Word-level Readers

A guided reading series that integrates phonics into reading instruction

Written by Joy Allcock (MEd.hons.)
Joy Allcock

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Joy was a contributing author to the Ministry of Education publications Effective Literacy Practice Years 1 to 4 and Effective Literacy Practice Years 5 to 8 (Learning Media). She is also a member of the Ministry of Education’s National Literacy Reference Group which meets annually to discuss and advise on the direction of literacy instruction in New Zealand.
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Introduction

If students are to learn to read words accurately, they have to know how words work. They need to know that letters and letter patterns represent sounds in words, and that by pronouncing these letters and letter patterns accurately, in order from left to right through a word, and by blending the sounds together, they will be able to pronounce the words they see on the page. This seems easy to do, but because English has many different ways of writing the same sounds and many different ways of pronouncing the same letter(s), it is not. All children learning to read will benefit from explicit instruction that shows them how written words work. For some, this explicit instruction will explain what they already find relatively easy to do, and for others it is the only way they will learn how written English works.

What instruction is necessary for teaching beginning readers to read? The National Reading Panel (2000) identified five areas as critical for reading instruction:

- Phonemic awareness;
- Phonics;
- Vocabulary;
- Comprehension; and
- Fluency.

Acquiring skills in these five areas allows students to accurately read the words they see on the page and to understand what the text is about. They will learn to become accurate, fluent readers and to enjoy reading. Most students need systematic, explicit instruction in some or all of these areas. As Moats (2000) says, “Achieving balance in reading instruction does not mean dabbling superficially in a variety of skill domains but means teaching each component thoroughly, systematically, and well” (p. 155).

Gilt Edge Word-level Readers

The Gilt Edge Word-level Readers offer teachers texts and instructional guidelines to provide students with systematic, explicit instruction in all five key areas necessary for developing efficient reading skills. Many early reading programmes provide books that focus on teaching vocabulary, comprehension and high-frequency words, with a focus on using language prediction skills to work out the words on the page. The Gilt Edge Word-level Readers are unique in the way they teach students to decode text using word-level information...
without compromising the language and structure of the story. Learning to decode words using word-level information is one of the constrained skills that are the foundation for the development of reading comprehension skills (Literacy Learning Progressions, 2010). Decoding words by recognising and pronouncing graphemes also fosters the development of whole word recognition skills (Moats, 2000).

The cornerstone of early reading success is the ability to decode the words fluently using letter-sound correspondences. …Decoding proficiency permits and fosters a child’s automatic recognition of whole words as fluency is acquired. (p. 147)

**The Rationale of the Gilt Edge Word-level Readers**

This series is designed to teach beginning readers how print works by providing books that scaffold the decodability of text in an explicit and systematic way. “Decodable text provides concentrated practice with specific sound-symbol associations and a few learned sight words. Reading decodable text provides a bridge between phonics instruction and the reading of trade books” (Moats, 2000, p. 148).

The books build students’ knowledge of the links between single letters, clusters of letters, and sounds. They progress to teaching students to understand how the same spelling pattern(s) link to different sounds. Finally, students discover how to recognise syllables and morphemes in words.

What differentiates this series of readers from others is that it provides opportunities to explicitly teach students how to develop their language and comprehension skills as they read real books at the same time as they learn to decode the words on the page accurately and efficiently. Students acquire phonic knowledge and learn to use this word-level knowledge while they are building text knowledge and language comprehension skills.

Every book in this series contains brief notes on the inside back cover for teaching the relevant decoding strategies. In-depth notes for teaching vocabulary, phonemic awareness, phonic knowledge, comprehension and fluency are available online at [www.giltedgepublishing.co.nz](http://www.giltedgepublishing.co.nz)

The following pages offer suggestions for using the Gilt Edge Word-level Readers to teach sound-spelling correspondences. These notes focus on the first 64 titles covering Levels 1-16, which teach the most common spelling patterns for all the sounds of English.
Level 1

Books at this level
Tim’s Sound Hunt
Meg’s Sound Hunt

What the research says
We do not usually hear speech sounds in continuous speech because they are “unsegmented in words; that is they are not spoken as separate units” (Moats, 2000, p. 22).
Because the alphabetic code is a representation of individual speech sounds (phonemes), students need both an awareness of individual phonemes, and skills manipulating these phonemes in order to use the alphabetic code to read and spell. Students need opportunities to hear and pronounce phonemes to develop phonemic awareness.

Word-level teaching goals for Level 1 books
The teaching goals for this level are:

• To pronounce some initial consonant sounds and to discover that many words begin with the same sound;
• To discover that when we blend a series of sounds together we can make words – words are really strings of sounds;
• To discover that words contain different sounds;
• To develop some concepts about print and to notice what written words look like (groups of letters separated by spaces), to notice what sentences look like (groups of words that end with a full stop); and
• To recognise high-frequency words (to remember what some words ‘say’ by remembering what the whole word looks like).

Teaching strategies
The books at Level 1 provide students with an opportunity to hear and read repeated text (I’m going on a sound hunt, come with me, we’re looking for things that start with…). Students are likely to remember these words but the text can be used to teach word, sentence and letter recognition. However, the main aim of the books at this level is to help students pronounce simple consonant sounds, search for pictures that begin with the same consonant sound
and then learn to blend three or four sounds together to pronounce words, using the notes under the flap.

**Example: Meg’s Sound Hunt**

**Synopsis**

Students are encouraged to go on a sound hunt with Meg to find things that start with the same sound. Each page focuses on a different consonant sound.

**Discussion**

You could begin with a discussion of what a hunt is and what a sound hunt could be. Ask children to think about their names to see if they can identify the sound their name starts with. If any children give you the letter their name starts with, just say, “Your name does start with that letter, but what is the sound you can hear at the start of your name?”

