



The Building Blocks of Literacy

A Literacy Resource Manual for Peace Corps Volunteers

Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support (OPATS)
May 2015



Peace Corps Publication No. M0107

The Building Blocks of Literacy

A Literacy Resource Manual for Peace Corps Volunteers

**Office of Overseas Programming and Training and Support
(OPATS)**



May 2015
Peace Corps
Publication No. M0107

Table Of Contents

Introduction	1
Literacy and Early Grade Reading	2
Literacy in the Peace Corps.....	2
The Literacy Wheel	3
How to Use This Manual	4
Acknowledgements	4
Before Getting Started	5
Section 1: Decoding	9
Chapter 1: Print Awareness and Knowledge	10
Chapter 2: Alphabet Knowledge.....	27
Chapter 3: Phonological and Phonemic Awareness	44
Chapter 4: Phonics	60
Making the Leap: From Decoding to Comprehension	86
Section 2: Comprehension.....	95
Chapter 1: Fluency.....	96
Chapter 2: Vocabulary.....	105
Chapter 3: Spelling	115
Chapter 4: Writing	132
Assessment	
Final Reflection: Reading Rocks!	163
Appendix: Resources	167
Glossary	169

Introduction

Literacy and Early Grade Reading

The ability to read with understanding is one of the most fundamental skills a child can learn. Research evidence indicates that learning to read both early and at a sufficient rate are essential for learning to read well. As a student grows older, acquiring literacy becomes more difficult and children who do not learn to read in the first few grades are more likely to repeat grades and eventually drop out of school entirely. Over time, the educational achievement gap between early readers and nonreaders increases.

Reading has two components: **decoding** and **comprehending**.

Decoding refers to the ability to apply an understanding of letter-sound relationships, knowledge of letter patterns, and the correct pronunciation of written words.

Comprehending refers to the set of skills that allows a learner to move beyond decoding to understanding text. For young learners, comprehending requires a certain level of fluency and speed (called automaticity in academic circles) so they can hold onto the meaning of the print.

Literacy is not just about reading, however. Literacy refers to all the ways in which language, print, texts, symbols, books, and writing (in essence, any kind of communication) can be used to enhance understanding and help strengthen the literate environment. Particularly in settings where text and print are not common and there is an underdeveloped culture of reading, looking at other kinds of literacy is crucial. In communities where many adults do not read and write, alternative ways (and rich traditions) to communicate and share information already exist. In such settings, drawing upon traditional folk tales, stories, proverbs, and songs are ways to introduce reading and writing activities and build upon already established communication strategies.

Literacy in the Peace Corps

In the Peace Corps, many posts support host country efforts in early grade reading in primary schools. In some settings, Volunteers act as literacy coaches, while in others Volunteers are co-teachers or teach literacy or reading directly with primary grade students. Some Volunteers concentrate their efforts on developing a school-based library and help schools incorporate library and book-focused activities into their timetables.

While past generations of Peace Corps Volunteers often worked at the secondary level, we now better understand that helping children solidify their literacy skills earlier will allow them to make more strides in the later grades when they need to use reading to comprehend new information in such subjects as mathematics, social studies, and science. Additionally, many secondary and high school-level Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) programs benefit from children who have mastered reading English at the primary grade level.

Each country has established for itself the language(s) used for literacy and reading instruction in the formal school setting. Activities in this manual offer opportunities for bi-literacy implementation for situations where children do not come to school understanding the language of instruction (i.e., students who speak a language at home different from the language taught in school). This manual provides Volunteers with some essential tools to help students connect their mother tongue with the orthography or formal system of language presented in school.

In addition to school-based support for literacy and reading, Volunteers often engage with communities to enhance the literate environment by introducing book-based strategies, such as mobile libraries, story hours, after-school reading clubs, tutoring, and summer reading camps. Another role that Volunteers can play is to help family members, many of whom are not literate themselves, understand how to support their young learners and why family support is so important. Drawing on bi-literacy strategies may be particularly useful in situations where the language spoken at home is not the same as the language used for instruction in schools.

The Literacy Wheel

While there are many ways to think about the “big brick” concepts of literacy acquisition, for Peace Corps training and program support purposes, we have created the **Literacy Wheel**. The Literacy Wheel illustrates the various components of literacy and learning to read and also demonstrates the relationship of these concepts to each other. Each chapter of this manual has been organized around the literacy wheel for ease of organization and reference. The chapters are also presented in a developmentally logical sequence, beginning with the most basic concepts (i.e., Print Awareness and Knowledge) and ending with the most complex components in literacy (i.e., Spelling, Writing). The content of each chapter builds on the knowledge gained from the chapters before it. Therefore, it is highly recommended that the manual, lesson plans, and activities be followed sequentially. As mentioned above, the ultimate goal for any reader is to gain comprehension so that he or she can make sense of new information. By following the sector chapters in order you will help your students establish strong foundations for the building blocks of literacy.



How to Use This Manual

The purpose of this manual is to help Volunteers working in literacy to build the capacity of their host country counterparts by organizing ideas, activities, and lesson plans for each of the concepts highlighted in the Literacy Wheel. In addition to sharing the interactive lessons and activities in this manual, consider doing the exercises and action planning along with your counterparts. Working through the exercises and gathering information with a counterpart helps establish a collaborative partnership and builds the capacity of local teachers in the process. This manual could also be used as a resource to conduct teacher training workshops.

Some of the sample activities may require some adaptation on your part to make them relevant for your classroom. Alternatively, you may find that the lessons or proposed activities just do not resonate in your cultural context or in the classrooms in which you work. For that reason, the activities and ideas included vary greatly. Some start at a very basic level and need no, or very few, material resources to implement, while others are more complex and require some preparation of resources or materials in order to meet the session's goals.

As you read through the following chapters, you will see that the activities and sample lesson plans are listed in order of the resources that might be available to PCVs at their sites. Activities under "No/Low Resources" will best serve those who have little available to them in terms of classroom materials. At most, these Volunteers may be working with a blackboard and/or writing slates. "Basic-Medium Resources" include activities for PCVs who may have access to materials such as blank paper, writing tools, and recycled items. "Print Resources" provide activities for Volunteers who serve in areas that may be more developed, and/or with a variety of classroom materials such as books, writing materials, or basic art supplies. Ultimately, each Volunteer should use his or her discretion and best judgment in reference to which activities would be most appropriate for the context and population of students receiving this instruction. Most likely, this process will involve trial and error in determining which methods are most effective. Remember to reach out to your fellow Volunteers for suggestions on what methods have been successful and to share best practices with each other.

Please keep in mind that not all of the activities in this manual will work in your context or at your site. We expect that some of the materials suggested will not exist and that you will need to make adaptations (e.g., shells or bottle tops instead of rocks; sand rather than water; the use of a blackboard when there is no paper). For that reason, at the end of each chapter we have provided space to add your own innovations or activities you have created to touch upon a literacy concept.

Additionally, we would love your feedback! Because literacy is a newer focus area for Education Volunteers at the Peace Corps, we are still building our own library of best and promising practices. Please send all ideas and activities that have been used successfully to the Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support (OPATS) literacy specialist by emailing Literacy@peacecorps.gov.

Acknowledgements

Many people contributed their time and expertise to the development of the *Literacy Resource Manual*. OPATS Chief of Programming Joanie Cohen-Mitchell directed the project, assisted by OPATS Literacy Specialist Camille Aragon (RPCV/St. Vincent and the Grenadines, 2010–2012).

Other contributors include: Yaya Boure, Mali program manager; Shellon Bovell, Guyana associate Peace Corps director; Tiffany Daniels, Guyana programming and training specialist; Linda Murgatroyd, The Gambia program manager; Mary Olinga, Uganda program manager; Mafiosamo (Mafi) Palepoi, Samoa program training staff/Teaching English as a Second Language; Joe Pearson, The Gambia Peace Corps Volunteer leader; Amanda Pincock, RPCV/Côte d'Ivoire & Madagascar, 2001-2003; Monette Santos, Philippines program manager; Ann Smyntek, Dominican Republic associate Peace Corps director; and Allegra Troiano, Vanuatu director of programming and training.

The Peace Corps gratefully acknowledges the talent and skills of the authors who provided authorization for use of their materials in this manual: Super Simple Learning; Rob Reid; Reading Rockets; Ron Brown; Margie La Bella; Fran Avni; CanTeach; Sue Palmer; Jean Warren, PreschoolExpress.com; Jean Feldman, Ph.D., and Excelligence Learning Corporation. The Peace Corps also acknowledges the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which developed the Tanzania early grade reading assessment form reprinted in this manual.

Before Getting Started

Consider the following broad points about literacy (in no particular order) that help set the stage for the successful implementation of the building blocks covered in this manual.

Develop book routines. Routines and consistency are very important in teaching, especially when working with young children. Because books are so scarce in areas where most Volunteers work, students need direct instruction on how to care for and handle books and to support a culture of reading and literacy. In developing your book routines, consider including some (or all) of the following:

- Have the children wash their hands before handling books.
- Have students sit in a designated area—around a table, or on a rug or mat.
- Model how to hold a book and turn pages carefully.
- Show how to exchange one book for another.
- Show how to return a book so someone else can use it.
- Explain how to clean up and put the books away so they are ready to use again.

Rely on observation. Learning to read is not always a linear process and often occurs in fits and starts. To become readers, students need to master a set of skills. The chapters of this manual present each skill in isolation. In real classrooms with real students, however, the process of acquiring these skills can be as varied as the personalities occupying the desks. Some students experience remarkable breakthroughs after weeks of plodding along, while others backslide after extended breaks or absences. Utilizing a variety of literacy activities each day helps address the various learning needs and keeps the interest of all class members. The key to deciding what to do with a class is to *observe*. Notice what children are doing, address their struggles, and challenge them with new material. Veteran and novice teachers alike rely on observation to direct and inform their instruction.

Allow ample time for change. This manual contains a variety of activities to teach reading. Some of you may have had teachers who used similar methods when you were a young learner. Others may have completed coursework in similar teaching methodologies. In many places where Peace Corps serves, quality teacher training is lacking and many teachers rely on rote memorization to instruct

their classes. Working in an unfamiliar culture can be a very humbling experience. Good ideas get dismissed, materials get damaged or stolen, and Volunteers get frustrated. Nurturing literacy is a process and creating a culture of reading takes time. Individuals need time to adjust to new ways of thinking and doing.

Not an end in itself. While we definitely want all of the students we teach to become fully literate, acquiring reading skills is not an end in itself. Strong phonics and word recognition skills are essential and, once mastered, can be applied to any text on any subject. To make our efforts in teaching literacy truly sustainable, we want our students to learn not only how to read, but to develop a love of learning and confidence in utilizing their reading skills to make their own discoveries. When you serve as a model for how reading can be used as a tool to learn new information, you plant the seed that reading opens doors to the world beyond what is in the immediate physical environment for you and your students.

Relationships matter. The relationship between a teacher and student is unique. In the midst of imparting some new vocabulary and helping students to crack the code, remember that good teaching is about relationships. While a class of 40-plus students can feel overwhelming at times, don't forget that it is made up of individuals. Regular check-ins allow the teacher to connect with the students and determine how to move forward. They also provide an opportunity to give individual praise and encouragement. This sort of attention goes a long way in helping students succeed.

Be creative. Among other things, Volunteers are known for their resourcefulness and creative problem-solving skills. While your efforts should align with the basic components of a good literacy program outlined in this manual, feel free to personalize and adapt the activities to suit your needs. Some Ministries of Education have adopted set curriculums for reading instruction for use in all schools. If that is the case in your situation, use this manual as a supplement. The sequences of different reading curricula may vary but the content is likely consistent with what is presented here. In addition, the materials suggested for use in the activities can always be substituted for what is appropriate and accessible in your environment. Engaging the students in meaningful activities is paramount.

Make books accessible. While this may seem obvious, it bears mentioning: Books are meant to be read. In many countries where the Peace Corps serves, the concept of a lending library does not exist, at least not by U.S. standards. Stories of books being locked away in storage or unused rooms are common. In many areas, books are so scarce and difficult to obtain that some schools are reluctant to let students use the library. Create a plan with your school and counterparts for how to make books accessible to students. If your school or community already has an established library, work with the staff to create a library slot on the school timetable for each class. Introducing teachers to the idea of using library books to support their lessons will support your efforts to increase literacy.

Build strong foundations. Just as a builder would never put a roof on a house with a bad foundation, a teacher cannot address higher level skills if his or her students are not competent readers. If we think of early literacy as the foundation for later learning, we need to make sure that students have a structure of fundamental skills. Time spent on the basics, as well as exposure to books through read-alouds, will provide students with a strong foundation upon which they can build. The content in this manual builds on itself, from basic ideas in earlier chapters to the more complex. Refrain from skipping ahead to more complex chapters if you have not yet worked with your students on the fundamentals.

Pictures count. In the midst of teaching print awareness, letter recognition, and phonics, take steps to ensure that you don't neglect the other aspects of literacy. Pictures, illustrations, charts, diagrams, signs, symbols, and icons are all used to communicate. As such, they are part of literacy. They enhance meaning and often aid in comprehension. Teach students to use illustrations to help them decipher text and encourage discussions about information they obtain from pictures.

Read it again. This request is heard a lot by Volunteers who work in childhood literacy. Often an individual child or an entire class has a favorite story or book that they never tire of hearing. It's OK to read it again. And again. Hearing a familiar text over and over reinforces the language and helps develop fluency. It also builds confidence in young readers. Sometimes during repeated readings, teachers will read the first part and have students complete the last part of the sentence. Don't worry about the class getting bored. The students will let you know when they are ready to move on.

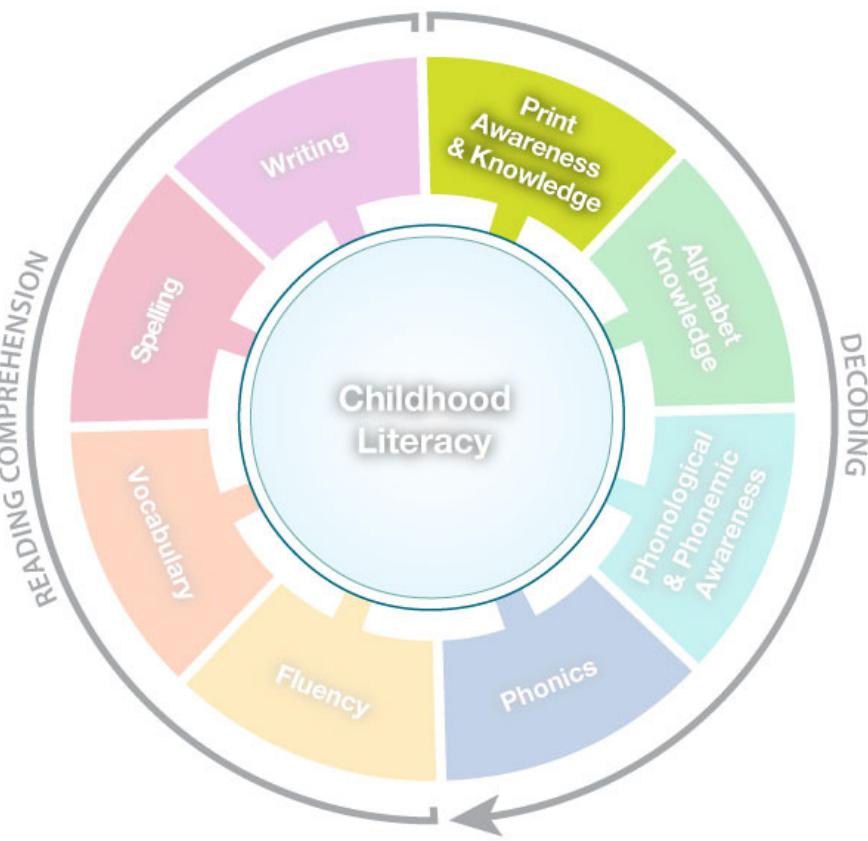
Be prepared. Before implementing any activity or lesson plan, prepare materials, resources, or notes to yourself that will help you to successfully facilitate your literacy sessions. It is always a good idea to consider in advance where students may need a break or how to transition from one segment of an activity or lesson plan to another. Preparing for classroom transitions will be especially helpful for those working with large numbers of students. Successful adult-led transitions can be a lifesaver when it comes to classroom management.

Stay flexible. Flexibility is key to being a successful Peace Corps Volunteer. The same applies when teaching literacy in any context. While it is important to be prepared and have a plan for what you will be teaching in your sessions, you should also keep in mind that things will not always go as planned. Stay committed to teaching your students at their level, and don't be afraid to go "off script" if a situation calls for it. If your students lose interest and become disengaged in an activity, there is little benefit to them and this can lead to a lot of frustration for you. Feel free to return to an activity that has proven successful in the past or bring the students back by engaging them in a song or story that they have heard before and enjoyed.

Blessed are the flexible, for they will not allow themselves to become bent out of shape!—Anonymous

Section 1: Decoding

Chapter 1: Print Awareness and Knowledge



Print awareness is the understanding that print is organized in a particular way. It is usually the first introduction to literacy for young children.

Scenarios

Katie, 4, is an American growing up in Chicago. In the mornings before leaving for preschool, Katie has a bowl of cereal from a box in the pantry while Katie's mother reads the newspaper and her father checks email. Mom says Katie should bring her umbrella to school; the paper says rain showers are expected later in the afternoon. Katie's dad wants to arrive at the office a few minutes early to prepare for a big meeting with his colleagues. On the way to school, Katie reminds her dad to stop at the red stop sign on the street corner. Once Katie arrives at her preschool, the teacher and a few of her classmates greet her. Throughout the day, Katie has the opportunity to speak and play with other children, sits in a circle with her peers to listen to stories read out loud by her teacher, and practices reading and writing on her own with crayons, pencils, and construction paper at a table set up for this purpose. Before bed, Katie's parents take turns reading her a bedtime story.

In another part of the world, in a village in Zomba, 5-year-old Michel awakens to the sound of waves lapping against the coast and calls of the native bird. He has a breakfast of rice and fruit. As his mother collects fish and shellfish on the reef for the day's meals, Michel's father tends to the family's pigs. Michel takes the family goats to graze in the pasture before leaving for school. He walks to the local primary

school where there is one classroom for 40 students, ages 5–12. His teacher leads the class in activities like language, reading, and mathematics, using a blackboard and a few textbooks. After school, Michel enjoys playing football with his friends and cooling off in the river. In the evenings, Michel and his family eat a dinner of fish and rice. He checks on the goats before going to bed.

While there are infinite ways to grow up as a child in this world, the effects of a child's environment are equally important for every child in every country. These environments affect, for example, the way a child learns, how he or she develops a worldview, and how a child makes sense of information around him or her. The environments in which you were raised are probably very different than the community where you are currently serving as a Volunteer. Many of you may identify more closely to Katie in the above vignette, while children you are meeting in your host country seem more similar to Michel.

Imagine for a moment your childhood home, your street, and the surrounding neighborhood. Try to recall and visualize where you spent most of your time and the print that existed within those environments. Can you remember your favorite childhood storybook? A nearby street sign, stop signs, and words or banners posted on storefronts and buildings? At what age were you able to make sense of these printed words?

Now imagine your earliest classrooms—preschool, kindergarten, and first grade. What did your classrooms look like? Were they decorated with the letters of the alphabet, charts, poems, and other printed materials? In the space below, create a sketch or drawing of your favorite childhood environment. Include as many printed words as you can recall seeing frequently as a child. (If it is helpful to you, you may refer back to the Community Map for Literacy that you created during the Community Engagement in Literacy session in pre-service training.)

PCV Exercise: Recalling Print in Your Childhood Environment

In the box below, sketch your hometown environment. Try to include as much print as possible that you remember seeing as a child.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, designed for a participant to draw their childhood environment.

Exposure to printed words on a daily basis serves a critical role in developing print awareness. As a child develops, he or she begins to interact and receive information from his or her surroundings. A typically developing child will pick up cues from adult caregivers to understand how to make sense of his or her environment. The earliest indicators of print awareness are often in relation to popular brands and logos. For example, a child may begin to recognize that the yellow letter "M" represents McDonald's or that a red bull's-eye is a symbol for Target. This ability to recognize that visual

representations hold meaning is a major precursor for literacy and, later, reading. It indicates that a child is able to store symbols in his or her long-term memory with a particular meaning associated with it.

Culture and Print Prevalence

It is important to understand that **print awareness is acquired in a child's natural environment** (i.e., home, school, neighborhood/community). When a child at home sees an adult referring to a recipe while making dinner, reading the morning paper, or writing an email, that child is learning that **written words are symbols that communicate ideas and information**. The child is also learning the role of literacy and written communication in his or her culture. In print literate societies, children are often exposed to text in their home and school environments, religious institutions, through the media, via technology, and in other public spaces. But in many villages where PCVs serve, the use and availability of printed materials can be much more limited.

Take a moment to consider how often you encounter print at your site. If you live in or near a capital city, you may notice a higher prevalence of printed materials around you. For PCVs in more rural communities, the use of print in the environment may be minimal or even nonexistent. Complete the exercise below to gain an understanding of print prevalence in your community.

PCV Exercise: Print Prevalence in Your Country of Service

Write a list of the first 10 words that come to mind that you have seen in print at your site. If print does not exist, list places where signs or words would have been useful for you as a PCV.

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

If the above exercise was easy, it is likely that print is prevalent and commonly used in your community. If the above exercise proved challenging, this may indicate that printed materials are scarce or nonexistent at your site. With the understanding that *print awareness is acquired in a child's natural environment*, how might this affect your role as a Literacy Volunteer? We will examine this further in the following section.

Print-Rich Environments

In the world of education, the ideal classroom is one in which learning is fostered in a supportive and enriching environment. Since children naturally acquire print awareness in their sur-

roundings, children who attend school with plenty of print resources are at an advantage compared to students who attend schools with very limited resources. **As a Literacy Volunteer, you are an educator whose presence has a significant impact on your students' educational experiences.** With your knowledge and expertise, and support from your counterparts, you have the ability to positively influence how classroom environments can support your students' literacy development.

PCV Exercise: Assessing Your Classroom's Print Resources

Go into one of your school's classrooms, or the room/space where you will facilitate literacy lessons with students. Look around and check the boxes below for indicators of a print-rich environment.

- Posted alphabet line
- Posted number line
- Name labels
- Item labels
- Teachers' writing
- Children's writing
- Poems
- Books
- Maps
- Charts
- Graphs
- Wall stories
- Word walls or displays
- Bulletin boards
- Classroom library
- Other printed materials:

The exercise above is designed to help you assess the degree to which your teaching space is *print-rich*.

A classroom that reflects a **print-rich environment** is one that is “alive with print.” Print-rich classrooms offer students multiple opportunities to interact with books and other printed materials, encourage and support students’ attempts at reading and writing, and invite students to question and explore the meanings of words and text.

Do you notice any correlations between the previous two exercises? How do your school’s classrooms reflect the use and availability of print in your community?

You may have observed: a) scarcity of print at your site and limited print in the classroom, b) high prevalence of printed materials in your community and at your school, or c) another combination of outcomes between the degrees of cultural print prevalence and print-rich learning environments.

Now reflect back on Katie and Michel—which child is more likely to have an easier time learning to read? More challenging? If students at your site seem more like Michel than Katie, how might this affect your work as a Literacy Volunteer? What challenges do you anticipate seeing in your classrooms and in your community?

PCV Exercise: Brainstorming Potential Challenges

List the challenges you foresee coming across in your work as a PCV teaching literacy. They may have to do with language, materials, culture, and counterpart relationships, for example.

<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

You may choose to discuss these anticipated challenges with your program manager or associate Peace Corps director. If so, what insights/advice did they have?

<input type="checkbox"/>	_____

All classrooms can benefit from having print-rich environments. Even with limited paper and traditional school supplies, you can create some of the things below by using open-ended materials such as stones, bottle caps, or shells. Here are some simple ideas to help your classroom come alive with print.

- Create and post an alphabet line
- Make name labels for children’s desks

- Label areas of the classroom and items in those areas
- Post poems, stories, and artwork
- Make books available (or if books are not available, create a simple storybook for the classroom based on popular folk tales)

Children who are surrounded by print in their environments are more likely to be successful in learning how to read. By gaining an understanding that print holds meaning and represents spoken words, children learn that print can be used to tell a story and communicate ideas.

Print Convention

Before a child can effectively read, he or she must learn the mechanics, or convention, of the language. The convention of print indicates a written language's *directionality, punctuation, space, case, grammar, and spelling*.

- In English, words are read from left to right and top to bottom.
- Punctuation communicates expression and meaning to readers.
- Space is used to separate ideas and to separate words so they can be easily read.
- Uppercase (capitalized) and lowercase (absence of capital letters) words can give additional meaning to readers about the beginning of new ideas, and can indicate to the reader if a noun describes a specific person, place, or thing.
- Grammar is a set of rules which affect word forms, such as verb tense, plurals, possessives, and modifiers like adverbs and adjectives.
- Spelling rules are according to convention so that they can be easily read by others to facilitate effective communication.

Identify the print conventions of your host country's language(s) by completing the following exercise.

PCV Exercise: Identifying Your Host Country's Print Conventions

*Write a short paragraph in your host country's language that reflects the following components of print convention: **directionality, punctuation, space, case, grammar, and spelling**.*

Book Knowledge

Finally, **book knowledge** is a principle of print awareness that incorporates an understanding of the mechanics of using a book appropriately. An individual with book knowledge is able to identify the front and back cover, understands the significance of the book's title, author, and illustrator, can hold the book in the correct orientation, and turns the pages one at a time and in the appropriate direction.

The activities and sample lesson plan on the following pages are provided to assist PCVs in the beginning steps of creating and facilitating an engaging and effective literacy program.

Activities

Below are suggested activities to build print awareness and knowledge with your students. The list is organized according to what resources may be available to you at your site. Please note that not all of these activities will be appropriate for all Volunteers. It is important for you to assess what materials and resources you can utilize in your lesson plans, decide which activities make sense for you and your students, and determine how to make the best use of what you have. (For additional resource creation strategies, please refer to two sessions commonly used in pre-service training, "Materials Design" and "Limited Resources.")

No/Low Resources

Activity: Nature-Made/Recycled Alphabet Line

Implementation

Make an alphabet rock garden, an alphabet vine, or another display of the letters of the alphabet using natural or recycled materials.

Resources

Materials from nature: rocks, sticks, leaves, dried beans, berries, seashells, smooth sea glass

Collected/recycled materials: bottle caps, buttons, lids of jars, pieces of cardboard/packaging

Things to Keep in Mind

It is important that the alphabet lines are simple and help children easily identify the different letters; use the writing conventions commonly seen in your school.

Activity: Writing Letters on Classmate's Back

Implementation

Students work together in pairs and take turns "writing" on their partner's back using an index finger.

With more advanced students, Partner A guesses the letter Partner B is writing.

Resources

None

Things to Keep in Mind

Students who are very new to learning letters will need guidance and more explicit instructions. Use very descriptive language with these students (e.g., For letter M, *"First draw a straight line from top to bottom, and then make a diagonal line down, a diagonal line up, then another straight line down, from top to bottom."*)

You may want to have all students draw the letters you are working on in the air with you first to be sure they are clear about each letter's directionality.

Activity: Writing in the Sand

Implementation

Students can use their fingers or sticks to practice writing letters in the sand.

Resources

Sticks, if available

Sand

Things to Keep in Mind

For students who are not yet able to write letters and words, encourage them to scribble, draw, or trace an outline of their hand in the sand to develop their fine motor skills.

Activity: Name Cards

Implementation

Create name cards for students using banana leaves (or any other type of large, pliable leaf) or using recycled cardboard or packaging.

Resources

Leaves, recycled cardboard, recycled packaging

Things to Keep in Mind

It is important that you write children's names with a capital letter followed by lowercase letters.

Basic Resources

Activity: Recording Student Stories

Implementation

Record stories dictated by students, word for word. Encourage students to share local folk tales or family stories passed down from older generations.

Resources

Paper and pen/pencil, chalk and chalkboard, or a computer

Things to Keep in Mind

Giving students a few sentences from the story to practice reading is a good way to get new readers invested and engaged in reading.

Activity: Song Charts

Implementation

Create song charts for students to follow along with words as you lead them in songs.

Sample song:

Open Shut Them¹

*Open shut them
Open shut them
Give a little clap clap clap.*

*Open shut them
Open shut them
Place them in your lap lap lap.*

Resources

Paper and markers, or chalk and chalkboard

Things to Keep in Mind

Be sure to write clearly and large enough for a new reader to see.

Medium Resources

Activity: Shaping Letters from Molding Clay

Implementation

Provide molding clay. Instruct students to form a given letter.

Resources Needed

Clay that can be molded into shapes

Sample Recipe (enough for about two students)

2 cups of plain/all-purpose flour
1 cup salt
1 cup cold water
1 tbsp oil (vegetable oil is fine; baby oil smells lovely)

Combine all ingredients then place into a plastic bag and seal.

Things to Keep in Mind

For children unaccustomed to fine motor activities, it may be enough to have them write the letter in the flattened dough.

Activity: Classroom Object Labels

Implementation

Create labels for classroom items. Introduce each word-object pairing to students before attaching labels to items in the classroom. Have students help in placing labels in appropriate areas of the classroom.

¹ Reprinted with permission from Super Simple Learning, www.supersimplelearning.com.

Resources

Cardboard, construction paper, or backs of cartons; tape; markers

Things to Keep in Mind

Ensure that you place the labels at the eye-level of students.

Print Resources

Activity: Introducing Book Knowledge

Implementation

Introduce a storybook to the class. Help students identify the front and back of the book, the title page, and the author. Point out the direction of the text, using your finger to follow the words as you read the story aloud.

Resources

Picture book, storybook, or self-created book

To create a book, you can use:

- Paper
- Markers/crayons
- Tape or staples to bind the book together
- Pictures cut out from magazines or newspapers

Things to Keep in Mind

Children who have had very limited experiences with books may need additional instructions about caring for the books. Discuss appropriate book handling, such as not tearing pages out or writing and drawing in books.

Sample Lesson Plans

Below are three sample lesson plans, organized according to the degree of available resources. These lessons draw from the sample activities provided in the previous section. Certain activities and songs are repeated throughout; use the **Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes** section to see how you can increase the complexity of the activities depending on the availability of your resources and to add notes for yourself about how you will implement each segment of the lesson.

You may find that you do not have the time or flexibility to implement these sample lessons fully. If so, take what you need from them. For example, you might not always be able to include opening and closing songs, but if you can, songs serve as excellent transitions from one part of the curriculum to the next. Repetition and reinforcement are also critical components for beginning readers; the working memory of young children is limited so the more repetition of the lesson's key messages you can do during each day, the better.

You may also choose to return to these suggested activities later to reinforce the ideas introduced in this chapter on print awareness and knowledge and build upon them as you introduce more concepts.

No. 1: No/Low-Resource Lesson Plan

Welcome and Opening Songs

 (5–7 minutes)

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Open Shut Them²

*Open shut them
Open shut them
Give a little clap clap clap.*

*Open shut them
Open shut them
Place them in your lap lap lap.*

Learning Names Song

*Oh here we are together, together, together
Oh here we are together all sitting on the floor*

*Here's _____, and _____, and _____, and, _____
Oh here we are together all sitting on the floor.*

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

On “open,” place both hands in front of you, palms facing away and opening them wide.
On “shut them,” clench hands into fists.

On “lap,” fold hands and put them in your lap.

Repeat 1–2 times, with variations such as faster, slower, loud, or quiet.

The tune for “Learning Names Song” is “Did You Ever See a Lassie?”

Fill in blanks with students’ names and repeat until all names are said.

Transition to Main Activity

 2 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Say, “Today we will be learning each other’s names and everyone will get their own special name card.”

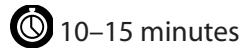
*If you’re ready to begin...
-raise both hands in the air,
-put your hands on your head,
-say ‘Shhh.’”*

² Reprinted with permission from Super Simple Learning, www.supersimplelearning.com.

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Show students the name cards that you've created as described in the Activities section above.

Main Activity



Activities and Suggested Scripts

1. Begin with an example, focusing only on the first letter of the name: "Here is my name card. My name is Julie. My name begins with the letter J." As you show your name card to the students, point your finger underneath the letters in the direction that words are read.
2. Hold up one card at a time, first saying the first letter in the child's name. "This name begins with the letter M. Michel. Where is Michel? Here is your card. Your name begins with the letter M."
3. With each child's name, ask the class to follow along with you as you draw the first letter of his or her name in the air. Use descriptive language to guide them. For letter M, "First I draw a straight line, then I make a diagonal line down, a diagonal line up, then another straight line down."
4. For variations, children can practice writing with their index finger on their neighbor's back, or on top of their desk.

Wrap-Up



Activities and Suggested Scripts

Go over 5–7 different letters and ask students to raise their hands if that letter matches the first letter of their name. Collect name cards from students for the next session according to first letter of their name. Tell everyone they've done a good job and sing a closing song.

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

The tune for "Wave Goodbye Song" is unique. Create your own tune, with gestures to go along with the words.

No. 2: Basic-Medium Resources

Welcome and Opening Songs



Activities and Suggested Scripts

Open Shut Them³

Open shut them

Open shut them

Give a little clap clap clap.

³ Reprinted with permission from Super Simple Learning, www.supersimplelearning.com.

*Open shut them
Open shut them
Place them in your lap lap lap.*

Learning Names Song

*Oh here we are together, together, together
Oh here we are together all sitting on the floor

Here's _____, and _____, and _____, and, _____
Oh here we are together all sitting on the floor.*

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Post the song charts for the children to follow along with before you begin. First, sing the song once to demonstrate and introduce the tune and rhythm. Next, refer to the song chart and point to the text as you say the words. During the third round, ask the children to sing along as you point to each line of the song chart.

See Sample Lesson Plan 1 for additional guidance on "Learning Names Song."

Transition to Main Activity

 2 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Say, "*Today we will be making labels for some of the things in our classroom. Just like each of us has a name, the things in our classroom have names too. If you're ready to begin...*

*-raise both hands in the air,
-put your hands on your head,
-say 'Shhh.'*

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Introduce students to the materials you will be using to create the labels using the resources you have available to you and have prepared for this activity.

Main Activity

 10–15 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

1. Have 7–10 classroom items in mind to label. Some simple suggestions for this activity are: **door**, **wall**, **chalkboard**, **desk**, **chair**, **floor**, **window**, and **bookshelf**.
2. Describe the item you want the students to help you create a label for. Example: "*I'm thinking of something that we sit on. It has four legs and a back, and at the end of the day we put it on top of the desk. Yes, a chair!*"
3. On paper or cardboard strips, write the word as the children watch. Say each letter aloud as you write. "*This is how you write the word chair. C-H-A-I-R. Chair.*"
4. Once all of the labels are made, shuffle the cards and hold up one at a time. Ask students if they can

recognize the word. Give clues and say each letter in the word before giving the answer.

5. If a student gives the correct answer, ask that student to help you affix that label to the appropriate object or area of the classroom.

Wrap-Up



3–5 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Go over the objects you labeled one last time. Ask the students if there are any other items or areas of the classroom that need a label for the next session. Tell everyone they've done a good job and sing a closing song.

Wave Goodbye Song

Wave high. Wave low.

I think it's time, we gotta go.

Wave your elbows. Wave your toes.

Wave your tongue and wave your nose.

Wave your knees. Wave your lips.

Blow a kiss, with fingertips.

Wave your ears. Wave your hair.

Wave your belly and derriere.

Wave your chin. Wave your eye.

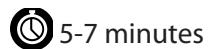
Wave your hand and say "goodbye."

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Tune for "Wave Goodbye Song" is unique. Create your own tune, with gestures to go along with the words.

No. 3: Activities with Print Resources

Welcome and Opening Songs



5-7 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Open Shut Them

Open shut them

Open shut them

Give a little clap clap clap.

Open shut them

Open shut them

Place them in your lap lap lap.

Learning Names Song

*Oh here we are together, together, together
Oh here we are together all sitting on the floor
Here's _____, and _____, and _____, and, _____
Oh here we are together all sitting on the floor.*

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

See Sample Lesson Plans 1 & 2 for additional guidance.

Transition to Main Activity

 2 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Say, "Today we will be reading a book called _____. Here are some things we will be reading about in the book."

[Write a list on the chalkboard or hold up flashcards of 5–7 recurring/main words in the story. For example, in "The Very Hungry Caterpillar," vocabulary words to use are: **big, ate, sun, egg, pop, pie, one, two, fat**.]

"Listen for these words in the story. After the book, you will each get a chance to draw a picture about the story. Maybe some of you will want to make a picture about some of the words on this list."

