

Third Edition

Word Identification Strategies

Phonics from a New Perspective



Barbara J. Fox

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Third Edition

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When I began writing the first edition more than 10 years ago, we were in the midst of a debate about the role, function, and contribution of phonics in learning to read. Phonics is still a hot button. While most educators agree that children need to learn how our alphabetic writing system works, the bone of contention is how much time and energy teachers should put into phonics.

The perspective I take in this book is that we cannot afford not to teach phonics, but we cannot afford to overdo it either. Phonics is a means to an end, not an end in and of itself. Children learn phonics so they can read and learn new words and, in so doing, build a large fluent reading vocabulary. The goal of all approaches to teaching reading is for children to become independent readers. Phonics is a necessary tool in achieving this universal goal.

Core Beliefs About What Makes a Good Phonics Teacher

From my perspective, a good phonics teacher knows how the letter patterns of phonics match the sounds in words. A good teacher understands and knows how to teach the prefixes, suffixes, syllables, and other multiletter groups in the structure of long words. Also important for good teaching is understanding how children develop competence in reading new words, and the strategies children use at different stages in their development as readers. A good teacher understands that a balanced classroom reading program provides phonics instruction in proportion to children's needs.

Who Will Benefit From Reading This Book: This book is for kindergarten through fifth-grade teachers getting ready to enter the classroom for the first time, and for practicing teachers who already have classroom experience. This book offers a comprehensive, easy-to-understand explanation of what children do when they first begin to pay attention to print, how children learn and use the letter-sounds of phonics, and the contribution that knowledge of the prefixes, suffixes, and syllables in word structure makes to building a large reading vocabulary. It offers a theory-based, developmental perspective on teaching word identification, and describes teaching activities that are consistent with this theoretical perspective.

What Principles Guide Phonics Teachers: The first guiding principle is that learning to read new words unfolds in a predictable developmental sequence that begins long before children ever pay attention to the specific words in books, and ends when children rapidly, accurately, and effortlessly recognize all the words in everyday reading. The second guiding principle is that we teach children how our writing system works so that they can develop a large fluent reading vocabulary and, ultimately, become independent readers. Children may begin kindergarten with only the foggiest knowledge of our writing system, but they leave fifth grade with a wide and rich body of words that they recognize quickly, accurately and effortlessly. A third and final principle is that ultimately successful teaching is measured by children's ability to learn new words on their own, to read independently, to easily recognize many different words, and to focus their attention on comprehension.

New in This Edition

Each bulleted item describes a new few feature for this third edition.

- We have learned a good deal more about how to effectively teach word identification in kindergarten through fifth grade since the last edition, and so this edition includes a section in chapters solely devoted to best practices.
- New teaching activities have been added to help teachers implement best practices in their classrooms, and the explanations of the teaching activities have been refined to make them easy to apply in any classroom setting.
- Also new in this edition are descriptions of the different ways in which children show their teachers that they are aware of the rhymes and sounds in language.
- And because word identification is successful only when children identify words that fit the reading context, chapter 4 includes a new section on how to help children cross-check, self-monitor, and self-correct when reading new words.

What the Reader of This Book Will Learn About Teaching Word Identification

Readers of this book will learn about the different word identification strategies children use to read new words and also how to effectively teach these strategies. Chapter 1 considers the proper place of phonics in a balanced reading program, the cues children use to read new words, and the stages for learning new words and spelling. Chapter 2 explains the sequence in which phonemic awareness develops, best teaching practices, 14 activities to teach rhyme awareness, 17 activities to teach phonemic awareness, and tests for assessing children's phonemic awareness.

Chapter 3 explains the very first strategies children use when reading new words, and best practices for teaching children who are progressing through the first two word-learning stages. Chapter 4 explores how children use the letter patterns in known words to read unknown words; how to help children cross-check, self-monitor, and self-correct; 6 research-based best teaching practices; and 20 ac-

tivities for teaching rimes and onsets. Chapter 5 describes the letter-sound strategy, the letter-sound patterns of phonics, a sequence for teaching letter-sound patterns, the proper way to use decodable books, 10 best teaching practices, and 23 easy and effective activities for developing knowledge of letter and sound relationships. Chapter 6 explains the multiletter groups readers use to identify long words; best practices for teaching prefixes, suffixes, and syllables; and 22 activities for developing knowledge of multiletter chunks in the structure of words. The last chapter, chapter 7, focuses on children who may benefit from extra help and consideration because they are not yet successful at reading new words on their own or because they speak a language other than English at home.