You could do a sound hunt for children’s names that begin with a particular sound, to set the scene for the book. “I’m hunting for someone who has a name that starts with ‘k’, ‘t’, ‘p’, ‘sh’ etc.”

**Word-level reading skills**

Once students have found many things in the pictures that begin with the focus sound, use the notes under the flaps to see if anyone can work out the words, and then find them in the picture.

“If I put these sounds together, what word do you think they would make – ‘t’ ‘a’ ‘p’ – Yes, tap! – Can you find the tap in the picture?” and so forth.

**Supplementary resources**

**Search for Sounds posters**

These 20 posters each focus on a different initial consonant sound and they can be used in a similar way to *Meg’s Sound Hunt* and *Tim’s Sound Hunt*. Students who find it easy to hear the sound at the start of words can be sent on a sound hunt to find words that end with the focus sound. The back of the posters contain suggestions for using the posters to teach phonemic awareness skills, develop oral language skills, teach visual discrimination skills, link knowledge to writing and naming alphabet letters, and to generate ideas for story writing.

**Prowl for Vowels posters**

The 18 posters in this set focus on the vowel sounds of English. They can be used in the same way as the Search for Sounds posters to help students identify vowel sounds in different positions in words.
Level 2

Books at this level

Pet Day (one-letter, one-sound)
A Bug in a Jug (one-letter, one-sound)

What the research says

The alphabetic structure of written English is complex. However it is still a relatively reliable system. Beginning readers may not know that there is a system at work in words as they learn to read and spell words. Moats (2000) highlights the need to teach children to understand the alphabetic principle from the outset of learning to read.

The child who comes to reading and writing with some exposure to books and stories may or may not understand the alphabetic principle, that alphabet letters are used to represent the segments of speech. Gaining this understanding is critical for early reading success. (p.145, 146)

It makes sense to explicitly teach children the knowledge we expect them to use. Byrne (1998) says, “if we want children to understand the alphabetic principle underpinning English orthography, we should tell them about it. We should not rely on them fathoming the system for themselves” (p.138).

Word-level teaching goals for Level 2 books

The teaching goals for this level are:

- To develop concepts about print – to notice what written words look like (groups of letters separated by spaces), and to notice what sentences look like (groups of words that end with a full stop);
- To recognise high-frequency words (to remember what some words ‘say’ by remembering what they look like);
- To discover that single letters can represent single sounds, and that by pronouncing each letter with a sound, in sequence from left to right, and putting these sounds together, we can make a word;
- To learn to blend a sequence of up to three sounds together to pronounce a word;
- To understand that the letters in written words lead us to the pronunciation of the word; and
• To use the pictures, sentences and context of the story to check that the words we have pronounced make sense in the story.

**Teaching strategies**

The synopsis on the back of each book gives an overview of what the book is about. You can use this synopsis to discuss what the book might be about and to access students’ prior knowledge about the content area of the book. If there are key vocabulary words (concept words) for the story they will be listed in the inside back cover. You may need to discuss these words and their meanings before reading the book.

The two books at this level have the pictures relating to the content words hidden under a flap so that students learn to use word-level information (single letter graphemes) to pronounce the word, rather than guessing the word from the picture. Students are learning to use one-letter, one-sound connections to pronounce each sound in the content words (from left to right through the word) and then to blend these sounds together to pronounce the word. They then lift the flap to use the picture to confirm that they read the content word correctly.

**Example: Pet Day**

**Synopsis**
It’s pet day at school. All the children will bring along a pet. What will they bring?

**Discussion**
If your school has a pet day, discuss this.
Who has been to a pet day before?
What did you bring?
What is a pet?
Does a pet have to be alive?
What about a pet rock – is that a pet?

Lead-in to the book: Look at the cover. The pets are all hidden: “I wonder what kind of pet this boy has, this girl has in her basket etc. Let’s find out.”

**Word-level reading skills**

1. High-frequency words
If students have not met these words before, you could tell them what they say. Put your finger under each word as you say it, to teach one-to-one matching: “I’ll bring my...”
2. Reading content words

All content words (the pets) are decodable one-letter, one-sound. If students don’t yet know that letters represent sounds in words, this is an opportunity to teach it. Do it fairly quickly first (so as not to interrupt the flow of the story), just working with the sounds in the words and pointing to the letters that write them without pointing out the letter-sound link initially.

For example: *cat* – pronounce each sound in *cat* separately, pointing to each letter in the word.

“This word says ‘k’ ‘a’ ‘t’. What would that word sound like if we put those sounds together? Yes it says cat! Do you think we are right? Let’s look under the flap and see.”

Lift the flap and say, “We were right. We read the word cat and here it is, jumping out of the basket!”

Repeat this with each content word if necessary – pointing to each letter, left to right through the word, and pronouncing the sound each represents, then ask students to blend the sounds together to pronounce the word. They then check under the flap to confirm they were right.

If students already have some letter-sound knowledge you could ask them to pronounce the sound for each letter and then blend the sounds together.

For example: “I’ll bring my… How do you think we could pronounce this word? What could the c sound like? ‘k’; the a? ‘a’; the t? ‘t’ :“

Put the three sounds together – ‘k’ ‘a’ ‘t’ – and students pronounce the word. Check under the flap.

**Teaching phonic knowledge after reading**

When you have finished reading, reread the story to help students recognise the high-frequency words and double-check the content words.

For example: The students read, “I’ll bring my cat.”

“Are you sure this word says cat? How will we know when we look at the word, that it says cat? There’s a c for the ‘k’, an a for the ‘a’, and a t for the ‘t. ‘k’ ‘a’ ‘t’; cat!

Let’s check under the flap.”
You could write the content words on the board and ask students to find the word *cat* or *hen* or *pig* etc and ask them how they knew which word is which. You are trying to draw their attention to the letter-sound connections in the words.