When writing on the chalkboard, be sure to say each word aloud as you are writing it. Make sure your print is large enough for all students to see clearly.

Main Activity

 20–30 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

1. Introduce the book to the students. Show them the front cover and back cover. On the front cover, identify the book's title (name of the book), author (who wrote the words), and illustrator (who drew the pictures).
2. Read the story, making sure all of the children can see the pictures. Follow the text with your finger as you read aloud.
3. Incorporate the *dialogic reading method* throughout the story: Ask children what is happening on the page. Ask them to predict what they think might happen next. Ask about the various objects and actions of the page and story.
4. When you're finished reading the book, ask the students, "*Did anyone have a favorite part of the story?*" Let 3–4 students share aloud.
5. Give students materials for drawing: paper, crayons/markers, pens, and pencils. Depending on children's skills, give one or more of the following options for the follow-up activity:
 - For students with a limited skill set, encourage them to use the writing materials by scribbling and attempting to draw simple shapes and to write letters.
 - Ask students to make a picture showing their favorite part of the story.

- As students are finishing, ask them if anyone drew a picture of the words on the vocabulary list introduced earlier. Help students label those words on their drawings to encourage writing.
- Students who are capable of writing and drawing can copy the vocabulary words and draw a corresponding picture to match each word.

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Keep your students engaged in the story by using some simple strategies:

- Make sure you read the book so that all students can see the pictures.
- Use different voices for different characters.
- Have different children turn the page for you.

Wrap-Up



3–5 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Ask 2–3 students to share their pictures and any words they wrote down to label their drawings with the class.

Wave Goodbye Song

Wave high. Wave low.

I think it's time, we gotta go.

Wave your elbows. Wave your toes.

Wave your tongue and wave your nose.

Wave your knees. Wave your lips.

Blow a kiss, with fingertips.

Wave your ears. Wave your hair.

Wave your belly and derriere.

Wave your chin. Wave your eye.

Wave your hand and say "goodbye."

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

The tune for “Wave Goodbye Song” is unique. Create your own tune, with gestures to go along with the words.

Reflection, Action Planning, and Ideas

Take a moment to reflect on what you have learned in this chapter, what questions you still have about print knowledge and awareness, and what items you would like to research and learn about further. Create an action plan for implementing a lesson on print awareness and knowledge in your classroom.

PCV Exercise: Reflection on Print Awareness and Knowledge

What I've learned

Questions I still have

Results of my research

PCV Exercise: Action Planning to Teach Print Awareness and Knowledge

Action

By Whom

By Date

e.g., Create lesson plan

Super PCV

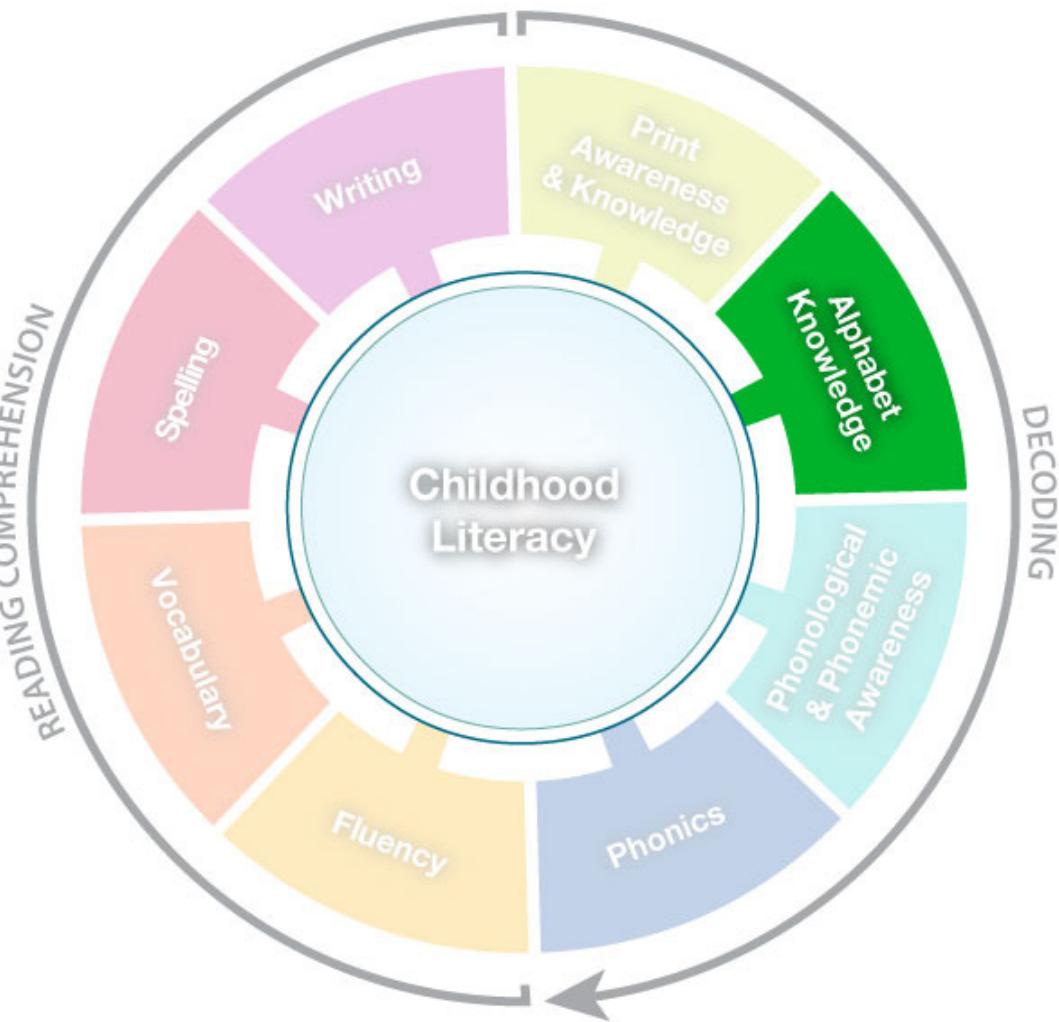
Next Friday, October 1

PCV Exercise: Add your own print awareness and knowledge activities.

Use this space to come up with your own great ideas about how to teach print awareness and knowledge to students at your site.

Remember to send your great ideas and activities that have shown promise to the OPATS literacy specialist at Literacy@peacecorps.gov.

Chapter 2: Alphabet Knowledge



The concept of alphabet knowledge is explained and illustrated in this chapter through the use of the English language. You may need to make adjustments for the language of instruction at your school or for the language that the students think in—most often their first language—particularly if that language does not have an official alphabet or the language has no orthography.

Scenario

Stephen is a PCV working as a literacy educator in a primary school in rural Dominican Republic. Upon arriving to his site, Stephen began to notice the significant lack of print in his community and school. After taking steps to improve the availability of print by posting an alphabet line in his classroom, labeling objects in the classroom with his students, and using song charts during his lessons, Stephen has noticed that his students have started to show progress with the basic concept of print awareness and knowledge. More students are now able to demonstrate this understanding by going to the labeled objects in their classroom, pointing to a label, and saying the name of an object.

*Stephen recently began teaching the individual letters of the alphabet to his students by showing letter-object associations. For example, he shows students the letter **m** with a picture of a table and says, “**m** is for **mesa**.” But when he shows the students only the letter **m** and asks, “What letter is this?” only a few of the students give the correct answer, while a few others respond, “**mesa**.”*

*Stephen has also observed that, of his students who are able to identify some specific letters, many times they become confused by the letter’s orientation. When showing the lowercase **d**, students may say it looks like the letter **b**.*

Understanding Alphabet Knowledge

Alphabet knowledge is a simple concept, but an important step in a child’s literacy development. **Alphabet knowledge is naming the letters of the alphabet and recognizing the letter symbols in print.** It does not include identifying the letter sounds (we’ll explore that in Chapters 3 and 4). Recognizing letters in the alphabet has been identified as one of the most accurate predictors of early reading success. In order to learn to read, a child must know most of his or her letters, although knowing all of them is not necessary in the earliest stages.

Cracking the Alphabet Code

As children gain print awareness, they begin to make a connection between spoken language and print. At this level of understanding, students may be able to understand that the word **dog** represents a furry four-legged animal that barks. However, they may not yet understand that the written word **dog** is made up of three separate letters: **d-o-g**.

With *alphabet knowledge*, a child must become familiar with these finite symbols that make up their written language. In other words, they learn to understand *each separate element, or letter/character* that makes up their language’s special written code (if their language is indeed written).

Refer back to the anecdote at the beginning of this chapter. When Stephen asks his students to identify the letter **m**, few students demonstrate their understanding of alphabet knowledge and are able to correctly identify the letter. Those students understand that it is associated with that particular symbol, **m**, and do not say the word **mesa**.

What can Stephen do to help students learn to discriminate between each finite letter that makes up a word? Consider the following:

- Point to each letter in the word, **m-e-s-a**, identifying each one as separate from the others; only when they are combined together in this specific way do they make up the word **mesa**.
- Only show the letter **m**. Give examples of other words that begin with this letter to break the association students may have created in their minds through the **mesa** example.
- Begin to emphasize the beginning sounds of words that begin with the same letter. Example: “**mmm-esa, mmm-ano, mmm-adre** all begin with the letter **m**.” Establishing this connection will make it easier to transition to the concept introduced in Chapter 3 (Phonological and Phonemic Awareness).

Letter Orientation

One of the most confusing aspects for children learning the alphabet is to understand that a letter's orientation to space is important. While a toy car is still a toy car no matter its orientation in space, the same is not true for letters of the alphabet. Take for example the letter **M** in the English alphabet. Turn it upside-down and it becomes the letter **W**. In the example above with Stephen, his students confuse letter **d** with **b**. Flip that upside-down, and they become **q** and **p**. These letters share the same shape, but the orientations in which they are presented are important in understanding what each symbol represents.

More confusing still are instances when schools teach the alphabet of a language other than that of students' mother language. It is confusing in large part because the students often cannot make the connection between the symbols and their meaning in this new language. Also, students in this case do not necessarily have the requisite background knowledge to make the leap between two or more languages. For PCVs who serve in a region where a language does not have a written script, or the orthography is still developing, consult with your associate Peace Corps director about how to proceed with a bilingual approach. Although the use of print and text to teach literacy is limited in these instances, incorporating the oral use of a child's home language can be beneficial in helping a student relate to new vocabulary and understand meaning if lessons are taught in a language other than the one primarily used in the child's home and community.

PCV Exercise: English Alphabet and Your Host Country's Alphabet

Before going into your classroom to teach the letters of the alphabet, take this time to write out the letters of the English alphabet and the letters of your host country's language. Compare any differences/similarities between the two and reflect on how you will teach alphabet knowledge in your classrooms. Always consult with a native speaker before teaching new skills to your students.

Write the letters of the English alphabet below:

Write the letters of your host country language's alphabet below:

Are there differences between the two? Are there similarities? If so, list them here:

Identify letters you think may confuse children based on similar shapes and different orientations.

What strategies will you/have you tried to help students understand the concept of alphabet knowledge?

From Print Awareness to Alphabet Knowledge: Your Community Is a Classroom!

Much like print awareness and knowledge, alphabet knowledge skills can be gained in a child's natural environment in addition to a classroom setting. Take advantage of the time you spend with your students and children in your community, neighborhood, or compound to identify teachable moments promoting alphabet knowledge. Here are some simple ideas for teaching print awareness and knowledge and alphabet knowledge outside the traditional classroom setting:

1. Go on a scavenger hunt around your village in search of print. Ask children if they can identify the letters they find. Point out letters and read the words aloud, identifying the association between the printed word and what it stands for to increase understanding of printed words and their meanings.
2. If children visit you at your home, show them the books you are reading, tell them what you enjoy about the stories, and talk about what you are learning. Use print around your home to illustrate how you gain information from text – you can even use your Peace Corps training materials to tell them what you have been learning about your host country during pre-service training and in-service training. Ask the children to tell you more about their community and write it down as they tell you.
3. Ask children to draw a picture about their favorite story or a time they felt very happy. As they tell you about the picture, label different parts of their drawing for them, spelling out the words as you write them in your host country's language. Depending on the child's language and storytelling skills, as well as your ability to write in the local language, you could have each child narrate a story about his or her picture while you record his or her words.

Alphabet Knowledge and Writing

There is some debate among educators working with the Roman alphabet as to whether it is best to initially use lowercase or uppercase letters when teaching young children how to write. The argument for beginning with lowercase letters assumes that because lowercase letters are more commonly seen and used in writing, it makes sense to introduce them to children first. The argument in favor of uppercase letters points to the development of young children's fine motor skills and the ease of writing uppercase letters first, since they contain fewer curves and are easier to replicate. (See [handout](#) at the end of this chapter.)

Take your cues from your host country counterparts to prevent mixed messages to the children you work with and, if appropriate, you could err on the side of caution by introducing both—emphasizing that proper nouns, names, locations, and those words that begin sentences all begin with uppercase letters in most scripts (but not all!).

When selecting a font or typeface to use as visual aids for early readers, keep simplicity in mind and pay special attention to the letter **Aa**; most fonts utilize the more stylized version of the lowercase **a** (including the font used for this paragraph). Select fonts that use the simplest, and easiest to read versions of the letters in your alphabet of instruction.

The examples below show different fonts that use the simple version of lowercase **a** and vary in style. According to guidance released by USAID, the recommended typeface to use for teaching basic writing skills in the early grades is **Andika**, which is available for free download on several public websites.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. (MV Boli)

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. (Comic Sans MS)

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. (Andika)

Activities

Below are suggested activities to build alphabet knowledge with your students. This list is organized according to what resources may be available to you at your site. Please note that not all of these activities will be appropriate for all PCVs. It is important for you to assess what materials and resources you can utilize in your lesson plans, decide which activities make sense for you and your students, and determine how to make the best use of what you have. (For additional resource creation strategies, please refer to the two sessions commonly used in PST, "Materials Design" and "Limited Resources".)

No/Low Resources

Activity: Alphabet Search/Alphabet Scavenger Hunt

Implementation

Accompany your students on a walk around your home, school, neighborhood, or community in search of individual letters and print. Encourage students to look in books, magazines, on food containers, bath products, etc. Send students on a mission to find a certain letter and report back to the class where they found the letter or how many times they found that particular letter.

Resources Needed

Time to accompany students around your home, school, neighborhood, or community.

Things to Keep in Mind

If you live in a community with low print prevalence, this activity may best be done at your home, if it's appropriate in your community (or with permission from your host family, if applicable), where you are likely to have more print available or where you can "hide" print.

Activity: Fine Motor Practice with Rocks

Implementation

Ask students to collect small rocks, pebbles, or shells from outside. Focus on introducing one letter at a time, showing the students the letter and a picture of an object that begins with that letter, then describe how that letter is written (e.g., "To write letter **A**, start at the top and draw one diagonal line down to the left, go back to the top of that line and connect another diagonal line down to the right. Then draw a line straight across to connect the two diagonal lines.") Then ask the students to use their pebbles or rocks to create that letter on their desk or a table, or at their workspace.

Resources Needed

Small pebbles, rocks, or shells, and containers to hold them (optional)

Things to Keep in Mind

Sensory activities (activities that appeal to the senses) are important in children's development. Learning through the senses can encourage development of attention, coordination, and other important skills. This particular letter writing activity can help to strengthen children's fine motor skills, building the small muscles in the hands that will support later writing. If students are unable to use the small rocks or pebbles to create letter shapes, encourage them to work on picking up one pebble at a time and placing them in different patterns and shapes.

Activity: Making Letters With Your Body/Body ABC

Implementation

Show children how to make shapes of different letters with your body, using arms, legs, and head to create different parts of the letters. (Think of the song "YMCA" and the movements that go along as an example.) Choose about 10 different letters, either writing each letter on the chalkboard for students to animate with their body, or call the letter aloud if students are more familiar with the alphabet.

Resources Needed

Chalk and chalkboard, or letter cards if using a visual prompt for the students

Things to Keep in Mind

Be sure to indicate if you want students to create the uppercase or lowercase version of the letter. For older students and students with more mastery of the alphabet, assign each participant a letter and have them work together to organize themselves in alphabetical order where they will create their assigned letter with their bodies. If a digital camera and printer are available to you, take a picture and print it out to add to the alphabet resource area of your classroom.

Basic Resources

Activity: Alphabet Flash Cards

Implementation

Create flash cards, one for each letter of the alphabet, showing uppercase and lowercase letters. Draw a picture on the back of an object that begins with the letter on each card.

Resources Needed

Notecards, scrap paper, recycled cardboard, and pens, markers, or crayons

Things to Keep in Mind

These cards will also be useful in encouraging subsequent literacy skills, such as phonemic awareness (Chapter 3).

Activity: "I Am Here" Chart

Implementation

Create a chart for students to have meaningful experiences in writing their names by using a daily sign-in or "I Am Here" chart. Provide a space on the chalkboard for students to sign in each morning, or provide a piece of paper where students can write their names independently or trace over their pre-printed names.

Resources Needed

Paper and markers, or chalk and chalkboard

Things to Keep in Mind

Allow for younger children or students less familiar with writing to trace over letters you have written to increase their confidence with writing. As students become more confident, let them trace over dashed letters, then work toward independent writing.

Activity: Creating Sensory Letters

Implementation

On index cards or cardboard cutouts, use glue to write out one letter on each card. Sprinkle sand on top of the glue and let it dry.

Resources Needed

Index cards or cardboard pieces, glue, sand

Things to Keep in Mind

This activity can provide sensory input for children, as they trace their fingers over the dried letters.

Medium Resources

Activity: Letters in a Basket

Implementation

Place plastic letter magnets or letter cutouts in a basket with a variety of common objects. Have children pick out all of the letters. For less experienced children, say the letters aloud for them. For more skilled students, ask them to identify the letter and to pair the letter with an object in the basket that begins with the same letter.

Resources Needed

Plastic letters, letter magnets, letters written inside bottle caps, or alphabet cutouts

(Cutouts can be made from recycled cardboard, construction paper, or thick leaves.)

Things to Keep in Mind

Be sure to discriminate between uppercase and lowercase letters, if applicable to your host country language.

Activity: Writing Tasks

Implementation

Demonstrate how to write one letter at a time on the chalkboard (be sure to face the chalkboard while writing to demonstrate correct form). Show students the uppercase and lowercase version of the letter and give examples of words that begin with that letter. Ask students to practice writing that letter and to draw pictures of the words you came up with.

Resources Needed

Chalkboard, paper, pencils, crayons, markers

Things to Keep in Mind

Encourage younger children and students newer to writing and drawing to simply make scribbles on their paper to build confidence in writing. Give encouragement, such as, "Good job, look at how well you're holding your pencil!" or "I see that those scribbles are starting to look like letters and words ... this one here looks like the letter 'A' if you put a line straight across the middle."

Print Resources

Activity: Alphabet Storybook

Implementation

Find a book with a focus on the letters of the alphabet (or create your own). Be sure to write each letter on a separate page. Read the story aloud, showing students the letters and pictures of objects that begin with each letter.

Resources Needed

Picture book, storybook, or self-created book*

To create a book, you can use:

- Paper
- Markers/crayons
- Tape or staples to bind the book together
- Pictures cut out from magazines or newspapers

Things to Keep in Mind

Examples for English alphabet storybooks:

- Dr. Seuss's ABC: An Amazing Alphabet Book!
- The Alphabet Book, by P.D. Eastman
- Chicka Chicka Boom Boom, by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault

If you create your own book, you may choose to use letters from a magazine or newspaper or write each letter on blank paper.

Sample Lesson Plans

Below are three sample lesson plans, organized according to availability of resources. These lessons draw from the sample activities provided in the previous section. Also included are examples of songs to welcome students, suggestions for transitions, and ideas to end your lesson. Depending on how much time you have to facilitate your sessions, you may or may not choose to sing a song after each lesson. Alternatively, you may choose to repeat songs over a span of multiple sessions to help students develop familiarity with the activities and build confidence in participation. Refer to and utilize the **Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes** section to see how you can increase the complexity of the activities depending on what resources you have available, and to add notes for yourself about how you will implement the different activities.

No. 1: No/Low Resource Lesson Plan

Welcome and Opening Songs

 (5–7 minutes)

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Learning Names Song

*Oh here we are together, together, together
Oh here we are together all sitting on the floor

Here's _____, and _____, and _____, and, _____
Oh here we are together all sitting on the floor.*

The Alphabet Song

Sing "The Alphabet Song" with your students, utilizing an alphabet line in your classroom if available.

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

The tune for "Learning Names Song" is "Did You Ever See a Lassie?"

Fill in blanks with students' names and repeat until all names are said.

The tune for "The Alphabet Song" is "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" (or the tune used to sing the alphabet in your host country language).

Transition to Main Activity

 2 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Say, "Today we will be learning the first letter of our names. We will be using our name cards to see whose names begin with the same letter."

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Refer to the name cards you created from Chapter 1.

Main Activity

 10–15 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

1. Begin with an example: "*Here is my name card. My name is Julie. J-u-l-i-e. Who can tell me what the first letter of my name is?* [Pause for responses from students.] *My name begins with the letter J.*"
2. Refer to the alphabet flash cards created from the Activities section above. "*Here is the card for letter J. We have big J, and a little j. When we write our names, we always use a big letter at the beginning of the name to show that this person is important.*" Point this out using a few more students' name cards as examples.
3. Separate students into small groups (optional) and ask them to look at their own name cards. Ask for two or three children to each identify the first letter of his or her name.
4. Have children look at the name card of a neighbor. Can anyone tell the class what letter your neighbor's name starts with?
5. Ask students to look at their group mates' name cards. Do any children have names that begin with the same letter?
6. Choose 4–5 letters and ask students to raise their hands if their names begin with that letter. Then ask all students to make that letter with their body [see activity called "Making Letters with Your Body" in the section above].

Wrap-Up

 3–5 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Ask students the following questions:

- "When we write our names or the names of other people, do we use an uppercase or lowercase letter at the beginning?"
- "*Raise your hand if the first letter of your name is the same as someone else's.* [Pick a pair of students to use as an example.] *Michel and Maya have the same first letter M. Mmmm-ichel and Mmmm-aya. They each have the same first letter in their name and that also makes the beginning of their names sound the same. We will learn more about letters and their sounds in our next class.*"

Collect name cards from students for next session according to the first letter of their names. Tell everyone they did a good job and sing a closing song.

Bye Bye Goodbye⁴

*Bye bye. Goodbye.
Bye, bye, bye, bye. Goodbye.*

I can clap my hands.

⁴ Reprinted with permission from Super Simple Learning, www.supersimplelearning.com.

I can stamp my feet.

I can clap my hands.

I can stamp my feet.

Bye bye. Goodbye.

Bye, bye, bye, bye. Goodbye.

Bye bye. Goodbye.

Bye, bye, bye, bye. Goodbye.

GOODBYE!

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Sing "Bye Bye Goodbye" (tune unique, you can create your own) or choose to repeat the "[Wave Goodbye Song](#)" (from Chapter 1).

No. 2: Basic-Medium Resources

Welcome and Opening Songs



Activities and Suggested Scripts

Learning Names Song

Oh here we are together, together, together

Oh here we are together, all sitting on the floor

Here's _____, and _____, and _____, and, _____

Oh here we are together, all sitting on the floor.

The Alphabet Song

Sing "The Alphabet Song" with your students, utilizing an alphabet line in your classroom, if available.

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

The tune for "Learning Names Song" is "Did You Ever See a Lassie?"

Fill in blanks with students' names and repeat until all names are said.

The tune for "The Alphabet Song" is "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" (or the tune used to sing the alphabet in your host country language).

Transition to Main Activity

 2 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Say, “Today we will be learning the first letter of our names. We will be using our name cards to see what letters make up our names. Then you can draw a picture of yourself and write your name next to your picture.”

Helpful Hints & Facilitator’s Notes

Refer to the student name cards you created from Chapter 1.

Introduce materials you will be using:

- Name cards
- Pencils/pens/crayons
- Paper

Main Activity

 10–15 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

1. Begin with an example: “Here is my name card. My name is Julie. J-u-l-i-e. Who can tell me what the first letter of my name is?” [Pause for responses from students.] “My name begins with the letter **J**.”
“When we write our names, we always use a big letter at the beginning of the name to show that this person is important.”
2. Separate children into small groups (optional) and pass out children’s name cards. Ask if anyone can identify the first letter of his or her name. For more skilled students, ask if they can say all of the letters that make up their names.
3. Ask students to trace the letters on their name card with their index finger.
4. Have students draw a self-portrait, using their notebook, on their slate, or with a piece of paper and a pencil. Students can write their names underneath if they are able.
5. Encourage younger students or less experienced students to use their name cards as a guide. Allow them to write their name as many times as they like.

Helpful Hints & Facilitator’s Notes

Point out uppercase letters vs. lowercase letters using several name cards as examples.

Wrap-Up

 3–5 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Ask students the following questions:

- “When we write our names or the names of other people, do we use an uppercase or lowercase letter at the beginning?”
- “Raise your hand if the first letter of your name is the same as someone else’s.” Pick a pair of students to use as an example. “Michel and Maya have the same first letter **M**. Mmmm-ichel and Mmmm-aya. They each have the same first letter in their name and that also makes the beginning of their names sound the same! We will learn more about letters and their sounds in our next class.”

Collect name cards from students for the next session according to the first letter of their names. Tell everyone they did a good job and sing a closing song.

Bye Bye Goodbye

Bye bye. Goodbye.

Bye, bye, bye, bye. Goodbye.

I can clap my hands.

I can stamp my feet.

I can clap my hands.

I can stamp my feet.

Bye bye. Goodbye.

Bye, bye, bye, bye. Goodbye.

Bye bye. Goodbye.

Bye, bye, bye, bye. Goodbye.

GOODBYE!

Helpful Hints & Facilitator’s Notes

Sing “Bye Bye Goodbye” (tune unique, you can create your own) or choose to repeat “Wave Goodbye Song” (from Chapter 1).

No. 3: Print Resources

Welcome and Opening Songs

⌚ 5–7 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Learning Names Song

Oh here we are together, together, together

Oh here we are together all sitting on the floor

Here’s _____, and _____, and _____, and _____

Oh here we are together, all sitting on the floor.

The Alphabet Song

Sing “The Alphabet Song” with your students, utilizing an alphabet line in your classroom, if available.

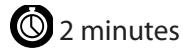
Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

The tune for "Learning Names Song" is "Did You Ever See a Lassie?"

Fill in blanks with students' names and repeat until all names are said.

The tune for "The Alphabet Song" is "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star" (or the tune used to sing the alphabet in your host country language).

Transition to Main Activity



Activities and Suggested Scripts

Say, "*Today we will be reading a book about the alphabet. Each letter in the alphabet will have a word or picture that goes along with it. Listen for the first letter of your name and some of the things in the book that begin with the same letter.*"

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

See [Activities](#) section above for suggestions for English alphabet books.

Main Activity



Activities and Suggested Scripts

1. Introduce the book to the students. Show them the front cover and back cover. On the front cover, identify the book's title (name of the book), author (who wrote the words), and illustrator (who drew the pictures).
2. Read the book aloud, ensuring all students can see the pictures on each page. Follow the text with your finger as you read aloud.
3. Ask students to write letters in the air with their fingers as you go through the alphabet to keep them actively engaged.
4. At the end of the book, have students write the first letter of their name (uppercase and lowercase) on their paper.
5. Ask students to recall the words in the book that had the same first letter as their name. Allow students time to draw a picture of those objects, as well as any other objects that begin with the same letter.
6. Encourage younger students or less experienced students to simply draw or scribble with their drawing materials. Allow more experienced students to write their name as many times as they like.
7. Pass the book around for students to look more closely at the pages and to practice good book handling and letter recognition and to gain ideas for their drawings.

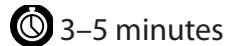
Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Example for *Dr. Seuss's ABC: An Amazing Alphabet Book!*:

Ask each student to write at the bottom of their paper: "Big ____ Little ____ What begins with ____ ? _____" (This pattern of verse is repeated throughout the book, so students will likely have become familiar with it by the end of the read-aloud.) Have students use their names as an example. Ask each student to fill in the first letter of his or her name in the letter blanks and his or her name in the blank after the question.

e.g., Big **S** Little **s**. What begins with **S**? **Stephen**

Wrap-Up



3–5 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Ask 2–3 students to share their drawings and any words they wrote down that begin with the same first letter of their name with the class. End with a song.

Bye Bye Goodbye

Bye bye. Goodbye.

Bye, bye, bye, bye. Goodbye.

I can clap my hands.

I can stamp my feet.

I can clap my hands.

I can stamp my feet.

Bye bye. Goodbye.

Bye, bye, bye, bye. Goodbye.

Bye bye. Goodbye.

Bye, bye, bye, bye. Goodbye.

GOODBYE!

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Sing "Bye Bye Goodbye" (tune unique, you can create your own) or choose to repeat "Wave Goodbye Song" (from Chapter 1).

Reflection, Action Planning, and Ideas

Take a moment to reflect on what you have learned in this chapter, what questions you still have about alphabet knowledge, and what items you would like to research and learn about further. Create an action plan for implementing a lesson on alphabet knowledge in your classroom.

PCV Exercise: Reflection on Alphabet Knowledge

PCV Exercise: Action Planning to Teach Alphabet Knowledge

Action	By Whom	By Date
e.g., Create lesson plan	Super PCV	Next Friday, October 1

PCV Exercise: Add Your Own Alphabet Knowledge Activities

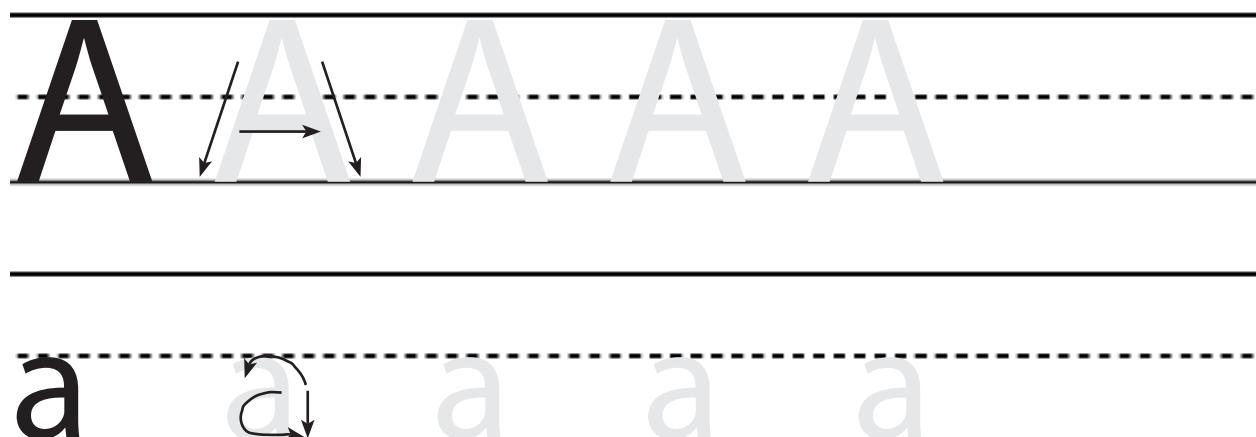
Use this space to come up with your own great ideas about how to teach alphabet knowledge to students at your site.

Remember to send your great ideas and activities that have shown promise to the OPATS literacy specialist at Literacy@peacecorps.gov.

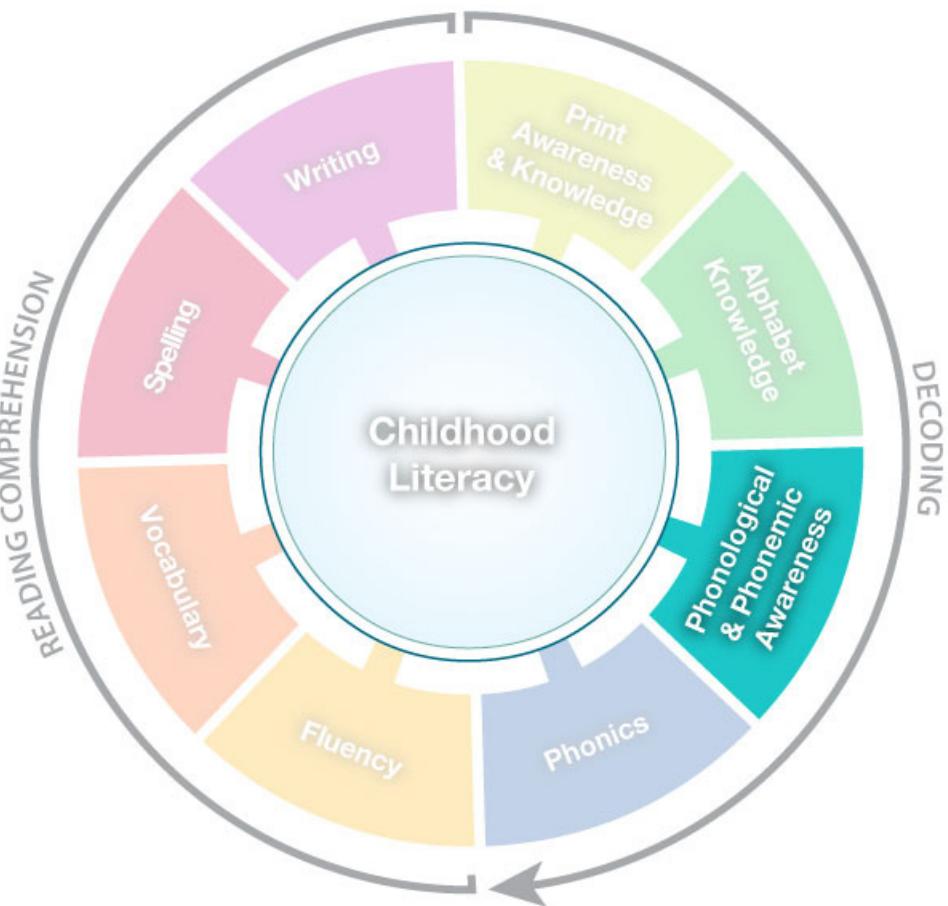
Handout: How to Write the Letter A

Name _____ Date _____

A a



Chapter 3: Phonological and Phonemic Awareness



Scenario

PCV Heather has been encouraged by her students' progress at her primary school site. After about a month of systematically adding printed materials to her classroom, and helping her students gain a better understanding of the letters of the alphabet, Heather feels ready to move forward in her lesson planning to help her students decode, but she is unsure about how to progress into the next phase of teaching literacy.

She takes a few days to observe the teachers at her school during their language arts lessons. The teachers have been excited by the idea that Heather has introduced new materials to the school and had even asked her to create some for their classrooms, to supplement the standard curriculum the Ministry of Education requires all teachers to follow.

As Heather observes one of her counterparts, a third-grade teacher, she notices the teacher is incorporating the alphabet line and name cards that Heather gave her. During the lesson Heather sits in on, she watches as the teacher uses phonics flashcards in her lesson on phonological and phonemic awareness. The teacher is using an example in which she is breaking up the different sounds that make up the word **cat**. The teacher holds up a card with the phonetic pronunciation. What the children see on the flashcard is:

/k/ /a/ /t/

The teacher points to each phoneme and asks the students, "How many syllables does the word **cat** have? Three. /k/-/a/-/t/."

The teacher is confusing syllables with phonemes and Heather worries this will confuse the students as well. Heather wonders how to help the teacher think differently about what she is trying to teach the students.

Phonological and Phonemic Awareness

In the scenario above, the third-grade teacher was confusing *syllables*, the number of sound segments in a word, with *phonemes*, the units of sound that make up a word. This is an easy mistake to make; there are many new concepts to understand in order to most effectively teach literacy. Take the time to familiarize yourself with new concepts presented in this chapter. Where you are confused, take notes and reach out to your fellow PCVs, counterparts, or associate Peace Corps director with questions and feedback.

The term **phonological awareness** refers to a person's ability to recognize how sounds function in words. It is an umbrella term and under which the terms **phonemic awareness**, **syllables**, **onsets**, and **rimes** fall.



Phonemic awareness is the understanding of the smallest sound units in words and deals with only one aspect of sound: the *phoneme*.

A **phoneme** is the smallest unit of sound in a language that holds meaning. Almost all words are made up of a number of phonemes blended together.

e.g., The word **cat** has three phonemes: /k/ /a/ /t/

Syllables are the number of speech sounds in a word.

e.g., The word **cat** has one syllable.

Onsets are the beginning sounds of syllables.

e.g., Onset for **cat** is /k/.

Rimes are the sounds of a syllable following the onset.

e.g., Rime for **cat** is /-at/.

