



Use Multiple Modalities

Reading skills are best taught through explicit and direct instruction. It can be helpful to incorporate multi-modal activities into each lesson to ensure all students have the opportunity to develop the same skills. Below are some suggestions for ways to instruct and support the development of phonemic awareness, phonics, and word study using multiple modalities.

Phonemic Awareness

Elkonin boxes are a great foundational tool for building phonemic awareness. Educators can produce a three (or more) box template to be used in a variety of ways. To begin, students should use chips or some other placeholder as they are working specifically on phonemes (sounds) and not graphemes (letters). Students can **isolate** specific phonemes within small words by pointing to specific boxes. Then, they can practice **stretching** an isolated phoneme to understand how it influences the word. Next, students can work to **blend** segmented phonemes as they read them together. This activity can be adapted to fit any phoneme combination and can be used consistently for practice and review.



Phonics

As students progress in their development and mastery of phonemic awareness, they should begin to understand the alphabetic principle, which is the idea that phonemes (sounds) are connected to graphemes (letters). During phonics development, students should be exposed to and taught specific decoding elements, such as the ability to recognize syllable types, onset and rime, and predictable word patterns (digraphs and double vowels).

Having students complete individual or group sorts to identify and apply specific patterns is one way to engage students in a hands-on activity. Furthermore, manipulative activities such as card matching or bingo are additional hands-on activities that support skill development.





Word Study

Once students are familiar with the alphabetic principle and can match phonemes to graphemes, instruction in decoding and syllabication can focus on recognizable patterns. Word study is particularly helpful for struggling older readers, and there are a variety of instructional approaches to take. Morphology (the study of words) should be a central focus of word study.

- Providing instruction in word families can help students identify a specific pattern and the sounds associated with that pattern. This skill, in turn, helps students to decode unfamiliar words that contain that same pattern. In the example below, “-dge” is the targeted pattern and each of the word contains that pattern. Once students learn the sound associated with the “-dge” pattern, they should be able to apply that knowledge to read any other word containing that pattern.

| | | |
|--------|--------|--------|
| Badge | Grudge | Bridge |
| Budget | Lodge | Dodge |

- Providing instruction in recognizing and understanding [affixes](#) is another morphological approach to word study that allows students to transfer their knowledge of known patterns to the decoding of unknown words. In word study, the more a student can connect what they know about phonics to unknown words, the better they will be able to read and comprehend.
 - For example, instruction in the prefix “**anti-**” meaning “against” should help students read and understand words such as “antidote”, “antisocial”, “antihero”, and “antiseptic” because they can isolate the prefix, determine its meaning, and then focus on the remaining unknown word parts.

HOW DOES THIS CONNECT TO USE MULTIPLE MODALITIES?

Because students learn at different rates, enter classrooms with varying levels of knowledge, and possess a variety of learning styles, it is important to provide instruction that will address each of these factors. Therefore, it is essential that educators use multiple modalities to ensure that all students have access to the curriculum and instruction. Providing instruction and practice through the multiple modalities gives students a hands-on experience to learning, which supports their internalization of key skills. Considering the importance of developing and demonstrating reading abilities, educators should use multiple modalities when providing reading instruction.