

GOAL: Learn the Alphabet, Letters and Sounds

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Introduction

Reading is a process that is equal parts wonderful and complicated. Because of this, successful reading is made up of the **proficient** development of multiple skills. There are five important components of reading: **phonemic awareness, decoding, fluency**, vocabulary and **comprehension**. Between kindergarten and third grade, students are taught these explicit reading strategies where they learn to read. If a student misses the opportunity to develop any of these components of reading, it is easy for a student to miss out on the development of important reading skills leading to some students' struggle with reading later in life.

GUIDEPOST I: Where to Start

Phonemic awareness, or the ability for an individual to detect individual speech sounds with words, is the foundation of reading development. Some readers struggle because they have not acquired or need further support building this skill. Practicing phonemic awareness assists in learning the alphabet letters and sounds that will provide them the skills to become independent readers. Building these early skills in readers can be intimidating, but we all have the knowledge and ability to work with our learners to build these skills!

To figure out where to start with your learner, it's crucial to find out what letter and letter-sounds skills your learner knows and does not know. To begin the process, your learner must undergo a comprehensive reading assessment, such as the Bader Reading & Language Inventory, which is typically done during the initial intake by your library literacy staff. An assessment will help you learn what letters and sounds your learner needs support developing.

Questions to Consider:

- What is your learner's education history?
- What is your learner's experience with reading?
- What is your learner's overall feeling towards reading?
- Why is your learner interested in improving their reading skills now?
- What is your learner unable to do that they would like to do?
- What is your learner's reading goal?

Key Vocabulary

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Comprehension• Decoding• Fluency• Foundational• Phoneme• Phonemic awareness• Phonics	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Proficient• Recognition• Simultaneously
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NOTE: In this lesson plan, we'll be focusing on learning the alphabet letters and sounds, but reading skills are not developed in isolation. Reading skills are developed in conjunction with other skills. So, spending specific time on **phonemic awareness** and **phonics** instruction while putting these skills into practice while reading is equally important.

GUIDEPOST II: What You Will Learn

In this lesson plan, a learner will practice developing their alphabet letter and sound **recognition**. These instructional activities will walk a learner through both isolated letter and sound recognition as well as what letter and sound practice could look like while reading. Building these skills will help the learner receive guided practice building a **foundational** reading skill for the learner to work on their overall reading level.

Potential Materials

- Learner letter/sound assessment
- Letter Tiles or Letter Cards
 - **TIP:** Scrabble letters work perfect here!
- Text of learner interest (book, article, poem...etc.)
- Dictionary or dictionary website, such as [Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dictionary](#) or [Oxford's Learner's Dictionary](#)
- Notebook and writing tool for note taking

GUIDEPOST III: How You Will Learn—Multisensory Instruction

ISOLATED LETTER/SOUND PRACTICE

To begin, it is important to know what letters and letter sounds in which your learner needs additional support. Most often, this is conducted during your learner's intake process for

enrollment into the literacy program. You can also rely on your observations if you've been working with your learner for some time.

Isolated letter/sound practice focuses just on building letter knowledge and letter-sound recognition outside of reading. Using either the letter tiles or letter cards you can use the following approaches to help build your learner's letter knowledge and letter-sound recognition focusing on the letters/sounds where they need to build knowledge. This list of phonemic awareness strategies is taken from the National Institute for Literacy's text, "[Applying Research in Reading Instruction for Adults: First Steps for Teachers.](#)"