While the terms *phonological awareness* and *phonemic awareness* look quite similar, and the two are often used interchangeably, it's important to note that there are slight distinctions between them: *Phonological awareness* is one of the best predictors of later reading success; it is a broader skill set in which students understand the importance of sounds in words. *Phonemic awareness* is just one aspect of phonological awareness.

PCV Exercise: Name that P.A.!

Read through each of the examples below and decide if the skill described falls under the umbrella of phonological awareness or the more specific understanding of phonemic awareness. (See answer key below.)

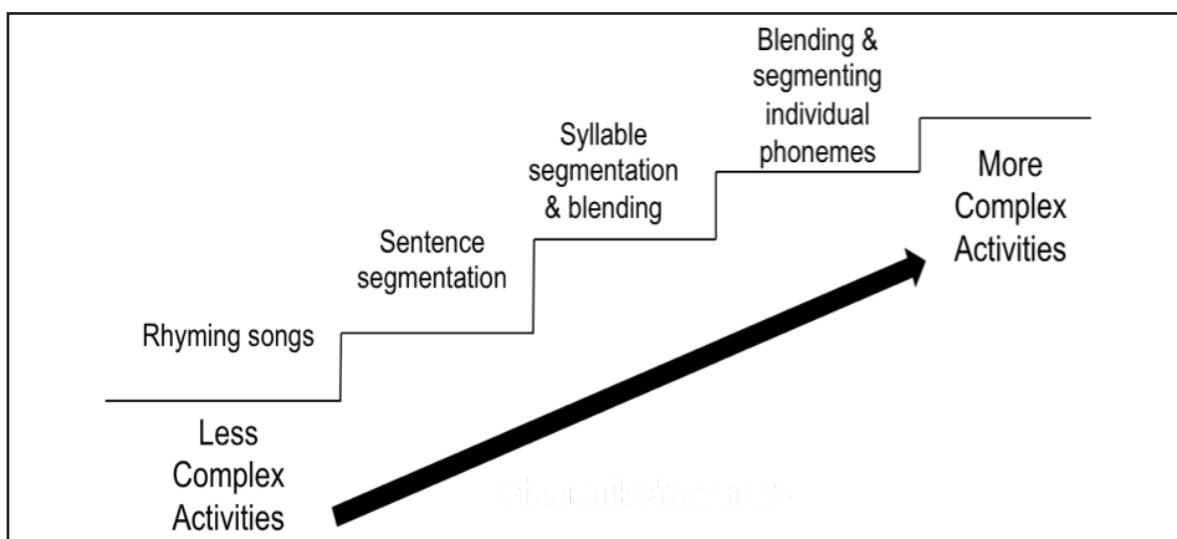
	Phonological Awareness	Phonemic Awareness
1. Ability to identify that a sentence is made up of words	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Ability to identify how many different sounds make up the word happy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Ability to break the word cardboard into its syllables	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Ability to blend the separate phoneme sounds /k/ /a/ /t/ to say the word cat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(Answer Key: 1. Phonological awareness, 2. Phonemic awareness, 3. Phonological awareness, 4. Phonemic awareness)

The Sequence of Understanding Phonological and Phonemic Awareness

Recent research suggests a developmental sequence for phonological awareness that proceeds from word awareness, to syllable awareness, to onset-rime awareness, to phoneme awareness.⁵ As children develop emergent literacy, they progress from larger units of sound to smaller and smaller units of sound—that is, from 1) words in a sentence to, 2) syllables in words, to 3) sounds in syllables, to 4) the smallest units of sound.

Teachers should begin teaching in this sequence, but also should realize there is overlap between levels. It is important to know that you do not have to wait until all of the children in your classroom have mastered one level before moving on to the next one. Also, some children may master a more complex level before mastering a level that is easier.



This chapter will follow the sequence described in the chart above, focusing on providing you with activities that you can facilitate in your classrooms to promote each level of phonological awareness. As phonological and phonemic awareness focuses more on the *sounds of words* (and not the print that visually represents those words), many of the activities provided require little to no material resources. As such, your focus when teaching should be on allowing students to develop the *oral language skills* required to dissect the phonemes that make up words and sounds. Students will need to develop a keen ability to *listen* for sounds, and must practice the appropriate *pronunciation* of those sounds.

Rhyming

Rhyming activities can help children come to understand different sounds and *phonemes* (sounds that make up words). Rhyming helps children learn to differentiate sounds that rhyme while learning to understand the similarities between word endings, such as **car** and **far**.

Rhyme recognition is a skill in which a child can identify if two or more words end in the same sound. (e.g., "Which word rhymes with **mat?** **Mop** or **bat?**")

⁵ Lonigan, Christopher J. 2008. "Successful Phonological Awareness Instruction With Preschool Children: Lessons From the Classroom." *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*. Vol. 28, No. 1. <http://tecse.sagepub.com>, hosted at <http://online.sagepub.com>

Rhyme generation is a skill in which a child can generate a real word or fictional word that rhymes with another word provided. (e.g., “What is a word that rhymes with the word **play**?” Child responds with a word that ends in the sound */-ay/*.)

Activity: Nursery Rhymes and Rhyming Songs

Implementation

Introduce children to one nursery rhyme or song at a time. Refer back to Chapter 1 about creating charts to accompany each rhyme or song. Incorporate gestures or movements to encourage the students to actively participate.

Resources Needed

Knowledge of words and lyrics to rhymes and songs

Paper and markers/pens/crayons to create song charts

Things to Keep in Mind

You can use nursery rhymes or songs from examples provided in the chapters throughout this manual, provide your own, or use a local rhyme popular in your village, compound, or community. If these do not exist, create an original song or chant about your school or your community.

Once children become familiar with the rhymes or songs you introduce, begin to encourage rhyme recognition and rhyme generation.

For **rhyme recognition**, say or sing along with the students until you get to the word that will rhyme with the word in the previous verse or line. Ask students which word goes there, and give the options of a rhyming word and non-rhyming word for them to choose from.

Example:

I'm a Little Teapot

I'm a little teapot, short and stout

Here is my handle (one hand on hip),

*here is my _____ (ask students, “**spout** or **arm**?")*

For **rhyme generation**, say or sing along with the students until you get to the word that will rhyme with the word in the previous verse or line. Ask students what word should go there.

Example:

I'm a Little Teapot

When I get all steamed up, hear me shout

Just tip me over and pour me _____! (Prompt students to fill in the blank. If they need a hint, say, “The correct answer rhymes with: stout, spout, and shout.”)

Activity: What Rhymes With ... ?

Implementation

Play this fill-in-the-blank game with your students. Ask one child at a time, "What rhymes with _____?" Choose from a variety of categories:

- Child's name
- School
- Objects
- Places
- Family members
- Or select any other word that comes to mind

Resources Needed

No material resources necessary.

Things to Keep in Mind

This activity focuses on rhyme generation. If children are close to but still struggling with generating rhyming words, provide two options for them to choose from (a rhyming word vs. a non-rhyming word). For students not yet ready for rhyme generation activities, help students with rhyme recognition by focusing on the ending sounds of rhyming words until this skill is well established. If a child still needs additional assistance with understanding rhyming, ask him or her to repeat a few rhyming words with you, stressing the same ending sounds of the different words. This is where listening skill development comes in: Some children might need to listen many times to grasp the distinctions you are making. Be sure to ask if they can hear that the two words end in the same sound. Be generous with your encouragement as students learn this skill.

Activity: Rhyming Picture Cards

Implementation

Show children picture cards of objects, people, or places with which they are familiar. Use the cards to either have the children match cards whose corresponding words rhyme with each other (rhyme recognition), or go through each card and ask students to come up with words that rhyme with each picture you show them.

Resources Needed

Index cards, magazine cutouts of pictures, or draw your own pictures using markers, pens, or crayons

Things to Keep in Mind

This activity can be used for both rhyme recognition (matching cards with objects that rhyme) and rhyme generation (asking students to think of a word that rhymes with the object on a card you show them).

Sentence Segmentation

Children learn how to segment sentences into the words that make up a sentence. This helps children learn that words are distinct units; in combination with other words, a string of separate words together form a sentence.

Activity: Counting Words Game

Implementation

Practice counting from 1 to 10 with your students, laying out one counter (see **Resources Needed** below) at a time with each number you say aloud. Next, practice counting different objects around the classroom—e.g., desks, chairs, windows, bookshelves—until students can count reliably.

Then tell the students you will also be practicing to count the words in different sentences.

Say a short sentence aloud, such as “We like school.” Demonstrate by placing one counter down at a time with each word you say aloud. Ask students to follow along, using a few different sentences as examples.

Resources Needed

Up to 10 pebbles, stones, buttons, seashells, or other small counters for each student.

Things to Keep in Mind

Begin simply by choosing 3–4 word sentences, using monosyllabic words such as, “We eat lunch” or “I like to read.”

Once students become more comfortable with the activity, add complexity by including more words with multiple syllables.

If this proves too challenging, return to one- or two-syllable words until students have a better understanding, and gradually add difficulty.

Activity: Keyword Substitution

Implementation

Choose a song or chant that students are familiar with to “play” with the words in the song/chant. Create new lyrics that substitute words with small phonemic variations.

For example, in the first verse of the song “Open, Shut Them”:

[Open, shut them]

Open, shut them

Give a little clap, clap, clap]

The word **clap** can be changed to **flap**. Discuss how changing a phoneme changed the action in the first verse.

Resources Needed

Song chart (Use flip chart paper or poster board, or write the words on the blackboard.) You may choose to create an entirely new song chart with the substitute lyrics. Or, write the substitute words on cutout paper, cardboard, or poster board strips to tape over the original words on the song chart.

Things to Keep in Mind

This activity helps children learn the role that phonemes play in the meanings of words. Be explicit in pointing out that, while only one sound in the word has changed, the entire meaning of it, and the action associated with the word, has become entirely different. (e.g., Ask students to act out the words *clap* and *flap* for the example using the song “Open, Shut Them.”)

Syllable Segmentation and Blending

Syllable segmentation helps children to understand that the different sounds in a word make up the word as a whole. In syllable segmentation, the students learn to break words into syllables.

Syllable blending refers to the ability to identify a word when hearing the separate syllables of the word in isolation. For example, in a compound word such as **cupcake**, the two syllables /cup-/ and /-cake/ make up the entire word. The same can be done to segment other multisyllabic words, e.g., **cookie** /kuh-/ /-key/, **paper** /pay-/ /-per/, **banana** /buh-/ /-na-/ /-na/.

Activity: Syllable Clap/Tap and Variation

Implementation

Begin by having each child try to clap out his or her name. Ask each student to say how many syllables are in his or her name.

e.g., **Joanne: jo-anne (two claps); Pierre: pi-erre (two claps); Mamadou: ma-ma-dou (three claps).**

After determining the number of syllables in a name, ask children to hold two fingers horizontally under their chins, so they can feel the chin drop for each syllable. To maximize this effect, encourage the children to elongate or stretch each syllable.

Ask them to clap with you as you say some familiar words (use these or similar words that are familiar to the group):

Sunshine, cake, dog, mouse, alphabet, cat, butter, peanut, melon, dinner, elephant, television

Resources Needed

None

Things to Keep in Mind

At the beginning, keep it simple until students become familiar with syllable clapping/tapping.

Ask for volunteers to lead the class when you introduce new vocabulary.

The kinesthetic (body) connections with the word sounds encourage students to become actively engaged with the word. Once students begin to understand this activity, encourage them to practice this independently on a regular basis.

Other Variations

Use instruments to separate syllables: drums, legs, bells, and other percussion instruments are fun for children to use and can help them hear the syllables.

Tapping with fingers, hands, or an object such as a stick can be done as an alternative to clapping.

Activity: “Guess the Word” Blending Game

Implementation

Place a small number of picture cards face down in a stack, or on a desk/table. Tell students they are going to practice saying words using “Snail Talk,” a slow way of saying words (e.g., /fffffllllaaaag/). One child will come up at a time to randomly choose a picture card. He or she will look at the picture on his or her chosen card and use Snail Talk to say the word aloud to the class, focusing on separating each word out by syllable. The first student in the class to guess the word correctly will choose a picture card next and take a turn in front of the room.

Resources Needed

Picture cards of easily recognizable objects

Things to Keep in Mind

This activity is an example of how to teach students to blend and identify a word that is stretched out into its different syllables.

Blending and Segmenting Individual Phonemes

Learning to segment and blend individual phonemes can be difficult for students at first. This is the most complex part of the developmental sequence we discussed at the beginning of the chapter, as it focuses on the smallest units of spoken language, the *phoneme*.

Before teaching words to students, try to practice saying the words aloud by phoneme or even write out the word phonetically.

Activity: Finding Things—Initial Phonemes (Onsets)

Implementation

Spread a few picture cards out in the middle of a circle.

Select a few target onsets and ask students if they can identify which pictures have those beginning sounds.

As each picture is found, ask the students to say the name of the object on the picture and its initial phoneme. (e.g., **f-f-f-f-ish**, /f-f-f-f/, **fish**).

Resources Needed

Picture cards (create, or can be the same ones used in the picture cards Rhyming activity)

Things to Keep in Mind

This activity will help students learn to compare, contrast, and eventually identify the initial sounds of a variety of words.

As the children become more comfortable with the game, spread out picture cards from two different sets, asking the children to identify the name and initial phoneme of each picture and to sort them into two piles accordingly.

Additional small group activity: Distribute pictures to the children; each must identify the initial phoneme of his or her picture and put it in the corresponding pile. This game works well with small groups.

More advanced option: **Sound concentration**—Place picture cards face down in the middle of a circle. Children take turns flipping pairs of pictures right side up and deciding if the initial sounds of the pictures' names are the same. If the initial sounds match, the child collects the matching cards and selects another pair; otherwise, another child takes a turn. This game works well with small groups. For larger groups, make multiple sets of cards for smaller groups to play.

Activity: Segmentation Cheer

Implementation

Use the following sample song to lead a cheer.

Segmentation Cheer⁶

Listen to my cheer,

Then shout the sounds you hear.

Sun! Sun! Sun!*

Let's take apart the word sun.

Give me the beginning sound. (Children respond with /s/.)

Give me the middle sound. (Children respond with /u/.)

Give me the ending sound. (Children respond with /n/.)

That's right!

/s/ /u/ /n/ - Sun! Sun! Sun!

Resources Needed

No resources needed

Things to Keep in Mind

*In this example, the word sun is used. Replace this word with other words as you use different examples to teach segmentation.

⁶ Reprinted with permission from Reading Rockets, www.readingrockets.org

Activity: If You Think You Know This Word, Shout It Out!

Implementation

If You Think You Know This Word, Sound It Out!⁷

*If you think you know this word, sound it out!
If you think you know this word, sound it out!
If you think you know this word
Then tell me what you've heard
If you think you know this word, sound it out!*

After singing, the teacher says a segmented word such as /k/ /a/ /t/ and students provide the blended word **cat**.

Resources Needed

No resources needed

Things to Keep in Mind

Sung to the tune of "If You're Happy and You Know It, Clap Your Hands."

Sample Lesson Plans

Below are two sample lesson plans, organized according to availability of resources. These lessons draw from the sample activities provided in the previous section. Also included are examples of songs to welcome students, suggestions for transitions, and ideas to end your lesson. Depending on how much time you have to facilitate your sessions, you may or may not choose to sing a song after each lesson. Alternatively, you may choose to repeat songs over a span of multiple sessions to help students develop familiarity with the activities and build confidence in participation. Refer to and utilize the **Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes** section to see how you can increase the complexity of the activities depending on what resources you have available, and to add notes for yourself about how you will implement the different activities.

No. 1: No/Low Resource Lesson Plan

Welcome and Opening Songs

(⌚) (5–7 minutes)

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Stand Up and Take a Bow!

*If your name begins with the letter A
Stand up and take a bow!
If your name begins with the letter A
Stand up and take a bow!*

⁷ Reprinted with permission from Reading Rockets, www.readingrockets.org.

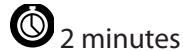
Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

No set tune for "Stand Up and Take a Bow"; make up your own unique way to sing or chant the words.

Go through the letters of the alphabet one at a time, or use alphabet flash cards to choose 5–10 letters randomly.

This song helps to reinforce the previous chapter's lesson on Alphabet Knowledge while familiarizing you with students' names.

Transition to Main Activity



Activities and Suggested Scripts

Say, "*Today we will be learning to count the sounds in words. Let's start with our names.*"

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Use students' names as examples.

Main Activity



Activities and Suggested Scripts

1. Begin with an example: "*My name is Heather. I'm going to clap with each part of my name. /Hea-/clap /-ther/ clap.* How many sounds does my name have? [Wait for responses] That's right! My name has two sounds!"
2. Have each child try to clap out his or her name. Ask each student to say how many syllables are in his or her name.
 - a. e.g., **Joanne:** jo-anne (two claps); **Pierre:** pi-erre (two claps); **Mamadou:** ma-ma-dou (three claps).
3. After determining the number of syllables in a name, ask children to hold two fingers horizontally under their chins so they can feel the chin drop for each syllable. To maximize this effect, encourage the children to elongate or stretch each syllable.
4. Ask them to clap with you as you say some familiar words (use these or similar words that are familiar to the group):
 - a. Sunshine, cake, dog, mouse, alphabet, cat, butter, peanut, melon, dinner, elephant, television

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Refer to the alphabet flash cards created from the Activities section above.

Wrap-Up



Activities and Suggested Scripts

Ask students the following questions:

- *Raise your hand if you have one sound in your name. Two sounds? Three sounds? More sounds?*
- *Which word has more sounds? [Choose from two words you introduced, e.g. sunshine or alphabet?]*

Tell everyone they have done a good job and sing a closing song.

Sing an Echo Song⁸

Ba-ba-ba (Ba-ba-ba)

Ba-ba-ba (Ba-ba-ba)

Mah-mah (Mah-mah)

Mah-mah (Mah-mah)

Go Go Go. (Go Go Go.)

Go Go Go. (Go Go Go.)

Co-Co- Co- co- nut. (Co-Co- Co- co- nut.)

Co-Co- Co- co- nut. (Co-Co- Co- co- nut.)

Choo-choo-choo. (Choo-choo-choo.)

Choo-choo-choo. (Choo-choo-choo.)

Shh-shh-shh. (Shh-shh-shh.)

Shh-shh-shh. (Shh-shh-shh.)

Da- da-da. (Da- da-da.)

Da- da-da. (Da- da-da.)

La-la-la. (La-la-la.)

La-la-la. (La-la-la.)

Bye-bye-bye (Bye-bye-bye.)

Bye-bye-bye (Bye-bye-bye.)

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

"Sing an Echo Song" can help reinforce learning about syllable sounds in words. There is no specific tune; create your own unique way of singing this song.

No. 2: Basic-Medium Resources

Welcome and Opening Songs

 5–7 minutes

⁸ Reprinted with permission from Margie La Bella, www.musictherapytunes.com.

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Stand Up and Take a Bow!

If your name begins with the letter A

Stand up and take a bow!

If your name begins with the letter A

Stand up and take a bow!

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

No set tune for "Stand Up and Take a Bow"; make up your own unique way to sing or chant the words.

Go through the letters of the alphabet one at a time, or use alphabet flash cards to choose 5–10 letters randomly.

This song helps to reinforce the previous chapter's lesson on Alphabet Knowledge while familiarizing you with students' names.

Transition to Main Activity

 2 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Say, "*Today we are going to learn to talk like snails—very slowly!—and practice blending together the sounds in words. Let's start with our names.*"

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Use students' names as examples.

Main Activity

 10–15 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Place a small number of picture cards face down in a stack, or on a desk/table. Tell students they are going to practice saying words using "Snail Talk," a slow way of saying words (e.g., /ffffflllllaag/). One child will come up at a time to randomly choose a picture card. They will look at the picture on their chosen card and use Snail Talk to say the word aloud to the class, focusing on separating each word out by syllable. The first student in the class to guess the word correctly will choose a picture card next and take a turn in front of the room.

Wrap-Up

 3–5 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Reinforce the main concept of the lesson by asking students to say the words of the objects on a few picture cards together by using Snail Talk. Tell everyone they've done a good job and sing a closing song.

Sing an Echo Song

Ba-ba-ba (Ba-ba-ba)

Ba-ba-ba (Ba-ba-ba)

Mah-mah (Mah-mah)

Mah-mah (Mah-mah)

Go Go Go. (Go Go Go.)

Go Go Go. (Go Go Go.)

Co-Co- Co- co- nut. (Co-Co- Co- co- nut.)

Co-Co- Co- co- nut. (Co-Co- Co- co- nut.)

Choo-choo-choo. (Choo-choo-choo.)

Choo-choo-choo. (Choo-choo-choo.)

Shh-shh-shh. (Shh-shh-shh.)

Shh-shh-shh. (Shh-shh-shh.)

Da- da-da. (Da- da-da.)

Da- da-da. (Da- da-da.)

La-la-la. (La-la-la.)

La-la-la. (La-la-la.)

Bye-bye-bye (Bye-bye-bye.)

Bye-bye-bye (Bye-bye-bye.)

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

"Sing an Echo Song" can help reinforce learning about syllable sounds in words. There is no specific tune; create your own unique way of singing this song.

Reflection, Action Planning, and Idea

Take a moment to reflect on what you have learned in this chapter, what questions you still have about phonological and phonemic awareness, and what items you would like to research and learn about further. Create an action plan for implementing a lesson on phonological and phonemic awareness and knowledge in your classroom.

PCV Exercise: Reflection on Phonological and Phonemic Awareness

What I've learned

Questions I still have

Results of my research

PCV Exercise: Action Planning to Teach Phonological and Phonemic Awareness

Action	By Whom	By Date
e.g., Create lesson plan	Super PCV	Next Friday, October 1

PCV Exercise: Add Your Own Phonological and Phonemic Awareness Activities

Use this space to come up with your own great ideas about how to teach phonological and phonemic awareness to students at your site.

Remember to send your great ideas and activities that have shown promise to the OPATS literacy specialist at Literacy@peacecorps.gov.

Chapter 4: Phonics



Scenario

Chad, a Literacy Volunteer in Uganda, has experienced both great success and some unexpected challenges at his village's primary school in the four months he has been at his site. The students were initially excited about Chad's creative attempts to introduce more print in the classrooms, and they enjoyed the songs at the beginning and end of the literacy lessons. Many students in the second-grade classroom are now able to recognize and generate rhymes and can count the syllables in their names and other words. The teachers have been enthusiastic and cooperative with Chad's efforts to work together to enhance literacy instruction while still ensuring they follow the Ministry of Education's national reading curriculum.

However, the "honeymoon" seems to be over, and Chad notices that many of the labels and name cards he made for the students have been torn apart and teachers are not using the ones still in good shape. His teaching counterparts have gone back to rely solely on the prescribed curriculum, which focuses mainly on a very rote approach to phonics instruction with mainly repetition of letter sounds and some sight word reading. Chad would like to introduce some interactive activities that promote the skills of a phonics approach, but he is struggling with how to do so.

Decoding: Putting It All Together

Throughout Chapters 1–3, we discussed three different components that contribute to a child’s ability to master the skill of **decoding** written language: **Print Awareness and Knowledge, Alphabet Knowledge, and Phonological and Phonemic Awareness**. In isolation, each of these concepts represents just one aspect of what skills need to be mastered for a child to successfully learn how to decode. Taken together, these concepts are important benchmarks and indicators along the path toward overall success in reading. (Consider creating an informal assessment benchmark as strategy to gauge when to progress your class toward more advanced concepts. If a majority of the class is showing a strong understanding of the more basic skills, move on to the next concept and add a review of rhyming, letter sounds, and the other skills for students struggling with the earlier concepts. For additional guidance on assessments, refer to the Assessment section.)

Phonics refers to the relationship between letters and sounds through written language and combines all of the skills of

- print awareness and knowledge;
- alphabet knowledge; and
- phonological and phonemic awareness.

Phonics instruction refers to a components or parts approach to teaching the skills of decoding. *It is highly recommended that children have a strong grasp of the preceding skills before moving into phonics instruction. Therefore, it is not advised to skip Chapters 1–3 before introducing phonics in your lesson plans.*

Phonics and the Whole Language Approach

Phonics is an instructional approach for teaching literacy that emphasizes **understanding the components (sounds and functions of letters) rather than memorizing whole words**. In **phonics instruction**, students are taught to look at **the parts of words, syllables, and sounds** to learn to read. Phonics breaks down written language into small and simple components that children learn to pronounce. In phonics, the child learns how letter combinations sound out loud and is taught to decode words based on their spellings. They do not memorize whole words.

A different literacy instructional technique is the **whole language approach**, sometimes called the **look-say or sight-reading approach** to literacy. In this method, children are taught to read by **recognizing words as whole pieces of language**.

Proponents of the whole language philosophy believe that language should not be broken down into letters and combinations of letters and decoded because that is not naturally how we experience language. Instead, they believe that language is a complete system of making meaning, with words functioning in relation to each other in context.

Articles on Literacy

Juel, Connie and Minden-Cupp, Cecilia. 2000. "Learning to read words: Linguistic units and instructional strategies." *Reading Research Quarterly*. Vol. 35, No. 4. International Reading Association

Neuman, Susan B. and Roskos, Kathleen. 1997. Literacy knowledge in practice: Contexts of participation for young writers and readers." *Reading Research Quarterly*. Vol 32, No 1. International Reading Association.

Whitehurst, Grover J., and Lonigan, Christopher J. 1998. "Child Development and Emergent Literacy." *Child Development*. Vol. 69, No 3. Society for Research in Child Development: Wiley.

While neither approach itself is the complete answer for every child, most education professionals agree that **phonics instruction is most effective in promoting independent reading when it is embedded in the context of a total reading and language arts curriculum**. Many reading experts believe that if students can master decoding, they can go on to use other techniques, such as the whole language approach.

In other words, we should not rely on phonics instruction alone; phonics is designed to help children master the ability to decode, or learn to read written language. Once this is achieved, students will be more adept at taking their reading skills to the next level: **comprehension**, or reading to learn, which will be discussed in Section 2. For the latter skills of reading to learn, additional teaching strategies will be introduced and explored using whole language approaches.

The examples you will see in this chapter are phonics-based activities that help children become expert **decoders**, building upon and reinforcing the concepts introduced from Chapters 1–3 in Section 1. Again, because students' success in understanding phonics relies heavily on the most basic building blocks of literacy, it is *not advised* that PCVs working with new readers skip ahead to this chapter when planning their lessons.

Teaching Phonics in Steps

Like the information presented in previous chapters, phonics instruction is most effective when the most basic concepts are introduced first, and more complex skills are introduced over time.

The following is a common sequence for introducing letter-sound correspondences to help guide you in planning your phonics lesson plans. It is critical that you present the information in this sequential order as you move through these skills in order to scaffold, or build upon, students' learning from the most basic concepts to the more complex.

Note: *The examples and content provided here are for North American English. Other languages may differ slightly in the content and examples, but the sequencing of components is similar (if the components exist in that language). Always consult with a native speaker of your host country's language for accuracy before teaching these concepts.*

Introducing Letter-Sound Correspondences⁹

1. Begin with initial consonants (e.g., **m, n, t, s, p**)
2. Add short vowel and consonant combinations (e.g., **-at, -in, -ot**)
3. Introduce consonant blends (e.g., **bl, dr, st**)
4. Introduce digraphs (e.g., **th, sh, ph**)
5. Introduce long vowels (e.g., **eat, oat**)
6. Variations to the phonics rules*
 - Final e (**-ake, -ute, -ime**)
 - Variant vowels and diphthongs (**-oi, -ou**)
 - Silent letters and inflectional endings (**kn, wr, gn, -es, -s**)

⁹ Blevins, Wiley. 1998. *Phonics from A-Z: A Practical Guide*. (New York: Scholastic, 1998).

*Note: Remember that these specific rules might not apply to your host country language, but there may be other variations to phonics that may exist.

In the sections below, sample activities and lesson plans are provided for each of the steps in the sequence listed above.

Initial Consonants

Introduce children to words that begin with consonants (e.g., **m, n, t, s, p**) and focus on the sound of the first letter in the word. As children become more confident in recognizing print and specific letters (Chapters 1 and 2), and learn the different sounds that make up words (Chapter 3), they are ready to associate letter symbols with the sounds they make. Take special consideration here that this is different from alphabet knowledge, where the child recognizes the *letter*. In the phonics approach, students learn the *sounds or phonemes that a letter or letter combination represents*.

Consonants Chart

Below are the consonants and their *initial* phonetic sounds for English in the following format:

Consonant letter

/phonetic pronunciation/

example

Note that this chart provides the sounds that correspond with each letter as they appear at the ***beginning of a word, the majority of the time.*** Example:

Letter c makes /k/ sound, as in cat, most of the time.

vs.

Letter c makes /s/ sound, as in cell, some of the time.

Before implementing any phonics activities or lesson plans in your classroom, fill out the provided Consonants Chart template in the [Phonics Resources](#) section at the end of this chapter. Practice these sounds on your own or with a native-speaking counterpart, especially if this is not the language you speak natively.

b <i>/b/</i> bat	c^{1,2} <i>/k/</i> car	d <i>/d/</i> dog	f <i>/f/</i> fan
g¹ <i>/g/</i> gold	h <i>/h/</i> hit	j <i>/j/</i> jet	k <i>/k/</i> kite
l <i>/l/</i> luck	m <i>/m/</i> mess	n <i>/n/</i> night	p² <i>/p/</i> pup

q <i>/kw/</i> <u>quick</u>	r <i>/r/</i> <u>run</u>	s² <i>/s/</i> <u>sat</u>	t² <i>/t/</i> <u>tree</u>
v <i>/v/</i> <u>van</u>	w <i>/w/</i> <u>water</u>	x <i>/z/</i> <u>xylophone</u>	z <i>/z/</i> <u>zebra</u>
¹ Indicates that the consonant can also have a “soft” pronunciation variable. Generally, if the letter e or i follow these consonants, the pronunciation will be soft. Examples: cake (hard sound) / cell (soft sound); ground (hard sound) / giant (soft sound).			
² Indicates that the consonant may also appear in words as part of specific <i>digraphs</i> that can change its pronunciation. Examples: chair , phoneme , three . Refer to the <u>Digraphs</u> section of this chapter for further explanation.			

Activity: Consonant Flash Cards

Implementation

Using the alphabet flash cards or other alphabet resources you have created from previous chapters, select the consonants you want to teach (5–10 letters are appropriate for each lesson).

When presenting each letter to the students, distinguish between the *name of the letter* and the *sounds it makes*. Example: Show the flash card for letter **L**. Ask, “*What is this letter?*” Answer: **L**.

Then ask, “*What sound does the letter L make?*” Answer: */l/l-l* Emphasize by showing students the shape of the mouth as you make the sound. Consider where the tongue is placed in the mouth with each letter sound to further assist and explain correct pronunciation. Then ask students to give an example of the word that begins with that letter sound.

Resources Needed

Alphabet flash cards, sensory cards, or other alphabet resources from previous chapters

Things to Keep in Mind

Pay special attention to when students are confusing the name of the letter with the sound the letter makes. This is a common mistake children make as they learn to distinguish between alphabet knowledge and phonics.

Activity: I Spy Initial Consonants

Implementation

For this activity, focus on one letter at a time. Write that letter clearly on the chalkboard. Ask the students to name the letter and identify the sound it makes at the beginning of a word.

Ask one child at a time to take a turn thinking of something in the classroom or the school that begins with that letter sound. As each child gives an example, write that word on the board, indicating if it begins with the same letter as the target letter you have chosen.

Resources Needed

Chalkboard, common objects around the classroom students can look to for examples

Things to Keep in Mind

Be explicit in indicating the *sound* you are asking students to look for. When thinking of letter S, instruct students to look for objects that begin with the sound /sss-/, such as snake or sun. While the word **shore** indeed begins with letter s, the initial sound of the word is made up of the *digraph* /sh-/. Digraphs and sample activities for digraphs will be discussed later in this chapter.

Sample Lesson Plan: Initial Consonant Sounds

Welcome and Opening Songs

 (5–7 minutes)

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Dinosaurs to Dinner¹⁰

We're having
Dinosaurs to dinner
Lizards in for lunch
Salamanders in for supper
Beavers in for brunch
Elephants at evening time
Tortoises to tea
Wallabies for waffles
Won't you sit right next to me?

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

No set tune for "Dinosaurs to Dinner"; make up your own unique way to sing or chant the song.

This song helps to reinforce initial letter sounds through alliteration, the repetition of an initial letter sound.

You may choose to have a discussion about the words in this song with your students, especially if these words are new to them or out of their cultural context. You could also replace certain words to make the song more culturally appropriate for your student group. The main purpose of this song is to emphasize the beginning consonant sounds of different words.

Transition to Main Activity

 2 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Say, "Today we will play a game in teams to learn beginning letter sounds. Let's focus on these letters today."

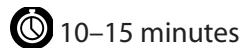
Write 5–10 letters on the chalkboard, and ask students to give the names of the letters and the sound each letter makes.

¹⁰ Reprinted with permission from Fran Avni, www.songsforteaching.com.

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Starting with or referring back to students' names is always a good default and can help connect newer concepts back to previous lessons.

Main Activity



Activities and Suggested Scripts

1. Split the class into small groups of 4–5 students. One member of each team will have a turn to stand to represent their team for each round of the game.
2. At the beginning of each round, use consonant flash cards or write the letter on the chalkboard to show students the target letter. The first representative from a team to raise his or her hand with a correct example of a word that begins with the appropriate letter sound gets a point for his or her team.
3. The winning team gets to choose a closing song for the end of the lesson.

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Remind students not to shout out the answers if it is not their turn.

Repeat letters if students show difficulty in understanding specific initial consonant sounds.

Wrap-Up



Activities and Suggested Scripts

Reinforce the main concept of the lesson by reviewing the target letters you have chosen for the lesson. Again, state the name of the letter, the sound it makes, and a few examples for each letter.

Tell everyone they've done a good job and sing a closing song.

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Re-use a song from a previous lesson plan or any closing song of your choice.

Short Vowel and Consonant Combinations

In phonics, a short vowel sound is indicated by a *breve symbol* (˘) over the letter. The following are the common short vowel sounds in the English language, at the **beginning of a word**:

˘ – apple

˘ – egg

˘ – ink

˘ – octopus

˘ – umbrella

Words containing a **consonant**, **vowel**, and **consonant** are often referred to as **CVC words**. When presented in this way, these words highlight the short vowel sounds. Examples of CVC words:

ă – bat

ĕ – ten

ĭ – rid

ŏ – dog

ŭ – cup

Activity: Short Vowel Clue Word Chart

Implementation

Create a chart to illustrate the association between short vowel sounds and words that begin with each short vowel. Write the vowel clearly next to a picture of a word that begins with that sound and write the word next to the picture. Hang the chart in the classroom and refer to this on a regular basis when teaching students about short vowel sounds.

Resources Needed

Paper, recycled cardboard, or other reusable materials that can be used as a chart

Pens, pencils, markers, or crayons to write on the chart

Things to Keep in Mind

Be sure to write clearly and in a size large enough for all students to see from the back of the classroom.

Activity: CVC Word Rhymes

Implementation

Provide children with a list of 10 CVC words, made up of five rhyming pairs with the same short vowel sound (e.g., cat, bat; log, fog; rug, mug).

On the chalkboard, write five of the words in one column, and on the other side of the chalkboard, write the corresponding five rhyming words in scrambled order. Ask one student at a time to come up to the chalkboard to draw a line between the words that rhyme.

Resources Needed

Chalk, chalkboard

Things to Keep in Mind

This activity relies on the students' ability to recognize rhymes in words. If you have students who are still struggling with this concept, this is a good section to reinforce this topic.

Sample Lesson Plan: Short Vowels and Consonant Combinations

Welcome and Opening Songs

 (5–7 minutes)

Activities and Suggested Scripts

A Ram Slam Slam

A ram slam slam

A ram slam slam

A gooley gooley gooley gooley

Ram slam slam

A waffie

A waffie

A gooley googley gooley gooley

Ram slam slam

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Create your own tune and gestures or hand motions to go with each nonsense word

Transition to Main Activity

 2 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Say, “Today we will play a game using the chalkboard, matching words that rhyme with short vowel sounds.”

Write the vowels on the board, review the sounds, and then ask students to give the names of the vowels and the sound each short vowel makes.

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

For more advanced students, have one student at a time write the selected vowel on the board.

Main Activity

 10–15 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

CVC Word Rhymes Game

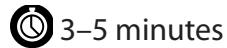
Provide children with a list of 10 CVC words, made up of five rhyming pairs with the same short vowel sound (e.g., cat, bat; log, fog; rug, mug).

