

Note #3, to Teachers Teaching Kindergarten Children in Reading Mastery

The Greatest Teaching Program Ever

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The Subject: a further refinement of decoding words in [lessons 40-60](#), with the use of stop sounds. Decoding had started in earnest in lesson 28, with some small lead-ups starting in lesson 18. This has accumulated 15 words with 8 letters by lesson 40. This is a good start in getting decoding going.

Lesson 40 is a landmark because of how the auditory, or phonemic awareness, exercises have been dropped. Any further phonemic awareness development will come as a result of the advance of decoding skills. The awareness and use of phonemes remains a sustaining, but hidden, support of reading. It's always there.

So, what's the deal about stop, or fast, sounds? The kids know about some fast sounds when they come at the end of a word. (Letter d in lessons 27 - 30, letter t in lessons 41-43) That's easy. At the beginning of a word is a different story. Including fast sounds with the smooth sounding out sounds can be tricky. There is definitely a trick to it. It is rarely taught in phonics programs as a separate skill. Therefore, kids can have trouble with it. When sounding out with pauses is used, you get what is called a swah sound. /tah/ /i/ /mah/ or /bah/ /a/ /gah/.

How do you get rid of the swah?

The answer is easy if decoding is taught without pauses. (daa.) But not so easy for many kids, as you know. It's definitely something different.

Mostly, phonic programs teach decoding with pauses. This is, reportedly, done to avoid a sounding out strategy that includes the swah sound. Kids have lots of difficulty "inducing the word from the letters" with this decoding strategy. (Marilyn Adams) This means they can't jump from this kind of sounding out to blend them into a word. It's a leap. If it is not done right, kids have difficulty seeing the results as a word, a word that they know.

The quote is from Marilyn Adams who has done a lot of writing on this subject. Her solution is to first teach the harder phonemic awareness tasks with pauses so children can make the blend from letters to words with pauses. This seems to work, if enough prior training in various phonemic awareness tasks are given. It typically takes all of kindergarten to train for this kind of approach. (See her program) Even then the leap or blend from letters with pauses to complete words is still rough, unclear and time consuming to learn.

Why no one came up with the simpler solution of continuous sounds for sounding-out, to avoid the swah sound, is a puzzle. Engelmann had come up with it years before the scientist got into the question. Some researchers did get into it later on, but not for phonemic awareness, just decoding. I do think that most phonics teaching programs still teaches the sounding out with pauses. It was included in the National Reading Panel Report (NRP) of 2000. It's a practice that has continued, even by those who teach phonics.

Engelmann's continuous sounding out does have a hitch to it, though. It doesn't include fast sounds for many lessons up to lesson 58. This is a big deal. Trying to sound out words that start with fast sounds doesn't work, ddddoooog. A new trick must be added to the slow, smooth sounding out. Reading words that begin with a stop sound doesn't start in the Reading Vocabulary lists until lesson 58, with the word **can**. A lot needs to be done to build up to this point, mostly between 30 and 60.

Engelmann uses the onset-rhyme technique to accomplish this. But this is a different skill from decoding. So, he begins teaching it very early, from a very small completely oral version in lesson 16. This then is built up very gradually over 40 lessons, from 16-26, from 26-36, from 36-38, from 43-58.

I found the oral skill very hard to teach in lesson 16. At the start, I could never figure out why it was being taught. As you all may remember, lesson 16 first teaches onset-rhyme in "Say it Fast Rhyming" as a completely oral exercise. A slow sounding printed letter is seen in the onset, "Rhyming with beginning letters" in lesson 26. A printed fast sounding letter for onsets is in lessons 36-38. The fully spelled out onset and rhyme, "Reading Vocabulary Rhyming" with words beginning with slow sounds, on lesson 37, with fast sounding beginning letters in lesson 43, all spelled out. Finally the whole word, **can, is spelled out with the fast sound c** inserted in the Reading Vocabulary list of lesson 58.

But, look how it gets there?

It starts in lesson 16 as an oral rhyming task that is tricky to teach. For one thing, the kids have no idea why you are teaching this. It's not a rhyme to them. It's not reading. It has no letters. And in teaching it, you must follow the scripts perfectly. No going off script here. In lesson 16, p. 106 there is a whole page of it with three words, mmmat, zzzzoo, rrrrun.

"First I'll say mmmm. Then I'll say at. Here I go, mmmmat."

"First I'll say zzzz. Then I'll say oo. Here I go, zzzzzzoo."

"First I'll say rrrr. Then I'll say un. Here I go, rrrrrun."

(you fill in the details)

Of course in addition to saying the right words in the script, you have to remember exactly how many times to repeat for tasks 10,11,12 in the script.