“What sound does the word *cat* start with? That’s right, it’s a ‘k’. Does anyone know which letter we could use to write the ‘k’ sound down?”

If someone says *k* you could say, “You’re right, we use a *k* in lots of words to write the ‘k’ sound. How else could we write the ‘k’ sound? Can anyone see a word that starts with the ‘k’ sound in this list?”

Circle the word *cat*.

“We used a *c* to write the ‘k’ in *cat*, an *a* to write the ‘a’, and a *t* to write the ‘t’. Repeat for other content words in the list.

**NOTE**

For ideas for using other reading strategies (comprehension, fluency, phonics knowledge, vocabulary, phonemic awareness) refer to the teaching notes for *Pet Day* available online at [www.giltedgepublishing.co.nz](http://www.giltedgepublishing.co.nz)
Level 3

Books at this level

Fun in the Mud  (ll digraph)
Oh, What a Mess!  (ll, ss digraph)

What the research says

Because there are only 26 alphabet letters to represent more than 40 sounds in English, letters are used in pairs or clusters to represent many sounds. Once students understand that a single letter can represent a single sound in words, they need to discover letter patterns can also represent single sounds. Learning to recognise spelling patterns in words, not just single letters, is the foundation for more elaborate orthographic knowledge that supports the development of phonemic awareness and knowledge of the alphabetic code.

Moats (2000) states “the teacher must ensure that the student can employ a strategy of sound-symbol association and sound blending so that independent reading of unknown words is possible” (p.148).

Word-level teaching goals for Level 3 books

The teaching goals for this level are:

- Highlight and review word-level strategies taught before: making one-letter, one-sound connections; pronouncing sounds in words from left to right; blending these sounds together to pronounce words; and recognising high-frequency words by sight;
- Introduce the concept of a digraph – that some sounds are written using two of the same letters;
- Read words that start with initial blends by pronouncing each letter in the blend separately, since each letter represents a separate sound  (s/l/a/p, s/l/o/p, d/r/i/p, d/r/o/p); and
- Blend four sounds together to pronounce words.

Teaching strategies

The synopsis on the back of each book will give an overview of what the book is about. You can use this synopsis to discuss what the book might be about and to assess students’ prior knowledge about the content area of the book. If there are key vocabulary words (concept words) for the story, they will be listed on the inside back cover.
Students should now be expecting to look at the individual letters they see in words (from left to right), to link them to their possible sounds, and to blend these sounds together to pronounce the word. This strategy is reinforced in books at this level but students are also taught to expect that two of the same letters together in a word can also represent just one sound.

Example: *Fun in the Mud*

**Synopsis**
Having fun in the mud makes a mess! What will Mum think of all this mud?

**Discussion**
The front cover shows the boy and his dog having fun in the mud, and the back cover show his mother’s reaction when he arrives home. You could use these pictures to discuss being muddy – who likes it, how do we get muddy, and so forth, and what would you expect to happen when you get home covered in mud. You could decode all words except the high-frequency word *the* in the title by using knowledge of one-letter, one-sound relationships, if necessary.

**Word-level reading skills**
The majority of words in this text are decodable one-letter, one-sound. This book contains some words that begin with consonant blends and students are taught to pronounce each sound in these blends.

**Page 2** *We slip in the mud.*
With the exception of *the*, any words in this sentence could be read by sounding out one letter at a time if they are not instantly readable as sight words.

**For example:** If students did not recognise the high-frequency words *we* and *in*, they could still read them as ‘w’ ‘e’ *we*, ‘i’ ‘n’ *in*.

When you come to the word *slip*, you could say, “Let’s see how the letters in this word sound – ‘s’ ‘l’ ‘i’ ‘p’. What word will we hear if we put these sounds together – slip!”

You could use the same strategy for any of the other decodable words in this text.

**Page 3** *We roll in the mud.*
The word *roll* introduces doubled letters that represent one sound. You could say, “This word says ‘r’ ‘o’ ‘l’.”

Point to each letter/letter cluster (r o ll) as you pronounce the sounds. “What would that say if we put the sounds together? *roll. Can you see there*
are two ls in roll but there is only one ‘l’ sound – ‘r’ ‘o’ ‘l’. Sometimes one sound is written with two of the same letters!  Let’s read this line again – We roll in the mud.”

**Teaching phonic knowledge after reading**

When you have finished reading the text, you could write the words *roll* and *all* on the board and colour code the two ls red. Because there are not many words that rhyme with *roll* that use the same spelling (*bowl, foal, coal, mole* etc) it is not a good idea to think of words that rhyme with *roll* to get to other words with the same doubled l.

Use *all* instead.

You could say, “*Here is a word that has two ls to write one ‘l’ sound – all. Can anyone think of another word that rhymes with all?”*

You may have to give your students clues to get to *wall, ball, tall, fall,* and *mall.* When they have finished brainstorming words they know, choose some to write on the board. Write them in two lists – those that use the double l pattern and those that use a single l (*crawl, shawl, Paul*). Point out that some words use two ls for the ‘l’ sound and some just use one l.

