



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Siceolaíochta Oideachais | National Educational Psychological Service

## Effective Interventions for Struggling Readers

### Resource Pack

This resource pack accompanies the  
**NEPS Good Practice Guide: Effective Interventions for Struggling Readers**

1. [Assessing Literacy Difficulties](#), list of up-to-date standardised tests for reading and spelling
2. [Interventions](#), list of evidence based interventions, with contact details, including information about free downloads
3. [Precision Teaching Guidance](#)
  - Teaching Sight Vocabulary and Improving Fluency
  - Precision Teaching Approaches and Using SNIP (free download)
  - Checklists for First 100 Words, Second 100 Words, Phonics
4. [Reading Partners Guidance](#) (cross-age peer tutoring)  
A Rough Guide to Reading Partners, with supporting templates
5. [Guidance on the Use of Positive Declarations](#)



## Assessing Literacy Difficulties

### Reading

There are many ways of testing reading, including word reading, sentence completion and close exercises. Word reading tests, by their nature are individually administered, while group tests, used at screening, usually depend on some element of comprehension. Teachers should be aware that some students can perform well on a reading comprehension task, but still have significant difficulty with reading accuracy and fluency.

When teachers are using tests to measure progress, it is best to use the same test before and after intervention. Ideally, tests that have two versions (such as the WRAT4, Micra-T, Neale Analysis, TOWRE and Group Reading Tests) should be used as they allow retesting using the same criteria, but eliminate the risk of 'practice effects', where the student does better because the test has become familiar.

In the post-primary years, the importance of measuring progress has implications for the appropriate selection of tests in first or second year. It is important that the tests used on entry to post-primary education are age appropriate and will continue to be appropriate if used for subsequent re-testing.

The DES provides a comprehensive list of approved tests for post-primary schools and this can be accessed on <http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Supports-for-Pupils-with-Special-Needs/>

**We strongly advocate that teachers conduct their own assessment for learning and make use of non-standardised assessment, such as reading records, as an integral part of their teaching. See the NCCA for further information on assessment for learning.**

[www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Publications/Afllleaflet2.pdf](http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/Publications/Afllleaflet2.pdf)

### Group Administered Tests

#### **Micra-T Group Reading Tests (2004)**

Standardised on Irish population, in 2002-2003, with total of 10,000 pupils. Has four levels, spanning first to sixth class. Published by CJ Fallon.

#### **Drumcondra Primary Reading Test- revised (2007)**

Re-standardised in 2006. Tests both reading vocabulary and reading comprehension, with six levels corresponding to first to sixth class. Published by the Education Research Centre.

### **New Group Reading Test, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, (2010)**

There are four tests, covering different age bands, with standardisation from 5 years to 17 years. Both word reading and reading comprehension are tested. Group administration. Published by gl-assessments.

### **Cloze Reading Test 1, 2 & 3, D Young, (2002) Revised norms.**

Published by Hodder & Stoughton Age range 7:6 to 12:7, a group test of reading comprehension.

### **The Gray Silent Reading Test (2000)**

This is produced by PRO-ED, Inc. The GSRT is a norm-referenced test of silent reading comprehension that is appropriate for individuals ages 7 years through 25 years 11 months. It has two parallel forms, Form A and Form B. THE GSRT can be administered individually, to small groups or to entire classes.

## **Individual and Diagnostic Tests**

**The Adult Reading Test (2004)** is suitable for the age range 16 – 55 years. It is a test that needs to be individually administered. It has UK norms and is published by the Psychological Corporation.

**The Wide Range Achievement Tests (WRAT 4 2006)\*** includes word reading, reading comprehension and spelling tests. It is suitable for the complete age range and uses US norms. This individually administered test also includes a maths assessment. Published by PAR.

**The Neale Analysis of Reading Ability (NARA II 1997)** has been widely used, but is of limited utility in secondary schools as it is only standardised up to the age of 12 years, 11 months. It offers a comprehensive assessment of reading rate, accuracy and comprehension. This test uses British norms. Published by gl-assessment.

The **Diagnostic Reading Analysis (2006)** published by Hodder covers the age range 7 to 16 years and is particularly suitable for testing less able students. It is individually administered and covers reading accuracy, comprehension, fluency and rate of reading.

**Woodcock-Johnson III\*, Tests of Achievement, Form C / Brief Battery, (2007)** is a battery of 9 subtests of letter-word identification, reading fluency, passage comprehension, spelling, writing fluency, writing samples, calculation, applied problems and maths fluency. It is suitable for the age range 2 to 80 years plus. Published by Riverside Publishing.

There is also a **Woodcock-Johnson III\*, Diagnostic Reading Battery (2004)** which measures dimensions of phonological awareness, phonics knowledge, reading achievement, and related oral language abilities. This again, can be used across the age range. Published by Riverside Publishing.

### **Test of Word Reading Efficiency–Second Edition (TOWRE–2, 2011)**

This test measures an individual's ability to pronounce printed words (Sight Word Efficiency) and phonemically regular non-words (Phonemic Decoding Efficiency) accurately and fluently. Because it can be administered very quickly, the test provides an efficient means of monitoring the growth of two kinds of word reading skill that are critical in the development of overall reading ability. The age range for use is 6 to 24 years. It uses US norms and is published by Pearson.

**York Assessment of Reading Comprehension (YARC), (2011, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition).** It is suitable for the age range 4-11 years. It focuses on not just decoding and sight reading but also on reading comprehension. In addition to passages for pupils 5-11, YARC also includes four short tests (letter-sound knowledge, sound deletion, sound isolation and early word recognition) specifically designed for five and six year olds. It uses UK norms and is published by gl-Assessment.

