

FOURTH
&
FIFTH
EDITIONS

Chapter 6
Phonemic Awareness and
Alphabetic Understanding
DIRECT INSTRUCTION
READING

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Phonemic Awareness and Alphabetic Understanding

In the 1970s, the first edition of *Direct Instruction Reading* (Carnine & Silbert, 1979) described the importance of teaching auditory skills to beginning readers. The authors proposed ensuring that students were introduced to the sound structure of words and were able to manipulate sounds in words by teaching three auditory skills: blending, segmenting, and rhyming.

Research in the 1980s and 1990s led to understanding of the important roles that these auditory skills play in reading. As that understanding grew, the terms *phonological awareness skills* and *phonemic awareness skills*, referring to auditory teaching, became part of the vocabulary of reading instruction. With that research came increased understanding of the distinctions and the intricate relationships among phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, the alphabetic principle, and phonics.

PHONEMIC AND PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Both phonological awareness and phonemic awareness involve the identification and manipulation of parts of *spoken* language. *Phonological awareness*, the broader category, includes awareness of the larger parts of spoken language as well as awareness of the smaller parts. Included among the larger units of spoken language are words, syllables, onsets, and rimes; thus, phonological awareness refers to aspects of sound such as rhyming and alliteration. Phonemic awareness, on the other hand, refers only to awareness of phonemes, the smallest meaningful parts of spoken language.

Phonemic awareness is a subcategory of phonological awareness that is focused more narrowly on identifying and manipulating individual sounds within words. Phonemic awareness includes both an awareness that spoken words are composed of tiny, abstract sounds and the ability to manipulate those sounds in a variety of ways. Those tiny, abstract sounds are called *phonemes*. English consists of about 41 phonemes.

Alphabetic Awareness, Alphabetic Understanding, and the Alphabetic Principle

As stated above, phonemic awareness involves the ability to hear and manipulate sounds. *Alphabetic awareness* refers to a reader's knowledge of the letters of the alphabet coupled with the understanding that the alphabet represents the sounds of spoken language. *Alphabetic understanding* refers to understanding that letters represent sounds and that whole words embody a sound structure of individual sounds and patterns of groups of sounds. The *alphabetic principle* is the combination of alphabetic understanding and phonemic awareness. The alphabetic principle enables the reader to translate independently a visual symbol into a sound. Converging evidence provides strong support that a combination of *phonemic awareness* and *letter-sound correspondence* training is necessary to understand the alphabetic principle (Adams, 1990; Ball & Blachman, 1991; Byrne & Fielding-Barnsley, 1990; Mann, 1993; Rack et al., 1992; Snowling, 1991; Spector, 1995; Stanovich, 1986; Vellutino, 1991; Vellutino & Scanlon, 1987a).

Phonemic Awareness and Phonics

Phonemic awareness is not the same thing as phonics, though they have been frequently misunderstood as being the same. Phonemic awareness is an understanding of how the sounds of *spoken* language work to form words, whereas phonics is the system by which symbols represent those sounds in an alphabetic writing system. Because the two are closely linked in beginning reading instruction, phonemic awareness activities are sometimes called beginning phonics activities, and beginning phonics activities are sometimes called phonemic awareness activities. As shown in Figure 6.1, the National Reading Panel concluded that phonemic awareness instruction is most effective when students use letters of the alphabet as they are taught to manipulate phonemes. When students use letters of the alphabet in phonemic awareness instruction, the instruction looks like what we usually consider to be beginning phonics instruction. To distinguish the two, the National Reading Panel explained that phonemic awareness instruction does not qualify as phonics instruction when it teaches children to manipulate phonemes in speech, but it does qualify when it teaches children to segment or blend phonemes with letters. In other words, when instruction teaches children to segment

