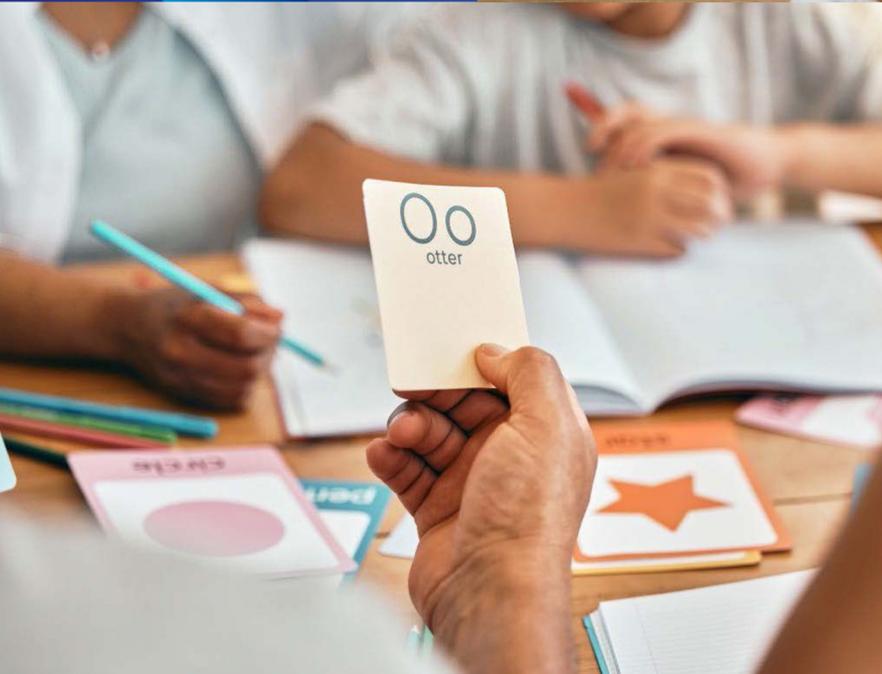


Making Sense of Reading

A workbook to help people read

City of Dublin
FET College



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Arna chomhchistiú ag
an Aontas Eorpach

Co-Funded by the
European Union



An Roinn Breisoideachais agus Ardoideachais,
Taighde, Nuálaíochta agus Eolaíochta
Department of Further and Higher Education,
Research, Innovation and Science

City of Dublin
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Acknowledgements

The Making Sense of Reading workbook was developed by the City of Dublin FET College Barry Road as part of our commitment to providing accessible and engaging adult education.

We gratefully acknowledge the funding provided through the Adult Literacy for Life (ALL) Strategy and the Collaboration and Innovation Fund (CIF), which made this project possible. ALL and CIF fund projects and activities that support adults with unmet literacy, numeracy, digital and financial literacy needs. More information on CIF can be found on their website <https://www.adultliteracyforlife.ie/fund/>.

Special thanks to Gemma d'Arcy, Adult Educator in the City of Dublin FET College Barry Road in Finglas, for developing the content based on her extensive knowledge of phonics and her work with adults and children with dyslexia. Gemma has vast experience as an adult educator and her special area of expertise is in dyslexia awareness, training and support.

We would also like to acknowledge Finglas Library and St. Helena's Family Resource Centre, our collaborators on this project. Thank you to Conor Crowley, Adult Educator, who contributed his expertise to the making of the videos in this workbook. A special mention to Iris Hall for participating in the supporting videos in this workbook.

We sincerely thank Cora Rafter, Adult Education Officer, for her continued support and guidance throughout this project. Thank you to Becca Callaghan and Nicola Callaghan of the City of Dublin FET College Barry Road, for their contribution to the workbook.

Finally, we are deeply appreciative of the valuable contributions from our learners and the support of key organisations whose input helped shape the final workbook.

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Introduction

This workbook is designed to support adults who are learning to read or who want to build confidence with basic reading skills. It can be used in the classroom, but it can also be used as a stand-alone, go-to resource for adults learning to read independently or for parents supporting their child with reading at home.

The activities focus on letters, sounds, common words, spelling patterns, and simple reading practice, with clear explanations and plenty of repetition. While the workbook works well alongside tutor support, it does not require a tutor.

This workbook is designed to support parents and caregivers with their reading and to help their child with reading and spelling difficulties, including children with dyslexia. It offers clear guidance, practical tools, and engaging activities to make learning at home both effective and enjoyable. You will learn how sounds in speech match letters and spelling patterns, known as the Alphabetic Code, and why English spelling is about both sounds and meaning.

The activities build key skills such as:

- recognising speech sounds
- mapping sounds to letters
- breaking words into syllables
- using decoding strategies to read unfamiliar words
- using encoding skills for spelling
- understanding parts of words to support reading
-

Together, these skills help people to read and spell with greater confidence and accuracy. The person will be introduced to the 44 sounds of English, with a strong focus on vowel sounds, a, e, i, o, u and how they work in reading and spelling.

Short video clips are included to guide you through each step.

Finally, remember that reading is not simply about sounding out words, it is about making sense of what you read, this also depends on how words are arranged in a sentence.

Decoding skills (being able to say each sound and blend them together), also encourages language comprehension, vocabulary, and general knowledge. All of which work together to support strong reading and lifelong learning.

Throughout this workbook, we use the terms “person with dyslexia” to describe a person living with dyslexia. Our goal is to use language that is clear, respectful, and inclusive of all experiences.

Note: In the workbook, if you see letters written between slashes, for example, /a/ or /sh/, this shows the speech sound the letter or letters represent, not their letter names.

Glossary of Terms

The following terms are commonly used in psychological and educational assessments. They are explained here in everyday language, with examples, to support parents and caregivers.

Alliteration

When words begin with the same sound.

Example: Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper.

Blending

Putting individual sounds together to make a word.

Example: /s/ + /a/ + /t/ = “sat.”

Continuum

Something that changes gradually step-by-step without clear gaps between the stages.

Example: Reading skills develop along a continuum - from recognising single letters, to blending sounds, to reading full sentences.

Decoding

To read each sound in a word and blend the sounds together. Decoding is about saying the word correctly from print, even if you do not know what it means.

Example: A person might decode the word “bat” by sounding out /b/ + /a/ + /t/ even before they learn that a bat is an animal or a piece of sports equipment.

Encoding

Breaking a spoken word into its sounds to spell it.

Example: Hearing the word “dog” and writing down the sounds /d/ + /o/ + /g/ to spell it correctly.

Grapheme

The smallest unit in a writing system, that is, a letter or group of letters used to represent a speech sound.

Example: ‘c’, ‘a’ and ‘t’ in cat are all examples of graphemes.

Morpheme

The smallest unit of meaning in a word.

Example: In the word “played,” the base word is “play” and the ending - “ed” means it happened in the past.

Morphology

Morphology is the study of how words are built. It looks at the smallest parts of words that have meaning— called morphemes. These morphemes are like Lego pieces, each piece has meaning and when you join them together, you build bigger words.

Example: Understanding that adding “re” to “do” makes “redo,” which means to do again.

Orthography

The correct order of letters in a word and how words are spelt.

Example: The word “chest” shows correct orthography when it is spelled **ch-e-s-t**, not cest or chets.

Phoneme

The smallest unit of sound in a word.

Example: The word “dog” has three phonemes.

/d/ + /o/ + /g/

Phoneme Deletion

Taking a sound out of a word and saying what word is left.

Example: “smile” without the /s/ is “mile”.

Phoneme Isolation

Identifying a single sound in a word, for example, first, middle or last sound.

Example: The first sound in “sun” is /s/.

Phoneme Manipulation

Changing sounds within a word to create a new word.

Example: Changing the /h/ in “hat” to /c/ makes “cat”.

Phonemic Awareness

Ability to hear, identify and move around the individual sounds within speech.

Example: Changing the /m/ in “mat” to /s/ makes the new word “sat.”

Phonics

To understand the relationship between letters (print) and the sounds they represent.

Example: Knowing that the letters “sh” make the /sh/ sound in “ship.”

Phonological Awareness

To hear and recognise the sound structure of words.

Example 1: Clapping out the syllables in “ba-na-na” it has three beats.

Example 2: Noticing that “hat,” “bat,” and “cat” all rhyme.

Phonological Processing Disorder

Difficulty recognising, manipulating, or working with the sounds of language.

Example: A new reader may struggle to rhyme words or to break words into sounds for reading and spelling.

Rapid Automatisised Naming (RAN)

How quickly a person can look at familiar items (like letters, numbers, colours, or simple pictures) and say their names out loud.

Example: A person is shown a page with rows of colours - red, blue, green, yellow - mixed up in random order and is asked to name them as fast as possible.

Segmenting

Breaking a word into its sounds.

Example: “fish” can be segmented into /f/ + /i/ + /sh/

Syllables

The “beats” of sound in a word.

Example: “elephant” has three syllables.

el / e / phant

Working Memory

The ability to hold and use information in your mind for a short time while carrying out a task. It helps you follow instructions, solve problems, and learn new things.

Example: A child listens to the teacher say, “pick up your book, turn to page 10, and underline the first sentence,” and then does each step in order without being reminded.

Chapter 1: Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a common learning difference that affects how the brain processes the sounds of language. This can make reading and spelling more challenging, but it does not reflect a person's intelligence or creativity.



With the right support and strategies, people with dyslexia can develop strong reading and writing skills, succeed in school, and go on to thrive in work and life.

Dyslexia occurs on a spectrum. A spectrum shows the broad range of strengths and challenges a person with dyslexia might have. This spectrum ranges from mild to severe, affecting people in different ways.

