Essentials for Reading Success

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Phonics Resources

These resources were compiled to provide educators with essential foundational knowledge to support students' skills in phonics. The information is not meant to be comprehensive. For more information, please refer to the references. This document includes an introduction and information about:

- ► **Regular word types**
- ► **Consonant sound-spelling patterns**
- ► **Vowel sound-spelling patterns**
- ► **Schwa**
- ► **Consonant generalizations**
- ► **Syllable patterns**
- ► **Spelling patterns and rules**
- ► **Common word parts**

Introduction

Phonics instruction and skills become more complex as students progress from learning simple correspondences between single letters and sounds, to working with initial and final consonant blends and various vowel combinations, and finally to larger "chunks" of letters in words. Good readers will be able to fluently apply phonemic decoding skills to help them identify unfamiliar words they encounter in text. Phonemic decoding is the process of blending letter sounds and sound-spelling patterns from left to right within a word to read the word.

Students should be carefully instructed in how to apply phonemic decoding strategies when reading text. The general rule is that, when they come to a word they cannot immediately recognize, they should first try to "sound it out" (i.e., decode it). Once they have "sounded out" as much as they can, they should try to think of a word that has those sounds in it, and that also makes sense in the sentence they are reading.

Phonemic decoding skills are established early through extensive practice and instruction that involve relatively simple relationships in simple words. As students become more skilled, they progress to increasingly complex patterns of letter sounds and words.

To effectively teach phonics, teachers must pronounce letter sounds correctly and understand that there are two ways that sounds can be categorized: continuous/stop sounds and voiced/unvoiced sounds. A **continuous sound** can be pronounced for several seconds without any distortion. For example, the letter sound for M is /m/. You can hold /m/ for several seconds, and the sound will remain the same. Continuous sounds are the easiest sounds for students to produce and blend. A **stop sound** is a quick sound that can be correctly pronounced for only an instant. For example, /b/ or /t/. It is very important not to say /buh/ or /tuh/, adding the schwa sound.

A **voiced sound** is one that makes the vocal cords vibrate, such as /v/ or /j/. Place your hand on your throat at your vocal cords and say /v/. Do you feel the vibration? An **unvoiced sound** is one that does not make the vocal cords vibrate, such as /s/ or /f/. Place your hand on your throat at your vocal cords and say /s/. There is no vibration, so it is an unvoiced sound. Learning the differences between these sounds will help you become more conscious of the way phonemes sound and feel.

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Regular Word Types

This table provides general guidelines for teaching each word type. Word types are in relative order of difficulty. Some students may find words of an earlier word type more difficult than words further down the list. Students' phonemic awareness skills will influence their ability to read words of increasing difficulty. V = Vowel. C = Consonant.

Word Type	Examples of Regular Words
VC and CVC words that begin with a continuous sound. These types of words are grouped together because there are few VC words.	am at man sat
CVC words that begin with a stop sound.	dog tan
CCVC words that begin with a consonant blend. Words that begin with two continuous sounds (e.g., flat, slap) are the easier than words that have a stop sound in the consonant blend (e.g., skip, crab).	frog snap stop crib
VCC and CVCC words that begin with a continuous sound. These types of words are grouped together because there are few VCC words.	end ant mist lamp
CVCC words that begin with a stop sound and end with a consonant blend.	dust hand test
CCVCC, CCCVC, and CCCVCC words.	cramp split strand

The following tables include sound-spelling patterns for consonants, vowels, and the schwa sound.

Consonant Sound-Spelling Patterns

Sound	Spelling	Example	Sound	Spelling	Example
/b/	b bb	big bubble	/r/	r wr rr rh	rat write carry rhino
/ch/	ch tch t	chip match future	/s/	s ss c ce se sc	ip glass civil voice house science
/d/	d ed dd	did turned rudder	/t/	t tt bt pt ed	tab mitt debt pterodactyl sipped
/f/	f ff ph ph lf	fat stuff phone tough	/v/	v ve	van nerve
/g/	g gg gh	tag giggle ghost	/ks/	x	fox
/h/	h wh	hot whole	/z/	z zz s se ze x	zip buzz is choose snooze xylophone
/j/	j g ge dge	jet giraffe barge fudge	/th/	th	thing this
/k/	k c ck ch	kite cat duck chord	/sh/	sh s ss ch sc	shell sure mission chef conscience
/l/	l ll le	lip full sample	/hw/	wh	wheel
/m/	m mm mb mm	man slimmer numb autumn	/ŋ/...	ng	sing
/n/	n nn kn gn pn	no winner know gnat pneumonia	/w/	w	water
/p/	p pp	hip happy	/y/	y	yellow
/kw/	q	queen			

Note: A consonant digraph consists of two consecutive consonant that make one sound (e.g., th, sh, wh).

Vowel Sound–Spelling Patterns

Sound	Spelling	Example	Sound	Spelling	Example
/ă/	a	cat	/oo/	oo oul u	cook would put
/ā/	a_e ai ay ea ey eigh a ei aigh	ape rain say steak they eighty paper vein straight	/oo/	oo ue ew u ui u_e ou oe o	boot blue new super suit flute soup shoe do
/ĕ/	e ea ai ie	bed bread said friend	/aw/	aw au al ough augh	lawn fraud walk fought taught
/ē/	ee ea ie y e i_e i ei e_e ey	meet seat chief sunny she petite variation receive eve key	/ow/	ow ou ough	cow out drought
/ĭ/	i y	inch myth	/oy/	oy oi	boy soil
/ī/	_e ie eigh igh y uy i	kite cried height sigh my buy bicycle	/er/	er ur ir or ear ar yr	faster turn girl work learn dollar syrup
/ŏ/	o	hot	/or/	or oar ore our	for board store course
/ō/	o_e oa oe o ow ough ou	note boat toe most grow though soul	/ar/	ar ear	car heart
/ŭ/	u ou	tub touch			
/ū/	u_e u ew	mule pupil few			

Note: A vowel digraph consists of two consecutive vowels that make one sound (e.g., ea in bread, oa in boat, ai in rain). A diphthong consists of two consecutive vowels that feel as if it has two sounds (e.g., oy in boy, ew in few).
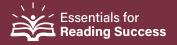
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Schwa

Schwa (/ə/) often makes the short u sound as in cup.