- Phonemic awareness can be taught explicitly.
- Phonemic awareness instruction helps children learn to read and spell.
- Phonemic awareness instruction is most effective when students use letters of the alphabet as they are taught to manipulate phonemes.
- Phonemic awareness instruction is most effective when it focuses on only one or two rather than several types of phoneme manipulation.
- Phonemic awareness instruction produces greater benefits in reading when it includes blending and segmenting of phonemes in words.
- Phonemic awareness instruction is most effective when it makes explicit how children are to apply phonemic awareness skills in reading and writing tasks.
- Phonemic awareness instruction helps all types of children improve their reading, including normally developing readers, children at risk for future reading problems, disabled readers, preschoolers, kindergarteners, first-graders, children in second through sixth grades with reading disabilities, and children across various socioeconomic levels.
- Phonemic awareness instruction should consume no more than 20 hours of instructional time over the school year.
- Phonemic awareness instruction is more effective when delivered to small groups of students than when delivered to individual students or to the whole class.

FIGURE 6.1 National Reading Panel Conclusions from Scientifically Based Research on Phonemic Awareness Instruction

Adapted from the National Reading Panel Report of the Subgroups, Chapter 2, Part 1, "Phonemic Awareness Instruction," pp. 5–7.

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or blend phonemes with letters, the instruction can be termed either phonemic awareness instruction or phonics instruction. When letters are used in phonemic awareness instruction, the instruction overlaps phonics instruction. This overlap helps children understand how their phonemic awareness skills link up with their knowledge of letters of the alphabet. This understanding is critical. What we call the instruction is of less importance.

Research of the late 1980s and early 1990s showed clearly that students who enter first grade with a wealth of phonological and phonemic awareness are more successful readers than those who do not (Kame'enui, 1996; Smith, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 1995). Fortunately, phonemic awareness skills can be taught explicitly to students who lack these skills when they enter kindergarten or first grade. The National Reading Panel concluded that phonemic awareness instruction is most effective when it

- Uses letters of the alphabet as students are taught to manipulate phonemes.
- Focuses on only one or two rather than several types of phoneme manipulation.
- Includes blending and segmenting of phonemes in words.
- Makes explicit how phonemic awareness skills are applied in reading and writing tasks.

The National Reading Panel report (2000) provides evidence that the three “auditory” skills described in the first edition of *Direct Instruction Reading* (Carnine & Silbert, 1979) are critical pre-reading skills. The National Reading Panel identified blending and segmenting as critical skills. The third “auditory” skill—rhyming—was identified as an important phonological skill that helps students focus on parts of spoken language that are smaller than syllables but larger than phonemes. A rime is the part of a syllable that contains the vowel and all that follows it (the rime of *man* is -an; of *shop*, -op).

PRESKILLS FOR SOUNDING OUT WORDS

In this section, we explain how blending, segmenting, and rhyming are preskills for reading words and provide formats for teaching the three skills. It

is important to note that these three skills are presented orally. A student is not required to look at a word and read it. The student merely listens to what the teacher says and responds. Teaching blending and segmenting skills early is necessary to lay the groundwork beginning word reading exercises in which the children sound out words.

Two skills directly related to sounding out words, which enhance phonemic awareness, are blending sounds to form a word and segmenting a word into sounds. Blending sounds to form a word begins with the teacher saying a series of blended sounds. The students then translate the series of sounds into a word said at a normal rate (“aaamm” becomes *am*). This procedure explicitly demonstrates that words are composed of strings of smaller units of speech or phonemes. In the blending task, the students are provided with extended opportunity to “hear” those smaller units of speech (i.e., phonemes) and then translate what they have heard into familiar spoken words.

Segmenting has the students identify the sounds that make up a word. Segmenting is easiest when the students simply produce a series of sounds without a pause (as in saying a word very slowly, “mmmmaaaannnn”). Segmenting is more difficult when students hear a word and say each phoneme separately in sequence (“m-a-n”). We recommend that in the beginning stage of reading instruction, teachers model and teach segmenting without stopping between sounds. With sufficient practice, students can learn to segment without pausing between sounds and then utilize this important skill in subsequent sounding-out activities.

The tasks of blending and segmenting words do the following:

- Show students that words are composed of discrete sounds (i.e., teach phonemic awareness skills).
- Provide practice in saying sounds before the letter–sound correspondences are introduced. This practice is particularly important for difficult-to-say sounds such as “th.”
- Prepare students for later sounding-out exercises that require blending (saying sounds without pausing between them).

