




An Introduction to Structured Literacy

Ros Lugg

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

What's in a name?

Structured Literacy

or

Science of Reading?



Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

What is the Science of Reading?

“The science of reading is a vast interdisciplinary body of scientifically-based research about reading and issues related to reading and writing.

This research has been conducted over the last five decades across the world, and it is derived from thousands of studies conducted in multiple languages.”



Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

So what is Structured Literacy?

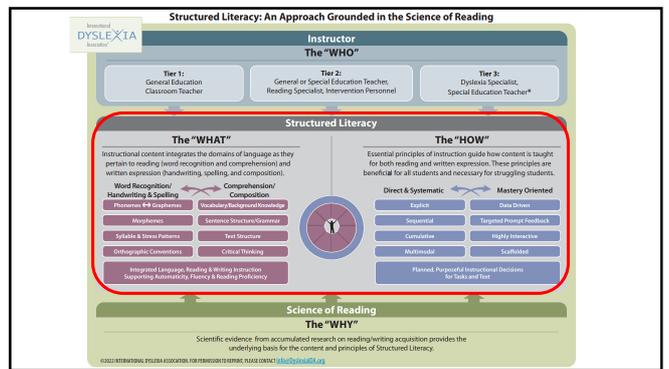
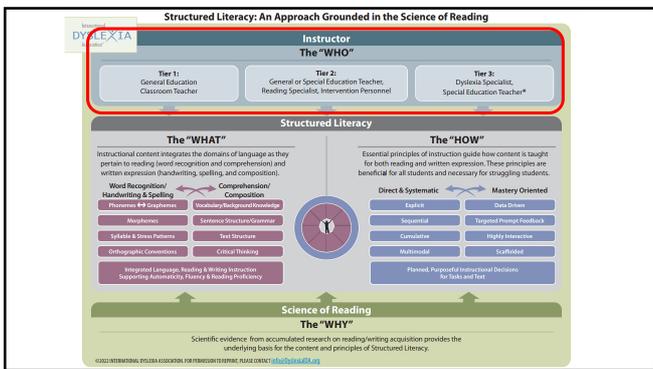
Structured Literacy = a trademarked term owned by the International Dyslexia Association.

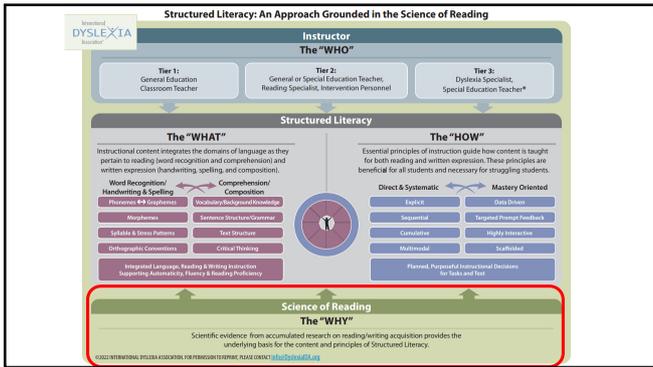
“An approach grounded in the Science of Reading.”

A specific methodology – not the research itself.



Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com





What's in a name?

Structured Literacy - A specific methodology

Science of Reading - Underpinning research

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Core Principles of Structured Literacy

Explicit – the teacher explains and models key skills, with well-chosen examples.

Children are not expected to develop these skills based mainly on exposure and incidental learning opportunities.

International DYSLEXIA Association

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Core Principles of Structured Literacy

Systematic and cumulative – a planned sequence of instruction. Important prerequisite skills taught before more advanced skills.

Example: Children are not expected to decode or spell complex words before simpler words.

International DYSLEXIA Association

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Core Principles of Structured Literacy

Diagnostic – students are screened and their progress is monitored. Students who need help are promptly identified.

Effective interventions provide opportunities for students to respond and practice what they are learning, with the teacher providing clear, prompt, constructive feedback to students' errors.

