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Ideas for the Classroom

These lessons were developed originally for elementary-age students. The curriculum works very well for them, and it helps that they tend to be enthusiastic learners. It is important to get students reading as early as possible. Most students can and should be reading well before the end of first grade. Any reading difficulties should be resolved long before ninth grade, as this is when permanent school records start being kept. A student who is overcoming a reading deficit needs time to adjust his study habits and begin to fill in the knowledge and skill gaps that his inability to read may have caused in other disciplines (math, science, etc.). We want him to begin his high school years with everything in place for success.

Reading and Spelling Pure & Simple is equally valuable for teaching reading to teens, adults, and even ESL students. These older students usually show the most dramatic results. This curriculum is ideal for one-on-one instruction but is suitable also for small group lessons. Instructors who have used the lessons with more than one student at a time offer the following teaching tips.

The most effective use of these lessons, whether in a classroom or other setting, is when an adult works one-on-one with a student at least once a day for a minimum of twenty minutes.¹ Naturally, a 1:1 student/teacher ratio is ideal. Group work is quite feasible, though. In one third-grade class, four students worked together through these lessons and improved their Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) reading scores two and three grade levels in only a few weeks. A student in Oklahoma improved from 1.6 (first grade, sixth month) to 3.2 (third grade, second month) in her SRI scores after working daily with a classroom aide for less than a month. We have seen this kind of dramatic improvement repeatedly, with consistent, daily, one-on-one or low-ratio student/adult instruction. If you do work with several students at a time, be sure that each one is getting adequate attention. Groupthink (relying on other students' answers) is not acceptable. Each pupil should be pronouncing (reading) and spelling (on paper) with immediate corrections provided.

Enlist aides and volunteers to teach the lessons. Many concerned citizens, including the parents and grandparents of students, are willing to volunteer their time to make a difference in school classrooms and in the lives of older teens and adults. Volunteers can be found in parent/teacher organizations, churches, libraries, social clubs, community centers, and senior citizens' groups. Sometimes it is possible to get help from high school or college students who want to earn community leadership credit.

¹ One twelve-year-old, fifth-grade student (he had been retained once) worked on our lessons with an adult instructor for about thirty minutes a day for three weeks. Prior to using our lessons, he had scored a zero (0) on the Scholastic Reading Inventory test. After he completed Lesson 19, his SRI score jumped to a 364.5 (second grade). After completing Lesson 40, he scored 804 (sixth grade) on his next SRI test. On May 3 he scored 921 and was considered to be on grade level. When he took the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills test (TAKS), he comfortably passed both math and reading (he had not been successful with either section of the TAKS before).

Basic Terms

Adjective An *adjective* is a word that changes (modifies) or describes a noun. “A **big, fluffy** cat and a **small, friendly** dog can be fun to own.” In this sentence, **big, fluffy, small,** and **friendly** are adjectives, and **cat** and **dog** are nouns. (See also *noun* and *verb*.)

Adverb An *adverb* is a word that changes or modifies a verb, adverb, or adjective. Words that end with the suffix **ly** are usually adverbs. “Juneau ran **quickly** and **effortlessly** to the corner.” Notice the **ly** endings in **quickly** and **effortlessly**; they provide a clue that these words are adverbs. (They are, in a manner of speaking, the vapor trail of an adverb.) The words **quickly** and **effortlessly** describe the verb **ran**. “How did Juneau run? She ran **quickly** and **effortlessly**.”

Alphabetical Letters that are placed in the order of the alphabet are *alphabetically* listed. The alphabet, in order, is **a b c d e f g, h i j k l m n o p, q r s, t u v, w x, y** and **z**. Students must learn the alphabet in order. “The Alphabet Song” is suited for this purpose. All through life, your student is going to need to look up names in a telephone book, words in a dictionary, and streets on a map index. He simply must know all 26 letters in their alphabetical order. Five of the letters in the alphabet are vowels: **a, e, i, o, u**. The rest of the letters in the alphabet function as consonants (**b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, y, z**). Occasionally, the consonants **y** and **w** act as if they are vowels.

Breve The *breve* (pronounced [brēv]) is a curved line symbol (looks like a smile) that is placed above a vowel to indicate that the vowel says its short sound. In dictionaries, short vowel sounds are indicated with the breve as follows: **ă, ě, ĭ, ŏ, and ŭ**. The breve instructs us how to pronounce such words as **săt, rĕd, bĭd, ŏdd, and sŭn**.