You could finish by saying, “*Quite a few sounds are written with two of the same letters together in the word. Let’s see if we can find others when we are reading!  And if we see two of the same letters together how many sounds are they usually writing?  That’s right – only one!”*

If you have any children with doubled letters in their names, write them on the board and ask the student who belongs to the name to come up and circle their doubled letters (*Jenny, Bobby, Danny, Timmy, Allan* etc). If you have a *Matt,* the double ts work but if you have a *Matthew,* the tt is part of the ‘th’ sound. If a child suggests *Matthew,* you could just say,

“*Can we hear a ‘t’ in Matthew?  No, we can hear a ‘th’ in the middle of Matthew, and Matthew uses his double ts with the letter h to write one sound – ‘th’. Three letters to write one sound!  Wow!”*

**NOTE**

For ideas for using other reading strategies (comprehension, fluency, phonics knowledge, vocabulary, phonemic awareness) refer to the teaching notes for Fun in the Mud available online at [www.giltedgepublishing.co.nz](http://www.giltedgepublishing.co.nz)
Levels 4 and 5

Books at these levels

Level 4  Camping With Dad  (‘k’ sound – c, k, ck)
         The Little Kitten  (le word ending, doubled consonants)
         A Breakfast Surprise  (er word ending, double consonants)
         Papa Henry  (long ‘e’ at end of word – y, e, doubled consonants)

Level 5  A Bee for Breakfast  (ed, ing endings, doubled consonants)
         Beachball Games  (ed, ing endings, doubled consonants)
         My Hair Cut  (ed, ing endings, doubled consonants)

What the research says
Treiman and Cassar (1996) found that young children in Grade One were able to notice and use some morphological information in their early spelling attempts. Moats (2000) also points out that morpheme units such as ed, ing and er are common in speech and are therefore known for speech purposes before children learn to read and spell. Once they have learned to recognise the spelling patterns for these morpheme units, children generally find them relatively easy to understand since they are familiar with using them in speech.

Word-level teaching goals for Level 4 and 5 books
The teaching goals for these levels are:

• Make one-letter, one-sound connections;
• Pronounce sounds in words from left to right, blending these sounds together to make words;
• Recognise doubled letter patterns and pronounce them as a single sound; and
• Recognise common morphemes (ed, ing, er) and spelling patterns that occur on the ends of words (y, ck, le).

New information taught in books at this level
The focus is on recognising word endings – recognising and pronouncing common morphemes on the ends of words (ed, ing, er) and recognising common spelling patterns that occur at the ends of words (y, le, ck). Students
will meet many doubled letter patterns in words with these endings because words that contain short vowels before these endings (with the exception of the ck spelling pattern) commonly have doubled consonants between the vowel and the ending (clapped, running, butter, happy, puddle).

**Teaching strategies**
The book can be introduced using the title and cover illustration, and then the synopsis on the back used to set the scene for reading and to assess students’ background knowledge about the subject.

**Example: A Bee for Breakfast**
The focus word-level teaching point in this book is the ed and ing endings. These endings are bolded in the text to help students notice them.

**Synopsis**
A boy is about to eat a boiled egg for breakfast when a bee comes in an open window. The bee buzzes around the room and then something surprising happens.

**Discussion**
The discussion could begin about eating a boiled egg – who likes them, who eats them, how we cook them, the best way to eat them, and so forth. Discussion could then move on to what might happen if a bee comes into the room. What might the boy do when he sees the bee? What might he be thinking? What could happen?

**Word-level reading skills**
The students can be told to expect to see some letters on the ends of words written in bold. Write these endings on the board – ed and ing – and say that they often go on the ends of words that tell us about things we do. You could brainstorm things we do, then use the words in different ways:

- walk – I am walking, I walked
- play – I am playing, I played
- jump – I am jumping, I jumped
- laugh – I am laughing, I laughed
Teaching phonic knowledge after reading

After reading the story you could go back to find words that have ed or ing endings. Write them on the board – write the root word then the ending in bold or another colour.

There is only one ing word in this book (but more in the other books at this level that have this focus), but several ed words (happened, buzzed (x3), dropped).

You could use the ed words to focus on what this spelling pattern sounds like in these words. Say the root word first – happen, add ed (happen ‘d’); buzz, add ed (buzz ‘d’); drop – add ed (drop ‘t’). Students will discover that the ed can be pronounced in two different ways in this book – ‘d’ and ‘t’. When they read Beachball Games and My Hair Cut, they will discover that the ed ending can also be pronounced ‘id’ (start ‘id’).

Note

For ideas for using other reading strategies (comprehension, fluency, phonics knowledge, vocabulary, phonemic awareness) refer to the teaching notes for A Bee for Breakfast available online at www.giltedgepublishing.co.nz
Levels 6-8

Books at these levels

**Level 6**  Walter and the Wasps (short ‘o’ after ‘w’ – ‘wo’ words)
Look in a Book (short ‘oo’ – oo, u, oul)
Amy the Snail and the Lucky Escape (long ‘a’ – a, ai, a_e, ay, ey)
Beans for Dad (long ‘e’ – e, ee, ea, y)
Good Night Baby Bear (long ‘i’ – i, igh, i_e, y)
We Love Winter (long ‘o’ – o, oa, ow, o_e)
Ruby the Tooth Fairy (long ‘u’ and long ‘oo’ – u, oo, ew, o)

**Level 7**  Mrs Rush-Around and Lily’s Fish (‘sh’ sound – sh)
What Was That (voiced ‘th’ and unvoiced ‘th’ sounds – th)
Dad Makes the Scones (‘ch’ sound – ch, tch)
The Bunk Pirates (‘ng’ sound – ng, n)
Queen Mab’s Secret (‘qu’ sounds – qu)
A Fox in a Box (‘ks’ sounds – x)

**Level 8**  Troy’s First Day at School (‘oy’ sound – oy, oi)
Monty Mouse Goes Outside (‘ow’ sound – ow, ou)
The Flying Carpet (‘ar’ sound – a, ar)
My Cat Gertie (‘er’ sound – er, ur, ir, urrr, or)
Rory and the Storm (‘or’ sound – or, aw, ore, a, our)
The Bush Walk (short ‘u’ – u, a, o)
The Cave Rescue (short ‘e’ – e, ea, ay)

