# How to incorporate review into your phonics lessons - with Jessica Farmer

Triple R Teaching Podcast #222

Hello, this is Anna Geiger, author of *Reach All Readers* and creator of the Reach All Readers website.

If you hear a saxophone in the background, that's my son practicing. I'm recording this in the summer, and I just have to take the moments when I have them!

I am very excited to start this fall series with you with episodes from classroom teachers who are going to share practical strategies for teaching literacy. This is going to be a series of about 12 episodes that are all about 10 to 20 minutes each, the perfect amount of time as you're working to get back into the school year.

I know you're going to enjoy this very first episode with Jessica Farmer of Farmer Love Phonics. This is the third time she's joined me on the podcast, and today she's going to talk about how to incorporate review into your phonics lessons. Here we go!

**Anna Geiger:**

Welcome back, Jessica!

**Jessica Farmer:**

Hi! I'm so excited to be here! I think it's my third time back on the podcast with you, so I'm super excited to be here.

**Anna Geiger:**

I'm so glad to have you! You're one of my most frequently encountered guests on the podcast *and* in person, because you and I connect a lot at conferences - usually twice a year. We're doing that again coming up as I record this in July. This is going to come out in the fall. So yeah, I get to see you a lot, and that's super fun. I love what you share.

Today I asked you to come on to talk about the importance of review, but before we do that, could you quickly introduce yourself and tell us what you're doing now?

**Jessica Farmer:**

Yeah. Hi, everybody, I am Jessica Farmer. Many of you might know me as Farmer Loves Phonics from social media. I am a former elementary classroom teacher with over a decade of experience, and I have since transitioned into the role of a professional learning facilitator. I facilitate PD for several different companies, and I've also transitioned into the role of literacy advocate, which is what I share a lot about on social media as well as sharing about early literacy skills.

I like to use my background in early literacy and my passion for effective instruction to support educators and to support families in aligning their practices with the science of reading.

I'm thrilled to be back on the podcast, so thank you, Anna, for having me again!

**Anna Geiger:**

Thank you so much for being here.

Let's talk about review. I think people know what review is, but just so we're on the same page, what is review and why is it so important?

**Jessica Farmer:**

Yeah, I want to define review. It just refers to going back over previously-learned material to help reinforce that understanding. You can review passively by just reviewing exactly what you learned, or it can be active review where you're utilizing retrieval or interleaving practice.

It's really important because pacing guides and curricula tend to make this assumption that students have retained all that prior information that they learned from year to year, month to month, week to week, even day by day. And so that time for review isn't always built in, and teachers are often wondering how can I fit this into my already tight schedule?

We know that review is essential for not only literacy, but every subject and topic that we teach. Without that review, students often are forgetting that new information.

When I speak specifically about early literacy, we know that these skills require frequent exposure and repetition to become automatic, and that automaticity is the key to building fluency. If readers are working too hard at decoding and they're having to sound out every word while they're reading, then their comprehension suffers. And, of course, comprehension is that outcome that we are looking for.

I always channel Dr. Archer when I think about explicit instruction and review. She says, “Rehearse and then retrieve it, again and again and again.”

We want to keep bringing back past skills as often as we can because they often build upon each other. It's really hard to move on to the next step if students don't have that previous one solidified. I think that's why it's so crucial for our students to have that review.

**Anna Geiger:**

And I think something that I did not appreciate as a teacher was this idea that the learning actually occurs when they're practicing remembering. Like you talked about with retrieval, it's the act of pulling it out of long-term memory that strengthens it in your long-term memory. That's why it's so important.

As a teacher, I would think that most of the learning was happening as I was sort of putting it into their brains, but them pulling it out was actually where it was getting stronger. That's why it's just so important.

**Jessica Farmer:**

Yeah, absolutely.

**Anna Geiger:**

So there are different times during literacy lessons that we might incorporate review. Could you talk about what we might do at the beginning of the lesson and then throughout?

**Jessica Farmer:**

Yeah, absolutely. You can always start with that retrieval practice at the beginning of a lesson, and it's really quick. You want to keep your review time short, five minutes and under. You can even do quick little one-minute reviews before each section of your lesson.

Let's say at the beginning you are reviewing your previous graphemes. You can go through a sound drill, pull back those previous graphemes that you taught, and have students say the phoneme. This is quick. You can use flashcards that have your graphemes on them already. You can have them on your slides and just go through them really quick.

That's what I used to do. I had a slideshow presentation and just had the one grapheme per slide and we would say, "Let's see how fast we can go!" You kind of make it a game and see if you can do it really quickly.

Of course, this is choral response, the whole class is saying the sound. That way if anyone has forgotten the sound, they're hearing everyone else in class say it. I'm not calling on one student at a time; I'm doing lots of choral response with this review.

You can also do this with your blending drill. You want to bring back words that contain previous phonics patterns that you've taught. Even if you're just teaching short i today, and we're definitely going to read a lot of words with short i, we also want to bring back the words that had short a in it as well. You can also include those review words within your decodable sentences that you're reading together.

Just think about how you can frequently bring back past skills to ensure that those are really solid for your students.

**Anna Geiger:**

Do you have specific game ideas that are fun for students and effective?

**Jessica Farmer:**

Yeah, I think games are such a great way to review, and it does keep it really engaging, especially for our youngest learners. I think structured literacy often gets called boring and phonics is deemed boring because it's so structured and follows the same sequence. By using games, you really get kids involved and engaged.