Chirography *Chirography* refers to handwriting or penmanship.

Closed syllable A *closed syllable* is one that ends with at least one consonant.

Compound word A *compound word* consists of two or more words that could stand alone but that are combined to form a new word. Combining the two individual words **in** and **let**, for example, results in the compound word **inlet**.

Continuous The sounds of some letters or pronunciation patterns are considered *continuous*. That means that as long as someone has breath and time, he can continue making the sound of the letter. All of the vowel sounds are continuous. Consider the vowel **a**. You can continue saying **a** in any of its variations—([ă], [ā], [ä])—as long as you have breath and time. A few consonants and consonant patterns are continuous, also. For example, the **sh** ([sh]) pattern in **push** can be expressed until one runs out of breath. These continuous letters are pronounced unbroken, without interruption. (See, also, *noncontinuous*.)

Contractions A *contraction* is the combination of two words subsequently shortened by the omission of one or more letters. An apostrophe is inserted where the letter or letters were omitted. Common examples are **isn't (is not)** and **don't (do not)**. [There are a few irregular contractions, such as **won't (will not)**.] Reference: Lesson 83

Index of Letters and Sounds

Letter	Sound	Sample Words (Lessons Found in)
a	ă	as in am (A, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9), at (A, 1, 3, 5, 7, 9), bat (A, 1), lab (B, 1, 3), ban (B, 1, 5, 7), ram (C, 1, 5, 9), ax (E, 1), ad (10, 11, 12), cat (13, 16), back (14, 16, 18, 34, 80), cap (33), admire (34, 64), laugh (85)
	ā	as in cape (33), game (34), aim (39), day (39, 73), play (39, 40), chain (40), pay (44), spray (47), quail (47), gray (39, 50), playback (53), maybe (54), graded (59), faded (60), halo (61), face (71), ache (79), bacon (80)
	ngk and ng	as in bank (39, 40), sang (39, 40)
	âr or ěr	as in pare (34), pair (39), hair (39, 40), share (39, 40)
	ô	as in ball (55), law (55), fault (55), quart (55)
	ä	as in calm (55), watts (55), quad (55), star (55), heart (77)
	ä or ô	as in want (55), quash (55), ma (55)
	ər	as in polar (69), nectar (69)
	ə	as in dent<u>a</u>l (65, 66, 72), ag<u>o</u> (66), vac<u>a</u>nt (72), bal<u>a</u>nce (72), capt<u>a</u>in (89)
	<i>silent</i>	as in seat (36), ear (36), boat (41), Cairo (89)
ō	as in taupe (89)	
b	b	as in bat (A, 1), lab (B, 3), bag (C, 1), bit (2, 3), bib (2, 3), bob (4, 5), bug (6), buzz (6), bus (6, 7, 9), ebb (8), bet (8, 9), bell (8), bad (12), back (14, 16), blot (22, 24), brim (22), bless (22, 23), blastoff (28)
	<i>silent</i>	as in lamb (81), climb (81)
c	k	as in cat (13, 16), cot (13), cut (13, 16), cull (13, 16, 18), back (14, 16, 80), rocks (14, 15), act (20), class (22), clam (23), scram (23), cuts (24), scotch (26), cannot (28), cap (33), cost (42), coach (44), camel (65, 66), lilac (72), ache (79, 80)

Pronunciation Guide

A to Z

|zh| Sound

Schwa Sound

Murmur Diphthongs

Silent Letters

This guide is strictly a support for instructors wanting more information about pronunciation and sound patterns. It is not comprehensive nor is it intended as a tool for speech therapy. Two speech therapists have reviewed this material and made corrections and suggestions, but any errors are mine. – DHC

Pronunciation Guide

A a

[Vowel]

Pronounce the **SHORT** vowel sound for the letter **a**, |ă|, by opening the mouth and tightening the corners in a tense almost smile. Lower the tongue in the mouth. The sound that issues will be like the **a** in **apple**. All vowel sounds are *continuous*, which means that as long as one has breath and time, the sound can continue uninterrupted. All vowel sounds also are *voiced*. To determine if a sound is voiced, pronounce the letter while touching the neck over the vocal cords. If the vocal cords vibrate, the letter is considered voiced. The short-vowel sound of the letter **a** is voiced.

