

Ease Into Phonics

Tips for Success:

- ◇ **Keep it happy!**
Remember that children who feel criticized, nervous or fearful cannot learn well.
- ◇ **Trust in easy, accurate rehearsal**--not struggle--to build skill.
- ◇ Start at a point of success, and try to move ahead in such a way that your student stays about 85% successful in rehearsal. In other words, you are aiming for better than eight out of 10 correct responses if at all possible.

If your student is struggling, you can always

- ◇ move back to an easier game
- ◇ pull out any troublesome sounds for extra play
- ◇ practice with fewer letter-sounds at a time
- ◇ always do an easier warm-up before playing with the current challenge
- ◇ move ahead more gradually--allowing your student plenty of time for 'over-learning' of a challenge he or she has mastered, before taking the next small step ahead.

Best Results With Introductions:

- ◆ Pronounce the sounds correctly!
 - ◇ You don't want to add voice to whispered sounds.
 - ◇ You don't want to add more vowel than necessary to 'b,' 'd,' or 'g.'
- ◇ These mistakes can confuse your student! See the *Teacher's Guide to Pronouncing the Sounds*, in the Walls (Phonics) section of The Reading Treehouse.
- ◇ Introduce just 2 or 3 new letter-sounds at a time. Then start practicing 'Learn the Letter-Sounds,' step 3, with those new ones. Once your student is secure in naming them, begin to play with them in words (step 4). Meanwhile, you can introduce another 2 or 3 letter-sounds, until you have introduced all of the letter-sounds in your student's current Phase.
- ◇ You can give a lot of preliminary practice by repeating the sound as your student is drawing a picture on the letter-sound page (drawing is an option for step 1 or step 2), or looking for it (Matching, step 3a). HOW IT WORKS: The student hears the sound over and over again while the attention is directed to the shape of the letter. The sound and the look of the letter begin to link-up in your student's mind.
- ◇ Re-read the growing Letter-Sound book to your student often.



Successful Blending:

- ◇ Before using Ease Into Phonics, make sure your student can blend compound words, blend syllables into words, blend a first sound plus a word ending, and blend the easiest individual sounds into words. See *Phonemic Awareness Games to Play-- Blend Sounds Together*, in the Floor (PA) section of The Reading Treehouse.
- ◇ Begin with the easiest words, those marked with an *asterisk. (All words in Phase 1 are easy.)
- ◇ Move a little more rapidly thru the word at first: 'f-f-f-a-a-a-n-n-n.' A slower pace sounds less like the word your student is used to hearing: 'f-f-f-f-f-f-f-f-f-a-a-a-a-a-a-n-n-n-n-n-n-n-n-n-n-n.'
- ◇ Keep your voice joined thru the word at first: 'f-f-f-f-a-a-a-a-n-n-n-n.' Separated sounds ('f-f-f-f, a-a-a-a, n-n-n-n') are more advanced.

Successful Naming:

- ◇ Make sure that the flashcards in your student's 'big deck,' the ones used in Rapid-Accurate Naming drills, are those he or she knows with confidence.
- ◇ Mix up the flashcards between trials, then lay them out again in left-to-right, top-to-bottom order (the order in which we read).
- ◆ Before your student names the flashcards, give extra warm-up practice on any troublesome sounds.
 - ◇ Easiest: Matching. Say, 'Hmm, where is that shhh this time?' as you hold up the matching sound.
 - ◇ More difficult: You can ask, 'Where is that shhhh' without holding up a sample, so that your student has to find it by memory.
 - ◇ Ready to go: You can point to the sounds you've just rehearsed and give your student one more time to name them, before naming the whole big deck that is laid out.
- ◇ If your student habitually stumbles or hesitates on certain letter-sounds, pull them out of the deck and rehearse them separately. Work with Matching, Finding and/or Naming (steps 3a, 3b and/or 3c) until your student names them easily. When your student is sure of them, then you can put them back into the deck.

Successful Early Spelling:

- ◇ It's easiest for your student if you work with just one word at a time. Let your student blend that word from its individual sounds (step 4a); then point to the letter-sounds of that same word as you say them in order (step 4b); then finally copy the letter-sounds as you say them again (step 4c).
- ◇ If copying is too cumbersome, you can give your student a small set of flashcards, instead of writing a small set of sounds at the top of a piece of paper. Then, instead of copying the letters in order, your student can arrange the flashcards.

