

StepsWeb Lockdown Webinar 1 - Q & As

24 August 2021

Are the levels linked the NZ curriculum levels?

The StepsWeb Course is a structured literacy progression, which students can follow at their own level and speed. This is why the Course levels are not marked as for specific yeargroups. However, there is a document which lets you know how their current level equates to a particular school year.

<https://support.stepsweb.com/306/guidelines-for-progress>

Bear in mind that StepsWeb covers the literacy aspects of the curriculum, not the complete English curriculum. StepsWeb activities certainly support the Literacy Progressions, but concentrate on the core skills and knowledge needed for reading and spelling.

Isn't the course best supported with the workbooks. At the moment, I thought it would be best to go the assigned work way?

In school, we certainly recommend that struggling learners are on the workbooks as well and some schools also use them for whole-class teaching. However, over the period of a lockdown, the Course provides a ready-made structure which learners can follow at home.



The Course is very easy to monitor remotely and automatically builds in the extra activities and games. After every four units, StepsWeb automatically analyses every error and creates individual reinforcement for each student.

If your remedial learners are at home without their workbooks, there are a couple of things you can bear in mind.

- When they come back to school, it's not a bad revision activity for them to catch up with their workbooks with you. You can set them work from the Course Revision bank under Wordlists to reinforce, without taking them too far ahead on the StepsWeb Course.
- From the revision point of view, you can also get them to go back on StepsWeb and upgrade medals they achieved during the lockdown period.
- If you choose to use assigned work instead, that is absolutely fine. Don't forget that there is a Course Reinforcement section on the main Wordlist menu, which is designed to specifically reinforce Course Levels.

Should we be sending workbooks home for children to use with their parents?

That is a tricky one! It can certainly be a very good idea in some cases, but it depends whether the parents are happy about working with their children on the workbooks. Many parents are not confident about doing this for a variety of reasons and children therefore may just be 'marking time' with the workbook activities, rather than using them constructively.

The workbooks are really designed for your 'active teaching' activities, particularly for remedial learners. There are lots of printables you can send home, which is another option to think about.

If students sit the initial test at home and someone does help them (even though we will ask them not to), will the programme readjust once they start if they are not placed in their actual level? If this happens, could they resit the test once they are back at school?

If this happens, it will be immediately obvious that the child can't do the activities at the Level they have been placed on. Of course, one possibility is that parents then help them to do the activities as well, but this is obviously not going to be the most effective way for that student!

If you notice that a child appears to have been set at a much too high a level, you could always contact the parent and say that you're planning on re-testing that student and please don't help! Alternatively, once they're back at school, just re-set the test at that point.

This is how you re-set the test: <https://support.stepsweb.com/279/how-to-set-the-spelling-test>

If I have set up new logins but turned the test off now, can I turn it back on when we are back at school?

You can set the student to do tests at any stage, and you can also set to adjust the course position based on the results of the test. Bear in mind that this may mean students being put back on the Course.

This is how you re-set the test: <https://support.stepsweb.com/279/how-to-set-the-spelling-test>

Where can we find the cost, following the trial?

StepsWeb pricing is on our website: <https://www.stepsweb.com/why-steps/pricing>. As a summary, this is the current, tiered pricing structure for schools:

1 – 15 student logins	-	\$30 pa each
16+ student logins	-	\$10 pa each

There is a minimum of 5 logins for a school account and it is possible to add more student licences during the year and pay pro rata for the remainder of your licence period.

You are welcome to email sales@stepsweb.com to get more information.

How can I retest a student?

You can re-set the test for individuals, classes or the whole school. This article is an introduction to the Spelling Test section, which also has other articles for guidance.

<https://support.stepsweb.com/276/spelling-test-intro>

Bear in mind that a normed, standardized test is not designed for frequent use. Official guidelines for this kind of test is once a year, but once every 6 months is acceptable.

You shouldn't need to test to see progress more often than that anyway, as StepsWeb is designed around continuous assessment. Records will clearly show the progress your students are making. Have a look at this guide:

<https://support.stepsweb.com/306/guidelines-for-progress>

How can I assign work to more than one student?

You can assign work to an entire class. There is an article on our Support Site to help out with that.

<https://support.stepsweb.com/245/assign-work-to-a-class>

The "Essential Core Skills" course has many short videos which cover topics like that. Class Assigned Work is one of the later videos (you can skip chapters!).

If I create a new word list, will the rest of my school be able to see it or just me?

