Bowling for Words

Make a bowling score sheet for each student (see sample). Then make a set of large tagboard or construction paper bowling pins. On each pin, write a word and a number from 1 to 10. Make the words with the highest numbers the most difficult. Divide the class into small teams. Place the bowling pins in a bag or box so that students can't see them. One player from each team reaches in and selects a pin. If the player can correctly read the word, he records the score on his or her score sheet. If the player can't read the word, he or she receives a "gutter ball," or a score of 0. The game ends when all ten frames of the bowling game have been played and the scores tallied. You might want to have teams use calculators to tally their scores.

BOWLING FOR WORDS										TOTAL
Max	6	0	7	8	1	0	3	9	0	36

26 Word Sort

Provide students with sets of word cards. Have them sort the word cards first in any way they choose, such as by common sounds or word length. Then suggest a way for the students to sort the words. Be sure that the words you provide can be sorted in more than one way. For example, use words containing the long-*a* sound spelled *a_e*, *ai*, and *ay*. To make the word sorts more engaging, have the children sort cleverly shaped word cards into appropriate containers. For example, have them sort egg-shaped word cards into egg cartons labeled according to specific spellings.

27 Missing Words

Write a brief story or paragraph on a chart. Place self-sticking notes over every fifth or tenth word. Or select words with target sounds you want to review and cover those up. Another option is to write the story or paragraph, leaving blanks for each word you want students to figure out. When you get to a "missing" word, have students guess it. Before telling children whether they are correct, write the correct spelling for the first sound in the word and let children modify their guesses. (For example, you would write "sh" for the first sound in the word *shop*.) Continue this way until the whole word is spelled.

28 Silent Riddles

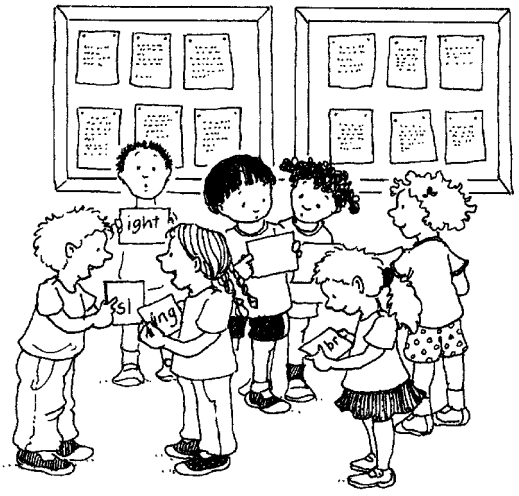
Write a set of words, each containing a silent letter, on the chalkboard. Then read a clue, such as "I am something you use to fix your hair. What am I?" Have a volunteer circle the word on the chalkboard that answers the riddle. (*comb*) Then have another volunteer draw a line through the silent letter. Continue until all the words have been used.

29 Unscramble It

Divide the class into teams of three or four. Provide each team with a list of ten scrambled words. Allow each team five minutes to unscramble as many words as possible. You can vary this activity by providing each team with scrambled sentences.

30 Make a Match

Write word parts on note cards. Make enough cards so that each student can receive one, and be sure that every card can be combined with at least one other to form a word. Distribute one card to each student. Play music while students search for their match—the student with another word part that can be combined with their card to form a word. When all students find their match, provide time for them to share their words with the class. Continue with other word part cards, or challenge students to find another match.



31 Word Card File

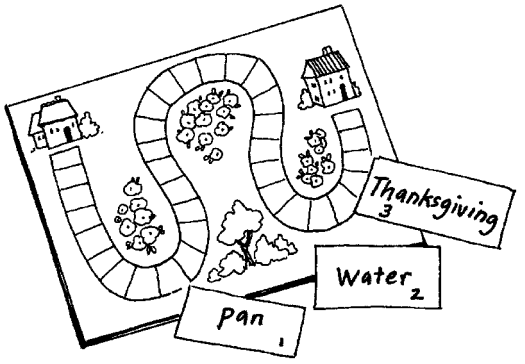
At the beginning of the year, have each student bring in a card file box and blank index cards. Every week, provide time for students to write a word they are having trouble reading or spelling on one of the index cards. Suggest that they add a sentence or picture clue to the card to help them remember the word. Have them keep their cards in alphabetical order and periodically review them. Point out opportunities for them to use their file cards.

32 Book Chat

Divide the class into groups of four or five. Have each student tell the group a little—just a few sentences—about a book he or she has recently read. Students might also enjoy reading aloud a favorite paragraph or page. Remind children not to give away the ending if the book is fiction. Encourage students in each group to read one of the books they heard about from their classmates. These book chats honor students' accomplishments and remind them of the purpose of learning sound-spelling relationships—to read great books.

33 Syllable Race

Create a game board such as the one shown. Then make word cards, each containing a one-, two-, or three-syllable word. Each player draws one card and reads aloud the word. If the player reads the word correctly, he or she moves the same number of spaces on the game board as there are syllables in the word. You might want to write this number under the word on each card for students to refer to. The game continues until one player reaches the end.



34 Time It

Make enough sets of word cards for each of several small teams. The cards in each set should contain the same mix of base words, prefixes, and suffixes. Distribute a set to each group. Timed by a three-minute egg timer, each team uses its cards to form words. One player records the words on a sheet of paper. Teams earn one point for each word. At the end of the game, each team reads aloud the words they formed.

35 Other Children's Games

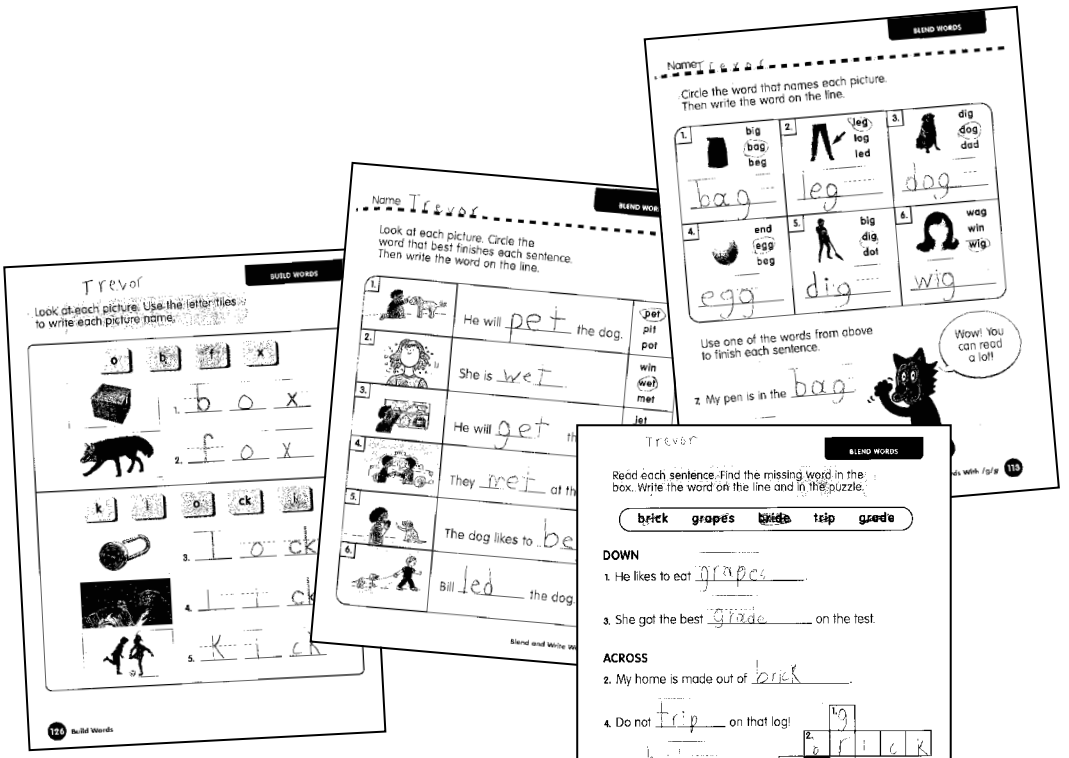
Many popular children's games are excellent for developing students' awareness of sound-spelling relationships. These include Scrabble, hangman, crossword puzzles, and search-and-finds. Stock your learning centers with these and other games.

For additional games and learning centers, see *Quick-and-Easy Learning Games: Phonics* by W. Blevins and *Quick-and-Easy Learning Centers: Phonics* by M. B. Spann.

Workbooks

Worksheets are viewed by many as a dirty word in phonics instruction. Generally, "seatwork is associated with lower levels of engagement and achievement" (Rosenshine and Stevens, 1984). However, you can use well-designed workbook pages to provide a quick paper-and-pencil assessment of a child's growing knowledge of phonics. A well-designed workbook page goes beyond having children circle and color by providing connected text for children to read and respond to. Nevertheless, workbook pages should not be the instructional emphasis of any phonics program and should not be used as busy work to keep children occupied. There is no better way for children to apply their growing phonics skills than to read. So if you choose to use workbook pages as part of your phonics instruction, evaluate them carefully and provide a reading assignment as a follow-up to each page. For example, after completing a workbook page, have the child reread a passage from a previously read story or article and respond to it in writing on the back of the workbook page. Or have the child read something new and respond to it in writing. Children need to have successful reading opportunities every day in order to develop into skilled, fluent, and enthusiastic readers. Statistics show that the average first-grade reader reads approximately 1,900 words a week. The typical poor first-grade reader reads only 16 words a week (Allington, 1984). Daily reading opportunities, including the rereading of stories and articles, are critical. Spending too much time on workbook pages is wasteful.

The following is a list of picturable items that can be used to develop quality workbook pages or to make instructional picture cards. (Remember that picture cards can provide excellent visual clues for students learning English as a second language.)



These activity pages provide multiple opportunities for children to read words in context and to write.

Scholastic

500 Picture Words

ant	bug	crib	football	horse	man	photograph	roots	spray	tub
apple	building	crown	fork	hose	map	piano	rope	spring	turkey
ax	bun	crutches	forty	hot	mat	pie	rose	square	turtle
baby	bus	cry	four	house	mask	pig	row	squeeze	twenty
backpack	bush	cub	fox	hug	match	pillow	rug	squirrel	two
bag	button	cube	frame	hump	meat	pin	ruler	stamp	umbrella
ball	cab	cup	fright	hut	men	pink	run	star	under
balloon	cage	cut	frog	ice	mice	plane	sand	steam	up
banana	cake	dance	frown	inch	milk	plant	sandwich	steps	vacuum
band	camel	deer	fruit	ink	mirror	plate	saw	stir	valentine
bank	camera	desk	fry	itch	mitt	plow	scale	stop	van
barn	can	dice	game	jacks	mitten	plug	scarf	strawberry	vase
baseball	candle	dig	garden	jam	mix	plus	school	street	vegetable
basket	cane	dinosaur	gate	jar	monkey	point	seal	stump	vest
bat	cap	dive	gift	jet	moon	pole	seed	suit	vine
bath	car	dog	giraffe	jug	mop	pond	seven	sun	violin
beach	carrot	doll	girl	juggle	mouse	pony	shadow	sweep	volcano
beak	cat	door	glass	jump	mouth	pool	shark	swim	wagon
bean	cave	dot	globe	kangaroo	mule	pop	shave	swing	wallet
bear	ceiling	draw	glue	key	mushroom	popcorn	sheep	table	wash
bed	chain	dress	goat	kick	music	porch	shelf	tack	watch
bee	chair	drip	gold	king	nail	pot	shell	tail	watermelon
beg	chalk	drum	goose	kiss	neck	pretzel	ship	tape	wave
bell	check	duck	grapes	kit	necklace	prize	shirt	team	wax
belt	cheese	eat	graph	kitchen	needle	pumpkin	shoe	teeth	web
bench	cherry	egg	grass	kite	nest	purse	shoelace	ten	well
bib	chest	elbow	grasshopper	knee	net	puzzle	shorts	tent	wet
big	chimney	elephant	green	knife	night	quack	shout	thermometer	whale
bike	chin	envelope	grill	knock	nine	queen	shovel	thirteen	wheel
bird	chop	face	groom	knot	nose	question	sink	thirty	wheelchair
black	circle	fall	guitar	ladder	nurse	quick	sit	thorn	whistle
block	circus	fan	gym	lake	nut	quiet	six	three	white
blow	city	feather	ham	lamp	octopus	quilt	skate	throne	wig
blue	clap	feet	hammer	lap	oil	quiz	skirt	throw	window
boat	clay	fence	hand	leaf	ox	rabbit	skunk	thumb	wing
boil	cliff	fifty	hat	leash	page	rag	sled	tie	worm
bone	clock	fin	hawk	leg	pail	rain	sleep	tiger	wrist
book	cloud	finger	hay	lemon	paint	rainbow	slide	tire	write
boot	clown	fire	heart	letter	pan	rake	smell	toad	yard
bow	coat	fish	heel	lid	paw	rat	smile	toast	yarn
bowl	coins	five	hen	light	pay	red	smoke	toe	yawn
box	cold	flag	hide	line	peas	read	snail	tooth	yell
boy	comb	flashlight	hill	lion	peach	right	snake	top	yellow
bread	cone	float	hippo	lips	pear	ring	snow	toys	yo-yo
brick	cook	floor	hit	list	peel	rip	soap	train	yolk
bride	corn	flower	hive	lock	pen	road	sock	tray	zebra
bridge	cot	flute	hole	log	pencil	robe	spider	tree	zero
broom	cow	fly	hood	lunch	penguin	robot	spill	triangle	zigzag
brown	crab	fold	hop	mail	pet	rock	spin	truck	zipper
brush	crawl	foot	horn	mailbox	phone	roof	spoon	trunk	zoo

