

Word Solving Strategies



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Word Solving Strategies

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



Purpose

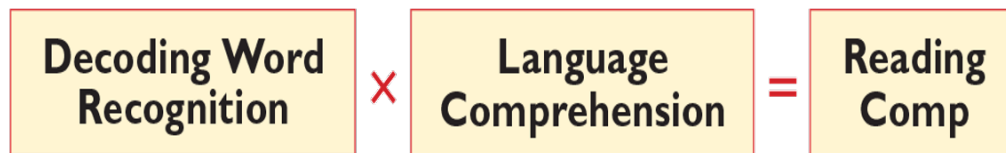
This Word-Solving Strategies Guide was composed by the Shelby County Schools Early Literacy Department to provide a menagerie of effective, research-based word solving strategies to improve the word reading abilities of all students, PreK-12th grade. This guide will successfully support and equip teachers with the tools and strategies needed to help students learn how to orchestrate varied sources of information to word solve with more efficiency and confidence. Arming students with a repertoire of word-solving strategies empowers them to access, read, and comprehend increasingly complex texts across all subjects and grades.

Word Solving Research

- In kindergarten, children are exposed to words that are easily memorized, because there aren't that many of them. However, as the lexicon expands dramatically through elementary school - with approximately 2000 to 3000 new words learned each year (Biemeller, 2003) – this visual memorizing strategy becomes less effective.

- These same children cannot memorize enough words over time, and so their word reading and reading comprehension decline with age (Shaywitz, 2003).
- A child has to decode harder words not visually recognized to link the words to lexical-semantic word memory and their definitions (Biemeller, 2003).

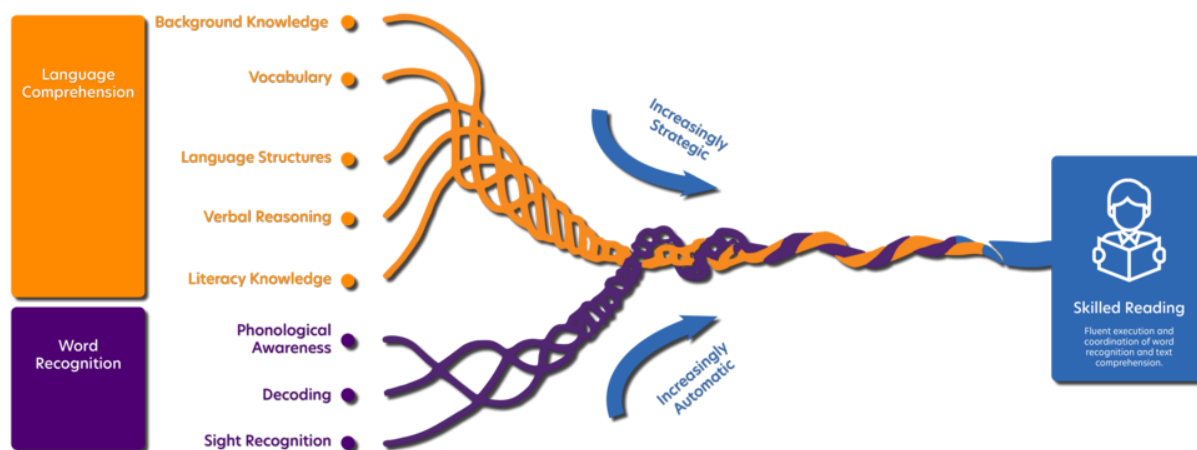
The Simple View of Reading



In order to unlock comprehension of text, two keys are required—**being able to read the words on the page** and **understanding what the words and language mean** within the texts children are reading (Davis, 2006).

If a student **cannot recognize words** on the page accurately and automatically, **fluency will be affected**, and in turn, reading comprehension will suffer. Likewise, if a student has poor understanding of the meaning of the words, reading comprehension will suffer.

Students who have success with reading comprehension are those who are skilled in both **word recognition** and **language comprehension** (Davis, 2006).



Scarborough, Hollis (2001). The Reading Rope: The Many Strands That Are Woven Into Skilled Reading.

Phoneme Articulation

When teaching students to read, modeling the correct letter sounds is critical. Learn how to pronounce the 44 phonemes in the English alphabet.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBuA589kfMg>



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?



Strategy #2: Back Track and Read-On

- When students 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 students 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?



