



A Note to Parents, Guardians, and Special Caregivers,
 A basic understanding key terms and concepts can significantly benefit both your child's education and your ability to actively engage in the educational process.

accuracy (reading accuracy):	reading without errors.
base word:	the part of a word that carries the main meaning. A base word can stand alone without a prefix or suffix. Many additional words can often be formed by adding prefixes and suffixes to a base word. Examples of base words are love, walk, and calculate.
blend:	see consonant blend.
chunk:	in RGR lessons, a group of letters in one syllable that consistently spells the same sounds. The letters in chunks can almost always be read reliably as a group. For example, chunk all almost always spells the sounds /ōl/ when the letters are in the same syllable, as in ball or call.
closed syllable:	a syllable that has one vowel letter followed by one or more consonant letters. The vowel sound in a Closed Syllable is usually short. Examples of Closed Syllables are cat, pick, and robot.
consonant blend (blend):	two or more consonant letters next to each other where each letter spells a separate sound.
consonant-le:	a syllable type that contains a consonant letter followed by the letters le. Consonant-le syllables are unaccented and occur only at the end of words with two or more syllables. This is always a three-letter syllable. The letters le in a Consonant-le Syllable always spell the sounds /əl/. Examples of words containing Consonant-le Syllables are gig gle , puz zle , and ca ble .
consonant letter:	a letter that, on its own or when combined with other letters in a grapheme, spells a consonant sound. Letters are consonants only when they spell a consonant sound. For example, the letter y is a consonant in the word yes because it spells the consonant sound /y/. The letter y is a vowel in the word by because it spells the vowel sound long i.
consonant suffix:	a suffix that begins with a consonant letter.
continuant:	a sound that the speaker can hold until he or she runs out of breath. Examples of continuants are the sounds /m/, /n/, /s/, or /l/.

digraph:	two letters that work together to spell one sound. The sound spelled by a digraph can be a vowel sound or a consonant sound. In Blast Foundations and in many other reading programs, the term “digraph” is used to refer only to consonant digraphs, or two consonant letters that spell one sound. Some reading programs use the term “vowel digraph” to refer to two vowel letters that work together to spell one vowel (as in ai, oa, oo, and ue). In Blast, a vowel digraph is called a vowel team.
digraph blend:	a digraph and a consonant letter that are next to each other where the consonant letter spells one sound and the digraph spells one sound. The letters shr in the word shrimp and nch in the word ranch are digraph blends.
diphthong:	a vowel sound that has two parts. The position of the mouth changes as a diphthong is articulated. Diphthongs are also called “glides” or “gliding vowels” because the mouth glides from one part of the vowel sound directly into another. Examples of diphthongs taught in Blast Foundations are /oi/ as in oink and /ou/ as in ouch.
fluency:	reading with enough speed, accuracy, and expression to allow for comprehension of what is being read.
grapheme:	a letter or letter combination that spells a phoneme. Graphemes can have one, two, three, or four letters. For example, in the word chef, the phoneme /sh/ is spelled by the grapheme ch.
inflectional endings:	a word part that is added to the end of a base word to indicate or change the function of a word (i.e., to make a word plural, change the verb tense, etc.). Examples are -s, -es, and -ing.
long vowel:	a vowel sound that is produced with tension in the vocal cords; also called “tense.” The five long vowel sounds in English are long a (/ā/), long e (/ē/), long i (/ī/), long o (/ō/), and long u (/ū/).
open syllable:	a syllable that ends with a single vowel letter. The vowel sound in an Open Syllable is usually long. Examples of Open Syllables are me, hi, table, open, and unit.
other vowel:	in Blast, a vowel sound that is not categorized as long, short, or r-controlled. Some reading programs call these vowel sounds “variant” vowels. The other vowel sounds taught in Blast Foundations are /ɪ/ as in food, /oi/ as in oink, / ou/ as in ouch, and /ɒ/ as in book.
phoneme:	the smallest unit of sound in a spoken word. A phoneme is a sound, not a letter.
phonemic awareness:	a person’s ability to identify, segment, blend, hold in memory, and manipulate phonemes in words.
phonics:	the study of the systematic relationship between sounds and the letters that spell those sounds.

phonological awareness:	a person's ability to understand all levels of the speech-sound system. Phonological awareness includes knowledge of word boundaries, syllables, onset-rime units, and phonemes. Phonemic awareness is a subset of phonological awareness.
r-controlled vowel:	a vowel sound that is modified because it is immediately followed by consonant sound /r/. The pronunciation of an r-controlled vowel is heavily affected by the sound /r/. Examples of r-controlled vowel sounds are /ar/ as in car, /or/ as in fork, and /er/ as in bird, hurt, and her
root word:	a part of a word that carries meaning and can stand alone. Root words do not have to be combined with prefixes, suffixes, or other roots to form words. Examples of roots are love, walk, and calculate.
schwa:	an unaccented and unstressed vowel sound. The schwa sound is a weak sound said without any energy, pronounced as /uh/ or /ih/. Any vowel letter can spell the schwa sound in unaccented syllables. The second vowel sound in seldom, the first vowel sound in about, and the second vowel sound in helmet are schwa sounds. The phonetic symbol for the schwa sound is /ə/. Some teachers prefer to call the schwa sound "schwi" when it spells the /ih/ sound.
stop:	a consonant sound that cannot be held or elongated; the speaker forms the sound by constricting or "stopping" the air flow, cutting the sound off. Examples are /b/, /d/, /g/, and /p/.
short vowel:	a vowel sound that is produced with little tension in the vocal cords; also called "lax." The five short vowel sounds in English are short a (/ă/), short e (/ĕ/), short i (/ĭ/), short o (/ŏ/), and short u (/ŭ/).
sound box:	the two slashes surrounding a phoneme's symbol. In Blast Foundations, phonemes are represented by letters inside sound boxes. Examples of phonemes represented inside sound boxes are /r/, /ŭ/, /l/, /m/, and /sh/. When a letter is shown inside a sound box, say the sound (phoneme), not the letter name.
suffix:	a word part that can be added to the end of a base word or root word. Suffixes change a word's verb tense, part of speech, and/or meaning.
syllable:	a unit of spoken language that is larger than a phoneme. Every syllable contains a vowel sound, and almost every syllable contains one or more vowel letters.
trigraph:	three letters that work together to spell one sound.

vowel-consonant-e:	a syllable type where a single vowel letter is followed by one consonant letter and the letter e. In Blast, the e in Vowel-Consonant-e is not considered silent because it works with the single vowel letter to spell the vowel sound. In Vowel-Consonant-e, the vowel sound is usually long. Examples of Vowel-Consonant-e are make, eve, fine, note, and cute.
vowel letter:	a letter that, on its own or when combined with other letters in a grapheme, spells a vowel sound. Some examples are dge, igh, ear, and tch.
vowel sound:	a speech sound made with the mouth open, produced using the vocal cords, and with no obstruction of the flow of air to make the sound. Every spoken syllable has a vowel sound.
vowel team:	two or more letters that work together to spell one vowel sound. Some examples are ai, oa, oo, igh, and ough.