a |ă| at camp lab apple
au laugh aunt

Pronounce the **LONG** vowel sound for the letter **a**, |ā|, by holding the teeth about one-half inch apart and the facial muscles somewhat tense. The lips are not rounded but wide, and the tongue is lifted to about mid-high in the mouth. The long-vowel **a** can also be pronounced with the tongue down. As with all of the vowels, the long-vowel letter **a** is continuous and voiced. The long vowels are pronounced exactly the same as their name. Thus, **a** says |ā|, as in **ape** (|āp|).

silent e **ai** |ā| ape cake sail
ay a day baby

The long-vowel **a**, when it is followed by the letters **nk** or **ng**, is pronounced with less emphasis than normal. The spelling combinations **ank**, **ang**, **are**, and **air** are pronounced a bit out of the ordinary, also. The change in sound will be stronger in words spelled with **r**, as in **stare** and **fair**. (These are called *r-controlled words*.) The modified sound is similar to the short sound of **e** (|ĕ|) or the slightly changed long-vowel sound of **a**. Most students will not pick up on the nuanced sound change caused by these patterns.

ank ang |ā| bank tank sang clang **See: N and G**
are air |ā|, |â|, or |ĕ| care stare hair fair **See: R**

Pronounce (what I often refer to as) the **THIRD** sound of **a** as |ă| or |ô|, as in **car**, **all**, **fault**, and **water**. The lips are open and rounded, the facial muscles relaxed, the tongue down, and the jaw dropped. The |ă| sound is very similar to the sound of the short-vowel **o**, |ô|, heard in **stop**. These additional sounds of **a** (|ă|, |ô|, and |ô|) are voiced.

al aw au |ô| all straw haul
ar a ear |ă| ark star ma heart
qua wa |ă| or |ô| quality water

ar |ər| tartar polar altar molar **See: R**
a |ə| final original alone dental **See: Schwa**
ea oa ai *silent* meat road boat Cairo **See: Silent letters**

Note: The long-vowel **a** sound can also be spelled using **ei**, **ey**, and **ea**, as in **veil**, **eight**, **they** and **great**.

When Is This Word Introduced?

Words Sorted According to Pattern and Category

The order in which this curriculum introduces words has been carefully selected. Students will have the phonetic tools to pronounce many words by the end of each lesson. The several listings that follow are emblematic of typical phonics milestones (not all of the sample words are necessarily taught within the lessons but the sound and spelling patterns are covered).

This curriculum does not involve teaching reading through using sentences. We realize that most teachers will contemporaneously use other classroom work that does involve the reading and writing of sentences. Teachers are always free to posit sentences to test for comprehension. If your student comes across a word in his outside reading for which he has not learned one or more of the patterns and he asks you about this word, put him at ease by telling him that some patterns will be introduced later. If you want to teach the pattern early, check in the “Index of Letters and Sounds” found on pages 215-223 to see where the pattern is first presented. Go to the indicated lesson for an explanation of that pattern.

Some words appear simple but are actually complex. Take this sentence, which seems to consist of only easy short-vowel words: *“This math class is fun.”* A student will have the phonetic tools to easily read this sentence after completing the first 27 lessons. He will have been introduced in Lessons 1, 2, and 6 to the three short-vowel sounds |ă|, |ĭ|, and |ŭ|, found in **math**, **class**, **this**, **is**, and **fun**. In Lesson 1, he will have learned **s** and **ss**, pronounced with the voiceless **s** sound, |s|, as in **this** and **class**. Lesson 17 introduced the second sound for **s**, |z|, as in **is**. Lesson 22 introduced the consonant blend **cl**, as in **class**, and Lesson 27 introduced the two sounds for the digraph **th** (voiced—**this**; and voiceless—**math**). All of the syllable patterns for this “simple” sentence are really not so simple after all. They must be intentionally and deliberately taught.

Common Words

LESSON 1	at an am man van bag sat tax	LESSON 13	can	LESSON 32	address
LESSON 2	in it if six big will pin him sit	LESSON 14	back	LESSON 33	made use sale
LESSON 4	on off hot not	LESSON 17	is as his has	LESSON 34	came time like name make more these take state nose line five nine
LESSON 6	up us but	LESSON 19	and left ask west hand jump just	LESSON 35	see three feet
LESSON 8	get egg tell less ten men yes sell jet	LESSON 20	song long	LESSON 36	the be we he she me clean reach east read each ear year
LESSON 10	add dad had did	LESSON 22	class black	LESSON 39	way day May Sunday air hair
		LESSON 23	spell		
		LESSON 27	when which where that then them than this there with math sixth tenth		
		LESSON 30	taxes		
		LESSON 31	singing		