International DYSLEXIA Association

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

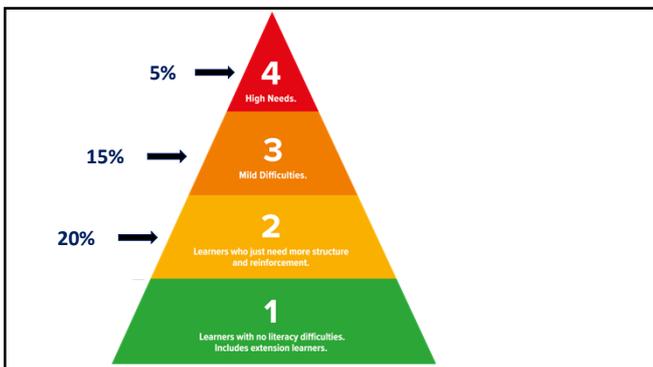
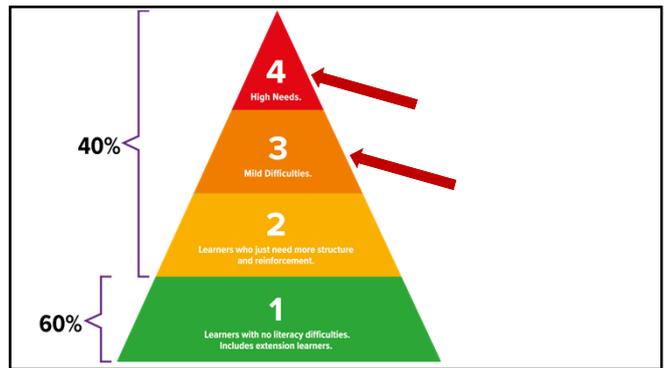
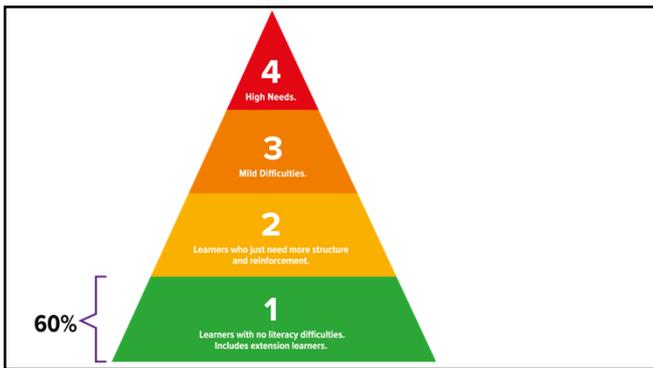
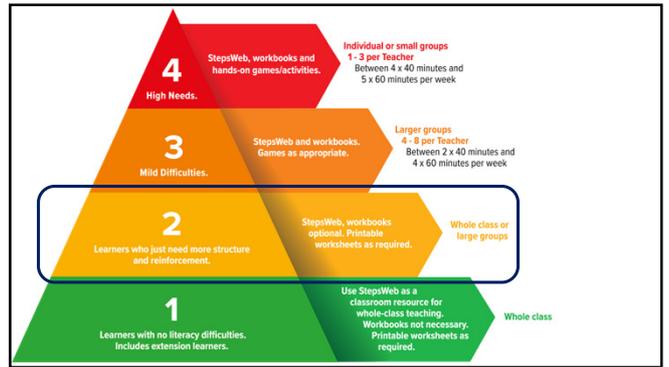
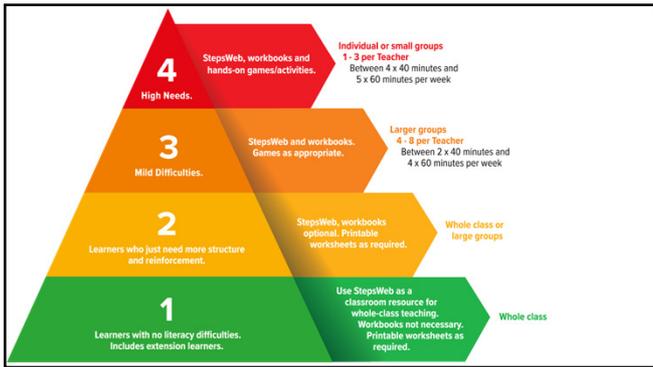
Core Principles of Structured Literacy

Assessments are used to help target specific skills that need to be addressed for individual students.

Interventions should be appropriately intensive, with a greater level of intensity (i.e. smaller group size, more time) for children who are further behind.

International DYSLEXIA Association

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com



Core Principles of Structured Literacy

Phonology
Patterns of sounds in a language

International DYSLEXIA Association

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Core Principles of Structured Literacy



Sound-Symbol

Phonic knowledge and skills. Knowing how sounds are represented by letters and letter patterns.

International
DYSLEXIA
Association™

STEPS
WEB

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Core Principles of Structured Literacy



Syllables

A word unit/part with one vowel sound.