Many people like to play Bingo, and Bingo is a great game that you can really apply to any subject. You can use your high frequency words, you can use your heart words, you can use decodable words and include those review words of past concepts within your Bingo boards.

You can even have students create the Bingo boards. You can have a blank template and put a list of words on the board. Tell them, "You create your Bingo board," and then play Bingo. That's great for small group too because then you can differentiate it for each group that you're working with.

I really love Tic-Tac-Toe. That's an easy game to utilize with phonics skills.

My students always loved I Have, Who Has, and that's a great one for whole class participation. If you've never played I Have, Who Has, you will have cards, and you'll give one to each student. At the top it will say, "I have..."

Let's say you're playing it with decodable words. It will be, "I have cat," so they've got to read the word cat. "Who has bat?" Maybe you're only reviewing short a words or you've got a mix of different words that you want students reading, maybe it's high frequency words, or even sentences. You can use it with math as well.

I've even found a book that has tons of I Have, Who Has games in it so that you don't have to recreate. I think Scholastic or someone has a book of all tons of I Have, Who Has.

Roll and Read is another good one. There are tons of Roll and Read that you can find online. If you just search Roll and Read, you can find them. UFLI has them for free. It's essentially a fluency grid, and all of your different decodable words are on there. Students can work in partners or alone. Roll and Read is great.

There's Spin and Write, where you have students using a paperclip where they're going to put it on the little circle that has different words, depending on what it is. It could be rhyming words. It can be just your decodable words. Spin, read it, write it down.

Then even sorting is good. Sorting isn't a game necessarily, but if you tell students it's a game, they think it's a game. There's sorting by pattern, sorting by vowel sound, sorting by spelling rule. I love different types of word sorts. It can be a closed sort where you're telling them exactly how to sort, or it can be an open sort, where they're kind of figuring out how they want to sort the words, and then they need to tell you how they sorted the words.

Those are just some really quick, fun games, and they don't require a ton of prep. A lot of these games you can find online for free if you just do a quick little search.

**Anna Geiger:**

Yeah, just as a note for teachers, I know sometimes teachers are teaching a small group and they do need to have other kids working at centers. I know we try not to do too much of that every day because we want as much time with the students as possible, but there usually are moments where that's required.

I think centers are a great way to do this, but I think a good tip for teachers is to have them do something that was a few skills ago so they're not practicing mistakes with new information, and we don't have to feel like this is kind of a waste of time because we already taught this. We're actually strengthening their memory of those patterns.

Those activities you mentioned are great. Anything with a die, I think, is great. Although it can help to have a little box with felt on the bottom for them to roll the die, because they tend to end up under the table and they tend to make a lot of noise. But I find that when you add a die, kids are a little more excited to participate.

**Jessica Farmer:**

You know what I love? The Dollar Tree has the big die that are soft, and so when they roll those, they don't make a lot of noise, and they kind of like the big ones. I like that.

I've also seen where you put it inside of a little Tupperware container so that they just shake it inside the container, and then it's not flying all over the classroom. Then you can just flip it over and whatever it's on inside your little container, that's your number.

**Anna Geiger:**

So it stays in there?

**Jessica Farmer:**

Yeah, you keep it inside the container.

**Anna Geiger:**

Ah, so it's a clear box.

**Jessica Farmer:**

Yes, any clear box, you can probably find them at the Dollar Store or Walmart or somewhere. You shake it inside the container, that way they're not throwing the dye across the classroom. Because we know that with little ones, if you give them something to roll, it's going to fly across the classroom. Inevitably someone will chuck it across and you don't want that. So yeah, I suggest those big ones that are soft or put it inside a little container.

**Anna Geiger:**

All right.

Well, thank you. Today we talked about the importance of review and how you can have a routine review at the beginning of your phonics lesson, but then you can incorporate these other activities throughout. If you're doing new material, you can add in a few review items, or you can have something like these full games of review at centers. There are lots of options.

Can you tell us where to find you and where to learn more from you?

**Jessica Farmer:**

Yeah, you can find me as Farmer Loves Phonics on all the social media platforms. I am on Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Tik Tok, and I have a website where you can visit me at farmerlovesphonics.com.

I have more blog posts coming. I haven't been on top of blogging lately because I've been prepping for Science of Reading Mini Con in July.

And I'm always doing top 10 tips webinars with the ladies from Sounder & Friends. We have those several times per year if you're ever looking for a virtual webinar.

I'm busy and I have lots to share, so come find me.

I'm also usually known as the freebie queen. I share a lot of freebies, and this summer I've been busy making a lot of free resources. I know it's the fall now when everyone's listening, but scroll back on my page and you can find past freebies.

A lot of my freebies are review-based. I just posted one, a little short vowel chant and a little long vowel chant that is a great review at the beginning of your small group lesson. Students are just saying the letter name, sound, and keyword. I have it in that order for a reason. You want to eventually remove that scaffold of the keyword and brain, science says pulling something from the end is easier than trying to remove something from the middle. I don't put the keyword in the middle like some programs do, and I actually learned that through LETRS for early childhood.

Yeah, so grab those freebies!

**Anna Geiger:**

Thank you so much, Jessica.

**Jessica Farmer:**

You're welcome!

**Anna Geiger:**

You can find the show notes for today's episode at reachallreaders.com/episode222. Talk to you next time!

**Closing:**

That's all for this episode of Triple R Teaching. For more educational resources, visit Anna at her home base, reachallreaders.com, and join our teaching community. We look forward to helping you reflect, refine, and recharge on the next episode of Triple R Teaching.