

Mini Grant  
Beginning Reading: Research  
and Practical Applications for the  
Adult Education Classroom

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## **Rationale for Beginning Reading: Research and Practical Applications for the Adult Education Classroom**

In preparing for the Adult Conference in the Fall of 2010, I had been asked by one of my fellow presenters for some information and suggestions on beginning reading since that individual would be presenting on beginning reading at the Fall Conference. In mentoring my fellow teacher, I reinforced for myself research and teaching strategies about beginning reading and how I could better serve the needs of my adult learners at Salem Adult Education.

It is always an enjoyable process when you reinforce for yourself what you are teaching and why you are teaching it. Many skills need to be taught to beginning readers, and many of our adult readers have skills in some areas, but not others. Our adult learners have gaps in their skills and we as the teachers need to fill in these gaps.

Teaching reading is not just the “reading teachers” job. It is a job for each teacher employed in adult education. It is a facet of our teaching in adult education that cannot be ignored by us, and it must be fostered in our students for their success and the meeting of their individual goals.

I had the privilege of attending a week-long training in the summer of 2009 on learning disabilities, entitled, “Learning to Achieve”, presented by the National Institute for Literacy, or NIFL. Within that week long training, one of the disabilities that was touched upon was reading disabilities. I learned much about specific reading disabilities, but the techniques and strategies work with adults without specific reading disabilities.

It is my hope that this mini-grant will allow you to see that struggling readers do not necessarily have reading disabilities, and those learners that work with you that have identified learning disabilities, may not have reading disabilities. The

purpose of this mini-grant is to shed some light on beginning reading research and how you can use strategies with all learners within your class.

Most research into how reading happens has involved children. Research on how adults learn to read is harder to come by, but it is available and continues to be developed and expanded. However, that research does show us that using prior knowledge to identify words and construct meaning from those words is an effective and essential learning strategy.

According to research, the federally funded Adult Basic Education (ABE) system in the United States is designed to serve two categories of adult learners:

- those who lack a high school diploma and/or high school-level academic skills
- immigrants seeking to learn English or improve their English language and literacy skills.

According to reading research, skilled readers are able to:

- Read all or most of the words on the page
- Notice most of the letters in each word and use the letters to access a phonological representation of the word
- Read words quickly because they have automatized the processes of letter recognition and phonological access through practice
- Rely heavily on context cues for comprehension
- Use context cues only minimally for word recognition, which is primarily driven by using letters to access sounds.

The scope of this mini-grant will cover research about adults who are beginning readers, the component parts of reading, practical application of reading strategies to assist you with your work with adult beginning readers, as well as my personal strategies that I employ. It is my desire that you will find the

research helpful and the reading strategies helpful in designing effective reading instruction for beginning readers in your classes.

## **Research Beginning Reading for Adults**

Proficient readers experience reading as a seamless process—almost as if the text is "talking" to them. However, teachers who work with struggling readers find it helpful to deconstruct the reading process into its component parts. The components of reading can be divided into two groups:

- Alphabets, or print skills
- Meaning Skills

Both print skills and meaning skills contribute to reading comprehension. Print skills are necessary at the very start of the reading process. Within print skills, the reader recognizes a group of letters as a word, produces an internal phonological representation of that word, and accesses its meaning.

According to reading research, for proficient readers all of this takes less than 250 milliseconds (one-fourth of a second). Because the word recognition of proficient readers is so rapid and automatic, they are able to focus all of their attention on the meaning of what they are reading.

For many beginning reading adult learners, they have difficulties with print skills that make their reading slow, effortful, and inaccurate; this seriously undermines their comprehension.

Within print skills are the skills of:

- Phonemic awareness
- Word Analysis
- Word recognition
- Spelling
- Fluency

Within the study of meaning skills are:

- Word meaning, both listening and expressive
- Background knowledge
- Silent reading comprehension

Reading can be seen as a hierarchy of skills:

- Phonemic Awareness
- Decoding, word analysis, or alphabetics
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension

As research has shown, and our own personal experiences as teachers have reinforced, learning to read is a complex process. It is not an easy skill to learn. When looking at the adult learner, it is key to look at these component parts when teaching an adult to read:

- Adults bring life skills and knowledge to the learning situation that children do not possess. Their skills and knowledge can then be incorporated into direct teaching by using words and concepts from learners' everyday lives.
- Similarly, adults may bring a good deal of "baggage" to the program with them, especially if their early school experiences were negative.
- Also, in our day-to-day lives, adults solve problems and make decisions based on the analysis of a given situation. Adult learners can be shown how to transfer these critical thinking skills to the learning environment to develop learning strategies.
- Adults can relate to their teachers as peers/partners.
- Adults usually take courses with a specific purpose in mind. In other words, they are goal-directed.

The research is divided into sections of:

- Phonemic Awareness
- Decoding, word analysis, or alphabetics
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension



## Key Vocabulary for Phonemic Awareness

- **Phoneme:** A phoneme is a speech sound. It is the smallest unit of language and has no inherent meaning.
- **Phonemic Awareness:** The ability to hear and manipulate the sounds in spoken words, and the understanding that spoken words and syllables are made up of sequences of speech sounds. Phonemic awareness involves hearing language at the phoneme level.
- **Phoneme deletion:** deleting a sound from a word or nonsense word. For example, deleting the “b” from “bat” makes “a”.
- **Phoneme classification:** the ability to classify two sounds as the same or different. For example, “bat” and “bip”, both start with the “b” sound.
- **Phoneme reversal:** the ability to reverse phonemes. For example, the learner hears “pat” rather than the word that is read, “tap”.
- **Phoneme segmentation:** the ability to indicate the number of individual phonemes or sounds are in a word. For example, the word “hat” has three sounds, “h”, “a”, “t”.

- **Phonics:** use of the code (sound-symbol relationships to recognize words).
  
- **Phonological Awareness:** The ability to hear and manipulate the sound structure of language. This is an encompassing term that involves working with the sounds of language at the word, syllable, and phoneme level.
  
- **Continuous Sound:** A sound that can be prolonged (stretched out) without distortion (e.g., r, s, a, m).
  
- **Onset-Rime:** The onset is the part of the word before the vowel; not all words have onsets. The rime is the part of the word including the vowel and what follows it.
  
- **Segmentation:** The separation of words into phonemes.
  
- **Blending:** in phonemic awareness instruction, putting individual sounds together to form a word or a part of a word. For example, the sounds represented by the letters, “c”, “a”, “t” blend together to make the word “cat”.
  
- **Blends:** in phonics instruction, they describe common sounds consisting of more than one phoneme or basic sound. For example, some blends are “str”, “br”, “gl” and “spl”.

- **Grapheme:** letters or groups of letters in an alphabet used to represent the phonemes in a language.
  
- **Nonsense word:** a pseudo-word, that conforms to the rules of English spelling but is not a real word. For example, "clat".

## Phonemic Awareness

According to research, phonemic awareness is

- The ability to hear and manipulate phonemes plays a causal role in the acquisition of beginning reading skills.
- There is considerable evidence that the primary difference between good and poor readers lies in the good reader's phonological processing ability.
- The effects of training phonological awareness and learning to read are mutually supportive. Reading and phonemic awareness are mutually reinforcing: Phonemic awareness is necessary for reading, and reading, in turn, improves phonemic awareness still further.
- Phonological awareness is teachable and promoted by attention to instructional variables.

**Phonemes** are the smallest units of sound of a language. For example, **may** has two phonemes, /m/ /ay/; **sit** has three phonemes, /s/ /i/ /t/; **tax** has four phonemes, /t/ /a/ /k/ /s/. To understand spoken language, we must distinguish very slight differences between the phonemes, or speech sounds, with little or no conscious effort. Think how easily we understand the difference between "**a sick politician**" and "**a slick politician**."

**Phonemic Awareness (PA)** is the awareness that speech is made up of a sequence of sounds that can be manipulated, which means, changed, added, or subtracted—to form different words: **sick**, **slick**, **slim**, **slam**.

**Phonemic Awareness (PA) is:**

- the ability to hear and manipulate the sounds in spoken words and the understanding that spoken words and syllables are made up of sequences of speech sounds.

- essential to learning to read in an alphabetic writing system, because letters represent sounds or phonemes. Without phonemic awareness, phonics makes little sense.
- fundamental to mapping speech to print. If a learner cannot hear that "man" and "moon" begin with the same sound or cannot blend the sounds /rrrrruuuuuunnnn/ into the word "run", he or she may have great difficulty connecting sounds with their written symbols or blending sounds to make a word.
- essential to learning to read in an alphabetic writing system.

An important distinction that needs to be made between phonemic awareness and phonics is:

- Phonemic awareness is **NOT** phonics.
- Phonics, another term for Word Analysis, refers to the knowledge of letter sounds, syllable patterns, and the rules used to decode words.
- Phonemic awareness is **AUDITORY** and **does not involve words in print**.

Phonemic awareness is important to the beginning reader because:

- It requires readers to notice how letters represent sounds. It primes readers for print.
- It gives readers a way to approach sounding out and reading new words.
- It helps readers understand the alphabetic principle (that the letters in words are systematically represented by sounds).

Phonemic awareness is difficult because:

- Although there are 26 letters in the English language, there are approximately 40 phonemes, or sound units, in the English language.

- Sounds are represented in 250 different spellings, such as /f/ as in ph, f, gh, ff.
- The sound units, or phonemes, are not inherently obvious and must be taught. The sounds that make up words are "co-articulated;" that is, they are not distinctly separate from each other.

