



Foundational Literacy Glossary of Terms



Foundational Literacy Glossary of Terms

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| Accuracy | The ability to recognize words correctly. |
| Advanced Phonics | Strategies for decoding multisyllabic words that include morphology and information about the meaning, pronunciation, and parts of speech of words gained from knowledge of prefixes, roots, and suffixes. |
| Affixes | Affixes are word parts that are "fixed to" either the beginnings of words (prefixes) or the endings of words (suffixes). The word disrespectful has two affixes, a prefix (dis-) and a suffix (-ful). |
| Alphabetic Awareness | Knowledge of letters of the alphabet coupled with the understanding that the alphabet represents the sounds of spoken language and the correspondence of spoken sounds to written language. |
| Alphabetic Code | Sound-symbol relationships to recognize words |
| Alphabetic Principle | The concept that letters and letter combinations represent individual phonemes in written words. |
| Alphabetic Understanding | Understanding that the left-to-right spellings of printed words represent their phonemes from first to last. |
| Automaticity | The ability to translate letters-to-sounds-to-words fluently, effortlessly. With practice and good instruction, students become automatic at word recognition, that is, retrieving words from memory, and are able to focus attention on constructing meaning from the text, rather than decoding. |
| Base Word | Base words are words that can stand on their own. In the absence of any affixes, a base word is still a "real" word. A base word is also called a free morpheme. |
| Blend | A blend is a consonant sequence before or after a vowel within a syllable, such as cl, br, or st; it is the written language equivalent of consonant cluster. |
| Blending Chunking | The task of combining sounds rapidly, to accurately represent the word. A decoding strategy for breaking words into smaller, more manageable parts (e.g., /yes /ter/ day). |

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| Comprehension | Understanding what one is reading, making meaning from reading. |
| Consonant Blend | Two or more consecutive consonants which retain their individual sounds (e.g., /bl/ in block; /str/ in string). |
| Consonant Digraph | Two consecutive consonants that represent one phoneme, or sound (e.g., /ch/, /sh/). |
| Continuous Sound | A sound that can be prolonged (stretched out) without distortion (e.g., r, s, a, m). |
| Context Clues | Context clues are sources of information outside of words that readers may use to predict the identities and meanings of unknown words. Context clues may be drawn from the immediate sentence containing the word, from text already read, from pictures accompanying the text, or from definitions, restatements, examples, or descriptions in the text. |
| Continuum of Word Types | <p>Words can be classified by type according to their relative difficulty to decode. Typically this continuum is listed from easy to difficult, beginning with VC and CVC words that begin with continuous sounds and progressing to CCCVC and CCCVCC words.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •CCVC words: Word pattern that begin with a consonant blend: flat •CVC words: Word pattern that begin with consonants and have one vowel; easily decoded: red. •CVCe words: Word pattern that begin with consonants and have a long vowel due to a silent e at the end of the word: cake. •CVVC words: Word pattern that begin with consonants but have two vowels so that the first vowel is long: read. |
| Decodable Text | Text in which a high proportion of words (80%-90%) comprise sound-symbol relationships that have already been taught. It is used for the purpose of providing practice with specific decoding skills and is a bridge between learning phonics and the application of phonics in independent reading. |
| Decodable Words | These words contain phonic elements that were previously taught. |
| Decoding | The process of using letter-sound correspondences to recognize words. |
| Derivational Affix | A prefix or suffix added to a root or base to form another word (e.g., -un in unhappy , -ness in likeness). |