International
DYSLEXIA
Association™

STEPS
WEB

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Core Principles of Structured Literacy



Morphology

An understanding of words and their relationships.

dog – dogs
walk – walking, walked
nan/sense

International
DYSLEXIA
Association™

STEPS
WEB

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Core Principles of Structured Literacy



Syntax

The arrangement or order of words in a sentence to convey meaning.

International
DYSLEXIA
Association™

STEPS
WEB

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Core Principles of Structured Literacy



Semantics

The meaning of language.

International
DYSLEXIA
Association™

STEPS
WEB

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

How should this work out in practice?

Teachers avoid introducing confusable phonic elements simultaneously.

Examples:

b/p
sh/ch
Multiple short vowel sounds



STEPS
WEB

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

How should this work out in practice?

Teachers avoid introducing confusable phonic elements simultaneously.

Children also have ample opportunities to apply their developing skills in reading texts they are capable of decoding and comprehending.



STEPS
WEB

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

A key model developed by the USA National Reading Panel in 2000

Describes the progression of skills as reading develops as:

Sequential
Cumulative

The 5 Big Ideas in Beginning Reading



Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Cognitive Load Theory

Sweller, J., 1988

Cognitive Load Theory – learners can absorb and retain information effectively only if it is provided in such a way that it does not ‘overload’ their mental capacity.



STEPS
WEB

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Cognitive Load Theory

Sweller, J., 1988

Key principle: You can't do two 'cognitive tasks' at the same time.

Cognitive = something you need to think about.



STEPS
WEB

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Cognitive Load Theory

Sweller, J., 1988

Cognitive tasks overload working memory.

Working Memory = the ability to retain and simultaneously process information

Key message: Make as many aspects of literacy automatic for our learners.



STEPS
WEB

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Cognitive Load Theory

Sweller, J., 1988

Rule-based teaching can lead to cognitive overload – particularly for our dyslexic and other struggling learners.



STEPS
WEB

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Key misunderstandings about Structured Literacy



STEPS
WEB

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com



Decodable Texts

We shouldn't be encouraging students to guess words from the context or from pictures.

Students should only be presented with texts with words they can decode.

STEPS
WEB

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com



The Reading Ladder



Progress in reading

The Reading Ladder



Using mainly decoding strategy
Can't follow the sense of what he's reading



8 year reading level

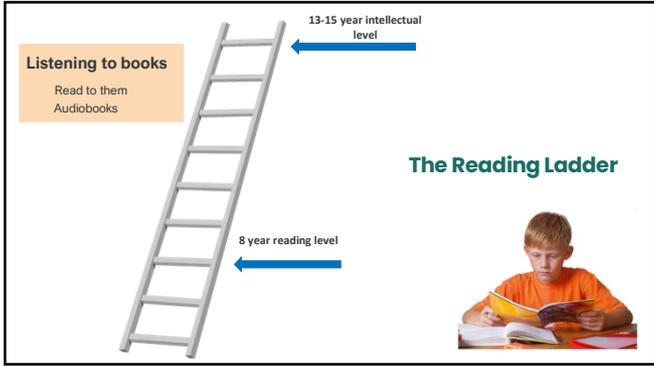
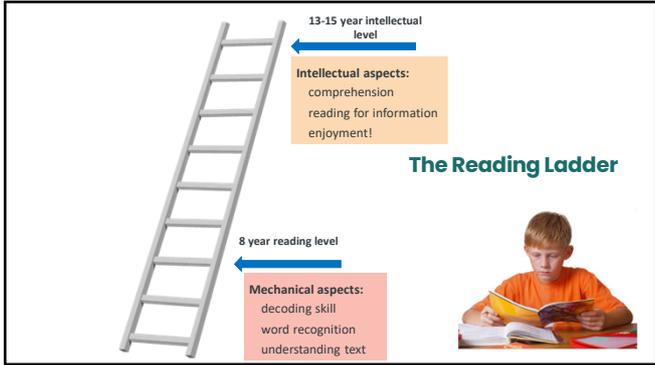
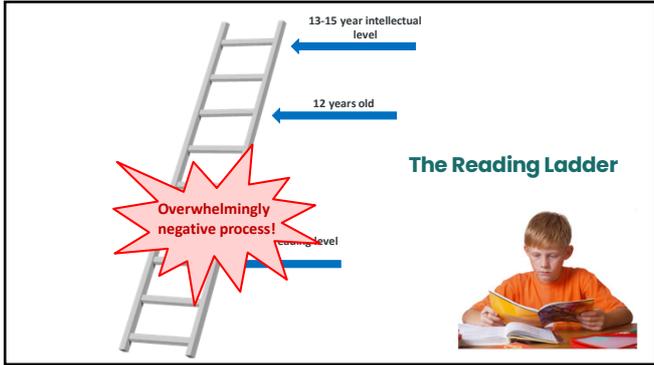
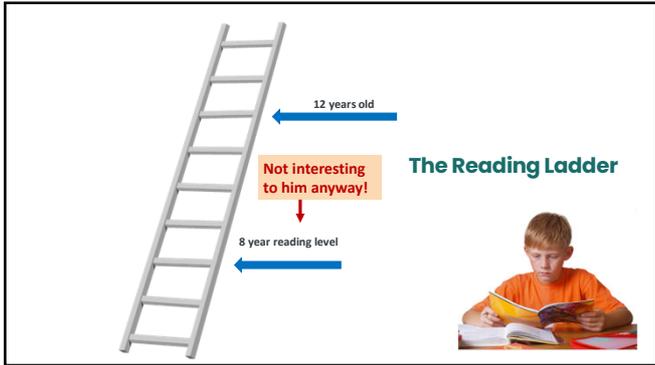
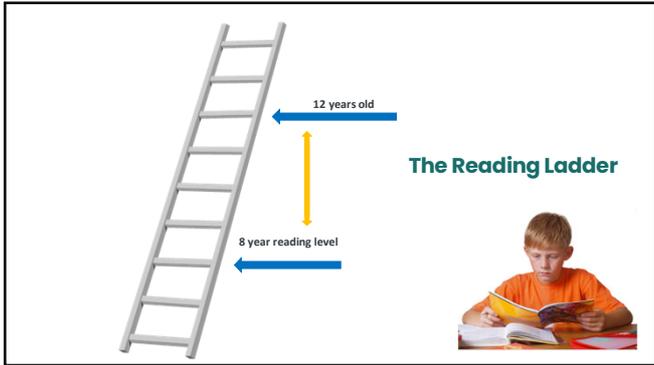
The Reading Ladder