### Examples of Phonemes

The word "sun" has three phonemes: /s/ /u/ /n/. The table below shows different linguistic units from largest (sentence) to smallest (phoneme). Table taken from LINCS.

<http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/applyingresearch.pdf>

Sentence	The sun shone brightly.
Word	sun
Syllable	sun, sun-shine, sun-ny
Onset-Rime	s-un, s-unshine, s-unny
Phoneme	s-u-n

The word "shut" also has three phonemes: /sh/ /u/ /t/.

### Examples of Phonemic Awareness Skills

- Blending: What word am I trying to say?  
Mmmmm...oooooooo...p.
- Segmentation (first sound isolation): What is the first sound in mop? /m/
- Segmentation (last sound isolation): What is the last sound in mop? /p/
- Segmentation (complete): What are all the sounds you hear in mop? /m/ /o/ /p/

## What Does the Lack of Phonemic Awareness Look Like?

Learners lacking phonemic awareness skills cannot:

- group words with similar and dissimilar sounds (**mat**, **mug**, **sun**)
- blend and split syllables (**f oot**)
- blend sounds into words (**m\_a\_n**)
- segment a word as a sequence of sounds (e.g., **fish** is made up of three phonemes, /f/ , /i/ , /sh/)
- detect and manipulate sounds within words (change **r** in run to **s**).

Phonemic awareness development can be viewed as a continuum of skills. The easiest skill to attain is word comparison, followed by rhyming. From there, the skills become increasingly more difficult: sentence segmentation, syllable segmentation and blending, onset-rime blending and segmentation, blending and segmenting individual phonemes, and lastly, phoneme deletion and manipulation.

### Examples of Phonemic Awareness Skills

- **Sound and Word discrimination:** What word doesn't belong with the others: "cat", "mat", "bat", "ran"? **"ran"**
- **Rhyming:** What word rhymes with "cat"? **bat**
- **Syllable splitting:** The onset of "cat" is /k/, the rime is /at/
- **Blending:** What word is made up of the sounds /k/ /a/ /t/? **"cat"**
- **Phonemic segmentation:** What are the sounds in "cat"? /k/ /a/ /t/
- **Phoneme deletion:** What is "cat" without the /k/? **"at"**
- **Phoneme manipulation:** What word would you have if you changed the /t/ in cat to an /n/? **"can"**

## Practical Applications for Phonemic Awareness

### 1. Sound and Word Discrimination

- Tells whether words or sounds are the same or different (**cat/cat** = **same**; **cat/car** = **different**).
- Identifies which word is different (e.g., **sun, fun, sun**).
- Tells the difference between single speech sounds (e.g., Which one is different? **s, s, k**).

### 2. Rhyming

- Identifies whether words rhyme (e.g., cat/mat; ring/sing).
- Produces a word that rhymes with another (e.g., "A word that rhymes with **rose** is **nose**. Tell me another word that rhymes with **rose**.)

### 3. Blending

- Orally blends syllables (**mon-key**) or onset-rimes (**m-ilk**) into a whole word.
- Orally blends 2-3 separately spoken phonemes into one-syllable words (e.g., /m/ /e:/ **me**; /u/ /p:/ **up**; /f/ /u/ /n:/ **fun**).

### 4. Segmentation

- Claps or counts the words in a 3-5 word sentence (e.g., Sue can jump far).
- Claps or counts the syllables in 1-, 2-, and 3-syllable words.
- Says each syllable in 2- and 3-syllable words (**di-no-saur**).
- Identifies the first sound in a one-syllable word (e.g., /m/ in **man**).
- Segments individual sounds in 2- and 3-phoneme, one-syllable words (e.g., **run**: /r/ /u/ /n/; **feet**: /f/ /ee/ /t/).



## 5. Sound Isolation

- Identifies initial sounds in one-syllable words.
- Identifies final sounds in one-syllable words.
- Identifies medial sounds in one-syllable words.

## 6. Sound Blending

- Blends 3-4 phonemes into a whole word (e.g., /m/ /a/ /n/: **man**; /s/ /k/ /i/ /p/: **skip**).

## 7. Sound Segmentation

- Segments 3- and 4-phoneme, one-syllable words (e.g., **man**: /m/ a/ /n/; **skip**: /s/ /k/ /i/ /p/).

## Extensions of Segmenting

### 1. Substituting

Example: "**Nap**. What word do we get when we change the /n/ to /c/?" **cap** (as in rhyming or word family practice).

### 2. Deleting

Example: "**Flake**. What word do we get when we take away /l/ from **flake**?" **fake**

### 3. Adding

Example: "**Mile**. What word do we get when we add /s/ to the front of **mile**?" **smile**

## Phonemic Awareness materials should:

- Progress from easier phonemic awareness activities to more difficult. The process should go: rhyming, sound matching to blending, segmentation, and manipulation.
- Focus on segmentation or the combination of blending and segmenting.
- Start with larger linguistic units (i.e., words and syllables) and proceed to smaller linguistic units (i.e., phonemes).
- Begin instruction that focuses on the phonemic level of phonological units with short words (2-3 phonemes: **at**, **mud**, **run**).
- Focus first on initial (/s/ /**at**/), then final (/sa/ /**t**/), and lastly the medial sound (/s/ /**a**/ /**t**/) in word).
- Introduce continuous sounds (e.g., /m/, /r/, /s/) before stop sounds (/t/, /b/, /k/), as stop sounds are more difficult to elongate and isolate.
- Add letter-sound correspondence instruction to phonological awareness interventions after readers demonstrate early phonemic awareness.

Research states that for phonemic awareness instruction to be successful, the teacher will provide brief instructional sessions. Significant gains in phonemic awareness are often made in 15-20 minutes of daily instruction and practice over a period of 9-12 weeks.

## Phonemic Awareness Skills Development

- oral activities
- rhyming,
- matching words with beginning sounds,
- blending sounds into words.
- blending ("Blend these sounds together "mmmm-aaaa-nnnn), segmentation ("What are the sounds in **man**?)
- the substitution and manipulation of phonemes (e.g., Change the first sound in **man** to /r/. What word do you have?").

## Sound Isolation Skills Practice

Example: The first sound in **sun** is /**ssss**/.

Model Strategies

### 1. Show learners how to do all the steps in the task before asking learners to do the task.

Example: Put down 2 pictures that begin with different sounds and say the names of the pictures. "My turn to say the first sound in **man**, /**mmm**/. **Mmman** begins with /**mmm**/. Everyone, say the first sound in **man**, /**mmm**/"

Example: "Who can tell me the first sounds in these pictures?"

### 2. Use consistent and brief wording.

Example: "The first sound in **Mmman** is /**mmm**/. Everyone say the first sound in **man**, /**mmm**/"

Example: "**Man** starts with the same sound as the first sounds in **mountain**, **mop**, and **Michael**. Does anyone know other words that begin with the same sound as **man**?"

### 3. Correct errors by telling the answer and having learners repeat the correct answer.

Example: "The first sound in **Man** is /mmm/. Say the first sound in **mmman** with me, /mmm/. /Mmmm/."

Example: Asking the question again or asking more questions. "Look at the picture again. What is the first sound?"

## Blending

Example: /sss/ - /uuu/ - /nnn/ is **sun**.

Scaffold Task Difficulty

### 1. When learners are first learning to blend, use examples with continuous sounds, because the sounds can be stretched and held.

Example: Listen as I say the word in a broken way:

/mmm/ - /ooo/ - /mmm/ he means **mom**."

Example: Listen as I say the word in a broken way:

/b/ - /e/ - /d/ he means **bed**."

### 2. When learners are first learning the task, use short words in teaching and practice examples. Use pictures when possible.

Example: Put down 3 pictures of CVC words and say: "Listen to hear all the parts of the words and then choose the correct one. /sss/ - /uuu/ - /nnn/. Which picture?"

Example: ".../p/ - /e/ - /n/ - /c/ - /i/ - /l/. Which picture?"  
This is a more advanced model that should be used later when you know your learner understands what is being asked of him or her.

**3. When learners are first learning the task, use materials that reduce memory load and to represent sounds.**

Example: Use pictures to help learners remember the words and to focus their attention. Use a 3-square strip or blocks to represent sounds in a word. Use poker chips to show visually the sounds in the words. One color would represent vowels, and one color would represent consonants.

Providing only verbal activities is helpful too.

**4. As learners become successful during initial learning, remove scaffolds by using progressively more difficult examples. As learners become successful with more difficult examples, use fewer scaffolds, such as pictures.**

Example: Move from syllable or onset-rime blending to blending with all sounds in a word (phoneme blending). Remove scaffolds, such as pictures.

"Listen, /s/ - /t/ - /o/ - /p/. Which picture?"

"Listen, /s/ - /t/ - /o/ - /p/. What word?"

Provide instruction and practice at only the easiest levels with all the scaffolds in place. Gradually remove the scaffolds as mastery occurs.

## Phoneme Segmentation

Example: The sounds in **sun** are /sss/ - /uuu/ - /nnn/.

Strategically integrate familiar and new information when learning new tasks.

- 1. Recycle instructional and practice examples used for blending. Blending and segmenting are sides of the same coin. The only difference is whether learners hear or produce a segmented word. Note: A segmenting response is more difficult for learners to reproduce than a blending response.**

Example: "Listen as I say the sounds in words. The sounds in **mom** are /mmm/ - /ooo/ - /mmm/. Say the sounds in **mom** with me. "

- 2. Concurrently teach letter-sound correspondences for the sounds learners will be segmenting in words.**

Example: Letter sound /s/ and words **sun** and **sit**. Put down letter cards for familiar letter-sounds. Then, have learners place pictures by the letter that begins with the same sound as the picture.

