



General Principles and Lesson Plan

General Introduction.

As I have taught phonics over the course of over thirty years, I have worked with many different phonic programmes and children with varying needs. I learned many things, not least:

1. The need for **simplicity**:

Many programmes include far too many rules. the more rules, the more to remember and some children just cannot cope. These are the children with poor short term memories and difficulties processing information. They need things to be kept as simple as possible - and so do many teachers and parents!

2. The power of a **dictation** to help children's spelling and therefore writing ability to progress quickly.

- This dictation must **constantly revise taught sounds**. Other programmes teach a sound, maybe give some practice and move on without the constant revision so needed by many children to succeed. The dictations I have written for Reading Made Simple are designed to revise as many words from the already taught sound families, plus the new sound family list for each lesson. The effect of this is to give the necessary exposure to the sounds and words to gain writing fluency.
- A good dictation allows the child to USE his/her developing skills.
- The **editing** of the dictation teaches children to be accurate in their spelling and final presentation of a piece work. Learnt early, this skill will be valuable throughout the rest of the child's life and make examinations, later on, much easier.

- While doing the dictations we teach basic grammar in a simple, easy to digest way so building confident writers.

3. The use of **constant revision**, through the use of

- Dictations, of sounds already learnt in a sequenced way. The dictations are always given the week after the sound has been taught. This is the mastery technique and it is powerful. It enables all children to succeed.
- Flashcards

4. The need for **careful introduction of sounds**:

So that no word is ever presented for which the necessary spelling has not already been introduced. This is one of the main difficulties I have encountered with many other phonic programmes. For example, some will include the word 'shark, when teaching 'sh', without having first taught 'ar'. This causes many children to stumble in their progress,

5. The use of **vocabulary carefully matched to the child's age**.

This is another problem I find in many phonic programmes, Very often, word families are introduced according to some 'ideal' schedule, but the words in some of the families are just not relevant to young children - so they are not likely to stick so easily and be easily forgotten.

Other programmes introduce phonic sounds which are only found in words that the child is less likely to use at a young age. For example, which child is going to be using the word 'jaunty' in their writing? Or 'renew'? Experience proves that these are harder sounds that are best left until

children are well on their way with phonics and have the maturity to process them.

The words used in Reading Made Simple at each level are words that, on average, children are likely to use and need when either reading or composing their own writing, at each level of ability.

6. The need for a **set of words for each sound**, that are concentrated on for both reading and spelling for all, but particularly for all for spelling.

Of course, the more able will quickly be able to learn to apply the new sound to many more words when reading and spelling, but spelling goes more slowly and any with a processing difficulty, especially, but all children, benefit from a list of 'key' words to use as a point of reference for each sound. I pin the relevant list for that week up around the room for easy reference. I have them on hand for quick reference whenever a child needs short, sharp revision. In short, I make every effort to help the child to assimilate the teaching.

7. The need to **spend one whole week on each new sound** for spelling, but also for reading if a child has a special need.
 - This is vital - It makes progress so much faster as the children are actually using and applying the knowledge as it has been 'cemented' in as it were. It might seem very slow - but actually it accumulates quickly. The less able have time to absorb the new information; the more able can extend it as far as they can with other words that fit these families.

- The need to use **multi-sensory methods**:
Do not just have your child look at the words, but have them hear the sounds, and write the sounds. The child should learn by memory which words are **on** each list - but use phonics (sound) to **decode and spell** the words. Do whatever is necessary to help each child succeed. Games, worksheets (well-selected) all have their place, but do not forget the power of writing with the hand.
8. The use of a **reading scheme** that:
- Matches the introduction of phonic sounds in the phonic programme exactly.
 - Has only decodable words that have either been taught, or can easily be worked out, following the phonic cues already taught.
 - Provides constant repetition of words so needed to build reading fluency - which in turn allows for a child to comprehend what is being read.
 - Introduces sight word (that cannot be sounded out, or will be met in a phonic family later than they need to be used) gradually with plenty of repetition.

This programme is designed to make use of all of these excellent components.

Why does Reading Made Simple work where others fail?