The Dyslexia Association of Ireland offer courses for parents, children and adults with dyslexia, in the areas of self-esteem, building confidence and self-advocacy i.e. understanding personal strengths, weaknesses, preferences and being able to communicate these to others in different situations. In addition, the Dyslexia Association of Ireland, offer free online information, resources and supports.

The Dyslexia Association's Learning Hub offers helpful information and resources for students, staff and adults on topics such as:

- emotional wellbeing
- technology
- parent empowerment
- exam accommodations
- second level education

The Learning Hub also offers free access to a structured literacy programme. By using clear instructional videos, this programme reinforces and revises phonics. The association has many webinars on their YouTube channel, for example, on assistive technology and the transition to secondary school (link below).



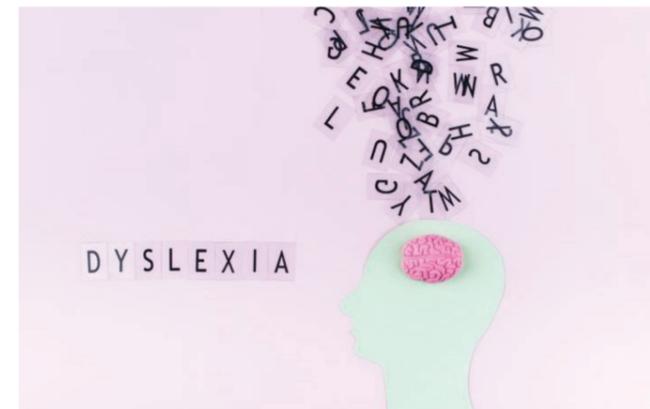
<https://dyslexiahub.ie/structured-literacy/>

Common Myths about Dyslexia

1. Dyslexia is not a problem with eyesight; it is a difficulty with how the brain processes the sounds of language.

People with dyslexia often have difficulty with:

- hearing and breaking apart sounds in words
- matching sounds to letters for reading words (decoding)
- hearing and understanding how those sounds are broken up for spelling (encoding)
- reading fluently — not because they do not see the word correctly, but because their brain has trouble working with words and sounds
-



2. Dyslexia is not about seeing or writing letters backwards. A person with dyslexia sees letters the same as everybody else but their brain takes longer to make sense of them. The challenge is how quickly and accurately those letters are processed.

Characteristics of Dyslexia

Dyslexia does not affect everyone the same way, some people are mildly affected, while others may have more challenges. Below are some common characteristics associated with dyslexia.

1. Phonological Processing Challenges

Phonological processing is the brain's ability to hear, recognise, and work with the sounds in spoken language.

This includes things like:

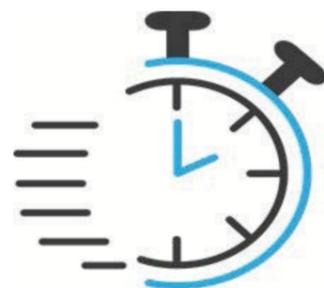
- hearing the separate sounds in words
- putting sounds together to make words
- remembering sound patterns
- telling the difference between similar sounds
- storing sounds in their memory accurately
- (they may not hold the full sound pattern of a word)



2. Rapid Automatised Naming Challenges

Rapid Automatised Naming (RAN) is the ability to quickly name familiar things — like colours, numbers, letters, or objects — when you see them.

Many people with dyslexia find rapid naming tasks difficult and slow. Even when they know what the item is, it takes them longer to get the word out.



3. Executive Functioning or Organisation Challenges

Think of executive functioning as the brain's "management system" — it helps things run smoothly. Many people with dyslexia also have executive functioning difficulties.

This means they might:

- struggle to plan or organise their work
- find it hard to stay on task or shift between tasks
- forget what they were just told to do
- feel overwhelmed by multi-step instructions
- have trouble starting homework or finishing tasks on time
- get frustrated more easily when things feel difficult
-



4. Working Memory Challenges

Working memory can be an area of significant difficulty for people with dyslexia. Working memory is the brain's ability to hold on to small bits of information while using them.

For example:

- following instructions
- sounding out words
- keeping track of what they are thinking or saying
- remembering what to do next



There are huge demands placed on working memory in busy, noisy places like work or a classroom. Scan the code and watch the short video on working memory.

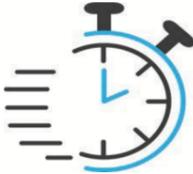


Website: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vISaiJEtFuY>

Activity

Now that you know more about dyslexia, read the statements below and see if any are true of you or your child. Choose the correct characteristic of dyslexia from the four characteristics listed below by writing it in the box beside each statement. The first one has been done for you.

Phonological Processing Executive Functioning	Rapid Automated Naming Working Memory
Phonological Processing	"You knew your spellings last night."
	"You knew that was due in today, why am I getting these notes from school saying you were late?"
	"These questions are too hard; they don't relate to the story at all!"
	"Why haven't you taken down your homework correctly?"
	"I don't understand it, I need to read it a few more times, it's way too long".
	"Get organised!"
	"I asked you to put the white socks in the top drawer in your brother's room, will you just listen!"
	"I just can't think of the word!"

 <p>Phonological Processing</p>	<p>"You knew your spellings last night."</p> <p>"I don't understand it, I need to read it a few more times, it's way too long".</p> <p>"These questions are too hard; they don't relate to the story at all!"</p>
 <p>Executive Functioning /Organisational</p>	<p>"You knew that was due in today, why am I getting these notes from school saying you were late?"</p> <p>"Get organised!"</p> <p>"Why haven't you taken down your homework correctly?"</p> <p>"I just can't think of the word!"</p>
 <p>Working Memory</p>	<p>"You knew your spellings last night."</p> <p>"I don't understand it, I need to read it a few more times, it's way too long".</p> <p>"You knew that was due in today, why am I getting these notes from school saying you were late?"</p> <p>"These questions are too hard; they don't relate to the story at all!"</p> <p>"Get organised!"</p> <p>"Why haven't you taken down your homework correctly?"</p> <p>"I asked you to put the white socks in the top drawer in your brother's room, will you just listen!"</p>
 <p>Rapid Automatised Naming</p>	<p>"I asked you to put the white socks in the top drawer in your brother's room, will you just listen!"</p> <p>"You knew your spellings last night."</p>

Chapter 2: Learning to Read

Reading must be learned, it is not a natural process, it is a hard skill. Reading is something the brain must learn step-by-step. Decades of research into how the brain learns to read suggests that the process begins by:

- connecting letters to sounds, for example, knowing 'c' makes a /k/ sound
- with practise, the brain gets faster at recognising words without having to sound them out each time

This happens because different parts of the brain work together to link sounds (phonology), letters (orthography), and meanings (morphology). English is a code — letters and groups of letters spell different sounds. To read fluently, you need to crack that code. People with dyslexia need clear, step-by-step instructions and lots of practise.

Reading Skills

There are five skills to the reading process (NRP, 2004). These skills are the same for all, whether the person has dyslexia or not.

Skill 1: Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic Awareness is the ability to hear and identify the individual sounds (called phonemes) in spoken words.

This is an area of weakness for most people with dyslexia; phonemic awareness skills help to understand how sounds work in words. It allows you to break words down into smaller parts, which is essential for decoding and spelling, for example:

- knowing that the word “cat” is made up of the sounds; /k/, /a/, /t/
- being able to blend the three individual sounds; /k/ + /a/ + /t/ = to read the word cat
- being able to split the word cat into its individual sounds = /k/, /a/, /t/

Skill 2: Phonics

Phonics is the link between letters, also known as graphemes and their corresponding sounds, also known as phonemes.

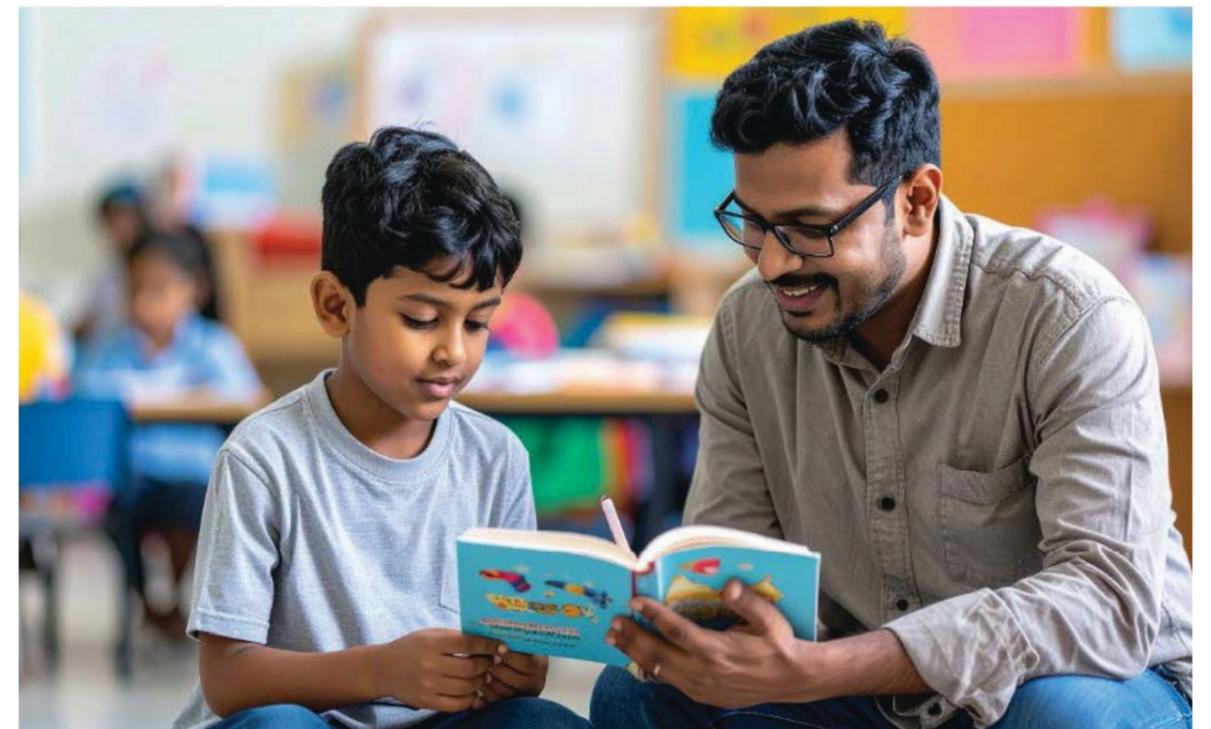
Phonics teaches the reader how to decode words by connecting written letters to their spoken sounds. It helps to understand how letters and sounds come together to form words, which is needed for reading and spelling.