Because auditory skills do not require knowledge of letter–sound correspondence and do not require students to look at written letters (graphemes) or words, instruction on these skills can begin on the first day of instruction, before any letter–sound correspondences have been introduced. Blending sounds to form a word is the easier skill and should be introduced first. Segmenting a word into sounds can be introduced when students are able to blend a group of words with no errors. This is usually within several days. These auditory tasks should be continued for the first few months of instruction. Four to six words should be included in each exercise. As a general rule, auditory exercises should include words and sounds that students will be asked to decode in the near future.

Blending Sounds

Blending requires a student to translate a series of blended sounds into words said at a normal rate. When sounding out a written word, students will hold each continuous sound for 1 to 2 seconds, thus producing a series of sounds (“mmaaann”). Then the student will have to telescope this series of sounds into a word pronounced at a normal rate (“man”). A format for teaching blending appears in Table 6.1. The teacher says a word slowly, pauses an instant, and then says, “What word?” The students reply by saying the word at a normal rate. After the teacher firms the group on all words in the set, (*firming* means the teacher has the group respond in unison until the group responds without an error on all words in a row), the teacher gives individual turns to several children.

CORRECTING MISTAKES Students may make three types of mistakes when blending sounds to form a word: saying the word slowly (imitating the teacher), leaving out a sound (the teacher says “ss-saaat,” but the child leaves off the final consonant, saying “saa”), and mispronouncing a sound (the teacher says “ssseeelll,” but the student says “sill”). The correction procedure, which is the same for all types of mistakes, consists of the teacher’s (1) modeling the correct response, (2) leading the students by responding with them, (3) testing the students on the missed word, and (4) returning to the first word in the format.

Here is a typical correction sequence in which the teacher is presenting the words *if*, *sat*, *Sid*, *am*, and *fit*:

- Teacher says, “Sssiiiiid.” Student says “sad” instead of “Sid.”
- Teacher says correct answer, “Sid.”
- Teacher models entire task: “My turn. (Pause.) Sssiiiiid. What word? “Sid.”
- Teacher leads—teacher and student respond together: “Do it with me. Sssiiiiid.” What word? (Signal.) “Sid.” (Teacher says, “Sid” with the students.)
- Teacher tests—only students respond. Your turn. (Pause.) “Sssiiiiid.” What word? (Signal.) “Sid.”
- Teacher returns to first word in format: Let’s see if we can do all the words without making any errors.

Usually one or two students in a group will make an error, and the rest of the students will

TABLE 6.1 Format for Blending Sounds

Teacher	Students
1. (Teacher gives instructions.) “Listen. We’re going to play a say-the-word game. I’ll say a word slowly, then you say the word fast.”	
2. (Teacher says the word slowly, then students say it fast.) “Listen.” (Pause.) “iiiiffff. What word?” (Signal.)	“If.”
3. Teacher repeats step 2 with four more words: <i>sat</i> , <i>Sid</i> , <i>am</i> , <i>fit</i> .	
4. Teacher repeats the set of words until students can respond correctly to all the words, making no errors.	
5. Teacher gives individual turns to several students.	

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respond correctly. Teachers should occasionally begin the correction procedure by praising a student who responded correctly (e.g., “Good answer, Tommy”). This praise will demonstrate to students that the teacher places importance on correct responding. Teachers should not be negative with students who make errors. Praising a student who got the answer right keeps the lesson positive and motivates other students. The teacher should not generally single out the students who made errors but should present correction to the entire group, having all the students respond. When presenting individual turns at the end of the format, the teacher should test a student on any word the student missed during the exercise.

Segmenting a Word

Segmenting a word format (see Table 6.2) teaches students to say a word slowly, holding each continuous sound for about 1½ seconds, and switching from sound to sound without pausing. The teacher presents a set of four words. For each word, the teacher first models saying the word slowly, sound by sound, without pausing. The students then say the word slowly, switching from sound to sound without pausing as the teacher signals. The teacher repeats each word in the exercise until the students

can say the word slowly without pausing or stopping two times in a row.