Assessments

The following standardized diagnostic test batteries with tests or subtests measuring word recognition have good reliability and validity:

- Diagnostic Reading Scales (1981)
  California Test Bureau
  Del Monte Research Park
  Monterey, CA 93940

- Durrell Analysis of Reading Difficulty (1980)
  Psychological Corporation
  555 Academic Court
  San Antonio, TX 78204

- Gates-McKillop-Horowitz Reading Diagnostic Tests (1981)
  Teachers College Press
  1234 Amsterdam Avenue
  New York, NY 10027

- Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (1984)
  Psychological Corporation
  555 Academic Court
  San Antonio, TX 78204

- Woodcock Reading Mastery Test, Revised (1987)
  American Guidance Service
  Publishers Building
  Circle Pines, MN 55014

In addition, I'm including here two quick assessments you can use.

1 Nonsense Word Test

The Nonsense Word Test (Blevins, 1997) assesses children's decoding abilities without allowing their sight-word knowledge to interfere. Administer this text no earlier than the spring of Grade 1. Another good test to use if you are uncomfortable with nonsense word assessments is the Name Test (Cunningham, 1990).

Preparing the Test

Make two photocopies of the next page for each student you plan to assess, one for the student and one for you to use as an answer sheet on which to record the student's responses.

Administering the Test

Administer the test to one student at a time.

1. Explain to the student that he or she is to read each word. Point out that the words are nonsense, or made-up, words.
2. Have the student read the entire list.
3. Write a check mark on the answer sheet for each word read correctly.

Scoring the Test

1. Count a word correct if the pronunciation is correct according to common sound-spelling relationships.
2. Total the number of words the student read correctly. Analyze the mispronounced words, looking for patterns that might give you information about the student's decoding strengths and weaknesses.
3. Focus future instruction on those sound-spelling relationship categories (short vowels, long vowels, and so on) in which the student made three or more errors.

/b/ /d/ /f/ /g/ /h/ /j/ /k/ /l/ /m/ /n/ /p/ /r/ /s/ /t/ /v/ /w/ /y/ /z/ /ch/ /sh/ /th/ /th/
/hw/ /zh/ /ng/ /ɑ/ /e/ /i/ /o/ /u/ /ā/ /ē/ /ī/ /ō/ /yo͞o/ /ə/ /o͞o/ /o͞o/ /ou/ /oi/ /ô/ /û/ /ä/ /ä/

Name _____ Date _____

ASSESSMENT 1: Nonsense Word Test

A. Short Vowels

1. lat
2. ped
3. sib
4. mog
5. vun
6. fim
7. hep
8. yot
9. rud
10. cag

B. Digraphs, Blends

1. sheg
2. chab
3. stot
4. whid
5. thuzz
6. bruck
7. cliss
8. smend
9. thrist
10. phum

C. Long Vowels

1. sote
2. mabe
3. foap
4. weam
5. glay
6. shain
7. dright
8. hupe
9. heest
10. sny

D. Other Vowels

1. doit
2. spoud
3. clar
4. foy
5. jern
6. moof
7. lurst
8. porth
9. stook
10. flirch

2 San Diego Quick Assessment

The San Diego Quick Assessment (LaPray and Ross, 1969) contains words common to children's reading materials at a number of grade levels. I've included only the portion of the test pertaining to the elementary grades.

Preparing the Test

1. To prepare word list cards, make a photocopy of the next page. Cut apart the word lists and glue each to a note card. Write the grade level on the back of each card for your reference.
2. Make a photocopy of the next page for each student you plan to assess to use as an answer sheet on which to record the student's responses.

Administering the Test

Administer the test to one student at a time.

1. Start with a card that is at least two years below the student's grade level. Have the student read aloud the words in the list. If he or she misreads any words, go to an easier list until the student makes no errors. This indicates the base reading level.
2. Then have the student read each subsequent card in sequence, and record all incorrect responses. Encourage the student to read all the words so that you can determine the strategies he or she uses to decode.
3. Continue the assessment until the student misses at least three words on one of the lists.

Scoring the Test

Use the assessment results to identify the student's independent, instructional, and frustration levels. You can provide instructional and independent reading materials for each child based on the results of this assessment.

Independent level = no more than one error on a list
Instructional level = two errors on a list
Frustration level = three or more errors on a list

Try It Out

- Select one activity from the Quick-and-Easy Phonics and Word Analysis Games to try out with your students.
- Write this week's phonics lesson using the models provided as a guide.
- Evaluate your prefix and suffix instruction based on the frequency charts provided.
- Match classroom trade books to specific phonics skills. Determine where in your phonics scope and sequence the majority of the words in each book is decodable. Sequence the books accordingly.
- Assess your students using the Nonsense Word Assessment. Form small groups based on the results.

Name _____ Date _____

ASSESSMENT 2: San Diego Quick Assessment

Preprimer	Primer	Grade 1	Grade 2
see	you	road	our
play	come	live	please
me	not	thank	myself
at	with	when	town
run	jump	bigger	early
go	help	how	send
and	is	always	wide
look	work	night	believe
can	are	spring	quietly
here	this	today	carefully

Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
city	decided	scanty	bridge
middle	served	certainly	commercial
moment	amazed	develop	abolish
frightened	silent	considered	trucker
exclaimed	wrecked	discussed	apparatus
several	improved	behaved	elementary
lonely	certainly	splendid	comment
drew	entered	acquainted	necessity
since	realized	escaped	gallery
straight	interrupted	grim	relativity

Meeting Individual Needs

What do Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein, Woodrow Wilson, Nelson Rockefeller, Hans Christian Andersen, George Patton, Galileo, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Bruce Jenner, Winston Churchill, and Tom Cruise have in common? These notable individuals were all dyslexic. Each struggled in his own way to master the art of reading.

One of the most difficult aspects of teaching is watching a child struggle with learning to read. Early in my teaching career, I was given a class of 30 second- and third-grade struggling readers. My class was designated a Chapter 1 classroom, and most students had serious reading difficulties. A few students were getting extra help from the Resource Room teacher, but most of them received all their instruction from me and my teaching partner, a highly skilled veteran teacher. The range of abilities in the class was broad. Matthew was a nonalphabetic reader with almost no sight word knowledge; Bradley had severe motor-coordination problems that hampered his ability to form letters; Christon couldn't recall the alphabet; Brian and Ryan had serious behavioral problems; Billy's learned helplessness and lack of motivation were constant issues; Darlene could read on grade level but had trouble organizing thoughts and ideas in a logical manner; Jason had accurate but labored decoding skills; and the list went on.

> "Do I have to read that now, Mr. B.? Can't I just help you clean out the hamster cage or somethin'?"
>
> —Billy, age nine, struggling reader

This same situation exists in many classrooms across the country but with only one full-time teacher in the room. Certainly, meeting the individual needs of each student in your class is perhaps the greatest challenge you will face.

Many sobering statistics regarding the state of reading instruction in this country circulate in the media each year. Miller (1993) cites the following:

- Approximately 60 million U.S. citizens read below the eighth-grade reading level.
- About 85% of the juveniles appearing in juvenile court are functionally illiterate.
- Approximately 50–60% of U.S. prison inmates are functionally illiterate.
- About 75% of the unemployed adults are illiterate.

As you can see, learning to read goes well beyond an educational issue; it is an extremely serious and important social issue. In a country with such tremendous wealth and resources, there's no excuse for the high numbers of children who leave our schools each year unable to meet the most basic reading demands of adult life. We must do all we can to reverse these horrible statistics. Solutions often cited include improved teacher training, adequate instructional materials, smaller class sizes, family and community support, early preventive measures, and strong intervention programs.

All these solutions can and will help. But you still may be teaching in an overcrowded classroom with insufficient materials and little parental support. So what can you do given the resources available?

In this chapter I briefly examine why some children have difficulties learning to read, focusing on children who struggle learning phonics. I also offer some tried-and-true practical suggestions to help you plan appropriate and purposeful instruction for these children.

We read to obtain information. We also read for pleasure. For some children, however, reading is neither easy nor enjoyable. While some children seem to learn to read with relative ease, others experience great difficulties. Children with learning disabilities (dyslexia) have normal or high intelligence and have few problems with vocabulary or understanding English syntax. However, they do have problems with sounds and print. Estimates reveal that 10–20% of all students are dyslexic. Some estimates say the percentage is even higher.

Children with reading difficulties can be hindered by a wide range of language deficits. They might have problems with phonemic awareness, phonics, comprehension, or processing verbal information. And they might lack the auditory and visual skills needed for reading. Often memory and concentration are a problem. The causes are many, including educational, psychological, physiological, and social. Educational factors cited as causes of reading difficulties include instruction that is inconsiderate of a child's unique needs, inappropriately paced instruction, and large class sizes. A child's emotional reaction to these difficulties might compound them. Because they aren't succeeding, many of these children think they're incapable of learning to read. This "learned helplessness" may cause them to stop trying. "Part of teaching children with reading problems is convincing them that they can learn to read, despite their experience to the contrary" (Stahl, 1997).

The following groupings classify four types of students with reading problems.

Types of Readers

Nonalphabetic

These children have difficulties during the first stage of reading development. They don't grasp the alphabetic principle, need much phonological awareness training, and benefit most from explicit instruction in alphabet recognition and sound-spelling relationships. They have extremely poor word recognition skills and grasp at any visual clue they can find to read a word, such as its shape, length, or position on the page.

Compensatory

These children have a limited grasp of the alphabetic principle and weak phonemic awareness skills. Therefore, they have trouble using a knowledge of sound-spelling relationships to decode words. They compensate by relying on their sight-word knowledge and on context and picture clues. These children do okay with easy material, but they have serious difficulties when the reading demands increase.

Nonautomatic

These readers can accurately sound out words but with great effort. Since their word recognition skills are not automatic, decoding requires much of their mental energies. Therefore, comprehension suffers, and they may have motivational problems. These children need practice and repetition to build fluency.