- 3. Make the connections between sounds in words and sounds of letters.**

Example: After learners can segment the first sound, have them use letter tiles to represent the sounds.

- 4. Use phonologic skills to teach more advanced reading skills, such as blending letter-sounds to read words.**

Example: Give learners letter tiles for **s, u, n**. Have learners do familiar tasks and blending to teach stretched blending with letters.

## Key Vocabulary for Word Analysis, Decoding or Alphabetic Principle

- **Alphabetic Awareness:** Knowledge of letters of the alphabet coupled with the understanding that the alphabet represents the sounds of spoken language and the correspondence of spoken sounds to written language.
- **Alphabetic Understanding:** Understanding that the left-to-right spellings of printed words represent their phonemes from first to last.
- **Continuous Sound:** A sound that can be prolonged (stretched out) without distortion (e.g., r, s, a, m).
- **Decodable Text:** Text in which the majority of words can be identified using their most common sounds. Reading materials in which a high percentage of words are linked to phonics lessons using letter-sound correspondences readers have been taught. Decodable text is an intermediate step between reading words in isolation and authentic literature. These texts are used to help readers focus their attention on the sound-symbol relationships they are learning. Effective decodable texts contain some sight words that allow for the development of more interesting stories.
- **Decoding:** The process of using letter-sound correspondences to recognize words.

- **Grapheme:** The individual letter or sequence of written symbols (e.g., a, b, c) and the multi-letter units (e.g., ch, sh, th) that are used to represent a single phoneme.
  
- **Irregular Word:** A word that cannot be decoded because either (a) the sounds of the letters are unique to that word or a few words, or (b) the student has not yet learned the letter-sound correspondences in the word.
  
- **Letter Combination:** A group of consecutive letters that represents a particular sound(s) in the majority of words in which it appears.
  
- **Letter-Sound Correspondence:** A phoneme (sound) associated with a letter.
  
- **Most Common Sound:** The sound a letter most frequently makes in a short, one syllable word, (e.g., red, blast).
  
- **Nonsense or Pseudo-word:** A word in which the letters make their most common sounds but the word has no commonly recognized meaning (e.g., tist, lof).



- **Orthography:** A system of symbols for spelling.
  
- **Phonological Recoding:** Translation of letters to sounds to words to gain lexical, or dictionary meaning, to the word.
  
- **Regular Word:** A word in which all the letters represent their most common sound.
  
- **Sight Word Reading:** The process of reading words at a regular rate without vocalizing the individual sounds in a word (i.e., reading words the fast way).
  
- **Sounding Out:** The process of saying each sound that represents a letter in a word without stopping between sounds.
  
- **Stop Sound:** A sound that cannot be prolonged (stretched out) without distortion. A short, distinct sound (e.g., p, t, k).
  
- **VCe Pattern Word:** Word pattern in which a single vowel is followed by a consonant, which, in turn, is followed by a final e (i.e., lake, stripe, and smile).

## **Decoding, Word Analysis, or Alphabetic Principle**

Decoding, word analysis or alphabetic principle research says:

- Letter-sound knowledge is the prerequisite to effective word identification. A primary difference between good and poor readers is the ability to use letter-sound correspondence to identify words
- Learners who acquire and apply decoding skills, word analysis, or the alphabetic principle early in their reading careers reap long-term benefits
- Teaching learners to phonologically decode words is a difficult, demanding, and yet achievable goal with long-lasting effects
- The combination of instruction in phonological awareness and letter-sounds appears to be the most favorable for successful early reading
- Good readers must have a strategy to phonologically decode words
- During the decoding phase, readers must have lots of practice phonologically decoding the same words to become familiar with spelling patterns
- Awareness of the relation between sounds and the alphabet can be taught.

Because our language is alphabetic, decoding is an essential and primary means of recognizing words. There are simply too many words in the English language to rely on memorization as a primary word identification strategy

Decoding, word analysis or alphabetic principle is composed of two parts:

- **Alphabetic Understanding:** Words are composed of letters that represent sounds.
- **Phonological Recoding:** Using systematic relationships between letters and phonemes (letter-sound correspondence) to retrieve the pronunciation of an unknown printed string or to spell words.

Phonological decoding consists of:

- Regular word reading
- Irregular word reading
- Advanced word reading

**Regular word reading is defined as:**

A regular word is a word in which all the letters represent their most common sounds. Regular words are words that can be decoded (phonologically recoded).

Beginning decoding, also known as "phonological recoding" is the ability to:

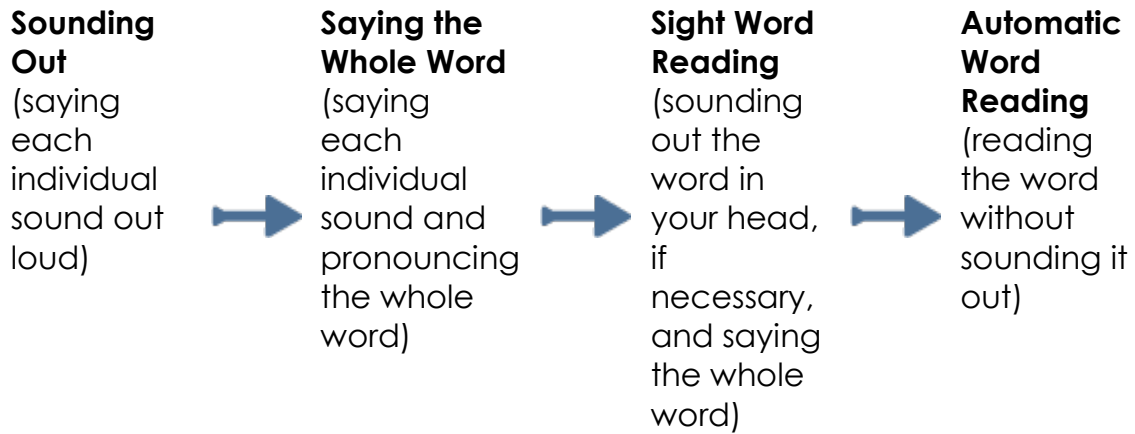
- read from left to right, to read simple words, and to read unfamiliar regular words.
- generate the sounds for all letters.
- blend sounds into recognizable words.

Beginning spelling is the ability to:

- translate speech to print using phonemic awareness and knowledge of letter-sounds.

On the following page, you will find a table illustrating the progression of regular word reading.

**Progression of Regular Word Reading (chart taken from <http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/applyingresearch.pdf>)**



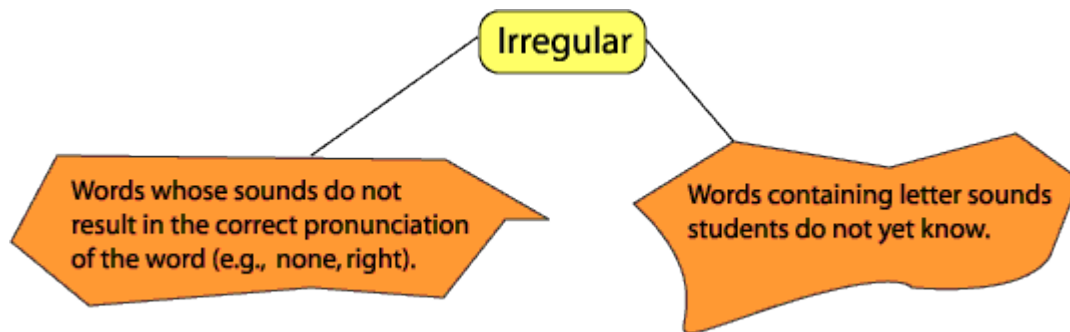
**Simple Regular Words - Listed According to Difficulty (chart taken from <http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/applyingresearch.pdf>)**

Word Type	Reason for Relative Ease/Difficulty	Examples
VC and CVC words that begin with continuous sounds	Words begin with a continuous sound	it, fan
VCC and CVCC words that begin with a continuous sound	Words are longer and end with a consonant blend	lamp, ask
CVC words that begin with a stop sound	Words begin with a stop sound	cup, tin
CVCC words that begin with a stop sound	Words begin with a stop sound and end with a consonant blend	dust, hand
CCVC	Words begin with a consonant blend	crib, blend, snap, flat
CCVCC, CCCVC, and CCCVCC	Words are longer	clamp, spent, scrap, scrimp

## Irregular Word Reading

Although decoding is a highly reliable strategy for a majority of words, some irregular words in the English language do not conform to word-analysis instruction (e.g., the, was, night). Those words are referred to as irregular words.

An irregular word is defined as “a word that cannot be decoded because either (a) the sounds of the letters are unique to that word or a few words, or (b) the learner has not yet learned the letter-sound correspondences in the word”



Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts, 1998

<http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/applyingresearch.pdf> )

In beginning reading there will be passages that contain words that are "decodable" yet the letter sound correspondences in those words may not yet be familiar to learners. In this case, those words are to be taught as irregular words.

In the beginning reading process, to strengthen learners' reliance on the decoding strategy and communicate the utility of that strategy, it is recommended **not to introduce irregular words until learners can reliably decode words at a rate of one letter-sound per second**. At this point, irregular words may be introduced, but on a limited scale.

The key to irregular word recognition is not how to teach them, but to consider **how many to introduce** and **how many to review**.

