INSTRUCTIONAL TEACHING GUIDE

Introduction and Key Underpinnings

Decodable Readers Australia

INTRODUCTION

Decodable Readers Australia are an Australian based company supporting teachers, across the globe, to explicitly teach decoding and encoding skills to beginner readers and spellers based on current research. When we look at an evidence-based approach to teaching of reading, we can turn to the large body of research that reading experts, including cognitive scientists, have conducted on how the brain best learns to read. This body of knowledge, decades in the making, referred to as the Science of Reading, has helped debunk other methods of reading instruction that were based on tradition and observation, not scientific evidence. The great news is that there are so many amazing educators, researchers and organisations providing collective intelligence on the Science of Reading, and we have made reference to some of these great resources and wealth of knowledge throughout our teaching guides, with the vision that an educator's 'silver bullet' is knowledge. With 'knowledge' comes the confidence to teach and respond to student needs. The Science of Reading is an evolving body of knowledge, and it is important that we see this knowledge as a journey to immerse ourselves with. As research expands, we need to evolve our practises and resources.

Firstly, we need to see what is currently happening in our schools and why things need to change, and how. Unfortunately, 3 false theories still persist in our education system today (and we need them gone!)

✗ Reading is as natural as speaking, therefore immersing children in print and literature will teach all children to learn.

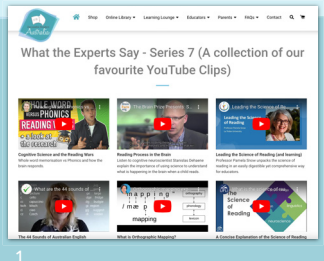
Truth: Although some children can put together the pieces of the puzzle with a smattering of phonics and exposure to books, the majority of students require the explicit teaching of reading through a systematic approach.

✗ Teaching children to look at pictures, skip over words, guess words based on context will develop the strategies necessary for reading.

Truth: Children need the skills to decode the alphabetic principle, the pictures will not help them do this. It will just make them more reliant on guessing the words.

✗ There are hundreds of ways to teach reading therefore no single way will work for all children.

Truth: As cognitive neuroscientist Stanislas Dehaene states, "When it comes to reading, all[children] have roughly the same brain that imposes the same constraints and the same learning sequence" (2009).



Check out our Learning Lounge, Series 7, 'What the Experts Say' for a series of free videos posted by reputable organisations and reading experts. We will continue to add videos to this series.
https://www.decodablereadersaustralia.com.au/pages/sor-learning-lounge-series-7

THEORETICAL MODELS

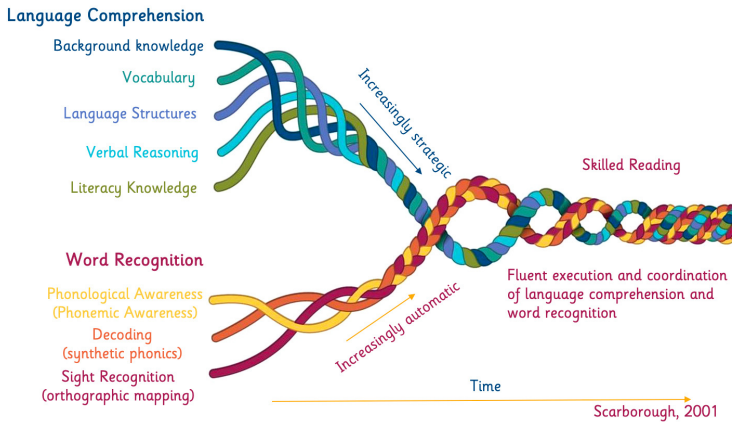
Research has brought to light the many complex skills that work together in proficient reading. One of the first theoretical models released, that helps us begin to understand the numerous skills used for reading, was the Simple View of Reading (SVR) by Gough & Tunmer, 1986 (Gough 1990, Hoover&Tunmer, 2022)

SIMPLE VIEW OF READING (SVR)
(GOUGH & TUNMER, 1986)

D	x	LC	=	RC
Decoding		Linguistic Comprehension		Reading Comprehension
This is referred to as word recognition, the ability to recognise printed words accurately and quickly to efficiently gain access to the appropriate word meanings.		This is the ability to extract and construct literal and inferred meaning from linguistic discourse represented in speech.		This is the combined ability to extract and construct literal and inferred meaning from linguistic discourse represented in print.