CORRECTING ERRORS Students can make three types of mistakes in segmenting a word: (1) not saying a sound correctly, (2) pausing between sounds, or (3) not switching sounds when the teacher signals for the students to say the next sound. The correction procedure for any of these errors includes these steps:

1. Stop the students as soon as you hear the wrong response and say the correct sound (or tell the student the problem if he or she paused or did not follow the signal).
2. Model the correct response.
3. Lead the students in making the response.
4. Test the students.
5. Return to the beginning of the exercise.

Here is a typical correction sequence where the teacher is presenting the words *am*, *not*, *rug*, and *sad*:

- Error when segmenting “Nnnnooot”; a student says “Nnnuuu.”
- Teacher stops the students as soon as she hears “uuu.”
- Teacher says correct sound, “Oooooo.”

TABLE 6.2 Format for Segmenting

Teacher	Students
1. “We’re going to say words slowly.”	
2. “First word: sad . I’ll say it slowly. Listen. (Pause.) Ssssaaaddd. You say it slowly. Get ready.” (Teacher signals each time students are to switch to the next sound.) “Again, Get Ready.” (Signal.)	“Ssssaaaddd.” “Ssssaaaddd.”
3. Teacher repeats procedure in step 2 with 3 more words. “Next word: me . I’ll say it slowly. Listen. (Pause.) Mmmmeee. You say it slowly. Get ready.” (Signal.) “Again, Get Ready.” (Signal.) “Next word: mom . I’ll say it slowly. Listen. (Pause.) Mmmmoomm. You say it slowly. Get ready.” (Signal.) “Again, Get Ready.” (Signal.) “Next word: fit . I’ll say it slowly. Listen. (Pause.) Ffffiittt. You say it slowly. Get ready.” (Signal.) “Again, Get Ready.” (Signal.)	“Mmmmeee.” “Mmmmeee.” “Mmmmoomm.” “Mmmmoomm.” “Ffffiittt.” “Ffffiittt.”
4. Teacher repeats the set of words until students can say every word slowly, making no errors.	
5. Teacher gives individual turns to several students.	

- Teacher models (emphasizing the sound the student said incorrectly): “My turn. Nnnoot.”
- Teacher leads: “Listen. Nnnoot. Say it with me. Get ready. (Signal.) Nnnoot.” (Teacher says “Nnnoot” with students “Again. Get ready.” (Signal.) Nnoot.
- Teacher tests: “Your turn. Listen. Nnnoot. Say it slowly. Get ready.” (Signal.) Nnnoot.
- Teacher returns to first word in task (*am*).

The correction procedure for students pausing between sounds is basically the same as for mispronounced words except that the teacher does not have to say a missed sound. The teacher tells the students not to stop between sounds. The teacher then models, leads, tests, and returns to the first word of the exercise. The teacher leads the students until it appears that the students have responded twice in a row correctly, then goes on to the test step.

The correction procedure for students failing to switch sounds when the teacher signals would begin with the teacher praising students who followed the signal, then modeling, leading, and testing, as previously shown.

Segmenting and Blending

The two auditory skills segmenting and blending are combined in a single format in Table 6.3. This format can be introduced when students are able on

the first trial to respond correctly to all the words in a segmenting format without making any errors. In this new format the teacher says the word slowly, then the students say the word slowly (rrrramm), then say it at a normal rate (ram).

CRITICAL BEHAVIORS—SAYING THE WORD SLOWLY

When saying a word slowly in an auditory-skills format, the teacher (1) says each continuous sound for about 1½ seconds, (2) does not pause between sounds, and (3) is careful not to distort any sound. When saying the final consonant of a word, the teacher must be careful not to add an “uh” sound but to say the word *sad* as “sssaad,” not “sssaaduh.” Similarly, teachers must be careful not to add an “uh” sound to words that begin with stop sounds (*b, c, d, g, h, j, k, p, q, t*). In modeling a word that begins with a stop sound, the teacher pronounces a word such as *pin* by combining the /p/ and /i/ sounds and then elongating the /i/ sound, pronouncing *pin* as “piiiiinnnn,” not as “puhiiiiinnnn.”