**York Assessment of Reading Comprehension (YARC) Passage Reading Secondary, (2010).** It is suitable for the age range 12-16 years. The assessment comprises of a series of prose passages that assesses a student's reading comprehension and fluency in a systematic way across the secondary school years. It also assesses reading rate, reading accuracy and reading fluency. It uses UK norms and is published by gl-Assessment.

Finally, there is also Wechsler Individual Achievement Test for use by teachers. This **WIAT for Teachers II (2006)** can be used from 4 years to 16 years, 11 months and has both US and UK norms. It is an individual assessment which covers the following areas: word reading, reading comprehension, reading speed, reading rate and spelling. Published by Pearson.

*\* Some of these tests have restricted access for teachers, depending on the qualifications of the teacher administering and scoring them. Your educational supplier can advise further.*

## **Spelling**

Standardised tests of spelling skills can be very helpful in identifying those who have marked difficulty with spelling. Weekly class spelling tests, where child learn off lists of spellings, can be misleading. This is because some children can manage to memorise spellings in the short-term, but do not retain spellings learnt (and often lack fundamental phonological skills to work out unfamiliar words). Dictation and free writing activities give a better indicator of a child's spelling ability, than a test of weekly spellings.

**The Drumcondra Primary Spelling Test (2003)** can be used from first to sixth class in primary school. There are two forms. It can be group administered in about 45 minutes.

**The Single Word Spelling Test, (SWST 2001)** gl-assessment (standardised from age 6 to 14) has been popular with some schools.

**The British Spelling Test Series, (2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2009)**, published by gl-assessment, is standardised from ages 5 to 15 years, 11 months and can be group or individually administered. It takes 30-40 minutes and uses UK norms.

**Vernon Graded Word Spelling Test, third edition, (2006)**

This is published by Hodder and is standardised for ages 5 to 18 plus.

**Also, see WRAT, WIAT and Woodcock Johnson tests listed above, as they include spelling tests.**

## **Other Tests of Literacy / Writing**

### **Informal Dictation**

It may be helpful to ask students to complete a short piece of dictation. Such a test can yield useful information about a range of skills, including: rate of writing, handwriting legibility, listening skills and spelling skills. While standardised results are not available, an experienced teacher should be able to identify students who have weaker skills in key areas. These students may need further diagnostic testing.

**The Detailed Assessment of Speed of Handwriting Test (DASH 2007, Harcourt Assessment)** can be group administered and is standardised from ages 9 to 16 years, 11 months. It takes 30 minutes and involves five short subtests, including a 10 minute free writing activity.

Other tests of writing speed included one developed by professional association of teachers of students with specific learning difficulties.

<http://www.patoss-dyslexia.org/SupportAdvice/InformationSheets/2012-09-02/Handwriting-Assessment/> Click on the 'Handwriting Speed Assessment' link in the right hand column.

The Hedderly Sentence Completion Test is another alternative and it can be downloaded for free. Google 'Hedderly Sentence Completion' and open the pdf file in [www.dyslexiaaction.com](http://www.dyslexiaaction.com) which contains the test itself, as well as instructions for scoring.

**The Irish Adaptation of the Handwriting Speed Test** by Hazel Killeen, Mairead Dempsey and Paul O'Mahony. Produced by The Association of Occupational Therapists of Ireland (AOTI), Suite 2.20 Smithfield Business Centre, The Distiller's Building, Smithfield, Dublin 7 01 8748136

## Interventions

There is information here about a number of interventions referred to in the Good Practice Guide, but also information about other, evidence-based interventions that are currently available in Ireland. However, the selection of interventions is limited to those for which NEPS psychologists have reviewed the recent research evidence and/ or the theoretical basis. There are many other interventions available for which we have not, as yet, reviewed the evidence and this is not in any way to imply that they are not suitable for use in Irish schools. For a comprehensive overview of a wide variety of interventions, see Brooks (2007). See also [www.nbss.ie](http://www.nbss.ie) for information on interventions at post-primary level which have been used successfully in Irish schools.

### Jolly Phonics

While this is now more typically used at the whole class level in the Infant years, it is nonetheless a useful intervention for children who are struggling with acquiring early literacy in the senior infants/ first/ second class years, IF the children have not already had comprehensive teaching using this method. The basic book, with photocopiable master sheets, is widely available. The Phonic Handbook (1992) by Sue Lloyd, Published by Jolly Learning

A whole range of supporting materials are available from Jolly Learning, including a 'starter kit', [www.jollylearning.co.uk](http://www.jollylearning.co.uk)

**Acceleread Accelewrite** is available in Ireland through software providers. It can also be purchased on line through [dyslexic.com](http://dyslexic.com). It can be purchased as a CD, which includes the manual and colour cards. Children of 8 years and up can make use of this, but basic key board skills are needed and the entry level presumes the ability to read simple CVC words (fat/ man/ run etc).

**Toe by Toe** is available in Ireland from a range of educational suppliers. It is intended to be used for one to one teaching and can be used across the age range, but is probably better suited to children from third class and up.

### Literacy Acceleration

This programme is an intensive literacy programme for use with struggling readers on entry to post-primary school. The research suggests that some amount of restructuring of the timetable may be needed to deliver this programme effectively in first and second year. The Literacy Acceleration Teachers' Pack of Resources can be purchased from:

AWLED Consultancy Ltd  
PO Box 33  
Newquay  
Cornwall, TR71YP

It can be ordered on line through website [awled.co.uk](http://awled.co.uk)

### **Phono-Graphix**

There is emerging evidence that Phono-Graphix may be a highly effective way of teaching early phonic skills, both at the whole class level and as an intervention with struggling readers. The book: Reading Reflex – the foolproof Phono-Graphix method for teaching your child to read (1998) Mc Guinness and Mc Guinness, Penguin, is the central element, but those who wish to use the approach should have specific training. The website, [readamerica.net](http://readamerica.net) has details of training courses. There are on-line certified training courses, as well as 4 day courses run in venues in England (Bath and Essex).