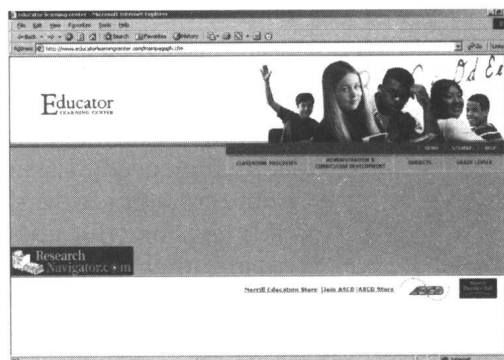
This book is a ready reference for teachers in every elementary grade. In taking a developmental approach to word identification, it gives teachers the information they need to match what is taught to what children need to learn. I hope that the cross-grade developmental perspective combined with the new additions to this revision will support effective teaching in every grade. The ultimate objectives are, after all, developing children's ability to read new words and enabling their steady progress toward becoming accomplished readers who instantly recognize all the words they read in everyday text.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to the many teachers who welcomed me into their classrooms, to the children who were willing readers and eager participants in the activities their teachers shared, and to the principals who encouraged and supported their teachers. Without them this book could not have been written. Of the teachers I visited and who shared their classrooms with me, I would like to especially thank: Elo Goodman of Cary Elementary School; Judy Goodnight, Supervisor, and Tamara Jones and Traci Ashbaugh of the Kannapolis City Schools; Christine Greene of Holly Springs Elementary School; Judy Skroch of Effie Green; Joan Perry of Emma Conn; Sarah Rodgers of Fox Road School; Denise Rhodes, principal, and David Wall of Franklinton Elementary; William Abel, principal, and Amy Stone of Immaculata Catholic School; Donna Dysert, Donna Kocur, and Karen Royall of Lacy Elementary; Helen Collier, principal, Gail Ace, and Marilyn Gray of Penny Road School; Moria O'Connor, principal, Carolyn Banks, Diana Callaghan, Debbie Faulkner, Pat Lemmons, and Gail Walker of Poe International Magnet School; Pam Bridges, principal, Judy Honeycutt and Patricia Gonzales of Willow Springs; JoAnn Everson; and Ronald Honeycutt. A special thanks to Catherine Clements for her good advice, to Celia Jolley for her helpful words, and to Elizabeth Beecher for her wise counsel. Thanks also to the reviewers of this text: Beth C. Anderson, Moorhead State University; Diane E. Bushner, Salem State College; Patricia P. Kelly, Virginia Tech University; and Thomas Gunning, Central Connecticut State University. William S. O'Bruba, Bloomsburg University; I. LaVerne Raine, TA&MU Commerce; Grace Nunn, Eastern Illinois University; and Hazel A. Brauer, University of San Francisco. Finally, thanks to Linda Montgomery, my editor at Merrill, for her guidance and vision.

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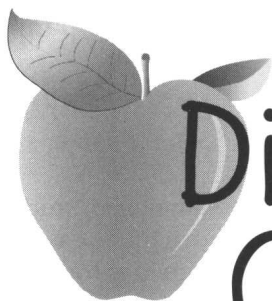
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- **Electronic Bluebook**—Send homework or essays directly to your instructor's email with this paperless form.
- **Message Board**—Virtual bulletin board to post or respond to questions or comments from a national audience.
- **Chat**—Real-time chat with anyone who is using the text anywhere in the country—ideal for discussion and study groups, class projects, etc.

