

The Step-by-Step Reading Program

introduces students to reading in steps. Level A has ten steps that each include:

- **Lessons** that teach the sound associated with certain letters or letter groups.
- A **review** that also introduces high frequency words.
- A **storybook** that only uses previously taught spellings and high-frequency words.
- **Assessments** that gauge student learning.

About the program

The written code of the English language is a phonetic code, meaning that symbols are used to represent sounds. Put another way, letters are pictures of sounds. For example, the 'c' in cat is a picture of the /k/ sound. Sometimes, two or more letters form a single sound picture. For example, the 'oa' in boat forms a picture of the /oe/ sound. (In this program, sounds are indicated by a familiar spelling bracketed by slash marks).

Level A of the **Step-by-Step Reader Program** teaches all of the single-letter sound pictures, and begins to introduce more complex sound pictures formed by two letters. In each case, students are taught that letters are pictures of sounds.

Program materials

- **Level A Workbooks 1 and 2**
- **Level A storybooks 1-10**
- **Level A Curriculum** with assessments and activity tiles¹
- a small whiteboard, markers, and eraser (sold separately)

¹Extra copies of scorecards and activity tiles are available for free at andreaahazard.com. Teachers can also download large activity tiles for classroom use on this site.

Level A learning objectives

- Understand that language is composed of sounds.
- Blend sounds to form a word, and segment words into sounds.
- Understand that letters, and sometimes groups of letters, are pictures of sounds.
- Recognize sound pictures that have been taught and say the sound associated with these pictures (sound pictures taught in Level A are shown on the back cover).
- Read one-syllable words containing sound pictures that have been taught.
- Read one-syllable words with adjacent consonants once this skill has been taught.
- Spell words containing sound pictures that have been taught (students are not, however, expected to know which sound picture to use when a sound is spelled several different ways, as is the case with the /oe/ sound).
- Recognize the high frequency words the, to, a, of, from, I, off, was, and put.
- Read simple text containing sound pictures and high-frequency words that have been taught.

The Science behind the program

In 1997, US congress mandated the formation of the **National Reading Panel** (NRP) which was charged with finding the best approach for teaching children to read. The panel conducted a meta-analysis of many different reading programs. Based on this research, the panel concluded that the most effective programs teach children to recognize *phonemes*, which are the smallest units of spoken language. The word 'cat' has three phonemes: /k/, /a/, and /t/.

It is not easy for young children to hear individual phonemes as the sounds are blended together in spoken language. Therefore, phonemic awareness, or awareness of the sounds that make up a spoken language, must be taught. The NRP identified six different strategies for teaching phonemic awareness, all of which are used in the **Step-by-Step Reading Program**:

1. *Isolating phonemes*: saying a single sound in a word (for example, the first sound in cat).
2. *Identifying phonemes*: identifying the same sound in different words (for example, the /sh/ sound in ship, shell, and shop).
3. *Sorting phonemes*: grouping words that contain the same sound (for example, sorting map, mop, cat, and cot based on the vowel sound).
4. *Blending phonemes into words*: listening to individual phonemes and blending them to form a word.
5. *Segmenting words into phonemes*: breaking apart a word into its component sounds.
6. *Adding or deleting phonemes*: adding or deleting sounds to make a new word (for example, adding the /t/ sound to 'ten' to make the word 'tent').

Besides phonemic awareness, the NRP concluded that effective reading programs teach students to recognize *graphemes*, which are the symbols used to represent phonemes in written language. English graphemes are quite complex as they may consist of a single letter or a pair or group of letters. To make matters more confusing, many graphemes can represent more than one sound.

The **Step-by-Step Reading Program** simplifies the process of learning to read by introducing one-letter graphemes that represent a single sound before introducing more complex spellings. The program also introduces high frequency words (such as the, to, a, and of) as necessary so that the students can begin to read as quickly as possible. Books associated with the program only contain graphemes and high frequency words that have been taught.

How to use the program

The storybooks, workbooks, and curriculum can each be used separately but are designed to be used together. For each step, the integrated curriculum includes the following activities:

1. Each student completes a **pre-assessment** to assess prior knowledge.
2. Students complete one or more **lessons** that teach certain sound pictures.
3. Students **review** the material through additional workbook and whiteboard exercises.
4. Students read the **storybook** associated with the step.
5. Each student completes a **post-assessment** to assess learning.

Tips for success

- *Have students work out loud.* Working out loud helps the brain map the written symbol to the sound it represents, and also helps identify problems with understanding of the written code.
- *Use letter sounds rather than letter names.* Letter names can be confusing. For example, the name for the letter c has two sounds, /s/ and /ee/, neither of which is found in the word 'cat'. When introducing the letter c, say "This is a picture of the /k/ sound." If a student uses a letter name, say "That's the name of the letter. What sound does it show?"
- *Do not add vowels to consonant sounds.* Consonants are difficult to say in isolation, and adults and children alike tend to add a vowel afterwards (for example, making /b/ into /bu/). When saying a consonant, make the sound as clipped as possible. Otherwise, students might think the consonant and added-on vowel are one sound.
- *To decrease memory load, the Level A curriculum focuses on small letters.* When the students do encounter capital letters, explain that these are used at the beginning of sentences and in names. Help them with capital letters that look different than small letters (such as capital D).