## Decoding, Word Analysis or Alphabetic Principle Skills Development

To develop the alphabetic principle, learners need to learn two essential skills:

- **Letter-sound correspondences:** comprised initially of individual letter sounds and progresses to more complex letter combinations.
- **Word reading:** comprised initially of reading simple CVC words and progresses to compound words, multisyllabic words, and sight words.

Learners who lack decoding skills, word analysis skills, or the alphabetic principle cannot:

- Understand that words are composed of letters.
- Associate an alphabetic character (i.e., letter) with its corresponding phoneme or sound.
- Identify a word based on a sequence of letter-sound correspondences (e.g., that **"mat"** is made up of three letter-sound correspondences **/m/ /a/ /t/**).
- Blend letter-sound correspondences to identify decodable words.
- Use knowledge of letter-sound correspondences to identify words in which letters represent their most common sound.
- Identify and manipulate letter-sound correspondences within words.
- Read pseudo-words, or nonsense words, such as "tup", with reasonable speed.

Decoding, and word analysis is the process of using the relationships between spelling and pronunciation at the letter, syllable, and word levels to figure out unfamiliar words.

For more proficient readers, word analysis also refers to knowledge of the meanings and spellings of prefixes, root words, and suffixes. Word analysis instruction can be very effective in helping beginning readers learn to read with understanding.

When teaching word analysis or the alphabetic principle, the letter-sound correspondence needs to be learned. Techniques are listed below:

- Sound symbol relationship. Example: (Teacher points to letter **m** on board). "The sound of this letter is /**mmm**/." Tell me the sound of this letter."
- Teacher actions should make the task explicit. Use consistent and brief wording.
- Separate auditorily and visually similar letters.
- Introduce some continuous sounds early.
- Introduce letters that can be used to build many words.
- Introduce lower case letters first unless upper case letters are similar in configuration.
- Once learners can identify the sound of the letter on two successive trials, include the new letter-sound correspondence with 6-8 other letter sounds.
- When learners can identify 4-6 letter-sound correspondences in 2 seconds each, include these letters in single-syllable, CVC, decodable words.
- Sounding out words. Example: (Teacher points to the word **map** on the board, touches under each sound as the students sound it out, and slashes finger under the word as students say it fast.) "Sound it out." (/mmm aaa p/) "Say it fast." (**map**)

For learners to learn and apply knowledge of letter-sound correspondences and use that knowledge to reliably decode words, words must be carefully selected for both (a) the letters in the words, and (b) the complexity of the words. To do this,

- Learners must also orally produce each sound in a word and sustain that sound as they progress to the next.
- Learners must be taught to put those sounds together to make a whole word.
- Learners sound out the letter-sound correspondences "in their head" or silently and then produce the whole word.

When learning how to "sound out words", learners should:

- progress from short vowel-consonant and consonant-vowel-consonant (2- or 3-letter) words in which letters represent their most common sounds to longer words (4- or 5-phoneme words) in which letters represent their most common sound.
- not contain consonant blends (e.g., /st/, /tr/, /pl/) until learners are proficient with consonant-vowel-consonant configurations.
- begin with continuous sounds in early exercises to facilitate blending. Stop sounds may be used in final positions of words.
- represent vocabulary and concepts with which students are familiar.

The chart on the following page lists the levels of difficulty in learning to sound out words. The chart was taken from <http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/applyingresearch.pdf>



## Simple Regular Words - Listed According to Difficulty

<b>Word Type</b>	<b>Reason for Relative Ease/Difficulty</b>	<b>Examples</b>
VC and CVC words that begin with continuous sounds	Words begin with a continuous sound	it, fan
VCC and CVCC words that begin with a continuous sound	Words are longer and end with a consonant blend	lamp, ask
CVC words that begin with a stop sound	Words begin with a stop sound	cup, tin
CVCC words that begin with a stop sound	Words begin with a stop sound and end with a consonant blend	dust, hand
CCVC	Words begin with a consonant blend	crib, blend, snap, flat
CCVCC, CCCVC, and CCCVCC	Words are longer	clamp, spent, scrap, scrimp

Lastly, when teaching decoding, word analysis, or the alphabetic principle, it is key that you remember to:

- Teach words first in word lists before integrating into passages.
- Use both the sounding out strategy and sight reading strategy for a few weeks to communicate their connection.

## **How to Develop Letter Sound Fluency for Word Analysis, Decoding or the Alphabetic Principle: Scaffolding and Review**

- Identify letter sounds students can identify accurately and include them in fluency building. Instruct students on letter sounds not identified accurately.
- Progress from accuracy to fluency by systematically decreasing the amount of time per response (3 - 2 - 1).
- Separate highly similar examples (d/b) on 1st sets.
- Include multiple examples of each letter sound in the practice set.
- Provide 2-3 short duration practice opportunities per day.

### **Letter-Sound Fluency Building Example: The 1-Minute Dash**

- Identify a set of letter sounds student can correctly identify.
- Include multiple cards of each letter in the set.
- Set a goal (i.e., 30 letter sounds correct).
- Do a 1-minute small-group practice. Position cards so that all learners can see.
- Start the stop watch.
- Present the first letter sound card so that all learners answer.
- Provide quick corrective feedback on errors.
- Continue presenting letters.
- Letter-sounds correctly identified go in one pile.
- Place errors in second pile.
- At the end of 1 minute, tally the number of letter sounds correct.
- Review errors and repeat activity for 1 more minute.

## Letter-Sound Fluency Activities to Build Word Analysis, Decoding or Alphabetic Principle Skills

- **Paired peer practice.** Pair a higher performer with a learner who needs fluency practice. Use similar procedures as in 1-Minute Dash. Each learner may use his/her set of known letter sounds.
- **Rapid response practice during instruction.** Include a short review of known and newly taught letter sounds during instruction. Systematically decrease the amount of time learners have to respond.
- **Assess phonics skills** of adult beginning level readers
- **Provide explicit, systematic phonics instruction** that is matched to the assessed needs of learners.
- **Follow a defined sequence of skills** or adopt a structured phonics-based program.
- **Provide practice in the phonics elements** you have taught, possibly including the use of controlled vocabulary texts.
- **Do not make decoding skills the entire focus of the reading lesson.**

## Examples of Tasks Illustrating Decoding, Word Analysis, or the Alphabetic Understanding

- **Letter-sound associations:** What is the sound of this letter?
- **Sound blending:** Blend the sounds of these letters to make a word /mmmmaaaaaannn/.
- **Segmenting:** What sounds do you hear in this word?
- **Manipulating letter-sound correspondences in words:** What word would you have if you change the /n/ in /nap/ to /l/?
- **Reading pseudo-words:** What is this word, **mip**?
- **Word identification:** What is this word, **map**?

Word recognition is the ability of a reader to recognize written words correctly and virtually effortlessly. It is sometimes referred to as "isolated word recognition" because it entails a reader's ability to recognize words individually—from a list, for example—without the benefit of surrounding words for contextual help.

Rapid and effortless word recognition is the main component of fluent reading. Words that beginning readers initially sound out through word analysis or phonics come to be recognized as

whole units after readers encounter them repeatedly in connected text. This means that beginning readers need to read lots of connected text at an appropriate level to solidify their word analysis and word recognition abilities—to move from sounding out words to rapid word recognition.

ABE learners need many encounters with a word in order to develop quick and accurate recognition of it. Practice with flash cards, lists, and word grids is needed to provide these repeated encounters.

Readers also begin to notice and apply known spelling patterns to decode new words by analogy, for example, using a familiar pattern such as consonant-en" as in *Ben, hen, Ken* to decode an unfamiliar word like *fen*, an archaic term for marsh. Even after readers become proficient at word recognition, it is hoped that they will transfer their word analysis or phonics skills when they encounter unusual words and complex multisyllabic words.

Learners who have difficulty with word recognition often misread words by substituting a similar-looking known word for the target word, such as reading **carrying** for **carriage** or **immorality** for **immortality**.

If learners are reading a text on a familiar topic, they can sometimes correct their miscues when they come to the end of the sentence or the end of the paragraph. It is fortunate when learners are able to self-correct based on context, but this inefficient strategy only works for very familiar topics. Learners who are reliant on context for word recognition usually have difficulty with unfamiliar topics and reading to learn the new vocabulary.

## Sight words

The term "sight words" has two somewhat related but different meanings in reading instruction:

- the many common words in English that do not conform to rules of Word Analysis or phonetic decoding—words like *said, would, night, was, were*, etc. Some experts refer to these words as "non-phonetic."
- any words a reader can recognize instantly without sounding them out.

Sight words need to be mastered so that learners can see the word and immediately read it. Some methods to learning sight words are:

- Flash cards or other ways to have repeated visual exposure to the word,
- Writing the word,
- Using a finger to trace the letter sequence,
- Visualizing the word are some strategies for learning the words.
- Saying the word while looking, tracing, or visualizing brings in another sense—hearing—to help impress the word in memory.
- Repetition is the key to acquiring mastery and automaticity with sight words.

One caution to teaching sight words: they cannot be a substitute for word analysis skills. Because most adult poor readers have difficulty with word analysis skills, they tend to use a sight word approach on unfamiliar words, when they should attempt to decode them. They substitute a word they know well for a new word that somewhat resembles it, e.g., *carrot* for *carriage*. The result is guessing, self-corrections, and misreading.