Learn more about the Simple View of Reading and how it has evolved, using the link below. Hoover, 2023. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11145-023-10471-x

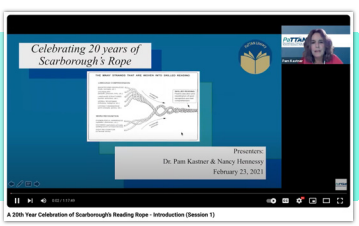
Another more well known theoretical model, that also helps educators understand the different mechanisms of reading, is the Reading Rope, Scarborough, 2001.



The rope analogy unravels the critical skills of word decoding/recognition and language comprehension, identifying each strand as a crucial skill that, over time, intertwines with other strands, and forms skilled reading.

Our other instructional guides will unpack the word recognition strands further, and the relationship to systematic synthetic phonics.

Here's a great YouTube that explains the Reading Rope with more explanation, from PaTTAN
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhQvybbDNkE



EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION

The evidence is clear! Research indicates that ALL students learn best when teachers adopt an integrated approach to reading that systematically and explicitly teaches:

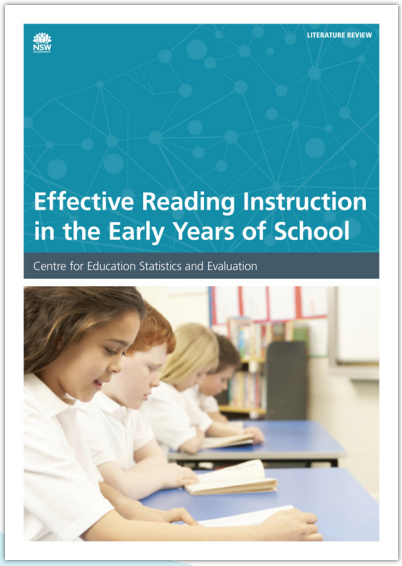
- Phonemic Awareness
- Phonics
- Fluency
- Vocabulary
- Comprehension

Table 1 - The five elements of effective reading instruction

Phonemic awareness	In an alphabetic writing system, letters represent sounds. Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear the sounds in spoken words and understand that words are made up of sequences of sounds. Phonemic awareness teaches readers to map speech to print and understand that the letters in words are systematically represented by sounds.
Phonics	Phonics relies on phonemic awareness. The reader must understand that words are made up from phonemes or units of sound. Phonics instruction connects these phonemes with written letters so that the reader can transfer knowledge of sounds to the printed word. Phonics teaches students to be able to identify the phonemes that make up each word, which helps children to learn to read and spell. The goal of phonics instruction is to help readers quickly determine the sounds in unfamiliar written words. When readers encounter new words in texts they use the elements of phonics to decode and understand.
Fluency	Fluency is the ability to read quickly and naturally with accuracy and expression. Fluency contains the skill of automaticity which allows a reader to recognise words quickly. For students, achieving automaticity in reading is essential to becoming effective readers. When reading skills have developed to a point of automaticity students no longer need to use their working memory to decode, and they can use that memory for comprehension.
Vocabulary	Vocabulary plays an important role in word recognition. Beginning readers use knowledge of words from speech to recognise words that they encounter in print. When children 'sound out' a word, their brain connects the pronunciation of a sequence of sounds to a word in their vocabulary. If they find a match between the word on the page and a word in they have learned through listening and speaking, and it makes sense to them, they will keep reading. If a match is not created, because the word they are reading is not found in their vocabulary, then comprehension is interrupted. This will be the case even if they are able to produce the correct pronunciation through the decoding process. Vocabulary is therefore an important element for effective reading instruction.
Comprehension	Comprehension is the understanding and interpretation of what is read. To be able to accurately understand written material, children need to be able to first decode what they read and then make connections between what they read and what they already know. Comprehension requires having a sufficient vocabulary.