Delayed

These readers have automatic word-recognition skills but acquired them much later than their peers. Therefore, they weren't ready when reading comprehension demands increased. The instruction designed to help children comprehend text had had little effect, since decoding was still an issue. Thus, these children are less skilled at using comprehension strategies and need a great deal of instruction in that area. They might also benefit from further instruction in phonics and spelling.

All four types of readers generally suffer from low motivation, low levels of practice, and low expectations. It's important to address these problems as well as the skill deficits. The following checklist of behaviors are characteristic of these and other children who might benefit from intervention. However, these characteristics may not apply to all children and should not be viewed as the causes of the reading problems.

Checklist: Possible Characteristics of Student With Reading Problems

- ❑ reads slowly and with great effort, as if seeing the words for the first time
- ❑ frequently pauses while reading
- ❑ has difficulty remembering high-frequency words
- ❑ reads in a choppy, word-by-word fashion with improper stress and intonation
- ❑ has difficulty learning letter sounds
- ❑ has difficulty blending sounds in words
- ❑ uses only the first, or first and last, letters of a word to decode it
- ❑ reverses letter order when blending or has difficulty remembering letter order when spelling
- ❑ fails to use context clues to figure out new words
- ❑ substitutes a word that is close in meaning while reading, such as *small* for *little*
- ❑ has difficulty remembering an entire sentence during dictation exercises
- ❑ has difficulty remembering names, events in sequence, or directions
- ❑ reads too fast, making multiple errors
- ❑ cannot copy accurately
- ❑ often loses place or skips lines while reading
- ❑ shows reading improvement with larger print or fewer distractions on the page
- ❑ has illegible handwriting
- ❑ writing shows letters colliding and no space between word boundaries
- ❑ has mirror writing (hold the paper up to the mirror and you can read it)
- ❑ makes the same error again and again
- ❑ is visually or auditorily distractible
- ❑ has a short attention span
- ❑ is withdrawn
- ❑ is anxious, tense, or fearful
- ❑ has difficulty with auditory discrimination
- ❑ may do better with word identification in isolation than in sentence context
- ❑ has difficulty responding to higher-level comprehension questions
- ❑ cannot think in an orderly, logical manner

To help children with reading problems, it's important to assess what they can and cannot do and then plan an intervention program to meet their unique instructional needs. They may not need a different reading program or instructional method but rather adjustments to their existing program, including more time, instructional support, and practice reading connected text.

"Phonics must not be made to carry the whole burden of reading instruction, especially if students have difficulty with it. Although research and experience have demonstrated again and again that phonic knowledge and skill are essential for learning to read, and that they speed up learning to read, there is also considerable evidence that reading development depends on wide reading of connected text, the development of fluency, and the growth of vocabulary, knowledge and reasoning. Thus, it is wise for all students, even those having extreme difficulty with phonics, to read books they find interesting, learn the meanings of ever more difficult words, and continue to acquire knowledge." (Chall and Popp, 1996)

How to Help: Effective Intervention Strategies

Effective interventions for students having trouble learning to read are generally characterized by the following:

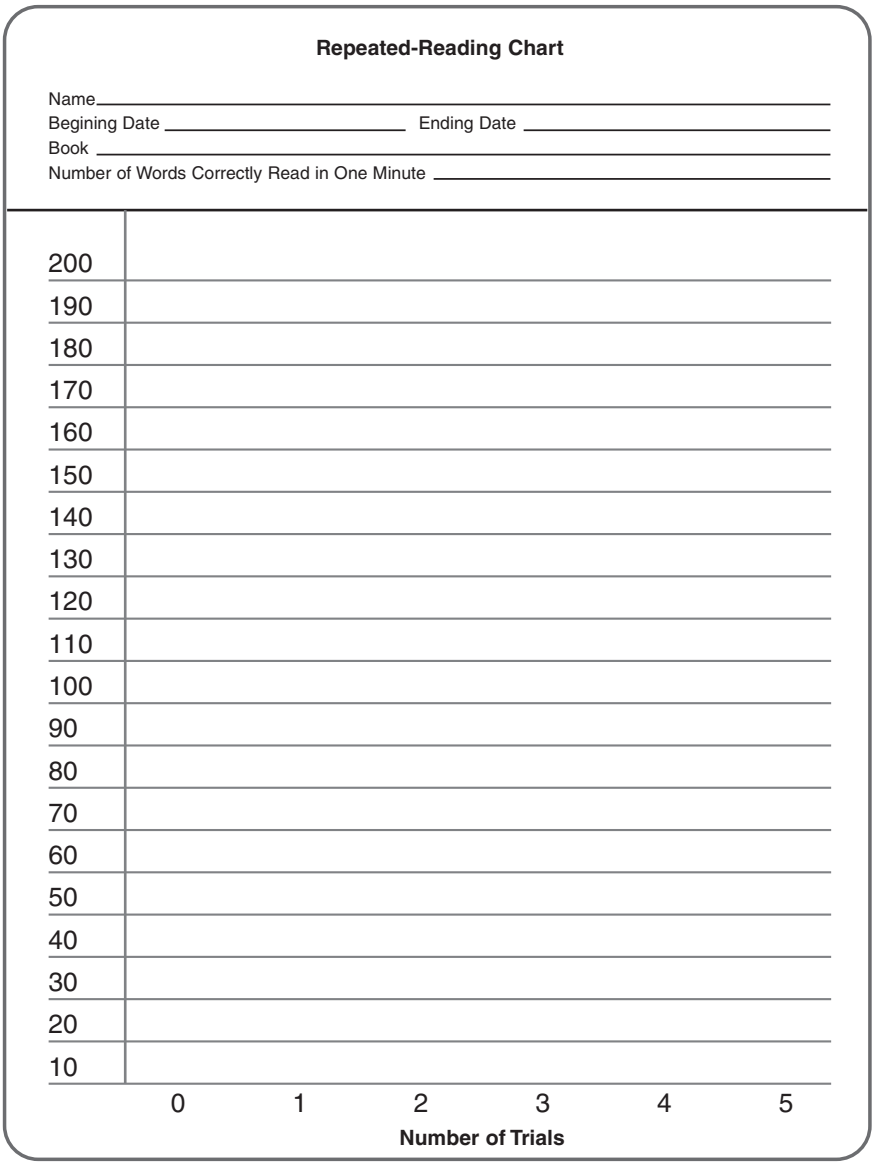
- They are applied as early as possible (as soon as a problem is diagnosed).
- They involve well-trained, highly skilled teachers and specialists.
- They are intensive.
- They close the reading gap for poor readers.
- They are short-lived, lasting only as long as needed.
- They help children overcome "learned helplessness."

Kindergarten retention does not appear to be a generally effective form of intervention (Mantzicopoulos and Morrison, 1992; Adams, 1990).

Ten Techniques That Support Intervention Instruction

1. **Prompting:** While a child reads a passage, provide prompts that help him or her focus attention on reading strategies. For example, when a child encounters an unfamiliar word, use prompts such as, "What letter sounds do you know in the word?" or, "Are there any word parts you know in the word?" You can also create and display strategy picture cards for children to refer to when they read independently. These cards provide written and illustrated cues to help children deal with reading stumbling blocks. For example, one card might remind children to reread a confusing sentence or passage.
2. **Assisted reading:** Have a child read with you or an audiocassette. Gradually lessen the assistance so that eventually the child is reading independently. Assisted reading sessions are particularly helpful for text that is at a child's frustration level. I always use this technique with social studies and science textbooks and my below-level readers.

3. **Supported contextual reading:** This technique was developed by Stahl (1997) and is designed to help children use their phonics knowledge. The assumption behind the technique is that many children with reading difficulties have phonics knowledge but can't use it effectively. The technique requires using material one or two years above the child's instructional level. First read the text aloud to the child and ask comprehension questions to make sure he or she understands the passage. This takes advantage of the child's oral listening skills and promotes concept development. Then conduct an echo reading (see number 5, below) of the text. Next send the text home for the child to practice reading. Support the family in helping their child with home reading by providing a checklist of tips and prompts for them to use. Back at school, have the child read that same text again and again to master it.



4. **Repeated readings:** This popular technique was developed by Samuels (1988). Time the child as he or she reads a passage at his or her instructional level. Give the child feedback on word-recognition errors and the number of words read accurately per minute, and record the data on a graph (see above). Then have the child practice reading the text independently or with a partner. During the time the child is practicing, periodically conduct timed readings and plot progress on the graph. This continues until the child masters that passage. These multiple repetitions of words help children build large sight-word vocabularies.
5. **Echo reading:** Read a phrase or sentence in the text and have the student repeat it. Continue this throughout the text. Alternatively, you can tape-record the text, leaving pauses so that the child can echo the reading as he or she follows along in the text.
6. **Cloze passages:** Write on a chart a passage that the child has previously read or had read to him or her. Leave out every fifth or tenth word (using a blank line) or cover words with self-sticking notes. Then ask the child to fill in the missing words by using his or her background knowledge and understanding of English syntax. I like to provide the first letter or cluster of letters in each word to help the child use phonics cues, too.

For Use During Partner Repeated Readings

Grades 2–6

Partner Fluency Feedback Chart

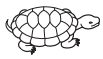
Use this chart to give your partner helpful criticism and feedback, or use it as a self-check.

	Reading 1	Reading 2	Reading 3
Speed	❑ too slow ❑ just right ❑ too fast	❑ too slow ❑ just right ❑ too fast	❑ too slow ❑ just right ❑ too fast
Accuracy	❑ skipped words ❑ read every word ❑ self-corrected	❑ skipped words ❑ read every word ❑ self-corrected	❑ skipped words ❑ read every word ❑ self-corrected
Expression	❑ attention to end punctuation ❑ pauses at commas/uses ❑ intonation/feeling	❑ attention to end punctuation ❑ pauses at commas/uses ❑ intonation/feeling	❑ attention to end punctuation ❑ pauses at commas/uses ❑ intonation/feeling

Grade 1

Partner Fluency Feedback Chart

Listen to your partner read. Circle the picture that best fits the reading.

Key
slow 
just right 
fast 
no feeling 
with feeling 

	Speed	Expression
Reading 1		
Reading 2		
Reading 3		

7. **Oral reading by the teacher:** Being read to is critical for developing children's listening/ speaking vocabularies and world knowledge—especially for children with reading difficulties. Since their knowledge of vocabulary and concepts is not being developed through their reading, they must be read to a lot.
8. **Constructing word families:** Building words belonging to the same word family can help children's reading and spelling by focusing their attention on common word parts. Use letter cards and pocket charts, magnetic letters, or any other type of manipulative available. You might use the word families to create lists for a Word Wall in your classroom.
9. **Elkonin boxes:** This technique is described in Section 2 (see page 47) and is particularly effective for helping children orally segment words. You can use it during spelling practice in which you have the children use the Elkonin boxes and counters to orally segment words. Children then replace each counter with the letter or letters that stand for each sound.
10. **Language experience:** Using a prompt, such as a field trip or a displayed object, have the children create a passage. Record the passage on a chart as children state aloud each sentence. This technique is motivational and honors children's experiences and oral language patterns. Later revisit that text for rereadings, focusing on words with target sounds or on proofreading and revising.

When I give tests in content areas such as science or social studies, I read aloud the tests to my struggling readers. This way, I can more accurately assess their content knowledge rather than their ability to read the test.

Removing Reading Roadblocks—Principles of Intervention Instruction

In my years of teaching and in the mountain of reading research that exists on intervention, I've seen many ideas and techniques for meeting the individual needs of students emerge. I've narrowed these down to four basic principles:

1. **Begin intervention at the level children need it most.** Treat the cause, not just the symptoms of reading difficulties. This requires looking at deficits in prerequisite skills.
2. **Assess, assess, assess.** Effective diagnosis and ongoing assessment are critical.
3. **Select the appropriate literature for instructional and independent use.** Be sure that the literature you select for students is not at their frustration level.
4. **Maintain consistency.** Often multiple methods serve only to confuse children. Instead of one clearly designed method of instruction, children are asked to learn a multitude of methods and techniques that may be at odds with each other.

