



Literacy handout 2: teaching phonics and word recognition

In the previous handout, we explored the foundational concepts of literacy instruction, including phonemes, graphemes, and sound-symbol correspondence. We also introduced the Off2Class foundational literacy lessons and provided an overview of Unit 1, which focuses on phonological awareness and phonics. In this training, we will dive deeper into strategies for teaching phonics and word recognition skills to secondary ELs.

Recap of phonemes and graphemes:

- Phonemes are the smallest units of sound in a language
- Graphemes are the written representations of phonemes (letters or letter combinations)
- Mastering the connection between phonemes and graphemes is crucial for reading development

Remember that phonemes are the sounds we hear in words, and graphemes are the letters or combinations of letters that represent these sounds in writing. This connection is fundamental for teaching your students to decode words efficiently.



Voiced vs. unvoiced sounds:

- Voiced sounds are produced with vibration of the vocal cords (e.g., /b/, /d/, /g/)
- Unvoiced sounds are produced without vocal cord vibration (e.g., /p/, /t/, /k/)
- Off2Class foundational literacy lessons use icons to represent voiced and unvoiced sounds



It's important to help students recognize the difference between voiced and unvoiced sounds, a concept we introduce through visual icons in the lessons. Voiced sounds, like /b/, /d/, and /g/, use vocal cord vibration, while unvoiced sounds, like /p/, /t/, and /k/, do not. These distinctions are useful for pronunciation and phonemic awareness.

Sound-out Words vs. sight words:

- Sound-out words (decodable words) can be read by applying phonics rules
- Sight words (undecodable words) must be memorized as they don't follow regular phonics patterns
- Off2Class lessons use icons to differentiate between sound-out words and sight words





We make a clear distinction in our curriculum between decodable sound-out words and sight words, which need to be memorized due to their unusual patterns. As your students progress, they'll learn to decode more and more words, improving their reading smoothness.

Strategies for teaching sound-spelling patterns and high-frequency words:

- Using anchor words: Anchor words help solidify the sound-symbol relationship. Use these consistently to help students connect phonemes to their graphemes.
- Practice makes perfect: Offer plenty of opportunities for your students to read words and sentences during lessons. The more they practice, the better their decoding skills will become.
- Teaching Sight Words: Introduce sight words gradually. Use multisensory techniques like flashcards or interactive games to aid memorization.

Effective phonics instruction involves a systematic approach, moving from simple to complex sound-spelling patterns. Anchor words and visual aids support students in making connections between sounds and graphemes, while frequent practice reinforces learning.

Overview of units 2-6: progressively building phonics skills and word recognition:

- Unit 2: Consonants and short vowels 1
- Unit 3: Consonants and short vowels 2
- Unit 4: Consonants and short vowels 3
- Unit 5: Digraphs
- Unit 6: VCe pattern (vowel, consonant, silent e)

Units 2-6 of the Off2Class foundational literacy lessons progressively build students' phonics skills and word recognition. Each unit introduces new sound-spelling patterns and high-frequency words while providing opportunities for practice and review.



Unit	Phonics Concepts	Example sound-out words	Key sight words
2	Short vowels & consonants, CVC words	Mat, sip, top	Is, and, the, on
3	Consonant blends, -s endings, short vowels	Sun, maps, has	To, see, of, me
4	R & L blends, short vowels	Trip, flat, swim	Was, from, look
5	Digraphs, double consonants, -all/-oll/-ull	Call, off, shell	They, there, your
6	VCe pattern, long vowel teams	Cap, ride, home	Said, go, any

Next Step: [Open the "a,t,s" lesson](#) in Off2Class.

Identify the sound-spelling patterns and sight words that may be challenging for your students, and plan activities and practice opportunities to reinforce these skills using the resources provided in the lesson.