

Office of Early Literacy
Shelby County Schools
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A Parent's Guide to Helping Your Child Read at Home



<https://www.scsk12.org/earlyliteracy/parent?PID=1618>



Word-solving strategies--also called word-attack strategies--help children decode, pronounce, and understand unfamiliar words. They help students attack (decode) words by letters, syllables, or meaningful parts.



Purpose

This guide was composed by the Shelby County Schools Early Literacy Department to provide effective, research-based word solving strategies to improve the word reading abilities of elementary students. This guide will successfully support parents with tools and strategies needed to support children's reading development at home.

This guide provides word-solving strategies and tips you can use at home to support your child with reading.

Word Solving Strategies That Can Be Used at Home

Strategy #1: Blending/Sounding out the Word

- Start with the first letter and say each letter-sound out loud. (segmenting)
- Blend the sounds together and try to say the word. Does the word sound right? Does the word make sense in the sentence?

m a p



"/m/"

m a p



"/ă/"

m a p



"/p/"

Strategy #2: Back Track and Read-On

- When children come to an unknown word, they go back to the start of the sentence then re-read, skipping the word and reading on until the end of the sentence.
- This often helps as more information is presented and children can make a contextual 'guess' as to what the word may be.

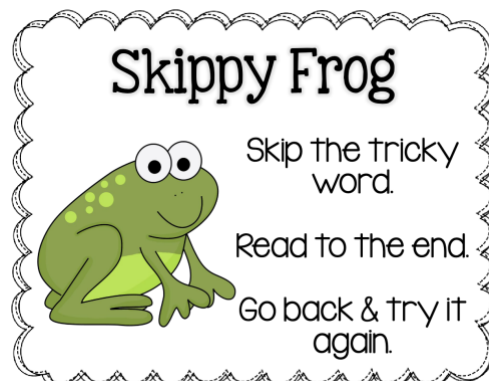
For example: Consider a child reading the following sentence and getting stuck:

The large bird... (unknown word)...

The large bird 'something' up to her nest.

We can see that the extra information provided by reading to the end of the sentence helps establish the missing word as 'flew'.

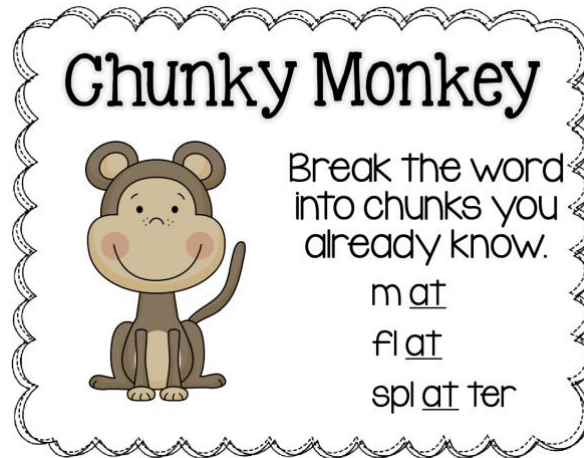
The large bird flew up to her nest.



Strategy #3: Look for Chunks in the Word

Chunks are groups of letters that when put together form a recognizable sound or word. Chunks can be found at the beginning, middle or end of a word.

- Look for familiar letter chunks. They may be sounds (digraphs/consonant clusters), syllables, prefixes, suffixes, endings, whole words, or base words.
- Read each chunk by itself. Then blend the chunks together and sound out the word. Does the word make sense in the sentence?



Strategy #4: Decoding “BIG” Words (syllable types)

Multisyllabic words (words with more than one syllable) can be decoded by using knowledge of the syllable types. There are 6 syllable types, and it is extremely helpful for first graders to at least be exposed to a few. Even kindergartners can learn to divide multi-syllabic words made up of closed syllables!

closed	cup ENDS IN VC	short vowel sound
open	she ENDS IN V	long vowel sound
vce	kite ENDS IN VCE	long vowel sound
vowel team	goat 2 VOWELS TOGETHER	long or new vowel sound
r-controlled	park V+R	changed vowel sound
final stable	bubble C+LE	silent e

What is a syllable and how do you explain it to your child?

A syllable is a part of a word that includes a vowel. If you hold your finger to your chin, every time you say a syllable, you can feel a slight movement.

Below are games you can play with your child at home to help with syllables.

Syllable blending– Clap the syllables to a word and have kids blend the syllables to call out the word.

Clapping – Select items around your home and practice clapping for and saying each syllable in the words.

Omission– Similar to the children's song B-I-N-G-O, think of a word and clap the syllables while saying all but one. Children have to identify the missing syllable. For example, you would clap for each part and say, "te-le-vi-(just clap)," your child would call out "sion", and together you say "television!" To make it trickier, omit syllables in the beginning and middle of the words too: "un-(just clap)- neath" (underneath).

Riddles-Like "I Spy" with an added syllable component. For example, "I spy something in our room that we use to open the door and has 2 syllables (*doorknob*)."

What Parents Can do at Home

- **Phoneme Articulation**

When teaching children to read, modeling the correct letter sounds is critical. Learn how to pronounce the 44 phonemes in the English alphabet by clicking on the video below. Click on the video to watch.



- Help your child learn the letters and sounds of the alphabet. Occasionally point to letters and ask your child to name them and make the sounds.



- Help your child make connections between what he or she might see on a sign or in the newspaper and the letter and sound work he or she is doing in school.



- Encourage your child to write and spell notes, e-mails, and letters using what he knows about sounds and letters.



- Talk with your child about the "irregular" words that she'll often see in what she's reading. These are the words that don't follow the usual letter-sound rules. These words include *said*, *are*, and *was*. Students must learn to recognize them "at sight."



- Consider using computer software that focuses on developing phonics and emergent literacy skills. Some software programs are designed to support children in their writing efforts. For example, some programs encourage kids to construct sentences and then cartoon characters will act out the completed sentence. Other software programs provide practice with long and short vowel sounds and creating compound words.



How To Identify If Your Child Has Decoding Difficulties

- Doesn't know the sounds associated with all of the letters
- Skips words in a sentence and doesn't stop to self-correct
- Can't remember words; sounds out the same word every time it occurs on the page
- Frequently guesses at unknown words rather than sounding them out
- A below average reading level
- Difficulty recognizing words
- A lack of fluency when reading
- Problems understanding what was just read
- Problems connecting what is read to previous knowledge
- Anxiety about reading
- Avoiding reading altogether
- Difficulty with spelling and writing
- Tasks involving reading or writing take an unusually long time to complete
- Easily distracted when reading

References

<https://www.readingrockets.org/helping/target/phonics>

<https://cfsd.chipfalls.k12.wi.us/faculty/ericksjl/WordStrategiesTipsheet1.pdf>

<https://www.tejedastots.com/tricks-for-teaching-syllable-types-and-division/>