PRINCIPLE 1: Begin intervention at the level children need it most.

The tendency is to treat the symptoms of reading difficulties, rather than the causes. For example, I recently met with a teacher who was spending a lot of time reteaching sound-spelling relationships to one of her students. She commented that this didn't seem to have much effect. When I asked her if the child had weak phonemic awareness skills, she didn't know. After doing a phonemic awareness assessment, we discovered that the child's phonemic awareness skills were indeed quite weak. He couldn't orally blend words effectively and had little knowledge of how words "work." I suggested providing the child with phonemic awareness training. It helped.

This anecdote illustrates the need to find out a child's lowest deficit skill and begin instruction there. Not doing this is like building a house on sand. Without a strong foundation, the house is sure to collapse. Skills necessary for phonics learning include phonemic awareness and strong alphabet recognition. And I should point out that simply treating a lower deficit skill isn't necessarily enough to correct the reading problem. It will remove a reading "roadblock," but there's more to do. "That is, the lowest level deficit should be identified and repaired, followed by a reevaluation of the reader for additional problems, and by further instructional intervention to repair newly identified problems" (Royer and Sinatra, 1994).

> "Provisions must be made for the student's continued conceptual and informational development while the reading issues are dealt with. If not, the reader will lose out on the knowledge, vocabulary, and concepts needed for further education and also as background information for reading in [later stages] and beyond." (Chall, 1996)

Although intervention techniques might not differ much from regular classroom instructional methods, I offer the following suggestions:

- Interventions should begin as early as possible.
- Teach only one skill at a time and teach it until it is overlearned.
- Adjust the pace at which you introduce skills. Allow children time to master each skill before moving on.
- Constantly review and reinforce learning.
- Apply the learning to real reading and writing. Reading in context is critical.

Since I don't attempt to cover the entire scope of intervention, I direct you to the following excellent resources for further information on meeting individual needs in your classroom. See the professional organization and periodical listings at the end of this section for additional sources.

Complete Reading Disabilities Handbook by W. H. Miller. West Nyack, NY: Center for Applied Research in Education, 1993.

No Quick Fix: Rethinking Literacy Programs in America's Elementary Schools by R. L. Allington and S. A. Walmsley. New York: Teachers College Press, 1995.

Off Track: When Poor Readers Become "Learning Disabled" by L. Spear-Swerling and R. J. Sternberg. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996.

Reading With the Troubled Readers by M. Phinney. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1988.

Reading Recovery: A Guidebook for Teachers in Training by M. Clay. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1993.

In addition to these resources, I encourage you to find out more about some of the most successful intervention programs currently in use. The best include:

- **Reading Recovery** (Clay, 1985). This program was originally developed by Marie Clay in New Zealand and imported to the U.S. by professors at Ohio State University. The program consists of daily 30-minute sessions involving a student and a highly trained tutor. The instruction includes the tutor and student rereading familiar books, writing, and reading new text, and the tutor taking running records. The intervention supplements regular classroom instruction and ends in about 12 to 20 weeks for most children.

- **Success for All** (Madden et al., 1987). This is a school restructuring program that targets schools with large numbers of economically disadvantaged students. The intervention, which supplements the regular classroom instruction, is administered by trained teachers and consists of daily 20-minute sessions for as long as the child needs it.

- **Benchmark School** (Word Identification Program) (Gaskins et al., 1988). The Benchmark School in Media, Pennsylvania, is dedicated to getting struggling readers on track. The program is closely monitored by a team of reading experts and researchers who have published accounts of its success.

- **Orton-Gillingham Method** (Orton, 1937). This synthetic, multisensory approach to phonics instruction is geared for children with severe reading difficulties.

14 Phonics Problems—and Solutions

Following is a partial list of some phonics-related difficulties students might have and some possible suggestions for helping them overcome these difficulties. This is not an exhaustive list of the many types of reading difficulties or the multitude of methods used in schools around the country to meet students' needs. Rather, it provides a few suggestions as starting points. Note that the best instructional procedure for a particular child is frequently discovered only after tutoring begins and a few techniques are tried. Many reading specialists suggest trying brief sample lessons using several procedures to find the one each child best responds to (Harris and Sipay, 1990). As your instruction proceeds, continue to assess children's progress and modify instruction as needed.

Problem 1: My student refuses to try to decode many words while reading.

Possible Solutions: A refusal to attempt words probably stems from inadequate word-recognition skills. Children often omit words, saying they don't know the words, and wait for the teacher to provide the word. This generally results from prolonged frustration with reading or characterizes a child who isn't a risk taker when reading. One solution is to stop providing words for the child as soon as he pauses. Allow him time to analyze the word and then provide prompts such as, "What letter sounds do you know in the word?" or "Are there any word parts that you recognize in the word?" Also model how to blend the sounds in the word. These strategies will reassure your student that he can be successful while reading.

Problem 2: My student has difficulty remembering sound-spelling relationships.

Possible Solutions: A student having this difficulty needs a great deal of review and repetition. Often, too much was taught too fast. Assess the child's decoding abilities; then go back and reteach at the appropriate level. Emphasize wordplay. Provide letter cards and a pocket chart, magnetic letters and a pie tin, or foam letters and an overhead for word building. In addition, have the child frequently read simple, decodable text. You may also need to provide other cues such as picture cards for each sound-spelling so the child associates a letter with an image and a key word. Or use a story that dramatizes a sound. For example, you might tell a story about a hissing snake to help the child remember the /s/ sound of the letter *s*, a story about a ticking clock for the /t/ sound of *t*, or a story about the sound we make when we are surprised (long *o*).

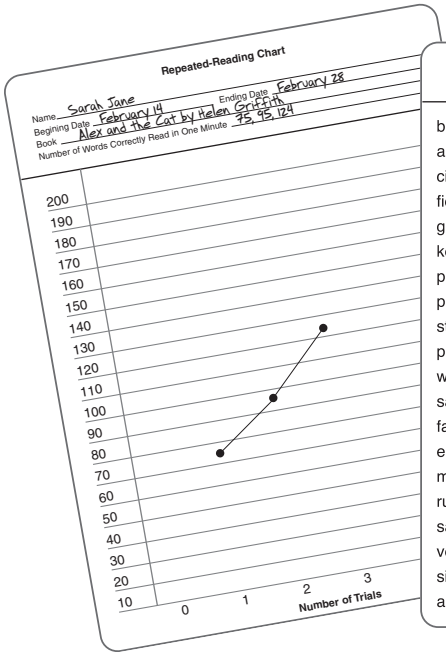
Problem 3: My student still confuses certain letters and words.

Possible Solutions: Some children need much attention put on the visual differences between confusing letters and words. Spend time discussing these differences. Use the memory devices highlighted in previous chapters. Provide practice reading word lists containing the confusing letters or words. Use minimal variations to focus your student's attention. For example, when working with the letters *b* and *d*, you might provide sentence completion exercises such as the following:

The dog sits on the _____.	*bad*	*bed*	*dad*
We have a pet _____.	*bog*	*dog*	*dot*

Problem 4: My student has trouble with multisyllabic words.

Possible Solutions: Beginning in second grade, children encounter greater numbers of multisyllabic words and begin having difficulties if their decoding skills are weak—especially if they are not beginning to recognize larger chunks (spellings) in words. These children need lots of practice in analyzing words into usable parts. For example, when they encounter the word *chalkboard*, children should be able to see the two smaller words in the compound word, or readily recognize common spelling patterns such as *ch*, *-alk*, or *-oar*. Have your students search words for common spelling patterns and circle or highlight the pattern. I sometimes provide word lists in which a common spelling pattern is written in a different color. I then help children blend the words. I follow up by giving them a list of words with the same spelling pattern and asking them to find it in the words. We then read together a passage that contains some of these words. I remind



Consonant + *le* Syllable Speed Drill

Underline the consonant + le in each word. (The consonant + le appears in the same syllable.) Then practice reading the words until you are ready to be timed.

bubble	battle	angle	bridle	apple
ankle	double	bottle	bugle	bundle
circle	crinkle	fable	cattle	eagle
fiddle	maple	dazzle	marble	gentle
giggle	handle	purple	fizzle	noble
kettle	jungle	kindle	sample	muzzle
pebble	little	shingle	middle	simple
puzzle	rumble	mantle	single	needle
steeple	sparkle	stubble	rattle	struggle
puddle	temple	sprinkle	tumble	settle
wiggle	puddle	uncle	wrinkle	title
saddle	vehicle	bubble	double	battle
fable	bottle	angle	title	cattle
eagle	circle	fiddle	bundle	handle
middle	steeple	marble	apple	gentle
rumble	giggle	tumble	maple	kettle
sample	rattle	needle	uncle	pebble
vehicle	purple	jungle	little	bridle
simple	settle	saddle	single	struggle
ankle	stubble	puzzle	wrinkle	wiggle

children to look for these spelling patterns while they read. Word-search puzzles and timed speed drills are effective and a lot of fun. In third grade and beyond, it's important to provide a lot of instruction on syllabication.

"A large proportion of the ability to decode words effectively is the ability to locate usable elements." (Bond, Tinker, and Wasson, 1994)

Problem 5: My student seems to overanalyze words.

Possible Solutions: Some students develop an over-reliance on one reading strategy. This might be a result of the instructional focus of the classroom teacher, the child's compensating by using the one strategy that seemed to work best early on, or the child's having a weak understanding of the many strategies that can be used to decode words. Children who overanalyze words often sound out words that they should be able to recognize by sight, particularly the words taught as sight words such as *the* and *of*. These children break these and other words into too many parts. To help your student, use flash cards and timed tests to develop quick sight-word recognition of common words. Also help her focus on larger word parts while reading. For example, point out spellings or word chunks and remind her that some letters together stand for one sound, such as *ch* or *igh*. In addition, stress the flexible use of a small repertoire of strategies and model when each of these can be used while reading. Periodically, ask the child to explain the strategies she's using. If she always says, "I'm sounding it out letter by letter," then point out more efficient ways to decode the word if appropriate. The following self-monitoring prompts can help children focus on many ways to figure out unfamiliar words.

Self-Monitoring Prompts

- What letter do you see at the beginning [end] of the word? What sound does it stand for?
- What word parts do you know?
- What word would make sense there?
- You said the word _____. Does that make sense in the sentence?
- Look at the picture. What clues to the word does it provide?
- Try the word again, thinking about what word would fit in the sentence.
- Try reading ahead for a clue to the word that you don't know.
- How does that sound to your ears?
- Read the sentence again to check on all of the words.
- Do you think the word looks like _____?
- Look at the letters. Could the word be _____ or _____?
- Can you think of a word that makes sense there and starts with those letters?
- If the word were _____, what letter(s) would you expect to see at the beginning? The end?
- Since that word has an *e* at the end, what sound do you think this vowel in the middle stands for?
- What sound does the letter ____ usually stand for?
- The word might be _____, but look at which letters it starts [ends] with.

> "Many children have difficulty in word recognition because they are too dependent on one technique or because they do not use the most efficient ones. . . . The exercises must encourage a diversified and flexible attack on words. They also must emphasize orderly progression through the word from its beginning element to its end." (Ekwall and Shanker, 1993)

In addition to self-monitoring prompts, provide corrective feedback while the child is reading. Much learning occurs during corrective feedback. Give feedback in direct response to your student's reading miscues. The feedback can be immediate or delayed. It can also be terminal (providing the word) or sustaining (providing prompts/clues). To provide children with opportunities to self-monitor their reading, I recommend delayed, sustaining feedback.