## DOLCH BASIC SIGHT WORDS

### BASIC WORDS\*

List 1	List 2	List 3	List 4
1. _____ the	1. _____ at	1. _____ do	1. _____ big
2. _____ to	2. _____ him	2. _____ can	2. _____ went
3. _____ and	3. _____ with	3. _____ could	3. _____ are
4. _____ he	4. _____ up	4. _____ when	4. _____ come
5. _____ a	5. _____ all	5. _____ did	5. _____ if
6. _____ I	6. _____ look	6. _____ what	6. _____ now
7. _____ you	7. _____ is	7. _____ so	7. _____ long
8. _____ it	8. _____ her	8. _____ see	8. _____ no
9. _____ of	9. _____ there	9. _____ not	9. _____ came
10. _____ in	10. _____ some	10. _____ were	10. _____ ask
11. _____ was	11. _____ out	11. _____ get	11. _____ very
12. _____ said	12. _____ as	12. _____ them	12. _____ an
13. _____ his	13. _____ be	13. _____ like	13. _____ over
14. _____ that	14. _____ have	14. _____ one	14. _____ your
15. _____ she	15. _____ go	15. _____ this	15. _____ its
16. _____ for	16. _____ we	16. _____ my	16. _____ ride
17. _____ on	17. _____ am	17. _____ would	17. _____ into
18. _____ they	18. _____ then	18. _____ me	18. _____ just
19. _____ but	19. _____ little	19. _____ will	19. _____ blue
20. _____ had	20. _____ down	20. _____ yes	20. _____ red

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## BASIC WORDS\*

### List 5

1. \_\_\_\_\_ from
2. \_\_\_\_\_ good
3. \_\_\_\_\_ any
4. \_\_\_\_\_ about
5. \_\_\_\_\_ around
6. \_\_\_\_\_ want
7. \_\_\_\_\_ don't
8. \_\_\_\_\_ how
9. \_\_\_\_\_ know
10. \_\_\_\_\_ right
11. \_\_\_\_\_ put
12. \_\_\_\_\_ too
13. \_\_\_\_\_ got
14. \_\_\_\_\_ take
15. \_\_\_\_\_ where
16. \_\_\_\_\_ every
17. \_\_\_\_\_ pretty
18. \_\_\_\_\_ jump
19. \_\_\_\_\_ green
20. \_\_\_\_\_ four

### List 6

1. \_\_\_\_\_ away
2. \_\_\_\_\_ old
3. \_\_\_\_\_ by
4. \_\_\_\_\_ their
5. \_\_\_\_\_ here
6. \_\_\_\_\_ saw
7. \_\_\_\_\_ call
8. \_\_\_\_\_ after
9. \_\_\_\_\_ well
10. \_\_\_\_\_ think
11. \_\_\_\_\_ ran
12. \_\_\_\_\_ let
13. \_\_\_\_\_ help
14. \_\_\_\_\_ make
15. \_\_\_\_\_ going
16. \_\_\_\_\_ sleep
17. \_\_\_\_\_ brown
18. \_\_\_\_\_ yellow
19. \_\_\_\_\_ five
20. \_\_\_\_\_ six

### List 7

1. \_\_\_\_\_ walk
2. \_\_\_\_\_ to
3. \_\_\_\_\_ or
4. \_\_\_\_\_ before
5. \_\_\_\_\_ eat
6. \_\_\_\_\_ again
7. \_\_\_\_\_ play
8. \_\_\_\_\_ who
9. \_\_\_\_\_ been
10. \_\_\_\_\_ may
11. \_\_\_\_\_ stop
12. \_\_\_\_\_ off
13. \_\_\_\_\_ never
14. \_\_\_\_\_ seven
15. \_\_\_\_\_ eight
16. \_\_\_\_\_ cold
17. \_\_\_\_\_ today
18. \_\_\_\_\_ fly
19. \_\_\_\_\_ myself
20. \_\_\_\_\_  
around

### List 8

1. \_\_\_\_\_ tell
2. \_\_\_\_\_ much
3. \_\_\_\_\_ keep
4. \_\_\_\_\_ give
5. \_\_\_\_\_ work
6. \_\_\_\_\_ first
7. \_\_\_\_\_ try
8. \_\_\_\_\_ new
9. \_\_\_\_\_ must
10. \_\_\_\_\_ start
11. \_\_\_\_\_ black
12. \_\_\_\_\_ white
13. \_\_\_\_\_ ten
14. \_\_\_\_\_ does
15. \_\_\_\_\_ bring
16. \_\_\_\_\_ goes
17. \_\_\_\_\_ write
18. \_\_\_\_\_ always
19. \_\_\_\_\_ drink
20. \_\_\_\_\_ once

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## BASIC WORDS\*

### List 9

1. \_\_\_\_\_ soon
2. \_\_\_\_\_ made
3. \_\_\_\_\_ run
4. \_\_\_\_\_ gave
5. \_\_\_\_\_ open
6. \_\_\_\_\_ has
7. \_\_\_\_\_ find
8. \_\_\_\_\_ only
9. \_\_\_\_\_ us
10. \_\_\_\_\_ three
11. \_\_\_\_\_ out
12. \_\_\_\_\_ better
13. \_\_\_\_\_ hold
14. \_\_\_\_\_ buy
15. \_\_\_\_\_ funny
16. \_\_\_\_\_ warm
17. \_\_\_\_\_ ate
18. \_\_\_\_\_ fall
19. \_\_\_\_\_ those
20. \_\_\_\_\_ done

### List 10

1. \_\_\_\_\_ use
2. \_\_\_\_\_ fast
3. \_\_\_\_\_ say
4. \_\_\_\_\_ light
5. \_\_\_\_\_ pick
6. \_\_\_\_\_ hurt
7. \_\_\_\_\_ pull
8. \_\_\_\_\_ cut
9. \_\_\_\_\_ kind
10. \_\_\_\_\_ both
11. \_\_\_\_\_ sit
12. \_\_\_\_\_ which
13. \_\_\_\_\_ fall
14. \_\_\_\_\_ carry
15. \_\_\_\_\_ small
16. \_\_\_\_\_ under
17. \_\_\_\_\_ read
18. \_\_\_\_\_ why
19. \_\_\_\_\_ own
20. \_\_\_\_\_ found

### List 11

1. \_\_\_\_\_ wash
2. \_\_\_\_\_ show
3. \_\_\_\_\_ hot
4. \_\_\_\_\_ because
5. \_\_\_\_\_ far
6. \_\_\_\_\_ live
7. \_\_\_\_\_ draw
8. \_\_\_\_\_ clean
9. \_\_\_\_\_ grow
10. \_\_\_\_\_ best
11. \_\_\_\_\_ upon
12. \_\_\_\_\_ these
13. \_\_\_\_\_ sing
14. \_\_\_\_\_ together
15. \_\_\_\_\_ please
16. \_\_\_\_\_ thank
17. \_\_\_\_\_ wish
18. \_\_\_\_\_ many
19. \_\_\_\_\_ shall
20. \_\_\_\_\_ laugh

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/20

## THE INSTANT WORDS\*

### FIRST HUNDRED

Words 1-25	Words 26-50	Words 51-75	Words 76-100
the	or	will	number
of	one	up	no
and	had	other	way
a	by	about	could
to	word	out	people
in	but	many	my
is	not	then	than
you	what	them	first
that	all	these	water
it	were	so	been
he	we	some	call
was	when	her	who
for	your	would	oil
on	can	make	its
are	said	like	now
as	there	him	find
with	use	into	long
his	an	time	down
they	each	has	day
I	which	look	did
at	she	two	get
be	do	more	come
this	how	write	made
have	their	go	may
from	if	see	part

Common suffixes: -s, -ing, -er, -ly, -est

**THE INSTANT WORDS\***  
**SECOND HUNDRED**

Words 101-125

Words 126-150

Words 151-200

Words 176-200

over	say	set	try
new	great	put	kind
sound	where	end	hand
take	help	does	picture
only	through	another	again
little	much	well	change
work	before	large	off
know	line	must	play
place	right	big	spell
year	too	even	air
live	mean	such	away
me	old	because	animal
back	any	turn	house
give	same	here	point
most	tell	why	page
very	boy	ask	letter
after	follow	went	mother
thing	came	men	answer
our	want	read	found
just	show	need	study
name	also	land	still
good	around	different	learn
sentence	farm	home	should
man	three	us	America
think	small	move	world

Common suffixes: -s, -ing, -er, -ly, -est

**THE INSTANT WORDS\***  
**THIRD HUNDRED**

Words 201-225	Words 226-250	Words 251-275	Words 276-300
high	saw	important	miss
every	left	until	idea
near	don't	children	enough
add	few	side	eat
food	while	feet	face
between	along	car	watch
own	might	mile	far
below	chose	night	Indian
country	something	walk	really
plant	seem	white	almost
last	next	sea	let
school	hard	began	above
father	open	grow	girl
keep	example	took	sometimes
tree	begin	river	mountain
never	life	four	cut
start	always	carry	young
city	those	state	talk
earth	both	once	soon
eye	paper	book	list
light	together	hear	song
thought	got	stop	being
head	group	without	leave
under	often	second	family
story	run	late	it's

Common suffixes: -s, -ing, -er, -ly, -est

\* Fry, E. B., Kress, J. E., & Fountoukidis, D.L. (1993). *The reading teacher's book of lists, 3rd edition*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, pp.185-187. By permission. © 1993 by Prentice Hall.

## Activities for Word Analysis, Decoding, or Alphabetics

### Approaches to instruction

**Blending** is a key skill to teach beginning readers because it mimics the process readers go through to sound out a word. Once readers have learned to match letter names with letter sounds, this knowledge is used to pronounce words by blending the separate sounds to arrive at the complete word, as in /p/-/a/-/t/ /pat/. Learners should practice to automaticity blending sounds in written words and writing words when the teacher pronounces the individual sounds.