### **Reading Partners/ Peer Reading**

Extensive information about this approach can be found through the Centre for Peer Learning at the University of Dundee

<http://www.dundee.ac.uk/eswce/research/projects/cpl/>

There are also multiple sources of information available on the internet. See also the attached resource, A Rough Guide to Reading Partners.

### **Precision Teaching Approaches**

SNIP Precision Teaching Pack (credit Carol and Phil Smart)

[www.snip-newsletter.co.uk](http://www.snip-newsletter.co.uk) This is a free download. It should be noted that the research evidence provided in the text is based on the original SNIP word lists and did not involve the follow-up activities that are now part of the resources available.

See also the sample precision teaching approach for Teaching a sight vocabulary and reading fluency in this pack, which gives details of other free download resources.

### **Reading Recovery**

You need to complete intensive training to be a recognised Reading Recovery Teacher. Information available from Reading Recovery National Network (covers Britain and Ireland) based in the Institute of Education, London

[Readingrecovery.org.uk](http://Readingrecovery.org.uk)

[www.ioe.ac.uk/readingrecovery](http://www.ioe.ac.uk/readingrecovery)

See also <http://www.metc.ie/National-Programmes/Reading-Recovery> and <http://www.mie.ie/Continuing-Professional-Development/Diploma-in-Reading-Recovery-Diploma.aspx> for information about reading recovery in Ireland.

### **ARROW**

See the website [self-voice.com](http://self-voice.com) where there is information about research findings and the training programme. Staff need specialist training and the school need to invest in the software.

The ARROW centre can be contacted on [arrow.centre@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:arrow.centre@yahoo.co.uk) so see [www.self-voice.com](http://www.self-voice.com)

Phone 00 44 1823 324949

### **Resources for Developing Reading Comprehension**

Since the teaching of comprehension involves the deployment of strategies, rather than programmes, the approach is somewhat different to the approach to teaching phonics or fluency. Excellent resources that use evidence from research are available. For teaching comprehension skills in the primary school phase, the following is a free download and includes clear guidance with five key recommendations.

Download Improving Reading Comprehension in Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade, Institute of Education Sciences, What Works Clearinghouse, NCEE 2010-4038

<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/practiceguide.aspx?sid=14>.

The NBSS (National Behaviour Support Service) have produced excellent materials on comprehension strategies for post primary schools.

Comprehension and Learning Strategies for all Subjects- Teacher Resource 2009 Contact [www.nbss.ie](http://www.nbss.ie)

A further resource which pays particular attention to adolescent readers is the report of the ADORE project: Teaching Adolescent Struggling Readers: A Comparative Study of Good Practices in European Countries.

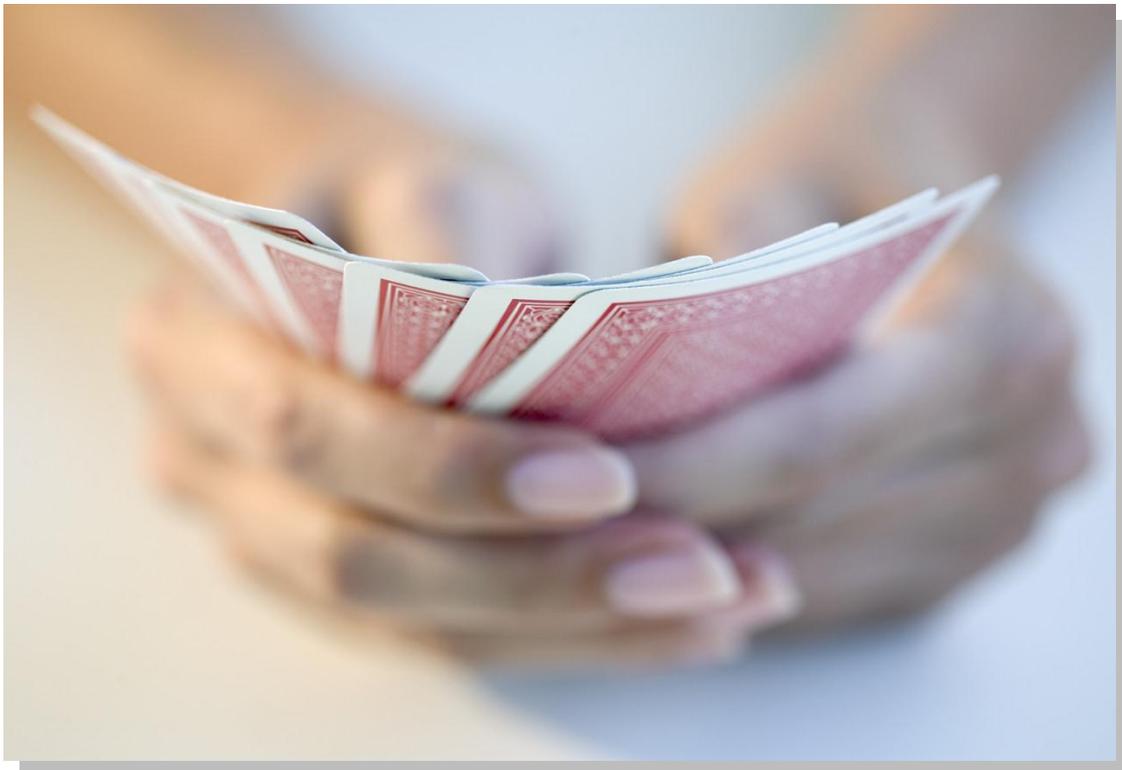
[http://ec.europa.eu/education/transversal-programme/doc/studies/2006adore\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/transversal-programme/doc/studies/2006adore_en.pdf)



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# Teaching Sight Vocabulary and Improving Reading Fluency

## A precision teaching approach



## A Guide for Teachers and Parents

This NEPS Good Practice Guide was developed by educational psychologists. It is based on current knowledge in this area. It is intended as a guide only. Not all the suggestions here will apply to any one student or situation.