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| Digraph | A combination of two letters representing one sound, as in ey, sh, ch, th, ea, ph. |
| Diphthong | A sound made by combining two vowels, specifically when it starts as one vowel sound and goes to another: oi, ou, ie. |
| Elkonin Boxes | A tool used during phonemic awareness instruction. Elkonin Boxes are sometimes referred to as Sound Boxes. Students push a marker into one box as they segment each sound in the word. |
| Etymology | The origin of a word and the historical development of its meaning (e.g., the origin of our word etymology comes from late Middle English: from Old French ethimologie, via Latin from Greek etumologia, from etumologos 'student of etymology,' from etumon, neuter singular of etumos 'true'). |
| Fluency | Fluency is the ability to read a text accurately, quickly, and with proper expression and comprehension. Because fluent readers do not have to concentrate on decoding words, they can focus their attention on what the text means. |
| Grapheme | The individual letter or sequence of written symbols (e.g., a, b, c) and the multi-letter units (e.g., ch, sh, th) that are used to represent a single phoneme. |
| High Frequency Irregular Words | Words in print containing letters that stray from the most common sound pronunciation because they do not follow common phonic patterns (e.g., were, was, laugh, been). |
| High Frequency Words | A small group of words (300-500) that account for a large percentage of the words in print and can be regular or irregular words (i.e., Dolch or Fry). Often, they are referred to as "sight words" since automatic recognition of these words is required for fluent reading. |
| Heteronym | Words that are spelled the same, pronounced differently, and have different meanings (e.g., sow-pig & sow-give or close-shut & close-near). |
| Homograph | Words that are spelled the same but have different origins and meanings. They may or may not be pronounced the same (e.g., can as in a metal container/can as in able to). |
| Homonym | Words that sound the same but are spelled differently (e.g., cents/sense, knight/night). |

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| Homophone | Words that may or may not be spelled alike but are pronounced the same. These words are of different origins and have different meanings (e.g., ate and eight; scale as in the covering of a fish; and scale as in a device used to weigh things). |
| Inflectional Suffix | In English, a suffix that expresses plurality or possession when added to a noun, tense when added to a verb, and comparison when added to an adjective and some adverbs. A major difference between inflectional and derivational morphemes is that inflections added to verbs, nouns, or adjectives do not change the grammatical role or part of speech of the base words (-s, -es, -ing, -ed). |
| Invented Spelling | An attempt to spell a word based on a student's knowledge of the spelling system and how it works (e.g., kt for cat). |
| Letter Combinations | Also referred to as digraphs, a group of consecutive letters that represents a particular sound(s) in the majority of words in which it appears (e.g., /ai/ in maid; /ch/ in chair; /ar/ in car; /kn/ in know; /ng/ in ring). |
| Letter-sound Correspondence | The matching of an oral sound (phoneme) to its corresponding letter or group of letters. |
| Morpheme | A morpheme is the smallest meaningful unit of language. A morpheme can be a whole word or a part of a word such as a prefix or suffix. For example, the word ungrateful contains three morphemes: un, grate, and ful. |
| Morphology | The study of the forms of words; meanings of words are determined or inferred by examining their meaningful parts (e.g., prefixes, suffixes, roots, etc.) |
| Multisyllabic Words | Words that are comprised of more than one syllable |
| Oddities | Vowels that are pronounced differently from the expected pronunciation (e.g., the "o" in old is pronounced /ō/ instead of the expected /o/). |
| Onset | These units are smaller than syllables but may be larger than phonemes. An onset is the initial consonant sound of a syllable (the onset of bag is b-; of swim is sw-). |
| Onset-Rime Segmentation | Onset-rime segmentation is separating a word into the onset, the consonant(s) at the start of a syllable, and the rime, the remainder of the syllable. For example, in swift, sw is the onset and ift is the rime. |
| Orthographic Knowledge | Orthographic knowledge is understanding that the sounds in a language are represented by written or printed symbols. |
| Orthography | A writing system for representing language. |

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| Phoneme | Phonemes are the smallest units of sound that change the meanings of spoken words. |
| Phoneme Manipulation | Adding, deleting, and substituting sounds in words (e.g., add /b/ to oat to make boat; delete /p/ in pat to make at; substitute /o/ for /a/ in pat to make pot). |
| Phonemic Awareness | The ability to hear and manipulate the sounds in spoken words and the understanding that spoken words and syllables are made up of sequences of speech sounds. |
| Phonics | Phonics is a form of instruction to cultivate the understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes (the sounds in spoken language) and graphemes, the letters that represent those sounds in written language and that this information can be used to read or decode words. |
| Phonogram | A succession of letters that represent the same phonological unit in different words, such as "igh" in flight, might, tight, sigh, and high. |
| Phonological Awareness | Phonological awareness covers a range of understandings related to the sounds of words and word parts, including identifying and manipulating larger parts of spoken language such as words, syllables, and onsets and rimes. It also includes phonemic awareness as well as other aspects of spoken language such as rhyming and syllabication. |
| Prefix | A morpheme that precedes a root and that contributes to or modifies the meaning of a word as "re" in reprint. |
| Print Awareness | Print awareness is basic knowledge about print and how it is typically organized on a page. For example, print conveys meaning, print is read left to right, and words are separated by spaces. |
| Print Concepts | The ability of a reader to know and recognize the ways in which print "works" for the purposes of reading, particularly with regard to books: directionality, capital letters begin sentences, ending punctuation, etc. |
| Prosody | Reading with expression, proper intonation, and phrasing. This helps readers to sound as if they are speaking the part they are reading. It is also this element of fluency that sets it apart from automaticity. |
| Rate | The speed at which a person reads. |

