



# Notes on Phonics Suite Scope and Sequences

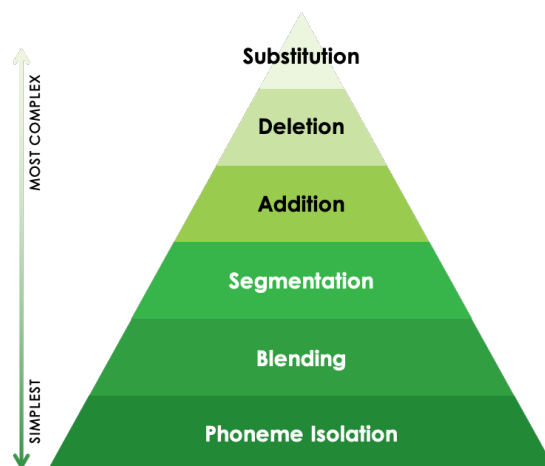
At Really Great Reading, we strive to stay abreast of the current research literature on foundational literacy skills. We use this research literature to inform our Scope and Sequences. Countdown, Blast, and HD Word all use the same master scope and sequences for letter knowledge, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, high-frequency word fluency, syllable types, phonemic awareness.

For the sake of brevity, only two scope and sequences are discussed here: the Phonemic Awareness Scope and Sequence and the Phonics Scope and Sequence. We agree and ascribe to this thinking that these two elements should be together as much as possible because of the well-documented reciprocal relationship between the two. Throughout the lessons, the interrelationships between phonemes and graphemes are taught, modeled, and practiced so that students gain real insight into English's underlying word structures.

## Phonemic Awareness Scope and Sequence

Included below you will find a graphic which illustrates a Phonemic Awareness Continuum. Our instruction intentionally moves along this continuum from the bottom (simplest skills) to the top (most complex skills).

### Phonemic Awareness Skills, in Order of Difficulty



Our goal with phonemic awareness skill building exercises is to help students develop what's commonly referred to as "Phonemic Proficiency." Phonemic Proficiency is a term that was coined by Dr. David Kilpatrick to describe the "instant, automatic access to phonemes in spoken words below the level of conscious attention" (Kilpatrick, 2015). There is emerging evidence that phonemic proficiency is critical to orthographic mapping (a term coined by Linnea Ehri). Orthographic mapping is the theory that "explains how children learn to read words by sight, to spell words from memory, and to acquire vocabulary words from print" (Ehri, 2014). Orthographic mapping is how individuals turn unfamiliar words into instantly recognized words (sight words), or how individuals anchor words into their sight word memory and store them for accurate & effortless recognition. Essentially, orthographic mapping is sight word learning.

In our programs, we expose students to all parts of this continuum; however, there is a heavy focus on the tasks of blending and segmenting phonemes. When we concentrate our efforts on different sections, **it is based on students' average foundational knowledge**. For instance, in Countdown, there is more time concentrated on phoneme isolation than in Blast and HD Word. Conversely, in HD Word, there is more instructional time dedicated to the top three sections: phoneme addition, deletion, and substitution.

Research tells us that phonemic awareness instruction, particularly in blending and segmenting phonemes\*, supports beginning reading instruction until students actually know how to read, and then reading/phonics instruction helps students develop stronger and more complex phonemic awareness skills, which is why each of Really Great Reading's Phonics Suite programs has a heavy focus on the tasks of blending and segmenting phonemes within the phonemic awareness lessons. This instruction is immediately followed by a phonics lesson tying the phonemic awareness instruction directly to written letters and words.

**"The NRP (2000) found that interventions focused on blending and segmenting sounds demonstrated stronger effects<sup>1</sup> than those that focused on other phonemic awareness skills<sup>2</sup>."** (Clemens et al., 2021, p. 11)

1.  $d = 0.67$  for reading outcomes and  $d = 0.79$  for spelling

2.  $d = 0.27$  for reading outcomes and  $d = 0.23$  for spelling

For the sake of brevity, we haven't included the continuum for Phonological Awareness, but that can be supplied upon request.

## Phonics Scope and Sequence

"The frequency of spelling patterns is a matter of scientific discovery" (Bruce Murray, Auburn University). Our phonics scope and sequence is designed around well-documented word-level statistics related to frequency of spelling and pronunciation patterns in English. (Hannah, 1966, Hodges, 1989, Fry 2004, Kearns, 2017). These statistics make it clear that not all phonics knowledge is equally impactful. We concentrate our instructional time on the most impactful, most predictable, most teachable patterns in our English code. (<https://wp.auburn.edu/rdggenie/home/teaching-ideas/spcat/>)

Our phonics sequence moves from most frequent and most predictable to the exceptions. Our scope, when considered across all programs intentionally teaches approximately 97% of teachable, predictable patterns in the English code. **Most students can leverage this comprehensive investigation of the lexicon and generalize the rest of the English Code.** In order to give students a solid foundation for reading any text they may encounter throughout life, we concentrate instructional time on the more common spellings and choose not to divert precious instructional time to rare/obscure spellings.