What the research says

With the sound-to-spelling approach, children are taught that spelling units (graphemes) represent the more than 40 sounds of English and are often more than one letter. From the beginning of a decoding program, children are also shown that there is often more than one way to spell a phoneme. Illustrating this fact has been called *establishing a set for diversity*, or helping students expect that there will be variation in the representational system. (Moats, 2000, p. 150, 151)
Word-level teaching goals

The teaching goals for these levels are:

- One-letter, one-sound relationships;
- Doubled-letter, one-sound relationships;
- Recognising ck as a two-letter, one-sound relationship for the ‘k’ sound;
- Recognising and pronouncing word endings – ed, ing, er, le, y correctly;
- Recognising and pronouncing the short ‘o’ written as an a after ‘w’.
- Recognising and pronouncing some consonant and vowel spelling patterns – single letters, digraphs (two letters that represent a single sound) and other letter clusters; and

New information taught in books at this level

Each book at this level has a focus sound. The focus sound in each book might be written with one or more common spelling patterns, and these spelling patterns are colour-coded blue in the text. The books at each level are sequenced to ensure new phonics knowledge is scaffolded carefully, and practised from book to book. If books are read in the suggested sequence, the content words in the text are decodable according to spelling patterns students have met before (see above lists). You may need to point out these earlier conventions while students are reading, since many of them will not yet be secure.

Teaching strategies

The synopsis on the back of each book will give an overview of what the book is about. You could use this synopsis and the pictures on the front and back covers to discuss what the book might be about. If there are key vocabulary words (concept words that may not be decodable) for the story they will be listed in the inside back cover.

Example: Mrs Rush-Around and Lily’s Fish

The focus sound in this book is ‘sh’ written with the sh digraph. Although the ‘sh’ sound can be written in other ways too (special, station, sure for example), students are just meeting it as an sh in this book. Other spelling patterns for the ‘sh’ sound are introduced in later books – Mum’s Birthday Treat and Shona and Shay Save the Ocean. Every sh spelling pattern for the ‘sh’ sound is coded blue in the text.
Synopsis
Lily needs her mother to make her a fish outfit for the school play. Will Mrs Rush-Around remember to make it in time?

Discussion
The discussion for this story could be about a number of things – being in a play, needing Mum’s help to make an outfit, mothers being busy, ways to help mothers so that they have time to help, and so forth. Mrs Rush-Around’s name gives a clue to the kind of person she is. What does her name suggest? Why might this be a problem for Lily? If she’s always busy, maybe she won’t think about the things she needs to remember.

Word-level reading skills
Before students start reading this story, the blue coloured spelling pattern sh needs to be introduced.

You could say, “When we read this story about Mrs Rush-Around and Lily, you will see this spelling pattern coloured blue in words.” Write sh on the board in blue. “Whenever you see these two letters in blue, they will sound like ‘sh’. Can you think of any words that begin with this ‘sh’ sound?”

You could write a few on the board and colour code the sh blue. If any words students suggest start with a different spelling pattern (Charlotte, sugar, for example) write them in a different list and write their ‘sh’ sound (ch and s) in red. Point out that although they start with the same ‘sh’ sound, they use different spelling patterns to write it.

“In this story, all the ‘sh’ sounds we will see will be written with a blue sh. So how will we pronounce the sh when we see it written in blue in this story? That’s right, it will sound like ‘sh’!”

Page 2
If students can’t read the word shouted, you could do the following:

“What will the sh letters sound like? – ‘sh’.”

Cover up the sh and the ed and see if students can read out, which is a high-frequency word. If they can’t, just tell them this part of the word sounds like out – ‘sh’ ‘out’ ‘id’.

“What will this word sound like? – Shouted.”

Hopefully when students get to outfit they will notice the out part and the fit can be sounded out if necessary. If they don’t notice the out, you could point to it inside shouted and say, “Can you remember how we pronounced this part of shouted? Yes, out – here it is at the start of this word – ‘out’ ‘f’ ‘i’ ‘t’.”
Page 3
If students are confused by the a in washing, ask them to remember reading Walter and the Wasps. How do they pronounce the first two letters in was – ‘w’ ‘o’? This word sounds the same – ‘w’ ‘o’ ‘sh’ ‘ing’.

Page 5
Wrote and note have the same long ‘o’ patterns. Wrote may confuse students if they try to sound out this word, but you could tell them that the wr in this word sounds like the ‘r’ sound (two letters to write one sound).

“This word says ‘r’ ‘oa’ ‘t’ (point to the letters for each sound).”

When they reach the word note, you could say, “Here’s another word that rhymes with wrote – ‘n’ ‘oa’ ‘t’!”

Page 8
You may need to remind students that ck is a pattern that sounds like a single ‘k’ sound. Students might also notice the doubled n in dinner.

Page 9
The word remember may not be known. You could cover up parts of it to show and pronounce one syllable at a time – ‘re’ ‘mem’ ‘ber’, and students blend these three sound chunks together to pronounce the word.

Page 12
The word tomorrow may not be known. You could cover up parts of it to show and pronounce one syllable at a time – ‘to’ ‘morr’ ‘ow’, and students blend these three sound chunks together to pronounce the word.

Page 14
The word shelves is difficult to sound out clearly because vowels before an ‘l’ are quite hard to pronounce ‘purely’. Students sounding this word out (if they need to) should hear ‘sh’ ‘e’ ‘l’ ‘v’ ‘z’.

You may have to help students break shiny and shimmery into sounds or sound chunks, but once again, do this in syllables by covering up all but the first syllable first, then the second, then the third – ‘sh’ ‘i’ / ‘n’ ‘y’, ‘sh’ ‘i’ ‘mm’ / ‘er’ / ‘y’.

Page 15
If students read the word shaped with a short ‘a’, just say this word has a long ‘a’ sound – shaped.
**Teaching phonic knowledge after reading**

There are many possibilities for teaching phonics knowledge using this book. You could focus on knowledge that has been taught in the past or on the ‘sh’ sound written with an **sh**.