Problem 6: My student has extremely weak language skills, which seems to be affecting his reading.

Possible Solutions: Certainly language skills play a crucial role in reading. A child's vocabulary and sense of story structure are important. Engage your students in frequent conversations and in acting out stories. Also, writing exercises can begin as lengthier discussions. In addition, reading larger amounts of nonfiction to expand children's world knowledge is critical. I strongly recommend reading at least two nonfiction books a week to your students.

Problem 7: My student struggles with the phonemic awareness exercises.

Possible Solutions: For children with weak phonemic awareness skills, I strongly recommend a phonemic awareness program such as the ones listed in Section 2 (see page 49). In addition, during the exercises, consider focusing on mouth position and throat vibration while making specific sounds. Or you might limit the number of choices a student has when responding. For example, during an oddity task, provide only two words (*cat, hat*) and ask if they rhyme instead of providing three choices (*cat, hat, run*) and asking the child to pick out the two rhyming words.

Problem 8: My student cannot blend or segment words.

Possible Solutions: Again, I recommend a phonemic awareness training program. The frequent modeling of blending using an extended method such as *sssssaaaat* is beneficial. Add movements when going from one sound to the next to highlight the different sounds. For segmentation, use Elkonin boxes and counters.

Problem 9: My student doesn't recognize many high-frequency words.

Possible Solutions: The quick and automatic recognition of the most common words appearing in text is necessary for fluent reading. Review these words daily in context and in isolation. Use a strategy that includes saying, writing, and reading the word many times. For example, select the word from a set of words, write the word in the air, write the word on paper, discuss interesting features of the word, and look for the word in books and environmental print. The technique for introducing high-frequency words described in Section 4 is quite effective (see page 131). In addition, make word cards with these and other words and build sentences using them. Remember, attention to the spelling patterns of both decodable and "irregular" words is essential. Wide reading and repeated readings are also necessary for developing high-frequency word knowledge. The following list includes other techniques:

- **Dictated stories:** Children dictate a story as you write it on a chart. Reread the story (perhaps chorally) and revisit it on subsequent days. Highlight the high-frequency words and write them on index cards to add to a Word Wall.

- **Predictable books:** Predictable books such as Carle's *Have You Seen My Cat?* or Martin's *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* are usually patterned to repeat specific high-frequency words. Reading this type of text ensures multiple exposures to important high-frequency words. Many quality, grade-appropriate predictable books are available.

- **High-frequency word banks:** Use the banks to periodically review the words. Students can also refer to them while they're writing.

- **Multisensory techniques:** These include tracing, copying, writing the words in sand, or forming the words using glue and small objects such as beans and macaroni.

- **Technology:** Many current computer programs contain a voicing feature that allows the child to click on a word and hear it read aloud. My favorite piece of technology is perhaps the simplest. It is the Language

Master. This machine uses large cards with strips of magnetic tape placed on them. The child looks at the card, reads the word, then places the card in the machine and listens as the machine says the word (headphones can be used). Teachers can make their own cards with blank cards provided with the machine. To find out more about this machine, write to:

Bell and Howell Company
Audio-Visual Products Division
7100 McCormick Road
Chicago, IL 60645

- **Interactive Phonics Readers** (Scholastic): This software combines leveled decodable reading practice with phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, and fluency games. Students can click on a word and hear it sounded out. Explicit, targeted corrective feedback is provided when children make errors during the games. Students are automatically advanced through the program based on phonics mastery.

- **Reading Mentor** (Learning Resources): Children build words using Reading Rods, then place them into the hardware to hear the word sounded out. This electronic educational tool is ideal for learning centers and for children needing immediate corrective feedback (special needs children and English-language learners).

Problem 10: My student frequently mispronounces words either at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end.

Possible Solutions: Some students have difficulties visually analyzing words or do not analyze words in their entirety. These children need much work in learning left-to-right progression and focusing on the word parts frequently neglected. Errors can occur in the initial, medial, or final position.

- **Initial errors:** Errors at the beginning of words are infrequent and generally involve letter reversals (*b-d*), confusion of similar words (*when, then*), or words beginning with single vowels that represent a schwa sound (*again, other*). Use forced-choice exercises that draw attention to confusing beginning letters, alphabetizing exercises, or calling attention to the schwa sound at the beginning of words. I suggest building a picture dictionary with children, doing multiple alphabetizing exercises, and doing exercises in which answers are visually similar at the end so children

will have to focus on other parts of the word. For example:

The _____ ran up the tree. *mat* *cat* *bat*

- **Medial errors:** For these errors, reteach vowel sounds. You might also have children copy or trace words and complete exercises in which the answers vary only in the middle. For example:

  The _____ ran up the tree. *cot* *cut* *cat*

- **Ending errors:** These errors are common. Focus children's attention on larger word parts, such as word families or common affixes. In addition, provide exercises in which the word choices vary only at the end. For example:

  The _____ ran up the tree. *cab* *cat* *can*

Problem 11: My student frequently substitutes words.

Possible Solutions: Substitutions are the most common type of oral reading error. Frequent substitution of words is often a sign of relying too much on context and not enough on the sound-spelling relationships in words. Sometimes children substitute an occasional word because their natural speech patterns and vocabulary differ from the language of the text. However, frequent substitutions are a cause for concern. Make sure the text your student is reading is at her instructional level. Reinforce word-attack strategies by using prompts that focus on word parts.

Problem 12: My student frequently adds or leaves out words.

Possible Solutions: Your student may be making frequent additions to try and make the sentence fit his oral language patterns. Or he may be reading too rapidly to pay attention to each word. Ask him questions about the text that require him to read entire sentences or passages in which additions occurred.

Omissions may indicate that the student is editing out words that he doesn't need to make meaning from the text or that don't fit his dialect. At other times, a child may omit words because he has weak decoding skills and can't figure those words out. The letters and syllables children omit most frequently are those at the end of words. They may be paying too little attention to that part of words, reading too quickly, experiencing dialect interference, or having difficulty decoding the phonic elements. Children sometimes omit entire lines of print because they're having trouble keeping their place on the page or with the concept of return sweeps. Use a place marker as long as they need one.

If the number of words your student omits decreases when he's reading an easier passage, he probably has decoding difficulties. If the number of omissions stays the same, he has fluency difficulties. When the child omits a word, point out the word and ask him to pronounce it. If he can't, help him blend the word. You might want to have him preread the passage silently before reading aloud. Also having the child point to each word as he reads it can be helpful. But don't continue this technique for a long time. One technique I like is to tape-record children's readings and then have them listen to their recordings and follow along to discover their omissions.

Problem 13: My student often repeats words while she's reading.

Possible Solutions: Repetitions are sometimes caused by slow and labored word recognition. The child sounds out the word, then repeats it at a more natural pace. Or the child may realize that the reading doesn't make sense and "retrace" her steps to try to figure out the text. This indicates that the child is self-monitoring her comprehension of text but that the text may be too difficult for independent or instructional reading. Call your student's attention to repetitions if they are a recurring problem. Echo readings and repeated readings can be helpful. In addition, tape-record the child reading a passage and have her listen and follow along to recognize when and why repetitions are occurring. Note that some children repeat words during oral reading not because they have difficulties decoding, but rather because they're nervous or lack confidence in their abilities. Encouragement and praise are great remedies, as are opportunities for the child to rehearse the text before reading aloud.

Problem 14: My student reads word by word in a slow, labored manner.

Possible Solutions: "Slow word-recognition can adversely affect fluency and comprehension" (Beck, 1981). This sluggish word-recognition ability is common at the beginning of formal reading instruction. However, if it continues, slow reading may indicate reading problems. There are many reasons why children fail to read fluently. Allington (1983) cites the following:

- Some children have never been exposed to fluent reading models. These children come from homes in which little or no reading occurs and few opportunities exist to experience books.
- In school, good readers are more likely to receive positive feedback, and more attention is paid to reading with expression and making meaning from text. Poor readers receive less positive feedback, and the focus of instruction is often on figuring out words or attending to word parts.
- Good readers generally spend more time reading during instructional time and therefore become better readers. Good readers also engage in more silent reading. This additional reading practice leads to positive gains in their reading growth.
- Good readers have more encounters with text that is at their independent reading level, whereas poor readers frequently encounter text at their frustration level. This generally results in poor readers' giving up because they make so many errors.
- Good readers tend to view reading as making meaning from text, whereas poor readers tend to view reading as trying to read words accurately.

To find out why your student is reading so slowly, ask him to read a passage from a book at a lower reading level. If he reads the passage slowly, the problem is probably a result of poor fluency. If he can read the text easily, the problem is probably due to decoding or comprehension difficulties. One way to determine whether the child is having decoding or comprehension difficulties is to have him read an on-level passage, then ask a series of questions. If he answers 75% or more of the questions accurately, the problem is one of weak decoding skills. If this is so, have him read from material at a lower level. And make time for repeated reading or echo readings, and use dictated stories for reading instruction and practice.

Another way to determine the child's problem is to give him a running list of the words he'll encounter in the text. If he can't recognize 95% of the words, then decoding may be the problem. If the child does recognize 95% or more of the words, but has difficulty reading, then comprehension or fluency is the problem.

PRINCIPLE 2: Assess, assess, assess.

A child's miscues can provide valuable insights.

A comprehensive diagnosis of each child is necessary because the causes of reading difficulties can be many. I am constantly reminded of the old saying "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." And certainly the best way to prevent reading difficulties is properly designed instruction and early detection of difficulties. Frequently monitor the child's progress to determine the causes of reading difficulties and the success of your teaching strategies. However, even with these safeguards, some children persist in having trouble learning to decode words.

You can assess children in many ways. These include (California Department of Education, 1996):

- **screening assessments** of phonics, phonemic awareness, concepts of print, alphabet recognition, writing
- **checklists** of phonics, phonemic awareness, alphabet recognition, reading and writing attitudes
- **miscue analysis** (running records) for assessing students' reading accuracy, identifying and analyzing consistent reading errors, and determining instructional and independent reading levels
- **individual and group-administered tests** including formal assessments, basal reading program tests, and reading inventories
- **portfolios** containing student work throughout the year

Formal assessments for decoding abilities were listed on page 196. These are generally administered by specialists and provide greater reliability and validity than other forms of assessment. However, many **informal assessments** such as observation and miscue analysis can give you vital information to guide instruction and determine what a child already knows so that you can explicitly reinforce it. It's important to collect diagnostic information daily, weekly, and monthly.

I recommend using a nonsense-word test beginning in Grade 2. This type of assessment relies on a student's decoding abilities to figure out unknown words and eliminates the risk of decoding using sight-word knowledge.

Observation

Frequent and systematic observations of children's reading abilities will help you modify instruction to meet individual needs. Select a few children each week to observe formally. A miscue analysis is a valuable assessment tool for these observations. Oral reading miscues reveal a child's reading strategies. (For more information on taking a miscue analysis, see the "Running Records" description in *The Early Detection of Reading Difficulties* by M. Clay, pages 16–22.) It's useful to take a miscue analysis about every six weeks for all children. Repeat this more often for children who need intervention.

To begin, establish a system or observation schedule. For example, you might choose one child per school day, keeping the dated record and analysis in each child's file to monitor his or her progress during the year. Select a time when you can hear the child read without interruptions, such as when other children are engaged in individual quiet reading.