**Onsets and rimes**, which are also called word families or phonograms can be used to practice and reinforce phonics principles.

The onset is the part of a word or syllable before the vowel, and the rime is the part from the vowel onward. The ability to use onsets and rimes allows a reader to decode many words in a family. Some common rimes are: *-ack, -an, -aw, -ick, -ing, -op, -unk, -ain, -ank, -ay, -ide, -ink, -or, -ock, -ight, -ame, -eat, -ine*.

Five hundred words can be derived from 37 rimes by preceding them by onsets such as consonant blends (*st, str, pl...*) and digraphs (*ch, wh, ph, th...*), as well as by single consonants. Important, or high frequency word families should be practiced to automaticity.

**Structural analysis** is the process of interpreting word parts that make up a word. "[U]sing word parts enables the reader to determine the pronunciation and meaning of unknown words. This word identification technique is effective especially if it is used along with phonic analysis and context clues."

**Suffixes**<sup>RR</sup> like *-ed*, *-ing*, and plural *-s* are part of beginning level instruction in decoding or word analysis. Suffixes usually indicate the part of speech of a word and/or its role in a sentence. Inflectional suffixes have to do with the grammar of a sentence like *-s*, *-ed*, and *-ing*, and derivational suffixes change the part of speech, for example, *-er* meaning "one who" as in *teacher*, or *-en* meaning "made of" as in *golden*.

**Prefixes** are additions to root words that form a new word with another meaning from that of the root word. In the word *disagree*, the prefix *dis-* (meaning not) changes the direction of meaning of the root, *agree*. Prefixes occur in texts from third grade level and above; the most common ones are *un-*, meaning "not" (as in *unclear*), or "opposite" (as in *unpack*); and *under-*, meaning "not enough" (as in *underpaid*).

## Definitions of Key Fluency Terminology

- **Automaticity:** The ability to translate letters-to-sounds-to-words fluently, effortlessly. Fluent readers are described as "one whose decoding processes are automatic, requiring no conscious attention". Such capacity then enables readers to allocate their attention to the comprehension and meaning of the text.
  
- **Fluency:** The combination of accuracy and fluency. Fluency in oral reading includes additional dimensions involving the "quality" of oral reading including intonation and expression.
  
- **Passage Reading:** Structured activity in which readers can read stories or connected text designed to provide practice and application of decoding and comprehension skills. Passage reading provides readers the practice to become accurate and fluent.

## Fluency

Fluency, or automaticity, is reading words with no noticeable cognitive or mental effort. It is having mastered word recognition skills to the point of over-learning. Fundamental skills are so "automatic" that they do not require conscious attention.

When a reader is fluent, the reader has the ability to read with speed and ease. When a reader can read accurately, without making mistakes in pronunciation, and with appropriate speed and rhythm, they are considered fluent.

Successful readers:

- rely primarily on the letters in the word rather than context or pictures to identify familiar and unfamiliar words.
- process virtually every letter.
- use letter-sound correspondences to identify words.
- have a reliable strategy for decoding words.
- read words for a sufficient number of times for words to become automatic.

To gain meaning from text, readers must read fluently.

- Proficient readers are so automatic with each component skill (phonological awareness, decoding, vocabulary) that they focus their attention on constructing meaning from the print
- Component skills need to be well developed to support understanding.
- It is not enough to be simply accurate; the skill must be automatic.

Fluency is not an end in itself but a critical gateway to comprehension. Fluent reading frees resources to process meaning.



For students to develop fluency, they must:

- perform the task or demonstrate the skill **accurately**, and
- perform the **pre-skills** of the task **quickly and effortlessly**.

Once accurate, fluency develops through **plentiful opportunities** for practice in which the task can be performed with a high rate of success.

## **Accuracy**

Generally speaking, as oral reading skill increases, so does reading comprehension. One reason for this might be that when word recognition becomes automatic for the reader, the reader can dedicate more cognitive resources to understanding what he or she is reading. Conversely, when a reader has to spend time decoding words, that reader is devoting cognitive resources to word analysis instead of comprehension.

Adult beginning readers' fluency, as measured by their reading rate, or speed, is frequently poor, and, consequently, their comprehension may suffer.

The aim of all reading instruction is to increase the level of silent reading comprehension. In order to be able to devote attention to the meaning of sentences and paragraphs, learners have to be fluent readers. Hesitations caused by a need to decode unfamiliar words interrupt the flow of the author's intended meaning. Fluent reading requires that word reading ability be automatic for the particular reading level being assessed. Researchers have found high correlations between oral reading fluency and reading comprehension.

## **Appropriate phrasing**

Attention to punctuation helps the reader to chunk words and phrases. Getting the phrasing right brings a rhythm to the text, and understanding the rhythm helps the reader understand the author's intended meaning. Appropriate intonation is an important aspect of fluent reading and an indication that the reader is paying attention to meaning.

*"Successful decoding requires the reader to translate printed words into their spoken equivalents, whereas successful fluency requires the reader to connect the flow of printed text to the flow of spoken language....The fluent translation of the flow of print to the flow of spoken language enables the reader to attend to the meaning rather than to the features of the printed text. Fluency is vital to comprehension, which is the main goal of reading."*

## **Approaches to fluency instruction**

Fluency instruction may benefit learners at all levels. Practicing fluent oral reading at a mastered level of word recognition and word meaning will help learners understand the close relationship between speech and print. They will see that there are markers in text that help bridge some of the differences between written and spoken language. Teachers can ask readers to read aloud as if they were giving a talk or acting in a play because reading to an audience highlights the communication conventions of spoken language.

Repeated reading is a process where the teacher models oral reading and the learner then reads the passage repeatedly until some measure of fluency is reached. It is effective provided there is guidance and feedback during the successive readings.

Research shows that repeated reading has been shown to be effective in increasing fluency and comprehension for both adults and children.

Other approaches to "repeated guided oral reading" from the National Reading Panel (NRP) are:

- Paired reading
- Shared reading
- Collaborative oral reading
- Assisted oral reading
- Modeling
- Use of books on tape or cd
- "performance reading, such as reciting poetry or lines from a play
- Incorporation of expression
- Guided repeated oral reading techniques, such as reading aloud, or reading in unison
- Corrective feedback
- Graphing/charting of learner performance
- Partner reading
- Peer review of fluency

**Effective fluency building instruction rests on three critical decisions:**

- Selecting appropriate instructional tasks (i.e., letter sounds students can produce accurately but not fluently.
- Scheduling sufficient practice (multiple opportunities per day).
- Systematically increasing the rate of response.

### **Definitions of Key Vocabulary Terminology:**

- **Contextual Analysis:** A strategy readers use to infer or predict a word from the context in which it appears.
- **Expressive Vocabulary:** Requires a speaker or writer to **produce** a specific label for a particular meaning.
- **Morphemic Analysis:** A strategy in which the meanings of words can be determined or inferred by examining their meaningful parts (i.e., prefixes, suffixes, roots, etc.)
- **Receptive Vocabulary:** Requires a reader to **associate** a specific meaning with a given label as in reading or listening.

## Vocabulary

Learning, as a language based activity, is fundamentally and profoundly dependent on vocabulary knowledge. Learners must have access to the meanings of words to guide them into thinking about known concepts in novel ways.

Vocabulary is a term used to refer too all of the words in a language. Personal vocabulary consists of the individual words we understand or know the meanings of.

Research on vocabulary states that vocabulary instruction must provide students with skills/opportunities to learn words independently. A learner must have access to word meaning by:

**Contextual Analysis:** A strategy readers use to infer or predict a word from the context in which it appears.

**Morphemic Analysis:** A strategy in which the meanings of words can be determined or inferred by examining their meaningful parts (i.e., prefixes, suffixes, roots, etc.)

Research on vocabulary instruction continues by saying that learners must be taught the meanings of specific words. According to research, vocabulary contained within literature can amount to 300-400 new word meanings to be taught per year through direct instruction. This is a significant proportion of words that learners have to learn. According to research, there is a formula to be followed when teaching vocabulary. It follows:

- Select words to teach
  - Choose words that are **important for text comprehension**.
  - Choose **functionally important words** that students will encounter often.
- Use both context and definitions to teach words
- Teach explicitly

- Help learners make connections to the words in the text to their personal lives
- Encourage **"deep"** processing of word meanings
- Take advantage of life experience to help define words
- Give multiple exposure to the words through discussion, word play, categorizing, mapping, word sorts, sentence writing, story writing, crossword puzzles, scrambled words, and scrambled sentences
- Expose learners to a "word-rich" environment through varied listening, speaking, reading, writing, and computer-based activities

**On the following page, you will find a chart that will help you to develop critical thinking skills with your students. The chart was taken from:**

**<http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/applyingresearch.pdf>**

Strategy	Examples that encourage deep processing
Find a synonym or antonym	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Which word goes with <b>fabulous</b> - o.k. or super?</li> <li>○ Why does super go with <b>fabulous</b>?</li> <li>○ Is it <b>fabulous</b> if you fall and scrape your knee?</li> </ul>
Make up a novel sentence with a word	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Maria thought her car was <b>fabulous</b> because...</li> </ul>
Classify the word with other words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Is a <b>masterpiece</b> <b>fabulous</b>? Why?</li> <li>○ The concert was the best he had ever heard. Every note seemed perfect. Am I talking about <b>fabulous</b> or <b>discover</b>?</li> </ul>
Relate the definition to one's own experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The family had a <b>fabulous</b> time at the park.</li> <li>○ How could a family have a <b>fabulous</b> time?</li> <li>○ When have you had a <b>fabulous</b> time?</li> </ul>

Lastly, in regards to vocabulary instruction, the best technique that can be modeled for our learners is to nurture a love and appreciation of words and their use. If learners have “word awareness” then our learners are bound to get excited about words and lead them to attend more closely to them, and what they mean in the context of the reading passage.