Example: Learning that the letter ‘b’ makes the /b/ sound, and “sh” makes the /sh/ sound in words like “bat” and “ship.”

Skill 3: Fluency

Fluency is being able to read quickly and accurately without effort and using your tone of voice.

Fluent readers can recognise words automatically and do not stop to sound them out. Fluent reading sounds like talking rather than slow, choppy reading. Fluency means the reader can focus on the meaning of words rather than getting stuck on words or guessing words which affects the overall understanding of what is being read.



Skill 4: Vocabulary

Vocabulary is the number of words a person knows and understands.

A strong vocabulary helps readers understand what they are reading. Knowing more words means you can easily understand what you are reading.

Example: Knowing that “delighted” and “pleased” are other words for “happy”, allows the reader to fully understand the meaning of this sentence:

“She was delighted after winning the match.”

Skill 5: Comprehension

Comprehension is the ability to understand and make sense of what is being read.

Comprehension is the goal of reading – reading to learn new information and for enjoyment. It involves making connections between what is being read and what you already know about the topic. It also involves, analysing information, and remembering key details as you read.

Comprehension means the person can:

1. Give a short version of the story (summarise)
2. Can read between the lines (infer)
3. Answer questions on the text
4. Connect ideas

Chapter 3: Code of English

English works like a code, where letters and groups of letters match with specific sounds and vice versa. People develop fluent reading skills when they learn to decode these patterns.

For people with dyslexia, clear and organised teaching of this code, along with plenty of structured practice, is especially important to help them build strong, confident reading skills.

A skilled reader understands that long words are made up of syllables which are in turn made up of sounds, however, a struggling reader simply sees “long” and “short” words and often refuses to even try to read the long ones!

A skilled reader recognises that one sound can be represented by 1, 2, 3, or even 4 letters:

on: each letter represents 1 sound

back: 2 letters representing 1 sound

light: 3 letters representing 1 sound

eight: 4 letters representing 1 sound

Skilled readers know that a letter or group of letters can represent different sounds, but look the same:

ow in ow and ow

Struggling readers may not notice this and need clear repeated practise.

Have a look at the table on the next page.

Code of English				
In English 1, 2, 3 or even 4 letters can spell a sound				
if	she	high	eight	
In English the same sound can be spelled in different ways				
<u>z</u>	<u>zz</u>	<u>s</u>	<u>se</u>	<u>ze</u>
zip	fizz	is	choose	graze
In English the same letter can represent different sounds				
<u>o</u>	<u>o</u>	<u>o</u>	<u>o</u>	
on	no	do	son	

Dyslexia and Why Learning the Code of English is Difficult

People with dyslexia do not pick up this code naturally. They often struggle to:

- hear individual sounds in words
- match those sounds to the right letters or sequence of letters
- hold sounds, words or instructions in working memory long enough to blend sounds together and segment (separate) sounds for spelling

Consistent and targeted practise in connecting letters to sounds is needed to reinforce decoding (reading) and encoding (spelling) skills.

The following skills may be difficult for people with dyslexia.

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic Awareness is the ability to hear and identify the individual sounds (called phonemes) in spoken words. People with dyslexia often struggle with phonemic awareness.

This can make it harder to:

- sound out words when reading, for example, /d/ /o/ /g/
- move a sound, for example, replace /d/ with /l/ to make a new word
- break words into sounds when spelling
- recognise rhyming words or sound patterns, for example, bat, cat, sat, rat

If a person cannot hear the sounds clearly, it is much harder to match them to letters when reading, writing or spelling.

Working Memory

Working memory is the brain's ability to hold on to small bits of information just long enough to use them. People with dyslexia often have weaker working memory.

That means they might:

- find it harder to hold on to sounds or words long enough to use them
- forget what they just read by the time they get to the end of a sentence
- lose their place when writing or get stuck on spelling
- have difficulty in following multi-step instructions
- have difficulty with solving a problem in their head

Retrieval

People with dyslexia often know what they want to say, read, or write — but they struggle to find the right word, sound, or letter when they need it.

In reading or writing, this might look like:

- mixing up letters, like b and d
- saying a word that sounds similar, like cat instead of cap
- taking extra time to think of a word they know well
- struggling to remember spelling patterns they have already learned

The brain takes a different route to get to the same information, and that route can be slower or less direct. Repetition and practise of the Code of English can help with remembering the information.

Chapter 4: The Alphabet

To become a skilled reader, you need to quickly and easily recognise letters and the sounds they represent, without having to stop and think each time. This is called automatic letter recognition.

When you automatically recognise letters and the sounds they represent, it helps the brain link the sounds you hear to the letters you see.

For example, knowing that the letter ‘m’ makes a /m/ sound means you can focus on breaking words down, changing them or blending them. Thinking hard about letters leaves less energy to work with sounds in a word, which is needed for confident reading.

There are 26 letters in the alphabet, if you recognise these letters automatically, it is easier to attach sounds to the letter.

Alphabet Chart

We all know children sometimes skip over or mix up those letters when singing or saying the alphabet because they sound so similar! If your person learning to read, is not confident with all the letters — especially in that tricky part of; l, m, n, o, p, it can cause confusion later when learning sounds and words.

Watch the first 4 minutes of this short video on alphabet fluency.



<https://youtu.be/VKN3oJVBvEw> 97.20

This alphabet chart with pauses, helps to slow the person down and focus on the letters in the tricky part of the alphabet.

Use the chart below to test what letters the person knows. Note that vowels are in **red** and consonants are in **black**. Vowels are very important because they make words easier to say and are needed for syllables.

Consonants are just as important because they help give words their meaning.

Vowels and consonants will be explained on pages 29 and 30.

Scan the QR code below and watch the video to see how the alphabet chart on the next page is used with a child.



A a **B b** **C c**

D d **E e** **F f** **G g**

H h **I i** **J j** **K k**

L l **M m** **N n**

O o **P p** **Q q**

R r **S s** **T t**

U u **V v** **W w**

X x **Y y** **Z z**

Step 1

- a) Model how to say/sing the alphabet.
- b) Track your pen/pencil under each letter as you say the alphabet.

Step 2

- a) Encourage the person to put his/her finger under each letter and say the letter name.
- b) The person must: look at each letter, point to each letter and say each letter name.

Checking helps you know where a person might need extra practise.

Letter Confusions

Not recognising the letters will slow reading down and lead to incorrect decoding of the words. It is difficult if they need to decide if that is a 'b' or a 'd' or a 'q' or a 'p' and then on top of that, recall what sound that letter makes.

If an person confuses letters, only work on one or two confused letters at a time.



<https://youtu.be/VKN3oJVBvEw> 97.20

Task 1: Scan the QR code to watch activities on letter confusions. Skip to 4 minutes and start from there.

Task 2: Read the instructions for working on letter confusions.

Task 3: Now you try.

Activities for Letter Confusions:

- Get a pack of blank postcards and draw a line on the card, write the targeted letter on the card.
- Allow the person some time to create a visual prompt that helps them tell the difference between the target letter and other letter, for example, in the video the child can see that the letter V has a point, while the letter Y has a line.



- Include lots of the target letter in the pack, the rest of the cards should be letters the person is very familiar with, as it is important that the person feels this task is manageable.
- As you do a quick-fire round of “dealing” the cards, the person must “name” the letter, repeat the memory trick while pointing to the letter. Once the person is confident in identifying the target letter, repeat the drill but this time without saying the memory trick.
- If this is not successful go back to the memory trick and repeat a few more times.

Writing Letters



Helping a person to remember how each letter is formed is key — and it all starts with knowing the starting point of each letter. That is the most important part to get right.

For example, the letter ‘b’: It starts at the top of the line and goes straight down, like a bouncy ball dropping.

As you write the letter, say a little rhyme such as:

“Bounce the ball down and around — /b/ /b/ /b/” (making the sound of the letter).

Then have the person say it and write it along with you — repeatedly, saying the sound as they form the letter. Repeating both the movement and the sound helps develop muscle memory.

Once they can form ‘b’ automatically, they will be more likely to form ‘d’ correctly too — since many people confuse these two letters, however ‘d’ is different — it does not start at the top. It starts like a ‘c’, then goes up to the top and down.

You can use a rhyme for this one too. Here is a suggestion:

“draw a ‘c’ before you can make a ‘d, bring it up tall, then drop it down, down, down, — /d/ /d/ /d/!” (sound of the letter).

Feel free to make up your own rhymes — the important part is to make the sound of the letter at the same time as writing it.

Seeing, saying, hearing, and doing is called a multisensory approach and it helps the person remember how to write each letter confidently and correctly.