**Past knowledge**

1. Students could search for words in the book with any of these sounds and group the words by their different spelling patterns
   - Long ‘a’ words and spelling patterns – *play* (ay), *made* (a_e), *shaped* (a);
   - Long ‘o’ words and spelling patterns – *home*, *going*, *folding*, *wrote*, *note*, *goldfish*, *tomorrow*, *chose*;
   - Long ‘i’ words and spelling patterns – *my*, *nice*, *shiny*; and
   - Short ‘o’ words that start with ‘wo’ – *washing*, *was*.
2. Students could search for words that contain spelling patterns they have learned about before and decide what the spelling patterns sound like, such as:
   - **ck** for ‘k’ – *stuck*, *shocked*, *tucked*;
   - doubled letters for one sound – *dinner*, *shopping*, *tomorrow*, *full*, *shimmery*, *pinned*; and
   - **y** at the end of words for long ‘e’ and long ‘i’ – *Lily*, *my*, *shiny*, *shimmery*.

**‘sh’ written as sh**

Students could find all the words in the book that have a ‘sh’ sound and write them in three lists:

- Words that start with ‘sh’ – *she*, *shouted*, *shocked*, *shopping*, *shops*, *shelves*, *shiny*, *shimmery*, *shaped*;
- Words with a ‘sh’ in the middle – *rushed*, *Rush-Around*, *washing*;
- Words with a ‘sh’ at the end – *fish*, *goldfish*. 

---

19
High-frequency word links

You could search for words within words in the book, and then think of other words that rhyme. Write them on the board in groups according to their different spelling patterns if they vary.

out  – shouted, outfit, (out, pout, about)
old  – folding, goldfish, (told, cold, bold, scold, bowled, rolled)
wrote  – note, (coat, boat, stoat, goat)

Note

For ideas for using other reading strategies (comprehension, fluency, phonics knowledge, vocabulary, phonemic awareness) refer to the teaching notes for Mrs Rush-Around and Lily’s Fish available online at www.giltedgepublishing.co.nz
Levels 9-16

Books at these levels

**Level 9**
The Birthday Skates (long ‘a’ – a, ai, ay, a_e)
The Greedy Beast (long ‘e’ – e, ee, ea, y, ey, i, eo)
Mike and the Ice Queen (long ‘i’ – i, igh, i_e, y, y_e, eye)
Just Right (long ‘o’ – o, oa, ow, oe, o_e, oh)
Marooned (long ‘u’ and ‘oo’ – u, ue, o, oo, oe, ew, u_e, o_e, ough)
Five Busy Bees (long and short vowel discrimination)

**Level 10**
Mum’s Birthday Treat (‘sh’ sound – sh, ch, ti, ci, s)
The Go-Cart Race (‘ar’ sound – ar, a, ear)
Plunk Dunk (‘air’ sound – air, aire, ere, ear, are, ar)
Stormy (‘ear’ sound – ear, ier, eer, eir)

**Level 11**
A Special Event (‘v’ sound – f, v, ve, vv)
A Visit to Egypt (‘j’ sound – j, g, ge, dge)
The Real Miss Hooper (‘h’ sound – h, wh)
Raspberry Fizz (‘r’ sound – r, rr, wr)

**Level 12**
Kindness (‘l’ sound – l, ll plus le, el endings)
The Pony Express (‘s’ sound – s, ss, ce, se, c)
Snap (‘f’ sound – f, ff, ph, gh)
A Holiday Swap (‘w’ sound – w, wh)

**Level 13**
A Lucky Find (‘k’ sound – k, c, ck, cc, ch, que)
The Barnyard Dance (‘ks’ sounds – x, ks, cks, k_s)
The Bee that Sneezed (‘z’ sound – z, zz, s, se, ze)

**Level 14**
Cora and the Firestorm (‘or’ sound – or, aw, augh, ough, al, ore, our, au, ar)

Worms, Worms, Worms (‘er’ sound – er, ur, ir, ear, or)

**Level 15**
Shona and Shay Save the Day (‘sh’ sound – sh, ch, s, ti, ci, ssi, ce)
Tree Hut Tricks (‘zh’ sound – su, si)
Market Music (short ‘e’ – e, ea, ai, a)

**Level 16**
Neighbours (long ‘a’ – a, ai, ay, ea, ey, eigh, aigh, a_e)
Charlie the Sleepy Bee (long ‘e’ – e, ee, ea, ie, ei, y, ey, i)
Lime Green Ice Cream (long ‘i’ – i, igh, y, i_e, uy, eye)
A Real Treasure (long ‘o’ – o, oa, ow, oe, o_e)
Stuart’s News (long ‘u’ and ‘oo’ – o, u, u_e, ew, oo, ui, ugh, ou, ough)

**FOCUS:** Expanding knowledge of the diverse spelling patterns for single sounds
What the research says

With the sound-to-spelling approach, children are taught that spelling units (graphemes) represent the more than 40 sounds of English and are often more than one letter. From the beginning of a decoding program, children are also shown that there is often more than one way to spell a phoneme. Illustrating this fact has been called establishing a set for diversity, or helping students expect that there will be variation in the representational system. (Moats, 2000, p. 150, 151)

Word-level teaching goals

The teaching goals for these levels are:

- One-letter, one-sound relationships;
- Doubled-letter, one-sound relationships;
- Recognising and pronouncing word endings – ed, ing, er, le, y correctly; and
- Recognising and pronouncing sounds written in diverse ways – single letters, digraphs, trigraphs and quadgraphs

New information taught in books at this level

Each book at this level has a focus sound. The focus sound in each book will be written with a variety of spelling patterns and these spelling patterns will be colour-coded blue in the text. The rest of the words in the text are decodable according to spelling patterns students have met before. You may need to point out these earlier grapheme/phoneme relationships while students are reading however, since many of them may not yet be secure.