Note that in all three formats, the teacher is directed to pause before saying a word slowly (segmenting a word). The pause should be just for an instant. The purpose of the pause is to ensure that the students hear the word as a distinct unit.

SIGNALING Blending and segmenting tasks are among the first tasks presented to students at the beginning of the school year. When presenting the first

TABLE 6.3 Segmenting and Blending—Combined Format

Teacher	Students
1. “First you’ll say a word slowly, then you’ll say it fast.”	
2. “Listen.” (Pause.) “Rrrraannn. Say it slowly. Get ready.” (Teacher signals each time students are to switch to the next sound.) “What word?” (Signal.)	“Rrrraannn.”
3. “Listen.” (Pause.) “Sssiiicck. Say it slowly. Get ready.” (Signal.) “What word?” (Signal.)	“Ran.” “Sssiiicck.” “Sick.”
4. “Listen.” (Pause.) “Mmmaaad. Say it slowly. Get ready.” (Signal.) “What word?” (Signal.)	“Mmmaaad.” “Mad.”
5. “Listen.” (Pause.) “Iiiiff. Say it slowly. Get ready.” (Signal.) “What word?” (Signal.)	“Iiiiff.” “If.”
6. Teacher repeats steps 2 through 5 until students are able to respond correctly to all words.	
7. Teacher gives individual turns to several students.	

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blending and segmenting exercises to the students, the teacher is not only teaching the blending and segmenting skills, but is also teaching the students how to respond in unison as members of a group. The teacher must present the signal to respond in a manner that makes it clear to the students exactly when they are to respond and when to listen.

In blending exercises, the teacher begins with his or her hand held up (as someone indicating another person to stop). The teacher signals the students to say the word at a normal rate by moving his or her hand up and down in a quick drumbeat motion. The up-down motion should be done crisply and without hesitation. The students respond on the down motion, just as the teacher's hand hits an imaginary drum. The up-down motion should be done the same way every time. Any hesitation or inconsistency makes a unison responding difficult because the students don't know when to respond.

The signal for segmenting a word begins with the teacher holding up her hand in a fist with the palm facing the teacher. After the teacher says "Get ready," the teacher pauses an instant, then signals the students to respond by holding up his or her index finger for approximately 1½ seconds, then extending a second finger for the second sound, then 1½ seconds later extending a third finger for the third sound. Students should switch from sound to sound each time the teacher extends a finger. When holding up a finger, the teacher's movement is quick so that students know when to start saying the new sound. This signaling procedure is illustrated below. A demonstration of the procedure appears on the Association for Direct Instruction website (www.Adihome.org). The video appears in the movie clips section with the url: http://www.adihome.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=19&Itemid=40.

lift	lift	lift
finger	finger	finger

A slight modification of the signaling procedure is necessary when words begin with stop

sounds (*b, c, d, g, h, j, k, p, q, t*). When a teacher models these words, the teacher says the first two sounds of the word as one unit. For example, when segmenting the word *hat*, the teacher begins by saying "haaa." The teacher says the initial-consonant sound for an instant and then begins the next sound without any pause or distortion.

The signal for words that begin with stop sounds begins with the teacher extending two fingers in quick succession, almost simultaneously, while saying the first two sounds of the word. The teacher holds the vowel slightly longer than usual (about 2 seconds) and then extends a third finger to signal students to say the third sound.

MONITORING STUDENTS' RESPONSES When students respond orally in unison, hearing an incorrect response can be difficult; therefore, the teacher should look at the students' mouths as they make the responses. The position of the students' lips and tongues helps to tell the sounds the students are making. For example, if a student's mouth is open when the student is supposed to be making the /m/ sound, the teacher knows the student is not making a correct response.

The teacher should also watch the students' eyes. The students' eyes should be directed toward the teacher's face. Young children unconsciously watch an adult's mouth movements to learn how to say sounds and words. Students should watch the teacher's mouth as the teacher models. Watching the students' eyes also lets the teacher know if the students are attending to the teacher's signals.