## Oral Vocabulary Teaching Strategies

### **Modeling (Examples):**

When it is impossible to use language to explain the meaning of a word (e.g., between, in).

### **Synonyms:**

When a student knows a word(s) that can explain the meaning of a new, unknown word (e.g., damp means a little wet).

### **Definitions:**

When students have adequate language to understand a longer explanation and when the concept is too complicated to be explained through a synonym (e.g., service station is a place where gasoline is sold and cars are repaired).

<http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/applyingresearch.pdf>



## Key Vocabulary for Comprehension

- **Comprehension monitoring:** a reading comprehension strategy used to help understand a text that is being read. Readers are aware or conscious of how well they understand a text as they read, and know what to do when they have a problem in understanding.
- **Inferential reading comprehension:** the ability to draw valid inference from the ideas or information presented in a text.
- **Graphic and semantic organizers:** a reading comprehension strategy used to help understand a text that is being read. Readers represent graphically the ideas and the relationships between ideas they find in a text.
- **Literal reading comprehension:** the ability to recall specific ideas or pieces of information from a text that has been read, or to make very simple inferences from this information.
- **Question answering:** a reading comprehension strategy used to help students understand a text that is being read. The reader answers questions posed by the teacher and is given feedback on the correctness.

- **Question generating:** a reading comprehension strategy used to help understand a text that is being read. Readers ask themselves: what, when, where, why, how, what will happen now, and who?
  
- **Summarization:** a reading comprehension strategy used to help understand a text that is being read. The reader attempts to identify and write the main or most important ideas that integrate or unite the other ideas or meaning of a text into a coherent whole.

## Comprehension

Comprehension is defined as the complex cognitive process involving the intentional interaction between reader and text to extract meaning. It is the essence of reading, and it is an active and intentional thinking in which the meaning is constructed through interactions between the text and the reader. Reading comprehension is understanding a text that is read, or the process of “constructing meaning” from a text.

**Factors that Impact Reading Comprehension (chart taken from <http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/applyingresearch.pdf>)**

Reader Based Factors	Text Based Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Phonemic Awareness</li><li>➤ Alphabetic Understanding</li><li>➤ Fluency with the Code</li><li>➤ Vocabulary knowledge</li><li>➤ Prior knowledge</li><li>➤ Engagement and interest</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Narrative v. Expository</li><li>➤ Genre considerations</li><li>➤ Quality of text</li><li>➤ Density and difficulty of concepts</li></ul>

### Research on Reading Comprehension tells us that...

- Readers who comprehend well are also good decoders
  - Teach decoding and word recognition strategies
- Time spent reading is highly correlated with comprehension
  - Provide for lots of in-class reading, outside of class reading, independent reading
  - Encourage readers to read more and read widely - develop a passion for reading

## **Causes of Reading Comprehension Failure**

- Inadequate instruction
- Insufficient exposure and practice
- Deficient word recognition skills
- Deficient memory capacity and functioning
- Significant language deficiencies
- Inadequate comprehension monitoring and self-evaluation
- Unfamiliarity with text features and task demands
- Undeveloped attentional strategies
- Inadequate cognitive development and reading experiences

## **Research recommends the following comprehension techniques:**

- Question answering
- Comprehension monitoring
- Cooperative learning
- Graphic/semantic organizers/story maps
- Question generation
- Summarization

## **Types of Comprehension Instruction that Have Evidence of Improving Comprehension**

- Comprehension monitoring
- Cooperative learning
- Modeling of techniques and how strategies and techniques build upon each other and are transferable to different types of text
- Multiple strategies
- Provide explicit instruction and coaching of comprehension strategies using meaningful, authentic and considerate text
- Use authentic materials
- Spend time developing vocabulary and prior knowledge

- Mental imagery / mnemonics
- Use of pictures
- Make inference, draw conclusions, express opinions
- Self monitor their understanding of the text while reading
- Graphic organizers
- Summarization
- Response journals
- Book shares
- Book discussions
- Cooperative learning
- Semantic organizers including:
  - story maps
  - question answering
  - question generation

## Spelling

Good readers are able to spell at levels close to their word reading ability. This is not surprising because both abilities require the same skills: phonemic awareness, decoding, word analysis, and visual memory.

**Spelling words = Encoding** = transposing speech into writing

**Reading words = Decoding** = transposing writing into speech

**Some spelling rules follow. The rules are taken from**

**<http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/applyingresearch.pdf>**

➤ **-ff -ll -ss -zz**

When a one syllable word ends in the /f/, /l/, /s/, or /z/ sound, double the final *f*, *l*, *s*, or *z* after a short vowel.

Examples: *cuff*, *pill*, *mess*, *buzz*.

➤ **c- k-**

Use *c* before a consonant or the vowels *a*, *o*, and *u*. Use *k* before the vowels *e*, *i*, and *y*.

Examples: *cat*, *cot*, *cut*, *key*, *kiss*.

➤ **-k -ck** [two part rule]

When a one syllable word ends in the /k/ sound, use *-ck* after a short vowel.

Examples: *neck*, *pick*, *sack*

BUT, use *k* after a consonant, long vowel sound, or after two vowels.

Examples: *silk*, *cake*, *speak*

➤ **-ch -tch**

When a one syllable word ends in the /ch/ sound, use *-tch* after a short vowel, use *-ch* otherwise.

Examples: *patch, witch, Dutch*

Exceptions: *rich, which, much, such*

➤ **-ge -dge**

When a one syllable word ends in the /j/ sound, use *-dge* after a short vowel, *-ge* after a consonant or long vowel.

Examples: *hedge, badge, fringe, huge*

➤ **Doubling Rule (1-1-1)**

When a one syllable base word ends in one consonant with one short vowel before it, double the final consonant of the base word when adding a suffix beginning with a vowel.

Examples: *mad + est = maddest; but mad + ly = madly*

➤ **Silent E Rule**

Words ending in silent e drop the e before a suffix beginning with a vowel but do not drop the e before a suffix beginning with a consonant.

Examples: *hope, hoping, hopeful*

➤ **Y Rule**

Final y after a consonant changes to *i* before any suffix except one beginning with *i* (*-ing, -ist*).

Examples: *copy, copies, copied; copying, copyist; boy, boys*

➤ **Plurals**

Add *es* to words ending with *s, ss, sh, ch, x, z*.

Examples: *passes, slashes, churches, foxes*

Change *f* or *fe* to *v* and add *es*.

Examples: *knife* to *knives*; *half* to *halves*

There are more spelling generalizations, from basic understandings such as "a vowel in every syllable," "the effect on the vowel of final *e* in one syllable words," "marking past tense, *-d, -ed, -t*," and "*r*-controlled vowel patterns" to those more advanced spelling conventions such as the "use of less frequent affixes (*pleasure, fortunate, flexible, confident, opposition...)," and "knowledge of spellings derived from other languages, e.g., *confide, fortunate, emphasize."**



## **Summary of Skills Needed for Beginning Readers to Learn How to Read**

### **Decoding, word analysis, or alphabets**

Analyzing words and knowing words by sight:

- Learn the names of letters
- Learn the sounds of the letters
- Break words into sounds, or decode
- Blend the sounds back together
- Learn words by sight

### **Fluency**

Reading fluently:

- Read smoothly
- Read often

### **Vocabulary**

Learning new vocabulary

- Learn the meanings of individual words

### **Comprehension**

Understanding what you read:

- Read to learn new information
- Read to communicate with other people
- Read for pleasure

## **Personal on-the-job Experience**

Reading and writing go “hand in hand”. One does not occur independently by itself. Reading and writing do not occur in a vacuum. Even though a student says that they want to learn to read, they also need to learn to write. The spoken, written, and read forms of words are all integral in the process of learning to read.

These are the observations, questions, activities, strategies, and skills that I have found to be necessary for success in moving along the continuum from beginning to intermediate reading skills.

All of the ideas listed from my personal experience have been field tested and have worked. The caveat, what works in one class may not work in another, and what works with one student may not work with another.

You will find my experiences on the following pages.

## Questions That I Ask to Help Beginning Readers

- Do they know the alphabet?
- Do they know the letters that make up the alphabet?
- Do they know the sounds that the letters make individually?
- Do they know the sounds that the letters make up when paired up?
- What types of materials do you want to learn how to read?
- What is the purpose in learning to read?
- How often per day, do you read?
- What types of materials do you read during the day?
- Where do you read?
- Do you have children at home that you can read to?
- Do you speak, read, and write English during the day?
- Are you required to read at your job?
- How motivated are you to learn to read?
- Are you excited about the opportunity to learn to read?
- Are you ready to ask me questions when you don't understand?
- Do you have any vision or hearing problems that I should be aware of?
- Would large print materials help you read easier?
- How is the lighting in the room?