# A Precision Teaching Approach to Teaching Sight Vocabulary and Improving Fluency

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It is important when working with children that they read at a level that is called proficiency level. This means they can read material at a 95% accuracy level.

Outlined below is a method that will support you to achieve this proficiency level. It is a precision teaching method although precision monitoring may be a better term to use as it monitors precisely learners' progress in acquiring sight vocabulary. It is about building a sight-vocabulary using a visual method. This is learning to read words by looking at them and remembering them, rather than sounding them out.

## **1. Establishing target words**

To start precision teaching one needs to identify where the learner is in relation to either their current class reader or dolch list, textbooks, Jolly Phonic 'tricky' words or any list of key sight words being taught. Establish where they are by checking the number or words which they can automatically recognise. (Automatic recognition is different to decoding. It means the learner instantly recognises the word as a whole word and does not hesitate or sound out the word).

Provide the student with a copy of the list of words you wish to check and keep a copy for yourself. Ask the student to read down the list and tick off the words he/she can read instantly (see sample list below). The unrecognised or hesitantly read words will form the student's longer term target list.

Select a short term **list** of words as a target for your student to learn. This can vary depending on the age and ability of the student but is typically 4 to 6 new words. This can be increased or decreased depending on the rate at which the student learns.

## **2. Teaching Strategy**

Following the identification of the target words you then select appropriate teaching strategies. We have given one example below of a teaching strategy, which is based on a direct instruction method. This teaching approach can also be delivered by a parent, peer or a community volunteer under teacher direction and demonstration.

### Step 1

Print the short term target words onto card. (This can be varied for older students as flashcards may seem a bit childish for them. Perhaps use PowerPoint to teach new words). Do not use capital letters unless the word starts with a capital letter.

Try not to use card that is too big as it will be cumbersome to store. Make sure you use the same colour and size of card and same colour marker so there is no other way for the pupil to recognise a word. For example a student may know that the green word is *home*, as opposed to recognising *home* as a sight word. Avoid putting similar looking words together as this can make learning harder for students e.g. *home* and *house* or *their* and *they*.

Place each card on the table one at a time and say the name of the word e.g., “this is the word shop”. Ask the learner to put the word into an oral sentence. If they have difficulty with this, give them an example and get them to repeat your example or give their own sentence. (Remember if a student doesn't know or understand a word they shouldn't be learning to read it). Repeat this process with all the target words.

### Step 2

When all the cards are on the table say the following to the pupil, “Point to the word shop”. The **student must look at the word, putting their finger under the first letter of the word and say the word at the same time**. Then say, “Point to the word home.....” Continue like this for about 10 or 15 times, moving between the words. Getting the student to place their finger under the first letter cues them into the starting phoneme of the word and keeps them focussed on the word.

This can be done in a fun manner, or as a game. Younger students usually enjoy being told, “Let's see if I can catch you out”. This allows the student lots of practise to name the word without putting an expectation on the student to recognise the word from his/her own memory.

### Step 3

The next step is to pick up the cards and shuffle them. Place the cards down in a random fashion and ask the student to name the word. Usually students have no difficulty with this. Repeat this process 3 or 4 times. It may seem tedious but is the essential learning part of the method.

## **3. Monitoring and charting progress**

Following this teaching segment the teacher administers a one minute speed test known as a ‘probe’. The probe consists of the words the child has just been taught. The probe gives information on the pupil's accuracy and fluency. Probes are constructed by preparing a list of words just taught, which are repeated randomly.

A simple user friendly probe generator is available from this website [www.johnandgwyn.co.uk/probe.html](http://www.johnandgwyn.co.uk/probe.html) . (Click on ‘*smaller print version*’ and then save it to your computer. A page will open with numbers 4 onwards, on the very bottom of the page. Click on the number of target words you want in your probe e.g. 4 or 5 or 6 etc. A page with a grid will appear. In each of the

red squares at the top of the page type one target word. The probe will automatically place the words randomly across the grid. An example of a probe sheet with five target words and aim rate is shown below).

For the pupil to achieve sight word recognition at automaticity or fluency levels they have to read 50 words on the probe within one minute with no more than two errors. Each day following the teaching, the probe is administered and the pupil's progress is charted on a graph/chart until the pupil achieves the aim rate (50 words per minute with no more than 2 errors). Charts can be very motivating for students. To see a sample graph/chart click on [www.eptoolbox.co.uk](http://www.eptoolbox.co.uk), then click on *Precision Teaching* on the left hand side. When the next page opens up click on *Daily Recording Charts* and a sample chart will open up.

If the pupil's rate of reading is not improving after 3 days then the number of words being taught needs to be reduced. If after 8 days the pupil is not at or very near your selected aim rate then you may consider adapting your teaching strategy and reviewing your target words.

Over successive days of practice, the data (corrects and errors) plotted on the chart produce *learning pictures*. When used effectively these *learning pictures* can indicate for each child, whether a task is too difficult, too easy or just right; whether the child requires further instruction, further practice, or should move onto to more complex tasks. Most importantly it indicates whether the teaching methods being adopted are having the desired effects.