On the chalkboard, write five of the words in one column, and on the other side of the chalkboard, write the corresponding five rhyming words in scrambled order. Ask one student at a time to come up to the chalkboard to draw a line between the words that rhyme.

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Refer to the flash cards created from previous activities.

Wrap-Up



Activities and Suggested Scripts

Reinforce the main concept of the lesson by reviewing the target letters you have chosen for the lesson. Repeat the name of each letter, the sound it makes, and a few examples for each letter.

Tell everyone they have done a good job and sing a closing song.

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Re-use a song from a previous lesson plan or any closing song of your choice.

Consonant Blends

Phonics blends, or clusters, are words whose consonant sounds blend together. As children become more confident in their ability to identify and produce consonant sounds, they can begin to blend them together. Consonant blends are pronounced such that each individual letter sound is said individually, but quickly together, so their sounds blend together without any vowels in between.

Following are examples of initial consonant word blends for the English language:

bl-	br-	cl-	cr-	dr-	fl-	fr-	gl-	gr-	pl-	pr-
sc-	sk-	sl-	sm-	sn-	sp-	sq-	st-	str-	sw-	tr-

Following are examples of final consonant words blends for the English language:

-ct	-ft	-lb	-lt	-mp	-nd	-ng
-nk	-nt	-pt	-sk	-sp	-st	

Activity: Blending Cube Game

Implementation

Create a cube out of cardboard, card stock, or thick paper to use as dice. Mark each of the cube faces with a consonant blend. After spending some time reviewing the sounds with your students, form a circle.

Take turns rolling the cube in the middle of the circle and say out loud a word which starts with the blend the cube lands on, e.g., “**tr** – tree.”

Each child attempts to say a word that begins with that blend. If they are unable to think of a word, then that child has to go **In the Blender**—i.e., he or she has to weave in and out of everyone in the circle until arriving back at his or her starting point and then roll the cube again to choose another blend.

Continue until all the blends have been used or each child has made an attempt at saying some word blends.

Resources Needed

Cardboard, card stock, or thick paper

Pens, pencils, markers, or crayons

Things to Keep in Mind

For students who are still struggling with the individual consonant sounds, adjust this activity so that they focus on the individual sounds made by each letter in the blend. Allow other students to assist in helping these students come up with the blending sounds.

See the Phonics Resources section for a dice template.

Activity: Fill-in-the-Blank Clusters

Implementation

Collect pictures of words children are familiar with that have initial or ending consonant clusters. Display these pictures at the front of the classroom, stressing the consonant cluster you are focusing on. Next to each picture, write out the word, leaving blank space for the consonant cluster (e.g., for plant, write out __ ant). Ask one student at a time to come up and write out the letters. Have students copy each example down in their workbooks if available.

Resources Needed

Chalk, chalkboard

Cut out magazine pictures, newspaper clippings, or packaging

Things to Keep in Mind

If you are working with very limited print resources, find objects around your natural environment to use instead of pictures, such as plants, glass, trees, and straw.

Sample Lesson Plan: Blending

Welcome and Opening Songs

 (5–7 minutes)

Activities and Suggested Scripts

I Have a Little Letter Blender¹¹

*I have a little letter blender
Mixing all around
A little letter blender
Mixing up new sounds.*

*I take two letters
And I put them in
And turn it on.
They mix all around
I get a brand new sound.
Let's blend along.*

*Now take an s and a p
And drop them right in
Out comes the sound
You hear in spot and spin
Spill, spell, spike, spend, spoon.*

*With my little letter blender
I'll be blending words very soon.*

*Now take a b and an l
And drop them right in.
Out comes the sound
You hear in blink and blend
Black, blue, block, bloom, blast.*

*With my little letter blender
I can blend those sounds so very fast.*

*Now take an f and an r
And drop them right in.
Out comes the sound
You hear in frog and friend
Fresh, fruit, from, free, frame.*

*With my little letter blender
I can always play the blending game.*

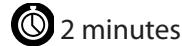
*It's my little letter blender. (My little letter blender.)
It's my little letter blender. (My little letter blender.)
It's my little letter blender. (My little letter blender.)
It's my little letter blender. (My little letter blender.)*

¹¹ Reprinted with permission from Rob Brown. www.songsforteaching.com.

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Sing to the tune of "Miss Suzy Had a Steamboat."

Transition to Main Activity



Activities and Suggested Scripts

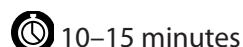
Say, "Today we will play the Blending Cube Game, learning the sounds that are made by blending letter sounds together."

Review the clusters you have selected to focus on for this lesson, and then explain the rules of the game.

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Because this activity requires handmade resources that you have likely spent time creating, set rules with the students about how to respectfully handle the materials.

Main Activity



Activities and Suggested Scripts

Blending Cube Game

Create a cube out of cardboard, card stock, or thick paper. Mark each of the cube faces with a consonants blend. After spending some time reviewing the sounds with your students, form a circle.

Take turns to roll the cube in the middle of the circle and say out loud a word which starts with the blend the cube lands on, e.g., "tr – tree."

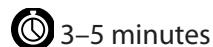
Each child attempts to say a word that begins with the blend facing up on the cube. If he or she is unable to think of a word, then that child has to go **In the Blender**—i.e., he or she has to weave in and out of everyone in the circle until arriving back at his or her starting point and then roll the cube again to choose another blend.

Continue until all the blends have been used or each child has made an attempt at saying some word blends.

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

This game requires successful understanding of individual letter sounds. A more basic version of this game can be implemented, focusing only on individual letter sounds.

Wrap-Up



Activities and Suggested Scripts

Reinforce the main concept of the lesson by reviewing the blends that were studied. State the name of the letters that make up the blends, the sounds they make, and a few different examples of words that include those blends. Tell everyone they have done a good job and sing a closing song.

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Re-use a song from a previous lesson plan or use any closing song of your choice.

Digraphs

A digraph is a single sound, or phoneme, that is represented by two letters. In digraphs, specific consonants are paired together to create a special sound. For example, when paired together, **s** and **h** create the sound /sh/, as in the word **shell**.

Digraphs Chart Below are initial and ending digraphs for the English language in the following format:

Digraph
/phonetic pronunciation/
example

ch <i>/ch/</i> chick, champ, ouch	ck <i>/k/</i> kick, lock, tuck	ff <i>/f/</i> cliff, stuff, puff	gh <i>/g/</i> ghost, ghastly, ghetto
gn <i>/n/</i> gnome, gnarly, gnat	kn <i>/n/</i> knife, knight, know	ll <i>/l/</i> wall, sill, tell	mb <i>/m/</i> lamb, thumb, comb
ng <i>/ng/</i> fang, ring, sung	nk <i>/nk/</i> ink, blank, punk	ph <i>/f/</i> phone, graph, phase	qu <i>/kw/</i> quick, quiet, quaint
sh <i>/sh/</i> shore, cash, fish	ss <i>/s/</i> floss, glass, mess	th <i>/th/</i> thin, bath, athlete	th <i>/th/</i> this, there, thus
wh <i>/hw/</i> where, which	wr <i>/wr/</i> write, wreath, wretched	zz <i>/z/</i> fuzz, buzz, Guzzle	

Activity: Digraph Recognition

Implementation

Select one digraph to focus on during each session. Before the class, prepare a paragraph that includes several examples of the target digraph. Write out the text on the chalkboard and read through it once through without interruption. Then, read it again. During the second read-through, ask children to clap each time they hear the digraph you are teaching.

Resources Needed

Prepare text ahead of class, focusing on one digraph for each session.

Things to Keep in Mind

Be as creative and as silly as you like to engage the children in the example paragraph you prepare.

Read through the paragraph more slowly the second time to give students an opportunity to respond.

Activity: Digraph Word Wall

Implementation

Display a blank sheet of paper at the front of the room to create your digraph word wall. Pass out pages of an old magazine or newspaper to students and ask them to cut out (or carefully tear out) pictures that contain something beginning with the digraph you are teaching. Ask each child to come up one at a time to describe the picture they found. Attach the picture to the sheet and write out the word next to the picture for all students to see, pointing to the digraph.

Resources Needed

Large sheet of paper, old magazines or newspapers, scissors (if available), markers/pens/pencils/crayons, glue/tape/adhesive to attach pictures to word wall

Sample Lesson Plan: Digraphs

Welcome and Opening Songs

⌚ (5–7 minutes)

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Say, “Today we will practice the special sound that these two letters make when they are next to each other in a word: **c** and **h**. When these two letters are put together they make the sound /ch/. I wrote out a paragraph of a story on the board, and now I will read it aloud so we can practice listening for the sound /ch/.”

Helpful Hints & Facilitator’s Notes

Choose any digraph to focus on.

Main Activity

⌚ 10–15 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Digraph Recognition

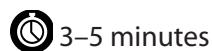
Select one digraph to focus on during each session. Before the class, prepare a paragraph that includes several examples of the target digraph. Write out the text on the chalkboard and read through it once without interruption. Then, read it again. During the second read-through, ask children to clap each time they hear the digraph you are teaching.

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Be as creative and as silly as you like to engage the children in the example paragraph you prepare.

Read through the paragraph more slowly the second time to give students an opportunity to respond.

Wrap-Up



Activities and Suggested Scripts

Reinforce the main concept of the lesson by reviewing the target digraph you have chosen. State the name of the letters that make up the digraph, the sound it makes, and a few examples from the paragraph. Tell everyone they have done a good job and sing a closing song.

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Re-use a song from a previous lesson plan, or use any closing song of your choice.

Long Vowels

A long vowel sound is a sound which is the same as, or very similar to, the letter name of one of the vowels. As opposed to the *breve* (˘) used to indicate short vowel sounds, long vowels in phonics are marked with a *macron* symbol (̄).

In the chart below, examples of simple words with long vowel sounds are provided. Note that this chart is not comprehensive of all phonics rules for long vowel sounds in written English. Rather, only examples of the most common rules and occurrences for long vowel sounds are displayed.

Long Vowel Sounds									
Ā ā		Ē ē		Ī ī		Ō ō		Ū ū	
Example	Rule	Example	Rule	Example	Rule	Example	Rule	Example	Rule
cake	final e*	meal	ea	tie	ie	coal	oa	cute	final e*
rain	ai	see	ee	night	igh	grow	ow	new	ew
play	ay	funny	y	shy	y	nose	final e*	true	ue

*Final e rule: When a word ends in a silent e, the vowel that comes before the silent e is long.

Activity: Poem of the Day

Implementation

Over the course of several weeks, introduce one new poem or passage of text each session. Write the poem or passage on the chalkboard or create a flip chart so all students can see the text. Select examples with words that end in long vowel sounds.

Read the words aloud to the students once, then ask students if they can identify the long vowel sounds in the poem. Circle the words with the long vowel sounds and underline the long vowel. Review the long vowel rules for each of the words and brainstorm other words with the same long vowel sound as the one in the poem.

Resources Needed

Chalkboard and chalk, or flip chart/large sheet of paper and markers or crayons

Things to Keep in Mind

Resource for finding poems with long vowel sounds:

BBC Schools. "Words and Pictures." Long Vowel Sounds—Poem Pack. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/wordsandpictures/longvow/poems/fpoem.shtml> (accessed April 29, 2014).

Activity: The Spinner

Implementation

Create a wheel spinner (see [Phonics Resources](#) at the end of this chapter for a template) using paper or cardboard. Write a vowel in each of the segments of the spinner, once if using a five-segment spinner, twice if using a 10-segment spinner. Show the students how to use the pencil/stick and paper clip on the spinner. Give each student a turn to spin the wheel and give an example of a word containing a long vowel sound he or she has landed on.

Resources Needed

Paper/cardboard, paper clip, pencil, makers/crayons/pens/pencil

Things to Keep in Mind

Use a paper clip and a stick or pencil to make the pointer for the spinner.

Create multiple spinners if you choose to perform this activity in small groups.

See Resources section for a spinner template.

Sample Lesson Plan: Long Vowels

Welcome and Opening Songs

 (5–7 minutes)

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Short Vowel/Long Vowel Song

A is my name.

Two sounds I make.

Short a in lamb

Long a in cake!

I is my name

Two sounds have I.

Short i in pig

Long i in pie!

O is my name.

Two sounds I know.

Short o in pot

Long o in go!

E is my name.

Two sounds for me.

Short e in hen

Long e in he!

U is my name.

Two sounds for you.

Short u in cup

Long u in cue!

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Create your own tune or say it as a chant. “Short Vowel/Long Vowel” introduces the different sounds the same vowel can make and can be helpful to reinforce the short vowel sounds learned previously and to transition to long vowel sounds.

Transition to Main Activity

 2 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Say, "Today we will read a poem together, called "Don't Eat That!" I will read the poem to you once so you can listen to all of the words. Then we will read it together and circle all of the words that rhyme and listen for the long vowel sounds in the poem."

Don't Eat That!¹²

1. Hey you! Don't eat that pie!

Don'tcha know it'll make you cry

2. Hey you! Don't eat that cheese

Don'tcha know it'll make you sneeze?

3. Hey you! Don't eat those beans

Don'tcha know they'll make you mean?

4. Hey you! Don't eat that cake

Don'tcha know it'll make you shake?

5. Hey you! Don't eat that veal

Don'tcha know it'll make you squeal?

6. Hey you! Don't eat that trout

Don'tcha know it'll make you pout?

7. Hey you! Don't eat that grape

Don'tcha know it'll make you act like an ape?

8. Hey you! Don't eat that honey

Don'tcha know it'll make you funny?

9. Hey you! Don't eat those onion rings

Don'tcha know they'll make you sing?

10. Hey you! Don't eat that peach

Don'tcha know it'll make you reach?

11. Hey you! Don't eat that fruit

Don'tcha know it'll make you look real cute?

12. Hey you! Don't eat that chili

Don'tcha know it'll make you look real silly?

¹² Reprinted with permission from Rob Reid, aka Rappin' Rob, www.rapnrob.com.

13. Hey you! Don't eat that ice cream
Don'tcha know it'll make you scream?
14. Hey you! Don't eat that bun
Now we're all done.

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Use any rhyming poem; poems with lines that end in long vowel sounds, like the one used in this example, help to emphasize learning this skill.

Main Activity



Activities and Suggested Scripts

Poem of the Day Activity

Introduce a poem and write it on the chalkboard or create a flip chart so all students can see the text of the poem. Select poems with lines that end in long vowel sounds.

Read the poem aloud to the students once, then ask students if they can identify the long vowel sounds in the poem. Circle the words with the long vowel sounds and underline the long vowel. Discuss the long vowel rules you identify in the words and brainstorm other words with the long vowel sounds in the poem.

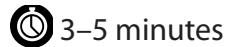
Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Follow-up discussion questions:

- What rules were used to create the long vowel sounds in the poem? (i.e., final **e**, **ay/ai**, **ee/ea**, etc.)
- What other words can you think of that have this long vowel sound?

After a few weeks with this activity, consider trying to write a poem with your students, focusing on ending each line with words containing a long vowel.

Wrap-Up



Activities and Suggested Scripts

Reinforce the main concept of the lesson by reviewing the long vowel sound you have chosen for the lesson. Again, state the name of the letters that make up the long vowel sound, the sound it makes, and a few examples of the long vowel sounds from the poem. Tell everyone they have done a good job and sing a closing song.

Two Vowels Together

I see two vowels (point to eyes)

I see two vowels

I hear one (point to ears)

I hear one

First one does the talking (point to mouth)

Second keeps on walking (walk fingers)

Yes, indeed!

Yes, indeed!

Can you hear it?

Can you hear it?

Braid and beat

Goat and feet

I can hear just one vowel.

Do you hear just one vowel?

Yes, indeed!

Yes, indeed!

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Sing “Two Vowels Together” to the tune of “Frère Jacques/Where is Thumbkin/Are You Sleeping?”

Variations to the Phonics Rules

- Final e (-ake, -ute, -ime)**

When a word ends in a silent e, the vowel that comes before the silent e is long.

Examples: **lake, rice, shine, tone**

- Variant vowels and diphthongs (-oi, -ou)**

Variant vowels are vowel sounds that are controlled by the letters surrounding them.

Examples: ‘oo’ in **flood** makes /ʊ/ sound, vs. ‘oo’ in **moo** makes /ew/ sound

‘ou’ in **mouth** makes /ow/ sound, vs. ‘ou’ in **youth** makes /ew/ sound

Diphthongs are vowel combinations consisting of a strong vowel sound followed by a weak vowel sound.

Examples: ‘oi’ in **choice**, ‘au’ in **faucet**

- Silent letters and inflectional endings (kn, wr, gn, -es, -s)**

Some letters, such as **k, w**, and **g**, can be silent in certain circumstances.

Examples: **knife, wrong, gnat, sign**

Grammar tip:

Inflectional endings, such as **-s**, **-es**, **-ed** or **-ing**, can be added to the end of a word to change the original word's meaning. In general,

- s** makes a noun mean "more than one"
- es** makes a noun mean "more than one"
- ed** puts an action in past tense
- ing** puts an action in present tense

Examples:

walk → walks/walked/walking

cook → cooks/cooked/cooking

box → boxes/boxed/boxing

It is important to remember that these variations to the rules of phonics do not apply to every language. Speak with your counterparts about variations to the rules in your host country language, or in the language in the written orthography in which you are teaching.

Phonics Resources

Consonants Chart

Create your own chart of consonants and initial phonetic sounds for the primary language spoken by students and teachers at your site so you are prepared to teach these sounds to your students.

Use the following format to fill in the spaces below:

Consonant letter
/phonetic pronunciation/
example

Note that you should provide the sounds that correspond with each consonant as they appear at the **beginning of a word, the majority of the time.**

Before teaching this, practice these sounds on your own or with a native-speaking counterpart, if this is not the language you speak natively.

example: b <u>/b/</u> <u>bat</u>			

Vowels Chart

Create your own chart of vowels and consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words for the primary language spoken by students and teachers at your site so you are prepared to teach these sounds to your students.

Use the following format to fill in the spaces below:

Vowel

/phonetic pronunciation/

CVC word example

Note that this chart provides the sounds that correspond with each vowel as it appears in CVC combinations to produce a **short vowel sound**.

Before teaching this, practice these sounds on your own or with a native-speaking counterpart, if this is not the language you speak natively.

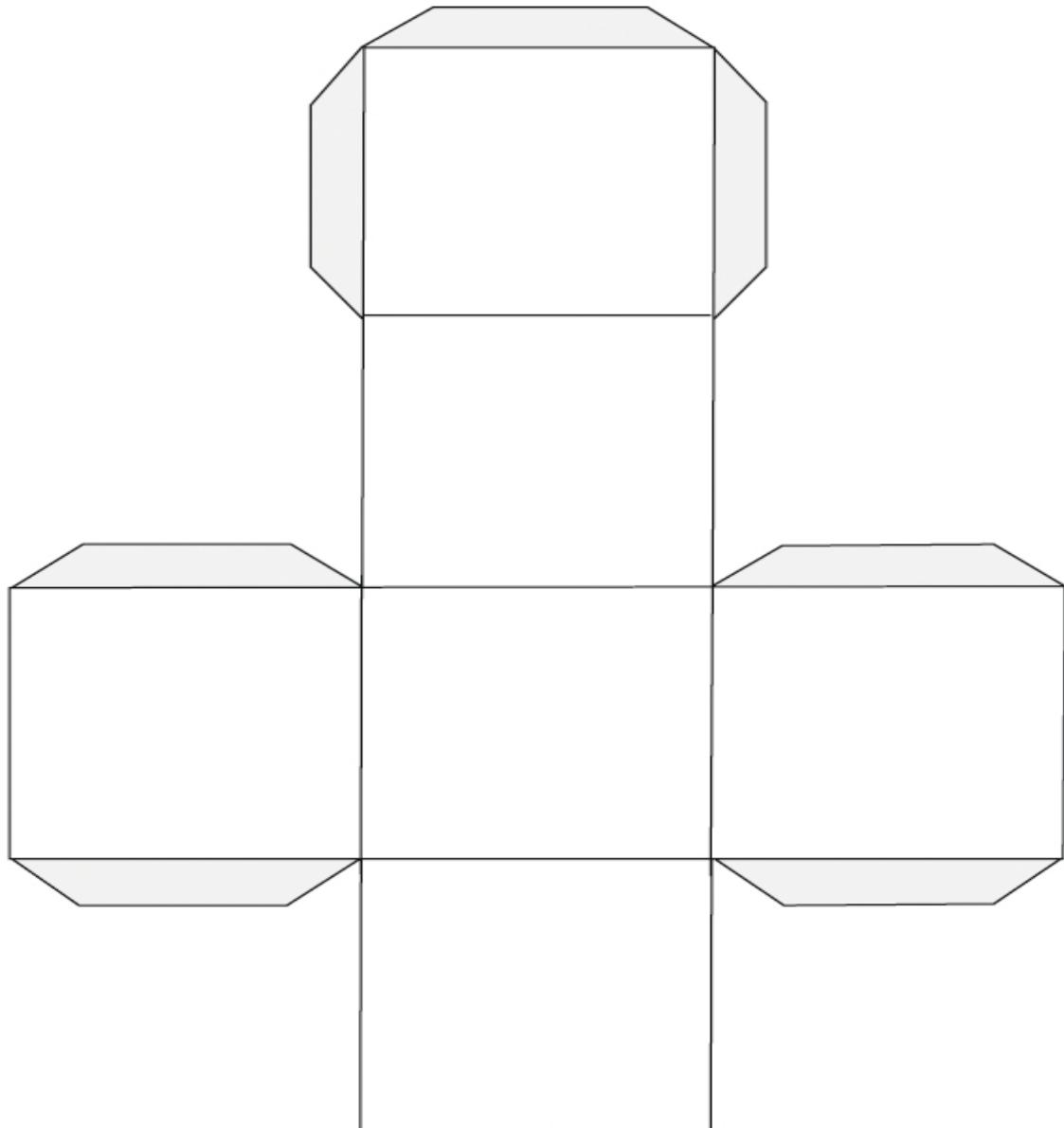
--	--	--	--	--

Consonant Blends

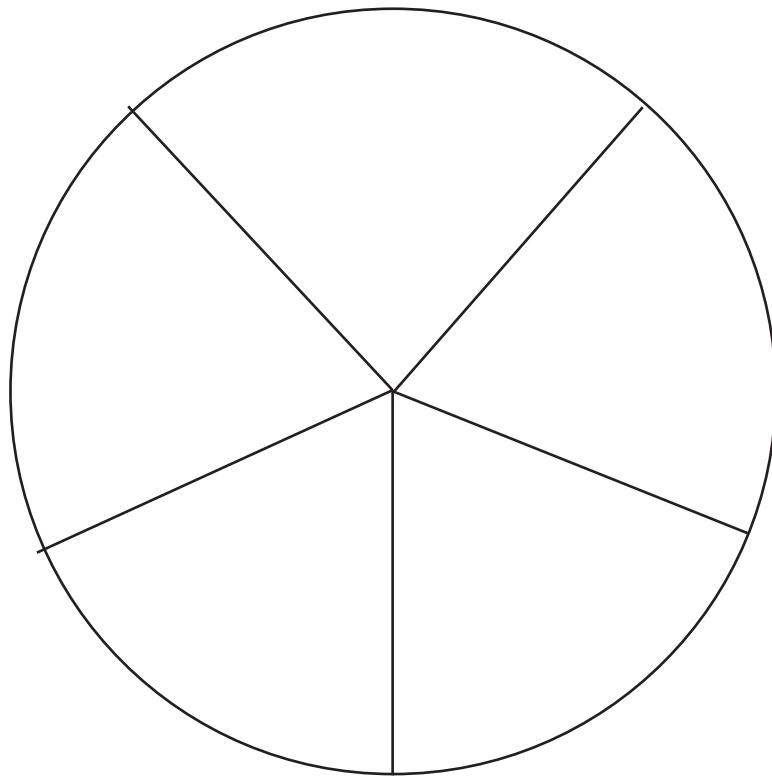
In the spaces below, think of and write down consonant combinations in your host country language that can be put together to create consonant blends. Consider blends that may appear at the beginning of words and at the end of words.

Before teaching this, practice these sounds on your own or with a native-speaking counterpart, if this is not the language you speak natively.

Dice Template



Wheel Spinner Template



Reflection, Action Planning, and Ideas

Take a moment to reflect on what you have learned in this chapter, what questions you still have about phonics, and what items you would like to research and learn about further. Create an action plan for implementing a lesson on phonics in your classroom.

PCV Exercise: Reflection on Phonics

What I've learned

Questions I still have

Results of my research

PCV Exercise: Action Planning to Teach Phonics

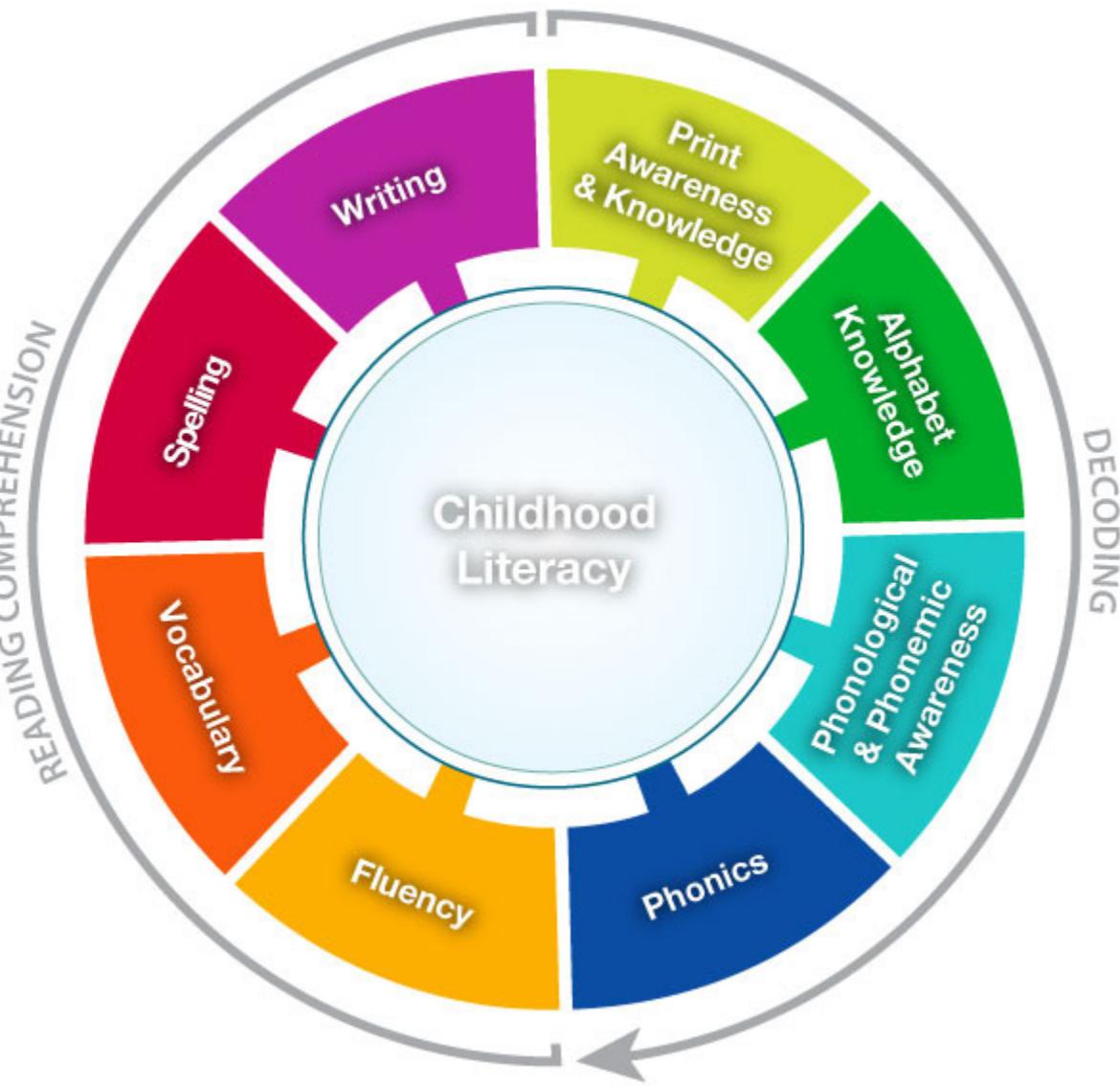
<u>Action</u>	<u>By Whom</u>	<u>By Date</u>
e.g., Create lesson plan	Super PCV	Next Friday, October 1

PCV Exercise: Add your own phonics activities

Use this space to come up with your own great ideas about how to teach phonics to students at your site.

Remember to send your great ideas and activities that have shown promise to the OPATS literacy specialist at literacy@peacecorps.gov.

Making the Leap: From Decoding to Comprehension



Chapters 1-4 in Section 1 of this manual focus on the first important phase of literacy: decoding, learning to read. It is critical for students to achieve competency over these topics (**Print Awareness and Knowledge**, **Alphabet Knowledge**, **Phonological and Phonemic Awareness**, and **Phonics**) before moving on to the next phase of literacy: *comprehension*, reading to learn.

If you have arrived at this point in the manual and sense that your students are still struggling with the first four building blocks of literacy, continue to revisit those topics they find challenging until your students feel more confident and can express their understanding. You may still choose to go to the next portion of this guide and incorporate ideas for teaching comprehension while reinforcing the skills associated with decoding.

Comprehension can be defined as **the capacity to perceive and understand the meanings represented by text**. It is the higher-level cognitive skill of the two main components in the Literacy Wheel; when the meaning of text is comprehended (decoded and processed) it is more likely that long-term learning will take place. The student who reads and understands text is able to learn new information from the text. The ability to understand the meaning of printed words only becomes possible when one is able to decode and read words. The student who can read a phrase, but cannot understand the meaning of the phrase, has not yet made the leap from decoding to comprehension. **Just because a child can read text from a page does not necessarily mean the child understands the meaning of those words.**

This section of the manual serves as an interlude and a bridge between Decoding and Comprehension. Some of the information presented (i.e., the Neuroscience of Reading, and Neuroscience and Education) here is more theoretical than much of the other content provided throughout the rest of the manual. Some PCVs may find this type of information useful in their personal understanding of teaching literacy, while others may find this section too abstract and more confusing than helpful. Feel free to read through or skip ahead to the subsection on Learner-Centered Approaches, depending on your needs.

The Neuroscience of Reading

During infancy, the brain develops at the fastest rate in one's life. With regards to literacy and education, it is ideal for children to be exposed to language, text, and positive learning experiences from a very early age. From a developmental standpoint, the brain uses many different parts to process text as information. Visual development, motor development, language development, and social-emotional development all contribute to an individual's literacy learning.

When a person reads words from a page, the sensory stimuli (presented as text in the task of reading) are first processed in the **primary visual cortex**, located at the back of the brain in the occipital lobe (Figure 1).

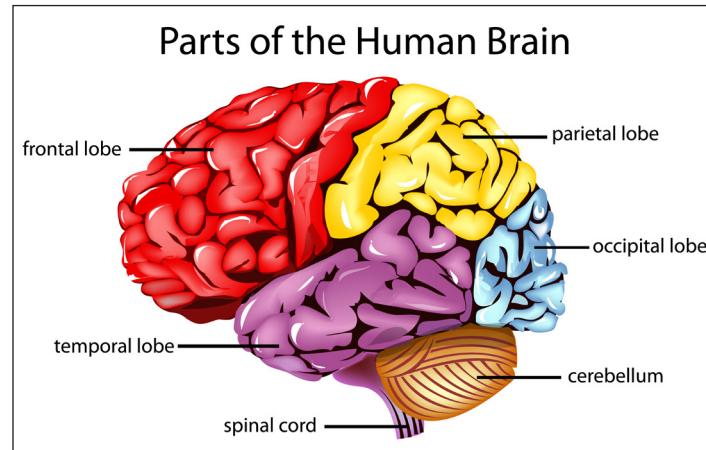


Figure 2. Parts of the human brain

Figure 1. Eye and cortex nerves

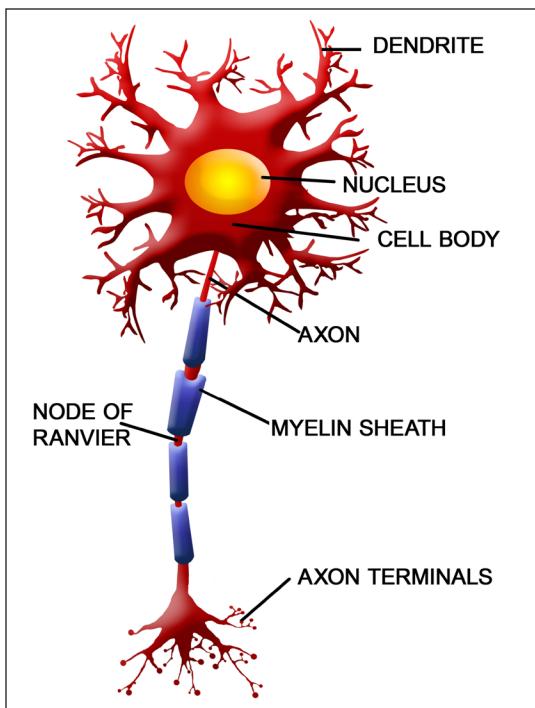


Figure 4. Diagram of a neuron

Once the brain registers symbols as text, the information is processed in the **visual word form** area of the fusiform gyrus, part of the temporal and occipital lobes (Figure 2). It is here where letter and word recognition take place, prior to associating the letters with phonology and semantic meaning.

The **temporal lobe** is responsible for the decoding and discrimination of word sounds (phonological awareness) and decoded information is processed in the **frontal lobe**, where comprehension, speech production, reading fluency, and grammatical usage take place. The **angular and supramarginal gyrus** regions located in the **parietal lobe** integrate all the various parts utilized to fully execute the action of reading.

As an individual learns how to read, connections are made between different parts of the brain as neurons communicate with each other. **Neurons** typically consist of a cell body, axon (nerve fiber), and **dendrites** (branches of the neuron that receive and transmit electrical impulses). Information is sent between neurons and flow to each other through synapses, the small spaces between the neurons (Figure 4, Figure 5). When a cell body's axon sends messages and its dendrites receive them, that neuron has matured.

At birth, the infant brain is equipped with more neurons than it needs. Throughout different times in the life cycle, large groups of neurons die off as a result of **developmental apoptosis**, sometimes referred to as **synaptic pruning**, or programmed cell death. Developmental apoptosis occurs when neural connections are not strong enough to survive. A simplified way to think about this is: If Neuron A fires and Neuron B receives that information, the synaptic connection between those two neurons is established and can become strengthened with each subsequent connection made between them. However, if Neuron C fires, and Neuron D does not receive the information, no synaptic connection takes place. Neurons that fire but don't ultimately transmit an electrical impulse to other neurons are the ones that naturally die off in developmental apoptosis.

Returning to the context of literacy and learning to read, the information in this section gives us an idea of the importance of teaching reading at an early age from a developmental perspective. The more a child is exposed to literacy, is read to, and practices reading, the stronger the neural connections responsible for literacy acquisition will become. When those connections are strengthened to the point of becoming established, students can achieve fluency in reading and the process of reading becomes automatic. (The concept of fluency and how it bridges decoding to comprehension will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 1.)

Neuroscience and Education

In congruence with neuroscience, the field of education widely recognizes that children must first learn how to read (decode) before they will be able to successfully read to retain and cognitively manipulate (comprehend) new information. However, teachers and PCVs can always incorporate practices that model successful reading and reading comprehension. These practices can also serve as a means to promote students' natural motivation to engage in literacy activities and use reading as a means for their own discoveries. These seeds of comprehension can be planted by supportive adults even before a child masters the fundamentals of decoding.

Learner-Centered Approaches

Four different **learner-centered approaches** are provided below that can be used in various settings and circumstances to help you further enrich your students' positive experiences with literacy and develop a platform for teaching comprehension skills. These learner-centered approaches place emphasis on active learning, wherein the students engage and interact with the new information in various ways. This style of teaching is therefore different from many traditional pedagogical techniques in which the adult or teacher is viewed as the expert delivering information from a prescribed curriculum. Here we will outline: (1) the **dialogic reading method**, (2) **read-alouds**, (3) **learner-generated material and emergent curriculum**, and (4) **working with existing curricula and school resources**.

Dialogic Reading

What Is Dialogic Reading?

Dialogic reading is the process of reading with a child and turning the story into an interactive experience. The dialogic reading method involves asking simple questions and talking about the pictures and simple text with the intent of cultivating a child's skills in vocabulary, recall, comprehension, and critical thinking.

