

Phonics Instructional Routines

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These four routines are grounded in the Science of Reading and decades of research on what works for all learners, including those with dyslexia and other reading difficulties. Use them consistently. The predictable structure is what makes them effective.

The routines work with any set of Sound Spelling Cards. They pair naturally with the *Instructional Routines: A Quick Guide to Explicit Instruction in Phonological Awareness and Phonics* (3rd ed.), available from Souslebois Press at www.veritasedconsulting.com/souslebois-press.

Routine 1: Introduce Sound Spelling Cards

Purpose: To introduce or review a sound-spelling pattern. **Time:** 5 minutes or less

How to Teach

- Select a Sound Spelling Card to highlight. Choose a few words that contain the sound.
- Display the picture on the card.
- **Say:** "This is the ___ card (e.g., Queen Card). What's the name of this card?"
- **Say:** "It represents the sound /_/ (e.g., /kw/). What's the sound?"
- **Say:** "Let's think about the sound /_/. It can occur at the ___ (beginning, middle, end) of a word or syllable."
- **Ask:** "Do these words have the /_/ sound in them?" Give a few examples and have the child respond to each.
- **Ask:** "Can you think of a word that has the /_/ sound?"

Helpful Tips

- Listen carefully to the sounds children make to ensure they are producing the correct sound.
- If errors occur, have the child watch your mouth as you produce the sound, then ask them to repeat it.

Routine 2: Sound-by-Sound Blending

Purpose: To teach mastery of sound-spelling relationships in one-syllable words. **Time:** 10–15 minutes

How to Teach

Prepare 15–20 decodable words that focus on the target sound. For each word:

- Write the spelling for the first sound, point under it, and say: Sound? Child responds.
- Write the spelling for the second sound, point under it, and say: Sound? Child responds.

- Continue through each sound to the vowel. After the vowel, point to the bottom left of the first spelling and say: Blend. Use a swoop motion under the onset and vowel to signal the child to blend through the vowel.
- Continue to write, point to, and have the child say the sound for each spelling after the vowel.
- After the last sound, point to the bottom left of the first spelling and say: Blend. Use the swoop motion to have the child blend through the whole word.
- Point to the bottom left of the first spelling and say: Word? Pause, then slide a straight line underneath to signal the child to reread the word naturally.

Helpful Tips

- Use consistent verbal cues (Sound? Blend. Word?) every time. The predictability is part of what makes the routine work.
- Once the child knows the routine, drop the verbal directions and use only the finger-pointing cues.

Routine 3: Continuous Blending

Purpose: To practice individual sound-spelling relationships in a whole word. **Time:** 10–15 minutes

How to Teach

Prepare 15–20 decodable words that focus on the target sound. For each word:

- Write the whole word.
- Point to the bottom left of the first spelling and say: Blend the sounds.
- Loop your finger quickly below each spelling pattern as a cue for the child to say the sounds and blend continuously.
- Point to the bottom left of the first spelling and say: Blend the word. Use the swoop motion to have the child blend through the whole word.
- Point to the bottom left of the first spelling and say: Word? Pause, then slide a straight line underneath to signal the child to reread the word naturally.

Helpful Tips

- This routine moves faster than Sound-by-Sound Blending — the child blends continuously rather than sound by sound.
- Once the child knows the routine, use finger-pointing cues only, without verbal directions.

Routine 4: Sound-by-Sound Spelling

Purpose: To teach spelling mastery with single-syllable words. **Time:** 15 minutes

How to Teach

Prepare 5–10 decodable words that focus on the target sounds. For each word:

- **Say:** "The word is ____." Use the word in a sentence. Repeat the word.
- **Say:** "What's the word?" The child responds before beginning to write.
- **Say:** "How many sounds are in ____ (word)?" The child says the sounds and counts them on their fingers.

- **Lead the child through each sound:** "What is the first sound? Which card? How is the sound spelled?" Then have the child write it down.
- Repeat with each remaining sound in sequence.
- After the child has written the word, have them proofread by comparing it to a correct example that the adult has written.

Helpful Tips

- The goal is practice, not perfection. Encourage the child to reference the Sound Spelling Cards while spelling.
- When correcting errors, help the child understand why the word is spelled the way it is — not just that it is wrong.
- Include this routine often. Spelling practice strengthens reading as much as reading practice does.

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