

How do I implement Decoding Instruction in my Class?

A step-by-step guide



There are a variety of instructional sequences that have been used to teach children to decode words. The instructional model that we are describing in this tutorial begins by teaching children high utility sound-symbol correspondences and also teaching children to recognise the six syllable patterns in English. The instructional sequence is based on a simple 5-step plan that we have used in our research (see, for example, Blachman, 1987; Blachman et al., 1999; Blachman et al., 2004) and found to be effective in teaching children to decode. These simple steps have been used with at-risk students in small groups in general education classrooms and in one-to-one tutoring with second and third grade students who have been identified to have reading or learning difficulties. Many resource teachers have also used this instructional sequence for older students.

Overview of the 5-Step Plan

We recommend that teachers follow a 5-step plan in each daily lesson. Each step builds on the previous step and we describe each step in detail later in this section of the tutorial. Here is an overview of the steps:

1. Practice sound-symbol associations;
2. Practice phoneme analysis and blending to learn to decode words **accurately**;
3. Practice reading phonetically regular words and high-frequency irregular words (e.g. said) to build **fluency** in decoding single words;
4. Practice reading decodable text and traditional children's stories to build **fluency** decoding words in connected text; and
5. Practice spelling words (and sentences) from dictation that contain the patterns used in previous steps of the lesson.

Before discussing each of the five steps in detail, we are going to introduce you to the six syllable types in English that you will be teaching your students. Although the five steps in each daily lesson remain the same, the lessons increase in difficulty as each new syllable type is introduced. Learning these syllable types helps children read longer, unfamiliar words by chunking words into familiar syllable patterns. The goal is to have children become adept at "pattern recognition, not rule memorisation" (Moats, 1998, p. 6).

Six Syllable Types in English

1. CLOSED SYLLABLE

- A closed syllable has one vowel and ends in one or more consonants.
- The vowel says its short sound (e.g. **a** says /a/ as in **apple**).

Examples: it, fun, splash

2. FINAL "E" SYLLABLE

- A final "e" syllable ends with a vowel, a consonant, and an e.
- The e is silent and the vowel says its long sound (says its name).

Examples: home, plate

3. OPEN SYLLABLE

- An open syllable ends in one vowel.
- The vowel says its name.

Examples: hi, she, go, va/cate

4. VOWEL TEAM SYLLABLE

- A vowel team syllable has two vowels.
- The two vowels make one sound.

Examples: rain, boat, spoil, shout

5. VOWEL + R SYLLABLE

- A vowel + **r** syllable has one vowel followed by an **r**.
- The r controls the pronunciation of the vowel.

Examples: car, storm, third, burn, her

6. CONSONANT + LE SYLLABLE

- A consonant + **le** syllable is a final syllable consisting of a consonant followed by **le**.

Examples: ruf/fle, ma/ple, noo/dle, hur/dle

By combining syllable patterns, students can begin to decode more complex words made up of the syllable patterns they have learned. For example, knowledge of closed syllables allows students to read a simple word like map, as well as words like nap/kin and Wis/con/sin. As students acquire knowledge of the remaining syllable types, it is easier for them to decode words like in/vite, si/lent, and ser/pen/tine by chunking the words into familiar syllable patterns.

Reference:

Teaching Tutorial: Decoding Instruction

Benita A. Blachman and Maria S. Murray

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