WORD RECOGNITION:
Tips & Tricks

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Word Recognition

A. Signs Your Student Needs Help with Word Recognition
1. Guessing at words rather than decoding (sounding them out) with automaticity and fluency.
2. Memorizing printed text after hearing it read aloud many times and then pretending to read.
3. Attempting to memorize every word with frequent seeming lapses in memory.
4. Reading (both silently and orally) in a slow and labored style which interferes with comprehension.

B. Recognizing Words
1. To obtain meaning from text, a person must be able to understand the author's message and react to it using prior information and experience. This can't happen, however, if the reader is unable to recognize many of the words in the text.
2. Recognition is the ability to match words that people see in print with words they already use and know the meaning of. Good readers are able to draw on one of the five word recognition strategies to do this.
   a. **Sight Words:** Words that readers recognize instantly without having to stop to figure them out. The more proficient readers are, the more words they recognize by sight.
   b. **Phonics:** The use of sound-symbol relationships to decode words.
   c. **Word Patterns:** The use of familiar letter groupings to help recognize parts of words.
   d. **Context:** The use of the surrounding words to help figure out an unfamiliar word.
   e. **Word parts:** The use of root words, suffixes, prefixes, and other word parts to recognize words.
3. No one strategy works for all situations, and readers sometimes use multiple strategies to figure out a word. So the more strategies a person learns, the more likely that person is to recognize words successfully. The strategies can be taught in any order. Start by building on what the learner already knows.

C. Ten Phonics Concepts
1. Pre-Phonics
a. Learn the names and sounds of the alphabet letters.
b. Develop phonemic awareness (the ability to rhyme, break words into syllables and syllables into phonemes (sounds), blend syllables and phonemes, and manipulate phonemes in words).
2. Learn to blend the letter sounds together (c-a-t).
3. Learn to blend the letter sounds in consonant blends (fl-a-t, dr-i-p).
4. Learn the sounds of consonant digraphs (ch, sh, th, wh: church, shop, that/thing, what).
5. Learn that the five vowel letters make both short and long sounds.
6. Learn that silent "e" generally makes the vowel say its name
7. Learn that vowel digraphs (ai, ea, oa) usually make the first vowel say its name.
8. Learn the r-controlled vowel sounds (ar, er, ir, or, ur).
9. Learn the sounds of the vowel diphthongs (ay, aw, oi, oy, ow, ou, ew).
10. Learn the other common word endings (ink, ight, ould, tion).

D. Ideas for Breaking Down Word Structure
1. Learn to recognize and use common suffixes (s, es, ed, ing).
2. Learn to recognize and use common prefixes (un, re, in, dis).
3. Learn to recognize and use compound words.
4. Learn to recognize and use contractions.

E. A Three-Step Teaching Model
1. *Introduce* the concept with word families on charts.
2. *Explore* and play with the concept through a variety of games and activities.
3. *Apply* the concepts in reading children's literature (if appropriate).

F. Word Formation
1. Beginning reading is thrilling but also challenging. The transition from learning isolated sounds to blending sounds into words is a difficult but rewarding one.
2. Beginning readers need lots of opportunities to manipulate letters and form them into words.
3. Forming words is easy with the beginning sounds f, l, m, n, r, s, v, w, and z because their sounds can be sustained. That makes them blend into vowels smoothly. Since the vowel sounds in the middle can all be sustained, any ending consonant can be used.
4. Introduce the concept of sight words. Sight words are words that don't always "sound out." These words occur frequently in written materials and are often called sight words because readers need to be able to recognize them at a glance.

G. Ideas on Methodology
1. Start with two-letter combinations such as "at." Sound out each letter before blending.
2. Put a letter before "at" to make words such as mat, cat, sat, bat, hat, fat, pat, etc.
3. Change the ending sound to "-ap." Add beginning sounds to make other words.
4. Add the vowel "e" to the end of the word to the first vowel says its name (long sound).
5. To practice consonant blends, add another consonant to the beginning or end to form words such as clap, flap, snap, slap, trap, gasp, tarp, etc.
6. To practice vowel digraphs, add a vowel to make words such as leap, soap, deep, etc.