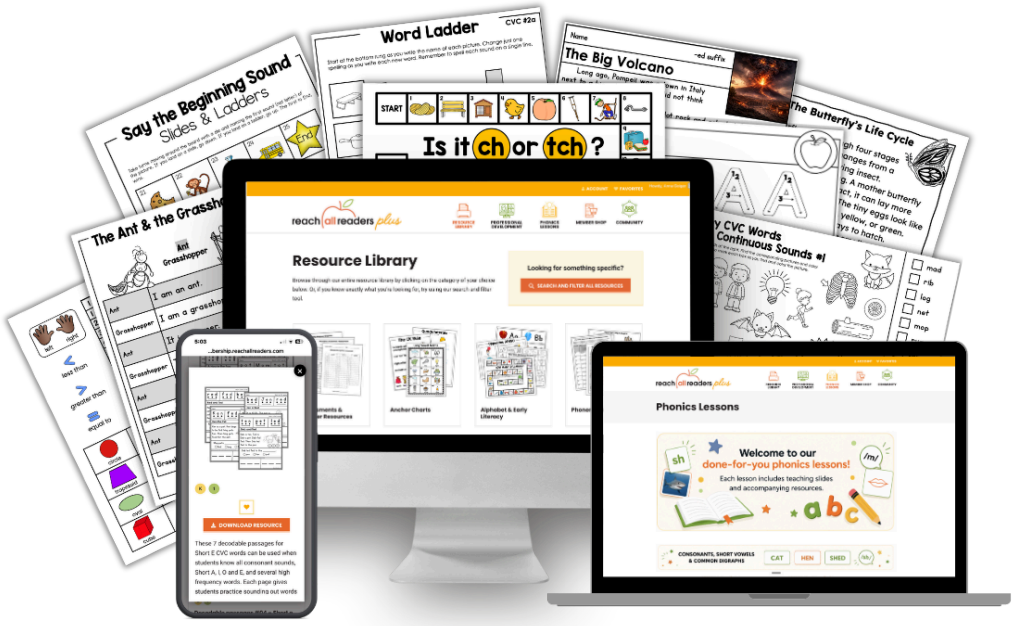
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Phonics Fast Facts

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Phonics
Fast Facts

› INTRODUCTION

Phonics is a method of instruction that teaches students the relationships between letters and sounds and how to use those relationships to read and spell words.

The letter or letters are called **graphemes**. The sounds are called **phonemes**.

For example, many different graphemes can be used to spell the phoneme /ā/. Graphemes for this phoneme include *a* (bacon), *a-e* (cake), *ai* (sail), *ay* (pay), *ey* (they), *ea* (break), *ei* (veil), and *eigh* (weigh).

› WHY TEACH PHONICS?

While comprehension is the goal of reading, phonics instruction come first. Here's how phonics and comprehension are related:

As students receive phonemic awareness and phonics instruction, they are also taught to decode words. The more they decode words, the sooner they begin to **orthographically map** words (recognize them by sight without needing to sound out or guess). The more words student have mapped, the more their fluency improves. Finally, reading fluency improves comprehension.

› RESEARCH SUMMARY

- Students are more successful at reading when beginning reading instruction has a code (phonics) emphasis.
- It may be best to teach letter names and sounds at the same time.
- Phonics instruction should be systematic and explicit.
- Students need phonemic awareness to make sense of phonics.
- Good phonics instruction leads to less reliance on decoding because students will orthographically map words and recognize them by sight.
- When struggling readers have phonics weaknesses, they should receive intense intervention.
- Phonics is not a full reading program.

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› IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION

- Teach phonics using a solid scope and sequence which orders skills from simple to more complex. (Research does not give us a specific scope and sequence.)
- Directly teach alphabet recognition and sound-symbol relationships.
- Model and practice blending often. Simply telling students to "sound it out" is not teaching them *how* to blend.
- Connect high frequency word instruction to phonics instruction whenever possible. For example, teach *can* and *big* when teaching CVC words rather than teach them as whole words to be memorized.
- Give students practice applying their phonics knowledge by having them read decodable text featuring the new sound-spelling.
- Include instruction in multi-syllable word reading using flexible syllable division strategies.
- Teach spelling alongside early phonics instruction.

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