

# Phonics-based instruction

- [1. Reading instruction](#)
- [2. Phonics-based instruction](#)
- [3. Benefit of phonics-based instruction](#)
- [4. References](#)

In a nutshell

- Most teachers of transparent languages (such as Bantu languages, Italian and Finnish) use phonics-based methods in reading instruction, because there is a regular connection between letters and sounds.
- Phonics-based instruction focuses on explicit and systematic training in decoding, including letter knowledge, phonological awareness and letter-sound correspondence.
- When teaching to decode words, four processes are repeated: (1) transforming letter to phoneme, (2) connecting phonemes, (3) combining sounds of syllables, and (4) decoding the word.
- Phonics-based instruction combines reading and spelling. When basic skills have been learned, the reader can read any text without mistakes and spell words correctly.

# Reading instruction

There is ongoing debate concerning the best way to teach children how to read. The discussion is focused on the efficacy of phonics (code-based) instruction versus whole language (meaning-based) instruction. Phonics-based instruction focuses on explicit and systematic training in decoding, including letter recognition, letter-sound correspondence, phonics and phonological awareness. Whole language-based instruction requires consistent experience with meaningful text within a literature-rich environment. However, there is a growing trend toward balanced instruction in early reading instruction: Most children seem to develop as stronger readers when they are provided explicit phonics-based decoding instruction in combination with meaningful reading activities and motivating texts to practice reading.

## Phonics-based instruction

Most teachers of transparent languages use phonics-based methods in reading instruction. Phonics-based instruction focuses on explicit and systematic training in decoding, including letter recognition, letter-sound correspondence, phonics and phonological awareness. This method is especially suitable for orthographically-regular languages such as Bantu languages. Because in the beginning attention is directed to accurate decoding, fairly accurate basic reading skill is acquired quite fast. Phonics-based instruction has also been found to support learning to spell and as being especially suitable for children who progress slowly and who struggle with [their reading](#).

In phonics-based instruction, reading and spelling are taught side-by-side. When teaching to decode words, four processes are repeated: (1) transforming letter to phoneme, (2) connecting phonemes, (3) combining sounds of syllables, and

(4) decoding the word. Getting to know a new letter and phoneme begins with a motivating story. All practices are bound to this story. As a starting exercise, syllables from words are perceived based on syllable rhythm, syllable phonemes and visualisation of the syllable, and then combining words from syllables. Next, three levels of the structure of written language follow: letter–phoneme level, syllable level and word level (see Table 1). These enable the child to learn how to decode and spell syllables and words.

## **Research briefs**

[Does early reading instruction promote the rate of acquisition? A comparison of two transparent orthographies](#)

[How Effective Are Early Grade Reading Interventions? A Review of the Evidence](#)

[Literacy Instruction Activities and Their Associations with First Graders' Reading Performance in Two Transparent Orthographies](#)

[Phonics Based Reading Interventions for Students with Intellectual Disability: A Systematic Literature Review](#)

[Multicomponent Reading Interventions for Students with Intellectual Disability](#)

[Developing Reading Fluency in EFL: How assisted repeated reading and extensive reading affect fluency development](#)

[Grade 1 Teachers' Knowledge and Perceptions Regarding Reading Instruction](#)

[Comparison of a Reading Fluency Intervention with and without Passage Repetition on Reading Achievement](#)

## Additional reading

[Developing Reading Instruction Plans That Work in Large Classes](#)

[Strategies for Teaching Reading Skills to Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students](#)

	<b>Letter-phoneme level</b>	<b>Syllable level</b>	<b>Word level</b>
--	---------------------------------	-----------------------	-------------------