- Because rules are kept to the minimum.
- Its simple structure/teaching method means that children do not even realise they are learning
- Because it is more highly structured and systematic than most other programmes
- It provides plenty of built-in revision so needed for writing and reading fluency through the use of carefully written dictations and reading books.

Games, worksheets and more help and advice can be found on our sister site:

www.sounditoutphonics.weebly.com

General teaching tips:

- Do ensure that there is a spirit of 'can-do' in your lessons and interest is kept alive. This will come as much from your attitude and desire to see your pupils progress as from your actual lesson plan.
- Do ensure to teach handwriting rigorously. Only when children can form letters easily and have spelling at their command can they be free to express themselves through writing.
- There is no need to confuse young children with words such as phoneme/blending/segmenting/digraph etc... These words are purely for teacher reference and I try not to use them where possible - as they even confuse teachers! Let's not make it so that you need a degree to learn to read!! I know this is contrary to common practice,. Have good reasons for what you do and prove that you are teaching successfully.

A few simple terms are all that are needed:

sounds, sound-it-out, vowels and consonants, capital letters, lower case letters (or ordinary letters for some children).

Dictations:

Children aged 5 to 6 are only just beginning to have enough manual dexterity, on average, to write at longer length.

If need be, split a dictation into two parts doing the first part on Thursday.

Assess continually and never ignore a problem. Identify the issue and give any necessary support to the child to overcome the difficulty.

The dictations can be used as a reading book for any that might be helped by it.

What can you expect to see as a result of following this programme? Confident writers - children who feel confident enough at spelling to compose freely.

Fluent, confident readers.

It's exciting!

Lesson Plan

On Monday

- Start by revising the previously taught flashcards (this is vital for success and should not be missed out. It also provides a comforting, familiar start to every lesson).
- Then introduce the new sound on a flashcard. Tell the children the sound it makes. Then, tell the child that today we will be learning words in the ___ family. All of the words have the new sound in them.
- Write each word on a blackboard, sounding it out as you go. I prefer a blackboard as it encourages the teacher to model good handwriting to the child in a way that can ever be achieved with a whiteboard and this modelling is vital. Emphasise the new sound as you sound out the word and repeatedly stress that we have two (or three in the case of igh) letters make one new sound. Make the letters of the new sound stand out in red.

day

- Rub the words off the board.
- Children should be provided with a special, lined book, in which to write the word family lists. The child should be appropriately seated on a chair with good support, at a desk of the correct height for the child to write comfortably, with feet touching a surface for good balance. The child should be taught to place the hand not being used to write on the book to steady it.
- Slowly dictate one word at a time, watching carefully and only

proceeding to the next word when you see that the child has completed the word in hand.

- Once the list is completed, ask the child to sound out each word in turn to check that it has been spelled correctly, This is important. Give minimal help other than to direct the child to an error if s/he does not see it for him/herself.
- Pin the list provided on a wall where it can be easily seen, and have the child read the words every school day. This too is important for success.)

Tuesday - Thursday provide plenty of time for reinforcement work - games/activities/worksheets aimed at helping the children to learn the words on the list - the more able can be stretched to read and spell as many as the words in the green box too .

You will find plenty of resources at:

www.sounditoutphonics.weebly.com.

- Do build in time each day to revise all sounds already taught plus the new one using flashcards.
- **Read the relevant reading book** for the previous week's sound.

These books do contain some words which are not taught on the family lists but are in the same family, for example, we may use the word 'clock' which is not on the 'ck' list but which can be easily sounded out once the child knows the sound 'ck'. This encourages the child to apply the new knowledge to a wider range of words for reading than we require for spelling. Do be prepared however to help the child to see the new sounds in words as s/he reads, if s/he does not see them for him/herself.

Other activities:

- Can the children make up a story using as many words on the list as possible? More able children could write their own story.
- Can they say/write a sentence containing each word? (You can just choose one or two words)
- Can the children find more words that belong in the same family?

How to read with a child

- Sit next to the child.
- With early readers, the child can point for him/herself, but the adult should also run a pointer (I use a pen/pencil) along the top of the words (not underneath - for that is where the child's finger will be).
- Should the child misread a word, the child should be trained to stop when your pointer stops.
- Use your pointer to indicate the error; may be point to the sound that has been missed out of a consonant blend, or maybe the child has not spotted the sound, and ask the child to have another look at the word. ask questions if need be.