Note that in all three formats, the teacher is directed to pause before saying a word slowly. The purpose of the pause is to ensure that the students hear the word as a distinct unit. The pause should be just for an instant.

PACING When presenting a format the teacher presents several words in a row, pausing no longer than several seconds to make a quick one- or two-word praise comment (e.g., "good," "great") between the student response and the teacher instructions for the next word. After a set of several words, the teacher can spend 5 to 15 seconds praising students.

The concept of presenting a set of words with little extraneous language between each word is an important one. Presenting a set of tasks with no interruption is a very powerful method for keeping students attentive.

The number of words in a set and the relative intensity of teacher praise depend on the difficulty the students have with the formats. The less difficulty students have, the more words should be included in a set and the less effusive the praise.

INDIVIDUAL TURNS As a general rule, when a blending or segmenting format is presented, the teacher has the students respond in unison until the teacher is fairly certain all students can respond correctly to all the words. Individual turns are then given.

The main purpose of individual turns is to make a final check to see whether students are able to respond correctly. During the first week of instruction, an individual turn may be given to most students. Later, fewer individual turns are needed. The teacher may give an individual turn to each weaker student, but just to one or two stronger students. The purpose of giving individual turns to higher performers is not only to monitor their performance but also to ensure that the teacher does not inadvertently stigmatize some students as lower performers by always calling on just them for individual turns.

If a student makes an error on an individual turn, the teacher should direct the correction to the whole group, present the individual turn again to the student who made the error, and again present it as a delayed test at the end of individual turns. If the student makes an error on the delayed test, the teacher should assume that the child needs reteaching on the entire set of words prior to the next lesson. If several children in a group make an error on an individual turn, the teacher should assume that the entire group needs reteaching on the entire set of words. The teacher should present the entire exercise again later in the lesson.

SELECTING EXAMPLES Blending and segmenting exercises are done with a set of four to five words. Initial blending and segmenting should only include words made up of two and three sounds and begin with continuous sounds. More difficult types of

words are presented in auditory tasks a week or so before that type is introduced in word-reading exercises.

The teacher must make certain a set of words is not too predictable because a predictable set may cause the students to anticipate words and not attend carefully to what the teacher says. For example, if the same vowel appears in all words, the words form a predictable order; the students may then respond according to the pattern rather than to what the teacher says. If the teacher presented the set *Sam, lap, rat, and man*, the students might start anticipating that all words have the /a/ sound.

To avoid creating a predictable list, the teacher should construct a list in which the same letter does not appear in the same position in more than two consecutive words.

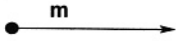


Rhyming

Rhyming is an important phonological awareness skill because it (1) prepares students to see the relationship between letter clusters that represent the same sounds in different words, such as *fan, pan, tan, and man*, and (2) prepares students for sounding out words that begin with stop sounds. Rhyming can be introduced when the students have mastered the combined segmenting and blending format with two and three sound words that begin with continuous sounds and know about ten letter-sound correspondences.

In the rhyming format (see Table 6.4), the students start with an initial sound (an onset) and then blend on a syllable that begins with a vowel (the rime). For example, the onset sound *m* is blended with the rime *at* to form the word *mat*. In presenting the format, the teacher writes several letters on the board (e.g., *m, r, s*). On the first days of presenting the format the teacher models rhyming by saying a series of rhyming words, beginning with those letters (e.g., *mat, rat, sat*). After modeling, the teacher then has the students rhyme while responding in unison. Over the first weeks that rhyming is presented, the letters written on the board should have continuous sounds. After the students can correctly do the rhyming tasks with continuous sounds, words that begin with stop sounds can be included. For example, a set might include these words: *fill, hill, pill, mill*.