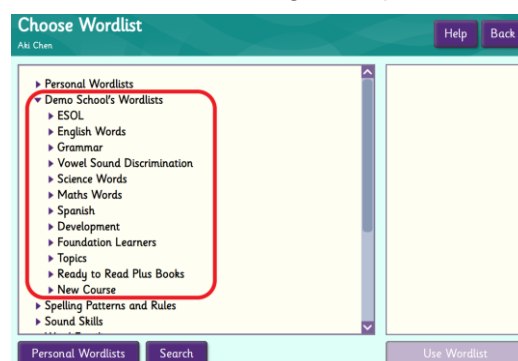
That depends on what kind of wordlist it is. You can create Custom Wordlists, which will be available to everyone on your account. You can also create Personal Wordlists, which are specific to one learner (and can only be seen by that learner).

The image here illustrates how Custom Wordlists will appear in the Wordlist Menu. You can see that you can have a complete Custom Wordlist menu with sub-headings for specific topics or subjects. An ever-growing resource for your whole school, in fact.

These are the links which show you how to create each type of list:

<https://support.stepsweb.com/126/create-a-personal-list-for-a-student>

<https://support.stepsweb.com/127/create-a-custom-wordlist>



Do you have to use a voice recording when you add a new word?

You don't have to, but the word won't be available in most of the activities unless you do. It is very quick and easy to record the word and sentence. Most laptops have a built-in microphone.

My learners really struggle with Drop and Chunks Any helpful tips?

One of the main difficulties with some activities is that students don't fully understand what is required in the activity, or what strategies are appropriate.

We have good information on our Support Site that covers Scaffolding Techniques for Drop, Sound Splits, Vowel Ladder, the Memory Activities, and our new Word Ladder activity. If a learner is having difficulty with Chunks, encourage them to sound out the onset and rime separately and then blend them together. This is a valuable phonological activity in itself.

<https://support.stepsweb.com/304/scaffolding-techniques-intro>

You can access the specific pages from the Introduction page

Can educators see what the activities are prior to setting them?

Not currently, although we would like to add that feature in future. Currently, we recommend you create an extra student account and have a play. If you do this, switch off 'forced progression' so that you can zip around and try different Levels of the Course. Also, switch off the Spelling Test (unless you want to do it, of course!).

Are there any certificates for rewards?

There are certificates awarded every time a student finishes a level. You will get a notification each time this happens. Certificates will automatically have the student's name and the correct number of medals they have earned.

You can see what certificates a student has earned inside Manage Students by clicking on a student, then scrolling down their profile page.



How popular is this in the High School sector?

Many high schools and intermediate schools use StepsWeb for their remedial students, particularly as StepsWeb is designed to be appropriate for older learners at low levels. In other words, even a student working at the very early Levels does not see any childish images or games which might appear patronising.

We are now finding that more and more high schools and intermediates automatically put each new year-group through StepsWeb. This way, they get an automatic heads-up on any students who are likely to struggle with literacy. Also, by going (in some cases relatively

quickly) through the higher Levels of StepsWeb, many gaps are being filled, even for students who had not previously been identified as struggling.

StepsWeb can also be customized by adding subject vocabulary. We are planning on adding subject vocabulary such as science and maths words (right through to Year 13), but in the meantime, subject teachers can create their own lists which teach students not only to read and spell those words, but to use them in context and match them with definitions.

We have some students who race ahead on the online course work and then are behind in the workbook. Any tips for keeping the two aligned so they are doing the same units online and in the workbook?

If your students are racing ahead in the course, you can disable the course access. They can be assigned other wordlists to work through until they have caught up. The Course Reinforcement section on our Support Site has a broad selection of wordlists for each level.

<https://support.stepsweb.com/317/course-reinforcement-section>

I am trying to find word lists on my login and am only finding a much more limited selection than what was shown on the demo. Is it possible that our school's administrator could have limited our access to all of the wordlists?

You will have access to all the wordlists and any custom wordlists on your school licence. It is not possible to delete built-in wordlists or restrict access to them. Make sure that you are clicking on each section heading to open up the wordlist categories in that section. Also, you might want to use the search button (as shown in the video) to look for specific spelling patterns.

If you continue to have difficulty with this, give us a ring when you're in front of your computer and we can help you out.

When I click add new assigned work and then finish current word list, I have a student that then automatically shows green as she has already completed most activities in that wordlist (I presume she jumped ahead). Is there a way of moving her up or do I just wait and keep setting her assigned work?