Friday

- Provide the child with a special wide-lined book with space for a picture for their dictations, and a sharp pencil.
- Seat him/her as for Monday. Best handwriting should be encouraged for this activity, however the teacher should be aware that much of a child's concentration will, of necessity, be on the spelling, so handwriting may not be quite as it could be for a handwriting lesson. Remind the child how to hold a pencil and sit correctly.
- Dictate the sentences for the **sound taught the week before** (so for the first week you will do the dictation for the 'e' family from Level 0). The way you do this will be dictated by your child's needs. Find what works best for the child (whether a word at a time, or short phrase,) and expect this to change as the child gains in ability and confidence. Some may like to read the passage all through to the pupil before commencing the dictation word by word. This is not necessary, but not forbidden!
- Once you have dictated the passage, ask the child to read what s/he has written out loud, to check first for
 - spelling errors
 - and then for capital letters and full stops

You can read the passage through again so that the child can check that s/he has included all words and to listen for full stops and commas (where appropriate) and has the word order correct.

As far as is possible the child should find all errors him/herself, even if this means you directing him/her to the spot where the error is found, or the word, and asking him/her to sound it out. The child's work should be perfect before the exercise is

completed.

- Ask the child to draw a picture to illustrate the dictation
Pictures, for as long as you can encourage children to draw them, are helpful to develop the memory for each list of words. Memory has to be used at some point, to differentiate say between words with ai and those with a-e. As ability increases, they will tire of them, so they can naturally stop.
- This is useful time to make a brief check of children's handwriting. If you see a letter incorrectly formed, briefly demonstrate the formation to the child and have him/her practise writing 5 good letters.

Teacher assessment of a dictation:

- Any sight words incorrectly spelt must be practiced before the next dictation.
- Any words incorrectly spelled should be noted and appropriate revision made of any weak sounds.
- If a child is still struggling with punctuation towards the middle of Level1, provide extra activities for practice and make it a real focus to help the child to get it correct. Some do just need much more reminding than others, even if they know how to do it. For these I offer some small incentive.

Troubleshooting

Some children will not need much more help than to be introduced to a new sound, and then the child will absorb that information, begin to see the sound in words that are not even on the list, apply the rule and will not encounter any difficulties, or will do so only rarely. These children still do best with a structured programme.

Others, however, will encounter difficulties. These are the most commonly occurring difficulties. If you run into others, do research for a means of helping your child over them before moving on. Be constantly assessing your child as you teach and watch the child working.

Generally speaking, if a child cannot sound out the word to see the error then something is wrong and the problem must be identified and put right before moving forward. Assess at all times, as problems will not go away without intervention.

Ask questions of yourself:

- Have you started Level 1 too soon, before the child is hearing all sounds in a word easily: the initial, middle and final sounds? If so return to Level 0 and remain there until the child is hearing all of the sounds easily. I suggest playing games.
- The child should also have a working knowledge of consonant blends. That means that the child must recognise what is needed when s/he hears 'bl', or 'sw' for example. See Level 0 for more help. Most children starting level 1 will still need support to spell and read words with consonant blends as it is typical that children will miss out the second letter of the blend, but must know what you are talking about when you give the prompt to re-look at the word and say "Listen to the

beginning of the word: (say the blends, e.g. st - uck) What sounds can you hear? Is that what you have written?

- Is the child trying to use memory rather than sounds? This is a very common problem. That means that s/he is guessing rather than relying on the phonic codes. This must be dealt with immediately. Have the child say the sounds out loud.

Watch the child working to find out what strategy the child is using. Have the child sound out exactly what s/he has written. Often children will say what they think they have written, not what they have written.

If the child cannot sound out his/her own word, have him write the word again and remind him/her to SOUND IT OUT. The child MUST SOUND OUT, unless it has stored the word into the long term memory, in which case it will be spelled correctly.

- Does the child need more tracking exercises to see the sounds in words? You could remind the child that every word on the list has the new sound. Ask the child to tell you what the new sound is. Have the child to first underline the new sound in each word on the list to check that s/he has heard the new sound in the words as s/he wrote them.