Below are some rhymes from Read Write Inc. (Miskin, 2002).

Rhymes for letter formation - taken from Read Write Inc.

<p>a</p>	<p>b</p>	<p>c</p>	<p>d</p>	<p>e</p>	<p>f</p>
Around the apple and down the leaf.	Down the laces to the heel and around the toe.	Curl around the caterpillar.	Around the dinosaurs bottom, up his tall neck & down to his toes.	Lift off the top and scoop out the egg.	Down the stem and draw the leaves.
<p>g</p>	<p>h</p>	<p>i</p>	<p>j</p>	<p>k</p>	<p>l</p>
Around the girls face, down her hair and give her a curl.	Down the head, to his hooves and over his back.	Down the body and dot for the head.	Down his body, curl, dot for his head.	Down the kangaroo's body tail and leg.	Down the long leg.
<p>m</p>	<p>n</p>	<p>o</p>	<p>p</p>	<p>qu</p>	<p>r</p>
Down Maisie, mountain, mountain.	Down Nobby and over his net.	All around the orange.	Down the pirates plait and around his face.	Round her head, up past her earring, down her hair, and flick.	Down the robots back and curl over his arm.
<p>s</p>	<p>t</p>	<p>u</p>	<p>v</p>	<p>w</p>	<p>x</p>
Slither down the snake.	Down the tower, across the tower.	Down and under, up to the top and draw the puddle.	Down a wing, up a wing.	Down, up, down, up.	Down the arm and leg, repeat the other side.
<p>y</p>	<p>z</p>				
Down a horn, up a horn and under head.	Zig-zag-zig.				

Chapter 5: Practising the Code

Reading is not a natural skill. Learning to read in English means learning how to crack the code. The connection between spoken language and the written code needs to be clearly shown and practised.

Once the code is cracked:

- new words can be sounded out - decoded
- more fluent reading can occur
- vocabulary can expand
- deeper understanding of what is being read can take place
-

In short, cracking the code of English is like unlocking a secret language. Once a person understands how letters and sounds work together, reading becomes easier, faster, and more meaningful. People with dyslexia may have difficulty recognising letters and how their sounds are spelt. For this reason, they need lots of practise with the Code of English and the different sound patterns.



Simple and Advanced Code of English

There are two parts to the Code of English; Simple and Advanced. English has 26 letters in its alphabet, but it has around 44 sounds, which are known as phonemes. These sounds, or phonemes, can be grouped into vowel and consonant sounds.

The following letters are vowels:

a e i o u

The following letters are consonants:

b c d f g h j k l m n p q r s t v w x y z

There are many ways these letters can be used to create more sounds such as:

1. Vowels can make different sounds. For example, the letter 'a' sounds different in "cat" and "cake."
2. Consonants can also make different sounds. For example, 'c' sounds like 'k' in "cat" and like 's' in "city."
3. Some sounds are made by two or more letters together, like "sh" in "shop" or "ch" in "chip." (These are called consonant digraphs).
Some letters are silent, like the 'k' in "knife," but they are still part of the alphabet.
- 4.

Forming the Sounds

It is very important to form the sounds of the letters as clearly as possible without adding any extra sounds to the end of some letter sounds, in particular, to the end of consonants, for example, pronouncing the letter 'm' as "muh" instead of "mmmm", or pronouncing the letter 'n' as "nah".

This extra sound can be confusing for some people with dyslexia when blending sounds together for reading and breaking up (or segmenting) the sounds for spelling.

Watch the following video to hear the sounds and see how the sounds are made.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwJx1NSineE&list=PL8aD0DGVHADHYHqHqFPPFiCs-jahBc3Gj>

For the vowel sounds: always encourage the person to open their mouths.



For the consonant sounds: notice how their mouths and lips are tighter together.



Use a mirror if needed, encouraging the person to notice how their mouth shape changes with each sound.

Working with Vowels

Words cannot be pronounced without vowels. They help people speak clearly and understand what they read, for example, in “cat”, the vowel ‘a’ gives the word its proper sound—without it, the word could not be spoken. Practising vowel sounds helps people communicate confidently and improves reading and comprehension.



Vowels in English are the letters:

Aa Ee Ii Oo Uu

Sometimes, Yy sounds like a vowel, for example, cry, gym or thirsty.

Here is a fun exercise to do to show the importance of vowels:

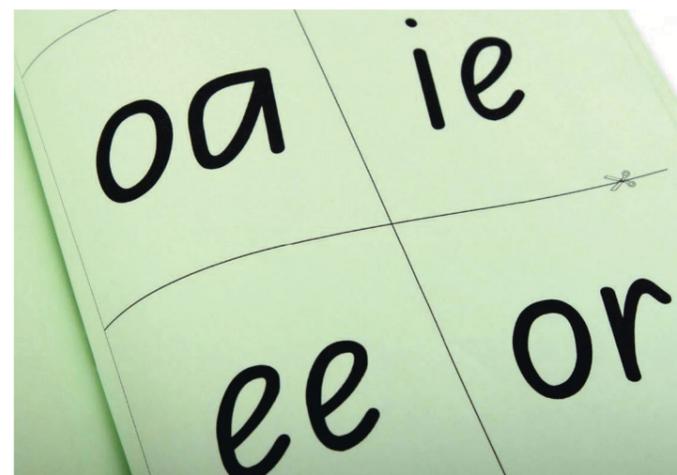
- write your or your child’s name
- let them identify the vowels
- take away all the vowels in the name (remember “y” can count as a vowel too)
- now try and pronounce your name without the vowels.

Short and Long Vowel Sounds

Here is a quick guide to the main vowel sounds. To help you practise, there is a booklet included covering both short and long vowel sounds, with exercises to make learning fun and easy.

- **Aa** can sound like in cat (short sound) or cake (long sound)
- **Ee** can sound like in bed (short) or me (long)
- **Ii** can sound like in bit (short) or time (long)
- **Oo** can sound like in pot (short) or go (long)
- **Uu** can sound like in cup (short) or cube (long)
- **Yy** can sometimes act like a vowel, like in cry, gym or thirsty

A **vowel team** is when two vowels appear together in a word and work as a pair to make a single vowel sound, for example, boat. Two vowels make the long o sound.



From the very beginning, people are taught that certain letter combinations make specific sounds. Being able to hear sounds in a word and know which letter or letters represent that sound, is just as important for spelling as it is for reading. The popular rhyme “when two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking” is often taught to help remember this. However, people with dyslexia may find this rhyme confusing and it does not always help them understand how vowel teams work.

Focusing on clear instruction and practise with vowel teams is usually better for building reading and spelling skills. Understanding and recognising vowel teams is an important step in helping people make sense of English spelling and pronunciation. When people master vowel teams, it supports smoother reading, more accurate spelling, and greater confidence with language. However, to become a good reader other skills are needed such as understanding the meaning, building vocabulary, and comprehension.

When two vowels appear together in a word, the first vowel usually makes its long sound, and the second vowel is not pronounced.

Here are some common types of vowel teams and examples of their sounds:

- **ai:** as in rain, mail
- **oa:** as in boat, road
- **ea:** as in bread, team
- **ou:** as in out, house
- **ei:** as in rein, vein
- **au:** as in autumn, caught
- **oi:** as in coin, boil
- **oy:** as in boy, toy

Some vowel teams can have more than one possible sound depending on the word, like “ea” in bread (pronounced as short e). It is important to practise and recognise patterns to master the use of vowel teams. It might help to watch the video on the 44 sounds again. You will find this on page 29.

Activities to Develop Phonemic Awareness

Complete the activities that follow in order. They start with easy and then become more difficult as they go on. These activities are designed to help a person learn how to read.

Scan the QR code to view them.



Remember:

- Always give an example first before you begin each task
- The reply must be the sound, not the letter/letters’ name
- You will know whether to use a short or long vowel sound by reading the target word
- Use the tables below to read the words aloud
- It is important that the person does not see the words for now as this is an oral activity

It is important to continue to develop phonemic awareness for people with dyslexia; continuous and repeated practise opportunities are needed. This activity builds the person’s phonemic awareness, which is the ability to hear, notice and work with sounds in spoken words. You should work your way downwards, starting with the column on your left.

Identifying Beginning Sounds ↓	Identifying End Sounds ↓
<p>What sounds do you hear at the beginning of these words?</p> <p>Example: fun cat, sock, girl, book, milk, flower, sing, chips, robot, nose, quick, shed</p>	<p>What sounds do you hear at the end of these words?</p> <p>Example: bus ball, drop, flag, peace, cold, much, time, hair, neck, bath, pick, wish</p>
<p>Odd one out: I am going to say three words and one of them has a different beginning sound, can you tell me which one is the odd one out?</p> <p>Example: candle, cop, pen many, hide, hat peach, pear, apple milk, nails, money shoe, shirt, clothes</p>	<p>Odd one out: I am going to say three words and one of them has a different end sound can you tell me which one is the odd one out?</p> <p>Example: van, cone, good cat, drum, boot chin, pen, neck put, mouse, moss hill, man, sell</p>