Our Phonics Sequence can be broadly summarized like this:

### Closed Syllables and Short Vowels

- ~50% of all English syllables

### Reading Multisyllabic Words

- ~90% of English words are multisyllabic

### Open Syllables and Long Vowels

- ~24% of all English Syllables

### The Schwa

- occurs in ~90% of multisyllabic words.
- is the most frequent phoneme in English.

### Vowel-Consonant-E

- ~5% of all English syllables

### Vowel Teams Spelling Long Vowel Sounds

- ~3% of all English syllables

*Note that when students have completed this part of the Phonics Scope and Sequence, they have learned to read approximately 82% of all English Syllables and have learned and practiced all the vowel phonemes involved in this sequence. This happens by the 24<sup>th</sup> week of Blast and by the 10<sup>th</sup> week of HD Word.*

### HD Word Scope and Sequence continues and includes:

- R-Controlled Syllables (~10% of all English syllables)
- Vowel Team Spellings related to Variant Vowels (~3% of all English syllables)
- Consonant-LE Patterns (~5% of all English syllables)
- Closed Syllable Exceptions
- Split Vowels

## Notes and Highlights

- **Reliable & Predictable:** Closed syllables and short vowels at a single-syllable level are extremely reliable, predictable, and most impactful. More than 91% of all single-syllable, closed syllable words had a predictable short vowel (Kearns, 2017). We teach and practice this closed syllable pattern extensively to ensure that students understand the depth of the closed syllable.
- **Impactful:** English word-level statistical analyses have concluded that closed syllables account for approximately 50% of all the syllables in English. (Some studies have indicated it is closer to 55%). If a student can

leave kindergarten with a working knowledge of closed syllables and has mastered their short vowel sounds, it is thought that they have the skills and knowledge they need to read half the syllables that they will ever encounter. Furthermore, it sets them up for success with content area reading. Many academic words are just a series of closed syllables (trans-at-lan-tic, cat-as-troph-ic, es-tab-lish-ment).

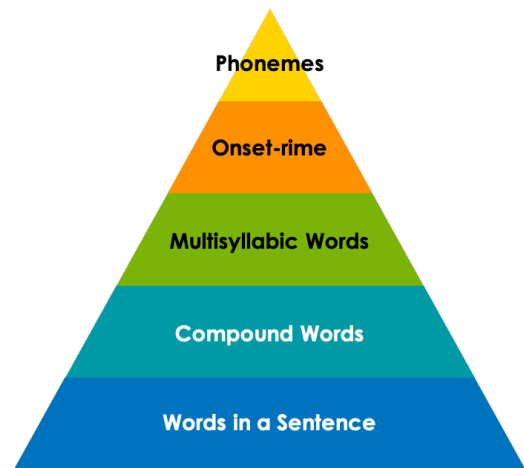
- Once students have mastered this closed syllable knowledge, we move quickly into teaching students to read and spell multisyllabic words. By the middle of first grade, students learn how to read and spell two-syllable words. (Students encounter multisyllabic words at the end of kindergarten in Countdown; this is just exposure).
- Once students learn how to read and spell multisyllabic words (constrained to the closed syllable pattern), we introduce the open syllable and the schwa. The schwa is thought to exist in more than 90% of multisyllabic words; some linguists are convinced it's closer to 98%. Many programs don't teach the schwa at all, and most programs don't teach it until third grade.
- In this same phonics sequence, we leverage the knowledge of closed syllable to teach open syllables and the vowel-consonant-E pattern. When students know about closed syllables and these two other syllable types, and they're comfortable with the schwa, we've covered the features that account for more than 79% of all the syllables in English. There is still more to learn, but it's a great start.
- This is in direct opposition to many of our competitors who emphasize and prioritize vowel team instruction without realizing that it only accounts for a very small percentage of English syllables (~5%), especially at the multisyllabic level. Nor do they take into consideration that the content area reading that students encounter in later grades (words found in common in academic subjects, including the sciences and mathematics) is mostly comprised of Latin and Greek forms, neither of which contain vowel teams.

## Other Notes

- The Blast Scope and Sequence is aligned to the common core state standards for first grade.
- HD Word Scope and Sequence is designed to cover 97%+ of teachable, predictable patterns.
- Unlike other programs, we use word-level statistical analysis to avoid teaching "phonics rules" or "syllable division rules" that are misleading (i.e., "When two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking," "tiger/camel rules," etc.).

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## Phonological Units in Spoken Language



**Really Great Reading®**

P.O. Box 46, Cabin John, MD 20818-0046

Toll Free 866-401-READ (7323) • Fax 240-465-0478

info@reallygreatreading.com • ReallyGreatReading.com