- *Phoneme isolation* helps practice recognizing individual sounds in words. For example, "Tell me the first sound in **paste**." A learner would correctly respond with the letter sound of p or /p/.
 - Watch "[Phoneme Isolation \(Recognizing Individual Sounds in Words\)](#)" by the San Jose Public Library as a model.
 - **NOTE:** When a letter sound is isolated, it is written in /slashes/, such as the letter sound of b would be written /b/.
- *Phoneme identity* helps practice recognizing the common sound in different words. For example, "Tell me the sound that is the same in **bike**, **boy**, and **bell**." A learner would correctly respond with the letter sound of b or /b/.
 - Watch "[Phoneme Identity \(Recognizing the Common Sound in Different Words\)](#)" by the San Jose Public Library as a model.
- *Phoneme categorization* helps practice recognizing the word with the odd sound in a sequence of three or four words. For example, "Which word does not belong? **Bus**, **bun**, **rug**." A learner would correctly respond by identifying the word "**rug**" because it does not follow the "bug" pattern like "**bus**" and "**bun**."
 - Watch "[Phoneme Categorization \(Combining Sounds to Form a Word\)](#)" by the San Jose Public Library as a model.
- *Phoneme blending* helps practice oral recognition of letter sounds by listening to a sequence of separately spoken sounds and combining them to form a recognizable word. For example, "What word is /s/ /k/ /u/ /l/?" A learner would correctly respond, "**school**."
 - Watch "[Phoneme Blending \(Combining Sounds to Form a Word\)](#)" by the San Jose State Library as a model.
- *Phoneme segmentation* helps practice breaking up a word into its sounds by counting each sound that makes up the word. For example, "How many phonemes are there in **ship**?" A learner would correctly respond that there are three sounds, /sh/ /i/ /p/.
 - Watch "[Phoneme Segmentation \(Breaking a Word into Its Sounds\)](#)" by the San Jose State Library as a model.

- *Phoneme deletion* helps practice recognizing what word remains when a specific phoneme is removed. For example, “What is **smile** without the /s/?” A learner would correctly respond that “**smile**” without the /s/ is “**mile**.”
 - What “[Phone Deletion \(Removing a Sound and Recognizing What Remains\)](#)” by the San Jose State Library as a model.

Practicing phoneme recognition is a great way to build letter recognition. Each of the phonemic skill practice listed here is important and is not intended to be practiced in this order. However, if your learner is learning a new letter sound, the first three phonemic strategies are easier, while the final three are more complex. So, it can make sense for some learners to begin practicing in the initial listed three to begin building letter sound awareness before moving into the final listed three.

LETTER/SOUND PRACTICE WHILE READING

It’s crucial for struggling readers to get specific letter/sound practice as well as practice building reading skills. It is tempting to think one must work through phonemic awareness, decoding, vocabulary building and the others in that order. However, reading **simultaneously** provides space for the practice of each of these elements. Therefore, reading is important even in the early stages if possible.

1. Using a learner-identified text, select a guided reading approach, such as choral reading, echo reading or others (read more about different guided reading approaches [here](#)).
2. As the learner is reading, pay close attention to the words a learner struggles with.
 - **TIP:** It’s always good for the learner and tutor to have their own individual copy of a text.
3. After the learner finishes reading, review the words of struggle.
4. Then, have your learner spell each word using the letter tiles or letter cards while sounding out each sound until they blend the whole word.
5. Finally, have the learner repeat spelling and sounding out each sound with their finger textured surface (such as their pants, felt, or other) before moving to the next word.

Once the learner has worked through each of the words of struggle, try reading the text out loud again independently.

NOTE: It takes about three read throughs for a learner to build fluency when reading a text.

GUIDEPOST IV: What Worked, What Didn’t, What Can You Use?

To complete this learning session, consider asking your learner the following questions to assess the success of your tutoring session:

Questions to Consider:

- What skills can you take from today to continue practicing letters and sounds at home?
- What did you think was most successful about today's session?
- What did you think was least successful about today's session?
- What challenges do you think you might have?
- What else would you like to know about the alphabet letters and sounds that we didn't cover today?
- What are ways you will know you've met the goal, "Learning the Alphabet Letters and Sounds"?

Milestones that Show Learner Progress

Initial Effort – Your learner is aware of or understands the basic skills needed to effectively recognize, name and sound out the alphabet letters and sounds. You and your learner have discussed and planned where to begin practicing the alphabet letters and sounds by taking inventory of or reviewing the intake assessment that captures what skills your learner possesses and those skills that need support.

Making Progress – You and your learner have identified elements of success and your learner can recognize these as indicators of progress. Indicators of progress can include but are not limited to:

- Your learner is aware of where to begin when reading letters and identifying letters sounds
- Your learner is aware of types of questions one can ask to begin reading words with challenging letters and letter sounds
- Your learner can begin reading words with challenging letters and letter sounds with support
- Your learner can navigate words with challenging letters and letter sounds with support

Based on the elements of success you and your learner have identified, you both are putting aside physical and anecdotal evidence that shows improved recognition of alphabet letters and sounds.

Goal Accomplished – Your learner can independently perform the reading tasks necessary to successfully read challenging alphabet letters and sounds. In this stage, the learner feels comfortable performing this goal on their own.