



## The Prototype for Teaching the English Alphabetic Code

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Here's what a successful reading/spelling program for teaching the English alphabet code should adhere to:

- NO SIGHT WORDS
- NO LETTER NAMES
- Teach a 'sound-to-print' orientation. Phonemes, not letters, are the basis for the code. Children learn that the letters are symbols for the sounds in their own speech and that the number of these sounds is finite (44+).
- Teach phonemes only and no other sound units.
- Begin with an artificial transparent alphabet: a one-to-one correspondence between 40+ phonemes and their most common spelling. (Basic Code)
- Teach children to identify and sequence sounds in real words by segmenting and blending, using letters. (Don't do this in the auditory mode alone.)
- Teach children how to write each letter. Integrate writing into every lesson.
- Link writing, spelling and reading to ensure children learn that the alphabet is a code, and that it works in both directions: encoding / decoding.
- Teach spelling alternatives. ('there's more than one way to spell this sound')
- Spelling should be accurate or, at a minimum, phonetically accurate (all things within reason).
- Introduce the entire advanced spelling code – the 134 remaining common spellings beyond the basic code level.

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Early Reading Instruction: What Science Really Tells Us about How to Teach Reading

A Bradford Book, The MIT Press, 2004