

Suggested Daily Lesson Sequence - The 5-Step Plan +1

Plus simple assessments to check on your student's progress



6. How does one know decoding instruction is working?

It is important to assess students' progress in decoding single words and to assess whether these word-level skills are transferring to reading connected text (Murray, Munger, & Clonan, 2012).

With regular assessment you will be able to determine which children in a group have mastered each new decoding pattern and which children are putting that skill to use in their oral reading. You will also be able to identify which children are lagging behind and provide the necessary reinforcement they need.

Remember, assessment data will be most helpful if you:

1. Collect baseline data. Baseline data will tell you what skills your students possess **before** you start instruction and help you form flexible instructional groups.
2. Regularly collect and review data *during* instruction. This is often referred to as "progress monitoring."
3. Use your data to make instructional decisions (e.g. decide when students are ready for the introduction of more complex skills; decide which students need more practise).

Two important questions

1. **Are students learning to decode individual words?** You can answer this question through the use of published assessment instruments, such as the Test of Word Reading Efficiency (TOWRE) (Torgesen, Wagner, & Rashotte, 1999) or the Quick Phonics Screener (QPS) (Hasbrouck, 2011) and/or you can create your own informal decoding measure.

ham	lit	mop	hug	pen
sad	fin	cob	fun	get
van	rid	job	dug	yes
path	ship	rock	chum	less

Box 3: A sample decoding probe with simple words that would permit a teacher to assess progress in reading individual words fluently and accurately.

A simple technique for creating your own decoding measure is to compile a list of about 20 words that represent the syllable type you are planning to teach. You can use the list to gather baseline data and, after teaching the syllable type, you can use the list to assess mastery. Box 3 shows an example of what this informal list might look like for simple closed syllable words with single consonants, digraphs (*th*, *sh*, *ck*, and *ch*), and words with a double final consonant (*-ss*). Use large type for the student reading page or put each word on a separate card. Keep a separate sheet with the words in the same order to use as a recording form.



Remember, although the focus of this tutorial is on how to implement decoding instruction in your classroom, decoding instruction is never a complete reading program. Vocabulary, comprehension, and frequent opportunities for text-based reading should not be neglected while working on decoding!

Have students read the words in each row from left to right. Record each error on your recording form. That is, if the student reads *lit* as *let*, write the error so that you can analyze the errors later. Notice that although children are reading from left to right, all the words in each column have the same phonetic pattern (e.g. in the first column all of the words contain the short /a/ sound).

If a child misses two or more words in a column, you will know that the child needs more review of that pattern. When looking at responses to the entire list, you might want to use 80% correct as an indication that a young child has mastered this pattern and is ready to move on. You are free to alter the required level of mastery when using informal lists and you might elect to use a more lenient level (e.g. 75%) or a more stringent level (e.g. 90%), depending on the age and skill level of your students.



The same format can be used to create measures to assess each syllable pattern. You can get more detailed information about the skill level of your students by creating multiple lists for each syllable type. For example, the sample above contains only closed syllables with single consonants and digraphs (i.e. letter combinations that make a single sound, like *sh*). You might also want to create a list of more complex closed syllable words by adding blends (e.g. *stamp*, *blend*).

2. Are students transferring their decoding skills to oral reading of connected text?

Learning to decode isolated words accurately and fluently is necessary, but not sufficient to become a competent reader. Children need to be able to use their decoding skills to read connected text. It is easy to get a false sense of security about the progress students are making if students are assessed only with single word lists and not asked to read text orally.

A simple procedure, described in detail by Hasbrouck (2011), can help you measure your students' oral reading accuracy and fluency. Select several passages from general education classroom texts and ask students to read orally for one minute from a selection of text that they have not seen before. Calculate a words-correct-per-minute (WCPM) score by subtracting the errors from the total number of words read in one minute. If you are selecting passages from classroom texts, Hasbrouck suggests that you might want the children to read individually from two or three passages and take the average. With standardised passages (from instruments like DIBELS [Good & Kaminski, 2002], Read Naturally [Ihnot, 2003], and AIMSweb [2001]), you may only need to have the children read a single passage to get a reliable measure of their speed and accuracy. Once you have a WCPM score, you can compare it to grade level norms.

As shown in Table 2, Hasbrouck and Tindal (2006) have developed guidelines based on a large national sample for grade level norms that you can use for comparison purposes at three times during the school year.

Table 2:

Hasbrouck and Tindal's Oral Reading Fluency Norms for Grades 1-4

Percentile	Fall	Winter	Spring
	Words correct per minute (WCPM)		
Grade 1			
90	-	81	111
75	-	47	82
50	-	23	53
25	-	12	28
10	-	6	15
Grade 2			
90	106	125	142
75	79	100	117
50	51	72	89
25	25	42	61
10	11	18	31
Grade 3			
90	128	146	162
75	99	120	137
50	71	92	107
25	44	62	78
10	21	36	48
Grade 4			
90	145	166	180
75	119	139	152
50	94	112	123
25	68	87	98
10	45	61	72

Reference:

Teaching Tutorial: Decoding Instruction

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