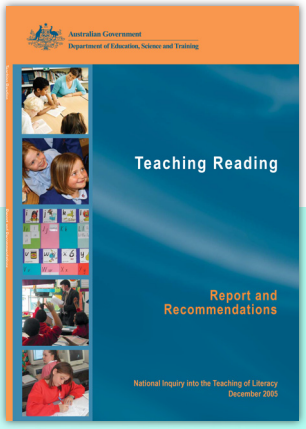
Taken from Effective Reading Instruction in the Early Years of School - See full report below

https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/education-data-and-research/cese/publications/literature-reviews/effective-reading-instruction-in-the-early-years-of-school



EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION

Back in 2005, Australia did a National Inquiry into the teaching of Literacy. The Inquiry found strong evidence that a 'whole-language approach' to the teaching of reading on its own is not in the best interests of children, particularly those experiencing reading difficulties. Moreover, where there is unsystematic or no phonics instruction, children's literacy progress is significantly impeded, inhibiting their initial and subsequent growth in reading accuracy, fluency, writing, spelling and comprehension.



This is Australia's report of the Inquiry's findings of best practise in effective approaches to literacy teaching and learning, both at the classroom level and in the training of teachers.
https://research.acer.edu.au/tll_misc/5/

Throughout our Teaching Guides you will see further research and details underpinning key skills and how to best teach explicitly and systematically.

Explicit Instruction:

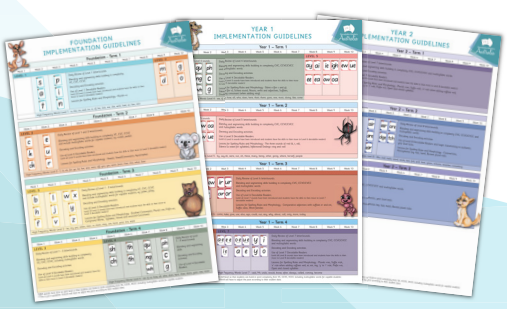
When introducing new concepts and skills, the teacher needs to be clear and direct when presenting this information. The content or skills presented need to be thoroughly explained and shown how it relates to previously taught skills or knowledge. Lots of worked examples should be presented in this time and students need guidance through the learning process (I Do, We Do, You Do).

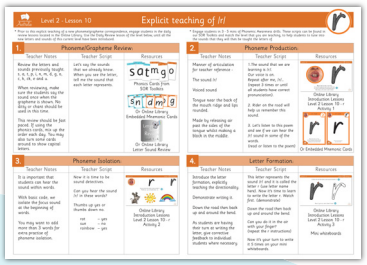
Systematic Approach:

When introducing these concepts and skills, teachers need to break them down into small manageable amounts of information, from simple to complex. Each skill needs to build on from the other, and presented in a highly structured manner, including modelling of the skills and joint construction/guided practise.

Explicit instruction expert, Dr. Anita Archer, provides the rationale and overview of explicit instruction and its benefit to students in this YouTube clip.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-qNpFtcynI

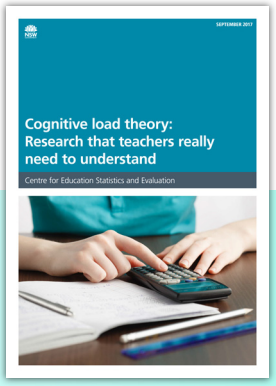
When exploring our Teaching Guides, you will see that Decodable Readers Australia has designed their teaching resources in a systematic approach with lessons using explicit instruction. The following documents can be accessed in the proceeding teaching guides with further explanation.





EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION

Cognitive Load Theory has been described by experts as 'the single most important thing for teachers to know'. It is a theory of how human brains learn and store knowledge and is grounded in a robust evidence base, providing support for explicit models of instruction. This research report (below) explains how the human brain can only process a small amount of new information at once (in working memory), but can process very large amounts of stored information (from long term memory). If a student's working memory is overloaded, there is a risk that they will not understand the content being taught and that their learning will be slow and/or ineffective. Find out what this means for more effective teaching practice.