If you set 'finish current wordlist', then she will only have to finish the remaining activities in that wordlist. By definition, some of those activities will have been completed already and show up as green.

If you want to set her further work, just use 'Set specific wordlist'. There's a link here to show you how to set assigned work: <https://stage-support.stepsweb.com/244/assign-work-to-a-student>

Is there a demo site I can show parents and students on zoom or should I use a fake student?

There is an introductory parent video here: <https://www.stepsweb.com/parents/how-can-i-use-stepsweb>. This section of the website also has lots of guidance for parents.

You are also welcome to set up a demo student, if you'd like to do that. Don't forget to switch off 'forced progression' and the Spelling Test.

Even once your account is a paid one, we are happy to provide one or two free student logins to enable access for teachers who want to try out or demonstrate the activities. You just need to contact us to arrange this.

Is there an app for parents to access or is it just on a website.

StepsWeb is a web-based online literacy programme. It will work on any device or computer and is accessible from any location (like an app).

You can access StepsWeb via our website. www.stepsweb.com You can bookmark the page so it is easy to access.

Would it better that tests are not left for the parents to do with their child? Can the tests wait with the teacher or RTLB supporting a learner on our case load (RTLB)

If you're working with the child remotely, you need to either get them to do the test to identify which Level they need to be on, or manually place them on a Level. It's actually easy for students to do the test themselves at home, providing that parents know not to help. Entirely up to you which option you choose.

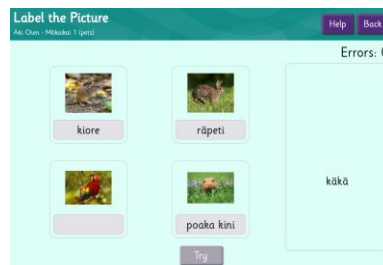
This article shows you how to create a student and manually set them on a Level: <https://stage-support.stepsweb.com/166/create-a-student>

Can Māori wordlists be used in the games and activities? As you did for guardian of the galaxy wordlists?

All of the core wordlist activities on StepsWeb are available for any wordlist you create, provided the words in the list have a voice recording. When you create a word, you will be asked to create and record a sentence. You can add an image at that point as well.

This is a link which shows you how to create custom wordlists: <https://stage-support.stepsweb.com/127/create-a-custom-wordlist>.

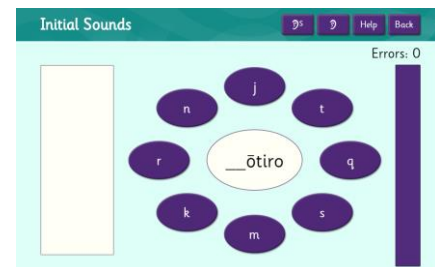
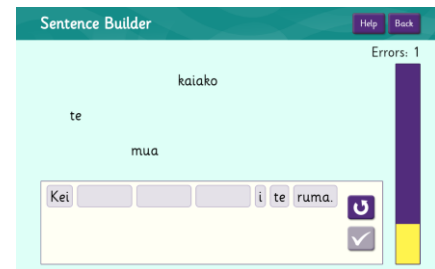
Wordlists can be created in any alphabetic language. You will find the current te reo Māori materials in the Wordlists section, including the vocabulary-learning course (which has sentences in English). You can add as many as you want using custom wordlists.



Many of the kura have created quite extensive custom wordlists and indeed complete wordbanks which support their teaching. For every list created, StepsWeb will also create a variety of printable resources, including;

- Handwriting practice
- Wordsearch with cloze exercise
- Crossword
- Sentence reading exercise
- Definitions activity
- Flashcards
- Stargame cards

This enables schools to build up an extensive bank of supporting resources for their online wordlists.



How do you know if Steps knowledge is being transferred back to the classroom?

This is always an issue, particularly with dyslexic or other struggling learners. It is also why we strongly recommend that remedial learners are on the supporting workbooks. You can teach, say, a dyslexic learner to spell a word on screen and find that they can't write it. If workbooks are not available, StepsWeb will provide printable reinforcement for every list.

However, StepsWeb ensures that students have done an extensive variety of activities for every word, including using the word in context. This ensures that they know the meaning of the word and how to use it, as well as how to read and spell it.

We also recommend that specific techniques are used with high-needs students to fully embed those words. Depending on the level of the learner, this includes activities such as dictation and teaching particularly challenging words using the 3,3,3 / Word Race process.

More information about these aspects are provided in the Teacher Manual and Teaching Guides which support the workbook materials.