When reading a story using the dialogic reading techniques, the adult and child switch roles as the child becomes the storyteller and the adult becomes the listener. Sharing a book becomes a meaningful dialogue, giving the child opportunities to practice and learn new words. It is an especially powerful strategy because there is no need to read any words. Anyone, regardless of their own language or literacy level, can engage in dialogic reading by talking about the pictures on the page.

How Does Dialogic Reading Work?

Two main components of dialogic reading include:

- 1. Questions that the adult asks; and**
- 2. How the adult frames the questions, and in turn responds to the answers given by the students.**

Two simple mnemonic devices (**PEER** and **CROWD**) are helpful for remembering the steps involved in the implementation of dialogic reading.

The **PEER Sequence** provides a structure for adults asking questions about a story:

- **Prompt** the child to say something about the story with a question such as, "What animal is that?"
- **Evaluate** the response with praise and correction (if necessary), "You are correct, it's a cow" or, "It does have similar features as a horse (four legs, a tail), but it is cow."
- **Expand** on what the child has said by rephrasing their words, adding more information to your evaluative response (e.g., "A cow has a bigger body and produces milk"), or by asking more questions ("What color is the cow?").
- **Repeat** the answer to the initial prompt to ensure that the child has learned from the expansion (e.g., "Good job! It is a white cow with black spots.")

These simple steps allow the child to use a variety of words, acquire new vocabulary, learn different sentence structures, and build confidence as he or she learns how to read.

The second mnemonic device, **CROWD**, specifies different types of questions or prompts that PCVs and teachers can use to effectively begin a dialogue about the story.

- **Completion** prompts the child to fill in a blank. These are particularly useful for rhyme or repetition. For example, "Brown bear brown bear what do you see? I see a red fox staring at ____." (answer: "me")
- **Recall** prompts activate the child's memory for the story and plot. "Do you remember what some of the animals were in this story?" "Who was looking for his mother?"
- **Open-ended questions** give the child an opportunity to use new vocabulary and answer more than yes or no. "Which animal was your favorite?" These types of questions generally have no wrong answer and are helpful in engaging students in discussion and improving self-confidence with opportunities to participate verbally in class.
- **Wh- questions** start with words like *who*, *what*, *when*, and *where* and help build vocabulary, long-term, and working memory. "What animal is that?" "Who did he ask?"
- **Distancing** prompts help the child relate the book to his or her life. "Who has seen cows in the fields?"

Read-Alouds

Read-alouds are a shared reading experience led by an adult, in which the adult reads out loud to a group of students. This strategy can be implemented even before students are developmentally able to read a book on their own, as it promotes skills such as listening, comprehension, and understanding

how to appropriately use a book as a resource of information. Read-alouds involve a process of presenting a book or story as an entire experience with a beginning, middle, and end, which can be implemented in the following sequence:

- **Pre-reading** – Before reading the selected book or story, the teacher previews the material by discussing elements of the book, such as the author, illustrator, and the subject matter. Children may also be asked to make predictions about what they think may happen during the story.
- **During reading** – The reader engages students in the story while it is being read. The dialogic reading method explained above is a technique that can be implemented during reading.
- **After reading** – Once the story is over, the adult asks questions or creates a follow-up activity about what he or she heard and learned from the story. With younger students, this can be done by soliciting oral responses or asking them to draw a picture of their favorite part. With older or more experienced students, they may be asked to write out a response to the story.

Checklist for a Read-Aloud

Before the Read-Aloud

- Read the book first by yourself so you are acquainted with the story.
- Review with the students how a book works—(In English) left to right, up and down, starting at the beginning—and how to *treat* a book.
- Discuss with students your expectations for the read-aloud (Will they sit down? Can they interrupt you?)
- Make sure everyone is comfortable and is seated so that all can see the book.

Things to Keep in Mind throughout the Read-Aloud

- Read slowly.
- Emote and be dramatic so children can understand the intention of the words.
- Enunciate words well.
- Pause to explain new vocabulary.
- Pose questions to check for meaning/comprehension of the story.
- Use your finger to guide children through the lines of the story.
- Explain new vocabulary in local languages, as necessary.

During the Read-Aloud

- Invite children to the story rather than commanding them.
- Talk about the front and back covers and spine/edge.
- Introduce the title (you may choose to start by asking if they know what a title is) and stress its importance.
- Introduce the author and illustrator and explain what each does.
- Ask for clues about the content of the book by asking questions about the front cover or the title.
- Ask students to predict what they think might happen as you read the story. Help them use the

pictures as clues and remember to return to the predictions to verify them.

- Acknowledge reactions of students as you read the story (e.g., "Oh, I see you are laughing, what is funny?"); this can help to check for students' understanding.
- Use children's experiences to link to new ideas or experiences in the story (activate background knowledge).
- Ask students to retell the story and story plot for meaning.
- Ask students for their opinions and feelings about the story plot and the characters in the story.
- Praise the children for their attention and good listening skills during the story.

Learner-Generated Materials and Emergent Curriculum

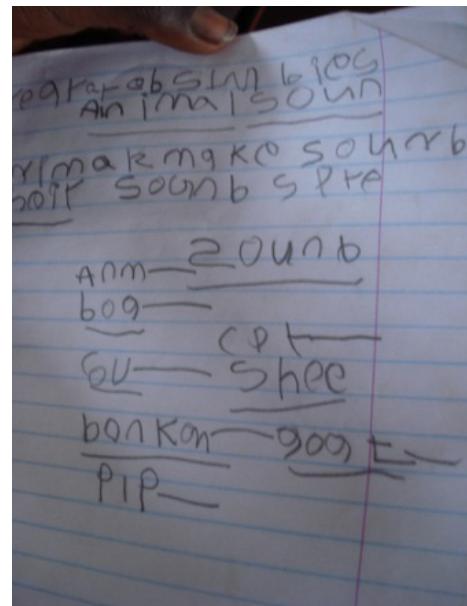
Learner-generated materials refer to written texts, stories, or illustrations produced by learners (children) and are used as a tool to aid in reading instruction. Because the stories, texts, or pictures have personal meaning to children, as they are the "author," they are intrinsically more interested in reading their own words and ideas.

Why Use Learner-Generated Materials?

Often, children can understand the meaning of their own writing, even if it is only a few lines without letters or words. Children can read their scribble and lines proudly to their teacher, who may not be able to read anything on the child's paper. In addition, research has found that children are able to obtain higher levels of comprehension when they are reading things in which they are interested. When enabling the creation of learner-generated materials, teachers are building literacy by using the listening and speaking skills of students. Because speaking skills and reading skills are interconnected, putting them onto paper allows children to make the connections between sounds, symbols, and ideas.

The steps to creating learner-generated materials include:

1. Invite a child to tell you a short story.
2. If the child does not yet write, transcribe the story for him or her. If he/she wants to "scribble" his or her story, you can translate underneath the written story lines.
3. Ask the child to add pictures to "illustrate" his or her story.
4. Review the story with the child and ask him or her to practice reading it.



If storybooks and print resources are limited at your site, learner-generated material can be especially useful by providing an opportunity for you to engage students, teachers, counterparts, and host families in helping to develop materials that can be used to teach literacy. If no stories exist in text

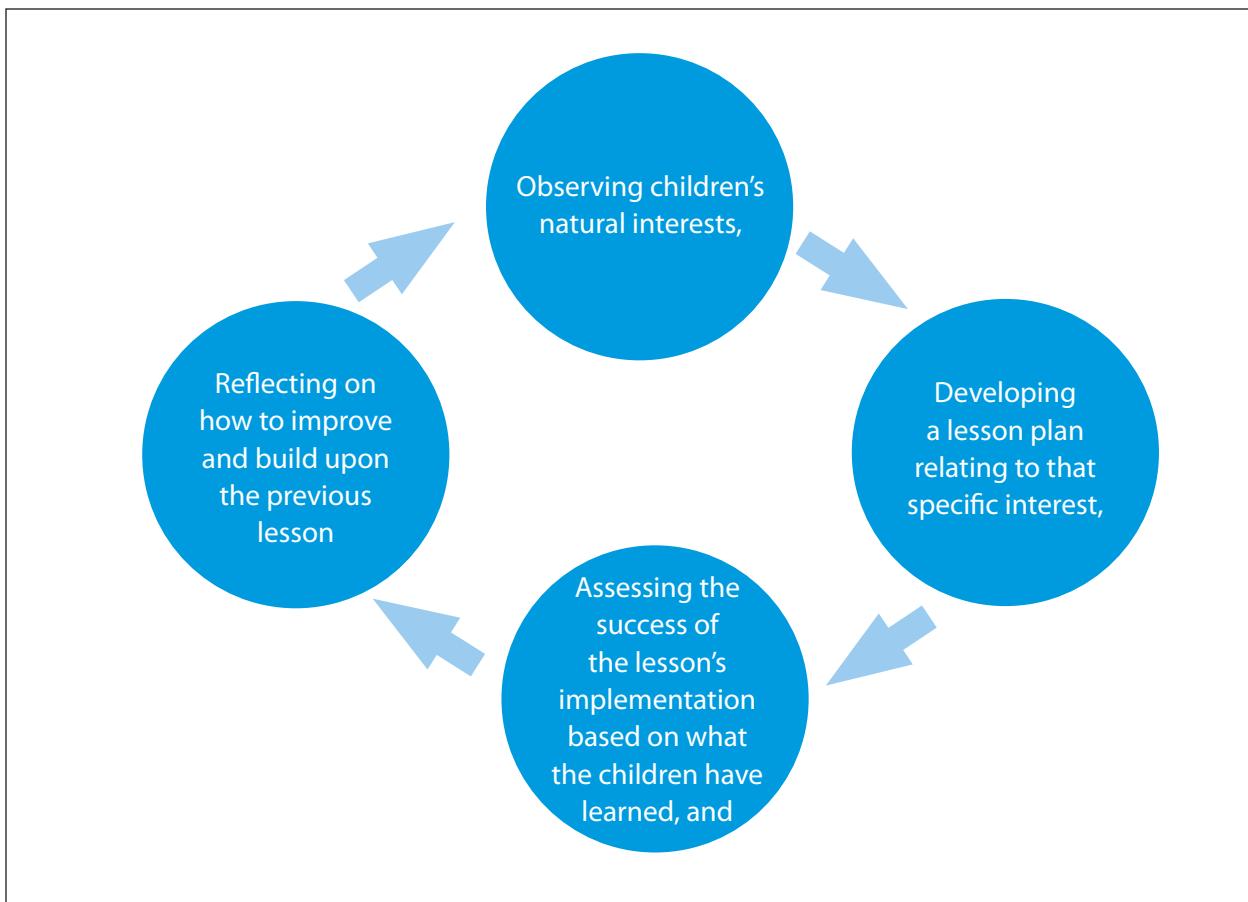


Figure 3. Emergent learning cycle for teachers

at your site, ask people to dictate to you a commonly told folk tale with which children in your community would be familiar. Write it out, or create your own storybook with the cultural folk tale using materials available to you, and ask children to help you draw pictures to accompany the text.

Another approach to developing material based on this learner-centered approach is the methodology of **emergent curriculum**. In this approach, the teacher actively engages in an ongoing process of **observation** (looking for children's interests), lesson plan **development**, **assessment** of students' understanding, and **reflection**.

This approach is beneficial in that it capitalizes on students' already existing interests. When a child is intrinsically motivated in the subject matter of a lesson, he or she is more likely to stay engaged and to retain the information presented in a meaningful way. Thus, the curriculum *emerges* from the interests of the children.

On the other hand, this approach requires quite a bit of freedom in terms of creating lesson plans apart from an already existing school curriculum. As such, this style of teaching may not be feasible at some sites that are more stringent on how closely the national curriculum must be followed. Some PCVs may thrive on this type of autonomy, while others may be lost without a more linear structure. It is always a good idea to speak with your counterparts and use your discretion before implementing this approach.

Existing Curriculum and School Resources

At this point in your service, you have probably become familiar with the language arts or literacy curriculum that is implemented at your site. Many PCVs who work alongside their counterparts may find themselves working with materials, resources, and lesson plans prescribed by the host country's Ministry of Education or the equivalent.

Often, PCVs may become frustrated by the constraints, limitations, and implementation of a prescribed curriculum. You are encouraged to observe the challenges encountered in regards to the teaching style, pedagogy, and educational approaches used in classrooms and the community.

Here are some suggestions to better understand the already existing curriculum at your site, as well as ideas for how to expand on and support literacy efforts.

- Engage teachers by asking them to assess how the existing curriculum has served and is serving children's learning in reading.
- Improve upon existing curriculum and school materials by soliciting counterpart/student/ community assistance for different literacy activities (e.g., start a library project or resource creation days for materials to be used during lessons, develop a reading buddies program or a teachers' book club).
- Work with your counterparts and co-teachers to see how you can incorporate different approaches discussed in this chapter within the existing curriculum.

Remember that there may be other approaches used indigenously in your community to teach children language and literacy. These approaches, such as oral storytelling, folklore, ceremonies, and other traditions, may lend insight and value to the next segment of this manual, which focuses on comprehension.

Section 2: Comprehension focuses on the remainder of the Literacy Wheel: **Fluency, Vocabulary, Spelling, and Writing**.

Resources

Supplementary Reading

Children and Brain Development: What We Know About How Children Learn

<http://umaine.edu/publications/4356e/>

Early Brain Development: What Parents and Caregivers Need to Know!

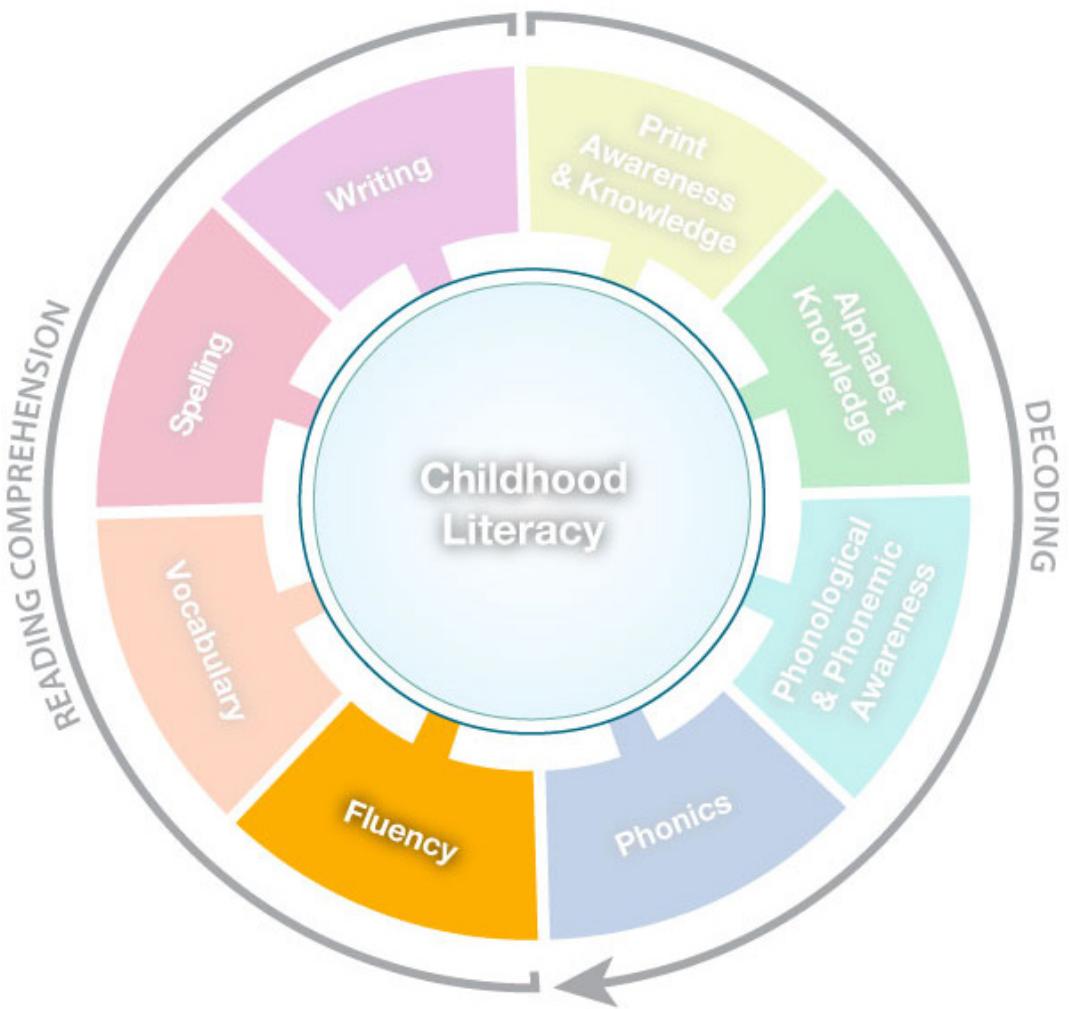
<http://www.educarer.com/brain.htm>

Nature, Nurture and Early Brain Development

<http://extension.missouri.edu/publications/DisplayPub.aspx?P=GH6115>

Section 2: Comprehension

Chapter 1: Fluency



What Is Fluency?

Fluency is the ability to read text accurately, without hesitations or false starts, and with appropriate expression when reading aloud, which becomes possible only from understanding the meaning of the text. As discussed in the Decoding section of this manual, fluency results when the brain creates and establishes the neural connections necessary to make decoding automatic (often referred to as automaticity).

Think back to when you learned how to ride a bike. In the process of learning, it's likely that you fell off your bike a few times or struggled with keeping the handlebars stable. Much like the emerging reader, the new bicyclist needs to use more of his or her brainpower to perform the basics in bike riding: holding on to the handlebars, pedaling, and balancing while staying in motion. Over time, as any skill is practiced and refined, a sense of mastery takes place. Once this occurs, the brain is better able to focus on more complex tasks while the basic function is effortlessly performed. When riding a bike, a more experienced biker may learn tricks like letting go of the handlebars or popping up the front wheel. In literacy, the fluent reader is able to automatically decode text. His or her "extra brainpower"

can then be focused toward the more complex tasks of comprehending the meaning of the words on a page and using that knowledge to add the appropriate inflections and verbal expression when reading text aloud.

Acquiring fluency is important because it is the critical step that provides a bridge between word recognition and decoding to comprehension (i.e., going from “learning to read” to “reading to learn”).

This chapter will focus on strategies that help to develop, support, and assess different stages of fluency.

Strategies to Develop Fluency

Model Fluent Reading

In education, a common method to promote a desired behavior or skill is for the adult or teacher to model the desired behavior or skill. When a student is engaged in observing another individual who is acting to achieve a desired outcome, like playing a song on the piano or reading aloud fluently, the student’s brain fires in the same neurons that become active when the student is the one playing the piano or reading aloud.

These neurons that fire are called *mirror neurons*, which engage when an individual witnesses another individual performing a target task. Basically, the spectator’s brain is capable of mirroring the brain activity of another individual performing an action. Mirror neurons have been found in multiple parts of the human brain—including the premotor cortex, the supplementary motor area, the primary somatosensory cortex, and the inferior parietal cortex—which suggests that mirror neurons play an important role in many areas of learning and brain development.

Therefore, it is important in your literacy program to create times for reading aloud to your students and to have read-alouds regularly. Use expression when reading aloud and choose your selections carefully. Try to expose students orally to a wide array of reading materials, emphasizing the varied inflections associated with different types of text (e.g., poetry, storybooks, mysteries, speeches, folk tales).

For additional guidance and a checklist on read-alouds, please refer to the [Read-Aloud Checklist](#).

Do Repeated Readings in Class

Repeated readings help to improve students’ literacy skills because it gives them the opportunity to: 1) listen/read and then re-listen/re-read the same text, and 2) receive any necessary guidance and corrections from the teacher.

Repeated readings can be done in several ways, two methods of which are described below:

- Read the same book or story to students two or more times over the course of a few days to a week. (For example, if you choose to read “Where the Wild Things Are,” you would read the book aloud on one day and then again on the following day or session, depending on how often you work with your students. Try to read the same story or book twice in the same week, or read the same story two weeks in a row if you see your students once a week.)
- Read and re-read the same short segments of text with your students in the same lesson.

Read for Enjoyment/Read for Comprehension

One way to plan your repeated reading lesson is to read the same book aloud on two different days. During the “first read,” the teacher focuses on **reading for enjoyment**, inviting the students to follow along in the story with the flow of the plot. The emphasis in this first read is to get through the story with minimal interruption and without too much deviation from the plot. Here are some questions that teachers can ask students throughout the story to keep them engaged and following along with the plot, using “Where the Wild Things Are” by Maurice Sendak as an example:

- Q: Max is wearing a costume. What kind of animal is he dressed up as? (A: A fox)
- Q: How did Max get to the land where the Wild Things are (i.e., what did he sail in)? (A: A boat)
- Q: Was Max scared of the Wild Things? (A: No)
- Q: Did the Wild Things love Max? (A: Yes)
- Q: When Max went back home, what did he find that was still hot? (A: Supper)

Note that the examples given here are close-ended questions (questions whose answers are either correct/incorrect). Close-ended questions will help to keep the students in the flow of the story so the teacher can read it straight through.

On the “second read,” the teacher focuses on **reading for comprehension**, opening up the discussion about the book to assess and build on students’ comprehension of the text. Since this is the second time the students will be exposed to this story aloud, students are likely to be more engaged as a result of being familiar with the plot. Now the teacher can focus on higher level and open-ended questions to help develop students’ comprehension, recall, and critical thinking skills. Some sample questions that teachers may pose to students during the second read are:

- Q: Why do you think Max was sent to bed without supper? (A: His mother said he was causing too much mischief, he was misbehaving, he was acting like a wild thing, etc.)
- Q: Where did the boat that Max sailed come from? (A: The Wild Things sent it to him, Max’s imagination, he built it, etc.)
- Q: Max was very brave and not scared of the Wild Things. What does it mean to be brave? (A: To not run away from something other people are afraid of, to do things that you’ve never done before, etc.)

Note that the responses to these open-ended questions can vary. The dialogic reading method described in the previous section ([Making the Leap](#)) is a useful resource in helping you to develop different questions to ask students throughout the story.

Echo Reading

Echo reading is a strategy to help students practice reading fluently and with expression using short sentences or segments of text. The teacher first reads the sentence or phrase aloud, then the students repeat, following along with the text. With beginning readers, the teacher should also read along with the students as they are attempting to echo the text.

Example: (from “The Giving Tree”)

Teacher: Once there was a tree ... and she loved a little boy.

[Then the students repeat, along with the teacher if extra support is needed.]

Teacher: *And every day the boy would come ...*

[Students repeat]

and he would gather her leaves ...

[Students repeat]

and make them into crowns ...

[Students repeat]

and play king of the forest.

[Students repeat]

Over time, as students become more fluent and expressive in their ability to read short segments, the teacher may choose to select longer phrases or sentences and decrease the amount of support provided as students echo the text.

Note: If you live in a place where resources are limited and print is hard to come by, you may choose to incorporate commonly used local proverbs or maxims in your host country's native language as examples with your students.

Phrased Readings

Similar to echo reading, phrased readings involve short segments of text. But in phrased readings, larger bodies of text are parsed into syntactically appropriate units (i.e., phrases).

For example, the following passage can be phrased into these "chunks":

Learning to Swim

Everton loved to swim/ and could even remember his first swimming lesson.// The teacher had brought him and his swimming classmates into the water,/ one by one,/ and they held on to the wall.// They all took turns practicing getting their faces wet/ and blowing bubbles with their mouths.// When Everton got older,/ he joined the swim team and learned how to do the freestyle,/ backstroke/, breaststroke,/ and butterfly.// Everton's favorite was the butterfly.

A single slash (/) indicates a slight pause, where a comma or natural break might occur in the text. The double slash (//) after the end of a sentence or paragraph indicates a more pronounced pause to identify the separation between ideas, or the end of one thought and the beginning of the next. This system of teaching fluency helps to reinforce the rules of grammar and assist in acquiring the appropriate inflections associated with different symbols of punctuation and sentence structures.

Guidelines for teaching phrased reading

1. Select the passage you will be using for your phrased reading activity. The difficulty of the passage may be adjusted according to your students' reading abilities. If you cannot provide separate handouts of your passage, write it on the chalkboard or on a master copy for students to write down in their notebooks.

2. Read the segmented passage aloud with appropriate phrasing and intonation. Ask students if they can figure out what the markers indicate.

[Answers: The single slash indicates a slight pause. The double slash after the period indicates a more prolonged pause.]

Then discuss why phrasing is important in the fluent reading process.

3. As a class, rehearse a passage in unison. Remind students that the phrase markers identify chunks of text that should be smoothly read together.
4. Provide students with time to read segmented passages with partners.
5. Allow students to rehearse segmented passages independently.
6. Meet with students individually to hear independent readings of segmented passages. Note students' expression, pauses, and phrasing. Assist those who seem to struggle.
7. Provide students with an unsegmented passage and ask them to segment the passage into appropriate chunks.

Reading Tutors/Reading Buddies

A great way to provide struggling readers with additional support is to pair them with another fluent reader who can serve as a reading tutor or reading buddy. The tutor or reading buddy can be anyone who is a fluent reader (adults in your community, parent volunteers, classroom aides, or older students) and can sit down with a struggling reader to practice fluent reading skills. They may employ any of the methods previously mentioned: modeling fluent reading, repeated readings, or practicing phrased readings. Sessions with tutors/reading buddies do not have to be long; sessions that are 15–20 minutes work well.

Reader's Theater

One of the most effective, engaging, and creative ways to promote fluent reading is to facilitate a reader's theater for your students. As students act out the script, they practice expressing the meaning behind the text through their use of intonation and gestures. This active learning opportunity engages the students in such a way that the *meaning* of the words is emphasized, and not memorization of the words.

Sample Readers Theater Script

A Tale of Two Chickens

Written by Amanda Pincock, Abby Blanton and Hyeju Kym

Illustrated by Hyeju Kym

Adapted by Amanda Pincock

Character	Student playing the character
Narrator 1	

Narrator 2	
Red Hen (1)	
White Hen (1)	
Red Hen (2)	
White Hen (2)	
Red Hen (3)	
White Hen (3)	
Red Hen (4)	
White Hen (4)	

Instructor's Notes:

This reader's theater can be done with as few as 3 students, and as many as 10.

If done with 3 students, there will be 1 narrator and 2 hens. If done with 10, there will be 2 narrators and 8 different hens. This can, of course, be modified to suit the number of students in your class.

This particular example was done with 4 students in mind.

Readers' Instructions:

Each character stays on the stage for the entirety. Red Hen and White Hen act out what each narrator says. There can be props if available (get creative!) or they can simply wear white and red.

Have fun!

Readers' Script:

Narrator 1	Red hen, red hen, what do you eat?
Red Hen	I eat greens, grains, and bugs, with water to drink.
Narrator 2	White hen, white hen, what do you eat?
White Hen	I eat what I find while scrounging the street.
Narrator 1	Red hen, red hen, where do you stay?
Red Hen	I live in a cozy coop that's clean and keeps germs away.
Narrator 2	White hen, white hen, where do you stay?

White Hen	I live on the road, unprotected and in harm's way.
Narrator 1	Red hen, red hen, how do you feel?
Red Hen	I feel plump, happy, tidy and well!
Narrator 2	White hen, white hen, how do you feel?
White Hen	I feel sad, skinny, dirty and ill.
Narrator 1	Red hen, red hen, how are your eggs?
Red Hen	My eggs are strong, nutritious, and come every day!
Narrator 2	White hen, white hen, how are your eggs?
White Hen	My eggs are few and fragile, prone to break and decay.
Narrator 1	We don't have many eggs from white hen to eat,
Narrator 2	But boiled or fried, red hen's eggs are a treat!

Take a bow!

Supporting Fluency for Different Stages of Reading

As you begin to work with your students on fluency, it will be beneficial for you as their literacy instructor to have an understanding of your students' levels of fluency.

The scale below roughly breaks down stages of fluent reading:

Level 1 Non-Fluent/Basic-Beginning Reader	Reads primarily word-by-word. Occasionally the student may be able to read two-word or three-word phrases but these instances are infrequent and/or they do not preserve meaningful syntax.
Level 2 Non-Fluent/Beginning-Emerging Reader	Reads primarily in two-word phrases with some three- or four-word groupings. Some word-by-word reading may still be present. Word groupings may seem awkward and unrelated to larger context of sentence or passage.
Level 3 Pre-Fluent/Emerging Fluency Reader	Reads primarily in three- or four-word phrase groups. Some small groupings may be present. However, the majority of phrasing seems appropriate and preserves the syntax of the author. Little or no expressive interpretation is present.

Level 4 Fluent Reader	Reads primarily in larger, meaningful phrase groups. Although some regressions, repetitions, and deviations from text may be present, these do not appear to detract from the overall structure of the story. Preservation of the author's syntax is consistent. Some or most of the story is read with expressive interpretation.
---------------------------------	--

For beginning readers (students whose reading abilities fall in Level 1 or 2 in the table above), focus on getting students' oral reading to sound like talking. **For students who are struggling with fluency, silent reading is not an effective use of literacy instruction.** These students should practice reading orally with a more advanced reader or adult as much as possible.

Encourage fluent readers (Levels 3 and 4 in the table above) to continue both reading aloud and practicing sustained silent reading. Partner reading, reader's theaters, and poetry readings are also useful activities that can help students maintain reading fluency.

For Students Still Struggling With Decoding

As you make headway into the world of reading comprehension, you may find that some of your students are still struggling with the basics of decoding. For these students, you may choose to employ some simple strategies to help them speed up decoding, such as combining phonics exercises with lessons within your comprehension lessons to accommodate the various stages of learning your students may be experiencing. These supplemental decoding strategies should not prevent these new readers from forging ahead in comprehension. Reviewing spelling and vocabulary lists, word walls, and other strategies to build a rich knowledge of words can be very useful in helping to build fluency. The next chapter, Vocabulary, will discuss how to help students acquire a greater lexicon and how an expansive vocabulary helps to support overall fluency.

Reflection, Action Planning, and Ideas

Take a moment to reflect on what you have learned in this chapter, what questions you still have about fluency, and what items you would like to research and learn about further. Create an action plan for implementing a lesson on fluency in your classroom.

PCV Exercise: Reflection on Fluency

PCV Exercise: Action Planning to Teach Fluency

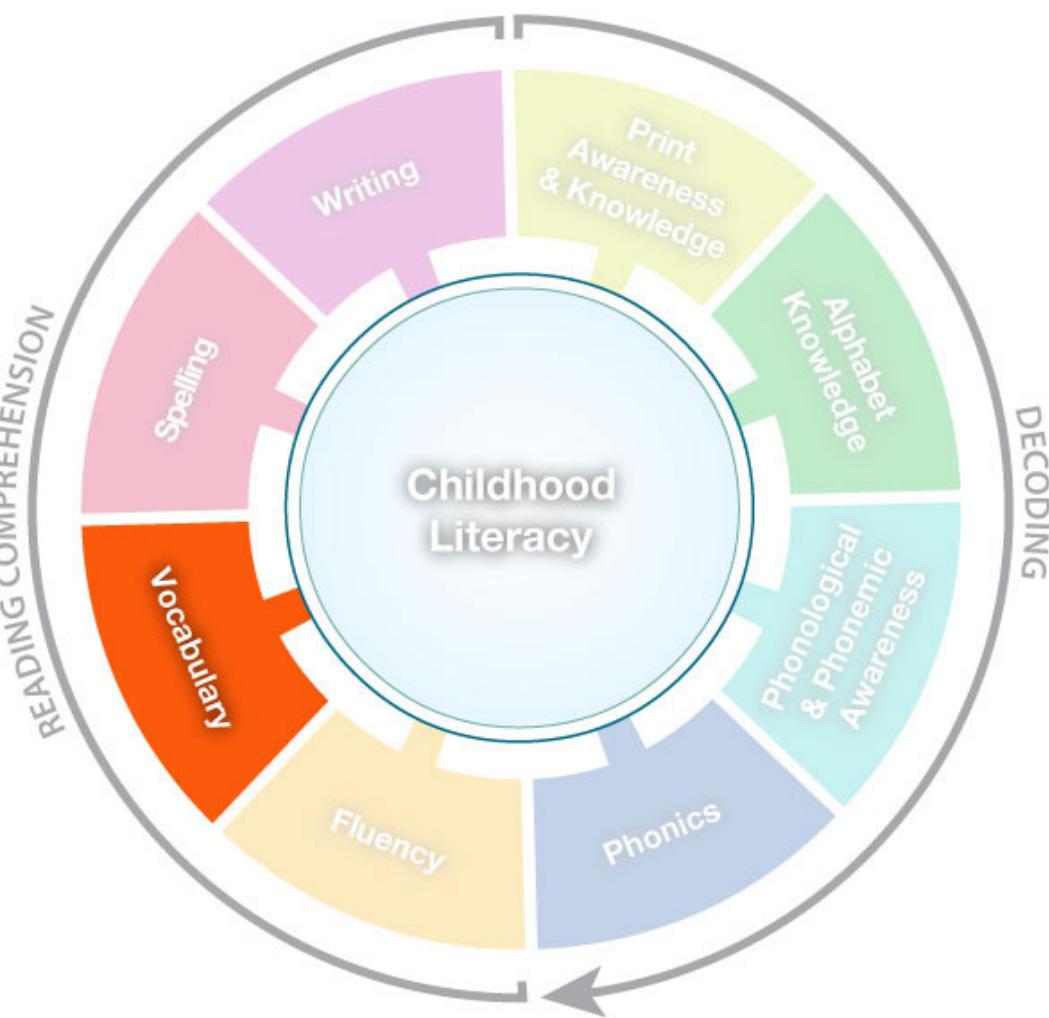
Action	By Whom	By Date
e.g., Create lesson plan	Super PCV	Next Friday, October 1

PCV Exercise: Add your own fluency activities

Use this space to come up with your own great ideas about how to teach fluency to students at your site.

Remember to send your great ideas and activities that have shown promise to the OPATS literacy specialist at Literacy@peacecorps.gov.

Chapter 2: Vocabulary



An individual's **vocabulary** consists of the body of words he or she knows and understands. Vocabulary instruction is critical in any language arts and literacy program. Many research studies based in the United States suggest that vocabulary is the strongest predictor of a child's later academic success and that a child's preschool and kindergarten vocabulary directly relate to reading comprehension in the primary grades. While this research has been mostly conducted in developed regions, it gives us clues about the important role vocabulary plays as young children learn how to read.

Without a robust vocabulary, new readers will have a more difficult time understanding what they are reading—and because of their lack of background knowledge, their comprehension will be compromised. As children learn to read more advanced texts, they must learn the meaning of new words that are not part of their oral vocabulary.

This last point is particularly important in cases where the medium of instruction is not the child's mother tongue; children learning in a second or third language are even more in need of a rich vocabulary to make meaning. Bilingual and dual literacy approaches are crucial to help children bridge the gap between their mother tongue and the classroom language.

Vocabulary instruction should include repetition and exposure to a wide variety of texts and print whenever possible. Newspapers, books, magazines, and signs in shops and businesses are all useful for vocabulary learning. Labeling the classroom in one or more languages and continually emphasizing vocabulary as part of content instruction is also a great way to reinforce new word acquisition.

Methods of Instruction

There are two types of vocabulary learning: **indirect** and **direct**.

In **indirect vocabulary learning**, children learn the meanings of most words indirectly, through everyday experiences with oral and written language.

Children learn word meanings indirectly in three ways:

1. If they engage daily in oral language, young children can learn word meanings through conversations with other people, especially adults. As they engage in these conversations, children often hear adults repeat words several times. They also may hear adults use new and interesting words.
2. If children are read to, they can learn word meanings from listening. Reading aloud is particularly helpful when the reader pauses during reading to define an unfamiliar word and, after reading, engages the child in a conversation about the book.
3. If the child is an independent reader, he or she can learn many new words by reading extensively on his or her own. The more children read independently, the more words they encounter and the more word meanings they learn.

Even though children are able to acquire an understanding of words indirectly, it is important to dedicate structured class time toward vocabulary instruction throughout the course of a comprehensive language arts and literacy curriculum. This not only targets building students' vocabularies directly, but it also helps to give students the tools to more effectively derive meanings of words when they are exposed to new terms indirectly.

In **direct vocabulary learning**, the adult or teacher helps students learn new words by providing direct instruction about the words and their meanings. These words may represent complex concepts and may not be a part of students' everyday experiences. Thus, the teachers' explanations of new words help students to learn and acquire a larger vocabulary and broaden their understanding of concepts and ideas.

Direct instruction includes:

- Providing students with specific word instruction; and
- Teaching students word learning strategies.

In lessons focusing on specific word instruction, the teacher selects new terms to introduce their meanings, present examples of the words in use, and provide opportunities for students to engage in activities designed to add to their knowledge of those words.