Common Core Alignment (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY)

RL.K.1 With prompting and support, ask and answer questions about key details in a text.

RL.K.1.B Recognize that spoken words are represented in written language by specific sequences of letters.

RL.K.2.D Isolate and pronounce the initial, medial vowel, and final sounds (phonemes) in three-phoneme (consonant-vowel-consonant, or CVC) words.¹ (This does not include CVCs ending with /l/, /r/, or /x/.)

RL.K.2.E Add or substitute individual sounds (phonemes) in simple, one-syllable words to make new words.

RF.K.3.A Demonstrate basic knowledge of one-to-one letter-sound correspondences by producing the primary sound or many of the most frequent sounds for each consonant.

RF.K.3.C Read common high-frequency words by sight (e.g., the, of, to, you, she, my, is, are, do, does).

RF.K.3.D Distinguish between similarly spelled words by identifying the sounds of the letters that differ.

RF.K.4 Read emergent-reader texts with purpose and understanding.

RF.1.3.A Know the spelling-sound correspondences for common consonant digraphs.

RF.1.3.B Decode regularly spelled one-syllable words.

Level A Step 1

a, c, d, f, i, m, n, o, p, s, t; the

Step 1 pre-assessment: Complete as described on page 20.

Step 1 Lesson 1: c, a, t, p

Level A Workbook 1: Complete the exercises on pages 1-3.

Whiteboard: Set the following letter tiles next to the whiteboard so the student can see them:



1. Spell the word cat

- Say the word 'cat', and ask students to say the first sound in this word (/k/). Have them select the picture of this sound and place it on the board.
- Say cat again, and ask students to say the middle sound in this word (/a/). Have them place the picture of this sound next to the picture of the /k/ sound. Repeat with the last sound (/t/). Have students write the word cat beneath the letter tiles.

2. Change the word cat to cap

- Tell the students to remove the picture of the /t/ sound. Next, tell them to find the picture of the /p/ and put it at the end of the word.
- Ask the students to say the sounds in the new word. Ask them to say the new word they just spelled. Have students write the word cap next to the word cat.

Step 1 Lesson 2: m

Level A Workbook 1: Complete the exercises on pages 4-5.

Whiteboard: Set the following letter tiles next to the whiteboard so the student can see them:



1. Spell the word map

- Say the word 'map'. Ask students to say the first sound in this word and place the picture of this sound on the board. Repeat with the other sounds in this word. Ask students to write the word.

2. Change the word map to mat

- Tell students to remove the picture of the /p/ sound and put the picture of the /t/ sound in its place.
- Ask the students to say the sounds in the new word. Ask them to say the new word they just spelled and to write it.

3. Repeat step 2 to change mat to cat

Step 1 Lesson 3: d, s

Level A Workbook 1: Complete the exercises on pages 6-8.

Whiteboard: Set the following letter tiles next to the whiteboard so the student can see them:



1. *Blend sounds to make the word mad*

- Say the /m/ sound and ask students to find the picture of this sound and place it on the board.
- Say the /a/ sound. Ask students to place the picture of this sound next to the /m/ sound picture. Repeat with the /d/ sound.
- Ask students to say the word they just spelled and write it.

2. *Change the word mad to sad*

- Tell students to remove the picture of the /m/ sound and put the picture of the /s/ sound in its place.
- Ask the students to say each sound in the new word. Ask them to say the word and write it.

3. *Repeat task 2 to change sad to the pad*

Step 1 Lesson 4: n, f

Level A Workbook 1: Complete the exercises on pages 9-12.

Whiteboard: Set the following letter tiles next to the whiteboard so the student can see them:



1. *Spell the word fan*

- Say the word 'fan'. Ask students to say the first sound in this word and to place the picture of this sound on the board.
- Repeat with the other sounds in this word. Ask students to say the word and write it.

2. *Change the word fan to man*

- Tell the students to remove the picture of the /f/ sound and put the picture of the /m/ sound in its place.
- Ask the students to say the sounds in the new word. Ask them to say the whole word and write it.

3. *Repeat task 2 above to change:*

- man to map
- map to nap

Step 1 Lesson 5: o

Level A Workbook 1: Complete the exercises on pages 13-14.

Whiteboard: Set the following letter tiles next to the white board so the student can see them:



1. Spell the word map

- Say the word 'map'. Ask students to say the first sound in this word and place the picture of this sound on the board. Repeat with the other sounds. Ask students to say the word and write it.

2. Change the word map to mop

- Tell the students to remove the picture of the /a/ sound and put the picture of the /o/ sound in its place.
- Ask the students to say the sounds in the new word. Ask them to say the word and to write it.

3. Repeat task 2 above to change:

- mop to cop
- cop to cap

Step 1 Lesson 6: i

Level A Workbook 1: Complete the exercises on pages 15-17.