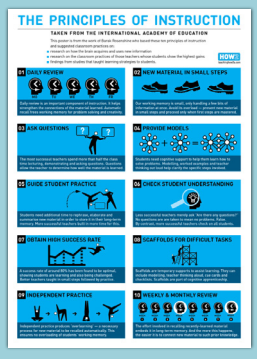


Read all about this important aspect of cognitive science in this report released by the Centre of Education Statistics and Evaluation

https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/education-data-and-research/cese/publications/literature-reviews/cognitive-load-theory

Another very important report that assists teachers with their effective instructional approaches comes from Barak Rosenshine. He presents 10 research-based principles of instruction, along with suggestions for classroom practise.

1. Begin a lesson with a short review of previous learning (daily review).
2. Present new material in small steps with student practice after each step.
3. Ask a large number of questions and check the responses of all students.
4. Provide models.
5. Guide student practice.
6. Check for student understanding.
7. Obtain a high success rate.
8. Provide scaffolds for difficult tasks.
9. Require and monitor independent practice.
10. Engage students in weekly and monthly review.

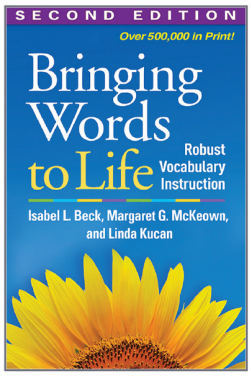


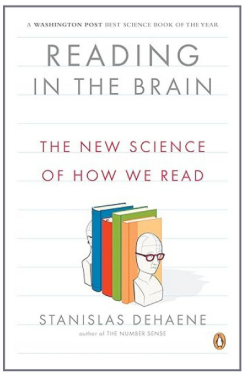
Tom Sherrington explores Barak Rosenshine's research-based principles. He provides many examples in this blog with all of the key links. It is a clear and comprehensive guide to evidence informed teaching.

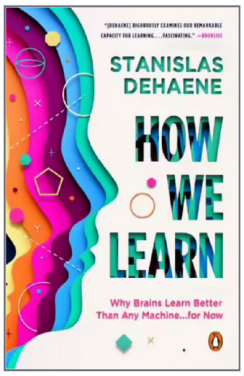
https://teacherhead.com/2018/06/10/exploring-barak-rosenshines-seminal-principles-of-instruction-why-it-is-the-must-read-for-all-teachers/

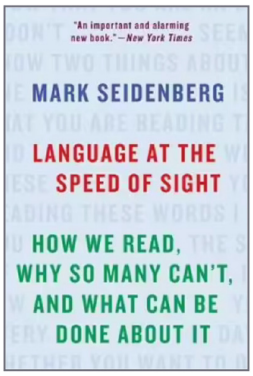
CONTINUE YOUR SOR JOURNEY!

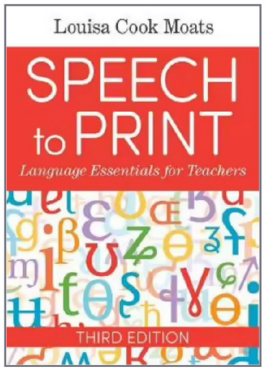
The best investment you can make is in 'knowledge'. Below are some great books and podcasts that our team recommend, to continue your journey into the Science of Reading and the Science of Learning.