Wonders Alignment

Decoding Strategy Chart

| | |
|--------|--|
| Step 1 | Look for word parts (prefixes) at the beginning of the word. |
| Step 2 | Look for word parts (suffixes) at the end of the word. |
| Step 3 | In the base word, look for familiar spelling patterns. Think about the six syllable-spelling patterns you have learned. |
| Step 4 | Sound out and blend together the word parts. |
| Step 5 | Say the word parts fast. Adjust your pronunciation as needed. Ask yourself: "Is this a word I have heard before?" Then read the word in the sentence and ask: "Does it make sense in this sentence?" |

Reading Big Words Routine

1. **Explain** Tell students you will be teaching them a strategy for decoding long words.

2. **Model** Model the five-step strategy:

Step 1: Look for word parts (prefixes) at the beginning of the word.

[Write the word *rebuilding* on the board. Do not pronounce the word.] *When we come across a word we don't know, the first step is to look at the beginning and check for any word parts we know. These parts are prefixes. [Prompt students to name prefixes they know.] When I look at this word, I see the prefix "re," which I know means "again." So I know how this word begins.*

Step 2: Look for word parts (suffixes) at the end of the word.

Then I look at the end of the word. That's where we might find a suffix. [Review the definition of suffixes as necessary and prompt students to name suffixes they know.] I see the suffix "ing" at the end of this word. I know that part is added to a verb to show an action that is happening now. So I know how the word ends.

Step 3: In the base word, look for familiar spelling patterns. Think about the six syllable-spelling patterns you have learned.

Now I look at what's left. This is called the base word. I check if I know it. In this case, I do: build. If I didn't know it, I would look for spelling patterns that I know and think about the syllable patterns I know to help me decode the word.

Step 4: Sound out and blend together the word.

Now we put the word parts together and blend them. Let's say it together: re-build-ing.

Strategy: #4 Speed Drills

PURPOSE: To build automaticity in skills already learned and practiced to a high level of accuracy.

- Can be used to review and build automaticity in sub-skills
- Should provide practice in skills that have been learned to a high level of accuracy
- Should be short—usually one minute
- Can be accomplished with computer-assisted games
- Students should graph their results and record their progress on specific drills

Example Task: Practice: Prefix Speed Drills

Reader reads for 15 seconds. Coach marks errors. Partners count the number of correct items & multiply by 4 to get words/word parts read per minute.

| | | | | |
|----------|-------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| mis | re | dis | un | pre |
| dis | un | re | pre | mis |
| prepaid | misspell | dislike | untie | replay |
| dislike | replay | untie | prepaid | misspell |
| mistaken | recycle | unpleasant | discover | predisposed |
| discover | predisposed | mistaken | unpleasant | recycle |

Strategy #5: Phrase-Cued Reading

Teaching students to recognize that natural pauses occur in their reading helps build fluency and promote comprehension.

- Use with individual or small groups of students
- Everyone has a copy of the text marked with phrase cues
- Read text aloud to student(s), exaggerating phrases at first
- Have students chorally read the phrase-cued text
- Repeat as needed with marked text
- Practice with unmarked text

Example Task: Phrase-Cued Text Reading

Ask participants to read along with you as you model phrase-cued reading of text (in this case, from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*). As you read aloud, scoop under

each phrase on the slide with a finger or pencil eraser. After demonstration and practice with the whole group, call on an individual to read the same passage with good phrasing.

Alice
was beginning
to get very tired
of sitting
by her sister
on the bank,
and of having nothing
to do:

once or twice
she had peeped
into the book
her sister was reading,
but it had no pictures
or conversations
in it.

Strategy #6: Decoding "BIG" Words (word parts)

Multisyllabic words can be decoded by using knowledge of word parts (e.g., prefixes, suffixes, roots, base words).



Decoding Strategy Chart

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| Step 3 | In the base word, look for familiar spelling patterns. Think about the six syllable-spelling patterns you have learned. |
| Step 4 | Sound out and blend together the word parts. |
| Step 5 | Say the word parts fast. Adjust your pronunciation as needed. Ask yourself: "Is this a word I have heard before?" Then read the word in the sentence and ask: "Does it make sense in this sentence?" |

Follow these steps when decoding a multisyllabic word.

Other Scaffolds

- Locate and underline each **sounded** vowel (do not include silent “e”), noting vowel graphemes.
- **Circle** familiar **prefixes**. (step 1)
- **Box** familiar **suffixes**. (step 2)
- Use syllable knowledge to guess at vowel pronunciation. (step 3)
- Scoop a pencil eraser under the syllables while blending the word from left to right. (step 4)
- Say the whole word and see if it makes sense; **flex the pronunciation** if it does not. (step 5)

performance
invisible
expansion
containment

Example Task: Decoding Big Words

Have students decode the words below using the word reading strategy.

unreachable
distraction
homelessness

Strategy #7: Decoding “BIG” Words (syllable types)

Multisyllabic words can also be decoded by using knowledge of the syllable types.