When the aim rate is reached a new set of target words is identified and the process is repeated again and again until the longer term targets can be read automatically.

#### **4. Possible extension work**

The following steps are optional but provide extra extension work for students and link in with other key skills.

- Place all the words on the table again and ask the child to point to the word that starts with the sound /s/ or ends with the sound /s/. Pick other letter sounds or letter patterns e.g. /a/, *-ing*, *-and* etc.
- Some words that children are learning may have smaller words within them e.g. *they*, *home*, *caravan*. As an extra piece of work present words like these to the children one at a time. For example with the word *caravan*, cover the last four letters and ask the pupil, "What word do you see now? *car*, or cover the first four letters and ask the pupil, "What word do you see now? *van*. It doesn't matter if the child doesn't recognise the words, tell them or prompt them. This is just an exercise to develop their visual skills. If you do this every day they will soon start to see those smaller words.

- A more difficult step from the previous one is to then ask the child to cover letters in the word *caravan* to show you *car* or *van*. Again don't worry if they can't do this, demonstrate for them each time.
- If possible supplement their daily learning with words they already know especially their name so sentences can be written with the words they have just been learning.

### **5. Maintenance Check**

It is very important to carry out regular 'maintenance checks' of all target words over a six to eight week period. This involves re-visiting or re-checking the original long term target list of words. Generally pupils who have achieved this level of fluency maintain those words; however any words they haven't maintained can be included in the next list of target words.

It is good practice at the beginning of each session to ask the student to read the words learnt previously.

### **6. Generalisation**

One of the potential difficulties of learning words that are not in context is that the pupil may not generalise their learning to written passages. Therefore, it is important to present the student with unseen passages that contain the target words to see if he/she can read the words fluently. That is the one advantage of taking the target words from a graded reading scheme. Alternatively teachers can compose passages of text which include the target words.

### **References**

Chiesa, M., & Robertson, A. (2000). Precision teaching and fluency training: Making maths easier for pupils and teachers. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 16 (3), 297-310. DfES. (2003)

Desjardins, E. A., & Slocum, T.A. (1993). Integrating Precision Teaching with Direct Instruction. *Journal of Precision Teaching*, X (2), 20-24.

Ikin, A.B. (2005). Precision teaching: The Standard Celeration Chart. *The Behaviour Analyst Today*, 6(4), 207-213.

Raybould, E. C., & Solity, J. E. (1988). More Questions on Precision Teaching. *British Journal of Special Education*, 15(2), 59-61.

## Sample list of words

Jolly phonic tricky words		Book 1			
I		shoe		books	
the		the		box	
he		three		bread	
me		tricks		carrots	
was		two		cheese	
to		at		chips	
said		can		dog	
she		did		eating	
we		do		everything	
do		four		favourite	
here		glasses		food	
are		her		fruit	
all		his		has	
you		lollipop		He	
your		look		lots	
come		on		meat	
some		play		milk	
there		see		no	
they		you		of	
go				pets	
by				pizza	
like				reads	
no				she	
so		<b>Book 2</b>		teddy	
my		an		toast	
one		apple		toys	
have		banana		vegetables	
live		beans		with	
give		blocks		yogurt	

### Sample probe sheet with five target words

said	you	we	the	of
you	the	of	we	said
we	of	you	said	the
you	said	the	of	we
the	we	said	you	of
said	of	the	we	you
of	said	we	you	the
you	the	we	said	of



## Precision Teaching Approaches and Using SNIP

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SNIP is a resource pack aimed at increasing the reading ages of pupils with reading ages of 10+. It includes curriculum words and words that often contribute to reading hesitation and are irregular i.e. not phonic.

The packs are intended to be photocopied and a new one given weekly to students who practise them daily and are then timed on their ability to read them out loud. How the reading practice is organised depends on the organisation of each school – some may be able to involve parents, adult helpers and peers, but it is also important to encourage the pupils themselves to practice unaided in order to allow them to gain fluency and control over the process.

SNIP Precision Teaching Pack (credit Carol and Phil Smart)