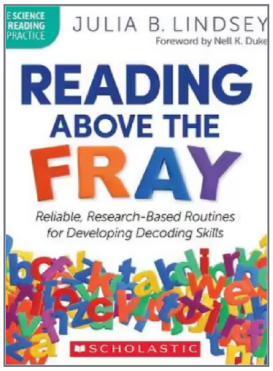


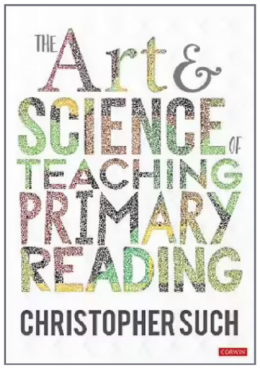


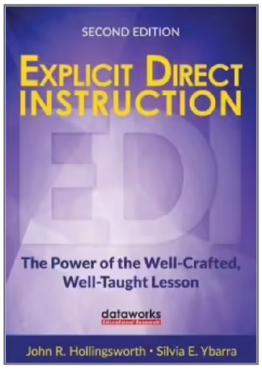


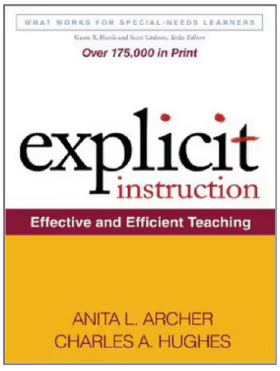


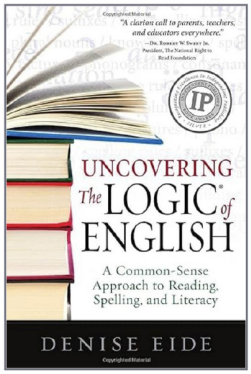


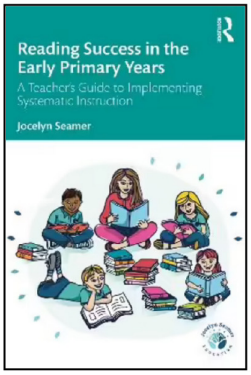


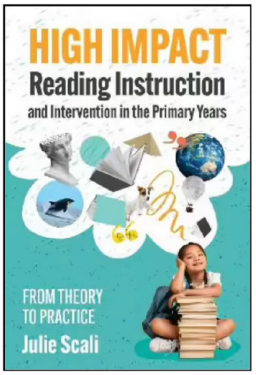


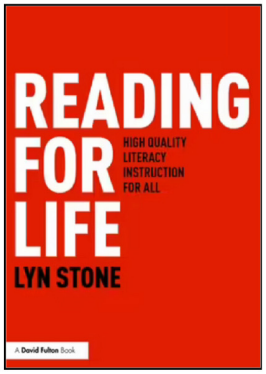


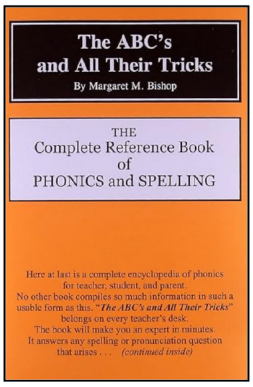




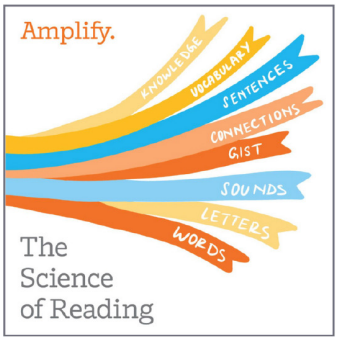








Podcasts:



OUR COMMITMENT

Here at Decodable Readers Australia, we are committed to keeping our finger on the pulse and informing our community when new information or research becomes available. We also review our resources and adjust accordingly if required. Here are 2 fairly new reports we hope you get a chance to read over.

GRATTAN Institute:
The Reading Guaranteed Report

In the typical Australian school classroom of 24 students, eight can't read well. Australia is failing these children. And it's a preventable tragedy – the reason most of those students can't read well enough is that we aren't teaching them well enough.
https://grattan.edu.au/report/reading-guarantee/

Effective Teaching of Reading by QLD Government

The Queensland Department of Education is committed to implementing the Australian Curriculum with an approach to the teaching of reading that is inclusive, evidence-informed, and promotes equitable outcomes for every learner.
https://education.qld.gov.au/curriculums/Documents/literature-review.pdf

"Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better."
- Maya Angelou