<p><b>Recognition</b></p>	<p>Recognition of new phoneme with the help of the association familiar from the story. Production of the phoneme corresponding to the sound. Perception of the phoneme: position of tongue, lips, teeth, sound movement, air flow, listening the duration of the phoneme. Naming the letter corresponding the phoneme.</p>	<p>Progress from short syllables to longer. Shortest syllable is one vowel. Separating the phonemes of syllable: different phonemes, duration of phonemes and order of phonemes in the syllable. Syllable is concretised by stretching its pronunciation. To support memory syllable is repeated half aloud while solving it and perceptions are made of phonemes and pronunciation that correspondence the letters.</p>	<p>Stress on separating syllables. The word is spoken, and the syllables of the word are separated with the help of rhythm. Specific syllables (for example the first one) are recognised from a group of other closely similar syllables.</p>
---------------------------	---	--	--

<p><b>Reading</b></p>	<p>Reading the phoneme as a separate entity and in combination with previously learned phonemes.</p>	<p>Combining phonemes to syllable by adding one phoneme at the time and sliding from phoneme to another and stretching the pronunciation if necessary. Finally, the syllable is read with normal speech rhythm. Reading syllables with repeating exercises where new letter is combined with previously learned phonemes.</p>	<p>Words are read by sliding one syllable at a time. When visual recognition of syllable figures becomes automatic, separate word composition is gradually not needed. For this reason, repetition of the same words in the text supports attaching the visual figure on memory and fluent reading.</p>
-----------------------	--	---	---

<b>Spelling</b>	With the help of the story, the child gets to know the letter shape and directions of drawing the letter corresponding to the phoneme. Letter shape is practiced by drawing the letter first in a large size and then with lines. With the help of dictation, it is checked that phoneme can be transformed to letter.	Syllable dictation practice differentiation of phonemes and writing of phonemes with letters: spoken syllable, listing phonemes, writing syllable, confirmation and checking.	Stress on differentiating syllables. Writing words progresses syllable by syllable: say the first syllable and write it, say the second syllable and write it, etc.
-----------------	--	---	---

*Table 1. Practice levels of the phonics method* <sup>1</sup>Aro, Lerkkanen 2019

## **Benefit of phonics-based instruction**

A benefit of phonics-based instruction is that learning the basic technique of accurate phonemes is based on combining reading and spelling. When basic skills have been learned, the reader can read any text without mistakes and spell words correctly. Phonics-based instruction has also produced good

results with those children who have difficulties [learning to read](#). The systematicity use of the method (every new letter and phoneme is learned in a same way) and positive support especially supports children's learning to decode words. Conversely, a benefit of phonics-based instruction's systematic and slow progress is that it makes it easier for the teacher to continuously follow the progress of each learner, to perceive individual difficulties in learning and intervene in those difficulties in the early phase.

When choosing the method of teaching reading, the teacher should be aware of the skills required for learning to read and how to best support each learner's reading and spelling skills development. It is also worth remembering that reading is not just a skill to combine phonemes to words, but good readers need several different skills, which help them to understand what they read and how to handle texts. In teaching to read, it should be recognised that different subskills of reading develop side by side, although they are often described as hierarchical subskills.

The figure of the baobab tree (see the front page) depicts the continuity of reading development for reading and writing skills towards multiliteracy, metalinguistic skills and multilingual competence. As is evident, the basics of technical reading and spelling skills are built upon linguistic development, letter knowledge and phonological awareness. With the help of practicing basic skills, fluency in reading and spelling develops, which is reflected in the interpretation and production of texts. Although the building of skills is described as hierarchical from basic skills to more demanding reading and writing text skills, it is important to understand that all text skills develop simultaneously, which is why teaching and practicing occurs concurrently. When there are problems in the development of reading skill and need for support is perceived, it is important to accurately recognise the cause of the problem and



direct systematic support for this specific skill.

## Videos

[Blending syllables](#)

[Initial phoneme identification](#)

[Letter-sound correspondence](#)

[Reading syllables](#)

[Reading words](#)

[Teaching Literacy in Finland – Basics](#)

[Teaching Literacy in Finland – ABC Book](#)

[Teaching Literacy in Finland – Part 3](#)

[Writing words](#)

## Practical tips

[Training in Understanding Syllables](#)

[Training in Blending](#)

## References

[mfn\_list\_execute\_after\_content\_processed]