To take advantage of these and other resources, please visit the *Word Identification Strategies*, Third Edition, Companion Website at

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Contents

CHAPTER 1

Word Identification in a Balanced Reading Program 1

Key Ideas 2

Key Vocabulary 2

What Is Phonics, Who Teaches It and Why? 3

Phonics in a Balanced Reading Program 5

When Do We Teach Phonics? 6

How Do We Teach Phonics? 6

How Much Time Should We Spend Teaching Phonics? 7

Under What Circumstances Should We Teach Phonics? 9

Three Cues for Reading New Words 10

Developing Metacognitive Awareness 12

Four Ways to Read Words 14

The Five Stages of Movement Toward Word Fluency 15

Prealphabetic Stage 15

Partial Alphabetic Stage 17

Alphabetic Stage 17

Consolidated Stage 17

Automatic Stage 18

References 19

CHAPTER 2

Phonemic Awareness: Becoming Aware of the Sounds of Language 21

- Key Ideas 22
- Key Vocabulary 22
- What Is Phonemic Awareness? 23
- What Is Phonological Awareness? 25
- The Connection Between Phonemic Awareness and Phonics 25
- Phonemic Awareness Develops in a Sequence 25
- Rhyme Awareness 26
- Three Ways Children Demonstrate Rhyme Awareness 27
- Fourteen Easy and Effective Rhyme Awareness Activities 28
- Sound Awareness 37
- Eight Ways Children Demonstrate Sound Awareness 38
- Eleven Best Practices for Teaching Phonemic Awareness 40
- Seventeen Easy and Effective Activities for Teaching Phonemic Awareness 41
- Phonemic Awareness Tests 56
- Teaching Phonemic Awareness in Your Balanced Classroom Reading Program 57
- References 58

CHAPTER 3

Early Word Identification Strategies: Using Logos, Pictures, Word Configuration, and One or Two Letter-Sound Associations to Read New Words 61

- Key Ideas 62
- Key Vocabulary 62
- Environmental Cues: The Strategy of Associating Meaning With the Print in Our Everyday Surroundings 64
- Picture Cues: The Strategy of Inferring Meaning From Illustrations 64
- Configuration: The Strategy of Using Word Length, Word Shape, or Eye-catching Letters to Read New Words 65

<i>Word Shape</i>	66
<i>Word Length</i>	67
<i>Letter Shape</i>	67
The Prealphabetic Stage of Movement Toward Word Fluency and the Precommunicative Stage of Spelling	68
Seven Best Practices for Teaching Children in the Prealphabetic Stage of Movement Toward Word Fluency	68
Phonetic Cues: The Strategy of Using Letter-Names or One or Two Letter-Sounds to Read New Words	71
The Partial Alphabetic Stage of Movement Toward Word Fluency and the Semiphonetic Stage of Spelling	71
Six Best Practices for Teaching Children in the Partial Alphabetic Stage of Movement Toward Word Fluency	74
References	76

CHAPTER 4

The Analogy Strategy: Using Parts of Familiar Words to Read New Words

Key Ideas	78
Key Vocabulary	78
Looking Inside Syllables	79
How Readers Use the Analogy Strategy to Read New Words	80
Three Strategies for Keeping Word Identification Meaning Focused	81
<i>Cross-Checking</i>	82
<i>Self-Monitoring</i>	83
<i>Self-Correcting</i>	83
Rimes, Phonograms, and Word Families	84
Why Do Children Use Onsets and Rimes to Read New Words?	84
Six Best Practices for Teaching Children to Use the Analogy Strategy With Onsets and Rimes	87
Twenty Easy and Effective Activities for Teaching the Analogy Strategy	89
Looking Beyond the Analogy Strategy	107
References	108

CHAPTER 5

The Letter-Sound Strategy: Using Letters and Sounds to Read New Words 111

Key Ideas 112

Key Vocabulary 112

Letter-Sound Patterns 113

Reading New Words with the Letter-Sound Strategy 114

Correcting Misidentifications 118

Minor Mistakes 119

A Sequence for Teaching Letter-Sound Patterns 119

Two Less Challenging Patterns 120

Seven More Challenging Patterns 120

Four Most Challenging Patterns 122

Demonstrating How Some Patterns Represent More Than One Sound 123

Do Phonics Rules Belong in Your Balanced Classroom Reading Program? 123

The Alphabetic Stage of Movement Toward Word Fluency and the Phonetic Stage of Spelling 125

Ten Best Practices for Teaching Letter-Sound Patterns 128

How Decodable Books Fit into Your Balanced Classroom Reading Program 130

Twenty-Three Easy and Effective Activities for Teaching Letter-Sound Patterns 130

Moving Toward Word Identification With Multiletter Chunks 150

References 150

CHAPTER 6

The Multiletter Chunk Strategy: Using the Multiletter Groups in Word Structure to Read New Long Words 153

