

Phonics Checklist

A free resource for reviewing reading programs

Does the reading program you are reviewing teach explicit, systematic phonics?

To find out, answer these questions:

| Column A | Yes / No | Column B | Yes / No |
|---|----------|--|----------|
| 1. Are all five short-vowel sounds (a in apple , e in elephant , i in igloo , o in ostrich , u in umbrella) taught in isolation before any whole words are introduced? | | 1. Are students asked or allowed to guess at unknown words? For example, are they asked, "What would make sense in this sentence?" Are they encouraged to look at a picture to help figure out a word? | |
| 2. Are all consonant sounds taught in isolation (b in boy , k spelled c in cat and k in kite , d in dog , and so on) before whole words using those sounds are introduced? | | 2. Are students asked or allowed to skip words they don't know? | |
| 3. Are at least one short-vowel sound and several consonant sounds taught in isolation before whole words using <i>only</i> those sounds are introduced? For example: Short a and consonant sounds t , p , and n are taught before students read words such as tap , tan , nap . | | 3. Are students asked or allowed to substitute a known word for an unknown word? For example, are they allowed to substitute pony for horse while reading? | |
| 4. During the first grade: Are all 44 sounds in the English language and the 70 most common ways of spelling those sounds taught in isolation? For example: th , sh , ch , wh , ck , ay , ai , eigh , ea , ee , ei , ie , igh , oe , ough , ow , ou , ew , ue , oo , oy , oi , ar , er , ur , or and so on. | | 4. Are students encouraged or allowed to use "invented" or creative spelling? For example, students may write ct for cat , mr for mother , usually leaving out vowel sounds. | |
| 5. Are students taught to blend and read each letter in each word, from left to right? | | 5. Are students taught to look at beginning and ending consonants, but not the vowels in between? | |
| 6. Do the reading selections conform to the phonics rules already taught? That is, are the reading selections 100% <i>decodable</i> by students, without guessing? | | 6. Do the reading selections introduce words <i>before</i> students are taught the sounds and spelling patterns that make up those words? | |

Scoring:

If you answered **Yes** to all **6** questions in **Column A**, the reading program is an explicit, systematic phonics program. **RECOMMENDED**.

If you answered **No** to one or more questions in **Column B**, the reading program is either a whole-language program or an incomplete phonics program. **DO NOT USE**.

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