

This document provides a summary of Recommendation 1 from the WWC practice guide *Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4-9*. Full reference is on the last page.

CONTENT: **Reading**
GRADE LEVEL(S): **4–9**
LEVEL OF EVIDENCE: **Strong**

Recommendation

Build students' decoding skills so they can read complex multisyllabic words.

This recommendation aims to prepare students with the skills needed to break apart and accurately sound out multisyllabic words. Steps 1 and 2 in this recommendation provide the knowledge students need to accurately sound out words. Step 3 involves spelling practice to solidify students' understanding of the vowel and consonant letter sounds and combinations that make words. Step 4 ensures that students have adequate opportunities to practice reading words not only in isolation, but also in sentences and passages to build increasingly automatic word recognition skills. Together these steps will help students accurately read multisyllabic words.

How to carry out the recommendation

1. Identify the level of students' word-reading skills and teach vowel and consonant letter sounds and combinations, as necessary.

Instructional strategies from the examples

- Assess student word reading skills prior to any intervention.
- Use a word-list reading measure or have the student read a list of regular and irregular words.
- Use the information to create intervention groups.

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South Carolina standards alignment

ELA: 3-5.RL.P.2, 3-5.RL.P.3, 3-5.RI.P.2, 3-5.RI.P.3, 6-8.RL.P.2, 6-8.RL.P.3, 6-8.RI.P.2, 6-8.RI.P.3, 9-12.RL.P.2, 9-12.RL.P.3, 9-12.RI.P.2, 9-12.RI.P.3

TEACHER: INST.PIC.2, INST.PIC.3, INST.TCK.1, INST.TCK.2

It is important to gauge students' word-reading abilities to determine where to begin instruction. Ideally, students' word-reading skills would be assessed prior to the intervention, and information from the assessment would be used to place students with similar needs in intervention groups. Use students' performance on a word-list reading measure to get a sense of the word-reading skills of the students in each intervention group. If students' scores on a word-list reading measure are not available, ask students to read a list of regular and irregular words.

Many intervention programs provide lists to help teachers gauge students' reading abilities and determine where they should start in the program. An oral reading fluency measure will provide more information about how words with the same kinds of vowel and consonant letter sounds and combinations are read in the context of sentences and paragraphs. Use the performance of the students in the group to determine which intervention groups need additional work in common vowel and consonant letter sounds and combinations, and which do not.

Resource 1.1. Common vowel sounds and vowel combinations

long vowel sound	<i>vowel sound, as in me, labor, polar</i>
short vowel sound	<i>vowel sound, as in cap, digger</i>
vowel-consonant-e	<i>“e” makes the vowel sound long, as in cake, mistake</i>
vowel combinations oa, ea, ee, ai	<i>long vowel sounds, as in boat, remain, teachable</i>
vowel diphthongs oi, oy, ou, ew	<i>vowel sounds, as in toy, destroy, newsworthy</i>
r-controlled vowels	<i>vowel sound, as in car, fur, personable</i>
consonant-le	<i>consonant sound, as in battle, belittle</i>

2. Teach students a routine they can use to decode multisyllabic words.

Instructional strategies from the examples

- Choose a single routine to break words into parts and blend them together.
- Explicitly teach the routine by demonstrating and guiding students through the steps multiple times before applying the routine on their own.
- Briefly explain the meaning and use of unfamiliar words.

South Carolina standards alignment

ELA: 3-5.RL.P.3, 6-8.RL.P.3, 9-12.RL.P.3, 3-5.RL.LCS.10, 6-8.RL.LCS.10, 9-12.RL.LCS.10, 3-5.RI.P.3, 6-8.RI.P.3, 9-12.RI.P.3, 3-5.RI.LCS.9, 6-8.RI.LCS.9, 9-12.RI.LCS.9

TEACHER: INST.PS.1

Rather than teaching a wide array of rules, choose a routine that provides simple steps for breaking words into parts and blending those parts together to sound out the word. The routine can be used flexibly across different multisyllabic words.

Explicitly teach students the routine to use when they encounter unfamiliar multisyllabic words. Briefly demonstrate how the word-reading routine can be helpful in sounding out words. Guide students through the steps of the routine and discuss how they would apply them to an unfamiliar word. To help students remember that the words they are reading have meaning, briefly explain the meaning or use of the word in a sentence, such as “If you misinform someone, you give them the wrong information.” Guide students through applying the routine to several words before asking students to practice applying the routine on their own.

Teacher demonstrating how to identify prefixes, suffixes, and vowel combinations to decode a multisyllabic word

The teacher refers to the following steps that are posted in the classroom:

1. Look for prefixes and suffixes. Circle prefixes and suffixes in the word.
2. Underline the remaining single vowels and vowel or vowel-consonant combinations.
3. Loop under each word part as you say it.
4. Say the whole word by blending the parts together, making it into a word you recognize.