8 year reading level

The Reading Ladder





Our 40% need a more spelling-based approach

8 year reading level

The Reading Ladder

If a spelling-based approach is done in the right way, it will:

- Develop all the processing and perceptual skills needed for reading.
- Develop all the understanding of text needed for reading.
- Include the right kind of incidental reading to activate and develop the Visual Word Form Area.

Genuine reading fluency!

The Reading Ladder

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Questions which arise:

A structured phonics-based literacy approach needs to include decoding words in context.

BUT:

Be aware that you're only targeting the 'mechanical' phonic aspects – not the 'intellectual' ones. Don't do too much – or make this their only experience of books.

The Reading Ladder

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Questions which arise:

What about listening and following the text at the same time?

May be beneficial with some learners, if there isn't a huge discrepancy between reading age and intellectual age.

Of limited use with most learners in this category – and doesn't replace the other aspects.

The Reading Ladder

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

So how do we develop decoding?

Some decodable texts – certainly!

Decoding skills and knowledge can effectively be taught through literacy games and activities.

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Phonic video + Find the Letter

A short phonic video introduces and explains a letter sound or phonic pattern. Then the student listens to sounds and chooses the right letter/pattern.

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Word Ladder

Students are given a word and asked to change it into another word by swapping sounds.

Steps Web

Feed the kiwi

Students hear the word and assemble it using sound tiles. If they are correct, the kiwi gets his worm.

Steps Web

Using appropriate strategies

When reading a decodable text – absolutely stop and tackle each word.

Other passages – read for content or enjoyment – don't make your learner stop and work out each word. Just give it to him!

Steps Web
Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Key misunderstandings about Structured Literacy

1. We must only use decodable texts.
2. Everything needs to be at the individual phoneme level. No word families or onset + rime.

Steps Web
Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Phonic Approaches

Grapheme-Phoneme Level

Onset + Rime Level

Word Families Approach

cat hat rat

International
DYSLEXIA
Association

Steps Web
Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Phonic Approaches

Grapheme-Phoneme Level

b - a - t

International
DYSLEXIA
Association

Steps Web
Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Phonic Approaches

Grapheme-Phoneme Level

Onset + Rime Level

b - a - t

b - at





Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Phonic Approaches

Grapheme-Phoneme Level

Onset + Rime Level

b - a - t

b - at

Word Families Approach



bat cat hat rat





Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Statement on Phonic Approaches

National Reading Panel, 2000:
Found no difference in effectiveness between these approaches.