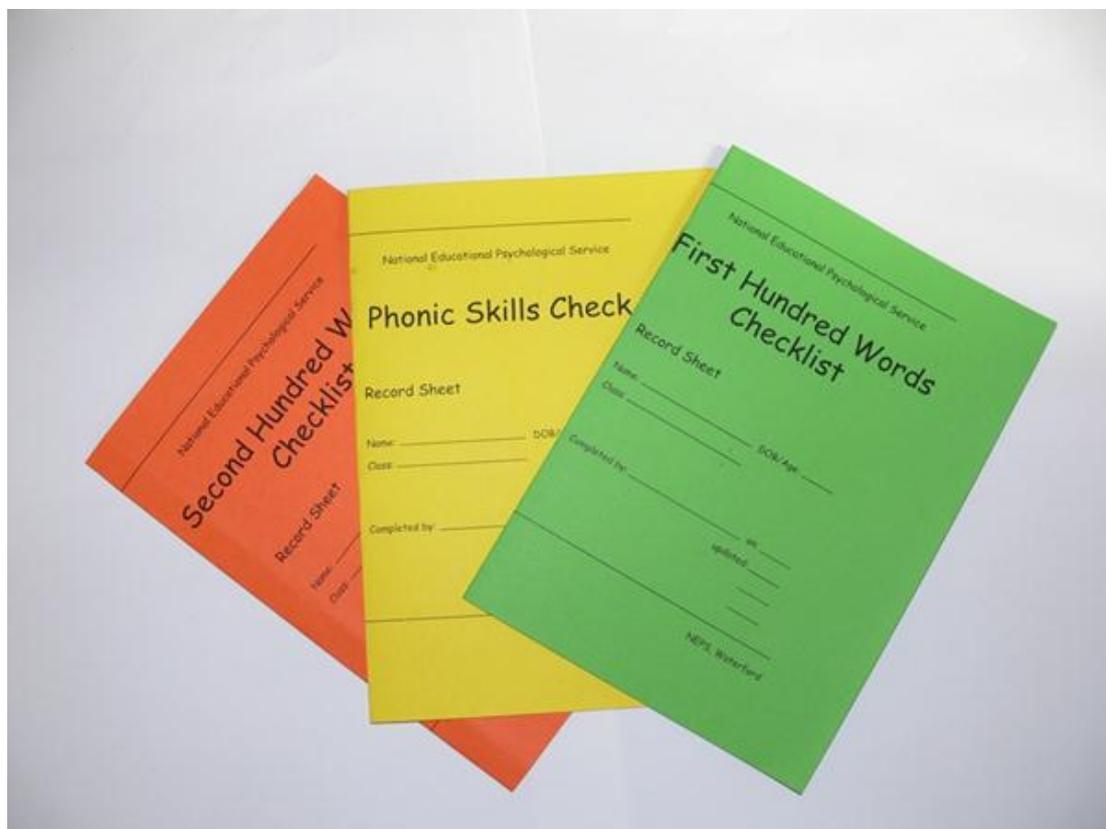
[www.snip-newsletter.co.uk](http://www.snip-newsletter.co.uk) This is a free download.

Sample from SNIP

<b>Word</b>	<b>Monday</b>	<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Friday</b>
guard					
height					
queue					
straight					
weird					
strength					
weight					

## Checklists for the First Hundred Words, Second Hundred Words and Phonics

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These resources have been developed by NEPS to assist teachers who wish to check a student's knowledge of sight words or phonics. They allow for teaching and review of progress and may be particularly suited to using with a precision teaching approach.

 [Click here](#) to download these checklists

There are also extensive resources freely available on <http://www.theschoolbell.com/>. Once on this site look at the material labelled Dolch kit. It allows you to make really attractive booklets with sight words set out in 11 lists.

There are, of course, many other ways of teaching sight vocabulary, including teaching vocabulary works in advance of meeting them in text. Teaching sight vocabulary is only one element of a balanced approach to literacy and should form part of a coherent approach to literacy skills.

## Teaching Notes

This checklist should be used to note a student's progress in learning a sight vocabulary. That is, the words which a student can read quickly and confidently.

If the student is unsure, guesses, or needs time to sound out a word, it is best to consider that the reading of that word requires more practice.

Put a small tick next to all the words the students knows. Leave unknown words without a mark.

# First Hundred Words Checklist

## Record Sheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB/Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_ on: \_\_\_\_\_

updated: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1	in	was	is	I	he	11	did	by	if	go	down
2	it	a	the	that	to	12	just	out	your	into	our
3	and	of	are	for	you	13	went	then	well	there	were
4	had	so	have	said	as	14	big	call	back	been	come
5	not	they	with	one	we	15	from	only	first	off	over
6	on	his	at	him	all	16	must	make	more	made	much
7	but	old	be	up	do	17	look	little	some	like	right
8	can	me	came	my	new	18	then	their	when	this	two
9	get	she	here	has	her	19	see	about	could	before	other
10	will	an	no	or	now	20	which	what	where	who	want

## Teaching Notes

This checklist should be used to note a student's progress in learning a sight vocabulary. That is, the words which a student can read quickly and confidently.

If the student is unsure, guesses, or needs time to sound out a word, it is best to consider that the reading of that word requires more practice.

Put a small tick next to all the words the students knows. Leave unknown words without a mark.

# Second Hundred Words Checklist

## Record Sheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB/Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_ on: \_\_\_\_\_

updated: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

1	ask	home	am	house	any	11	sit	blue	say	black	saw
2	yes	every	run	round	very	12	best	don't	bad	read	put
3	got	sat	good	soon	give	13	left	bring	let	green	live
4	boy	dog	play	girl	day	14	next	open	never	own	once
5	tree	too	time	three	take	15	gave	may	find	fly	many
6	hand	Mr.	head	father	mother	16	fell	ran	tell	than	eat
7	men	room	red	man	us	17	stop	help	sing	going	how
8	last	jump	bird	long	four	18	fast	walk	five	keep	found
9	under	year	would	thing	school	19	wish	think	why	these	work
10	after	again	know	always	away	20	white	should	another	woman	because

### Constant Diagraphs

whip shed chat quick thin ( /5)

### Simple Vowel Diagraphs

deep meat soon foot ( /4)

### Long "o" Sound

joke road blow rope slow toad ( /6)

### Long "a" Sound

nail lake way date paid tray ( /6)

### Long "i" Sound

fine pie high fry tide die sigh cry ( /8)

### Long "u" Sound

tune few use new ( /4)

# Phonic Skills Check

## Record Sheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB/Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_ on: \_\_\_\_\_

updated: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Letter Sounds

Stage 1

a c t m s ( /5)

Stage 2

g o r d n ( /5)

Stage 3

i w l k b ( /5)

Stage 4

e p j f h ( /5)

Stage 5

u v x y z q ( /6)

## Consonant - Vowel

co pe ta li ru ( /5)

## Consonant - Vowel - Consonant

sip nag pol fed tug ( /5)

## Final Double Consonant

well mess luck ( /3)

## Final Blends

melt silk damp risk pest lend junk ( /7)

## Initial Blends

blot flap crop trim twig spit stem snap ( /8)



An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta Siceolaíochta Oideachais | National Educational Psychological Service

# A Rough Guide to Reading Partners

## A cross-age, peer-tutoring approach



This NEPS Good Practice Guide was developed by educational psychologists. It is based on current knowledge in this area. It is intended as a guide only. Not all the suggestions here will apply to any one student or situation.

