

Foundational Literacy Glossary of Terms

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
Base Word	A unit of meaning that can stand alone as a whole word (e.g., friend, pig). Also called a free morpheme. 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	The task of combining sounds rapidly to accurately represent the word
Chunking	A decoding strategy for separating words into smaller, more manageable parts (e.g., /yes /ter/ day)
Comprehension	Understanding what one is reading; the ultimate goal of all reading activity

Connected Text	Words that are linked (as opposed to words in a list) as in sentences, phrases, and paragraphs
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.
Conventional Spelling	The correct spelling of a word
Cursive Writing	Joined, rounded handwriting; writing with the slanted strokes of successive characters joined and the angles rounded
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)
Differentiated Instruction	A process for making proactive adjustments in order to ensure students meet grade level expectations
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 and encoding instruction. One box is provided for each sound in a target word. Students push a marker into one box as they segment each sound in the word. Elkonin boxes are sometimes referred to as <i>sound boxes</i> .
Encode	The process of spelling wherein students segment phonemes of a word, translate each phoneme into its grapheme, and then write/spell the word
Etymology	The origin of a word and the historical development of its meaning
Explicit	Instruction that involves direct explanation. The teacher's language is concise, specific, and related to the objective. Another characteristic of explicit instruction is a visible instructional approach, which includes a high level of teacher/student interaction. Explicit instruction means that the actions of the teacher are clear, unambiguous, direct, and visible. This makes it clear what the students are to do and learn. Nothing is left to guess work.
Fluency	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.
Formative Assessment	Assessments utilized during instruction to provide the information needed to effectively direct and target teaching and learning as it occurs
Foundational Literacy Laureate	A subset of classroom teachers with strong knowledge of foundational skills instruction and proven abilities to coach, support, and guide colleagues in best practices for foundational literacy

Foundational Literacy Skills	A set of skills that develop students' understanding and knowledge of print concepts, phonological awareness, phonics and word recognition, word composition, and fluency; these skills are sequenced and serve as a platform for later competence and proficiency in reading and writing across text types and disciplines
Grapheme	The individual letter (e.g., a, b, c) or combination of letters (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)
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
Literacy	The ability to read and write as a means of communication
Literal Comprehension	Understanding ideas and information explicitly stated in the reading material
Literal-level Comprehension Questions	Questions that have responses that are directly stated in the text
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
Nonsense Word	A "made-up" word (with no meaning) following regular patterns for reading and spelling words in the English language
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
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	An instructional approach to cultivate the understanding and use of the alphabetic principle, 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 grapheme added to the beginning of a base word or root that contributes to the meaning of the word as "dis" in dishonest
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
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
Rigor	A level of work that appropriately challenges student thinking
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
Scaffolding	An instructional technique in which the teacher breaks a complex task into smaller tasks, models the desired learning strategy or task, provides support as students learn the task, and then gradually shifts responsibility to the students
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
Senior Reading Advisor	A small group of educators employed to provide explicit foundational skills instruction to targeted 6 th or 9 th grade students in Tier II or Tier III.
Skills	The abilities that are needed to perform a task or activity
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
Strategy	A set of procedures or steps that one uses to solve a problem

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	A grapheme 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: bat, cobweb Open: me, silo Vowel-consonant-e (VCE): dive, homemade Consonant-l-e: table, dimple (second syllable) R-controlled: star, corner Vowel pairs: team, rainbow
Syllabication	Syllabication is the act of breaking words into syllables
Symbol to Sound	Matching grapheme to phoneme
Synonym	Words that have similar meanings
Systematic	Instruction that includes a carefully selected set of letter-sound relationships that are organized into a logical sequence from easier sounds to more difficult sounds
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

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).