Blending Phonemes	Identifying Syllables
<p>I am going to say two/three/four/five sounds. Can you put the sounds together (blend them) to make a word?</p> <p>Example: /o/ + /n/ = on</p> <p>/s/ + /ee/ = see</p> <p>/ch/ + /oo/ = chew</p> <p>/a/+/n/+/d/ = and</p> <p>/n/+/i/ +/s/ = nice</p> <p>/p/+/l/+/u/+/m/ = plum</p> <p>/s/+/w/+/ee/+t = sweet</p> <p>/s/+/t/+/a/+/m/+/p/ = stamp</p> <p>/r/+/oa/+/d/ = road</p> <p>/f/+/i/+/n/+/a/+/l/ = final</p>	<p>I am going to say a word with two/three/four syllables. I want you to break the word into syllables.</p> <p>Example: purple: pur ple</p> <p>sister: sis ter</p> <p>table: ta ble</p> <p>winter: win ter</p> <p>doctor: doc tor</p> <p>napkin: nap kin</p> <p>piano: pi a no</p> <p>banana: ba na na</p> <p>potato: po ta to</p> <p>umbrella: um brell a</p> <p>calculator: cal cu la tor</p> <p>computer: com pu ter</p> <p>America: A mer i ca</p>

Identifying Phonemes	Deleting Parts of Compound Words
<p>I am going to say a word with two/three/four sounds. Can you separate the word into its sounds?</p> <p>Example: egg: /e/ /g/</p> <p>if: /i/ /f/</p> <p>low: /l/ /ow/</p> <p>say: /s/ /ay/</p> <p>shop: /sh/ /o/ /p/</p> <p>chick: /ch/ /i/ /ck/</p> <p>reach: /r/ /ea/ /ch/</p> <p>bread: /b/ /r/ /e/ /d/</p> <p>clap: /c/ /l/ /a/ /p/</p>	<p>I am going to say a word with two parts – a compound word. I want you to take away one part of that word and tell me the new word.</p> <p>Example: say postman without post: man</p> <p>sunshine without shine</p> <p>notebook without book</p> <p>daytime without day</p> <p>bedroom without room</p> <p>homework without work</p> <p>spaceship without space</p>

Deleting Syllables	Deleting Phonemes
<p>I am going to say a word with two syllables, and I want you to take away one of the syllables and tell me the new word.</p> <p>Example: say cartoon without toon: car</p> <p>teacher without er: teach</p> <p>almost without most: al</p> <p>monkey without mon: key</p> <p>chicken without en: chick</p> <p>farmer without mer: far</p> <p>valley without ey: vall</p> <p>jacket without jack: et</p> <p>Tuesday without day: Tues</p>	<p>I am going to say a word, and I will ask you to take away part of the word and tell me what is left.</p> <p>Example: say click without /k/: Lick</p> <p>fox without /f/: ox</p> <p>nose without /z/: no</p> <p>bone without /n/: bow</p> <p>mice without /s/: my</p> <p>wall without /w/: all</p> <p>scream without /s/: cream</p> <p>brush without /b/: rush</p> <p>stack without /t/: sack</p>

Adding Phonemes	Changing Phonemes
<p>I am going to say a word and then I am going to ask you to add a sound to the beginning/end of the word and then you must say the new word.</p> <p>Example: add /g/ to the beginning of rain: grain</p> <p>Add /s/ to the beginning of car: scar</p> <p>Add /k/ to the beginning of lamp: clamp</p> <p>Add /t/ to the end of car: cart</p> <p>Add /d/ to the end of goal: gold</p> <p>Add /p/ to the end of grass: grasp</p> <p>Add /t/ to the beginning of witch: twitch</p> <p>Add /b/ to the beginning of lock: block</p> <p>Add /t/ to the end of shoe: shoot</p> <p>Add /f/ to the end of shell: shelf</p>	<p>I am going to say a word and then I am going to ask you to change a sound in the word and replace it with another sound. Then you must say the new word.</p> <p>Example: bat – take away /b/ and replace it with /h/: hat</p> <p>shop – take away /sh/ and replace it with /t/: top</p> <p>den – take away /d/ and replace it with /wh/: when</p> <p>fresh – take away /r/ and replace it with /l/: fl esh</p> <p>plank – take away /l/ and replace it with /r/: prank</p> <p>spot – take away /p/ and replace it with /l/: slot</p> <p>deep – take away /d/ and replace it with /ch/: cheap</p> <p>rig – take away /i/ and replace with /a/: rag</p>

Word Chaining

Word chaining is an extra activity to help develop phonemic awareness. It involves changing one letter or sound in a word, to create a new word. This continues in a “chain,” and it reinforces how sounds and letters work together. To practise word chaining, see word list on page 41.

It helps people practise hearing sounds, blending them and noticing how one sound can change a whole word. Activities like these strengthen a person’s reading and spelling skills.

For example:

1. **cat** → **bat** (change /c/ to /b/)
2. **bat** → **bet** (change /a/ to /e/)
3. **bet** → **bed** (change /t/ to /d/)
4. **bed** → **bad** (change /e/ to /a/)
5. **bad** → **bag** (change /d/ to /g/)

Each step changes **one sound**, so people must focus on moving sounds.



Changes can be at the beginning of the word (initial sound), which is the easiest, the end of the word (final sound) which is a little more difficult, or the middle of the word (medial sound) which is the most difficult.

For example:

- initial sound: cat → bat
- medial vowel sound: bat → bit
- final sound: bit → big

Word Chaining Activities

You will need:

- set of alphabet tiles
- word list
- mini whiteboard
- marker
- eraser

Step 1:

Move down the columns, starting with column 1 first, then column 2 and so on. Read each word aloud to the person.

Step 2:

The person uses the letter tiles to create the word.

Remember:

- Consonant blends get 2 separate tiles/letters because each letter makes 2 separate sounds, for example, cl, fl, nd.
- Consonant digraphs are two or more letters that make 1 sound, so these get 1 tile each, for example; ch, sh, th.



Scan the QR code to see a child practising some of these word chaining activities.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4
cat	top	clip	hand
rat	pop	clap	band
ran	dot	fl ap	lend
man	got	fl op	bend
map	get	drink	bent
mat	gum	drank	best
hat	mud	prank	chest
ham	mug	plank	chop
him	rug	plant	clutch
hid	run	plan	crutch
his	sun	plans	brunch
hip	sin	pans	bunch
hill	sip	packs	bench
will	stop	sacks	bend
win	slop	stacks	send
chin	slip	sticks	blend

Starting to Read

Successive blending is a technique that encourages the person to smoothly blend the sounds of letters (phonemes) together to read words without pausing between the sounds.

For example:

Instead of breaking up each sound like:

- /c/ ... /a/ ... /t/ → “cat”

Encourage the person to blend the sounds smoothly and continuously, like singing!

- “ssssaaaaat” → “sat”

The key is no stopping between the sounds. This makes it easier for the brain to connect the sounds into a full word.

Successive blending can reduce confusion caused by pausing too much.

Have you heard someone trying to blend a word like “tap”, saying the sounds /t/ /a/ /p/ but at the end comes up with the word Pat. This can happen quite often as it can be hard for people to keep all those sounds in their working memory long enough to put them together to make the right word.

It can be even more demanding on a person with dyslexia as they may have difficulties with their working memory.

Instead of:

- /m/ ... /a/ ... /p/ (pausing)

Try:

- “mmmaaaap” (continuous blending – like singing!)



Watch the video above which will help you with the successive blending activities.

Read the instructions below and then practise the words in the word list.

- Successive sounds are sounds that flow together. Say the following out loud to see what is meant:

sat

- When consonant sounds come together with a vowel sound, you get a “stop” sound. Say the following out loud to see what is meant:

cup



- Use a yellow post-it or your finger to cover part of the word if needed and reveal the remaining part by dragging the post-it or your finger over sounds slowly and smoothly.
- Put a dot under each sound if that helps. Remember consonant blends at the beginning or end of the word are 2 sounds e.g. fast, clip.
- Using the word list below, put dots under each letter to let the person know that 1 letter = 1 sound.
- Put a line (dash) under 2, 3, or 4 letters where they make 1 sound, for example, chat.
- The person puts dots and dashes (dots under 1 letter = 1 sound and dash (line) under 2 /3 letters = 1 sound).
Example: cash
· · —
- Blends, for example, “sn” are 2 separate sounds so will have 2 dots under them.

Activity 1

Add dots and dashes to the words below. The first two are done for you.

sit
. . .
nip
. . .
set
sap
pin
tan
men
did
snap
desk
shed
chip
mash
shock

Answer Key for Activity 1

Add dots and dashes to the words below. The first two are done for you.

sit
. . .
nip
. . .
set
. . .
sap
. . .
pin
. . .
tan
. . .
men
. . .
did
. . .
snap
. . . .
desk
. . . .
shed
- . .
chip
mash
. . _
shock
- ' -

Segmenting

Segmenting is spelling one syllable words containing short vowel sounds.

Spelling can be very difficult for people with dyslexia. This is because it relies on their working memory. When spelling, they must remember the sounds in a word, match those sounds to letters, and keep the whole word in mind while writing it down. For a person with dyslexia, holding on to all that information at once can be difficult, which makes spelling harder.

Here is a helpful tip: say the word out loud and break it into syllables before spelling. This makes the task more manageable.



You will need:

- mini whiteboard and markers
- counters to count out the sounds (if needed)
- letter tiles if using mini whiteboard

Use the worksheet on page 48. The video explains the instructions.



Practise segmenting by following the instructions below.