## A Rough Guide to Reading Partners

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## **A cross-age, peer tutoring approach**

### **The Reading Partner Scheme**

The programme set out here is described as a Reading Partners Scheme. It is a cross-aged peer tutoring approach, in that the tutor would normally be at least two years older than the tutee. It is possible to run such a programme in mainstream primary or secondary schools, or indeed in a special school setting. Schools are encouraged to select children with literacy difficulties to participate in the scheme both as tutors and tutees. The emphasis is on the importance of the partnership being egalitarian. Although the terms *tutor* and *tutee* are preferred in the academic literature, I prefer the terms *helper* and *learner*, as students can easily understand these terms.

Participation in a Reading Partners Scheme should have a number of benefits;

- increased reading skill of learners and of helpers
- increasing confidence and self-esteem of helpers
- creating a positive attitude to reading for both parties

### **Managing a Reading Partner Scheme**

In order for a Reading Partners Scheme to be successful, a named teacher must have overall responsibility for co-ordinating the programme, and this will need some time allocation. This can be a Learning Support/ Resource Teacher or can be another member of the school staff who can give some time and energy to the project.

### **Who should participate in such a scheme?**

Reading interventions normally target those who need additional help with reading. Schools may choose to target struggling readers, both as readers and as helpers, while others may be invited to participate in order to build their self-esteem or their social skills. Generally, identifying those who need extra help with reading can be done through the schools' own screening and

through information from the Class Teachers, Learning Support/ Resource Teacher. Participation in a Reading Partner Scheme may be particularly suitable for children at Classroom Support and School Support level intervention, as described in the Continuum of Support documents.

Attendance is a key issue and, if a child has poor attendance, there needs to be some contingency in place to address the needs of the partner. For example, there could be a substitute helper/ learner available.

Models of partnerships include:

- Sixth class helpers working with younger learners
- Transition year students working with First years
- Older special school pupils working with younger special school pupils

### **Selecting Helpers**

Students can be selected by Learning Support Teachers, nominated by Class Teachers or can volunteer.

It is important to note that helpers may have reading skills that would be considered delayed in comparison to the mainstream population, and some may even be weak in comparison to their own classroom peers. For example, a fourteen-year old helper may only have a reading age of nine years. In fact, this does not prove to be a difficulty if the helper and learner are carefully matched, with the learner having significantly weaker skills and the helper having at least enough expertise to be helpful to the learner.

When selecting 'helpers' it can be very beneficial for the helper group to include some children with advanced reading skills and/or high social status. This avoids the possibility that participation as a helper is seen as a negative stigma (the scheme is perceived as being for weak readers). A very successful way to engage weaker older readers in the scheme is to 'reframe' their difficulties. For example, while acknowledging that their own reading skills might not be perfect, it is an opportunity to value the work they have done, for example: *'You have made so much progress...are doing so well...*

*and of course, you know what it's like for younger kids when reading is tricky... so you will be really understanding...'* This puts the helper in a positive role. It can be particularly beneficial to sixth class weak readers who may be ready to 'graduate' from a learning support setting and who need to build their confidence before transfer to secondary school.

### **Matching Partners**

There is some initial work in managing the logistics of matching partners. When matching partnerships, it is important to consider both chronological and reading ages. Ideally, there should be at least a two year gap on both, and often times the gap can be considerably greater. Anecdotal evidence suggests that learners prefer their partners to be a number of years older, perhaps because this age difference legitimises the difference in reading ability. Same sex reading partners seemed to work best socially. There may also be factors of personality or social issues to be considered.

### **A Time, a Place and a Book**

Reading partners need to have access to a range of books, including fiction and non-fiction and books with high interest and low reading age. These might be available in the learner's classroom, in the school library or in a resource/ learning support room.

Partnerships should ideally meet three times per week or more. Meetings can happen during lunchtime, at designated times in the school day (such as immediately after lunch) or after school. Each meeting will need approximately 20 minutes. A satisfying block of time for partners to meet might be for one term (approximately 3 months). This time-frame allows for a relationship to build up between the partners, but does not create an unlimited commitment. The model chosen in any one school will depend on the age and maturity of participants, constraints of the time table and availability of suitable space.

## **Training of Reading Partner Helpers**

It is important that the children understand how paired reading works before they begin. Accordingly, helpers need to be trained. This can be done in a single session, delivered by a teacher in the school.

A typical training session might follow the outline below;

- Nominated helpers are invited in a group to a training session.
- They are complimented on their ability to read and praised for their assumed progress over the years.
- Students are also encouraged to reflect on what it had been like to learn to read.
- The scheme is briefly outlined and students are told very clearly that participation in the scheme involves a commitment, and their consent is sought before further training progresses.
- The three key tasks are then explained; to remember to go to appointed meeting place at the right time, to listen to a child read, to be friendly.
- The strategy of Pause, Prompt, Praise (outlined below) is explained.
- The process of using these strategies can be role played by adults.
- Helpers then have the opportunity to practice the skill with another helper.

