



Teaching Reading in the Early Years

Overview

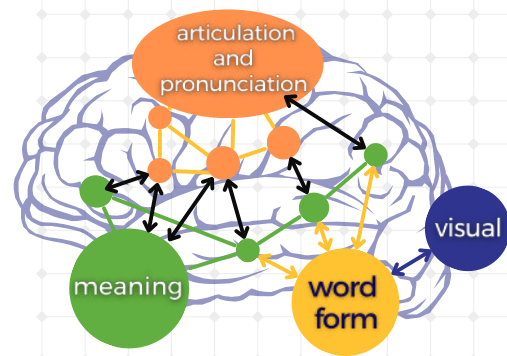


Understanding:

It is important that an evidence-based structured literacy pedagogy in reading is built on a **solid foundation of understanding of core concepts in the research on reading.**

Reading is biologically secondary.

Reading is not naturally acquired like spoken language. It is a skill that is best taught in a systematic and explicit manner- from least complex to most complex content and skills.

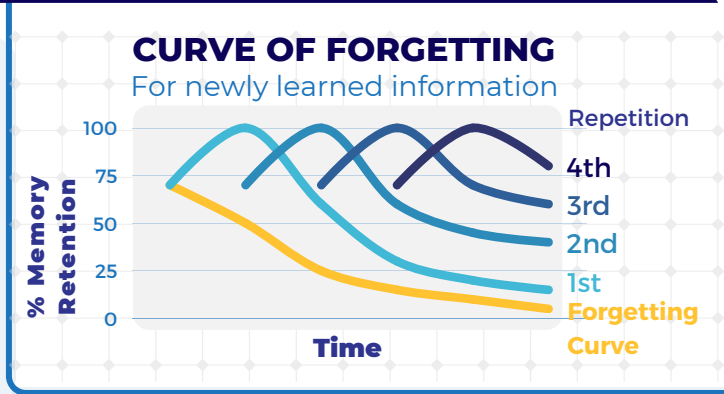
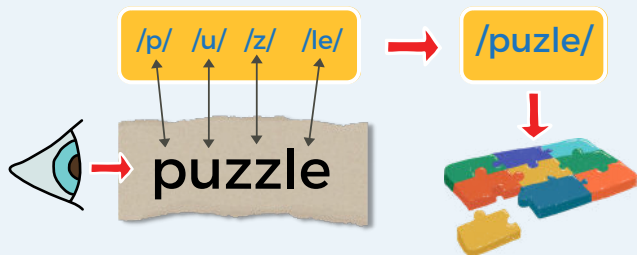
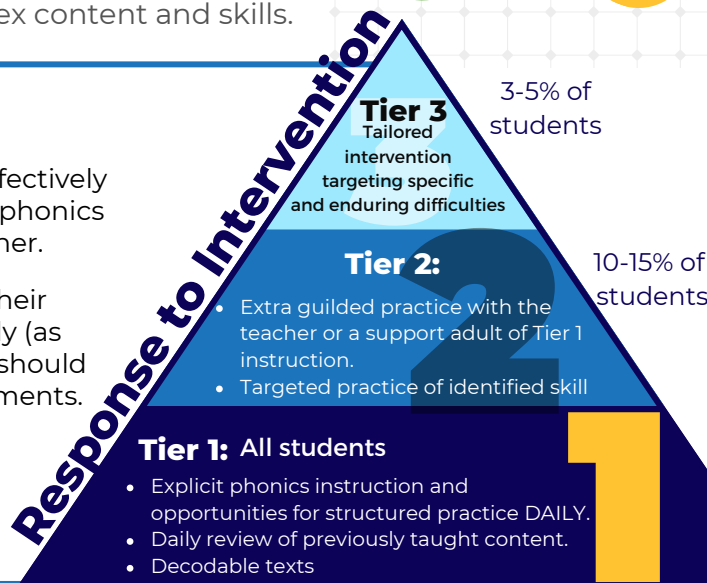


Impact on Practice?

To ensure that all students learn to read and spell effectively and in the most efficient manner, we need to teach phonics and morphology in a systematic and explicit manner.

Students who are not making progress along with their class peers should receive targeted intervention early (as early as end of Term 1 of Early Stage 1) and progress should be monitored closely using quality decoding assessments.