6 Syllable Types

| | C | L | O | V | E | R |
|-----------------|--|---|--|---|--|--|
| syllable type | Closed | consonant-L-e | Open | Vowel team | magic E | R-controlled |
| characteristics | ends in one or more consonants; vowel sound is short | a consonant followed by an “l-e”; must connect to another syllable type | ends in a single vowel; vowel makes long sound | a group of vowels working together to make a single sound | vowel-consonant-e pattern; vowel sound is long | r follows a vowel and distorts the sound |
| examples | pat, crunch | gigGLE, taBLE | hi, MUsic | food, STEAMer | rake, clove | cork, PARty |

- VC-CV (Two consonants between two vowels)

Useful Principles of Syllable Division

sub – let nap – kin pen – ny

- V-CV and VC-V (One consonant between two vowels)

- 75 percent of the time divide *before* the consonant.

e – ven ra – bies de – cent

- 25 percent of the time divide *after* the consonant.

ev – er rab – id dec – ade

- Consonant blends usually stick together; don't separate digraphs.

e – ther spec – trum se – quin

Example Task: Syllable Sort

Participants practice identification of the six types of syllables.

| | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| | | |
| cap con bot sup | pose vine tane bine | ma bo bu re |
| | | |
| tain geal main veal | gur dor tur | -gle -tle -ple |

| Closed | VCe | Open |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------|
| cap con bot sup | pose vine tane bine | ma bo bu re |
| Vowel Team | Vowel-R | -C+le |
| tain geal main veal | gur dor tur | -gle -tle -ple |

Strategy #8: Work Origin

Knowing the word origin can help students determine the pronunciation, as letters/letter combinations may represent varying sounds in different languages. For example, in English “ch” makes the /ch/ sound as in chips. In Greek, “ch” makes the /k/ sound, as in chemistry. In French, “ch” makes the /sh/ sound as in parachute.

| Anglo-Saxon Words | Latin Words | French Words | Greek Words |
|--|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Short, commonly used words• Include basic colors, basic body parts, numbers, compound words | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Follow a strict structure: prefix + root + suffix = in – vis – ible• Often include schwa: <u>e</u> – d<u>a</u>pt | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “<u>ge</u>” = /zh/: barrage, genre, beige, rouge• “<u>ch</u>” = /sh/: charade, chic, parachute• “<u>que</u>” = /k/: antique, critique, unique• “<u>ine</u>” = /een/: machine, limousine, marine | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “ch” for /k/: <u>ch</u>orus, <u>tech</u>nology, <u>Ch</u>ristmas, <u>anch</u>or• “ph” for /f/: graph, <u>sph</u>ere, epitaph, <u>ph</u>ase• Uncommon vowel split: <u>ch</u>aos, <u>creat</u>e, <u>poet</u>ry, <u>zodi</u>ac |

Strategy #9: Morphology: Decoding Words with Affixes

Students can use their knowledge of morphemes (smallest meaningful parts of a word) to decode and define longer words.

- Provides a powerful tool for improving literacy
- Enhances students’ existing skills by providing them with an additional tool to use when they encounter a challenging word
- Facilitates reading aloud by helping students clarify pronunciation

For example, if students can identify the boundary between the prefix “mis-” and the root “hear”, it is more likely that they would correctly pronounce the /s/ and /h/ separately, rather than incorrectly as a combination like “sh” as in “ship”.

Example Task: Identify the Affix

Student looks at word and identifies all affixes, then reads the word.

unfriendly
un-friend-ly

How to Identify a Student with 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



Tips for Word Study Instruction

- While struggling readers may benefit from word study, that doesn't mean you should turn the class into a deadly-dull word study workshop.
- Word study should be regular and frequent, yet it should be limited to relatively brief sessions (10-15 minutes).
- When it comes to learning new words, less is more — teach students 5-10 words at a time, rather than overwhelming them with 20-30.
- As much as possible, **word study should be linked to course content**, so that students have reason to know and use the given words.
- Word study should be treated as just one part of a larger effort to **engage students in discussing interesting books** and other materials and in writing and expressing their own ideas.
- The goal of word study isn't just to memorize words and word patterns but to help students to develop "**word consciousness**," a term that experts use to describe a curious and playful attitude toward language.
- Students who learn to enjoy words — having fun with rhymes, puns, word play, and the use of rare and unusual words — will learn far more than those who are **forced to memorize word lists and complete dry workbook exercises**.

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