Key Ideas 154

Key Vocabulary 154

Why Readers Chunk Letters 156

Using the Multiletter Chunks in Word Structure to Read Long Words	157
<i>Correcting Misidentifications</i>	159
Roots of the Multiletter Chunk Strategy	159
The Consolidated Stage of Movement Toward Word Fluency and the Transitional Stage of Spelling	160
Prefixes, Suffixes, and Base Words	163
<i>Prefixes</i>	163
<i>Suffixes</i>	163
<i>Base Words</i>	165
Five Best Practices for Teaching Prefixes and Suffixes	167
Greek and Latin Roots	168
Compound Words	169
Contractions	169
Syllables	170
<i>Five Syllable Patterns</i>	170
<i>Accent Patterns</i>	172
Three Best Practices for Teaching Syllables	173
Twenty-Two Easy and Effective Activities for Teaching the Multiletter Chunks in Word Structure	173
Insight into Word Meaning and Pronunciation	192
References	192

CHAPTER 7

Children Who Need Extra Help 195

Key Ideas	196
Children Who Over-rely on Picture Cues	197
<i>Shandra</i>	197
Children Who Do Not Effectively Use the Analogy and the Letter-Sound Strategies	201
<i>Raymond</i>	202
<i>Melissa</i>	205
<i>Mike</i>	209
Children Who Speak Languages Other Than English at Home	212
Nine Best Practices for Teaching Reading and Sharing Literacy with Second Language Learners	216
References	220

APPENDIX A

Rimes for Word Reading and Spelling 223

APPENDIX B

Letter-Sound Patterns 228

APPENDIX C

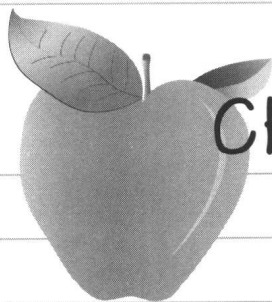
Generalizations for Adding Suffixes 243

APPENDIX D

Greek and Latin Roots 247

Key Vocabulary 249

Index 253

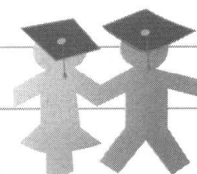


CHAPTER

1

Word Identification in a Balanced Reading Program

This chapter explains the proper place of word identification in a balanced classroom reading program. You will learn about five approaches to teaching phonics and how to determine the most appropriate balance between word identification and other components of the reading program. You also will learn how children use syntactic, semantic, and graphophonic cues to read unfamiliar words; the stages of word learning; and why understanding these stages is important for teaching children to read unfamiliar words.

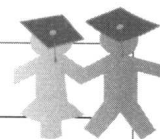




KEY IDEAS

- In balanced reading programs, the emphasis on word identification is in proportion to children's individual needs.
- Phonics is a shortcut for learning words; helps children develop rich, fluent reading vocabularies; and contributes to reading independence.
- Readers use graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic cues to read new words.
- In understanding how word reading develops in stages, you can teach exactly what children need to know to add new words to their reading vocabularies.

KEY VOCABULARY



Alphabetic principle	Fluent reading vocabulary	Phonics
Analogy-based phonics	Graphophonic cues	Semantic cues
Analytic phonics	Linguistic approach	Syntactic cues
Consonants	Metacognitive awareness	Synthetic phonics
Embedded phonics		Vowels
		Word fluency

You automatically recognize all the words you commonly encounter when reading. Instead of figuring out words, you focus on comprehension. This is exactly as it should be. But consider what it is like for young readers who come across many unfamiliar words. Meeting a large number of new words is a major impediment to comprehension, and so it is not surprising that these children concentrate on developing their reading vocabularies. One way to do this is to use the cues in the reading context, including cues from our alphabetic writing system, to figure out the identity of words that have never been seen before.

Consider the note in Figure 1–1 written by Maria. If you speak and read Spanish, Maria's message is crystal clear. The words are easy to recognize, the sentences are well formed, and you know why the picture and the message are a perfect match. Suppose instead that you speak Spanish but cannot read it. Now the format of the note and Maria's drawing are the only reliable clues to meaning. You might make an educated guess based on information gleaned from the picture and your