-My turn: repeat directions twice before demonstrating.

-With me: say directions once before saying it with group. (Repeat until firm)

-Your turn: say directions once. Get ready. Hold up fingers. (Repeat until firm)

Tasks 13 and 14, repeated with the words zoo and run, are even harder, I think.
-Your turn: give direction once

and then ask, what are you going to say first? what are you going to say next?

Repeat directions. Get ready. Repeat again. Get ready.

Asking the question is the tricky part. They have to remember. Sometime I got no answers. I had to repeat the directions, maybe repeat the demonstration. It took lots of practice on my part for it to get smooth. It is cool when it is smooth.

Beginning on lesson 26, it is taught with a printed slow sound letter for 10 lessons. And then Engelman sneaks in the stop sound d in lesson 36, in print (rim and dim) for just the onset. This is only done for three lessons, 36, 37, 38, while the full rhymes begin to be spelled out in lesson 37. The stop sounds don't show up again in these spelled out rhymes until lesson 43 with im and dim, again, but spelled out in both onset and rhyme. This continues to lesson 58, where the word **can** is inserted in the list of Reading Vocabulary Words.

This is all done in step by step fashion as usual. The progression of teaching words with beginning stop sounds takes that long. As you know, It's a major skill that must be molded into the sounding out decoding strategy.

Lessons 36-38 are unique.

My favorite lesson, though, in this progression, is lesson 36, the first time rhyming with a printed stop sound. (First rhyme the letter r with im for rrrrrim, then rhyme the letter d with im for dim.)

I love how it is done. The stop sound d is inserted without warning.

"You're going to start with this sound (Slash d) and rhyme with (pause) im".

(Repeated three more times, each time a little differently, **until firm**.) Don't name the letter or say its sound. Just point and say "You're going to start with this sound..... "First you'll say this sound...Tell me the sound?.... Again, tell me the sound?...." "Get ready".

I pause and go off script some right there and look at their faces when they discover that it wouldn't work the same way with the letter d as with the letter r. I let them stare and think a little, to see who can figure it out. I sometimes say, "This is a little different. It's a fast sound. Who can do it?") Some do. With great surprise in their faces. With the low group I usually have to eventually demonstrate this, to call attention to this "fast" sound. (I have been told by Ziggy, in person, that going off script some is ok after having taught the scripts for at least two years.)

This is a really good way to teach words that begin with fast/stop sounds. It isolates the skill with onset/rhyme first and then transfers to the full word. Always the steps are within reach, so it's smooth, if done right.

When a word with a fast sound is in the Vocabulary list, I usually insert into the script the following,

"This letter is a fast sound."(touch)

“Remember, with a fast sound, we say it (touch) and go to the next sound fast.

“Say the next sound.”(touch)

“Good, Now get ready to say the fast sound (touch) and go to the next sound fast. (slash)

(touch beginning) “Ready”, (pause/ slash). “Wow, you did it.”

Or something like that. Did anyone have that same experience, or did your group cruise on through, without a hitch? The scripts assume that this would happen. The group will get it on cue. I never had it happen that way. They usually all looked stumped.

Of course I always taught the low group. The top group probably never has a problem here. That’s why I always required training teachers with the low groups at some point. (Maybe not at the start). I always tell the story on Stephani Walker who tried to get away with only working with the top group when she first was principle. A person can develop a lot of bad habits that way.

I think it’s possible for a top group to skip all the onset/rhyme exercises from lesson 16 and, lesson 58, just say: “Oh, this first letter is a fast sound. We have to do this a little differently. We have to say it fast and go to the next sound fast to finish sounding out the word. Say the first sound fast. Good. Now say it again fast and go to the next sound fast.” I’m not suggesting to do this. It would be risky. It’s to illustrate that some kids get all of this very quickly.

By lesson 60 the Reading Vocabulary list has grown to 59 words, 44 new words with 5 new or 13 total letter or letter groups. (Only t and d stop sounds)This is a much faster pace, even with the stop sounds. It will increase a little more in lessons 60 to 80, once fast sounds are included in the vocabulary list. It grows with 47 new words and 109 total with 19 letter or letter groups in the next twenty lessons. The pace really picks up after this to get to almost 400 in the same number of lessons. The firm foundation from lessons 1 through 60 makes this possible. If those lessons are not taught to mastery, some kids will have difficulty keeping up to this increased pace.

It seems like in every 20 lessons its necessary to learn a new trick in...

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For a readable overview on how to and why teach all kindergarteners to read, tap on this link [Teaching all children to read](#).

Or, for those interested in pursuing this subject in more detail, [Where Research has Failed. Parts I-III](#)

Both on my website: arthurreadingworkshop.com
With related materials on Reading Mastery K.