- Say the word
- Give meaning to the word (give an example)
- Count out the syllables
- Count out the sounds, holding up your hand for the person to see you counting - encouraging them to do the same
- Draw a line on the mini whiteboard to represent the syllables for example
2 syllables = 2 lines
- Say and move the counters onto the line/s (skip this step if they can successfully and accurately count out the sounds using their fingers) or if using the worksheet instead of the mini whiteboard
- Remember if there are 2 letters but 1 sound, this will go into 1 square on the worksheet
- Say the sounds as the letters are written
- See the “answer key” below to check what the completed worksheet should look like
-

Activity 2

- Each sound goes in its own box
- If two letters make one sound (like sh or ch), they go together in the same box
- Blends (like sk or sn) are split, with each letter in its own box, because you can still hear both sounds
- Two examples have been done for you

sit	s	i	t	sit
nip				nip
set				set
sap				sap
pin				pin
tan				tan
men				men
did				did
Note: Blends – segment each sound				
snap	sn	a	p	snap
desk				desk
shed				shed
chip				chip
mash				mash
shock				shock

Activity 2 Answer Key

sit	s	i	t	sit
nip	n	i	p	nip
set	s	e	t	set
sap	s	a	p	sap
pin	p	i	n	pin
tan	t	a	n	tan
men	m	e	n	men
did	d	i	d	did
snap	s	n	a	snap
desk	d	e	s	desk
shed	sh	e	d	shed
chip	ch	i	p	chip
mash	m	a	sh	mash
shock	sh	o	ck	shock

Activity 3

Add dots and dashes under the following words.

Short a

m a p

s a p

n a p

t a p

a s k

f a s t

l a s t

h a n d

l a n d

Short i

f i t

p i t

s i t

s k i p

s l i p

c l i p

Short o

t o p

m o p

g o t

s l o t

c l o g

c o s t

Short u

r u b

g u m

s u n

c l u b

g l u m

r u s t

Short e

f e d

b e d

l e d

n e s t

w e n t

v e s t

r e s t

Activity 4

Blend multi-syllable words that have short vowel sounds. Scan the QR code below to see a child completing this activity.



Using the word list (or any written word) on page 54:

- Add dots under each letter indicate 1 letter = 1 sound
- Add a line under 2 or 3 letters indicates 2 or 3 letters = 1 sound
- Separate the word into syllables (say it aloud)
- If the word is too long for the person to read, you can divide the word into syllables and reveal each syllable at a time, remembering to blend each syllable before you move onto the next

Top Tip

If you are unsure how many syllables are in the word or where to split the syllables:

- Count the vowels in the word (every syllable in English must contain at least 1 vowel). Ask yourself, are the vowels together or apart? If the vowels are apart then take in the consonant beside the vowel and split it there.
- **Example:** tonsil – there are 2 vowels in the word, and they are apart so there are 2 syllables in the word it would be split; ton/sil.
- **Example:** in the word “until”, there are 2 vowels, they are apart so that means there are 2 syllables in the word. It can be split un/til.
- If the vowel is alone then the Code of English tells us to read it as a short vowel sound.
- However, a reader needs to know that they can swap a short vowel sound to a long vowel sound to make sense of the word.

Worksheet for Activity 4

Use your finger or a post-it to reveal the word syllable-by-syllable. Scan the QR code and watch the video to see how to complete this activity.



profit
until
public album
.....
tonsil
establish_
volcanic
maximum
pandemic
.....

Nonsense Words

Nonsense words are made-up words that do not have a meaning, for example: laf, bim, tup.

They are used in reading practise because they:

- help people focus on sounding out letters and patterns, not guessing from memory
- show whether a person can really apply phonics skills to any word, not just ones they have memorised
- build the person's confidence showing that they can read new and unfamiliar words on their own

For people with dyslexia, nonsense words are very helpful because they encourage careful decoding and strengthen the skills needed for real reading and spelling.

Note: "Magic e" Rule

- The letter "e" at the end of a word is silent. It does not make its own sound and is not counted when deciding how many vowel sounds are in the word.
- This silent "e" has an important job: it changes the vowel before it from a short sound to a long sound.

Example: cap to cape, the "a" changes from short /a/ to long /a/ because of the "magic (silent) e".

There will be some exercises on this later in the workbook.

Activity 5

Cover parts of the word and try put the word together. These nonsense words are used to stop the person from guessing. This list of words have been taken from Toe by Toe (1997).

Rensaftip	intaspofe Note: the final e does not count as a vowel, so this word has only 3 vowels, therefore 3 syllables)
grepsannat	collanite
lippenfonn	baggastope
chatrimming	shimmadock
athommer	dithichine
lglashher	lotcherfite

Activity 6

Segment multi-syllable words with short vowel sounds using the same list of words and video from the blending practise exercise on page 56.

You can use:

- mini whiteboard and markers
- counters to count out the sounds (if needed)
- letter tiles (if needed)

Follow the sequence to practise spelling (known as segmenting):

- Say the word
- Give meaning to the word
- Orally count out the syllables
- Count out the sounds – hold up your hand and count out the sounds, encourage the person to do the same and count the sounds out together
- Draw a line on the mini whiteboard for each syllable for example if the word has 2 syllables, draw 2 lines
- Say and move the counters onto the line, you can skip this step if the person can successfully and accurately count out the sounds using their fingers
- Say the sounds as the word is written
- Say the sounds as the word is cleaned off the whiteboard
- If a mistake is made while writing the word, correct it once the whole word is written and discuss the error

Worksheet for Activity 6

Follow the instructions on page 57 using the word list below.

profit
until
public
album
tonsil
establish_
volcanic
maximum
pandemic

Activity 7

Practise blending (reading) sounds using words with long vowels.

1. Mark the sounds in the word:

- Put a small dot under single letters that make one sound
- Draw a short line under vowel teams (two letters that make one sound, like ai or ee)

2. Read the sounds one by one:

If a person struggles with the vowel team (which is two vowels together spelling a long vowel sound), you can say the sound slowly, e.g. “try” making the long sound of the letter which is an /i/ sound, while pointing under the letters representing that sound.

3. Blend the sounds together smoothly:

Drag your finger or pencil under the letters as the sounds are read, blending them back into the whole word.

4. Extra step:

Cover part of the word and reveal each sound as you move across the word, then blend the sounds together again.

Tip: Using dots, dashes, and pointing helps people focus on each sound and makes reading smooth.

Worksheet for Activity 7

Practise blending multi-syllable words. If needed, reveal each syllable at a time but remember to blend as you go.

You will need:

- mini whiteboard and markers
- eraser

Remember: Put the letter or letters representing the sound in the square. In the example below “ai” is in one square because it represents 1 sound. Complete the rest of the table using some of the words listed underneath or draw a table on the whiteboard.

r	ai	n
.	—	.

Repeat with the following words:

- rain
- brain
- crayon
- team
- peanut
- life
- right
- choke
- loaf
- groan
- globe
- chew
- fuse
- public
- hundred
- gym
- shadow
- complain

Activity 8

Practise segmenting (spelling) sounds using words with long vowels. Scan the QR code to see a child completing this activity.



Use the list on page 60 to complete the following:

Step 1:

- Call out the word
- The person repeats the word
- Give meaning to the word – put it in an oral sentence

Step 2:

- Clap/thump/chin out the syllables
- Younger children like to clap out syllables in a word, but older children and adults might prefer to thump out the syllables on the table, always moving left to right in the direction of print
- Others may prefer to speak the word in their slower, clearer “spelling voice” and placing their hand under their chin, count how many times their chin tips their hand
- Each time we open our mouths and our chin drops, we speak a vowel

Remember: There is a vowel sound in every syllable in English.

Step 3:

- Draw sound boxes/lines on mini-whiteboard or a piece of paper
- If there are 2 syllables in the word, draw 2 lines or 2 sound boxes
- Hold up your hand and count out the sounds in the word
- Encourage the person to count also, if they are reluctant, you always model the correct process
- Begin to sound out the word on the line/sound boxes

- Say and move each sound counter or the person forms letters, always saying the sounds as they write or move the letters
- Blend the counters/ letters back together again
- Always blending and moving from left to right



Step 4:

- Discuss the word spelled
- Notice any vowel teams or “magic e”
- Discuss more, for example, what job is the “magic e” doing? Is it making a sound?
- Remember: If required, you are the person’s working memory, therefore, keep repeating the word/syllable
- Have the person write out the word approximately 3 times
- It is important that the person says the sounds as they write the word

Step 5:

- If possible, create a simple sentence for the person to practise spelling the word in a string of words
- If mistakes are made when writing the sounds or pulling down the tiles, discuss them once the whole word is written and give the person, with support, the opportunity to correct the misspelled sound

Worksheet for Activity 8

Scan the QR code and watch the following video which shows a child using long vowels.



You will need:

- mini whiteboard/paper
- marker/pen
- eraser
- counters if required

Remember: If the word has more than 1 syllable draw the equivalent number of lines or sound boxes.

- | | |
|----------|------------|
| • rain | • groan |
| • brain | • globe |
| • crayon | • chew |
| • team | • fuse |
| • peanut | • public |
| • life | • hundred |
| • right | • gym |
| • choke | • shadow |
| • loaf | • complain |
| • | • |
| • | • |

r	ai	n
.	—	.

Activity 9**“Long a”**

Scan the QR code to see a video of a child working through the next activity using the “long a” sound. Then complete the steps, bearing in mind that you will complete the same steps for each of the long vowel sounds; “long o”, “long i”, “long e” and “long u”.



The first sound in this activity is done for you. The “long a” sound in stain is represented by the letters “ai”. Once the person points to the sound, you write it in the top of the column in the box under the instructions.

Look at the example below.

ai
stain

Instructions:

- Choose the next word – “away”. Point to the word and ask the person to say it
- The person underlines the spelling of the sounds
- The person writes the spelling pattern at the top of the column (as shown in the first example) – say it as you write
- Do the same for each of the words – grape, April, grey, eight

ai					
stain	away	grape	April	grey	eight

- The person will underline the spelling pattern in each of the words in the word bank below and decide which box the word goes into

Word Bank

crayon	hazy	prey	weight
sprain	parade	agent	obey
essay	contain	phrase	crayon
grey	neighbour	convey	freight

- Read the following short text

The Brave Ace

Ray, the brave ace, played a game with his friend Kate. They raced around the lake but fell in the grey clay.