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TABLE 6.4 Rhyming Format

Teacher	Students
(Teacher writes on board:)	
	
	
	
1. "Listen. I'm going to rhyme with (Pause.) at . What am I going to rhyme with?" (Signal.)	"At."
2. (Teacher models: (Teacher puts finger on ball of first arrow and says: "My turn: Rhymes with at ." (After a 1-second pause, teacher moves finger rapidly across arrow and says:) " Mat ."	
3. (Teacher repeats step 2 with remaining arrows.)	
4. (Teacher tests: (Teacher puts finger on ball of first arrow and says: You're going to rhyme with at . What are you going to rhyme with? (Signal.) Rhymes with at . (After a 1-second pause, teacher moves finger quickly across arrow.)	"At." "Mat."
5. (Teacher repeats step 4 with remaining arrows.)	
6. (Teacher gives individual turns to several students.)	

The correction procedure follows these steps, where the teacher is presenting a task in which the students rhyme the rime *at* with the letters *r*, *m*, and *s*. On the task in which the teacher signals the students to begin with "m" and rhyme with "at," a student says "mit," so the teacher corrects as follows:

- Teacher says the correct answer, "Mat."
- Teacher models: "My turn. Rhymes with at. (Signal.) Mat."
- Teacher leads: "Let's do it together. Rhymes with at. (Signal.) Mat." (Teacher responds with the students.)
- Teacher tests: "Your turn. Rhymes with at. (Signal.) Mat."
- Teacher returns to first letter in the list.

COMMERCIAL PROGRAMS

Many commercial reading programs teach phonemic awareness skills in a manner that is likely to be problematic for a struggling reader or an at-risk child who enters kindergarten or first grade with

little literacy-related knowledge. The following are common problems:

- There is not sufficient emphasis on blending and segmenting. Blending and segmenting are not taught in consecutive lessons. Therefore, there is not adequate practice for students to develop mastery.
- A wide variety of phonemic awareness tasks are taught within a short lesson span. The introduction of too many different kinds of tasks over a short period can be overwhelming.
- The teaching demonstrations for phonemic awareness tasks tend to be wordy and potentially confusing for instructionally naive students. For example, a typical task taken from a popular reading program directs the teacher to tell the students that the teacher will describe a turkey. The teacher then tells the students that if the word that describes the turkey begins with the same sound as the word *turkey*, they should lift the letter *t* and trace the letter in the air. The teacher's guide presents the sentence,

"Is it a tall turkey?" emphasizing the words *tall* and *turkey*. Then, using the same sentence form, the teacher substitutes the following words for *tall*: *tired*, *muddy*, *terrible*, *tough*, *little*, and *tiny*. The activity concludes with the teacher writing on the board all the words that begin with *t*. The teacher reads each word, then asks a student to circle the *t* at the beginning of the word. This activity is potentially confusing for an instructionally naive child because of all the extraneous language. The task could be simplified by just saying two words and asking if the words begin with the same sound.

- The tasks are not highly interactive, and they infrequently require student responses. Some tasks instruct the teacher to just call on individual students to respond. There is not clear direction to teachers to ensure that all children have mastered the task.

Solution

The problems of inadequate emphasis on blending and segmenting and teaching demonstrations for skills that are not clear can be dealt with by incorporating the blending and segmenting formats in this chapter into daily lessons. Blending and segmenting should be taught daily until the students can do these tasks with no errors, and then be systematically reviewed. Early tasks should be done with short two- and three-sound words. Words with more sounds should be introduced gradually.

Teachers should be prepared to modify complex tasks by eliminating complex language that students may not know and by teaching component skills. For example, a worksheet task might have pictures of a frog, a hat, and a rug and instructions for the teacher to say "Circle the words that have the same last sound as the word *dog*." Teachers should not assume that students understand what is meant by the term *last* (or *first* or *middle*). Nor should they assume that students understand the meaning of the word *same* or that students can extract a sound from a word. The teacher should be prepared to present exercises designed to teach the prerequisite skills and knowledge. A good deal of teaching may be necessary for students to be able to successfully circle

words that end with the same sound as a given word. The teacher might first have to teach the students to identify the individual sounds in a word that was said at a normal rate (the more difficult type of segmenting) and then teach the students to identify the last sound in a word and also teach the concept of same.

The teacher models and tests students on several words and then presents several words without modeling the answers first. The exercise is continued daily until the students can respond correctly to four words presented without a teacher model.