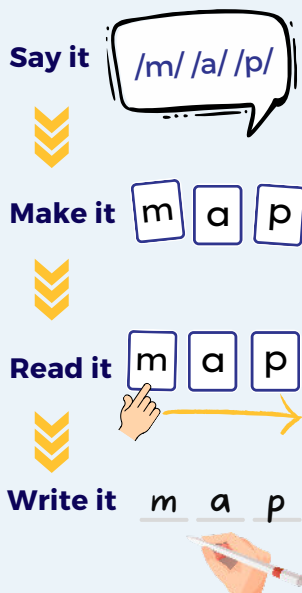
As with many biologically secondary skills, the key to learning is spaced retrieval practice. Lots of opportunities to cement new information into long term memory is essential.



Reading in English requires the development of the Alphabetic Principle.

To be an effective reading in an alphabetic language like English, you need to develop phonemic awareness, which is the awareness that words are made up of individual phonemes (speech sounds). You then need to understand that letters and combinations of letters are used to represent those phonemes in writing.

Some readers can intuit the alphabetic principle, but many do not, which leads to inaccurate reading, poor spelling, and an incomplete understanding of the English orthography.



Impact on Practice?

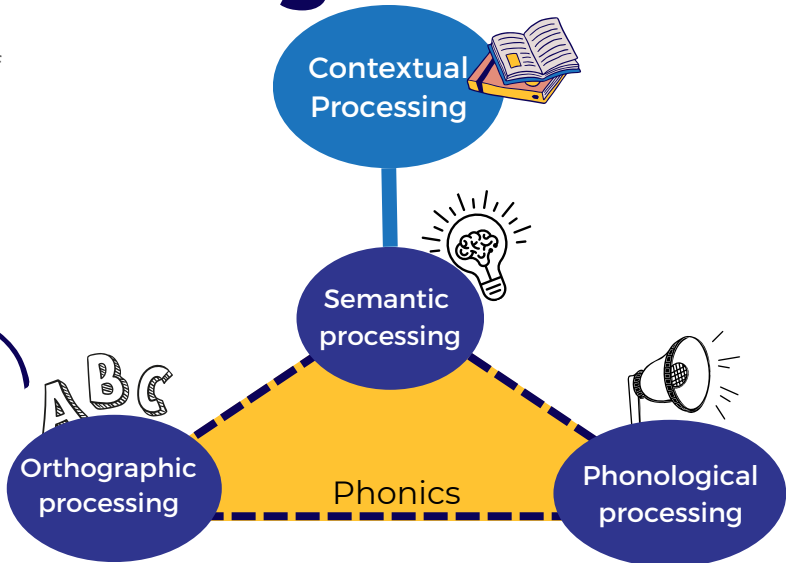
A systematic and explicit phonics program that directly teaches phoneme to grapheme correspondences and orthographic patterns support all readers to develop accurate word reading skills and develop phonemic awareness.

An illustration of a female teacher with glasses and a red dress, holding a book and a pointer. She is surrounded by several speech bubbles with encouraging and instructional messages:

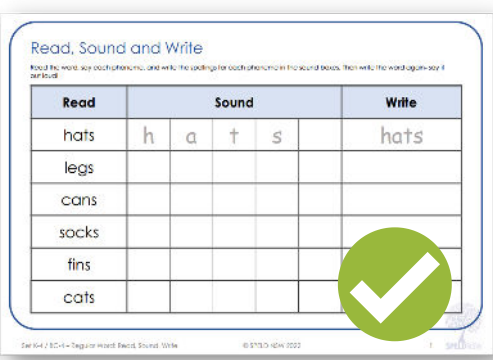
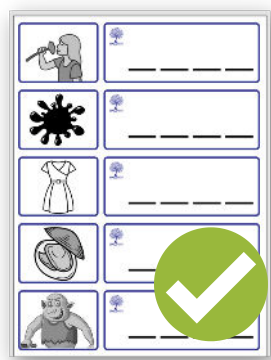
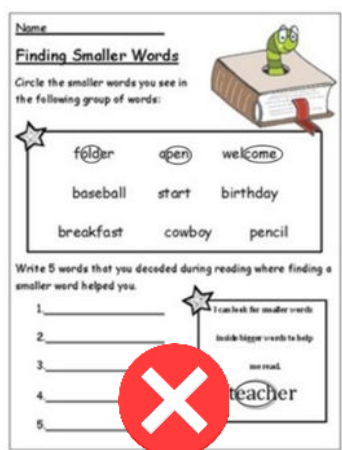
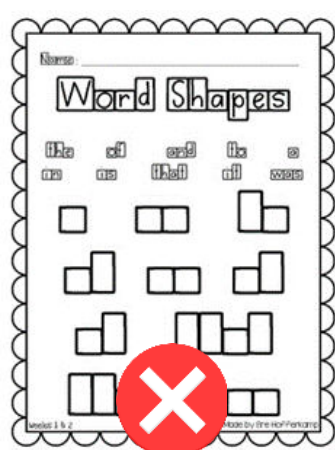
- 'Try again!'
- 'Prompt to try additive blending'
- 'What is this sound? (point to grapheme)'
- 'This is the _____ sound, try again!'
- 'Watch and listen to me.'
- 'Now you try.'
- 'Read this sentence/word again.'