Some later research:
Initial focus on grapheme-phoneme level can lead to better reading outcomes.



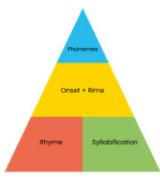


Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Phonological awareness

or

Phonemic Awareness



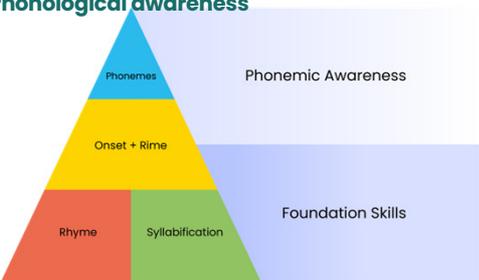






Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Phonological awareness



Phonemic Awareness

Foundation Skills





Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Rhyme Research

Rhyme Recognition for 4-5 year-old pre-readers is the single most important predictor of later reading accuracy.

Bryant & Bradley (1983)

Later research:
Ability to identify individual phonemes is the most important predictor.

for 6 year-olds







Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Development of Segmentation

sentences → words
 words → syllables
 words or syllables → phonemes

str ing
 onset rime

Structured Literacy Introduction
 stepsweb.com

Development of Segmentation

sentences → words
 words → syllables
 words → onset + rime
 words or syllables → phonemes

str ing
 onset rime

Structured Literacy Introduction
 stepsweb.com

Onset + Rime

Breaking words into two 'chunks' is significantly easier than breaking it into individual phonemes (sounds).

string
 Anything between 2 and 6!

cat hat rat

Structured Literacy Introduction
 stepsweb.com

Individual phonemes:

(sounds) s - t - r - i - n - g

Onset + rime: str - ing

Structured Literacy Introduction
 stepsweb.com

Individual phonemes

Not a natural stage in the development of phonological awareness.

Dyslexic learners in particular will struggle with this activity.

Structured Literacy Introduction
 stepsweb.com

Rhyme

Rhyme Recognition – important for early literacy.

Particularly significant for developing **analogical transfer**.

Analogical transfer – the ability to:

- Recognise patterns in words.
- Apply that to work out unknown words.

Structured Literacy Intro
 stepsweb.com



w



Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com



w or



Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com



w or l



ball
tall
mall
fall
wall



Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Statement on Phonic Approaches

National Reading Panel, 2000:

Found no difference between these approaches.

Some later research:

Initial focus on grapheme-phoneme level can lead to better reading outcomes.



Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Importance of onset + rime

(Word Families)

Make 500 common words from only 37 rimes.

Phase 1 Rimes

-at	-ell	-in	-ot	-ug
-an		-ill	-op	-uck
-ap		-ip	-ock	
-ash		-it		
-ack		-ick		
		-ing		



Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Importance of onset + rime

(Word Families)

Phase 2 Rimes

-ank	-est	-ink	-oke	-unk
-ate		-ice		-ump
-ale		-ide		
-ake		-ine		
-ame				

Phase 3 Rimes

-ail	-eat	-ight	-ore
-ain			
-aw			
-ay			



Note: This sequence is consistent with the Scope and Sequence for Ready to Read Phonics Plus.



Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Individual Phonemes

Not a natural stage in the development of phonological awareness.

Dyslexic learners in particular will struggle with this activity.



Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Rhyme

Students hear the target picture word and then select pictures which rhyme with that word. They can click on pictures to hear them.



steps
WEB

Sound Chunks

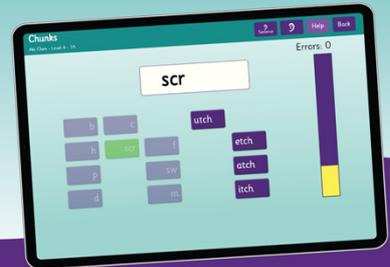
Students hear the onset and rime of a word (beginning and end chunks). They mentally blend these and click on the correct picture.



steps
WEB

Chunks

Students click on the onset (beginning) of the word and then select the correct rime (end chunk).



steps
WEB

Sound Splits

Students break words into individual sounds.



steps
WEB

Key misunderstandings about Structured Literacy

1. We must only use decodable texts.
2. Everything needs to be at the individual phoneme level.
No word families or onset + rime.
3. We need to teach syllable rules.



steps
WEB

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Syllabification

Auditory Syllabification – the ability to break spoken words into ‘chunks’.

rember

Syllabification Rules – how to break written words into syllables



Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Auditory Syllabification

The ability to hear the beats (syllables) in a word.