Below is a sample lesson plan which combines the **Read for Enjoyment/Read for Comprehension** strategy introduced in Chapter 1, and focuses on a specific list of vocabulary words from the popular fable *The Hare and the Tortoise*.

Sample Vocabulary Lesson Plan

Example Using “The Hare and the Tortoise”

Welcome and Opening Songs

⌚ 5–7 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Welcome Song¹³

Welcome, welcome everyone

It's time to have some fun.

First we'll put our things away

Then we'll start our busy day.

Welcome, welcome everyone.

I'm so glad that you have come!

Helpful Hints & Facilitator’s Notes

“Welcome Song” is sung to the tune of “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star.”

Transition to Main Activity

⌚ 2 minutes

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Say, “Today we will be reading a story called **The Hare and the Tortoise** and we will learn these words: **hare, tortoise, speedy, steady, bragging, and determination**. Please listen for these words because we will hear them in the story.”

Helpful Hints & Facilitator’s Notes

Write the words out for students to see on the chalkboard, flip chart paper, or flashcards.

You should also prepare simple definitions for each vocabulary word that will be simple and easy enough for struggling readers to understand, or more complex for advancing students, depending on your students’ level of comprehension.

You may choose to write out these simple definitions on sticky notes or small strips of paper and put them inside of the book on the pages where each vocabulary word is first introduced. That way, as you read through the story, you will be reminded to stop at the word to introduce its meaning.

Main Activity

⌚ 10–15 minutes

¹³ Courtesy of Jean Warren, www.preschoolexpress.com.

Activities and Suggested Scripts

Read for Enjoyment

Introduce the book/story to the students and read through it, stopping throughout to discuss the selected vocabulary words.

Some sample questions for this first read are as follows:

- *A **hare** is a small, furry animal with strong hind legs and long ears.*

*Q: What other animal looks a lot like a **hare**? (A: a rabbit)*

- *It says that the tortoise moved at a slow and **steady** pace.*

Q: Who do you think would win in a race, the hare or the tortoise?

(Ask students to raise a hand for hare or tortoise, and tell them that you will keep reading the story so they can find out who wins.)

- ***Bragging** is when someone always talks about what they know or can do, and maybe shows off.*

Q: Do you have friends/siblings/family members that brag about themselves? How does it make you feel?

(Let students answer, and then help them to make a connection between how they feel about their friend/sibling/family member and how the tortoise felt about the hare.)

Read for Comprehension

Read through the story a second time (the next day, or a few days later), this time focusing on students' ability to recall the meanings of words, how those words and ideas fit into the moral of the story, and engaging students in thinking more critically about the new terms.

Some sample questions for the second read are as follows:

- *Q: How did the tortoise feel about the hare that **bragged** so much?*
- *Q: Do you remember who wins the race?*
- *Q: What did the **hare** learn from the race?*
- *Q: The tortoise was very **determined** to get to the finish line. Why is it important to be **determined**?*

Optional Secondary Activity (10–15 minutes)

Implementation

Choose one of the following activities listed in the next section to reinforce and support students' understanding of the vocabulary words presented above in the Main Activity.

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Prepare any materials, additional text, and other resources necessary ahead of time.

Wrap-Up

⌚ 3–5 minutes

Implementation

Review the vocabulary words and main points in the story. You can ask a few students to talk about the words or their favorite parts of the story to close.

Wave Goodbye Song¹⁴

Wave high. Wave low.

I think it's time, we gotta go.

Wave your elbows. Wave your toes.

Wave your tongue and wave your nose.

Wave your knees. Wave your lips.

Blow a kiss with fingertips.

Wave your ears. Wave your hair.

Wave your belly and derriere.

Wave your chin. Wave your eye.

Wave your hand and say "goodbye."

Sample Activities for Teaching Vocabulary

There are many ways to teach specific word instruction, ranging from vocabulary lists and word walls to scavenger hunts. Below are several simple word-learning activities. Not only are these useful in engaging students, but they also teach students different ways to process information in order to **understand the meaning of the word**. The skills your students gain from the activities listed below will continue to help each of them in their individual approach to reading and literacy.

Activities

Activity: Direct Explanation

Description: Students can sometimes use context clues to figure out the meaning of an unfamiliar word they come across in their reading. Remind them that context clues are the words, phrases, and sentences surrounding an unfamiliar word that can give hints or clues to its meaning. Caution students that although these clues can prove to be helpful, they can sometimes be misleading.

Materials: Text or passage being used in class

Procedure:

1. Teacher identifies a few difficult words in sentences of the passage and writes them on the blackboard.
Example: *The constellation was visible at dusk, and Venus shone brightly.*
2. You can then ask, “*What do you think constellation means?*”
3. Tell students to look at the words around it and ask, “*Are there clues? What is Venus? What time of day is dusk?*”

¹⁴ Reprinted with permission from Rob Reid, aka Rappin’ Rob, www.rapnrob.com.

4. Wait for responses, and then ask, "Can you guess what a **constellation** is?"
5. If no answers are forthcoming, say, "A **constellation** is a collection of stars in the sky that form a shape. Often, a constellation has special name or story behind it."

Activity: Word Walls

Description: A word wall is a systematically organized collection of key words from a unit of study. High-quality classrooms often contain a variety of word walls that are based on classroom needs (e.g., high-frequency words, content words) and are interactive. The word wall is integrated into daily literacy activities, skills, and strategies. It provides ongoing support for a range of language learners.

Materials: Paper, wall, tape or adhesive; or chalk on a wall

Procedure:

1. Use large black letters on pastel or white backgrounds.
2. Do not include too many words at one time. Seven to ten words per lesson is usually enough for students to work with.
3. Do activities with the word wall each week, engaging all learners visually and kinesthetically (using bodily movement—creating the word wall, pointing to the word wall).
4. Encourage students to use word wall words during writing activities. Check to see if students are able to spell and write the words correctly.

Sample Word Walls



Activity: Word Webs

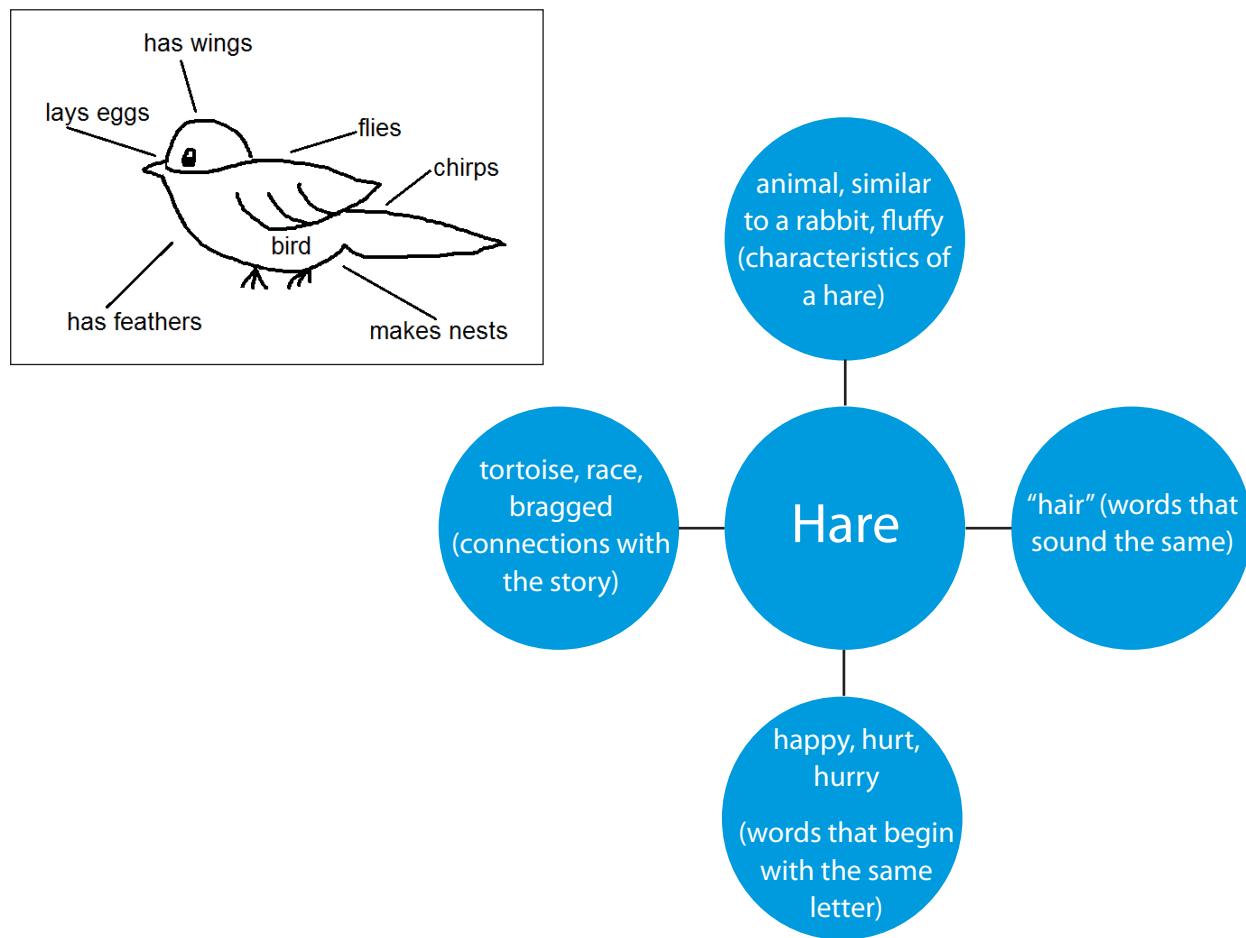
Description: A word web can be used to expand students' understanding of new vocabulary by creating connections between new words and other words or ideas with which students are already familiar. Students are given a visual representation of how a term can be used in various contexts, how some words can have different meanings, and ideas for how to use the word in their oral and written language. It can look very similar to an idea brainstorm.

Materials: Paper, wall, tape or adhesive; or chalk on a wall

Procedure

1. Write the target word clearly in the center of the paper, wall, or chalkboard.
2. Ask students to think of words that remind them of the target word, and call on students to give responses.
3. Show connections between the words students have responded with in relation to the target word.
4. Organize the word web according to different categories that relate to the target word (e.g., words that rhyme, start with the same letter, contextual clues,)

Sample Word Webs



Activity: Your Own Definition

Description: While students can do this individually when there are no notebooks or paper available, this activity can also be a teacher-led group activity facilitated on the chalkboard or on slates.

Materials: None, or chalkboard/slates where available

Procedure

1. Choose a word and write it clearly on the blackboard.
2. The following is a set of comments that can be written on the blackboard or provided in a handout:
 - b. Things I know about this word (should include any descriptive information)
 - c. Draw a picture
 - d. Examples (from own life)
 - e. General category this word might belong in
 - f. Examples or other related words
 - g. My definition: _____
3. You can ask each student to read his or her definition, or this can be done as a large group activity.
4. If the students cannot come up with the correct definition after moving through all these steps, you may need to think of additional hints.

Activity: Using Stem Sentences

Description: Helping new readers and writers develop and fully comprehend vocabulary is critical. By providing sentence stems, you are promoting a full understanding of vocabulary, not just memorization.

Materials: None

Procedure

1. On the blackboard, list the following sentence stems below or come up with some of your own.

It's sort of like _____.

It looks like a _____.

It's when you _____.

It's where you go to _____.

It smells like _____.

You use it when you _____.

Activity: Literacy Walk

Description: The simplest way to expose students to new vocabulary is to take a walk in the village or community and read the signs at shops and businesses. Students can act as scribes and copy all the new vocabulary as you go or after you come back. Particularly in second language contexts, this vocabulary will need to be practiced. This new vocabulary is useful for spelling lists, quiz-me cards, and story creation. *Note: This activity may not be appropriate or may need to be modified for PCVs in very print-scarce communities.*

Materials: None

Procedure

1. Walk to a particular place (like the grocer or post office) to learn new vocabulary specific to these places, or take a walk and note whatever you stumble upon that is written.
2. All students can copy down the new vocabulary, or a few students can be scribes for the entire class.

Activity: Quiz-Me! Cards

Description: Practicing new words is essential for integrating those words into a student's vocabulary. With quiz-me cards, students can have any peer, family member, or adult quiz them.

Materials: Card examples below

Procedure:

1. Students write a word on one side of an index or small card and the definition on the other side. Students can also write the word in an exercise book or on a slate.
2. Another adaptation is to put 2–5 lines underneath each vocabulary word, and each time the student gets the definition correct, a peer or adult can sign underneath. When the student has the card signed, he or she can turn it in to the teacher.

melancholy

sad

When teaching vocabulary, emphasize teaching students **new words and their meanings**.

Remember: A robust vocabulary is the strongest predictor in a child's later reading success.

The next chapter, **Spelling**, will focus on strategies to teach and reinforce students' ability to spell words accurately.

Reflection, Action Planning, and Ideas

Take a moment to reflect on what you have learned in this chapter, what questions you still have about vocabulary, and what items you would like to research and learn about further. Create an action plan for implementing a lesson on vocabulary in your classroom.

PCV Exercise: Reflection on Vocabulary

PCV Exercise: Action Planning to Teach Vocabulary

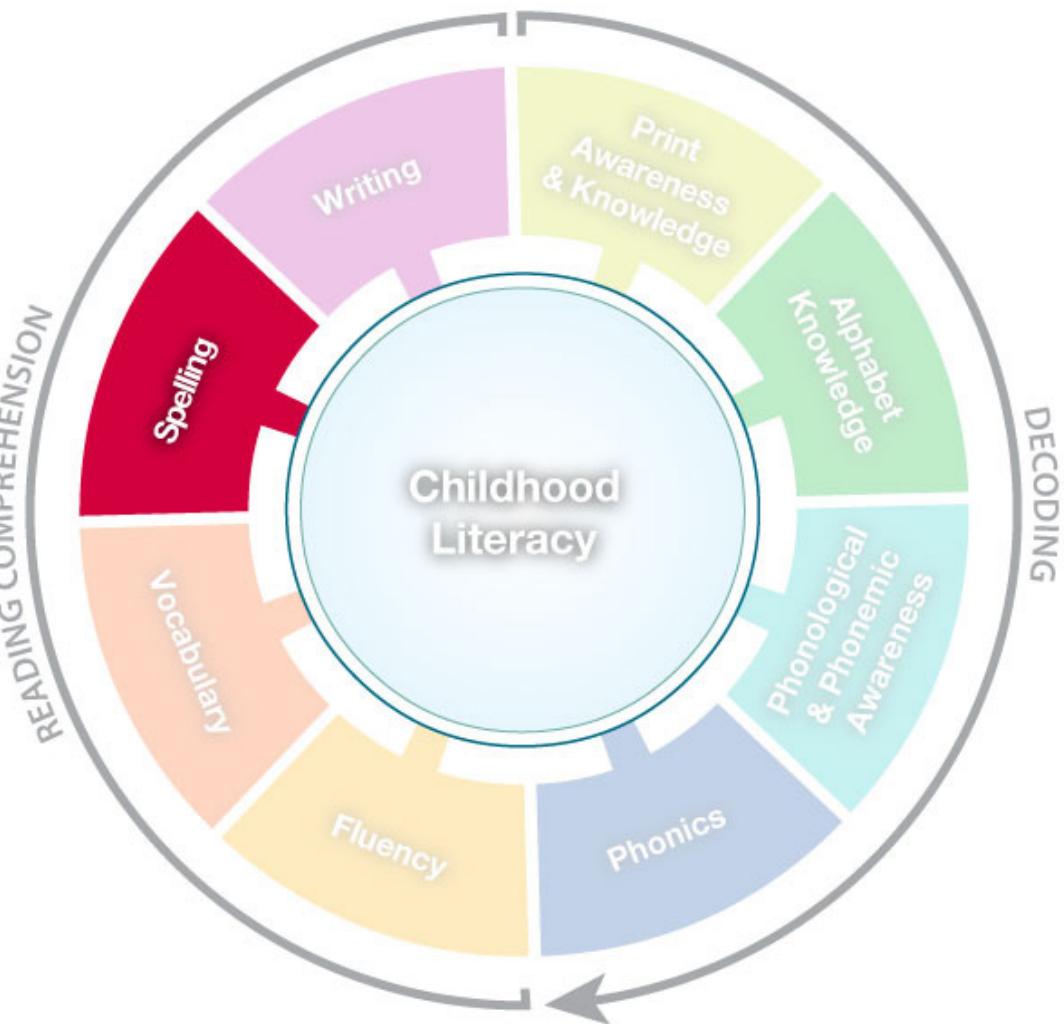
Action	By Whom	By Date
e.g., Create lesson plan	Super PCV	Next Friday, October 1

PCV Exercise: Add your own vocabulary activities

Use this space to come up with your own great ideas about how to teach vocabulary to students at your site.

Remember to send your great ideas and activities that have shown promise to the OPATS literacy specialist at Literacy@peacecorps.gov.

Chapter 3: Spelling



As children have more experiences with words, they can begin to notice patterns in the way letters are used, as well as recurring sequences of letters that form syllables, word endings, word roots, prefixes, and suffixes.

The specifics and intricacies of spelling must be taught. Children do not automatically understand how to spell. The three teaching components of **spelling** include:

- **The alphabetic principle** – Knowledge of which individual letters match up to sounds, in the correct sequence (e.g., in the word “cup,” each sound is represented by a single letter).
- **Pattern information** – Which groups of letters function as a pattern to represent sounds (examples of patterns would include: CVC (consonant/vowel/consonant) patterns to form short vowels (e.g., the word **cat**) or patterns to form long vowels (e.g., the words **same** or **meat**)).
- **Meaning information** – Which groups of letters represent the meaning (e.g., prefix **re-** as in **rediscover**, means to discover again).

The components discussed in previous chapters are important in providing the foundation for students to learn how to spell words. Confidence in these skills will help students to better understand spelling and will aid in their ability to utilize a variety of tools when faced with the task of spelling, orally and in their own writing.

The development of spelling, like other skills that are learned, follows a typical pattern or trajectory, but it is also common for some students to skip stages or revert back to previous stages in the learning process.

Developing Spelling Skills

Invented spelling is the first stage children go through when learning to spell. Once a child knows all the letters of the alphabet and can associate the correct sounds with the letters, that child can begin to put together words according to the letters and letter sounds he or she knows. In invented spelling, a child uses his or her best judgments to relate letter names with the sounds of words.

Once children reach the phonetic stage of spelling, they can represent each sound they hear when spelling a word. In the transitional stage, children begin to use conventional spelling and become more aware of the way they see words spelled, rather than just the sounds they hear. In the transitional stage, children may use words they know to spell words they don't, such as *younighted* for *united*, and *highked* for *hiked*.

As young children begin to hear separate sounds in words, they benefit from help in writing the sounds they hear, that is, from guidance in inventing spellings. Gradually, their initial invented spellings (usually one letter per word) more or less naturally give way to more complete and sophisticated invented spellings and to conventional spellings, as long as the children have ample opportunities to practice reading and writing.

Extensive exposure to print helps children internalize not only the spellings of particular words, but spelling patterns. Young children, especially, benefit from reading favorite selections again and again.

Children benefit from guidance in developing a spelling conscience—concern for spelling and a sense of when something may not be spelled correctly. For instance, as a first step toward correcting their spelling, children who are already spelling many words correctly might be encouraged to circle words in a first draft that they think might be spelled incorrectly.

Teaching children strategies for correcting spelling is far more important than giving them the correct spelling of any particular word. Such strategies include: writing the word two or three different ways and deciding which one "looks right," locating the correct spelling in a familiar text or in print displayed in the classroom, asking someone, consulting a dictionary, or using a spell-checker on the computer or a handheld electronic speller.

Stages of Learning to Spell and Sample Activities

There are five common stages for learning to spell (in English):

1. Precommunicative stage
2. Semiphonetic stage

3. Phonetic stage
4. Transitional stage
5. Correct stage

While these may not all correspond in different languages, there are many take-aways you can think about when working with young children, regardless of the language they are learning. Each of the stages listed below gives an approximate age range in which they commonly occur, but these are only estimations and are taken from English-based teaching perspectives. Depending on students' experiences with reading, writing, and spelling, the age estimates given here may or may not be applicable or accurate.

Precommunicative Stage (3–5 years old)

In the precommunicative stage, a child may have an understanding of print and can recognize that print carries meaning but is unable to effectively utilize print as a means of communication. Depending on ability, a child in this stage of spelling development may be able to use symbols from the alphabet but is unable to show knowledge of letter-sound correspondences. It is in the precommunicative stage that invented spelling takes place. The child in this stage may also still lack knowledge of the entire alphabet, the distinction between upper- and lowercase letters, and the directionality of his or her language's written orthography.

Activity: Song Charts

Description: Focus on helping these students to develop their interest in print, creating print-rich environments, and facilitating daily read-alouds. Reinforcing letter names and letter-sound correspondences are also key in this stage of literacy development, and teachers should begin to introduce the concepts of letters, beginning/ending sounds, words, sentences, rhyming, and directionality of print. The example described here focuses on song charts, which incorporates many of these skills.

Materials: Flip chart paper, markers, pens, pencils. Songs can also be written on a chalkboard.

Procedure

1. Select a simple song or nursery rhyme to teach students.
2. Write the words of the song/nursery rhyme in large print and clearly so that all students in the classroom will be able to see the text.
3. Read the song to the students, pointing to the words as you read to emphasize directionality of the print.
4. Teach them the tune and demonstrate any motions or gestures that accompany the rhyme.
5. Ask students to sing along and act out the gestures that go with the song.
6. Point out any rhyming words, alliteration, or words that repeat, and repeat the song together.

Example: *Old MacDonald*

Old MacDonald had a farm, Ee-i-ee-i-o

*And on the farm he had a cow, Ee-i-ee-i-o
With a moo, moo here, and a moo, moo there
Here a moo, there a moo, everywhere a moo, moo
Old MacDonald had a farm, Ee-i-ee-i-o
Old MacDonald had a farm, Ee-i-ee-i-o
And on the farm he had a goat, Ee-i-ee-i-o
With a baa, baa here, and a baa, baa there
Here a baa, there a baa, everywhere a baa, baa
Old MacDonald had a farm, Ee-i-ee-i-o*

Continue with the verses using different animals and animal sounds your students may be familiar with for 3–5 more rounds, or as long as the students stay engaged.

Activity: Spelling Aerobics

Description: A fun break to use kinesthetic learning to practice spelling and to familiarize students with letters. This example is in English.

Materials: None

Procedure:

1. All students stand up.
2. Leader says a word (could be teacher or a student).
3. For each letter in the word that when written extends above the line (b, d, f, h, k, l, t), the students reach their hands over their heads.
4. When a letter is written in between the lines (a, c, e, i, m, n, o, r, s, u, v, w, x, z), have the students put their hands on their hips.
5. Have students stretch toward their toes for letters that fall below the lines when written (g, j, p, q, y).

Example: “finally”—hands would go: up, hips, hips, hips, up, up, toes.

Semiphonetic Stage (4–6 years old)

The child in the semiphonetic stage begins to understand letter-sound correspondence and that sounds are assigned to letters. The child often employs rudimentary logic, using single letters, for example, to represent words, sounds, and syllables (e.g., *U* for you).

Note: As children are learning to read, write, and spell, it is important for teachers to be mindful in how they correct students’ attempts so as not to discourage students from continuing to make attempts at learning these skills. For example, if a child is asked to spell the word *you*, and they respond with the letter *U*, you can say, “*You are right that the letter U sounds like the word you. The word I’m asking you to spell is you, like “you and me,” or, “you are very smart. This word you is spelled with three letters, y-o-u.*”

Activity: Word Families

Description: In the semiphonetic stage, students are learning that letters stand for particular sounds and can make some accurate approximations about how words are spelled. Teachers working with students in this stage of spelling should focus on deepening students' understanding of phoneme-letter associations. The activity given in this example shows how to group words into "families" in which all of the words have one phoneme in common.

Materials: Chalk and chalkboard, or flip chart and markers. Words can also be written on flash cards and then displayed on the chalkboard or a wall.

Procedure

1. Choose a list of words that all have a specific phoneme in common (e.g., ch-, tr-, -ight, -ing).
2. Write a list of these words on the chalkboard, flip chart, or on flash cards. (e.g., light, night, bright, tight, fight, right).
3. Read each word aloud to the students and have students repeat the word aloud.
4. Ask students if they can see what all of the words have in common.
5. Focus on the selected phoneme, pointing out the letters that make up that sound and ask students to repeat the phoneme aloud.
6. Erase the words from the chalkboard, or take down the list of words. Then, write or display just the selected phoneme (e.g., -ight) and repeat the sound it makes.
7. Next, from your original list, say one word aloud at a time, asking students what letter(s) would go before the phoneme to create the word you are saying aloud. (e.g., "*I'm thinking of the word light. LIII-ight. What letter would go before -ight to make the word light?*")

Activity: Spelling in a Circle

Description: A fun, physical way to practice spelling. Students get to move a bit and practice their spelling skills at the same time.

Materials: None

Procedure

1. Students form a large circle around the room.
2. Say a spelling word and the students must each say one letter of the spelling word. For example, if the word was elephant, the first student says *e*, the next student says *l*, then *e, p, h, a, n, t* as each student continues.
3. After the last letter of the word, the next student in the circle will say the word, **elephant**.

Phonetic Stage (5–7 years old)

The child in the phonetic stage of spelling development uses a letter or group of letters to represent every speech sound he or she hears in a word. Typically, when asked to spell a word, these students select letters on the basis of sound alone. Although some of their choices do not conform to conventional (English) spelling, they are systematic and easily understood. Examples are *KOM* for *come* and *EN* for *in*.

Activity: Word Study

Description: “Word study” is an alternative to traditional spelling instruction. It is based on learning word patterns rather than memorizing unconnected words. Many teachers teach spelling by giving students a list on Monday and a test on Friday with practice in between. This type of drill and practice has earned traditional spelling instruction a reputation for being boring. That there is no big picture and no ultimate goal makes it all the more tedious—as soon as one spelling list is tested, another list takes its place. A word study program is a cohesive approach that addresses word recognition, vocabulary, and phonics, as well as spelling. Word study provides students with opportunities to investigate and understand the patterns in words. Knowledge of these patterns means that students don’t need to learn to spell one word at a time.

Materials: Spelling word list

Procedure

1. Introduce the spelling pattern by choosing words for students to sort.

For example, the difference between **hard c** (as in *cat*) and **soft c** (as in *cell*). After collecting many words containing the letter **c**, students discover that **c** is usually hard when followed by consonants (as in *clue* and *crayon*) and the vowels **a**, **o**, and **u** (as in *cat*, *cot*, and *cut*). In contrast, **c** is usually soft when followed by **i**, **e**, and **y** (as in *circus*, *celery*, and *cycle*).
2. Encourage students to discover the pattern in their reading and writing.
3. Use reinforcement activities to help students relate this pattern to previously acquired word knowledge.
4. Test students’ pattern knowledge rather than their ability to memorize single words. For example, a teacher might have students work with 20 words during a word study cycle and then randomly test students on 10 of those words.

Activity: Word Search

Description: This is a simple and fun way to practice spelling in any language. You can focus on a specific spelling pattern in the word search.

Materials: You must construct the word search grid in advance.

Procedure

1. Create word search sheets or create a large one on the chalkboard. Write all the spelling words first, from top to bottom, then add letters around them.
2. See the example below of how to create a word search card:

3. Words to search: dog, cat, chair, mouse, shoe, house

d	f	c	m	c	n	s
o	m	h	o	u	s	e
g	o	a	x	t	o	o
y	u	i	l	u	s	e
a	s	r	p	f	c	y
i	e	p	k	g	v	d
u	t	c	z	o	b	j

Transitional Stage (6–8 years old)

The transitional stage speller begins to assimilate the conventional alternative for representing sounds, moving from a dependence on phonology (sound) for representing words to a reliance on visual representation and an understanding of the structure of words. One of the most distinguishing characteristics of this stage is the inclusion of a vowel in every syllable. Some examples are *EGUL* for *eagle* and *HIGHEKED* for *hiked*. These misspellings exhibit right knowledge and are just one step away from correct spelling.

Activity: Spelling Scavenger Hunt

Description: An active learning activity to promote spelling

Materials: Index cards (or other small pieces of paper) with spelling words written on them

Procedure

1. Write a group of spelling words on index cards and display them all over the room. Keep them in plain sight, but tape them to different walls, on the chalkboards, on the door, on the windows, on the bookshelf, etc.
2. Give pairs or groups of students a spelling list.
3. Instruct students to find the words in the room.
4. When they find a word, they walk up to it. One student turns his back to the word, and spells it. If he or she spells it correctly, his or her partner will put a check next to the word on his or her word list.
5. Continue taking turns and moving pairs around the room until each student has a chance to spell each word aloud.
6. The students then go and find another word and repeat the process.

Correct Stage (8+ years old)

In the correct stage, the speller knows the orthographic system of your language of instruction and its basic rules. The correct speller fundamentally understands how to deal with such things as prefixes and suffixes, silent consonants, alternative spellings, and irregular spellings. A large number of learned words are accumulated and the speller recognizes incorrect forms. The child's generalizations about spelling and knowledge of exceptions are usually correct.

Activity: Crossword Puzzles

Description: Creating crossword puzzles takes a bit of thought, but they are fun and not only help students with spelling, but also with vocabulary. If you have access to the Internet, you can find there are free online crossword generators with a simple Internet search.

Materials: Paper, or can be created on chalkboard

Procedure

1. Use simple categories and words to start so students become accustomed to how a crossword puzzle works. You may have to explain and model the crossword puzzle if it is not common in the students' culture or home experience.

Example: Animals Word Search

Across

1. Animal that flies

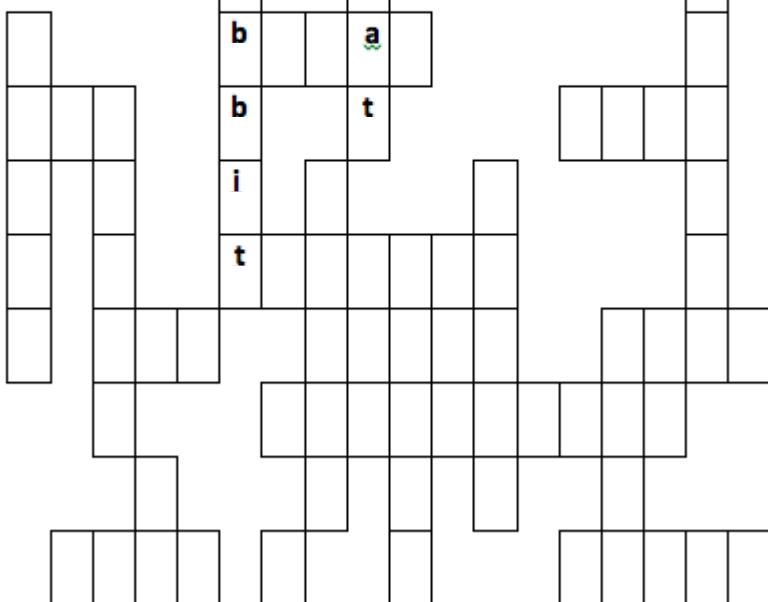
¹b i ¹r d

Down

1. Animal that likes carrots

a
²c
b a
b t
i t

2. Animal that scratches



Activity: Self-Corrected Spelling Test

Description: The self-corrected spelling test is a friendly way to approach vocabulary learning. It builds a student's word capacity while making it fun to hear how to spell words correctly. It should take no more than 15 minutes a few times each week. The teacher does not grade the self-corrected spelling test; rather, the students grade it themselves. Note that the teacher should decide on the words to study and students should be tested at least two times each week.

Materials: Word list chosen by teacher, paper, writing tools

Procedure

1. During the self-corrected spelling test, the teacher or PCV orally gives the words to be studied and the students copy them down as they are spoken out loud.
2. After the words have been read out loud, the PCV or teacher writes them on the chalkboard (if available).
3. The teacher and students chorally read the letters of the word in unison (e.g., L-E-A-F, LEAF)
4. After every word has been said out loud, the students correct their own spelling mistakes, adding missing letters and removing extra letters. For each word, the student puts a circle around the first mistake, a square around the second mistake, and a triangle around the third mistake.



5. After correcting their tests, the students turn their test paper over and take the test again. This way, the teacher and student can identify words or spelling patterns that need improvement.

Sample Spelling Lesson Plan

Below is a sample lesson plan that combines the dialogic reading strategy introduced in [Chapter 1](#), focusing on a specific list of spelling words in the story “Goodnight Moon,” written by Margaret Wise Brown and illustrated by Clement Hurd.

Welcome and Opening Songs

⌚ 5–7 minutes

*Hello, How Are You?*¹⁵ (*Sung to the tune of “Skip to My Lou”*)

Hello, how are you? (Wave at children)
Hello, how are you?
Hello, how are you?
How are you this morning?
I'm fine and I hope you are, too (Point to self)
I'm fine and I hope you are, too
I'm fine and I hope you are, too
I hope you are, too this morning!
Turn to your neighbor and shake their hand
Turn to your neighbor and shake their hand
Turn to your neighbor and shake their hand
Shake their hand this morning!

¹⁵ From “Transition Times & Tricks” by Jean R. Feldman, Ph.D, printed in Earlychildhood NEWS. See the Resources section of this chapter for the article in its entirety.

Transition to Main Activity

 2 minutes

Implementation

Say, "Today we will be reading a story called **Goodnight Moon** and we will look for these words:

- moon
- balloon
- bears
- chairs
- kittens
- mittens
- clocks
- socks
- house
- mouse

Please listen for these words because we will hear them in the story."

Helpful Hints & Facilitator's Notes

Write the words out for students to see, on the chalkboard, flip chart paper, or flash cards.

You may also choose to write out these simple definitions on sticky notes or small strips of paper and put them inside of the book on the pages where each vocabulary word is first introduced. That way, as you read through the story, you will be reminded to stop at the word to introduce its meaning.

Main Activity: Dialogic Reading and Word Search Activity

 20–30 minutes

Implementation

Dialogic Reading

Introduce the book/story to the students, discussing the front cover, author, illustrator, and title. Ask students what they think the story will be about and see if they can find any spelling patterns in the title, **Goodnight Moon**. Read through the story, stopping throughout to point out the selected spelling words.

Word Search

Description: This is a simple and fun way to practice spelling that will work in any language. You can focus on a specific spelling pattern in the word search.

Materials: You must construct the word search grid in advance.

Procedure

1. Create word search sheets or create a large one on the chalkboard. Write all the spelling words first, from top to bottom, then add letters around them.

2. See the example below of how to create a word search card:
Words to search for: moon, balloon, bears, chairs, kittens, shoe

m	f	h	m	c	n	s
o	m	o	l	h	o	h
o	o	u	x	a	o	o
n	u	s	o	i	s	e
a	b	e	a	r	s	y
k	i	t	t	e	n	s
u	t	c	z	o	b	j

Wrap-Up

⌚ 3–5 minutes

Implementation

Review the spelling words and main points in the story. To close, you can ask a few students to talk about the words or their favorite parts of the story and what new words they learned. If students would like to share words they learned how to spell in this lesson, you can ask them to stand up and share.

Wave Goodbye Song

Wave high. Wave low.

I think it's time, we gotta go.

Wave your elbows. Wave your toes.

Wave your tongue and wave your nose.

Wave your knees. Wave your lips.

Blow a kiss, with fingertips.

Wave your ears. Wave your hair.

Wave your belly and derriere.

Wave your chin. Wave your eye.

Wave your hand and say "goodbye."

Reflection, Action Planning, and Ideas

Take a moment to reflect on what you have learned in this chapter, what questions you still have about spelling, and what items you would like to research and learn about further. Create an action plan for implementing a lesson on spelling in your classroom.

PCV Exercise: Reflection on Spelling

PCV Exercise: Action Planning to Teach Spelling

Action	By Whom	By Date
e.g., Create lesson plan	Super PCV	Next Friday, October 1

PCV Exercise: Add your own spelling activities

Use this space to come up with your own great ideas about how to teach spelling to students at your site.

Remember to send your great ideas and activities that have shown promise to the OPATS literacy specialist at Literacy@peacecorps.gov.

Resources

Transition Time Tricks, by Jean Feldman, Ph.D.

Earlychildhood News Vol. 11, Issue 2

March-April 1999

Reprinted with permission from Excelligence Learning Corporation

Stand up! Sit down! Clean up! Calm down! Hurry up! WAIT! Too many transitions in the day can be frustrating for children as well as teachers. But it doesn't have to be that way. With careful planning and a few "tricks," your day can move more smoothly and many behavior problems can be avoided. And the good news is that transitions provide a great time to "exercise" children's brains. Children love music; they love to move and they love surprises—the very activities that stimulate children's brains according to recent brain research (Wolfe, 1996).