Reading involves developing orthographic knowledge.

When we read we access particular neural pathways dedicated to **orthographic knowledge** (knowledge of letters, letter patterns and spelling conventions). We learn how certain letter patterns, connect to the pronunciation of those patterns and the meaning of the word. We do not memorise word shapes.



Impact on Practice?
 Instruction should focus on phonemes, graphemes, letter patterns and word meaning.



Reading requires accuracy at the individual word level.

Instruction in early reading and when introducing more complex word structures, should be first given at the word level. Ensuring that accurate decoding and word attack skills develop at the individual word level rather than depending on contextual cues to guess or problem solve words is a key part of reading success.

Impact on Practice?
 Teachers should provide **explicit instruction** including modelling and guided practice of reading words (in isolation from a text). In Early reading this means phonic decoding and blending of single words as well as some basic morphology (ed, ing, s).

 At both early stages and in upper year spelling these words is an essential part of committing them to long term memory.



Reading individual words automatically is essential for fluency.

Reading individual words automatically (ie. without having to sound them out/decode them) is a key skill to developing oral reading fluency. Being able to read words, as if by sight, allows students to become more efficient readers who can focus their attention on comprehension rather than decoding.



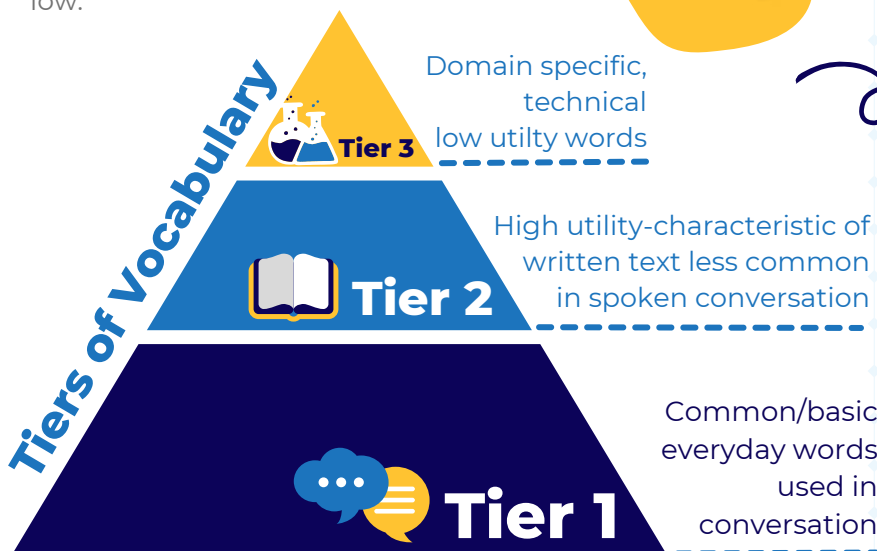
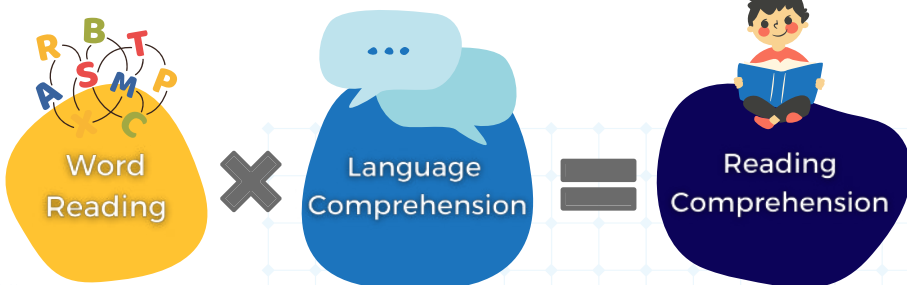
Impact on Practice?