Teaching strategies

The synopsis on the back of each book will give an overview of what the book is about. You could use this synopsis and the pictures on the front and back covers to discuss what the book might be about. Important vocabulary from the story is listed on the inside back cover, grouped by parts of speech.

Example: A Visit to Egypt

Synopsis

Gemma buys an old lamp at the school gala. While she and her friend Josh are cleaning it, something amazing happens.
Discussion
Students who know the story of Aladdin’s Lamp are likely to have an expectation that the lamp will be a magic lamp. However, if this story is unknown, students may not have the background knowledge that will allow them to predict and infer what is likely to happen in this story. It may be necessary to say that the lamp reminds you of one in a story you know about a magic lamp.

Word-level reading skills
Before reading this story, tell students that the book contains lots of words that have the ‘j’ sound and they will see the spelling patterns for this sound written in blue throughout the book.

You may need to help students decode some of the content words as you go through the book, based on what they have learned before and what is new in this book (the ‘j’ sound)

For example:
Page 2
Energy – this word could be read in syllables. Cover up all but the first syllable (en), then uncover the second (er) and finally the gy. Once students have all three syllable chunks en/er/gy, ask them to blend them together to pronounce the word.

Page 3
Smudges – this word could be pronounced one sound at a time – ‘s’ ‘m’ ‘u’ ‘j’ ‘i’ ‘z’ – and the sounds blended together.

Page 4
Strange – this word could be pronounced one sound at a time – ‘s’ ‘t’ ‘r’ ‘a’ ‘n’ ‘j’ – and the sounds blended together.

Page 6
Egypt – tell students that in this word, the y sounds like a short ‘i’ and ask them to say each sound in the word, ‘e’ ‘j’ ‘i’ ‘p’ ‘t’ – Egypt.

Page 10
Practise blending the sounds in hedges (‘h’ ‘e’ ‘j’ ‘i’ ‘z’) and gorges (‘g’ ‘or’ ‘j’ ‘i’ ‘z’).

Page 11
When students have read words like barges, dates and figs, ask them to pronounce each sound in the word (segmenting skills) – ‘b’ ‘ar’ ‘j’ ‘i’ ‘z’, ‘d’ ‘a’ ‘t’ ‘s’, ‘f’ ‘i’ ‘g’ ‘z’.
Page 12
Pyramids – this word could be read in syllables. Cover up all but the first syllable (pyr). Tell students that the y sounds like a short ‘i’ and ask them to pronounce this syllable. Uncover the second (a) and finally the last syllable (midz). Once students have all three syllable chunks pir/a/midz, ask them to blend them together to pronounce the word.

Page 17
Sandstorm – both parts of this compound word are easily decodable based on prior teaching. Ask students to read the first word in this compound word and explain what it means, then read the second word and explain its meaning. Discuss what a sandstorm is.

Page 19
Disappeared – this word could be read in syllables. Cover up all but the first syllable (dis), then uncover the second (a) and finally the last syllable (ppeared). Once students have all three syllable chunks dis/a/ppeared, ask them to blend them together to pronounce the word. Go back to page 5 and reread the first sentence. Discuss the difference between appeared and disappeared and what the prefix dis might mean.

Teaching phonic knowledge after reading
If students are able to distinguish between vowel sounds (when they hear them), you could group the words in his book that end with ‘j’, according to the sound that comes before the ‘j’ in the word.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>long vowel sound</th>
<th>short vowel sound</th>
<th>other vowel sound</th>
<th>consonant sound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>huge</td>
<td>smudges</td>
<td>gorges</td>
<td>strange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>hedges</td>
<td>barges</td>
<td>orange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>edge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students could add other words they know that have these sounds before a ‘j’. Highlight the spelling of the ‘j’ sound on the end of the word and students will be able to see that the dge pattern is used when it follows directly after a short vowel sound.
**Past knowledge**

Most of the words in this book, both high-frequency and content words, contain spelling patterns that students will have met before if they have worked through the series in the suggested sequence. Students may need reminding of some patterns when decoding (the ‘ow’ sound in *shouted*, the *el* sounding like ‘il’ in *camel*, the long vowel pronunciation of the vowel_e patterns, and so forth).

**High-frequency word links**

If students need support with high-frequency words, you could use some of these words to think of rhyming groups and sort the words by spelling pattern. Students could think of a mnemonic to help them remember the spelling of the group of words.

**For example:**

Saw – raw, paw, straw, thaw, jaw  
  more, sore, shore, core  
  door, floor

aw pattern – He *saw* some *raw* meat in the *straw* but he hurt his *paw* and his *jaw* because it was frozen and he didn’t let it *thaw*!

Could – would, should  
  good, hood

Last – last, past, fast, mast, cast  
  passed

**Note**

For ideas for using other reading strategies (comprehension, fluency, phonics knowledge, vocabulary, phonemic awareness) refer to the teaching notes for *A Visit to Egypt* available online at [www.giltedgepublishing.co.nz](http://www.giltedgepublishing.co.nz)
**Assessment**

The Word-level readers can be used to determine the skills students are using to decode print, to understand the meaning of what they are reading, and to read fluently with expression and purpose. For most beginning students, reading the words on the page and understanding what the text is about is a cognitively challenging task; many students cannot do both simultaneously for quite some time. Initially, students may ‘read’ the words on the page to tell a story about the picture they see, but the words they read may not match those that are on the page. The beginning reader has to learn to decode print – to turn the words they see into the words they represent. Accurate decoding (acquiring word-level reading skills) is the goal, but it takes time for students to learn this skill.