Circle Time

By following the same schedule every day, children learn what to expect and program in certain behaviors (Jensen, 1996). 'Indicator' songs are an effective way to let children know when they are about to begin a new activity. Try these tunes to gather children for circle time or to start the day:

"Hello Song"

(Tune: "Skip to My Lou")

Hello, How are you?

Hello, How are you?

Hello, How are you?

How are you this morning?

(Wave hand.)

I am fine and I hope you are, too

I am fine and I hope you are, too.

I am fine and I hope you are, too.

I hope you are too this morning.

(Point to self, then a child) Turn to your neighbor and shake their hand.

Turn to your neighbor and shake their hand.

Turn to your neighbor and shake their hand.

Shake their hand this morning. (Shake hands with children.)

Continue singing the song by inserting children's names. For example, "Hello Carla, how are you? Hello Peter, how are you? Hello Kia, how are you? How are you this morning?"

Review your schedule each morning and involve children in planning with a song like this one:

"I Like to Come to School"

(Tune: "The Farmer in the Dell")

I like to come to school.

I like to come to school.

I like to learn and play each day.

I like to come to school.

(Ask the children what they like to do, then sing it in the song.)

I like to play with blocks.

I like to play with blocks.

I like to learn and play each day.

I like to play with blocks.

Capture the children's attention for a book, game, or concept you want to introduce by putting a prop in a bag and singing:

"Surprise Sack"

(Tune: "I'm a Little Teapot")

What's in the surprise sack, who can tell?

Maybe it's a book, or maybe it's a shell.

What's in the surprise sack, who can see?

It's something special for you and me!

(Have children guess what they think is in the bag, then remove it and share it with them.)

Clean Up

Clean up is another time during the day that can be a chore for children and teachers. Use a minute timer to help children bring closure to their activities. Set the timer for five minutes, then explain that you will have a "whisper" clean up when it goes off. Model what you want children to do, and encourage them to help you. "Let's see. Where does this car belong?" Give choices to those children who are not cooperating. For example, "Fran, do you want to put away the puzzles or the books?" A cheerful song at cleanup time will also involve children:

"Clean Up Game"

(Tune: "Shortnin' Bread")

Let's all clean up, clean up, clean up.

Let's all play the clean up game. Put away the blocks, blocks, blocks.

Let's all play the clean up game.

(Insert words for other items that need to be picked up.) Reinforce children who are being good helpers by singing their name in a tune like this:

"Jolly Good Helper"

(Tune: "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow")

(Name) is a jolly good helper.

(Name) is a jolly good helper.

(Name) is a jolly good helper.

They're picking up the toys.

Line Up

Little ones don't like to wait, and they don't like lines, so avoid them whenever possible. However, when you do need to line up, play pretend games. For example, "Let's be a train. Everybody put their hands on the person's shoulders in front of them. What kind of car are you on the train? Choo-choo, here we go." Challenge children to be "as quiet as snowflakes," to "tiptoe like elves," to "move in slow motion," or say this chant:

"I'm Ready"

I'm looking straight ahead of me.

My arms are at my side

My feet are quiet as can be.

I'm ready for outside.

(Change the words to fit different activities.)

Attention Getters

Many times during the day you will need to get children's attention and calm them down. Try blowing bubbles, whistling, playing a music box or using a magic sign to focus their attention. If the room is loud say, "If you can hear my voice clap three times and look at me." Lower your voice each time until all of the children are participation. Maybe your class will enjoy a "quiet friend." Cut the top and bottom off a cereal box. Put a puppet on your hand and place it inside the box. Tell the children that when they're quiet, a little friend will come out of the box to see them. When they are very still, stick your hand with the puppet on it out of the box and let the puppet give them directions in a "tiny voice." You might even draw a little face on your index finger with and pen and sing:

"Henry Hush"

(Tune: "London Bridge")

Henry Hush says, "Please be quiet."

Please be quiet. Please be quiet."

Henry Hush says, "Please be quiet."

Sh! Sh! Sh!"

In Between Times

Entertain children while they're waiting to begin a new activity by telling them a story, singing a song, or saying a rhyme. You'll be stimulating their brains and developing reading readiness skills!

"Nursery Rhyme Bop"

(Tune: "100 Bottles of Bear on the Wall")

Jack and Jill went up the hill

To fetch a pail of water.

Jack fell down and broke his crown,

And Jill came tumbling after.

(Every nursery rhyme can be inserted in this tune and sung. Give it a try!)

"Clap Your Hands"

(Tune: "Row Your Boat")

Clap, clap, clap your hands.

Clap your hands with me.

Clap, clap, clap your hands,

Oh, so merrily.

(Sing other variations, such as "roll your hands," "dance around," "jump up and down," or ask children to suggest different movements.) Children will be delighted if you insert their names in traditional songs such as, "The Eensy Weensy Spider," "Five Monkeys Jumping on the Bed," and "Where Is Thumbkin?" If you have trouble thinking of a tune when you need one, then make a song chart for your classroom. Write titles and draw picture clues of your children's favorite songs or finger plays on a piece of poster board. Hang it in the room to refer to during transition times.

Celebrate

"Accentuate the positive" with children and encourage them frequently in the day by having them "hug themselves" or pat themselves on the back." Demonstrate how to give themselves a "silent cheer" (put your hands in the air and wiggle fingers), clap like a clam (make pincers with fingers and open and shut), applaud like seals (extend arms straight in front of you and clap), or clap like fleas (tap index fingers together). Sing this song to remind children how important they are to you:

"Special Me"

(Tune: "Twinkle Little Star")

Special, special, special me.

I'm as special as can be.

There is no one quite like me.

I'm as good as I can be.

Special, special, special me.

I'm as special as can be!

Repetition and Recall

A study of brain-based learning emphasizes the importance of reviewing activities with children. After reading a story, playing a game, or working in learning centers, take a bean bag and toss it to children. As they catch it, ask them to describe what they did or learned. Before children go home, have them recall what they enjoyed most at school, then end on a positive note by singing:

"Good-Bye Friends"

(Tune: "Frerer Jacques")

Good-bye friends; good-bye friends.

Time to go; time to go.

Thank you for playing; thank you for helping.

Love you so, love you so.

A Magic Wand

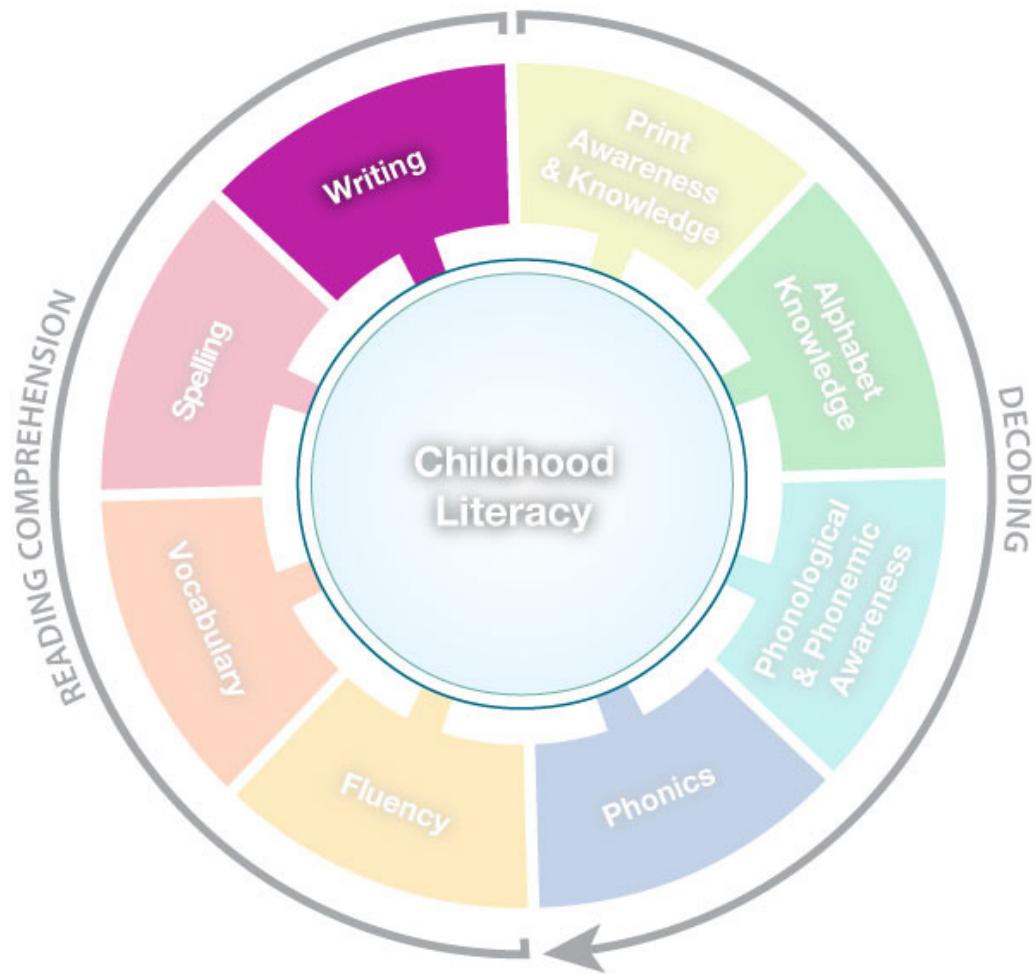
Being a good teacher is a bit like being a magician—you always have to keep a few “tricks” up your sleeve. Now all you need is a magic wand! So get a wooden dowel rod or pencil and cover it with aluminum foil. Dip one end in glue, then roll the glue end in glitter. Taa daa—you have a magic wand! Wave the wand over the children before a story so they will be quiet; tap them gently on the shoulder to dismiss them to go to a learning center; or “Zap!” them with your magic wand to turn them into bunnies, astronauts, butterflies, or bees. Better yet, “Zap!” yourself with the magic wand so all of the “tricks” in this article will work for you!

Jean Feldman, Ph.D., has been a teacher in the Atlanta area for 30 years. She serves on the advisory board of several organizations, presents to professional groups across the country, and is the author of *A Survival Guide for Preschool Teachers*, *Indoor and Outdoor Games and Activities*, *Science Surprises*, *Transition Time*, *Self-Esteem Activities for Young Children*, and *Wonderful Rooms Where Children Can Bloom*.

References

- Feldman, J. (1995). *Transition Time*. Beltsville, MD: Gryphon House.
Jensen, E. (1996). *Brain based learning*. Del Mar, CA: Turning Point.
Wolfe, P. (1996). *Mind, memory, and learning: Translating brain research to classroom practice*. Front, Royal, VA: National Cassette Services.

Chapter 4: Writing



Reading and writing are both thinking processes that are concerned with constructing meaning. By reading, we are able to see how writing “works,” and in writing, we are able to continue to develop vocabulary and the conventions for writing. As a means of communication, writing allows for the

expression of thoughts and ideas through printed language. Like reading, learning to write is a developmental process. The following graphic illustrates the general stages in learning how to write.



Young students sometimes find it difficult to make the transition from speaking to writing. Speaking is easy for most children. But when writing becomes part of a child’s world, there are conventions that suddenly come into play—for example, punctuation,

spelling, and grammar. ***The best way to teach writing to young children is by regularly reading to them.*** Have discussions about what you are reading together and how it is written. Pick a favorite story and have them notice and pick out punctuation marks, proper nouns, or multisyllable words. Breaking down a section of a story this way helps children to make the connection between reading and writing. Games and activities that build vocabulary will also help to increase the range of words your students will know to write with depth.

This chapter discusses the various stages of writing development, the mechanics and cognitive requirements involved in the writing process, and the Language Experience Approach (LEA). Activities to support each developmental stage of writing are also included.

The Developmental Stages of Writing

Awareness and Exploratory Writing

This stage is characterized by students' awareness of written symbols and their attempts to experiment with writing by making marks on paper with the intent of communicating a message.



Figure 1. Examples of children's drawing and scribbling

Drawing is the precursor to writing, as students attempt to translate visual imagery from their environment or imagination onto paper.

Scribbling is a student's attempt to write letters and words. It can be difficult to discern the difference between some children's drawings, which are meant to be pictures, and scribbles, which are meant to be letters and words. Usually, scribbles appear in a more linear form, as it represents text and the manner in which it is typically written in their language of instruction, and drawings have more distinguishable features of imagery. Sometimes, the only way to know the difference is to ask the children, who may be able to tell you about the details in their drawings or the message behind their scribbles.

Emergent/Experimental Writing

Students begin to create mock letters, which resemble letter-like forms. The symbols used by the student are unique, and children can tell you what their written symbols mean.

In this stage, students begin to demonstrate an awareness of the shapes in the symbols that make up print. They may make their own attempts at forms of writing that they have seen modeled by teachers and adults (e.g., lists, letters, or stories). Emergent/experimental writers can also show that they have an early understanding of one-to-one correspondence between the written and spoken word.

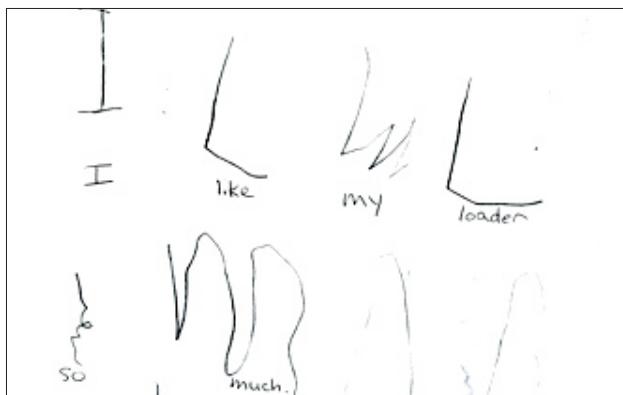


Figure 2. Example of Emergent/Experimental Writing

Transitional and Early Writing

Students begin to transition from using mock-like letters to writing strings of actual letters that more closely resemble words and sentences. Attempts at writing in this stage tend to include one letter per syllable or word, and students still omit and invent letters and symbols. Students show an awareness of spacing between letters, though their use of spacing may be improper as their understanding develops. Writers in this phase also begin to use uppercase and lowercase letters in their print and understand that they are used in different ways.

Other key characteristics of transitional and early writing include students who rely heavily on the most obvious sounds in words, such as hard consonants and long vowels, and students who attempt to write using a small range of text with which they are familiar (names, common objects, places). When writing sentences, these students use a basic sentence structure and may also show attempts to use conventional punctuation.

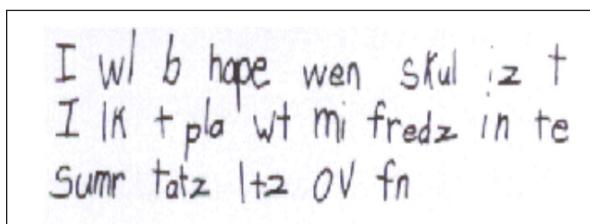


Figure 3. Examples of Transitional and Early Writing

Conventional Writing

Students in the conventional writing stage become increasingly familiar with most aspects of writing, including structure, punctuation, and spelling. Depending on the complexity of the task, students' accuracy of writing varies, but they are able to demonstrate a solid understanding of the writing process and utilize different sentence structures to suit different purposes.

Once upon a time a dog named Rags got lost in the woods. All of the people looked for him. After a while he found his way home again. His family was very happy.

Figure 4. Example of Conventional Writing

Proficient Writing

In this stage, students have gained control over their use of spelling, punctuation, and uses of various sentence structures to suit their needs. These writers have also gained a personal style of writing and can choose from a large vocabulary. Their writing is clear and cohesive, with minimal errors, and they are able to produce longer narratives.

First of all, I wear costumes on Halloween just like any little kid. That is my favorite part of Halloween, plus the candy of course. I think if I run around, in a costume, in the night, knocking on random people's doors asking for candy, then I should get candy. Plus, that's not only me, all 6th graders wear costumes on Halloween, and run around, in a costume, etc. etc. Also, I still like candy as much as the next little kid. And lastly it's not like I'm 30, I'm still a kid! Now, if a 30-40 year old came alone in a costume saying "trick or treat" it would be just weird. But I am not 30, so don't call Me too old to trick or treat!

Figure 5. Example of Proficient Writing

The Mechanics of Writing and the Writing Process

Before students can learn to effectively translate thoughts and words into print, they must first develop the skills needed to write. Physically, a writer must be able to hold a pencil or other writing tool and intentionally direct that writing tool to transfer printed symbols onto a piece of paper. This

requires the use of very small (fine motor) muscles in the hands, which from an early age can be strengthened with simple activities like stringing beads on wire, picking up pebbles or small buttons and sorting them into containers, using scissors, and even turning the pages of a book. The writer must also understand the visual and spatial orientation of letters and text, and the directionality of print in his or her written language. The writer should be able to merge his or her understanding of phonics, vocabulary, and spelling with the physical act of writing. Writing requires an integrated understanding of all the skills discussed in the previous chapters. Writing also presents students with the added task of learning the rules and proper use of grammar, syntax, semantics, punctuation, and capitalization when they reach the stage of writing longer narratives or passages in the conventional and proficient stages.

The process of writing is complicated:

Task	Skills Needed
Mechanics of Writing	
Ability to write letters of the alphabet	Understand the symbols Alphabetic principle (letters represent speech sounds) Memory of the letters of the alphabet Fine motor skills (handwriting ability)
Spelling	Sound-symbol connection Knowledge of spelling conventions and patterns Memory for any irregular spelling (for your language)
Vocabulary	Memory for words Some comprehension Strategies for learning new vocabulary
Grammar/syntax/semantics	Understanding of grammatical patterns Memory of syntax patterns (for your language)
Punctuation/capitalization	Memory for punctuation types, capitalization rules, and other punctuation (as it applies to your language) Understanding of punctuation types and capitalization rules
Writing Process	
Acquire knowledge	Auditory, nonverbal, and reading comprehension Short- and long-term memory
Retrieve knowledge	Short- and long-term memory (working memory) Taking thoughts and ideas and turning them into language
Plan the written text	Understand purpose and goals of writing Knowledge of planning processes and steps to text creation

Task	Skills Needed
Construct the text	Understand and apply conventions of text: Words, topic-centered sentences Organization of information (often culturally specific) Situation and genre-specific (a thank you note versus a cover letter for a job)
Edit the text	Ability to see errors and places for improvement

Supporting Writing Development

Write regularly across the content/curriculum and grade levels. Writing regularly for different purposes will help students develop as writers and can also help them learn in any study area. Teachers include writing not merely to help students develop communication skills but to promote learning and critical thinking.

Even students in the early grades can begin to write, using whatever they have learned about printed text to help them make meaning. It is especially important for young students to write frequently. The point is that students need to engage in composing their thoughts, not merely completing skills exercises and copying in preparation for some later day when they actually write.

For younger students or students who are still in the early stages of writing development, encourage them to draw pictures to communicate thoughts and ideas they cannot yet express through printed text. The PCV, teacher, or more advanced students can work to add captions to students' pictures to facilitate the connection between drawings and the words related to those images.

Authentic writing helps. Young writers are aided when they write about things meaningful to them or ideas they themselves have created about a topic or interest area. Use the Language Experience Approach to help new writers create authentic texts.

The Language Experience Approach

Description

The Language Experience Approach (LEA) is one way to have students create their own reading and writing materials. The method draws on children's firsthand experiences that are either naturally occurring or are planned. Eventually, the use of dictated accounts is reduced and eliminated as students use other-author texts to refine and extend their reading skills and increase their expressive skills with more complex and challenging writing and speaking activities.

An important advantage of this approach is that, from the start, students learn to recognize words in print that are orally very familiar to them. For many students, learning to read their own words, in the meaningful context of their own dictated accounts, is easier than grappling with the unfamiliar language and contexts of a published reading program.

Because students compose the account, comprehension is inherent to their interaction with the text, leading them to expect written language to make sense. As a result of the LEA experience, students expect other-author texts to contain meaningful ideas and understandable language. Dictation also develops and strengthens students' skill at composing their thoughts in writing. Reading skills and composing skills develop in tandem in an LEA program.

The flexible nature of LEA allows each teacher to tailor instruction to the specific interests and needs of individual students. For example, students' personal and cultural backgrounds are readily reflected in their dictated accounts and in their writing, especially when they are encouraged to base their accounts on their experiences outside of school.

Materials: Paper for writing (or a slate, blackboard, or exercise book)

Procedure

1. Create a shared experience: going for a walk, having a guest come into the class, reading a book together.
2. The group then talks about the experience. You should ask questions and point things out. The students' understanding of the experience is deepened while oral vocabulary and language skills are developed and reinforced.
3. As students formulate and express their ideas, you can guide them in creating a dictated account. Students offer statements that they want included in the account, or the teacher selects statements from the ongoing conversation and suggests that they be used.
4. You then record the students' statements on paper, constructing the text while the students watch. Seeing their words written down, students connect what they just said to what appears on the paper. As you record the experience, the students should take the opportunity to talk about written language and demonstrate various concepts of print (e.g., letter and sound names, left to right, right to left or up and down, uppercase and lowercase letters, whole words or symbols).
5. Read the completed account to the students, modeling the sound of fluent, expressive reading. Students then read it several times, with a teacher's help as needed, until they become familiar with it.
6. With the teacher's guidance, students learn to recognize specific words from the account and develop the decoding skills of context, phonics, and structural analysis, using the account as a resource. Students may also write their own thoughts to supplement and extend the dictation.
7. Students create and work with a new dictated account each week while continuing to work with past dictated accounts to strengthen their reading and writing skills and to build confidence.

Writing Activities

Activity: First Hundred Words

Description: The following list (in English) references the most commonly used and learned words in the English language, often referred to as *sight words* (meaning not sounded out but memorized).

Many languages have such a list. You can easily create your own list in the language you use to teach sight words and spelling lists or, if none exists, you can create your own lists with words in the local language and the language of instruction. For Volunteers, it's a great way to enhance their own vocabulary in a new language.

Materials: List of 100 words

Procedure

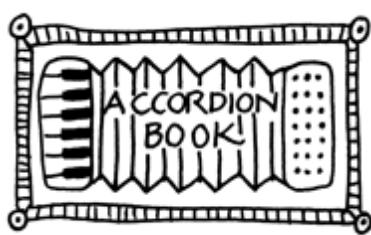
1. Find the first hundred most common sight words for memorization and recreate a grid like the sample below.

List 1	List 2	List 3	List 4
he	or	will	number
of	one	up	no
and	had	other	way
a	by	about	could
to	words	out	people
in	but	many	my
is	not	then	than
you	what	them	first
that	all	these	water
it	were	so	been
he	we	some	called
was	when	her	who
for	your	would	oil
on	can	make	sit
are	said	like	now
as	there	him	find
with	use	into	long
his	an	time	down
they	each	has	day
I	which	look	did
at	she	two	get
be	do	more	come
this	how	write	made
have	their	go	may
from	if	see	part

Book Making

These examples are used with permission from <http://www.makingbooks.com/freeprojects.shtml> and are available for download as a PDF.

Activity: Accordion Books



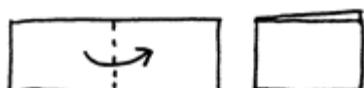
Accordion books work well in classrooms because you can stand them up and view all the pages at once. This makes them great for displays and exhibits. Accordion books have a rich history throughout the world. They are made in many parts of Asia, including China, Japan, Korea, Thailand, India, and Burma. They were also the book form of the Aztecs and Maya in Mexico and Central America. Book artists frequently experiment with the form.

You Will Need:

- One long, narrow piece of paper (you can recycle the front panel of a grocery bag cut in half the long way, or a piece of used paper with writing on one side folded in half so the writing is on the inside.)
- Front or back panel of a cereal or cracker box, or card stock or poster board
- Glue stick and scrap paper

Procedure

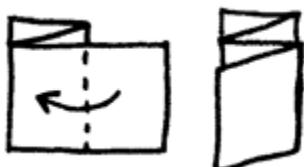
1. Fold the paper in half.



2. Take the top layer of paper, flip the edge back to meet the fold, and crease.



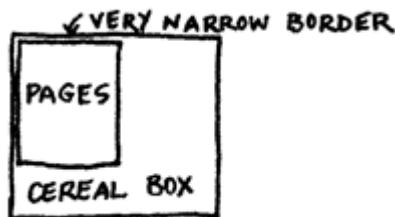
3. Turn the paper over, flip the edge of the paper back to meet the fold, and crease.



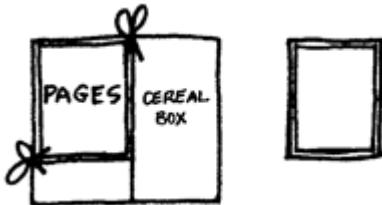
4. Lift the first page, insert scrap paper, and cover the entire surface with a thin coat of glue by starting in the middle and making stripes up and then down.



5. Place the folded pages, glue side down, on one corner of the cereal box. Leave a very narrow border on the outside edges.

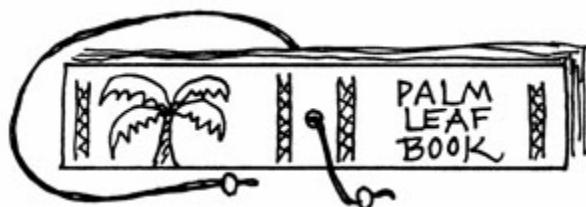


6. Remove the scrap paper and fold it in half with the glue on the inside.



7. Complete the cover by trimming the cereal box so that there is an even narrow border all around.
8. Using the cover you have already made as a guide, cut a second cover.
9. Using scrap paper, put glue on the other side of the pages and place the cover on top.
10. Open the book and smooth the first and last pages with the palm of your hand to help the glue adhere.

Activity: Palm Leaf Book



Palm leaf books are the traditional book form of India, Indonesia, and Southeast Asia. Their long narrow shape comes from the shape of the palm leaf. The leaves have one, two, or three holes and are strung together on a cord. Knots, rings, beads, or coins at each end of the cord keep the book together. This book has only one hole and uses

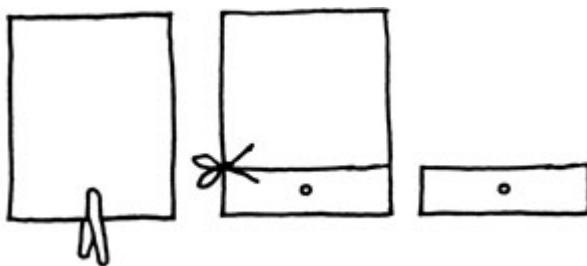
cereal or cracker box cardboard for the pages. The book is read by flipping the pages.

You Will Need:

- Front or back panel cardboard from cereal or cracker box
- One piece of cord (yarn, string, crochet cotton), 12 inches long
- Two beads with large holes, buttons, or plastic bread closures
- Hole punch

Making the Book

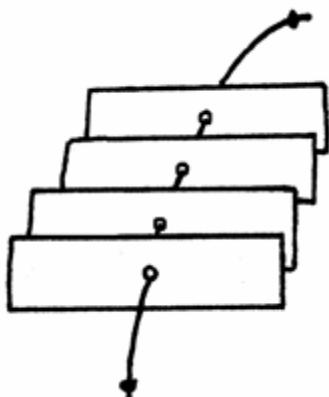
1. Place the cardboard in front of you so it is taller than it is wide. At the center of the bottom edge, push the punch in as far as it will go and punch a hole.
2. Make one palm leaf page by cutting above the hole so that the hole is in the center of the page from top to bottom. Use this as a guide to cut the rest and punch holes.



3. Tie a bead to one end of the thread with the bead inside the knot. Tie another knot to make it a double knot.



4. Starting with the end of the cord without a bead, push the cord through the holes in the pages. The cord can be strung through the holes one page at a time or all at once if the holes are aligned.
5. On the other end of the cord, tie a double knot with the bead inside.



6. To close the book, pull the cord so the front bead is resting against the front of the book. Wrap the cord around the book and tuck the back bead under the cord.



Activity: Copying the Alphabet

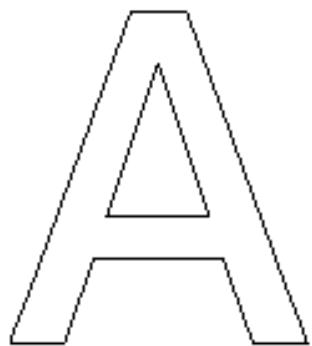
Description: Knowing the letters of the alphabet is important for decoding and writing skill development.

Materials: Paper, slates, blackboard, exercise book, or any scrap paper with one blank side

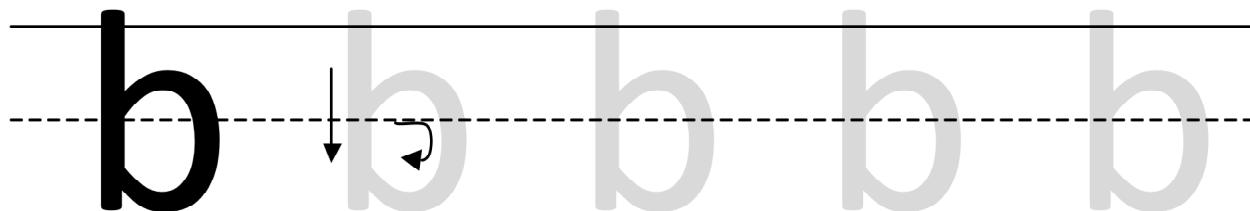
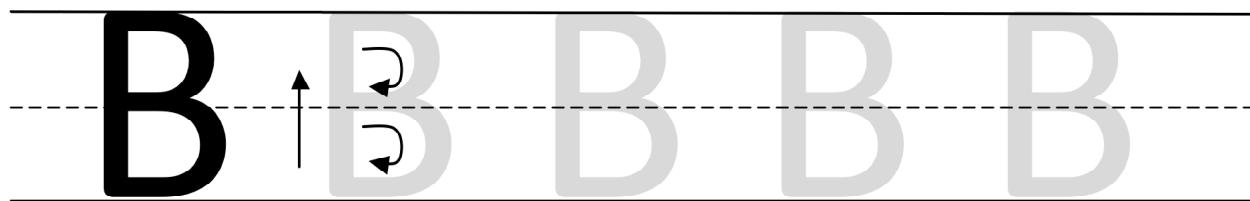
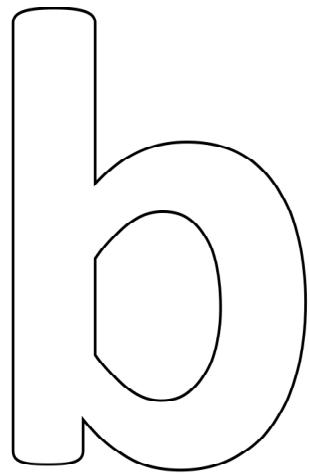
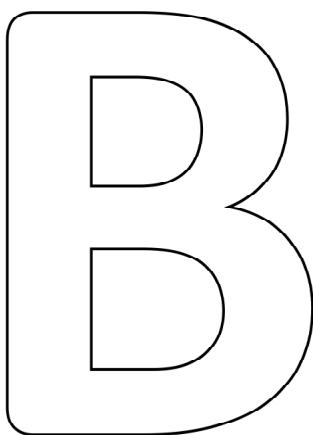
Procedure

1. Introduce alphabet letter names in a logical manner for recognition, sound, and name understanding, and ask students to trace the outlines of each letter. (You may find the following templates for A and B useful.) Each class and curriculum will have their own pace at which they introduce letters.

Name _____ Date _____



Name _____ Date _____



Activity: Finish a Sentence

Description: Providing some of the content is a good way to help students generate writing. Once they start writing, they will be able to produce it without the sentence support.

Materials: Paper and pencils

Procedure

1. Create starter sentences like the examples below, which can be finished by new writers. Be sure to use known topics.

Ants get angry when

Babies like to

Reflection, Action Planning, and Ideas

Take a moment to reflect on what you have learned in this chapter, what questions you still have about writing, and what items you would like to research and learn about further. Create an action plan for implementing a lesson on writing in your classroom.

PCV Exercise: Reflection on Writing

PCV Exercise: Action Planning to Teach Writing

Action	By Whom	By Date
e.g., Create lesson plan	Super PCV	Next Friday, October 1

PCV Exercise: Add your own writing activities

Use this space to come up with your own great ideas about how to teach writing to students at your site.

Remember to send your great ideas and activities that have shown promise to the OPATS literacy specialist at Literacy@peacecorps.gov.

Assessment

Assessment in education is an integral part of instruction and provides valuable insight into students' learning, teaching methods, and how to make improvements in the classroom. In some cases, assessments are used to inform educational research, to aid in curriculum development, and to determine funding. This section provides an overview of the purposes for assessment in the context of literacy instruction in community development; types of assessment; and examples of practical and simple literacy assessments currently being used in development contexts around the world.

First, consider your own experiences with assessment from your education and complete the following reflection exercise.

PCV Exercise: Reflection on Assessments in School

Think back to a standardized test you took during school. Unless you were home schooled or attended a private school all of your life, you have most likely had experiences with standardized tests. Do you think the standardized tests you took accurately captured what you knew? What kinds of knowledge were you able to demonstrate? What kinds of knowledge were you unable to demonstrate in this assessment?

Purposes for Assessment

As you work with students at your site, it is important to understand how to use assessment tools to evaluate students' understanding of literacy. Teachers need to understand what components a learner has mastered (letter recognition, word recognition [decoding], reading fluency, and comprehending) so that he or she can make instructional decisions based on where his or her students are in the processes of learning to read and reading to learn. Also, examining the reasons for an assessment will help determine its purpose, which in turn influences the design of the tool.

The purposes of conducting assessments in your literacy program will likely fall into the following conditions:

- **Identify skills that need review.** Assessment provides teachers with information on what skills students have and have not mastered. It is needed to help teachers understand the skill levels of their students, since students have varying experiences and knowledge.
- **Monitor student progress.** Teachers can learn which students need a review before covering additional content and which students are ready to move forward.
- **Guide teacher instruction.** Through consistent assessment, a teacher can make informed decisions about what instruction is appropriate for each student.
- **Demonstrate the effectiveness of instruction.** The information gained from assessment allows teachers to know if all students are mastering the content covered and thus gauge

whether or not the methods of instruction they are implementing are effective.

- **Provide teachers with information on how instruction can be improved.** Assessments can give teachers insight about which aspects of instruction are best suited to students' needs and what methods do not work in specific classrooms and with different students. In a community development context, assessments can also assist PCVs in developing post-appropriate adaptations for lesson plans to best suit their students' cultural settings.

Types of Assessment

There are many different types of assessments in education. Each type focuses on and measures a specific aspect of learning. Here, we will discuss three different kinds of assessments: Diagnostic, Formative, and Summative.

1. **Diagnostic.** Typically administered prior to instruction, diagnostic assessments look at students' prior knowledge, skills, interests, and misconceptions. This information assists the instructor in planning instruction. For the purposes of literacy and learning to read, a diagnostic tool is a common way to begin the school year, checking in on what components and skills of literacy the student has already mastered and which ones he or she needs help with improving.
2. **Formative.** Administered during the course of a unit, these ongoing assessments provide information on what students are learning at various points throughout a period of time. These assessments can be formal or informal and are intended to provide information to guide and adjust instruction while learning new concepts or skills. In terms of literacy skills, a formative assessment would be used as a new skill is being practiced to make sure all learners are grasping the concept.
3. **Summative.** Summative assessments typically assess what students have learned in a unit or course. These tend to be evaluative, result in grades, and often are used as indicators of student achievement.

Early Grade Reading Assessment

The Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) is an oral student assessment designed to measure the most basic foundational skills for literacy acquisition in the early grades: recognizing letters of the alphabet, reading simple words, understanding sentences and paragraphs, and listening with comprehension. EdData II (managed by the U.S. Agency for International Development) developed the EGRA methodology and has applied it in 11 countries and 19 languages. It has been adopted and used by other implementing partners in more than 30 countries and in more than 60 languages. Initially used at the country level, it is now being used in classrooms to capture important assessment data about which concepts children are mastering and which ones they need more help with. Some Peace Corps posts have partnered with organizations using EGRA in their early grade reading programs.

The EGRA is designed for students in Grades 1–4, administered at schools with students on an individual basis. Scores from each subtest on the EGRA provide information about students' speed and accuracy in basic decoding and comprehension. A sample EGRA used in Tanzania is included in this section.

Implementing the EGRA

The EGRA begins with general instructions for the administrator, which emphasizes that the assessment be presented to the child as a game instead of a school exam. Students may naturally feel some anxiety when being asked to perform unfamiliar tasks, so it is best to approach students with a friendly and relaxed attitude. Scripts are provided throughout the EGRA Protocol for administrators to follow, and space in each section is provided to mark students' responses.