Pause, Prompt, Praise is a simple approach suitable for use by peer tutors (see Wheldall 1995). The procedure involves the following simple steps:

- the child encounters an unfamiliar word;
- instead of stepping in immediately and giving the word, the teacher/tutor waits a few seconds for the child to work it out;
- if the child is not successful, the teacher/tutor prompts the child by suggesting he or she perhaps guess from the meaning of the passage, or attend to the initial letter, or read on to the end of the sentence, etc.;
- when the child cannot get the word after brief prompting, the teacher/tutor quickly supplies the word;
- the child is also praised for self-correcting while reading

This initial training only needs about twenty minutes. At this point the matched learners can be invited to join the training. Responsibilities for the learner include remembering meeting times, coming to the appointed place, selecting a book and keeping a record of each session (if the learner is very young, the helper may have this responsibility). The readability of the book chosen is primarily a matter for learner selection. In the event that the book proves 'too hard' during a session, helpers are advised to read it to the learner and, at the end of the session, ask the teacher/ co-ordinator to supply an 'easier' book for next time.

During the second part of the training session these learner responsibilities are described. Both partners complete their first record form together. This gives them a chance to learn each other's names, identify the place where the partnership will meet and make a note of the meeting days. There is also time for a brief trial reading partner session, closely supervised by the attending adults.

Finally, the incentive of earning a certificate can be introduced to the group. The Reading Partners Certificates can be earned by partnerships that have met successfully over a number of times during the term. Some schools like to offer a hierarchy of awards, for example:

- A certificate for partnerships meeting ten times
- A certificate for partnerships meeting twenty times
- A certificate for completion of the Reading Partners Scheme

In all the training sessions do not require more than forty minutes.

### **Monitoring the Reading Partner Scheme**

Some amount of monitoring and trouble shooting may be needed. The most common difficulty is absenteeism of one of the partners, but difficulties may also arise in relation to the selection of books at an appropriate level, the availability of suitable places to meet or personality clashes. It has been found that some ongoing feedback to helpers is helpful in sustaining commitment.

The co-ordinator (and possibly class teachers, depending on the context) needs to take on responsibilities such as remembering to encourage helpers to keep appointments, helping learners to select appropriate books and accommodating partnerships in the classrooms. The reading records, which are the primary source of evidence of attendance, need to be monitored and collected periodically. Certificates need to be awarded as needed. Whenever possible, it is helpful to integrate such a scheme into structures already in place in the school. For example, the reading partner certificates and prizes, can be included in the termly/ annual prize giving assemblies.

In some schemes, the Reading Partners' co-ordinator may bring partners to visit the local library as part of the scheme or plan a celebration/party for participants after completion of the scheme.

### **Conclusion**

Peer reading is an effective form of literacy intervention for students in many educational settings. It not only is easily established, but is cost effective. For many participants, not only are there impressive gains in literacy skills, there are also other gains, such as improved self-esteem, attendance and social skills. Dearden (1998) argues that if peer learning '*is of such value to both parties involved, then there needs to be a way of ensuring it happens*' (p257). It is hoped that this Rough Guide will encourage teachers to accept the challenge and implement such a programme in their own schools.

### **References**

Dearden, J. (1998). 'Cross Age Peer Mentoring in Action', *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 13 (4), 250 - 257.

Wheldall, K. (1995). 'Helping readers who are behind', *Educational Monitor* 6, (1) 23-5.

A version of this guidance was previously published in the Learn Journal:  
Nugent, M. (2008) A Rough Guide to Reading Partners- A cross age, peer tutoring approach. *Learn, Journal of the Irish Learning Support Association*, Vol 30, 76-82.

# Reading Partners

Your reading partner is \_\_\_\_\_

You will be meeting in \_\_\_\_\_

Your meeting times are \_\_\_\_\_

# Reading Partners

Your reading partner is \_\_\_\_\_

You will be meeting in \_\_\_\_\_

Your meeting times are \_\_\_\_\_

# Reading Partner Record Form

For Week Beginning Monday \_\_\_\_\_

Names \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

Day/ Date	Book/Page	Comment	Today was...

### Help words

good very tried lovely hard worked enjoyed funny  
boring effort excellent reading

# CERTIFICATE

## Reading Partner

Awarded to

---

In recognition of hard work,  
co-operation and reliability in the  
Reading Partner Scheme

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signed

## Guidance on the Use of Positive Declarations

Psychological research has shown that making bold positive declarations about future reading achievement can have a significant impact on both reading ability and attitude to reading (see McKay 2006).

The following is some guidance for you about how to implement this practice in your own classroom.

The expectation is that each child will make a minimum of 3 positive declarations per day about future reading achievement and the enjoyment of books/ reading. Declarations can be general or specific and can be done individually, in groups or as a whole class group.

Declarations typically begin with the phrase, *I will...* They should be about future reading achievement or enjoyment.

*I will become a good reader.*

*I will be able to read all the words in my word box.*

*I love books.*

*I will read lots of books this term.*

*Reading is fun.*

Please feel free to use any of these sample declarations, to generate your own ideas or to encourage the children to propose their own suggestions.

Typically, this kind of intervention runs for about one term. The weekly self-monitoring sheet below may be helpful to you.

### Positive Declarations

## Weekly Teacher Self-Monitoring Record Sheet

**Class** \_\_\_\_\_ **Week Beginning** \_\_\_\_\_

Day	Time of Day	Affirmations used	Individual <b>I</b> Group <b>G</b> Whole Class <b>W</b>
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Other comments/ Additional activities introduced			

**Signed** \_\_\_\_\_

Time of day: this helps you monitor that affirmations are used three times a day, spread throughout the school day

Sample affirmations: no need to write out each and every affirmation, but just note an example or two to check for variety

Individual, group or whole class: Note whether the affirmations were done collectively or not, if the affirmations are done in a mixed way, for example, some group and some whole class, note G +W etc