Use the following steps to complete a miscue analysis:

- Choose a book for the child to read. Select a book that is known to the child but that isn't too familiar. If it's too familiar, the reading may not reveal much information about the child's thinking. Make a photocopy of the story that you'll use to mark the child's miscues while he or she reads. This photocopy, along with your observational marks, will be your miscue analysis.
- Ask the child to read the whole book aloud. You might want to tape-record the reading for later review.
- Listen carefully as the child reads and use your copy of the story to record any miscues. Examples of some usual marking conventions are shown in the chart on page 219. Miscues are errors that are graphophonic (visual cues), syntactic (structure cues), or semantic (meaning cues) in nature.
- When the child has finished reading, tabulate the miscues. Begin by examining the symbols or marking conventions you used to indicate what the child is doing. Consider the child's successes and reading miscues. Ask yourself why the child makes each error. To determine what cues the child depends on, ask yourself:
  - Does the child use visual cues from letters and words, such as *they* for *them*? (*visual*)
  - Does the child use context clues to construct meaning? Inaccurate reading that makes sense indicates that the child is using knowledge of oral language. (*meaning*)
  - Does the child use knowledge of the grammatical structure of language? The child's own oral language may influence his or her reading of the text. (*structure*)

Figure out as well as you can what cues the child uses, recording by the miscue a *V* for visual cues, an *M* for meaning cues, and an *S* for structure cues. A child may use one or more types of cues for any miscue. By analyzing each miscue in this way you can get an indication of the strategies the child is using, as well as those he or she is not using or is overusing. Also notice instances of self-correction, considering what additional information the child uses to self-correct. Self-correction is an important skill in good reading. Finally, make any notes on the miscue analysis about behaviors during the session. All of this information will assist you in assessing the child.

After you've analyzed the miscues, look for patterns that indicate what the child is paying attention to. Notice the information sources that are used and those that are neglected. As the child rereads the book, and reads other texts, help him or her pay attention to the cues that he or she is consistently using as well as those he or she should be using.

You can help children who aren't looking at visual information by increasing their opportunities to write and to read familiar books. Help them form words and learn about words by providing letter cards and magnetic letters.

Sometimes, when children are paying close attention to print, they run the risk of losing the meaning. If that happens, draw the child's attention to pictures and have conversations about illustrations. Extending stories through art or other activities is another way to help children think about meaning. Also encourage them to talk about the story. Notice whether they use the language of the particular story.

Avoid focusing instruction solely on students' weaknesses. This can become frustrating for them. Continue to highlight those reading strategies children use effectively and provide them with practice using a variety of strategies. Acknowledge their progress and praise their efforts.

Some Usual Conventions

Accurate Reading	✔ ✔ ✔ (checks follow text pattern)
Substitution	set (child) sent (text)
Attempt	s-se-set sent
Self-Correction	set sent SC
Omission	— (or circle word) sent
Insertion	is (or use caret) sent
Teacher told	— (or underline word) sent T
Repetition (of word/sentence)	R2 (number indicates repeats) sent (or use wavy lines)

PRINCIPLE 3: Select the appropriate literature for instructional and independent use.

It is critical that you select the appropriate literature for instructional and independent uses. Not only do children need to be reading successfully during formal reading instruction, they also need to have successful independent reading opportunities each day. Children need to be placed in text that gives them a sense of control and comfort. The relationship between silent reading (and out-of-school reading) and reading growth has been well documented (Rosenshine and Stevens, 1984). As Allington (1984) pointed out, good first-grade readers read about 1,900 words a week, whereas their poorer reading counterparts read only about 16 words a week. You can't become a skilled reader if you rarely read. The following guidelines highlight the differences among a child's independent, instructional, and frustration reading levels.

"To encourage optimal progress with the use of any of these early reading materials, teachers need to be aware of the difficulty level of the text relative to a child's reading level. Regardless of how well a child already reads, high error rates are negatively correlated with growth; low error rates are positively linked with growth. A text that is too difficult, then, not only serves to undermine a child's confidence and will, but also diminishes learning itself." (California Department of Education, 1996)

Celebrate students' reading and writing growth.

Levels of Reading

Independent or free reading level: The level at which a student can read a text without the teacher's assistance. Comprehension should average 90% or better, and word recognition should average 95% or better.

Instructional reading level: The level at which a student should receive reading instruction. The student reads the text with teacher guidance and is challenged enough to stimulate reading growth. Comprehension should average 75% or better, and word recognition should average 90% or better.

Frustration reading level: The level at which a student cannot read a text adequately. At this level, the student often shows signs of discomfort. Comprehension averages 50% or less, and word recognition averages less than 90%.

To determine a child's independent, instructional, and frustration reading levels, use an individual reading inventory. This inventory asks a student to read a passage or series of passages. The reading is generally followed by sight-word tests, graded word lists, or comprehension questions. The following are commercially available reading inventories:

- Scholastic Reading Inventory (Scholastic, 1997)
- Analytical Reading Inventory (Woods and Moe; Merrill, 1989)
- Basic Reading Inventory (Johns; Kendall/Hunt, 1991)
- Classroom Reading Inventory (Silvaroli; William C. Brown, 1990)
- Ekwall/Shanker Reading Inventory (Ekwall and Shanker; Allyn and Bacon, 1993)
- Burns/Roe Informal Reading Inventory (Burns and Roe; Houghton Mifflin, 1993)
- New Sucher-Allred Reading Placement Inventory (McGraw-Hill, 1986)

You can also create your own informal reading inventories by selecting 100-word passages from books of various levels. Ask a child to read a passage at each level, count the reading

errors, and then ask a series of comprehension questions. Use this informal assessment to select the appropriate literature for each child.

Use a readability formula such as the Spache, Dale-Chall, or Fry to determine reading levels. Another popular leveling system is the lexile system, developed by MetaMetrics Inc. This system is currently being used to level trade books. Each book is assigned a level (for example, 200–400 = grade 1), and children's scores on a reading inventory are used to help the teacher match a child to an appropriate text. You can use a selection from each level to create your own reading inventory. Of course, matching children to text requires more than a readability formula or test. A child's background knowledge and experiences, as well as his or her interest in a particular topic, can affect the difficulty of a text.

PRINCIPLE 4: Maintain consistency.

In order for intervention to be successful, consistency must be maintained among the many teachers and reading specialists who are instructing the child. I frequently see that each instructor is providing thorough programs of instruction. But the methods each is using are sometimes different and conflicting in terms of emphasis. For example, a child might be receiving explicit phonics instruction with practice reading controlled text in the resource room, yet be reading uncontrolled text, in which using knowledge of sight words and context clues is emphasized, in the regular classroom. The result is confusion that stands in the way of the child's learning to read. Make sure to communicate with the other teachers of the children in your classroom. Maintain consistency among the methods or techniques used. For example, if the child receives a lot of instruction in sounding out words in the resource room, reinforce this learning while the child is reading in your classroom.

"The paradox of children with reading problems is that they get more phonics instruction than children reading at expected levels, yet they have continued difficulties decoding words. . . . I recommend a two-pronged solution—first, providing a clear and consistent program of phonics instruction, and second, providing copious amounts of reading of connected text." (Stahl, 1997)

Fluency

Fluency is "the ability to read smoothly, easily, and readily with freedom from word recognition problems." Fluency is necessary for good comprehension and enjoyable reading (Nathan and Stanovich, 1991). A lack of fluency is characterized by a slow, halting pace; frequent mistakes; poor phrasing; and inadequate intonation (Samuels, 1979)—all the result of weak word-recognition skills. Fluent reading is a major goal of reading instruction because decoding print accurately and effortlessly enables students to read for meaning. That is, students who decode words effortlessly can focus more of their conscious attention on making meaning from text. Fluency begins in Stage 2, the "Confirmation, Fluency, and Ungluing from Print Stage" (see Chall's Stages of Reading Development, pages 18–19), around grades 2 to 3 for many students. During this fluency stage, the reader becomes "unglued" from the print; that is, students can

Three Signs of Automaticity

A child is reading fluently if he can:

read with expression.

read aloud and then retell the story or content of the selection (decode and comprehend at the same time).

comprehend equally well a similar passage read or listened to.

recognize many words quickly and accurately by sight and are skilled at sounding out those they don't recognize by sight. A fluent reader can:

- read at a rapid rate (pace—the speed at which oral or silent reading occurs);
- automatically recognize words (smoothness/accuracy—efficient decoding skills);
- phrase correctly (prosody—the ability to read a text orally using appropriate pitch, stress, and phrasing).

Although research has shown that fluency is a critical factor in reading development, many teachers and publishers have failed to recognize its importance to overall reading proficiency. Few teachers teach fluency directly, and elementary reading textbooks give fluency instruction short shrift. Consequently, Allington (1983) has called fluency the "neglected goal" of reading instruction.

There are many reasons why children fail to read fluently. Allington (1983) cites the following:

- Lack of exposure. Some children have never been exposed to fluent reading models. These children come from homes in which there are few books and little or no reading.
- The good-reader syndrome. In school, good readers are more likely to get positive feedback and more likely to be encouraged to read with expression and make meaning from text. Poor readers receive less positive feedback, and the focus of their instruction is often solely on figuring out words or attending to word parts.
- Lack of practice time. Good readers generally spend more time reading during instructional time and therefore become better readers. Good readers also engage in more silent reading. This additional practice stimulates their reading growth. Poor readers spend less time actually reading.
- Frustration. Good readers are exposed to more text at their independent reading level, whereas poor readers frequently encounter text at their frustration level. Consequently poor readers tend to give up because they make so many errors.
- Missing the "why" of reading. Good readers tend to view reading as making meaning from text, whereas poor readers tend to view reading as trying to read words accurately.

The number of words read correctly per minute is an important indicator of a student's progress in all aspects of reading—decoding, fluency, and comprehension. Twenty years of research by Germann (Edformation, 2001) has shown strong correlations between a student's standardized achievement test scores and the number of words he reads correctly per minute (WCPM).

Six Ways to Develop Fluency

1. Model Fluent Reading

Students need many opportunities to hear texts read. This can include daily teacher read-alouds, books on tape, and books read by peers during book-sharing time. It's particularly critical for poorer readers who've been placed in a low reading group to hear text read correctly because they are likely to repeatedly hear the efforts of other poor readers in their group. They need proficient, fluent models; that is, they need to have a model voice in their heads to refer to as they monitor their own reading. While you read aloud to students, periodically highlight aspects of fluent reading. For example, point out that you read dialogue the way you think the character might have said it or that you speed up your reading when

the text becomes more exciting and intense. Talk about fluency—how to achieve it, and why it's important. Continually remind students that with practice they can become fluent readers. Another important benefit of daily read-alouds is that they expose students to a wider range of vocabulary.

2. Provide Direct Instruction and Feedback

Direct instruction and feedback in fluency includes, but isn't limited to, independent reading practice, fluent reading modeling, and monitoring students' reading rates. The following are ways to include this instruction in your classroom:

- Explicitly teach students the sound-spelling correspondences they struggle with, high-utility decoding and syllabication strategies, and a large core of sight words.
- Time students' reading occasionally and compare their results to grade-level expectations.
- Find alternatives to round-robin reading so that students are reading every story multiple times—both fiction and nonfiction.
- Use speed drills to increase students' automaticity with phonics patterns and sight words.
- Motivate students to read more using incentives, charting, and rewards.

3. Provide Reader Support

Readers need to practice reading both orally and silently. There are several ways to support students' oral reading without evoking the fear and humiliation struggling readers often feel when called on to read aloud. Below are the most popular techniques (always use text at the student's instructional level that enables you to model natural language patterns):

- Reading aloud simultaneously with a partner or small group
- Echo reading
- Readers Theater
- Choral reading
- Paired repeated readings
- Books on tape

Nonfluent Readers

Nonfluent readers read slowly and spend so much time trying to identify unfamiliar words that they have trouble comprehending what they're reading.

Automaticity theory, developed by LaBerge and Samuels (1974) helps explain how reading fluency develops. Automaticity refers to knowing how to do something so well you don't have to think about it. As tasks become easier, they require less attention and practice. Think of a child learning to play basketball. As initial attention is focused on how to dribble the ball, it's difficult for the child to think about guarding the ball from opponents, shooting a basket, or even running quickly down the court. However, over time lots of practice makes dribbling almost second nature. The player is ready to concentrate on higher-level aspects of the game.