They made a great team and had lots of fun on a warm day. After the race, they ate grapes and stayed to play a little more.

- Complete a word attack by putting any word the person struggled with into the grid below, add dots and dashes.

Remember:

One sound spelled with 1 letter = one dot

One sound spelled with 2, 3 or 4 letters = one dash (line)

“Long o”

The first sound in this activity is done for you. The “long o” sound in post is represented by the letter “o”. Once the person points to the sound, you write it in the top of the column in the box under the instructions.

Look at the example below.

o
post

Instructions:

- Choose the next word – “soap”. Point to the word and ask the person to say it
- The person underlines the spelling of the sounds
- The person writes the spelling pattern at the top of the column (as shown in the first example) – say it as you write
- Do the same for each of the words – soap, show, phone, toe

o				
post	soap	show	phone	toe

- The person will underline the spelling pattern in each of the words in the word bank below and decide which box the word goes into

Word Bank

pony	yellow	coach	goes
toaster	alone	notice	narrow
mistletoe	approach	frozen	compose
bow	zone	coastal	tomorrow

- Read the following short text

Roaming Goats

The goats roam across the wide, open road. They stop to look at the stones and the tall oak trees. On a cold day, they find a cosy spot to rest and enjoy the calm.

- Complete a word attack by putting any word the person struggled with into the grid below, add dots and dashes.

Remember:

One sound spelled with 1 letter = one dot

One sound spelled with 2, 3 or 4 letters = one dash (line)

“Long i”

The first sound in this activity is done for you. The “long i” sound in bright is represented by the letters “igh”. Once the person points to the sound, you write it in the top of the column in the box under the instructions.

Look at the example below.

igh
bright

Instructions:

- Choose the next word – “line”. Point to the word and ask the person to say it
- The person underlines the spelling of the sounds
- The person writes the spelling pattern at the top of the column (as shown in the first example) – say it as you write
- Do the same for each of the words – line, final, my

igh			
bright	line	final	my

- The person will underline the spelling pattern in each of the words in the word bank below and decide which box the word goes into

Word Bank

tonight	inside	idea	apply
describe	sigh	final	giant
deny	exercise	mighty	surprise
fortnight	butterfly	highest	inside

- Read the following short text

Mike and the Bike

Mike went on a big ride. He saw a bright kite flying high in the sky. The ride was fast and wide, and he felt excited.



Mike tried to find a nice prize at the end, but the biggest prize was the fun he had with his friends.

- Complete a word attack by putting any word the person struggled with into the grid below, add dots and dashes.

Remember:

One sound spelled with 1 letter = one dot

One sound spelled with 2, 3 or 4 letters = one dash (line)

“Long e”

The first sound in this activity is done for you. The “long e” sound in equal is represented by the letter ‘e’. Once the person points to the sound, you write it in the top of the column in the box under the instructions.

Look at the example below.

e
equal

Instructions:

- Choose the next word – “these”. Point to the word and ask the person to say it
- The person underlines the spelling of the sounds
- The person writes the spelling pattern at the top of the column (as shown in the first example) – say it as you write
- Do the same for each of the words – these, agree, each, fancy, protein, relief

e						
equal	these	agree	each	fancy	protein	relief

- The person will underline the spelling pattern in each of the words in the word bank below and decide which box the word goes into

Word Bank

complete	screen	ready	season	fever
Reebok	Chinese	museum	thirsty	grief
breathe	daily	area	complete	ceiling
brief	extreme	between	teacher	county

- Read the following short text

The Bees and the Trees

The bees were buzzing in the green trees. They flew between the leaves, searching for sweet treats.



The trees grew tall and free, their leaves blowing in the breeze. Each bee found a flower, and together they helped the trees grow even better. It was a peaceful day in the forest, and everyone felt happy.

- Complete a word attack by putting any word the person struggled with into the grid below, add dots and dashes.

Remember:

One sound spelled with 1 letter = one dot

One sound spelled with 2, 3 or 4 letters = one dash (line)

“Long u”

The first sound in this activity is done for you. The “long u” sound in human is represented by the letter “u”. Once the person points to the sound, you write it in the top of the column in the box under the instructions.

Look at the example below.

hu
human

Instructions:

- Choose the next word – “June”. Point to the word and ask the person to say it
- The person underlines the spelling of the sounds
- The person writes the spelling pattern at the top of the column (as shown in the first example) – say it as you write
- Do the same for each of the words – June, flew, issue, fruit

u				
human	June	flew	issue	fruit

- The person will underline the spelling pattern in each of the words in the word bank below and decide which box the word goes into

Word Bank

Cuba	crew	juice	costume
fuel	suitcase	review	annual
bruise	schedule	usual	attitude
united	include	pursuit	statue

- Read the following short text

The Curious Blue Bunny

One sunny afternoon, a curious blue bunny named Hugo decided to explore the huge forest. He hopped over the muddy puddles and underneath the tall, green trees. Hugo was on a mission to find something unusual.

As he hopped along, he saw a huge, shiny umbrella lying on the ground. "I wonder who left this?" he thought. He picked it up and ran to the meadow, where the sun shined bright.

There, under the umbrella, he found a small, fluffy unicorn who was looking for a place to rest. "Can I help you?" Hugo asked. "I'm just looking for somewhere quiet and cool," said the unicorn.

Together, they sat under the umbrella, enjoying the view of the beautiful blue sky and the quiet hum of the forest.

- Complete a word attack by putting any word the person struggled with into the grid below, add dots and dashes.

Remember:

One sound spelled with 1 letter = one dot

One sound spelled with 2, 3 or 4 letters = one dash (line)

Chapter 6: How Words Work

Morphology is the study of how words are built. It looks at the smallest parts of words that have meaning – called morphemes. These morphemes are like Lego pieces, each piece has meaning and when you join them together, you build bigger words.

A prefix can be added to the beginning of a word, and a suffix can be added to the end of a word to create different words and give new meaning.

For example:

- **“unhappiness”** has 3 morphemes:
 - **“un-”** (a prefix meaning not)
 - **“happy”** (the root word)
 - **“-ness”** (a suffix that turns an adjective into a noun)

Note:

- A noun gives a name to a person, place or thing, for example, Adam, Dublin or a car.
- An adjective is a word that describes a person, place or thing, for example, blue, kind or tall.

Here are some examples:

Word	Prefix	Suffix
play	replay	playful
helpful	unhelpful	helpless

Suffixing Rules

Rule 1: Adding 's' and 'es' to make something more than one (plural).

Examples:

trees
rugs
books
seats
walls
chairs
lights

Examples:

Add the words with their suffixes to make the new word.

1. run + s =
2. eat + s =
3. speak + s =
4. work + s =
5. sing + s =
6. draw + s =
7. skip + s =
8. hop + s =

We add "es" when the base word ends in ch, sh, s, x, or z.

Examples:

beaches
foxes
buses
crutches
churches
benches
watches
dresses

Activity 10

Word Sums

Add the words with the suffix 's' or 'es' to make the new word. Check if the word ends in ch, sh, s, x, or z.

1. kiss + es =
2. wish + es =
3. finish + es =
4. mix + es =
5. go + es =
6. fix + es =
7. pass + es =

Rule 2. Doubling Rule

We double the consonant of words before we add the suffix. We know when to double the last consonant if we follow the 1:1 rules which are:

- **1 syllable:** if the word has only one beat, for example, run, sit, hop
- **1 short vowel:** if the vowel makes a quick sound like 'a' in fat, 'i' in sit
- **1 consonant:** if the vowel is followed by only one consonant, for example, the 'n' in run, 't' in sit, 'p' in hop
- **Vowel Suffix:** if the ending you're adding starts with a vowel, for example, -ed, -ing, -er, -est

Examples:

fit + ed = fitted
sad + est = saddest
red + er = redder
stop + ing = stopping
cut + ing = cutting
shop + ed = shopped
big + est = biggest
add + ing = adding

Examples of when not to double the consonant before adding a suffix:

pack + ing = packing
 trick + ed = tricked
 hunt + ing = hunting
 land + ed = landed
 count + ing = counting

If the suffix you are adding does not start with a vowel, then you simply add it.

Examples:

sad + ness = sadness
 soft + ness = softness
 kind + ness = kindness
 fit + ness = fitness

Activity 11

Remember the 1:1 rules and complete the word sums.

Base	Suffix	Word
fit	ed	
bright	est	
gift	ing	
pack	ed	
pat	ed	
bright	ness	
tight	ness	

Rule 3. Change 'y' to 'i'

When a base word ends in 'y,' change the 'y' to 'i' before adding a suffix **unless**

a vowel comes before the 'y'

or

the suffix begins with 'i,' for example, -ist, -ing, -ish

Example:

happy + ness = happiness
 cry + ed = cried
 copy + es = copies
 pay + ing = paying
 study + ing = studying
 happy + est = happiest
 stay + ing = staying
 worry + ed = worried

Activity 12

Before changing the 'y' to 'i', ask yourself the following questions:

- Does the base end in a y?
- Is there a vowel before the y?
- Are you adding a suffix that begins with an 'i'?

Base	Suffix	Word
story	es	
apply	ed	
fly	es	
cry	ed	
reply	ed	
reply	es	
grumpy	est	
grumpy	er	
easy	ly	
hazy	ly	

Activity 13

Scan the QR codes below that focus on reading and spelling.



Complete the following tasks with the words below:

1. Circle the known morpheme/s in the word (the smallest unit of meaning in the word)
2. Dot the single phonemes
3. Underline any vowel teams

misread

distrust

disappointing

undo react

useful

fearless

darkness

misinform

Activity 14

Using the videos and word list from page 83, complete the following but with segmenting (spelling) this time.

