**Standard 3:** Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

**K** Students know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.
- a. Demonstrate basic knowledge of one-to-one letter-sound correspondences by producing the primary sound or many of the most frequent sounds for each consonant.
- b. Associate the long and short sounds with common spellings (graphemes) for the five major vowels.
- c. Read common high-frequency words by sight (e.g., the, of, to, you, she, my, is, are, do, does).
- d. Distinguish between similarly spelled words by identifying the sounds of the letters that differ.

**1** Students know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.
- a. Know the spelling-sound correspondences for common consonant digraphs.
- b. Decode regularly spelled one-syllable words.
- c. Know final -e and common vowel team conventions for representing long vowel sounds.
- d. Use knowledge that every syllable must have a vowel sound to determine the number of syllables in a printed word.
- e. Decode two-syllable words following basic patterns by breaking the words into syllables.
- f. Read words with inflectional endings.
- g. Recognize and read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words.

**2** Students know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.
- a. Distinguish long and short vowels when reading regularly spelled one-syllable words.
- b. Know spelling-sound correspondences for additional common vowel teams.
- c. Decode regularly spelled two-syllable words with long vowels.
- d. Decode words with common prefixes and suffixes.
- e. Identify words with inconsistent but common spelling-sound correspondences.
- f. Recognize and read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words.
Grades K–2 Common Core Reading Foundational Skills Standard 3

What the **Student** Does

**K Gist:** Students know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

They consider:

- Do I know the basic consonants? And many of the most frequent sounds for each consonant?
- Do I know the five major vowels and their sounds? Do I know the common spellings of the short vowel sounds? Do I know the common spellings of the long vowel sounds?
- Can I read common high-frequency words accurately and quickly without sounding them out?
- Can I identify the sounds of the letters that are different in words that are similarly spelled? Can I identify the differences between words that look almost alike? Can I read them?
- Do I use what I know about letter-sound relationships when I read on my own?
- Do I use phonics together with what makes sense and sounds right?
- Do I look all the way through words to the end to make sure that more than just the beginning sounds and letters match?

**1 Gist:** Students know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

They consider:

- Do I know the letter-sound relationships for common consonant digraphs?
- Can I decode regularly spelled one-syllable words?
- Do I know final -e and common vowel team conventions for representing long vowel sounds?
- Do I know that every syllable must have a vowel and use that to help me count the number of syllables in a printed word?
- Can I figure out two-syllable words by breaking the words into syllables?
- Can I read words with inflectional endings?
- Can I read irregularly spelled words that are at my grade level?
- Do I use what I know about letter-sound relationships when I read on my own?
- Do I use phonics together with what makes sense and sounds right?
- Do I look all the way through words to the end to make sure that more than just the beginning sounds and letters match?

**1 Gist:** Students know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

They consider:

- Do I know the difference between long and short vowels when reading regularly spelled one-syllable words?
- Do I know letter-sound correspondences of common vowel teams?
- Can I decode words with common prefixes and suffixes?
- Can I identify words with inconsistent but common letter-sound correspondences?
- Can I read irregularly spelled words at my grade level?
- Do I use what I know about letter-sound relationships when I read on my own?
- Do I use phonics together with what makes sense and sounds right?
- Do I look all the way through words to the end to make sure that more than just the beginning sounds and letters match?
Grades K–2 Common Core Reading Foundational Skills Standard 3

What the Teacher Does

Considering the expansive nature of this standard—that is, it addresses all of the phonetic elements students need to know in K–2 classrooms—we provide some broad instructional principles and practices that apply to all of these phonetic elements, rather than addressing each element individually.

To help students know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words:

- Provide systematic, explicit phonics instruction from a research-based resource (consider work by Wiley Blevins and Marilyn Jager Adams). Along with the resource, which should provide a scope and sequence for learning the letters and the sounds they make, give students voluminous opportunities to practice their developing skills with fiction and nonfiction books, rhymes, songs, and so on. One approach without the other is insufficient and simply does not work; the meaningful, engaging texts motivate students to do the hard work of cracking the code of the English language and, more to the point, give them the forum for applying their knowledge to texts.