Whiteboard: Set the following letter tiles next to the whiteboard so the student can see them:



1. Blend sounds to make the word pin

- Say the first sound in this word and ask students to place the picture of this sound on the board.
- Say the middle sound. Ask students to place the picture of this sound next to the first sound picture. Repeat with the last sound.
- Ask students to say the word and write it.

2. Change the word pin to pan

- Tell the students to remove the picture of the /i/ sound and put the picture of the /a/ sound in its place.
- Ask the students to say the beginning, middle, and last sounds in the new word. Ask them to say the word and write it.

3. Repeat task 2 above to change:

- pan to fan
- fan to fin

Step 1 Review

Level A Workbook 1: Complete the exercises on pages 18.


Whiteboard:

A. Review the *a, c, d, f, i, m, n, o, p, s, and t* sound pictures. Set the following letter tiles next to the whiteboard:



1. Say the word 'cap', and ask students to use the letter tiles to spell this word on the board. If they struggle, tell them to break the word apart into its component sounds, and to find the picture for each sound. Tell them to write the word beneath the tiles. Erase the board and remove the tiles.
2. Repeat step 1 above with the words tip, fad, cod, man, and sit.

B. Review the tricky word 'the'

- Set the tile for the word 'the' on the board: 
- Ask the students if they remember this tricky word from the workbook. Have them say it out loud and write it.

Step 1 storybook The students are now ready to read Level A, book 1, **Did the Cat Sit?**

Step 1 Post-Assessment Complete as described on page 20.

Instructions for Level A Assessments

Each step has pre- and post assessments. Instructions for each type of assessment are shown below, and step-specific instructions are on the scorecards that follow. Each student should be assessed individually.

Extra scorecards are available free at andreaahazard.com

ORAL ASSESSMENTS (Step 1 only, PRE and POST)

Segmenting words Say the first word on the scorecard, and ask the student to say each sound in that word. Repeat with the other words.

scoring example: The word fan should be segmented into three sounds: /f/, /a/, and /n/. If, instead, the student says fa-nu, write this error in the appropriate box. In the comments section, note that the student does not segment vowels from consonants and adds vowels that are not there. Another error might be saying the letter name instead of the sound. Put a checkmark in the box if the student segments correctly.

Blending sounds Say each sound in the first word on the scorecard with a distinct pause between. Ask the student to say the word that has those sounds. Repeat with the other words.

scoring example: Put a checkmark in the box if the student blends the sounds correctly, and an X if they do not.

READING AND SPELLING ASSESSMENTS

You will need word and letter tiles for the reading and spelling assessments: assemble these before you start.

Reading words (All Steps, PRE and POST) Show the student the first word on the assessment and ask them to say each sound as you point to the picture of that sound. Ask them to say the word that has these sounds. Repeat with the other words.

scoring example: If a student misidentifies the 'o' sound picture in cop, saying cap instead, write 'cap' in the appropriate box. Note a problem with distinguishing vowels in the comments section.

Spelling words (Steps 1-7, PRE and POST) Set the letter tiles where the student can see them (a whiteboard is not necessary as the student will not be writing). Say the first word on the scorecard. Ask the student to use letter tiles to spell the word. Repeat with the other words. *Note: there is no spelling assessment for steps 8-10 as sounds in these steps can be spelled different ways, and the goal of these lessons is not to memorize specific spellings.*

scoring example: Write any wrong spelling on the scorecard. Put a check mark if the spelling is correct. Note any consistent problems in the comments section.

READING COMPREHENSION ASSESSMENTS (All Steps, POST only)

Book reading and comprehension: Note whether the student has difficulty decoding text, recognizing high frequency words, or deciphering longer sentences. Comprehension can be assessed based on the ability of the student to answer questions in the text or to answer questions you ask about the storyline.

Workbook post-assessment: Complete as described in the workbook. On the scorecard, note whether the student has difficulty decoding text or putting the words together to form a sentence. Also note whether the student is able to fill in each blank with the word that makes sense based on sentence context (Steps 1-7) , or to identify and distinguish sounds (Steps 8-10).

Level A Step 1 Assessment: a, c, d, f, l, m, n, o, p, s, t

Level A Step 1 Assessment 1: Segmenting words

	fan	cod	sip	mat
PRE				
POST				

Comments:

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Level A Step 1 Assessment 2: Blending Sounds

	fin	cat	sod	nap	map
PRE					
POST					

Comments:

Level A Step 1 Assessment 3: Reading words (use the step 1 assessment word tiles)

	cop	fit	mad	sad	man
PRE					
POST					

Comments:

Level A Step 1 Assessment 4: Spelling words (use the a, c, d, f, i, m, n, o, p, s, t letter tiles)

	cap	fin	sod	nap	mat
PRE					
POST					

Comments:

Level A Step 1 Assessment 5: Comprehension

Book reading and comprehension:

Workbook post-assessment (Workbook 1 pages 19-21):

Activity Tiles Remove the dotted line when cutting. Note that for all Steps other than Step 1 some letter tiles from previous levels will be needed. Level 8 has no letter tiles. Extra copies are available at andreaahazard.com.