Wording for Teaching Segmenting

Teacher	Students
• "My turn. I'll say the sounds in mud."	
• "The first sound in mud is /mm/."	
• "The middle sound is /üü/."	
• "The last sound is /d/."	
• "Your turn. Say mud."	
• "Get ready." (Signal.)	"mud."
• "What's the first sound?" (Signal.)	"Mm."
• "What's the middle sound?" (Signal.)	"uu."
• "What's the last sound?" (Signal.)	"d."

The teacher models and tests students on several words and then presents several words without modeling the answers first. The exercise is continued daily until the students can respond correctly to four words presented without a teacher model.

Wording for Identifying the Last Sound in a Word

Teacher	Students
• "My turn. I'll say the last sounds in some words."	
• "Listen. Rat. The last sound in rat is /t/."	
• "Listen. Sam. The last sound in Sam is /m/."	
• "Listen. Fill. The last sound in fill is /l/."	
• "Your turn. Rat. What's the last sound in rat? (Signal.)	"t"
• "Your turn. Sam. What's the last sound in Sam?" (Signal.)	"m"
• "Your turn. Fill. What's the last sound in fill?" (Signal.)	"l"

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The teacher models and tests students on sets of sounds and then presents several sets without modeling the answers first. The exercise is continued daily until the students can respond correctly to four words presented without a teacher model.

- "Listen. ffff mmmm. Tell me about those sounds."
- "Listen. ffff ffff. Tell me about those sounds."
- "Listen. rrrr rrrr. Tell me about those sounds."
- "Listen. rrrr mmmm. Tell me about those sounds."

Wording for Determining Whether Sounds Are the Same

- "I'll say sounds and tell you if they are the same or not the same."
- "Listen. mmm mmmm. Those sounds are the same."
- "Listen. rrrrrr rrrrrrrr. Those sounds are the same."
- "Listen. mmm rrrr. Those sounds are not the same."
- "Listen. ffff mmmm. Those sounds are not the same."
- "I'll say sounds. You tell me same or not same."

These preskill exercises give the teacher a means to make a correction if a student makes an error on a workbook exercise in which he or she is to circle words that end with the same sound.

Again, we caution teachers on not spending excessive time on complex phonemic awareness exercises. Once the students have mastered oral blending and segmenting, we recommend a focus on teaching students to sound out words rather than spending excessive time on phonemic awareness tasks. This focus on word reading is particularly important for students who enter first grade unable to sound out words.

Application Exercises

1. The teacher is presenting the format for blending a word. Specify all the steps in the correction procedure for the following error. Tell what the teacher says and does.

Teacher says "mmmuud. What word?" Student says "mad."

2. The teacher is presenting the format for segmenting a word. Specify all the steps in the correction procedure for the following errors.

Teacher says "fffiit. Say it slowly." Student says "fff (pauses) iiiiit."

3. Classify each of the following words under the appropriate heading below.

mud	hid	fled	ramp
stamp	ran	Sid	frog
cop	slid	hot	fit
best	stink	ten	strap
runt	lid	splint	

- (a) VC and CVC words that begin with continuous sound:
 - (b) CVC words that begin with stop sound:
 - (c) CVCC and VCC words:
 - (d) CCVC words:
 - (e) CCVCC, CCCVC, and CCCVCC words:
4. Identifying words students will not be able to decode is an important teaching skill. Assume that students know the most common sound of each individual letter. Circle any single letter the student will not be able to decode, which means the word itself is probably not decodable. For example, the letter *g* in *gin* would be circled because *g* is not representing its most common sound.

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chest	lamp	rub
bent	ten	find
cent	bath	fit
son	rust	slim
rob	camp	limp
was	mend	pen

5. The teacher is selecting words to use in teaching the segmenting format during the first week of instruction. Examine each list of words and indicate by writing *A* (for acceptable) or *U* (for unacceptable) whether the teacher followed the example selection guidelines for segmenting. If the teacher did not follow the guidelines, specify the violations.

List A	List B	List C
brat	mud	mad
ham	sad	if
sit	lid	sit
fun	mad	Sam
last		