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| Regular Word | A word in which all the letters represent their most common sounds and can be decoded. |
| Rhyming | Words that have the same ending sound. |
| Rime | The rime is the part of a syllable that contains the vowel and all that follows it (the rime of bag is -ag; of swim is -im). |
| Root | A bound morpheme, usually of Latin origin, that cannot stand alone but is used to form a family of words with related meanings. |
| Schwa | The vowel sound sometimes heard in an unstressed syllable and is most often sounded as /uh/ or as the short /u/ sound as in cup or /a/ in assign. |
| Segmentation | Separating the individual phonemes, or sounds, of a word into discrete units. |
| Sight Words | These are words that are recognized immediately. Sometimes sight words are thought to be irregular, or high frequency words (e.g., the Dolch and Fry lists). However, any word that is recognized automatically is a sight word. These words may be phonetically regular or irregular. |
| Sound to Symbol | Phonics instruction that matches phoneme to grapheme. |
| Spelling Patterns | Refers to digraphs, vowel pairs, word families, and vowel variant spellings. |
| Stop Sounds | A stop sound can only be said for an instant, otherwise its sound will be distorted (i.e., / b/, /c/ /d/, /g/, /h/, /j/, /k/, /p/, /q/, /t/, /x/). Words beginning with stop sounds are more difficult for students to sound out than words beginning with a continuous sound. |
| Structural Analysis | A procedure for teaching students to read words formed with prefixes, suffixes, or other meaningful word parts. |
| Suffix | An affix attached to the end of a base, root, or stem that changes the meaning or grammatical function of the word, as "en" in oxen. |
| Syllable | A syllable is a word part that contains a vowel or, in spoken language, a vowel sound (e-vent, news-pa-per). |
| Syllable Types | There are six syllable types: Closed: cat, cobweb |

Open: he, silo
Vowel-consonant-e (VCE): like, milestone
Consonant-l-e: candle, juggle (second syllable)
R-controlled: star, corner
Vowel pairs: count, rainbow

Syllabication

Syllabication is the act of breaking words into syllables.

Symbol to Sound

Matching grapheme to phoneme.

Synonym

Words that have similar meanings.

Variant Correspondences (vowel variants)

Various corresponding spelling patterns for a specific sound or a variety of spelling patterns for one sound (e.g., long a spelled a, a_e, ai_, _ay).

Vocabulary

Vocabulary refers to the words a reader knows. Listening vocabulary refers to the words a person knows when hearing them in oral speech. Speaking vocabulary refers to the words we use when we speak. Reading vocabulary refers to the words a person knows when seeing them in print. Writing vocabulary refers to the words we use in writing.

Vowel Digraph (Vowel pairs)

Two vowels together that represent one phoneme, or sound (e.g., ea, ai, oa).

Word Attack

Word attack is an aspect of reading instruction that includes intentional strategies for learning to decode, sight read, and recognize written words.

Word Learning Strategies

Strategies students use to learn words such as: decoding, analyzing meaningful parts of words, using analogy, using context clues, using a dictionary (student friendly definitions), glossary, or other resources.

Word Parts

Letters, onsets, rimes, syllables that, when combined, result in words. Word parts include affixes (prefixes and suffixes), base words, and word roots. The ability to recognize various word parts in multisyllabic words is beneficial in decoding unfamiliar words.

Word Study

The act of deliberately investigating words (e.g., vocabulary-building exercises, word-identification practice, and spelling).