The Literacy Learning Progressions (2010) differentiate between ‘constrained’ skills (essential skills and items of knowledge) that are often mastered over a short period of time, and ‘unconstrained’ skills and knowledge (such as those required for comprehension) that continue to be acquired over a lifetime. The expectation in the early years is that the focus of instruction will be on acquiring the ‘constrained’ skills as a platform for acquiring and using ‘unconstrained’ skills. The Literacy Learning Progressions state:

> When students have learned to process texts fluently, they can use more of their cognitive resources to engage with meaning, examine texts critically, and control reading strategies flexibly. Most students will have well-established decoding skills and be processing texts fluently after three years at school. (p.5.)

**What the research says**

Ehri (1997) outlines five different strategies readers use to read words:

1. Sounding out and blending letters;
2. Pronouncing common spelling patterns;
3. Retrieving sight words from memory;
4. Analogising to words already known by sight; and
5. Use of context to predict words.
Sounding out and blending letters and pronouncing common spelling patterns

Strategies 1 and 2 require the reader to decode print using knowledge of how single letters, spelling patterns (sh, ch, ea, oa, igh, ough) and common chunks of letters (ing, ist, est, ous) are translated into a sound or chunk of sounds. Phonic knowledge (knowledge of grapheme/phoneme relationships) and blending skills are necessary for students to use these strategies.

Retrieving sight words from memory

In order to retrieve sight words from memory (strategy 3), students must have seen the words before. Some students need only a few exposures to words before they can recognise them in a new context, but others need more practice and they may need to see the words in isolation before they learn to recognise them immediately – seeing them in connected text is not always adequate for accurate whole-word recognition.

Analogising to words already known by sight

Analogising to words already known by sight (strategy 4) relies on working from sight-word memory and initially, students often use this strategy with rhyming words that look similar (e.g. pan/man/fan/ban/can). To read words this way students use their sight-word knowledge, knowledge of grapheme/phoneme relationships and phonemic awareness skills.

Use of context to predict words

The use of prediction to read words (strategy 5) is a language skill (“What would make sense here?”), but most of the time readers use this strategy they also use some grapheme/phoneme knowledge as well. They may only be able to use the initial and perhaps the final letters they see in the word and will predict or guess a word that would fit in the sentence. This may or may not lead to the correct word.

I put the b________er on the table.

The missing word could be butter, burger, batter etc.

The content area needs to be known and the text predictable for this strategy to be accurate. Once texts are not supported by illustrations and when the content area is unknown, this strategy does not lead to rapid, accurate reading.

Ehri (1997) says that as readers attain skill they are capable of reading words in all five ways. Assessment of reading skills therefore needs to highlight the skills and strategies students are acquiring and using, as they learn to read. The best way to do this is to analyse the errors and the self-corrections that students make as they read.
### Reading Running Record

**Adapted from Running Records (Clay, 1993)**

**Good Night Baby Bear** by Chris Bell

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pg</th>
<th>Title:</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Good night Baby Bear,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>it’s now time to sleep.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>So climb into bed and snuggle down deep.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The stars are all out,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The sun has gone down.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>The lights have come on, all over the town.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>No Baby Bear, you can’t fly your kite.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The clock has just chimed, it’s past nine at night.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>There are no monsters hiding, no tigers that bite.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>No bed bugs to nip you, no spiders in sight.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>It really is time to turn off the light.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Oh come Baby Bear, please don’t start to cry.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Put your head on the pillow, and give sleep a try.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Now kiss Mama Bear, let me tuck you in tight.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Sleep well Baby Bear, sweet dreams and good night.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Running word count: 126 (including title)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Error Analysis**

**Level (circle)**
- Easy
- Instructional
- Difficult

**Error rate**
1: ............

**Accuracy**
.............(%)

**Self-correction rate**
1: ............

**Strategies used (tick)**
- Word-level reading
- Making meaning

1. **Decoding accuracy and strategies used**

1.1 **Reading high-frequency words**

**Errors reflect:**

- Use of prediction/meaning/syntax (word makes sense but no grapho-phonetic similarity, e.g. *then* instead of *and*, *up* instead of *in*)

- Use of grapho-phonetic cues
  Word looks similar or has similar spelling patterns (e.g. *onto* instead of *into*)

**Uses sounding out and blending strategy**

Comment on high-frequency word reading skills:

...............................................................................................................................
..............................................................................................................................
1.2 Reading content words

Errors reflect:

- Use of prediction/meaning/syntax (word makes sense but no grapho-phonetic similarity, e.g. jump instead of climb)

- Use of grapho-phonetic cues
  Word looks similar or has similar spelling patterns
  (e.g. take for tuck)

Uses sounding out and blending strategy

Comment on content word reading skills:

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2. Vocabulary knowledge

Knowledge of key content words in text:
e.g. town, clock, kite, spiders, bite, tigers, climb, snuggle, chimed

Comments:

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Knowledge of expressions:
e.g. snuggle down deep, past nine at night, sun has gone down, all over the town, sweet dreams, tuck you in tight

Comments:

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30
3. **Comprehension strategies**

1. Prior knowledge – knows what to expect from title and synopsis
2. Recall and retelling – can sequence events in story
3. Summarisation – can briefly explain what story is about in own words
4. Prediction – uses words and pictures to predict what happens next, from page to page
5. Can answer literal questions from text – What time was it when Baby Bear went to bed?
6. Uses inference to explain things such as – How do we know it is time for bed? How is Mama Bear feeling on the last page? How is Baby Bear feeling? How would Mama Bear feel if she turned around?
7. Can generate questions related to the story

Comment:

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4. **Fluency**

Reads aloud with fluency and expression using punctuation to guide expression

Comment:

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SUMMARY

Strengths:

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Support needed:

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References