- Morphemes (smallest unit of meaning in a word), will still need to be sounded out, however the added understanding of the word will assist in attaching the sounds to the letters.
- Hold up your hand and count out the sounds in the word
- Encourage the person to count also, if they are reluctant, you always model the correct process
- Begin to sound out the word on the line/sound boxes
- Say and move each sound counter or the person can form letters, always saying the sounds as they write or move the letters
- Blend the counters/ letters back together again, always blending and moving from left to right
- Discuss the word spelled
- Think of words with similar morphemes

Some Rules of English

People with dyslexia often spell words the way they sound because their brains process language differently. They tend to focus on the sounds they hear in a word (phonemes) rather than noticing the specific letter patterns that represent those sounds. For example, a person might spell “phone” as “fon” because they both sound the same.

When people learn that English words often follow consistent patterns like “ph” making the /f/ sound, or “igh” always making the long ‘i’ sound, then reading and spelling start to make more sense.

Understanding these rules help people:

- decode unfamiliar words more easily when reading
- recognise common spelling patterns that represent sounds
- build confidence, because reading and writing start to make sense

While English is a difficult language to learn, much of it follows reliable and consistent rules. When people with dyslexia are taught these patterns, they gain the tools they need to read and spell more accurately and with greater confidence.

In this section, you will be introduced to one of the most helpful and easy-to-use rules in English. This rule is a tool that can make reading and spelling a little more predictable and a lot more successful.

“Magic e” Rule

“Magic e” is a silent “e” at the end of a word that changes the way other letters in the word sound, especially vowels.

Knowing the jobs of the “magic e”, also called “silent e” or “bossy e”, is very helpful when learning to read, spell, and pronounce English words correctly.

Job 1

Makes the vowel say its name.

- Magic e” changes a short vowel to a long vowel (says its name)
- **Examples:** cap → **cape**, kit → **kite**, hop → **hope**, tub → **tube**

Job 2

Softens the sound of c and g.

- When a “magic e” follows ‘c’ or ‘g’, it usually makes their sound soft:
 - c → /s/ sound
 - g → /j/ sound
- Examples: face, rice, page, huge, change

However, it is not only 'e' that softens the sound of 'c' and 'g'.

In English, the pronunciation of the letter 'c' and 'g', changes depending on the letter that comes after it:

- In circus, the first 'c' is pronounced like an /s/ because it comes before 'i'
- In circumstance, the first 'c' is also /s/ for the same reason, but the second 'c' is pronounced like a /k/ because it comes before 'u'.

Tip: When reading, pay attention to the letter that follows 'c' to know whether it sounds like /s/ or /k/.

How does the sound of 'g' change?

The letter 'g' usually makes a soft /j/ sound when it comes before i, e, or y. This can happen at the beginning, middle, or end of a word.

Examples:

- giant – soft 'g' (/j/), at the beginning because it comes before 'i'
- gem – soft 'g' (/j/), at the beginning because it comes before 'e'
- region – soft 'g' (/j/), in the middle because it comes before 'i'
- agent – soft 'g' (/j/), in the middle because it comes before 'e'
- courage – soft 'g' (/j/), at the end because it is followed by 'e', (/j/), which softens it
- gym – soft 'g' (/j/), because it comes before y

Tip: To know if a g will be soft, look at the letter after it. If it's 'i', 'e', or 'y', it usually makes the soft /j/ sound.

Exceptions

Unlike soft 'c' which has very few exceptions, soft 'g' has a few exceptions.

Here are some words that do not have a soft 'g':

get
girl
give
gift

Here is a list of soft 'c' everyday words:

police
face
price
pencil
circle
city
icy
fancy

Here is a list of soft 'g' everyday words:

gentle
magic
germ
giraffe
gem
giant

Job 3

It makes sure that every syllable has a vowel.

Example:

bubble – 2 syllables bub+ ble
drizzle – 2 syllables driz + zle
trickle – 2 syllables tric + kle

Job 4

It stops a word ending in an illegal letter.

- Illegal letters are i, j, q, u, v. English words cannot end in the following letters: i, j, q, u, v.
- Adding the letter 'e' to the end of a word stops this from happening.

Examples:

blue – blu +e

have – hav+e

give – giv+e

love – lov+e

Job 5

It stops words looking like plurals or present tense of a verb.

Examples:

- laps (running laps) versus lapse (lapse of e.g. memory or time)
- hears (present tense of verb "to hear) or hearse (vehicle used to transport a coffin)

Some words end with a /s/ sound and might be confused with plurals without "magic e" added to the end of the word, for example, "tease" has an "e" added to prevent confusion with "teas" (2x tea).

Chapter 7: Tricky Words

It is important to understand the difference between some confusing terms.

Sight Words:

Any word the reader can read very easily and without any effort is a sight word. The reader does not need to sound these words out each time they see these words.

High Frequency Words:

These are words which appear very regularly in texts. They may have a regular spelling pattern, fully decodable, for example, "napkin", or an irregular spelling pattern, not fully decodable, for example, "could". These words are only irregular while the person is learning and practising the English Code.

Tricky Words:

These may or may not be high frequency words, these are words with more unusual spelling patterns.

Activity 15

- If you are working on lists of tricky words always start with the part of the word you can decode phonetically
- Look at the targeted word



- Discuss with the person what they hear in the word and ask them what letter or combination of letters they think are spelling that sound and mark it out (dots and dashes like we used when practising blending activities)
- Discuss the remaining part of the word and explore if there is another word they already know with a similar spelling pattern and if this similar word is in the list -group them together
- Use the heart method.
Example: “there”

A person might have worked on “th” (a consonant digraph), if so, this is a very regular pattern for them. Even though there are two letters, it only makes one sound.

Get the person to draw a symbol over the tricky part. Some schools use a love heart because this shows the part that needs to be learnt by heart.

♥
there

Scan the QR code to see the example above being used with a child.



Chapter 8: Tips for Learning to Read, Spell and Build Vocabulary

Reading Tips

- **Use a pointer:** Encourage the person to track under the words with the tip of a pencil or pen as they read. This helps with focus and accuracy.
- **Track together:** When you read with the person, use your own pencil to follow the text above the words while they track below.
- If a word is misread, gently tap the word with your pencil. Often the person will notice and correct it.
- If they do not self-correct:
 - wait 2–3 seconds
 - then, give the first sound, for example, “try /i/”, not the letter name
 - if they still cannot work it out, say all the sounds slowly and see if they can blend them
 - if they continue to struggle, simply say the word and have them repeat it, eyes on the text
- **Encourage decoding (sounding out):** Remind the person to look carefully at all the letters and sounds rather than guessing. Decoding helps them become confident, accurate readers.
- **Break big words down:** Cover parts of the word and reveal one sound or syllable at a time.
Example: dentist → den + tist → dentist
- Blend it together like “singing” the word.
- **Keep eyes on the words:** Some people look away or guess from pictures. Gently remind them to keep their eyes on the letters to build their focus and accuracy.

- **Avoid guessing:** People sometimes read the start of a word and guess the rest, for example, “compliment” instead of “complain”. Encourage them to slow down, check all the letters, and sound it out.
- **When reading aloud:** Track the words with your pencil as you read. This helps new readers follow along, notice word order, and build understanding. Afterwards, reread the passage at a natural pace.

Spelling Tips

Reading and spelling go hand in hand.

- Have the person say the word out loud and break it into syllables
- If the word is mispronounced, say it correctly and have them repeat it
- Check that they understand the word by using it in a sentence together
- Ask what sounds they can hear in each syllable
- Encourage them to say the sounds as they write, this helps connect spoken sounds to written letters
- Remind them that some sounds can be spelled with more than one letter, for example, “weight” has 3 sounds but 6 letters
- Use coins or counters to help break up sounds Move one coin for each sound, saying the sound aloud as you go, then blend them together
Example: weight → /w/ /eigh/ /t/

Vocabulary and Comprehension

- Talk often - encourage everyday conversation, language builds reading strength
- Before reading, go over any tricky words together
- While reading, pause to ask questions like:
What do you think that means?
Why do you think that happened?
- Use new or more difficult words in conversation and talk about words that mean the same thing (synonyms)
- If the person often guesses when reading, listen to them read for a few minutes each day, focusing gently on accuracy rather than speed
- Keep it short and positive to avoid stress
- After reading, encourage the new reader to summarise the story — even a short retelling to you (or the family pet!) helps build comprehension and confidence

Conclusion

You have now worked through a series of structured activities designed to strengthen reading and spelling skills, with a particular focus on supporting people with dyslexia.

By exploring the Alphabetic Code of English, practising decoding strategies, and developing an understanding of syllables, vowel sounds, and sound structures, the new reader has built a strong foundation for fluent, confident reading.

Through these activities, the new reader has also developed key phonological and phonemic awareness skills, which is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate sounds in words, which are critical for successful reading and spelling. Using the guidance and strategies provided, you have supported the new reader in connecting sounds to letters, decoding unfamiliar words, and strengthening their literacy skills in a structured and supportive way.

While the skills practised in this workbook are essential for becoming skilled readers and spellers, it is also important to remember that decoding is only one of many skills needed to become a good reader. It is also important to continue developing vocabulary, reading fluency, and general knowledge. These additional skills are crucial for improving comprehension and supporting overall learning.

Remember, literacy development is a journey. Consistent practise, encouragement, and exposure to the Alphabetic Code, alongside building vocabulary, reading fluency, and knowledge, will continue to grow the new reader's confidence, independence, and enjoyment in reading.

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