Easy way to teach it:

Hold your hand under your chin and say the word.

The number of times your chin touches your hand is the number of syllables.



Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Syllabification Rules

Six Types of Syllable

- Closed syllables
- Open syllables
- Silent ‘e’
- Vowel pair
- R-controlled
- le ending



Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Cognitive Load Theory

Sweller, J., 1988

Rule-based teaching can lead to cognitive overload – particularly for our dyslexic and other struggling learners.



Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

How reliable are syllabification rules?

“Does English have Useful Syllable Division Patterns?”
(Reading Research Quarterly, 2020)

Devin Kearns, PhD
Associate Professor at University of Connecticut



Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

How reliable are syllabification rules?

Syllable Pattern	Examples	Reliability
VC-CV	e.g. pic-nic, tab-let	41-79%



Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

How reliable are syllabification rules?

Syllable Pattern	Examples	Reliability
VC-CV	e.g. pic-nic, tab-let	41-79%
CV-CV	e.g. tu-lip, cam-el	33-47%



How reliable are syllabification rules?

Syllable Pattern	Examples	Reliability
VC-CV	e.g. pic-nic, tab-let	41-79%
CV-CV	e.g. tu-lip, cam-el	33-47%
V-CV	With long 'u'	84%



How reliable are syllabification rules?

Syllable Pattern	Examples	Reliability
VC-CV	e.g. pic-nic, tab-let	41-79%
CV-CV	e.g. tu-lip, cam-el	33-47%
V-CV	With long 'u'	84%
V-CV	With long 'i'	18%



How reliable are syllabification rules?

“For longer CVC words, the vowel has the short sound more often than the long sound, in contradiction to the presumed pattern.”

“The data suggest that there is really no V/CV division pattern at all.”

Kearns, D., 2020



How effective is it to teach syllabification rules?

Those approaches that taught rigid spelling rules for syllabification didn't improve reading.

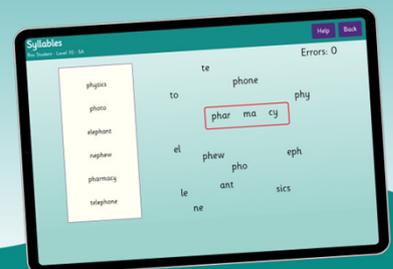
Those that aimed at flexibility in the use of syllables to decode words did significantly better.

Bhattacharya & Ehri, 2004



Syllables

Students join syllables together to form words.



Key misunderstandings about Structured Literacy

1. We must only use decodable texts.
2. Everything needs to be at the individual phoneme level.
No word families or onset + rime.
3. We need to teach syllable rules.
4. We shouldn't teach sight vocabulary any more.



STEPS
WEB

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

What are sight words, exactly?

High frequency words which are irregular or not yet decodable.

WAS

STEPS
WEB

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

What are sight words, exactly?

High frequency words which are irregular or not yet decodable.

Those words which have been orthographically mapped to the Visual Word Form Area, so they no longer need to be decoded.
They can now be instantly recognised without conscious decoding.



STEPS
WEB

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Misunderstanding about sight words

~~Sight word is one which has been learned purely from its visual pattern.~~

A sight word is a word which has initially been decoded
- or its phonic structure has been explained.

said s ai d



STEPS
WEB

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Misunderstanding about sight words

~~Sight word is one which has been learned purely from its visual pattern.~~

A sight word is a word which has initially been decoded
- or its phonic structure has been explained.

said s ai d

Then it's repeatedly seen until it becomes a sight word -
which can be recognised automatically without decoding.



STEPS
WEB

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Why are sight words important?

By definition, they're common words which will be met frequently
in the early stages.

The more words which can be instantly visually
recognised, the quicker the reader will make that
transition to being a fluent reader.

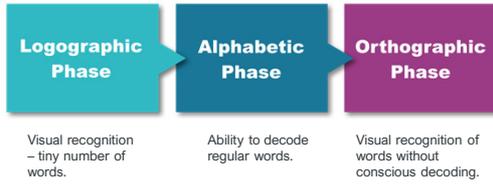


STEPS
WEB

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Key phases of literacy development

Ehri, L. 1985



STEPS
WEB

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com

Understanding Structured Literacy

Notes available on website. Send in any Q&As.

Sign up to our newsletter. Home page: www.stepsweb.com

If you'd like a free trial of StepsWeb, let us know.



STEPS
WEB

Structured Literacy Introduction
stepsweb.com