Teacher: *Today, we are going to learn a routine for breaking longer words into parts so we can easily sound them out. In this routine, there are four steps. In the first step, we circle the prefixes and suffixes in the word. The first word is unreasonable. I am going to circle un-*

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because it is a prefix and -able because it is a suffix. Remember un- means not and -able means capable of being.

unreasonable

Teacher: *In Step 2, I am going to underline the vowel sounds that are left. I am going to underline ea and o. I am doing this because each syllable has a vowel sound.*

unreasonable

Teacher: *In Step 3, I am going to use my pencil to loop under each word part as I say it: un rea son able. Now, in Step 4, I am going to blend the parts together: unreasonable. Unreasonable means not capable of reason or explanation.*

unreasonable

The teacher follows the same procedure for two more examples, *misinform* and *salamander*. In the word *misinform*, the single vowel, *i*, and the *r*-controlled combination, *or*, are underlined. The teacher reminds students that *mis-* means wrong and that the word *inform* means to tell someone. *Misinform* means to tell someone something wrong. In the word *salamander*, the three single vowels, *a*, and the *r*-controlled combination, *-er* are underlined. Note that *-er* is not a suffix in the word *salamander*. “Salamand” is not a word on its own. Therefore, *-er* in *salamander* is not circled. The teacher explains that a salamander is an amphibian that looks like a lizard.

misinform
salamander

Note: Adapted from page 7 of the practice guide referenced on the last page.

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Prefixes		Suffixes	
un-	pre-	-s, -es	-ity, -ty
re-	inter-	-ed	-ment
in-, im-, il-, ir-	fore-	-ing	-ic
dis-	de-	-ly	-ous, -eous, -ious
en-, em-	trans-	-er, -or	-en
non-	super-	-ion, -tion, -ation, -	-er
in-, im-	semi-	ition	-ive, -ative, -tive
over-	anti-	-able, -ible	-ful
mis-	mid-	-al, -ial	-less
sub-	under-	-y	-est
		-ness	

Note: Adapted from page 8 of the practice guide referenced on the last page.

Teacher working with students to apply a routine to identify syllables and sound out unfamiliar words

The teacher posts the steps of the routine on the board before providing an explanation:

1. Underline single vowels and vowel or vowel-consonant combinations.
2. Count the number of vowel sounds to determine how many syllables are in the word.
3. Break the word into parts, with every syllable having a vowel sound in it.
4. Blend each part together to form a word you recognize.

Teacher: Today, we are going to learn a routine for breaking words into parts and sounding them out. In this routine, there are four steps. In the first step, we underline single vowels and vowel combinations. Remember, a lot of the time, two vowels together sound as one. The first word is unreasonable. I am going to underline the u, the ea, the o, the a, and the e.

unreaonable

Teacher: Now, we will count the number of vowel sounds to determine how many syllables are in the word unreasonable. Count them with me.

Teacher and student: 1... 2... 3... 4... 5.

Teacher: So, how many syllables are in this word?

Student: Five!

Teacher: Yes, we have five vowels or vowel combinations, so we have five syllables. In Step 3, I am going to use a slash mark to break the word into parts so that every syllable has a vowel sound in it. For the word unreasonable, we broke the word into these parts: un/rea/son/a/ble.

un/rea/son/a/ble

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Teacher: *Now, let's blend the parts together.*

Together the group reads un reas on a ble and then blends the sounds to read *unreasonable*. The teacher tells students the word *unreasonable* means not capable of reason or explanation.

The teacher works with the students in applying the same routine for two more words, *misinform* and *salamander*.

mis/in/form
sal/a/mand/er

Note: Adapted from page 9 of the practice guide referenced on the last page.

3. Embed spelling instruction in the lesson.

Instructional strategies from the examples

- Practice spelling monosyllabic and multisyllabic words.
- Ask students to read the word aloud and spell it.
- Encourage students to think about the parts of the word and how many parts there are before writing it.
- Give additional examples to spell using the same vowel and consonant letter sounds and combinations.

South Carolina standards alignment

ELA: 3-5.RL.P.3, 6-8.RL.P.3, 6-8.RL.P.3, 3-5.RL.LCS.10, 6-8.RL.LCS.10, 9-12.RL.LCS.10, 3-5.RI.P.3, 6-8.RI.P.3, 9-12.RI.P.3, 3-5.RI.LCS.9, 6-8.RI.LCS.9, 9-12.RI.LCS.9

TEACHER: INST.PS.1

Spelling words will help reinforce the vowel and consonant letter-sounds and combinations students are learning. Include practice in spelling monosyllabic and multisyllabic words. This activity is called encoding practice. Begin by asking students to read the word aloud and spell it. Encourage students to think about the different parts of the word and how many parts or syllables are in the word before they write it. Give students additional words to spell that include the same vowel and consonant letter-sounds and combinations.