Sound	Spelling	Example
/ə/	a	alone
/ə/	e	jacket
/ə/	i	pencil
/ə/	o	gallop
/ə/	u	circus

Consonant Generalizations

Consonant	Generalization
y	- y at the beginning of a syllable makes a consonant sound (e.g., yellow, yes) - y in the middle or end of a syllable makes a vowel sound (e.g., cycle, cry)
-ck	When you hear /k/ at the end of a word or syllable directly after a short vowel, it is spelled -ck (e.g., clock).
-ch -tch	- When you hear /ch/ at the end of a word or syllable directly after a single short vowel, it is spelled -tch (e.g., catch, fetch). - If there is a consonant or a vowel team before the /ch/, it is spelled -ch (e.g., ranch, couch).
-dge -ge	When a one syllable word ends in /j/, use -dge after a short vowel. -ge after a consonant or long vowel (e.g., edge, fringe, sage).
Hard and soft g, c	- When c or g is followed by the vowel e, i, or y, it makes a soft sound (e.g., citrus, cycle, general, ginger). - When c or g is followed by the vowel a, o, or u, it makes a hard sound (e.g., cat, coffee, gum, good).

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Syllable Patterns

Students eventually need to learn common rules for dividing **syllables** in order to better read and spell multisyllabic words. A syllable is a word part with a vowel in it. Usually, a word has many syllables as it has vowels. Many students transfer their knowledge of syllable patterns to multisyllabic words. But some don't. When decoding a word, it is the vowel that causes confusion. Syllable patterns dictate how the vowel in the syllable is usually pronounced. Understanding syllable types can help students decode unfamiliar words.

Syllable Pattern	Description	Example
Closed	A closed syllable ends in one or more consonants and has a short vowel sound spelled with one vowel.	hat dish **bas-ket**
VCe	A syllable pattern that ends in silent e, which makes the vowel before it a long sound (say its name).	stripe shine bake
Open	An open syllable ends with a vowel sound that is spelled with a single vowel letter (a, e, i, o, or u).	me **pro**-gram **mu**-sic
Vowel Team	A syllable that has multiple vowels spelling the vowel.	tooth pain **train**-er
Vowel-r	A syllable that has at least one vowel followed by an r. The r always comes directly after the vowel (ar, er, ir, or, ur).	corn bird **mar**-ket
Consonant-le	A final syllable that contains a consonant followed by le. The e is always silent in this syllable pattern.	sim-**ple** puz-**zle** a-**ble**

Spelling Patterns/Rules

Students use patterns and rules to read and spell words which may include:

Floss Spelling Rule
- When a one-syllable word ends in **f**, **l**, or **s**, double the **f**, **l**, or, **s**. Examples: sni**ff**, fa**ll**, me**ss**.
- We call this the floss spelling rule because the word floss follows this rule and includes the letters f, l, and s to help us remember the rule.
- There are some exceptions to this rule (e.g., if, pal, has).

Double the Consonant Spelling Rule
- Use this rule when adding -ing, -ed, -er, or -est to a base word. When a vowel is followed by a consonant in a one syllable word, double the consonant and then add -ing, -ed, -er, or -est. Examples: swim/swimming, mop/mopped, win/winner, big/biggest.

Change y to i Spelling Rule
- Use this rule when the last letter of the word is y and we want to add a suffix, like -ed or -est or make it plural by adding -es to the end of the word.
- We can remember this rule by saying, "Change the y to i and add the ending."
- Examples: rely + ed = relied, busy + est = busiest, try + es = tries.
- The best way to remember when to use this rule is to look at the letter that comes before the y in the word.
  - If a vowel comes before the y, keep the y and add the suffix (play + ed = played).
  - If a consonant comes before the y, change the y to i and add the suffix (carry + ed = carried).
  - NOTE: If the suffix begins with an i (-ing), keep the y and add the suffix (play + ing = playing).

Common Word Parts

Prefixes and Suffixes
- A **base word** can stand alone and has meaning (for example, cat, bench, eat, walk).
- A **prefix** is a word part that is added to the beginning of a base word that changes its meaning. Examples of prefixes are un-, re-, im-. When the prefix un- is added to the base word lucky, the word changes from lucky to unlucky. The prefix un- means "not," so unlucky means not lucky.
- A **suffix** is a word part that is added to the end of a base word that changes its meaning. Examples of suffixes include -er, -ful, -ness. When the suffix -er is added to the base word work, the word changes from work to worker. The suffix -er means "one who," so worker means one who works.

Root Words
- A **root word** is a single word that cannot be broken into smaller words or parts. Latin and Greek root words rarely stand alone as words in English. But we can form many English words from root words.
- An example of a Latin root word is spect, which means to see, observe, watch over. There are several words we can build from **spect**: re**spect**, a**spect**, in**spect**, in**spect**ion, re**spect**able, per**spect**ive.
- Knowing the meaning of a root word can help you know the meanings of several other related words.

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