

Research Supporting Phonics Readers



- *Explicit, Systematic Instruction*
- *Research-Based Scope and Sequence*
- *Standards-Aligned Content*

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This guide has been created to give an overview of how Red Brick Learning Phonics Readers align with the research and findings of the National Reading Panel's Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction. Knowing that the acquisition of literacy is a very complex process, Red Brick Learning Phonics Readers provide up-to-date instructional materials that support a variety of strategies and fit with current National Standards.

Phonemic Awareness

A child's level of phonemic awareness on entering school is widely held to be the strongest single determinant of the success that he or she will experience in learning to read—or, conversely, the likelihood that he or she will fail (Adams, 1990).

Studies show that phonemic awareness and letter knowledge are the two best indicators of how well a child will learn to read for the first two-year period of instruction (Share, Jorm, Maclean, & Matthews, 1984).

Research clearly indicates that phonemic awareness can be developed through instruction and, furthermore, that doing so significantly accelerates children's subsequent reading and writing achievement (Ball and Blachman, 1991).

Effective phonemic awareness instruction teaches children to notice, think about, and work with (manipulate) sounds in spoken language. Research has found many activities teachers can use to build phonemic awareness, including:

- Phoneme isolation
- Phoneme identity
- Phoneme categorization
- Phoneme blending
- Phoneme segmentation
- Phoneme deletion, phoneme addition
- Phoneme substitution

Phonics Readers Program Features Supports for Phonemic Awareness Instruction:

- Each lesson begins with exercises to build phonemic awareness: oral blending, oral segmentation, rhyme, phonemic manipulation (substitution and deletion).
- Phonics Readers books are systematic; phonemic skills are practiced, reviewed, and expanded as the program progresses.
- Dictation exercises encourage students to practice oral segmentation skills while practicing spelling.

Phonics

The goal of phonics instruction is to help children learn and use the alphabetic principle—the understanding that there are systematic and predictable relationships between written letters and spoken sounds. Phonics instruction teaches children the relationships between the letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken language. It teaches children to use these relationships to read and write words. These types of relationships include the following:

- Graphophonemic relationships
- Letter-sound relationships
- Letter-sound correspondences
- Sound-symbol correspondences
- Sound-spellings

Children in the primary grades, and any students who are having some difficulty with learning to read, are the children for whom phonics instruction is designed. Current research continues to confirm the study of Jeanne Chall (1967) and the belief that the early and systematic teaching of phonics leads to higher reading achievement.

Phonics Readers Program Features Supports for Phonics Instruction:

- Each lesson is designed to explain sound-spelling relationships and how to use these relationships to read real words.
- The program features systematic instruction and a research-based scope and sequence. New skills build on previously-taught skills, while reviewing and practicing all skills.
- Teacher’s Guides include a phonics survey designed to diagnose each child’s phonics proficiency. The assessment can be used at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year.
- The student books are at least 75% decodable, and each book includes a word list identifying the words using the featured phonics skills.
- Each lesson includes dictation activities that allow children to practice transferring their newly acquired phonics skills into writing.

Fluency

Fluency is the ability to read a text accurately and quickly. Fluency is important because it provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension. Because fluent readers do not have to concentrate on decoding words, they can focus their attention on what the text means.

Researchers determined that repeated and monitored oral reading (commonly called “repeated reading”) is an effective approach for developing fluency. In this approach, students read passages aloud several times and receive guidance and feedback from the teacher. Effective activities for repeated and monitored oral reading include:

- Student-adult reading
- Choral reading
- Tape-assisted reading
- Partner reading
- Leveled reading passages and instruction for calculating words per minute

Fluency develops as a result of many opportunities to practice reading with a high degree of success. It is essential to provide students with texts containing mostly words they know or can decode easily.

Phonics Readers Program Features Supports for Fluency Instruction:

- Texts allow beginning readers to achieve fluency through the use of systematic phonics instruction, short text lengths, and repeated use of high-frequency words. All texts are at least 75% decodable.
- Teacher’s Guide lessons highlight multiple uses of repeated readings, including the use of partner reading.
- Read-at-Home Books allow for continued practice at home.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to the words we must know to communicate effectively. Vocabulary is important in learning to read as well as to reading comprehension. Researchers often refer to the following four types of vocabulary:

- Listening vocabulary
- Speaking vocabulary
- Reading vocabulary
- Writing vocabulary

According to the research of Stahl and Fairbanks (1986), one of the keys to improved comprehension is vocabulary instruction. It was also found that repeated exposure to vocabulary words was highly effective in vocabulary recall.

Direct learning involves specific word instruction and word learning strategies. Indirect learning involves children's daily engagement in oral language, listening to adults read, and reading extensively on their own. Effective vocabulary instruction utilizes both direct and indirect learning approaches.

Phonics Readers Program Features Supports for Vocabulary Instruction:

- Each student book includes high-frequency words, social studies or science concept words, and decodable words using the featured phonics skills.
- Photo-illustrations provide a tool for explaining new ideas and concepts. Engaging children in conversations about these concepts will add words to their speaking and listening vocabularies.
- Each student book includes a word list with concept vocabulary.

Text Comprehension

Comprehension is the “essence of reading” (Durkin, 1993). Research over 30 years has shown that instruction in comprehension can help students understand what they read, remember what they read, and communicate with others about what they read. Comprehension strategies are conscious plans—sets of steps that good readers use to make sense of text.

Comprehension strategy instruction helps students become purposeful, active readers who are in control of their own reading comprehension. The following six strategies have a firm scientific basis for improving text comprehension:

- Monitoring comprehension
- Using graphic and semantic organizers
- Answering questions
- Generating questions (reciprocal teaching)
- Recognizing story structures
- Summarizing

Phonics Readers Program Features Supports for Text Comprehension Instruction:

- Each Teacher’s Guide lesson provides specific “After the Reading” questions to assess student comprehension. The four types of questions used are recall questions, questions focusing on a decodable word, higher-order thinking questions, and personal response questions.
- Each lesson includes writing extensions that allow children to demonstrate their comprehension of the book by recording their learning in writing or connecting the book concept to their daily lives.

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For more information about Red Brick Learning and additional materials that support the National Reading Panel Report (2000), please contact:



1-888-262-6135

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