Verbal consent from the student is required before collecting any further information for the assessment. Administrators must communicate that all participation in this tool is voluntary and will not affect the student's standing or grades in school, and the student may choose to not answer any questions throughout the assessment.

Section 1. Letter Sound Knowledge

The student is presented with a sheet with different letters. Using a stopwatch, the administrator gives the student 60 seconds to say out loud the **sounds** made by the letters on the sheet. As the student goes through this section, the administrator marks any incorrect responses and notes the student's final letter read with a bracket []. If the child is unable to provide any answers in the first line, the administrator may discontinue Exercise 1 and indicate this at the bottom of the assessment page. If the student completes all the letters on the sheet before 60 seconds have expired, the administrator records the amount of time left on the stopwatch at completion.

Section 2. Invented Word Decoding

This section is designed to assess students' ability to decode letter sounds in consonant-vowel-consonant combinations. Again, the student is given 60 seconds on a stopwatch to give as many responses as possible. The administrator discontinues the exercise if the student provides no correct answers from the first line. Any remaining time is recorded if the student goes through the entire list in less than 60 seconds.

Section 3. Oral Passage Reading and Reading Comprehension

Section 3a focuses on oral passage reading in which the student is given a passage to read aloud to the administrator. The student is allowed 60 seconds to read as much of the passage as he or she can.

Section 3b assesses the student's ability to comprehend the passage he or she just read aloud. Comprehension questions accompany the passage and students are asked these questions after the administrator removes the passage from in front of the child.

Section 4. Oral Passage Reading and Reading Comprehension (Untimed)

Section 4 is almost identical to Section 3. While the heading of this section indicates that it is untimed, the administrator still uses the stopwatch and gives the student up to 3 minutes (180 seconds) to complete both tasks.

Section 5. Student Context Interview

This section aims to collect information about language and literacy in one's home and community context. It also asks the child to provide information about his or her schooling, attendance, language spoken, and parents' level of literacy.

The following is a sample EGRA adapted for Tanzania intended for use to capture baseline measurements of students' reading ability in Grades 1–3.



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



**Tanzania Early Grade Reading Assessment: Student Response
Administrator Instructions and Protocol (Baseline)**

ENGLISH

General Instructions

It is important to establish a playful and relaxed rapport with the children to be assessed, via some simple initial conversation among topics of interest to the child (see example below). The child should perceive the following assessment almost as a game to be enjoyed rather than an exam. It is important to read ONLY the sections in boxes aloud slowly and clearly.

Good morning. My name is _____ and I live in _____. I'd like to tell you a little bit about myself. [Number and ages of children; pets; sports; etc]

1. Could you tell me a little about yourself and your family? [Wait for response; if student is reluctant, ask question 2, but if they seem comfortable continue to verbal consent].

2. What do you like to do when you are not in school?

Verbal Consent

- Let me tell you why I am here today. I work with the Ministry of Education and we are trying to understand how children learn to read. You were picked by chance, like in a raffle or lottery.
- We would like your help in this. But you do not have to take part if you do not want to.
- We are going to play a reading game. I am going to ask you to read letters, words and a short story out loud.
- Using this stopwatch, I will see how long it takes you to read.
- This is NOT a test and it will not affect your grade at school.
- I will also ask you other questions about your family, like what language your family uses at home and some of the things your family has.
- I will NOT write down your name so no one will know these are your answers.
- Once again, you do not have to participate if you do not wish to. Once we begin, if you would rather not answer a question, that's all right.
- Do you have any questions? Are you ready to get started?

Check box if verbal consent is obtained: YES

(If verbal consent is not obtained, thank the child and move on to the next child, using this same form)

A. Date of Assessment :	Day : _____	Month: _____
B.1. Enumerator's Name :		
B.2. Enumerator Code :		
C. School Name :		
D. District:		
E. Region:		
F. School Shift :	1 = Full day 2 = Morning only 3 = Afternoon only	
G. Multigrade Class ?	0 = No	1 = Yes
H. Order of Assessment	1 = First 2 = Second 3 = Third	

I. Class:	1 = Class One 2 = Class Two 3 = Class Three 4 = Class Four	
J. Stream Name:		
K. Student Unique Code:		
L. Student's Age :		
M. Student's Gender	1 = boy	2 = girl
N. Time Started:	_____ : _____	AM / PM

Section 1. Letter Sound Knowledge

Show the child the sheet of letters in the student stimuli booklet. Say:

Here is a page full of letters of the English alphabet. Please tell me the **SOUNDS** of as many letters as you can; not the **NAMES** of the letters, but the **SOUNDS**.

For example, the sound of this letter [point to A] is “AH” as in “APPLE”.

Let's practise: Tell me the sound of this letter [point to V]:

If the child responds correctly say: Good, the sound of this letter is “VVVV.”

If the child does not respond correctly, say: The sound of this letter is “VVVV.”

Now try another one: Tell me the sound of this letter [point to L]:

If the child responds correctly say: Good, the sound of this letter is “LLL.”

If the child does not respond correctly, say: The sound of this letter is “LLL.”

Do you understand what you are to do?

When I say “Begin,” please sound out the letters as quickly and carefully as you can. Tell me the sound of the letters, starting here and continuing this way. [Point to the first letter on the row after the example and draw your finger across the first line]. If you come to a letter sound you do not know, I will tell it to you. If not, I will keep quiet and listen to you. Ready? Begin.



Start the timer when the child reads the first letter. Follow along with your pencil and **clearly** mark any incorrect letters with a slash (/). Count self-corrections as correct. If you've already marked the self-corrected letter as incorrect, circle the letter and go on. Stay quiet, except when providing answers as follows: if the child hesitates for 3 seconds, provide the sound of the letter, point to the next letter and say “**Please go on.**” Mark the letter you provide to the child as incorrect. If the student gives you the letter name, rather than the sound, provide the letter sound and say: [“**Please tell me the SOUND of the letter**”]. This prompt may be given only once during the exercise.

AFTER 60 SECONDS SAY, “stop.” Mark the final letter read with a bracket (]).

Early Stop Rule: If you have marked as incorrect all of the answers on the first line with no self-corrections, say “**Thank you!**” discontinue this exercise, check the box at the bottom, and go on to the next exercise.

Example : A v L

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
e	f	d	R	m	i	w	r	i	H	(10)
o	n	F	a	e	A	t	T	e	y	(20)
n	G	W	o	C	t	i	H	e	o	(30)
r	E	s	Y	n	U	S	t	s	e	(40)
D	t	I	o	t	p	I	i	s	g	(50)
L	N	I	E	I	x	k	r	z	A	(60)
n	w	a	O	H	e	P	d	t	s	(70)
s	o	E	h	e	m	a	M	b	E	(80)
J	r	c	s	v	h	R	u	B	a	(90)
u	E	Q	N	a	T	I	h	A	O	(100)

Time remaining on stopwatch at completion (number of SECONDS) :

Check this box if the exercise was discontinued because the child had no correct answers in the first line.

Section 2. Invented Word Decoding

Show the child the sheet of invented words in the student stimuli booklet. Say,

Here are some made-up words. I would like you to read as many as you can. Do not spell the words, but read them. For example, this made-up word is: "ut".

Let's practise: Please read this word [point to the next word: dif].

[If the student says "dif", say]: **Very good: "dif"**

[If the student does not say "dif" correctly say]: **This made-up word is "dif."**

Now try another one: Please read this word [point to the next word: mab].

[If the student says "mab", say]: **Very good: "mab"**

[If the student does not say "mab" correctly say]: **This made-up word is "mab."**

When I say "begin," read the words as quickly and carefully as you can. Read the words across the page, starting at the first row below the line. I will keep quiet and listen to you, unless you need help. Do you understand what you are to do? Ready? Begin.



Start the timer when the child reads the first word. Follow along with your pencil and clearly mark any incorrect words with a slash (/). Count self-corrections as correct. If you've already marked the self-corrected word as incorrect, circle the word and go on. Stay quiet, except when providing answers as follows: if the child hesitates for 3 seconds, provide the word, point to the next word and say "Please go on." Mark the word you provide to the child as incorrect.

AFTER 60 SECONDS, SAY "Stop." Mark the final word read with a bracket (J).

Early Stop Rule: If you have slashed/mark as incorrect all of the answers on the first line, say "**Thank you!**" discontinue this exercise, check the box at the bottom, and go on to the next exercise.

Example : ut dif mab

1	2	3	4	5	
vob	tep	reb	fem	bis	(5)
zay	yut	gux	pef	het	(10)
raz	mak	mip	lep	sab	(15)
vap	zin	jif	pab	ruk	(20)
wis	zeg	mep	jol	pos	(25)
yot	wog	bem	kar	heg	(30)
jeb	pog	dix	fik	dap	(35)
rov	wim	kom	gat	cur	(40)
pim	pug	daf	lal	laj	(45)
noz	zil	fal	mof	lop	(50)

Time remaining on stopwatch at completion (number of SECONDS) :

Check this box if the exercise was discontinued because the child had no correct answers in the first line.

Section 3a. Oral Passage Reading

Show the child the story in the student stimuli booklet. Say,

Here is a short story. I want you to read it aloud, quickly but carefully. When you have finished, I will ask you some questions about what you have read. Do you understand what you are to do? When I say "begin," read the story as best as you can. I will keep quiet & listen to you, unless you need help. Ready? Begin.



Start the timer when the child reads the first word. Follow along with your pencil and clearly mark any incorrect words with a slash (/). Count self-corrections as correct. Stay quiet, unless the child hesitates for 3 seconds, in which case provide the word, point to the next word and say "Please go on." Mark the word you provide to the child as incorrect.

At 60 seconds, say "Stop." Mark the final word read with a bracket ().

Early stop rule: If the child reads no words correctly on the first line, say "Thank you!", discontinue this exercise, check the box at the bottom of the page, and go on to the next exercise.

Section 3b. Reading Comprehension

When 60 seconds are up or if the child finishes reading the passage in less than 60 seconds, REMOVE the passage from in front of the child, and ask the first question below.

Give the child at most 15 seconds to answer the question, mark the child's response, and move to the next question.

Read the questions for each line up to the bracket showing where the child stopped reading.

Now I am going to ask you a few questions about the story you just read. Try to answer the questions as well as you can.

Story 1: WHERE IS SARA's SWEATER	QUESTIONS	CORRECT RESPONSE	INCORRECT RESPONSE	NO RESPONSE
One day, Sara lost her sweater. She was worried. It was very cold.	13 What did Sara lose? [Sara lost her sweater.]			
She looked in her desk and on her seat. The sweater was not there.	27 Where did Sara look for her sweater? [in the desk, seat, classroom, under the big tree; playground]			
She ran to the playground. She looked under the big tree. It was not there.	42 Where did Sara run? [the playground]			
She told her teacher she had lost her sweater. The teacher pointed to Sara's neck. Sara laughed.	59 Where was Sara's sweater? [On/around her neck, on her body] Why did Sara laugh? [Because the sweater was on her neck]			

Time remaining on stopwatch at completion (number of SECONDS):

Check this box if exercise stopped due to the child not reading any one of the words on the first line correctly.

4

STUDENT UNIQUE CODE: _____
EARLY GRADE READING ASSESSMENT-ENGLISH, BASELINE SURVEY

Section 4a. Oral Passage Reading (Untimed)

Show the child the story in the student stimuli booklet. Say,

Here is a short story. I want you to read it aloud, quickly but carefully. When you have finished, I will ask you some questions about what you have read. Do you understand what you are to do? When I say "begin," read the story as best as you can. I will keep quiet & listen to you, unless you need help. Ready? Begin.



Start the timer when the child reads the first word. Follow along with your pencil and clearly mark any incorrect words with a slash (/). Count self-corrections as correct. Stay quiet, unless the child hesitates for 3 seconds, in which case provide the word, point to the next word and say "Please go on." Mark the word you provide to the child as incorrect.

At 180 seconds, say "Stop." Mark the final word read with a bracket (J).

Early Stop Rule: If the child reads no words correctly on the first line, say "Thank you!" Discontinue this exercise, check the box at the bottom of the page, and go on to the next exercise.

Section 4b. Reading Comprehension

When 180 seconds are up or if the child finishes reading the passage in less than 180 seconds, REMOVE the passage from in front of the child, and ask the first question below.

Give the child at most 15 seconds to answer the question, mark the child's response, and move to the next question.

Read the questions for each line up to the bracket showing where the child stopped reading.

Now I am going to ask you a few questions about the story you just read. Try to answer the questions as well as you can.

Story 1: School Dance	QUESTIONS	CORRECT RESPONSE	INCORRECT RESPONSE	NO RESPONSE
Moraa and her friends are going to dance for their school. 11	What are the girls going to do? (To dance at school, dance, dance for school)			
They want to be the best dancers. They practice every day. 22	Why do they practice every day? (they want to be the best, to improve, get better)			
When the girls dance, the whole school claps. Moraa and her friends know they shall win. 38	What does the whole school do when Moraa and her friends dance? (The whole school/everyone claps) Why does the whole school clap? (The girls dance well; They were happy with the dancers.)			

Time remaining on stopwatch at completion (number of SECONDS):

Check this box if exercise stopped due to the child not reading any of the words on the first line correctly.

5

STUDENT UNIQUE CODE: _____
EARLY GRADE READING ASSESSMENT-ENGLISH, BASELINE SURVEY

Section 5. Student Context Interview

Ask each question verbally to the child, as in an interview. Do not read the response options aloud. Wait for the child to respond, then write the response in the space provided, or circle the code of the option that corresponds to the child's response. If there is no special instruction to the contrary, only one response is permitted.

1a	Do you speak the same language at home as you speak at school? Je, nyumbani kwenu mnazungumza lugha ileile kama unayozungumza shulen?	No, Go to 1b0 Yes1 Do not know/No response.....99			
1b	[If "No" to Question 1a], What language(s) do you speak at home? [Kama jibu ni "Hapana" Swali 1a], Je, ni lugha ipi au zipi mnazozizingumza nyumbani kwenu? [Multiple responses are allowed]	Kiswahili1 English.....2 Mother Tongue.....3 (Specify):..... Do not know/No response.....99			
	At your house, do you have: Je, nyumbani kwenu mnavyo vifuatavyo:	No	Yes	No Response	Don't Know
2	A radio? Radio?	0	1	8	99
3	A telephone or mobile phone? Simu au simu ya kiganjani?	0	1	8	99
4	Electricity? Umembe?	0	1	8	99
5	A television? Runinga au TV?	0	1	8	99
6	A refrigerator? Jokofu au friji?	0	1	8	99
7	A toilet inside the house? Choo ndani ya nyumba?	0	1	8	99
8	A bicycle? Baiskeli?	0	1	8	99
9	A motorcycle? Pikipiki?	0	1	8	99
10	A car, truck, 4 by 4, tractor, or engine boat? Gari dogo la abiria, gari la mizigo, gari aina ya landrover au landcruiser (4 by 4), trekta, au injini ya boti?	0	1	8	99

11	Did you go to a nursery or pre-school before Class 1? Je, ulisoma darasa la chekechea au shule ya awali kabla ya kuandikishwa darasa la kwanza?	No.....0 Yes1 Do not know/No response.....99
12	What class were you in last year? Je, mwaka uliopita ulikuwa unasoma darasa la ngapi?	Pre-school.....0 Class 11 Class 2.....2 Class 3.....3 Class 4.....4 Not in school5 Do not know/No response.....99
13	Last year, were you absent from school for more than one week? Katika mwaka uliopita, uliwahi kukosa kuhudhuria shulenii kwa zaidi ya juma moja?	No.....0 Yes1 Do not know/No response.....99
14	Do you have the English reading textbook? Je, unacho kitabu cha kusoma cha Kiingereza?	No.....0 Yes1 Do not know / No response.....99
15	Do you have the Kiswahili reading textbook? Je, unacho kitabu cha kusoma cha Kiswahili?	No.....0 Yes1 Do not know / No response.....99
16	Do you have the maths textbook? Je, una kitaba cha hisabati?	No0 Yes1 Do not know / No response99
17	Do you have books or reading materials at home? Je, una vitabu au vijarida vya kusoma nyumbani kwenu? <i>[If No or Don't Know Skip to 19]</i>	No.....0 Yes1 Do not know / No response99
18	<i>[If yes to Question 17] What language(s) are these books or other materials in?</i> Je, vitabu na vijarida kule nyumbani vimeandikwa kwenye lugha ipi? <i>[Multiple- responses are allowed]</i>	Kiswahili.....1 English.....2 Mother Tongue.....3 (Specify):..... Do not know / No response99

19	Can your mother read and write? Je, mama yako anajua kusoma na kuandika?	No.....0 Yes1 Do not know / No response99
20	Can your father read and write? Je, baba yako anajua kusoma na kuandika?	No.....0 Yes1 Do not know / No response99

OK we are done! You have done a good job. Go back to your classroom, and please do not talk to other pupils about what we have done today until the team of visitors departs from the school.

Vizuri sana, sasa tumemaliza. Umefanya kazi nzuri. Tafadhalii sasa rejea darasani kwako, na hakikisha huwaelezi wanafunzi wengine kuhusu mahojiano haya ya leo hadi timu ya wageni hawa imeondoka.

Time Ended: ____ : ____ AM / PM

8

STUDENT UNIQUE CODE: _____
EARLY GRADE READING ASSESSMENT-ENGLISH, BASELINE SURVEY

ASER: Assessment Tool

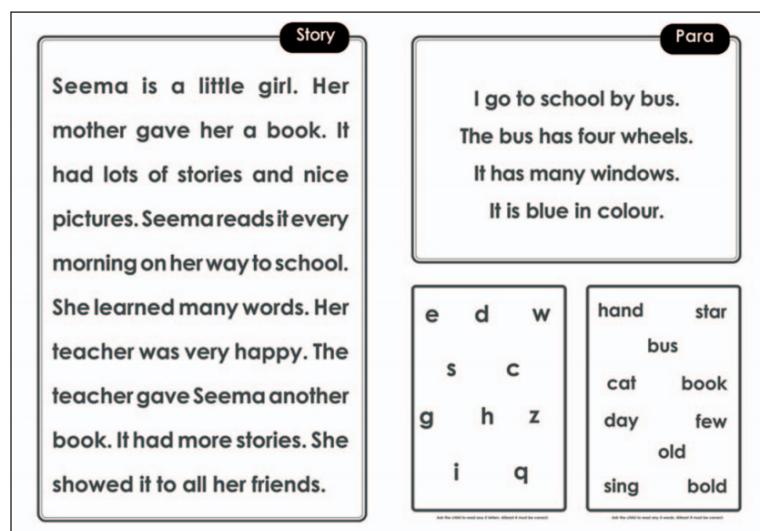
The second literacy assessment tool widely used is called the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER). Facilitated by Pratham, a nongovernmental organization in India, it is the largest household survey undertaken in India by people outside the government. The word *aser* also means “impact” in Hindustani. It measures the annual enrollment, reading, and arithmetic levels of students 6–16 years. Recently, the ASER tool for measuring reading has gained traction in the international development community because it is a very simple, easy-to-implement way to assess progress of learners in a few key literacy components: letter and word recognition, oral reading fluency, and comprehension. It is very similar to the EGRA tool, but slightly more basic and easier to replicate.

The ASER was designed for administration in homes. The reading tool consists of four levels:

1. Letters
2. Words
3. A short paragraph
4. A longer “story”

The child is marked at the highest level that he or she can do comfortably.

The ASER Centre provides free resources, including a Do-it-Yourself Toolkit for administering this assessment, at its website www.asercentre.org. Reading tools are available for download in 15 languages.



Sample English ASER reading tool from www.asercentre.org.

Integration and Application

This section provides an opportunity to implement literacy assessments with students at your site. If it is appropriate to do with children in your homestay family or with children in your community, you can inform your host families and students’ parents that you will be practicing this reading exercise

with their children. Ensure parents that this is not a diagnostic battery of their children's ability or standing at school, but simply for you to gain experience in facilitating these assessments in the context of your site.

PCV Exercise 1. Implement the EGRA with one or more children and answer the following questions:

1. What did it feel like to try this tool with young children?
2. Was it easy to use? Difficult?
3. What were the results?
4. Did the child (children) do better on one assessment section than others?
5. What did the results tell you about the skills of the children you live with?
6. If you were teaching these children literacy/reading skills, what would you emphasize for their continued learning based on the results you found?

PCV Exercise 2. Implement the ASER with one or more children and answer the following questions:

1. What did it feel like to try this tool with young children?
2. Was it easy to use? Difficult?
3. What were the results?
4. Did the child (children) do better on one assessment section than others?
5. What did the results tell you about the skills of the children you live with?
6. If you were teaching these children literacy/reading skills, what would you emphasize for their continued learning based on the results you found?

Reflection, Action Planning, and Ideas

Take a moment to reflect on what you have learned in this chapter, what questions you still have about assessment, and what items you would like to research and learn about further. Create an action plan for implementing an assessment.

PCV Exercise: Reflection on Assessment

PCV Exercise: Action Planning to Facilitate Assessments

Action	By Whom	By Date
e.g., Prepare assessment	Super PCV	Next Friday, October 1

PCV Exercise: Post Adaptations to EGRA & ASER Assessments

Use this space to come up with your own great ideas about how to adapt the EGRA and ASER assessment tools to the needs of your site.

Remember to send your great ideas that have shown promise to the OPATS literacy specialist at Literacy@peacecorps.gov.

Final Reflection: Reading Rocks!

Congratulations! You have reached the final segment of the *Literacy Resource Manual*. At this point, you may have already begun to facilitate some of the activities described in the previous sections. Remember that the purpose of this manual is to support Volunteers in teaching the building blocks of literacy to students in their schools and communities. It is important to keep in mind that each section of the Literacy Wheel plays a critical role in developing fluent, independent readers. Since these components build upon each other, teaching the concepts sequentially (in the order they are presented throughout the manual) is highly advised.

While this manual aims to serve as a practical resource for generalist PCVs working on literacy projects in the field, it is by no means a fully comprehensive or theoretically in-depth review of literacy instruction. You may still have questions or be confused by certain topics presented here or in your training sessions. Conversely, you may have discovered your own insights and developed some of your own best practices for teaching literacy at your post. All PCVs who have used this manual are encouraged to provide feedback to the Education team at Peace Corp headquarters in Washington, D.C., so staff can continue to effectively support Volunteers around the globe.



PCV Exercise: Reflecting on Literacy

Take a few moments to reflect on the components of literacy presented in this manual and record your thoughts, ideas, questions, and concerns in the space below. Then create action plans for finding clarification or guidance for any outstanding questions, and for sharing feedback, best practices, or post adaptations with your fellow PCVs, counterparts, and the literacy specialist at Peace Corps headquarters.

Literacy Component	Challenges, Questions, Unresolved Issues	Action Steps for Follow-Up (who to contact, by when, extra support needed)	Feedback, Successes, Best Practices, Promising Post Adaptations	Action Steps for Follow-Up (share with fellow PCVs, counterparts, literacy specialist at HQ)
Print Awareness and Knowledge				
Alphabet Knowledge				
Phonological and Phonemic Awareness				
Phonics				
Fluency				

Vocabulary				
Spelling				
Writing				
Assessment				

A Culture of Reading

Together, our combined efforts will not only assist future PCVs working in literacy, but will also help to develop a culture of reading where Volunteers serve. To further support your efforts in promoting literacy and a culture of reading at post, a resources section is included as an appendix, with references to other Peace Corps publications on literacy, building libraries, and community development.

Literacy and Sustainability

Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime. - Anonymous

As a PCV, you will be (if you haven't already been) faced with the question: *Is my work sustainable?* Here are some questions to reflect on your efforts in teaching literacy:

- What new skills are your students learning?

- How have you helped to expand your students' worldview?
- What will your students be able to do with their new skills once your service is over?

Taking these questions into consideration, you may soon come to realize that literacy is perhaps one of the most sustainable skills a PCV can help to develop in his or her community. Some experts believe that childhood literacy is the *key* to sustainable development. By teaching just one person how to read, that individual is then positioned to learn about any subject matter they wish for the rest of his or her life. That person can pick up a book on water sanitation and learn about safe water practices, read about agroforestry to protect and replenish the natural resources in his or her village, or go online to research and apply for continued education and professional opportunities. That one person could also go on to spread his or her newfound knowledge to others in the community or country, thus creating a ripple effect whose initial impact began from the time you spent teaching literacy during your Peace Corps service.

The task of teaching literacy is not easy, and the results of your work will probably not be immediate, but the potential influence and long-term benefit of your work is invaluable. We encourage you to keep the big picture in mind as you face challenges and frustrations, and hope that you will not hesitate to reach out for any additional support or guidance.

On behalf of the staff at Peace Corps headquarters, RPCVs from around the world, and those you work with at post, we thank you for your service to the Peace Corps and look forward to hearing from you about your experiences as a Literacy Volunteer!

Appendix: Resources

Following are resources for creating and supporting a culture of reading, lifelong learning, and other tools to assist Volunteers teaching literacy. They are available under the heading "Technical and Training Materials" in the Peace Corps Digital Library at <http://collection.peacecorps.gov/>.

ESP: Teaching English for Specific Purposes [No. M0031]

This is a supplemental resource for Volunteers teaching English as a foreign language. It provides step-by-step procedures for designing a program and creating materials and activities for the classroom. It covers the basic language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) and includes information on teaching grammar, enhancing study skills, and classroom management.

Idea Book Series: Classroom Management [No. M0088]

This book was written in response to feedback from Volunteer teachers who feel that the time spent dealing with classroom management issues detracts from the time they spend actually teaching content. Volunteers and staff members provided practical strategies for dealing with the most commonly reported challenges. Chapters include teaching in a cross-cultural context, strategies for developing classroom procedures and rules, motivation, managing disruptive behavior, assessment, and grading. Sensitive and complicated questions, such as how to teach in a school where cheating and corporal punishment are common, are addressed. There are exercises to exchange information with host colleagues to gain mutual respect and understanding. It would be helpful to read this book before starting to teach, but equally useful once teaching. It will help Volunteers think about their classrooms, students, and colleagues from new perspectives so they can adapt to a new teaching environment.

Libraries for All! How to Start and Run a Basic Library [No. RE035]

This manual and resource guide for small libraries contains practical, step-by-step instructions for creating and managing a successful library. Published by UNESCO, it was written by Laura Wendell, RPCV. It is a useful resource for Information Resource Center (IRC) managers and Volunteers involved in community resource center projects and school libraries.

Nonformal Education (NFE) Manual [No. M0042]

The content of the *Nonformal Education (NFE) Manual* is grounded in the theory and practice of some of the great educational thinkers of our time, including Paolo Freire, Howard Gardner, David Kolb, Malcolm Knowles, and Bernice McCarthy. This manual includes information from previous Peace Corps publications, as well as current research from the field of education. There are field-tested ideas, activities, and tips drawn from the experiences of Peace Corps Volunteers and staff around the world. Not intended for the exclusive use of Education Volunteers, this manual will help any Volunteer who has to teach, train, or facilitate in the field. Also check the *Community Content-Based Instruction (CCBI) Instruction Manual* [No. T0112].

Setting Up and Running a School Library [No. ED204]

This book provides a practical set of tips and techniques to use when setting up and managing a school library. It also offers activities to make the library an engaging, exciting place for the teacher and students alike. This is a resource for Volunteers who are involved in library work of any kind—the activities can be adapted for non-school library settings.

Sources of Donated Books for Schools and Libraries [No. RE003]

This publication helps Volunteers identify organizations that can provide books and other education resources to their communities. It provides contact information and guidance on how Volunteers and their community partners can submit requests and receive donations from the organizations listed, and it emphasizes the importance of sustainability in library development activities. Volunteers involved with library or resource center development will find this manual of particular value.

Sustainable Library Development Training Package

This training package supports and provides guidance to Peace Corps Volunteers engaged in library projects as both primary work assignments and secondary project activities. It is used at Peace Corps posts worldwide to train and prepare Volunteers for their work in the field. It can also be used by Volunteers to facilitate workshops on library development in their host country communities. Each session plan is stand-alone and includes all relevant handouts; some handouts are repeated from session to session.

Peace Corps Literacy Handbook [No. M0021]

This publication provides an introduction to literacy work for Volunteers and other development workers. It provides straightforward information on planning and preparing; offers guidance on program and materials development; and suggests strategies for evaluating and improving programs. Content focuses on three specific literacy activities, several case studies, an annotated bibliography, and suggestions for continuing and expanding a literacy program. Also available digitally in French, *Manuel d'Alphabétisation du Peace Corps* [No. M0032], and Spanish, *Manual de Alfabetización del Cuerpo de Paz* [No. M0028].

Teaching English as a Foreign Language to Large, Multilevel Classes [No. M0046]

This publication draws on suggestions from Volunteers working under difficult conditions with limited resources. In particular, it offers ideas and activities to help teachers facing classes of up to 150 students, most without textbooks. Content addresses issues such as student interests and needs, classroom management, theme-based lesson planning, the national curricula, emphasis on rote memorization, and resistance to group work. It aids Volunteers in creating classrooms where students are given opportunities to think critically, work cooperatively, and enjoy the experience of learning.

Glossary

Alphabet knowledge – the ability to name the letters of the alphabet and recognize the letter symbols in print.

Angular and supramarginal gyrus – regions of the brain responsible for integrating all the various parts utilized to fully execute the action of reading.

Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) – an oral student assessment that measures the annual enrollment, reading, and arithmetic levels of students 6–16 years. It was developed by Pratham, a nongovernmental organization in India, and is the largest household survey undertaken in India by people outside the government. The word *aser* also means “impact” in Hindustani.

Book knowledge – the understanding of how books are used, how to handle books appropriately, and the purpose of different types of books.

Components (parts) approach – an instructional approach for teaching literacy that emphasizes an understanding of the components in written language (sounds and functions of letters) rather than memorizing whole words. Phonics breaks written language down into small and simple components that children learn to pronounce.

Comprehension – the capacity to perceive and understand the meanings represented by text.

Decoding – the ability to apply an understanding of letter-sound relationships, knowledge of letter patterns, and the correct pronunciation of written words.

Developmental apoptosis (synaptic pruning) – programmed cell death, which occurs throughout different times in an organism’s life cycle, during which large groups of neural connections die off because they are not strong enough to survive.

Diagnostic assessment – typically administered prior to instruction, diagnostic assessments look at students’ prior knowledge, skills, interests, and misconceptions. This information assists the instructor in planning instruction.

Dialogic reading – the process of reading with a child and turning the story into an interactive experience. The dialogic reading method involves asking simple questions and talking about the pictures and simple text with the intent of cultivating a child’s skills in vocabulary, recall, comprehension, and critical thinking.

Digraph – a single sound, or phoneme, that is represented by two letters. In digraphs, specific consonants are paired together to create a special sound. (For example, when paired together, **s** and **h** create the sound /shh/, as in the word **shell**.)

Diphthongs – vowel combinations consisting of a strong vowel sound followed by a weak vowel sound.

Direct vocabulary learning – when an adult or teacher helps students learn new words by providing direct instruction about the words and their meanings.

Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) – an oral student assessment designed to measure the most basic foundational skills for literacy acquisition in the early grades: recognizing letters of the alphabet, reading simple words, understanding sentences and paragraphs, and listening with comprehension.

Echo reading – a strategy to help students practice reading fluently and with expression using short sentences or segments of text. The teacher first reads the sentence or phrase aloud, then the student(s) repeat, following along with the text.

Emergent curriculum – a teaching approach in which the teacher actively engages in an ongoing process of **observation** (looking for children's interests), lesson plan **development, assessment** of students' understanding, and **reflection** to deliver culturally and developmentally appropriate curriculum based on students' interests.

Fluency – the ability to read text accurately, without hesitations or false starts, and with appropriate expression when reading aloud, which becomes possible only from understanding the meaning of the text.

Formative assessment – administered during the course of a unit, these ongoing assessments provide information on what students are learning at various points throughout a period of time. These assessments can be formal or informal and are intended to provide information to guide and adjust instruction while teaching new concepts or skills.

Frontal lobe – the section of the brain where comprehension, speech production, reading fluency, and grammatical usage take place.

Indirect vocabulary learning – when children learn the meanings of words indirectly, through everyday experiences with oral and written language.

Language – communication by voice in the distinctively human manner, using arbitrary sounds in conventional ways with conventional meanings; speech.

Language Experience Approach – a whole language approach that promotes reading and writing through the use of personal experiences and oral language.

Learner-centered approaches – teaching methodology that places an emphasis on the needs, skills, and interests of the learner. These approaches typically engage students with new information in various ways and are different from many traditional pedagogical techniques in which the adult or teacher is viewed as the expert.

Learner-generated materials – refers to written texts, stories, or illustrations produced by learners (children) and are used as a tool to aid in reading instruction.

Literacy – the ability to read and write.

Literacy Wheel – Peace Corps' approach to framing the components of literacy. Includes print awareness, alphabet knowledge, phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, spelling, and writing.

Mother tongue – a person's first, or native, language. The language a person has learned from birth.

Neurons – an impulse-conducting cell that consists of a cell body, axon (nerve fiber), and dendrites (branches of the neuron that receive and transmit electrical impulses). Information is sent between neurons and flow to each other through synapses, the small spaces between the neurons.

Onsets – the beginning sounds of syllables.

Orthography – a writing system or method of representing the sounds of a language by written or printed symbols.

Phoneme – the smallest unit of sound in a language that holds meaning. Almost all words are made up of a number of phonemes blended together.

Phonemic awareness – the understanding of phonemes, the smallest unit of sound in a word.

Phonics – a method of instruction that emphasizes the relationship between letters and sounds through written language, and combines all of the skills of print awareness and knowledge, alphabet knowledge, and phonological and phonemic awareness. In phonics instruction, students are taught to look at the parts of words, syllables, and sounds to learn to read.

Phonological awareness – the ability to recognize how sounds function in words. An umbrella concept under which the terms phonemic awareness, syllables, onsets, and rimes fall.

Phrased readings – a method to promote fluency that involves students reading short segments of text. In phrased readings, larger bodies of text are parsed into syntactically appropriate units (phrases).

Primary visual cortex – the part of the brain that receives information from the retina (eye).

Print awareness – the ability to recognize that print carries meaning and is made up of symbols that represent oral language.

Print convention – the standard, uniform manner in which text is presented in a given orthography. This typically includes directionality, punctuation, space, case, grammar, usage, and spelling. Print convention can vary from language to language.

Print-rich environment – an environment in which print is abundant and visually accessible. In a school, classrooms are ideally print-rich and display a variety of print in children’s learning spaces.

Read-alouds – a shared reading experience led by an adult, in which the adult reads out loud to a group of students.

Rhyme generation – a skill in which a child can generate a word or made-up word that rhymes with another word provided.

Rhyme recognition – a skill in which a child can identify if two or more words end in the same sound.

Rimes – the sounds of a syllable following the onset; the ending sound of a word.

Sentence segmentation – a skill in which students are able to segment sentences into the words that make up a sentence.

Spelling – forming words with letters according to the principles underlying accepted usage.

Summative assessment – Summative assessments typically assess what students have learned in a unit or course. These tend to be evaluative, result in grades, and often are used as indicators of student achievement.

Syllable – a unit of pronunciation forming the whole or part of a word

Syllable blending – the ability to identify a word when hearing the separate syllables of the word in isolation.

Syllable segmentation – a skill in which students understand that the different sounds in a word make up the word as a whole. In syllable segmentation activities, the students learn to break words into syllables.

Temporal lobe – the section of the brain responsible for decoding and discriminating word sounds (phonological awareness).

Variant vowels – vowel sounds that are controlled by the letters surrounding them.

Visual word form area – the part of the brain where letter and word recognition take place prior to associating the letters with phonology and semantic meaning.

Vocabulary – the body of words an individual knows and understands.

Whole language approach – a teaching method for literacy in which students are taught to read by recognizing words as whole pieces of language.

Writing – Communication by means of printed or written symbols.

Overseas Programming and Training Support

The Peace Corps Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support (OPATS) develops technical resources to benefit Volunteers, their co-workers, and the larger development community.

This publication was produced by OPATS and is made available through its Knowledge & Learning unit (KLU). Volunteers are encouraged to submit original material to KLU@peacecorps.gov. Such material may be utilized in future training material, becoming part of the Peace Corps' larger contribution to development.

Peace Corps
Office of Overseas Programming and Training Support
Knowledge & Learning
1111 20th Street, NW, Sixth Floor
Washington, DC 20526

KLU@peacecorps.gov

Abridged Dewey Decimal Classification (DDC) Number: 372.6