For reading, automaticity refers to the ability to accurately and quickly recognize many words as whole units. The advantage of recognizing a word as a whole unit is that words have meaning, and less memory is required for a meaningful word than for a meaningless letter. The average child needs between 4 and 14 exposures to a new word to recognize it automatically. However, children with reading difficulties need 40 or more exposures to a new word. Therefore, it's critical that students get a great deal of practice reading stories at their independent reading level to develop automaticity (Beck & Juel, 1995; Samuels, Schermer, & Reinking, 1992).

To commit words to memory, children need to decode many words sound by sound, and then progress to recognizing the larger word chunks. Now, instead of focusing on sounding out words sound by sound, the reader can read whole words, thereby focusing attention on decoding and comprehension simultaneously. In fact, the hallmark of fluent reading is the ability to decode and comprehend at the same time.

4. Use Repeated Readings of One Text

Repeated reading, a popular technique developed by Samuels (1979), has long been recognized as an excellent way to help students achieve fluency. It has been shown to increase reading rate and accuracy and to transfer to new texts. As a child reads a passage at his or her instructional level, the teacher times the reading. The teacher then gives feedback on word-recognition errors and the number of words per minute the child has read accurately and records this data on a graph. The child then practices reading the same selection independently or with a partner. The process is repeated and the child's progress plotted on the graph until the child masters the passage. This charting is effective because (1) students become focused on their own mastery of the task and competing with their own past performance, and (2) students have concrete evidence that they are making progress. In addition, repeating the words many times helps students build a large sight-word vocabulary.

5. Cue Phrase Boundaries in Text

One of the characteristics of proficient (fluent) readers is the ability to group words together in meaningful units—syntactically appropriate phrases. "Proficient reading is characterized not only by fast and accurate word recognition, but also by readers' word chunking or phrasing while reading connected discourse" (Rasinski, 1994). Students who are having trouble with comprehension may not be putting words together in meaningful phrases as they read. Their oral reading is characterized by a choppy, word-by-word delivery that impedes comprehension. In addition, some of these students disregard punctuation, committing what I term "punctuation drive-bys." They fly through the punctuation, thereby chunking the text in unnatural ways. These students need instruction in phrasing written text into appropriate segments.

One way to help students learn to recognize and use natural English phrase boundaries—and thus improve their phrasing, fluency, and comprehension—is phrase-cued text practice. Phrase-cued text is a short passage marked by a slash (or some other visual) at the end of each phrase break. The longer pause at the end of the sentence is marked by a double slash (//). The student practices reading the passage with the slashes, then without. Here's an example:

In the summer/ I like to swim/ at the beach.//

6. Provide Students With Easy Reading Materials

Students need an enormous amount of individualized reading practice in decodable materials that are not too difficult. Fluency develops through a great deal of practice in reading stories in which students can use sound-spelling (phonics) strategies (as opposed to contextual strategies—trying to figure out words using one or two letters and sentence or picture clues) to figure out a majority of the unfamiliar words. It is critical that practice reading materials be at a child's instructional or independent reading levels, NOT at a child's frustration level. That is, at least 90% of the words should be known.

Fluency: The Next Generation

The next wave of researchers are expanding their definition of fluency and exploring the effect of automaticity in areas such as performing phonemic awareness tasks, recognizing the letters of the alphabet, stating common sound-spellings, and identifying high-utility sight words. What they are discovering is that it is not just a student's accuracy in recognizing letters and words or performing phonemic awareness tasks, rather it is the speed with which a child can perform these tasks that is critical and telling in terms of the child's reading progress.

If you are teaching the primary grades, you may wish to use the following assessments to check the fluency of your students.

Phonemic Awareness

Researchers at the University of Oregon are leading the way in developing assessments to test the accuracy and speed with which children can perform phonemic awareness tasks such as sound matching and oral segmentation. For more information on these assessments, see http://dibels.uoregon.edu.

Alphabet Recognition

Display the Alphabet Recognition Assessment on page 24. Ask the student to say the letter names as quickly as possible. Time the student. Slow, labored identification is common with children who will struggle learning to read. Much work with recognizing and writing the letters in and out of order will be necessary to help these children catch up. A good follow-up to this test is to have children name the sound that each letter stands for.

Phonics

Use the Nonsense Word Test on page 197 to assess students' phonics skills. This assessment is NOT recommended for children in grade 1, since the concept of nonsense words may confuse them. However, in older children nonsense words work well because they negate the possibility that a child recognizes a word by sight and thus requires the child to use his or her knowledge of sound-spellings to decode each word.

Sight Words

To develop fluency, children must be able to recognize the most common words in written English automatically. The Sight-Word Test on page 199 can be used to assess each child's automaticity with these words. Again, it is not just accuracy, but speed that must be monitored.

If available, use the TOWRE in place of this assessment. The TOWRE (Test of Word Reading Efficiency) is a nationally normed test available from PRO-ED. The address is: PRO-ED, 8700 Shoal Creek Blvd., Austin, TX 78757-6897. The phone number is (800) 897-3202.

See *Building Fluency* (Scholastic, 2002) by Wiley Blevins for more information.

Phonics and the English-Language Learner

Guiding Principles

With the recent explosion of English-language learners in our nation's classrooms, most teachers are busy searching for those special techniques and materials to help these students learn the sound-spelling system of English and/or quickly transfer their native language skills to their new language. From 1991 to 2001, the ELL population grew eight times faster than the general student population. Now, there are nearly 5 million ELLs in the United States. Although over 75% of these students are native Spanish-speakers, these students are incredibly diverse in terms of their language needs. Many enter the United States with variant levels of English proficiency and a wide range of reading skills in their native languages. Some speak and read languages that use a Roman alphabetic system like that of English; others do not. All these factors, and others, make the teaching of English-language learners quite complex.

However, these students do have a few things in common—all these students need explicit instruction in how English works, a focus on vocabulary development, lots of safe opportunities

to use language, wide reading of simple English texts, and an opportunity to transfer their existing skills into English.

Below I present my ten guiding principles for you to consider as you plan your phonics instruction for these English newcomers.

Principle 1: Connect phonics and vocabulary instruction.

You can do this by choosing key content words to match the phonics skills you are teaching. For example, when teaching the /b/ sound, use key words (and visuals) that children need to learn in order to communicate effectively in school. These may include *ball, book, boy, black,* and *bathroom*. Below is a sample of how one teacher accomplishes this. She chooses one key phonics-related word each day to focus on.

Word of the Day

- Tell children that every day of the school year, there will be a special "word of the day." When children hear this word throughout the lesson, they should clap their hands and say the word. They will earn one point for each time they hear, see, or use the word throughout the lesson. You will keep track on the board of the points they earn.
- Introduce the word of the day: *ball*.
- Display the ball picture card. Tape it to the board and write the word *ball* beside it. Point to the ball and say: **ball**. Ask children to repeat.
- Then show a real ball. Pass it around the class. Ask children to bounce it and say "ball."
- Then toss the ball to a student. Tell the student: **Say your name as I toss you the ball. Then toss it to another child.**

If you are using word lists to practice phonics skills (see below), decode the words first, then revisit the list to work on meaning. That is, define the words and help students use them in speaking, reading, and writing.

Sample /a/*a* Word List

cat (use visual)	can (use visual)
bat (use visual)	pan (use visual)
fat (use visual)	man (use visual)
hat (use visual)	fan (use visual)
mat (use visual)	ran (use action)
sat (use action)	van (use visual)

Note that many English-language learners, especially those who have already learned to read in their native language, can become good "word callers" with limited understanding of what they are reading, unless we focus on meaning during decoding instruction. It is essential that we build oral language while teaching English sound-spellings to our students.

Principle 2: Use kinesthetic activities to connect a sound to an action.

Instruction that activates various modalities of learning not only makes the instruction more engaging, but helps students more easily retain the new information. Below is an example of how I teach the /b/ sound, spelled *Bb*, to my English-language learners. You can connect any sound to an action. I have included the actions I use for each letter-sound in the chart that follows.

(Sample Lesson for /b/b) Bounce the Ball

- Display a ball. Say: **This is a ball. What is this?** (Children chorally say "ball.")
- Bounce the ball as children watch. As you bounce the ball, say **/b/ /b/ /b/.**
- Tell children: **The word *ball* begins with the /b/ sound.** Say: **Listen as I say the word *ball*—/b/ . . . all, ball**.
- Have a volunteer bounce the ball as he/she says /b/ /b/ /b/. Then have all the children pantomime bouncing a ball as they say /b/ /b/ /b/.
- Then, tell children to say /b/ as they write the capital and small letter *Bb* five times on paper or dry-erase boards.

A–Z Motions

Aa	apple	/a/ /a/ *apple* Bite that apple.
Bb	bounce ball	/b/ /b/ /b/ Bounce the ball (fast and slow).
Cc	click camera	/k/ /k/ /k/ Click the camera to take a picture of classroom objects and friends.
Dd	dance	/d/ /d/ /d/ Dance around the desk (change beat and speed).
Ee	slowly start engine	/e/ /e/ /e/ Slowly goes the engine up the hill.
Ff	fan	/f/ . . . /f/ . . . the fan starts, then /f/ /f/ /f/ /fffffffffffff/ Can you feel the fan's breeze?
Gg	girl gulping grape juice	/g/ /g/ /g/ /g/ /g/ /g/ (quickly) The girl gulps her grape juice—that's good!
Hh	hot (fan face with hands)	/h/ /h/ /h/ It's so hot in here (fan yourself with your hands).
Ii	icky insect	/iiiii/ That's an icky insect!
Jj	jump jump rope	/j/ /j/ /j/ Swing the jump rope 'round and 'round.
Kk	kick the ball	/k/ /k/ Kick that ball.
Ll	lick the lollipop	llllllllick the llllollipop (Must stick tongue out to lick the lollipop.)
Mm	say /mmm/ when tasting yummy food	/mmmmmm/ That mango/melon/(local food) smells/tastes yummy.
Nn	no-no-no	nnnnnnno (Shake head as you say "no".)
Oo	say "o" during doctor visit	/oooooo/ Keep your mouth open as the doctor looks inside.
Pp	popcorn popping	/p/ /p/ /p/ Listen to the popcorn pop in the pot.
Qq	timer ticking to quitting time	/kw/ /kw/ /kw/ /kw/ *quit* Move hands as if moving around a clock—start at 12, then go to 6 (point out that *qu* appears together and together stands for the /kw/ sounds).
Rr	racing racecar	/rrrrrrrrrr/ Listen to the racecar race around the track (louder and softer).
Ss	hissing snake	/ssssss/ Can you hear the snake hissing?
Tt	tick-tock like a clock	/t/ . . /t/ . . /t/ . . /t/ The clock ticks and tocks (swing head back and forth slowly).
Uu	push open an umbrella	/u/ /u/ Up goes the umbrella.
Vv	play the violin	/vvvvvv/ /vvvvvv/ /vvvvv/ /vvvvvv/ /vvvvvv/ /vvvvv/ /vvvvv/ Play the violin (pantomime playing violin while singing /vvvv/ at different tones).
Ww	wash the window	/w/ /w/ Wash the window (move hands in a circle as if washing a window).
Xx	cut the box open	/ks/ /ks/ /ks/ Cut the box open with your scissors.
Yy	spin a yo-yo	/y/ /y/ /y/ See the yo-yo go up and down.
Zz	zip a zipper	/zzzzz/ *Zip* that zipper up and down.

Principle 3: Work on articulation. Help students focus on the unique sounds in English and the differences between English and their native language. Take time to model how sounds are formed when you introduce a new sound or when students experience difficulty pronouncing a specific sound. Below are a few examples. I suggest that you use small mirrors during instruction. Have students watch how you make a specific sound, then they can attempt making the sound by paying close attention to the position of their lips, teeth, mouth, and tongue in their mirrors.