In early reading this means extensive opportunities to engage in repeated reading of words that students can read accurately. Playing word reading games, reading lists of words containing taught code and repeated reading of decodable readers helps develop that word reading automaticity.

For older students, repeated practice of reading and spellings polysyllabic and morphologically complex words through games, paired fluency reads and whole class activities support fluency development.

READING requires a deep and broad understanding of vocabulary and background knowledge.

To read a text with fluency and expression, students need to understand the vocabulary and context of the text. Fluency and reading comprehension are compromised when vocabulary and background knowledge of the topic are low.



Impact on Practice?

Teachers should provide **explicit vocabulary instruction** and many opportunities to use and engage with new vocabulary across various contexts. Teachers should plan reading instruction in line with other KLAs to ensure that content knowledge is strong.

References and Recommended Readings

Atkinson, R.C. and Shiffrin, R.M. (1968). Human memory: A proposed system and its control processes. In K. W. Spence and J. T. Spence (Eds) *The psychology of learning and motivation (Vol 2)*. London: Academic Press

Baddeley, A. D., & Logie, R. H. (1999). Working memory: The multiple-component model. In A. Miyake & P. Shah (Eds.), *Models of working memory: Mechanisms of active maintenance and executive control* (pp. 28–61). Cambridge University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139174909.005>

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/writing/Types-of-writing-systems>

Castles, Anne & Rastle, Kathleen & Nation, Kate. (2018). Ending the Reading Wars: Reading Acquisition From Novice to Expert. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*. 19. 5-51. [10.1177/1529100618772271](https://doi.org/10.1177/1529100618772271).

Dehaene, Stanislas. (2009). Reading in the Brain : The New Science of How We Read.

Ebbinghaus H (1913/1885). *Memory: A contribution to experimental psychology*. Ruger HA, Bussenius CE, translator. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Ehri, L. C. (2014). Orthographic mapping in the acquisition of sight word reading, spelling memory, and vocabulary learning. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 18(1), 5–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888438.2013.819356>

Ehri, L. C. (2014). Orthographic mapping in the acquisition of sight word reading, spelling memory, and vocabulary learning. *Scientific Studies of Reading*, 18(1), 5–21. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888438.2013.819356>

Gough, P. B., & Tunmer, W. E. (1986). Decoding, reading, and reading disability. *RASE: Remedial & Special Education*, 7(1), 6–10. <https://doi.org/10.1177/074193258600700104>

Jeffrey S. Bowers & Peter N. Bowers (2017) Beyond Phonics: The Case for Teaching Children the Logic of the English Spelling System, *Educational Psychologist*, 52:2, 124-141, DOI: [10.1080/00461520.2017.1288571](https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520.2017.1288571)

<https://www.mindtools.com/a9wjrw/ebbinghaus-forgetting-curve>

Moats, L, & Tolman, C. (2009). Excerpted from *Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS): Spellography for Teachers: How English Spelling Works* (Module 3). Boston: Sopris West.

<https://www.readingrockets.org/article/historical-layers-english>

Rosenshine, Barak. (2012). Principles of Instruction: Research-Based Strategies That All Teachers Should Know, *American Educator*, v36 n1 p12-19, 39

Scarborough, H. S. (2001). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice. In S. Neuman & D. Dickinson (Eds.), *Handbook for research in early literacy* (pp. 97–110). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Seidenberg, Mark. (2018). Language at the Speed of Sight.

<https://simplypsychology.org/multi-store.html>

<https://www.thoughtco.com/what-is-orthography-1691463>

https://www.timrasinski.com/presentations/building_fluency_through_the_phrased_text_lesson_article.pdf

https://www.timrasinski.com/presentations/article_why_fluency_shd_be_hot__rt_may_2012.pdf