4. Engage students in a wide array of activities that allow them to practice reading multisyllabic words accurately and with increasing automaticity.

Instructional strategies from the examples

- Post the steps of the routine so that students can refer to it.
- Provide multiple opportunities to practice the routine.
- Read word lists as a group using the routine as needed.
- Practice by having students read multisyllabic words in sentences and longer texts, using the routine as needed.
- Discuss the meaning of the word, including the meaning of prefixes and suffixes, after students have used the routine to read it.

South Carolina standards alignment

ELA: 3-5.RL.P.3, 6-8.RL.P.3, 6-8.RL.P.3, 3-5.RL.LCS.10, 6-8.RL.LCS.10, 9-12.RL.LCS.10, 3-5.RI.P.3, 6-8.RI.P.3, 9-12.RI.P.3, 3-5.RI.LCS.9, 6-8.RI.LCS.9, 9-12.RI.LCS.9

TEACHER: INST.PS.1

Provide multiple opportunities for students to apply the routine to build automaticity: the ability to recognize words instantly and effortlessly. Before starting, ensure that abbreviated versions of the steps of the routine (e.g., Step 1: Look for prefixes; Step 2: Look for suffixes; Step 3: Find single vowels, etc.) are readily available by posting them on the board or providing each student with a prompt card. Reminders of the steps will help students remember the routine.

Initiate practice by reading word lists out loud as a group. Include words with the vowel and consonant letter-sounds or combinations in that day's lesson, as well as previously taught sounds. Also include high-frequency words in the word lists. Continued practice with the words on the word list will help students begin to read them fluently.

Students will need multiple exposures to the words they are learning to read. Practice should include more than word lists. Equally important is having students read multisyllabic words in sentences and brief paragraphs. Ask students to read the words in sentences repeatedly to build automaticity. If sentences are not readily available, write sentences that include multisyllabic words the students are learning. Also have students read the words in longer texts. Choose age-appropriate texts used in upper-elementary and middle school grades that include the words or sounds students are

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working on. Ask students to read the passage and stop to apply the word-reading routine to unfamiliar words.

Knowing the meanings of words can also help students read words in the future. If the students are unsure of the word's meaning, briefly discuss the meaning after students have used the routine to read the word. Use this opportunity to also explain the meaning of prefixes and suffixes briefly.

Practice activities that can build students' automaticity with multisyllabic word reading

1. As a warm-up provide practice in vowel combinations in the multisyllabic words that students are going to encounter in a word list or section of text for the session.
2. Read a list of high-frequency prefixes and suffixes aloud as a group (in unison or by taking turns).
3. Ask students to underline prefixes and suffixes in each word in a word list, and then read the prefixes and suffixes aloud as a group (in unison or by taking turns).
4. Ask students to write words by adding a prefix and/or a suffix to a base word.
5. Ask students to read a list of words once with their partner, noting any words students have difficulty reading. Then ask them to try to read more words correctly when they read the list to their partner a second time.
6. Read a list of words (up to 20 words) aloud as a group (in unison or by taking turns).
7. Time students as they read a list of words. Ask them to read the list again to meet or beat their previous time.
8. Dictate words for students to spell that contain the targeted prefixes and suffixes or sounds in the lesson.
9. Read sentences containing multisyllabic words aloud as a group (in unison or by taking turns) or with the teacher reading first and then the students reading next.
10. Ask students to read the passage containing the words they are learning at least twice.

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Potential roadblocks and how to address them

Roadblock	Suggested Approach
<i>My students report having difficulty reading multisyllabic words in their core subject-area classes.</i>	The panel recommends including words from core subject-area classes during intervention time. If the week's American history topic is the aftermath of the Civil War, then words like Reconstruction and suffrage would be critical. Words like gravity and momentum would be excellent words for a unit on gravity in science. A teacher or the team leader for social studies or science departments may be able to provide a list of words. It is also possible to locate lists of important words in the students' textbooks.
<i>A few of my students can read multisyllabic words pretty effortlessly but perform poorly on reading tests because of weak vocabulary and difficulties in comprehension.</i>	These students need additional work on language and vocabulary development. Therefore, teachers should minimize decoding and fluency instruction and maximize comprehension instruction. When possible, group these students in an intervention that focuses on oral language and reading comprehension. Activities should include experiences that increase world knowledge and word knowledge and provide ample opportunities to engage students in meaningful discussion about the text they are reading.

Reference: Vaughn, S., Gersten, R., Dimino, J., Taylor, M. J., Newman-Gonchar, R., Krowka, S., Kieffer, M. J., McKeown, M., Reed, D., Sanchez, M., St. Martin, K., Wexler, J., Morgan, S., Yañez, A., & Jayanthi, M. (2022). *Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4–9* (WWC 2022007). Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (NCEE), Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from <https://whatworks.ed.gov/>.