Long *e*
The long-*e* sound is a "smile sound." Your mouth is in a smiling position when making the sound. The lips are close together, but not closed. Ask students to say the sound with you, noticing your mouth position. Have students place their hand under the chin as they say each of the following sounds in sequence: /ē/, /i/, /ā/, /e/, /a/, /ī/, and /o/. Help them notice that their mouth opens slightly with each sound.

Short *o*
The short-*o* sound is a doctor sound. Your mouth is in the shape of a small circle when making the sound, as if the doctor is checking your tonsils and you are saying "ah." Ask students to say the sound. Point out that their mouth is in the shape of a circle. Draw a circle on the board. Tell children that the letter *o* is also a circle. We write the letter *o* when we make the /o/ sound.

Consonant /b/
The /b/ sound is a stop sound and, therefore, cannot be stretched. The lips are together when the sound is made. Have students place their hand in front of their mouth as they say the /b/ sound. Ask them whether they feel a puff of air. (*yes*) Then have them put their hand on their throat and say /b/. Ask them whether they feel a slight shaking, or vibration. (*yes*)
Contrast this with the /p/ sound, in which the lips are also together, a puff of air is felt, but there is no throat vibration.

Consonant /f/
The /f/ sound is made by placing the top teeth on the bottom lip. Make the sound for students. Stretch the sound to provide students time to see how it is formed. Then have students make the sound, using their mirrors to note the position of their teeth and lips. You may wish to contrast the /f/ sound with the /v/ sound. Both sounds are made in the same way. However, the /f/ sound produces no throat vibration; the /v/ sound does.

Principle 4: Learn the confusing sounds for each language your students speak. For example, many languages do not have words with consonant blends. Some languages have few words that end in consonants. Other languages may have similar sounds, but students will consistently replace these sounds when speaking—as evidenced by Spanish speakers replacing the /b/ sound when they read words beginning with the letter *v*, or children who speak one of the many Asian languages replacing the long-*e* sound with the more familiar /i/ sound. Below is a chart showing the similarities and differences in English and several other languages.

For your Spanish-speaking students, be aware that they might have difficulties pronouncing the following sounds:

Language Chart

English		Spanish		Cantonese		Vietnamese		Hmong	
Sound	**Spelling**	**Sound Transfer?**	**Spelling Match?**	**Sound Transfer?**	**Spelling Match?**	**Sound Transfer?**	**Spelling Match?**	**Sound Transfer?**	**Spelling Match?**
/b/	b	yes	yes	@	no	@	yes	@	no
/k/	c	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no
/d/	d	@	yes	@	no	@	yes	yes	yes
/f/	f	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	no	yes	yes
/g/	g	yes	yes	@	no	yes	yes	@	no
/h/	h	yes	no	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
/j/	j	no	no	@	no	@	no	no	no
/l/	l	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
/m/	m	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
/n/	n	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
/p/	p	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	@	yes
/kw/	qu	yes	no	@	no	yes	yes	no	no
/r/	r	@	@	no	no	no	no	no	no
/s/	s	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no
/t/	t	yes	yes	yes	no	@	yes	@	yes
/v/	v	yes	yes	no	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
/w/	w	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	no
/ks/	x	yes	yes	no	no	no	no	no	no
/y/	y	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	yes	yes
/z/	z	no	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no
/ch/	ch	yes	yes	@	no	no	no	yes	no
/sh/	sh	no	no	no	no	yes	no	yes	no
/hw/	wh	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no
/th/	th	@	no	no	no	@	yes	no	no
/ng/	ng	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes	no
/a/	a	@	no	no	no	@	yes	yes	yes
/e/	e	yes	yes	@	no	@	yes	no	no
/i/	i	@	no	@	no	no	no	no	no
/o/	o	@	no	@	no	@	yes	@	yes
/u/	u	@	no	@	no	yes	no	no	no
long a	a_e, ai, ay	yes	no	@	no	@	no	@	no
long e	ee, ea, y	yes	no	@	no	yes	no	yes	no
long i	i_e, igh, y	yes	no	@	no	yes	no	yes	no
long o	o_e, oa, ow	yes	no	@	no	@	no	no	no
long u	u_e, ue	yes	no	@	no	no	no	no	no
/r/ as in star	ar	@	yes	@	no	no	no	no	no
/or/	or	@	yes	@	no	no	no	no	no
/ur/ as in her, bird, hurt	er, ir, ur	@	yes (er) no (ir, ur)	@	no	no	no	no	no
/är/ as in chair	air, ear	no	no	no	no	no	no	no	no
/oi/	oi, oy	yes	yes	@	no	@	yes	no	no
/ou/	ou, ow	yes	no	@	no	yes	no	@	no
/ô/ as in ball	aw, aw, all	@	no	@	no	yes	no	@	no
/o͞o/ as in moon	oo, ew	yes	no	@	no	@	no	yes	no
/o͝o/ as in book	oo	no	no	@	no	@	no	no	no

Note: @ stands for approximately

Might replace /d/ in *dog* with /th/, saying "thog."

Might replace /j/ in *jar* with /ch/, saying "char."

Might replace /r/ in *ran* with a "rolled r."

Might replace /v/ in *very* with /b/, saying "bery."

Might replace /z/ in *zoo* with /s/, saying "soo."

Might replace /sh/ in *ship* with /ch/, saying "chip."

Might add an "eh" to the beginning of words with s-blends, saying "eschool" for *school*.

Might drop the final consonant off words that end with blends, saying "car" for *cart*, "sin" for *sing*, or "pos" for *post*.

Principle 5: Use music, body language, and realia/visuals to teach new words and concepts.

Students can quickly learn the melody of many simple songs that contain repetition. Although they may not know all the words, students become more aware of the sounds of English and begin to attend to common words and phrases. In addition, body language and realia (real objects) or visuals (photos, simple drawings on the board) are the quickest ways to teach concrete concepts and vocabulary. If the object or action is already known by the student, then the task involves attaching a new label (an English word) to the object or action. A visual can facilitate this learning. When teaching a new word, write it on the board and highlight the pronunciation and key sound-spellings.

Principle 6: Connect phonics learning to writing and real-life applications.

English-language learners will accelerate their learning of English vocabulary and its sound-spelling system as they attempt to write for real-life purposes, such as creating a list of favorite foods, writing a letter to a friend, or making labels for classroom and home objects. In addition, provide students opportunities to think about and use the words in meaningful situations. For example, to focus on the word *collect* you might ask students, "Would you rather collect bugs or games?" Students are required to consider the meaning of the word, connect it to their personal lives, then respond using their level of English proficiency.

Principle 7: Use technology.

There is no safer or less threatening learning situation than that experienced by one student working on the computer, independent of the stares and critique of classmates and adults. Publishers are beginning to increase their language-learning options for young language learners. The best programs combine vocabulary learning with basic decoding instruction. Below are two exemplary resources.

Zip, Zoom English by Scholastic
This software program, originally developed and tested by the research team at PREL (Pacific Resources for Education and Learning), is divided into levels based on vocabulary learning and phonics skills. The program is accompanied by carefully leveled books developed under the guidance of Elfrieda Hiebert. For more information, see www.scholastic.com.

Sesame Street language learning DVDs
These language DVDs are divided into content categories, such as food and

clothing. Each DVD is in two languages—English and the child's native language. These DVDs take advantage of Sesame Street's extensive work across the world and are ideal for at-home language learning. For more information, see www.sesameworkshop.com.

Principle 8: Provide each student with a bilingual dictionary.

Students need easy access to words they don't know. Having a bilingual dictionary at their fingertips will be helpful. Even students who are just learning to read can benefit from a simple bilingual picture dictionary. You, a teacher's aide, or your school's language specialist can use this picture dictionary during instruction and one-on-one discussions with each student.

Principle 9: Provide comprehensible input.

This means that you need to adjust your speech during instruction based on the level of students' English proficiency. For example, focus on speaking a bit more slowly and carefully articulating sounds. It is common for native English speakers to trail off at the end of a word. Therefore, you will need to more carefully and clearly enunciate words during instruction. In addition, provide clear, simple explanations of learning tasks. Offer visuals, gestures, hands-on explanations, or body language to fully communicate the task. And, rather than constantly repeating yourself, paraphrase for students.

Principle 10: Modify your response expectations based on each student's level of language proficiency.

See the chart below, in order to better understand the types of responses you can reasonably expect from your students as they progress in the learning of English. You can also use this chart to monitor each student's language development.

Beginning	Intermediate	Advanced
These students respond using one word answers, pointing, or saying "yes" or "no" to questions posed to them. Some students will even go through a silent phase in which they are taking in language but still feel too insecure or unsure to attempt to use it. This is a natural phase that many language learners experience.	These students respond using simple phrases and sentences. Model responses using sentence stems to assist these students. For example, hold an apple as you say, "I like the apple." Hand the apple to a student and ask, "What do you like?" Assist the student in responding by providing the sentence starter "I like the _____ ."	These students respond using complete sentences, often with more complex sentence structures. However, these students will still have issues with English grammar and structure. When students respond using incorrect grammar, model by restating their answer using correct grammar, then move on. It is unnecessary to point out every language error. Rather, constant modeling of correct language usage will be most beneficial.

Professional Development

On a final note, I encourage you to continue your professional development. Below is a list of professional organizations and periodicals that might assist you. In addition, continue to take graduate-level courses and share your expertise with fellow teachers. As I travel around the country, I am struck by the wealth of untapped talent among the teaching staffs in our nation's schools. I constantly remind teachers that their best resources for professional growth are their colleagues. I wish you all much success!

Professional Organizations

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASLHA)
10801 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852

Council for Learning Disabilities
P.O. Box 40303
Overland Park, KS 66204

International Reading Association (IRA)
P.O. Box 8139
Newark, DE 19714-8139

Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA)
4156 Library Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15234

The Orton Dyslexia Society (OSD)
724 York Road
Baltimore, MD 21204

American Library Association (ALA)
50 E. Huron
Chicago, IL 60611

Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc.
5795 Widewaters Parkway
Syracuse, NY 13214

National Institute for Literacy
800 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20202-7560

Reading Is Fundamental (RIF)
600 Maryland Avenue, SW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20024

Center for Special Education Technology
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091

National Center for Learning Disabilities
99 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10016

Professional Periodicals

Annals of Dyslexia
Orton Dyslexia Society
724 York Road
Baltimore, MD 21204

Educational Research Quarterly
University of Southern California
School of Education
WPH 703D
University Park—MC0031
Los Angeles, CA 90089-0031

Educational Technology
Educational Publications, Inc.
720 Palisade Avenue
Englewood Cliffs, NJ 07632

Electronic Learning
Scholastic Inc.
557 Broadway
New York, NY 10012-3999

Elementary School Journal
University of Chicago Press
Journals Division
5720 S. Woodlawn Avenue
Chicago, IL 60637

Exceptional Children
Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, VA 22091-1589

Gifted Children Quarterly
National Association for Gifted Children
1155 15th Street, NW, Suite 1002
Washington, DC 20005-2706

Harvard Educational Review
Harvard University
Graduate School of Education
Longfellow Hall, 13 Appian Way
Cambridge, MA 02138

Instructor
Scholastic Inc.
557 Broadway
New York, NY 10012-3999

Journal of Reading
International Reading Association, Inc.
800 Barksdale Road
Box 8139
Newark, DE 19714-8139

Reading Research Quarterly
International Reading Association, Inc.
800 Barksdale Road
Box 8139
Newark, DE 19714-8139

The Reading Teacher
International Reading Association, Inc.
800 Barksdale Road
Box 8139
Newark, DE 19714-8139

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