### **Activities That I Use to Help Beginning Readers**

- I have them write the alphabet and then keep it in a binder.
- I have them put letters in alphabetical order.
- I have them find letters in the newspaper.
- I play Letter bingo.
- I teach them the rules of phonics.
- We work on one rule of phonics at a time.
- We use sentence strips to manipulate letters to make different words.
- I stay clear of nonsense words.
- Try rhyming with basic word, for example, “cat”, “rat”, “bat” and so on. Have them write out the words so they can see them as well. One activity that I read about somewhere has the students write on building blocks with washable markers. As the “tower” that they are building gets higher, they see that they are making so many words out of a basic unit of letters. I have not personally tried this yet since I do not have beginning readers anymore, but it might work.
- I have them do spelling of words when we have begun to see automaticity.
- I have them divide, or “scoop” the syllables in the words that we are working on.
- I have used “poker chips” to help reinforce sound/symbol relationships. For example, consonant are blue and vowels are white. They need to put one poker chip down in order for each sound that they hear. For example, /cat/. They would place a blue, white, and blue poker chip.
- I use an integrated approach to reading. I do a combination of phonics and whole language. I work with the students in small groups in both of these areas.
- Model reading for the learners so they can see and hear what good readers sound like.

- I create self-made games using the rules that we are working on.
- Use multi-syllabic words so learners can see that they can “read” ‘big words’.
- When reading “rich literature”, ask learners to listen to teacher modeled reading, and then have learner’s answer comprehension questions.
- When beginning to read “rich literature”, pick out words beforehand that learners may not know. Have them try to read them, and then discuss the meaning of the words. It has been my experience that the learners cannot read the words, but they can tell you what they mean.
- When using rich literature, have them find the “rules of phonics” within the passage, such as short and long vowels.
- Try to get materials that are high interest that learners may be able to read parts of the passage.
- Use sentence scrambles. Take a sentence from a passage that has been read in class, and cut it up. The degree to which you cut it up with depends on the skills of the students in the class. Have the learners rearrange the text so that it makes sense. This activity can extrapolate out to the degree of the learner, meaning you can go to paragraphs as they develop their skills.
- Work on homonyms and homophones. The learner’s skill level may not be one in which they can read the words, but they need to start to learn that some words sound the same, but are spelled differently, and have different meanings.
- Learners must practice, practice, and practice!
- Learners must be given corrective feedback.
- Learners must be given time to practice the skills being learned independently.
- Expect learners to take a long time to learn a skill.
- Be prepared to review the skill being learned over and over again.

- Combine book learning with authentic learning, meaning have learners brought in reading materials that are important to them, like notes from school, bills, and job related reading materials.
- Do hands-on learning if possible. For example, have learners find short vowel sounds in the newspaper and circle them.
- Cut words out of the newspaper that coincides with rules that you are learning, and put them in alphabetical order.
- Have them keep a notebook of words that could not be read and review periodically.
- Work with Dolch sight words and Fry Common Words. Print them out so they can manipulate them in sentences, individually, and in writing.

## **Observations About Vocabulary**

Oral vocabulary: a person's language that they can speak and understand

Reading vocabulary: a person's language set that they understand when reading

Typically, a beginning reader's oral vocabulary surpasses their reading vocabulary. They are much better able to understand words that are spoken to them as compared to words in which the need to read for themselves.

Challenge students to do writing with the vocabulary that they possess. Work as a scribe for the student so they can see that their writing is exceptional and that they do have much to say.

Utilize their prior knowledge to make connections.

Find out what the student's interests are and use them in reading.

## Consonants Introduction

Consonants produce sounds that are more consistent and easier to identify than vowels. Therefore, they make a good starting point for learning to read.

Initially, work should be done on identifying beginning consonant sounds (ex: t-t-t tulip).

After that, activities can focus on identifying final consonant sounds (ex: cat ends with the t-t-t sound)

When readers learn to recognize the sounds of consonants at the beginning and end positions of words, they gain the ability to look at a word and make a reasonable guess as to what it might be. Viewing the word in the context of a picture will help reinforce this skill.

(For example, a picture of a dog with the word DOG underneath. The ability to sound out the D and G letters will help the learner identify that the word is DOG, not puppy or dalmation)

<http://www.kidzone.ws/kindergarten/consonants-intro.htm>



## Consonant Concepts

The ideas and activities presented in this section will help readers develop the following skills:

- identifying beginning consonant sounds
- distinguishing between two or more beginning consonant sounds
- identifying ending consonant sounds
- distinguishing between two or more ending consonants
- choosing words that have a particular beginning or ending consonant

### Order of Presentation:

The order in which one presents consonants to students is often a matter of personal preference -- there are many different studies available that suggest one method is superior to another. Just keep in mind that you do not have to present the letters in alphabetical order.

Every learner is an individual -- what works perfectly for 85% of the learners out there, may not be the correct approach for your student. If he is having a tough time with the approach being used, try a different one.

### **APPROACH 1: RELIABILITY**

Some teachers like to deal with the letters based on their reliability (in other words, how many different sounds might that letter make... for example, although "s" is a common letter in the English language, it is not as **reliable** as the letter "v").

This is because in a word like "shark" the s does not make the same sound as in a word like "sat" and makes yet another sound in a word like "does" -- the letter V (though less frequently used when spelling words) always makes the same sound.

This makes "v" a much easier letter to teach than "s". However, "v" isn't as useful in reading as it is rarely found in words (to illustrate that point, compare the number of v's used in words in this sentence to the number of s's). See the following page for a reliability chart.

### Consonant Reliability Chart:

Extremely Reliable:	Reliable:	Generally Reliable:	Unreliable:	Very Unreliable:
m --> man	b --> bat	d --> doll	c*	s --> sat
r --> run	h --> he	f --> far	g --> goat	t --> tan
q*	k --> kid	j --> jam	w --> we	x*
v --> van	l --> let	n --> not	y --> yes	
	p --> pan	z --> zoo		

\* these letters are "unnecessary" or redundant. They do not make a unique sound.

- q --> kw
- c --> k or s
- x --> ks, gs or z

### APPROACH 2: FREQUENCY

Another method some use is to introduce the most common sounds first (s, t and r). This allows the student to quickly begin forming words. Using this approach and ignoring consonants vs vowels: o, s, t, a, r, e appear in 50% of the words in the English

language. Adding the next six letters: n, i, l, u, c, p -- gives 80% of the letters. When working on letter sounds, these can be presented "in concert" -- so, for example, one would present "at" as in rat, hat, cat, mat.

On the following page you will find a chart illustrating the word families.

**Word Families:**

single letter sounds	multi-consonant families	consonant/vowel families
s, t r, n c, l m, p b, f d, g h, v k, j z, w y, q, x	ch, th sh, wh sp, sl sc, sm st, sk sn, sq sw, tw br, tr gr, fr dr, cr pr, wr cl, bl fl, pl str, scr	ap, an, at en, are, all ub, ate, ail ay, ain, aw ake, ave eat, ear, eep ide, ice, ine, ike ow, oke, old ook, oop, ore ack, ash, ank ent, ell, est, edge ip, in, it ick, ill, ing ot, op, ock uck, ump, ush um, ug

## Consonant Digraphs

ch - chair

sh - ship

th - thumb (voiceless phoneme - th) \*\*

th - the (voiced phoneme) \*\*

wh - why

zh - pleasure

ng - sing

\*\* voiced vs voiceless: put your fingers on your vocal cords... now say "the" out loud. Notice the vibration you can feel with your fingers when you make the "th" sound? Now say, "thumb" out loud. This time there is no vibration. Letters that cause a vibration in your vocal cords are called voiced. Letters that do not are called voiceless.

Pay attention to the way your mouth makes the sound of the letter "D" and the letter "T"; the letter "B" and the letter "P"; the letter "G" and the letter "C"

D is voiced, T is voiceless -- your mouth moves the same for both

B is voiced, P is voiceless -- your mouth moves the same for both

G is voiced, C is voiceless -- your mouth moves the same for both.

If your students are having difficulty distinguishing these sounds, have them use the finger on the vocal cords trick ... it may help them out a bit.

## Consonant Blends

bl - black

cl - clown

fl - flying

dr and ft - draft

sk - desk

fr - fry  
spr - spray  
spl - splash  
tr - tree  
tw - twin  
gr - great  
sl - slow  
pr - pretty  
gr - grasp  
sp - grasp  
st - rest  
str - straits  
ngth - strength  
nd - bland  
thr - thread

<http://www.kidzone.ws/kindergarten/consonants-intro.htm>

## References

### **Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults First Steps for Teachers**

<http://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/applyingresearch.pdf>

### **Big Ideas in Beginning Reading**

Center on Teaching and Learning, CTL  
University of Oregon

[http://reading.uoregon.edu/big\\_ideas/pa/pa\\_teach.php](http://reading.uoregon.edu/big_ideas/pa/pa_teach.php)

### **Dynamic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills**

<https://dibels.uoregon.edu/dibelsinfo.php>

Excellent website for beginning reading. \$20 annual membership

[www.enchantedlearning.com](http://www.enchantedlearning.com)

### **Learning to Achieve**

National Institute for Literacy  
2009

### **Literacy Information and Communication System, or LINC**

[http://lincs.ed.gov/readingprofiles/MC\\_Text\\_Comprehension.htm](http://lincs.ed.gov/readingprofiles/MC_Text_Comprehension.htm)

### **Making Sense of Decoding and Spelling: An Adult Reading Course of Study**

An online course of study I participated in May 2010 presented by Professional Studies Online.

Can be found at: <http://lincs.ed.gov/pd/msteaching2010>

The Learner Activity Book and Lesson Plans are coming out soon according to the website.

**Literacy Basics**

<http://www.nald.ca/literacybasics/instruct/reading/01.htm>

**National Institute for Literacy**

[www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles/](http://www.nifl.gov/readingprofiles/)

Excellent website for beginning reading. Free

<http://www.superteacherworksheets.com>