

SEND &amp; INCLUSION · GRADES K-5

# Reading Intervention Progression

What to teach, when

## How to use this map

Find where the child currently is. Teach the skills at that stage until secure. Move on. Don't skip stages — even if a child is older, the skills are sequential. This is a generic progression, not a specific scheme. Most evidence-based DfE-validated synthetic phonics schemes follow this rough order. Use this as a checkpoint, not a replacement for a structured scheme.

## Stage 1 — Pre-phonics

<p><b>Phonological awareness</b></p> <p>Hearing rhythm in language. Clapping syllables. Identifying first sounds in words ('cat starts with /k/'). This is BEFORE letters are introduced.</p>	<p><b>Print awareness</b></p> <p>Knowing books open this way. Words go left to right. Letters make words. Words make sentences.</p>
<p><b>Letter recognition</b></p> <p>Naming letters and recognising them in environmental print. Not the same as knowing sounds yet.</p>	<p><b>Oral storytelling</b></p> <p>Listening to stories. Sequencing events. Predicting what comes next. Vocabulary building.</p>

## Stage 2 — Single letter sounds (Set 1)

<p><b>Letter-sound mapping</b></p> <p>Each letter has a sound. /s/ /a/ /t/ /p/ /i/ /n/ etc. Most schemes teach in groups of 4-6, in an order that allows blending early.</p>	<p><b>Blending</b></p> <p>Putting sounds together to read words. /c/-/a/-/t/ → cat. The breakthrough moment.</p>
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<p><b>Segmenting</b></p> <p>The reverse — hearing a word and breaking it into sounds. Foundation for spelling.</p>	<p><b>Common 'tricky' words</b></p> <p>Words that don't follow phonics rules — 'the', 'is', 'said', 'was'. Have to be learned by sight in parallel.</p>
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### Stage 3 — Letter pairs (digraphs/trigraphs)

<p><b>Consonant pairs</b></p> <p>/sh/ /ch/ /th/ /ng/ — two letters, one sound. Children need explicit teaching that these are 'special pairs.'</p>	<p><b>Long vowel pairs</b></p> <p>/ai/ /ee/ /oa/ /oo/ /or/ /ar/ /er/ — vowel teams that say their name or another sound.</p>
<p><b>Reading short texts</b></p> <p>Decodable books that use only sounds the child has been taught.</p>	<p><b>Building fluency</b></p> <p>Re-reading the same texts to build automaticity. Repeated reading is one of the most evidence-based reading interventions.</p>

### Stage 4 — Alternative spellings

<p><b>Same sound, multiple spellings</b></p> <p>/ai/ can be 'ai', 'ay', 'a-e', 'eigh'. /ee/ can be 'ee', 'ea', 'e-e', 'y'. Children need to learn alternatives systematically.</p>	<p><b>Same letter, multiple sounds</b></p> <p>'ow' can be /oʊ/ (snow) or /aʊ/ (cow). 'g' can be /g/ (go) or /j/ (gem). Context helps.</p>
<p><b>Word patterns and morphology</b></p> <p>Word endings like '-tion', '-sion'. Plural patterns. Past tense. Building blocks of harder words.</p>	<p><b>Reading longer texts</b></p> <p>Chapters, longer non-fiction, age-appropriate content. Comprehension starts to drive reading.</p>

### Stage 5 — Fluency and comprehension

<p><b>Reading rate</b></p> <p>Reading at a comfortable pace with appropriate phrasing. Not speed-reading — but no longer laboured.</p>	<p><b>Reading aloud with expression</b></p> <p>Pausing at commas. Voice for dialogue. Shows that comprehension is happening.</p>
<p><b>Vocabulary depth</b></p> <p>Children at this stage need to be EXPOSED to lots of words via reading and being read to.</p>	<p><b>Comprehension strategies</b></p> <p>Predicting, questioning, summarising, inferring. These can be explicitly taught.</p>

### When to escalate



If a child has had a structured intervention for at least a term and is making minimal progress, consider:

- Specialist dyslexia assessment
- Speech and language therapy referral (if oral language is weak too)
- Eyesight check (regularly missed; basic but vital)
- Hearing check
- Educational psychology assessment

Reading intervention works for most struggling readers. For some, it doesn't — and those children need specialist input. Don't keep doing the same intervention for years if the child isn't progressing.

