

HOW SHOULD I WORK WITH A STUDENT WHO IS STRUGGLING TO READ?

Strong readers can retain an accurate visual image of a word along with its identification. Students must be helped to build auditory and structural associations for identifying and retaining words. Teaching the use of *letter sounds (phonics)* and *pronunciation patterns or word families (linguistics)* is necessary for students to decode (sound out) and spell words.

During your session, you may want to encourage your student to sound out an unfamiliar word. It will be helpful to make sure they have some knowledge of phonics (that is, the sounds of the letters and the left-to-right direction in which we sound out words).

The general sequence of phonics taught is –

Single consonant sounds - (excluding at first ones like *q* & soft *c* & *g*)

Short Vowels	Long Vowels
a- apple	a- name
e- egg	e-week
i-ink	i-pine
o- octopus	o- cone
u- umbrella	u-tune or cute

Consonant blends- combinations of 2 or more consonant sounds (*bl, st, spr, etc.*)

Consonant digraphs - letters which together form a sound that's different from the separate letters (*ch, th, wh, ph, sh*)

Vowels before *r*; soft *c* & *g*; vowel combinations which have several pronunciations (*bread, clean, bear, etc.*)

Multisyllable patterns: compound words, suffixes, prefixes, etc

Trying to blend the common pronunciations of single letters is often ineffectual and discouraging: (“kuh” “huh” “eh” “wuh”, for instance will not yield the word “chew”. On the

other hand, knowing the most common sounds for “ch” and for words ending in “ew” is more likely to be successful. (By the way, even when needing to blend a single consonant sound with the rest of a syllable, try not to attach an “uh” sound after the consonant. This adds an extra vowel sound that can distort the pronunciation.)

In teaching phonics, it is important that you yourself pronounce words and their separate sounds and syllables correctly and distinctly for the child. Be willing to do this often. Even with older students, tutors should be sensitive to the fact that just a brisk, conversational type pronunciation of a difficult new word is usually not enough for a reader/speller with poor auditory skills. The word must be repeated clearly, and the student should be able to see the written word and copy it as well.

CHORAL READING:

With a very beginning reader you can use a *CHORAL READING* technique. Choose a book with not too many words and read it aloud and slowly yourself while pointing and sliding your finger under the words. Ask the student to follow along and say the words aloud with you, or even say a word ahead of time if they know it. Later, you can go back and let the student read a sentence, page or whole book that they have just read along with you. Watch that the student is reading the actual written words and not just giving an approximation of what they recall.

Dictated Reading:

You can invite a beginning reader to tell you a short story or experience of theirs while you write it down for them. Later help them read it back to you. When writing it, be sure you position yourself so the student can clearly see the words as you write them and print them legibly. At this beginning stage, take down the exact words of the student as closely as you can. You want the student to begin to connect word sounds with their letter spellings and not be inhibited by incorrect grammar and pronunciation at this point. If a student pronounces a word in a nonstandard way (such as *liberry* for *library*), write it correctly and, of course, when you read it pronounce it correctly, but for the moment don't get into a deep discussion of pronunciation. Be sensitive to the fact that the student's family and peers might pronounce certain words in a nonstandard way, and you will have to be diplomatic about this when discussions arise.