- Make the point to students that understanding phonics will help them read all their favorite books on their own. See it through this comprehension lens too, so that you gear your phonics instruction toward an emphasis on automatic word recognition. Why? Brain research has proven that we have a limited amount of capacity in our working memory, and so if we use it for one thing, it’s not available for another. When students can’t read words automatically and have to spend loads of time working on identifying words, they’re using their brain capacity on letter sounds and don’t have it available to make sense of the author’s message. This is why it’s critical that, early on, students learn a large bank of sight words—that is, words they can recognize automatically. (Sight words are discussed in more depth in Foundational Skills Standard 4, fluency.)

- When using authentic texts to introduce a particular phonics element, teach from the whole to the parts. That is, begin a phonics lesson by appreciating the whole book and then move to the sentence, then from the sentence to the word, and then from the word to letters and letter combinations. Doing so is far more effective than introducing and practicing skills with workbooks or worksheets. Just as it’s easier to fill in puzzle pieces after you’ve seen the entire picture on the cover of the box, it’s easier for students to work with letters when they know their place in the meaningful whole.

- To teach letter-sound relationships, conduct lots of letter and sound searches. Young children love the game-like quality of such activities, and they are “whole to part.” That is, students begin with a whole text and then identify the specific letters or sounds on which to focus. (For help with how to do letter-sound searches, see the online resources at www.core.com/therecommoncorecompanion.) Teaching with this approach does not preclude teaching phonics systematically; it’s just a great way to augment such teaching.

- Recognize the power of knowing the 37 dependable rimes in helping students read accurately and automatically. (In a single-syllable word, the onset is the initial consonant or consonant blend before the vowel, and the rime is the vowel and any consonants that follow. For example, in the word flop, /fl/ is the onset and /op/ is the rime.) (For this list of 37 rimes, see the online resources at www.core.com/therecommoncorecompanion.) Helping students become familiar with spelling patterns in words enables them to move beyond seeing isolated words to seeing chunks of letters that make specific sounds.

- Show students how to use phonics together with semantics (meaning) and syntax (grammar) to figure out words they don’t know. Relying on just one cueing system, such as letter-sound relationships, deprives students of the natural clues they would get by considering the message the text is conveying or how the unknown word is used in the sentence. However, it’s equally problematic to rely too heavily on semantics and have students guess at a word using only its initial sound. All three cueing systems—letter-sound relationships, semantics, and syntax—are important.

- Make the cloze procedure a standard practice in your classroom. (For information on how to do the cloze procedure, see the online resources at www.core.com/therecommoncorecompanion.)

- Leverage phonics skills with writing. One of the most powerful ways to teach and have students practice connecting sounds to letters and letter combinations is through writing. When students write, they’re using and consolidating the very same sound and letter combinations you’re teaching in reading. A writing center
stocked with paper and colored markers can be the hub of short, student-generated books; as a class, write fun phonics-laced books (e.g., “That cat sleeps in the sun”; “That cat isn’t thin but he sure isn’t fat”).

- In addition to your standardized method of assessing students’ knowledge of letter sounds, examine students’ writing for what they know and need to learn.

- Trust that students can, in fact, read unfamiliar words without knowing all the letters. The trick, of course, is that the word is embedded in a meaningful context. When it is, students can use the meaning of the sentence or text as a whole and their knowledge of English syntax to figure out the word. When they have daily opportunities to read just-right texts, they eventually learn the sounds that correspond with different letters and spelling patterns.

- Analyze words for their roots and affixes. This not only helps students figure out the meanings of words, but it also helps them identify words. Use an online search engine to search “word roots and affixes games for kids” to find helpful lists and fun games to play with students.

To help your English language learners, try this:

- Children learning English need explicit instruction in letters and the sounds they make when combined; thus, these students benefit from a comprehensive phonics resource. However, they also need exposure to many books with large numbers of sight words to put the phonics in context. Have them illustrate and write a simple story that uses the letter/sound combinations you are working on.

- In small groups made up of only English language learners, provide “play” time with letter cards, word cards, and pocket charts. Students can create words and work in pairs or teams to sound them out together. You can use onset and rime lists, root words and common prefixes, and suffixes and words from patterned texts that students are familiar with. Working in this way with groups composed exclusively of English language learners gives students supportive “risk-free” group time to play with the language and sounds.

**Developmental Debrief:**

Young readers and writers need to see how what they’re learning fits into the larger picture. For K–2 students, this makes it particularly important that you work from the whole to the part. Shared reading, in which students read along with and understand a text, is the perfect setting for emphasizing the individual letter sounds you want students to learn.
Academic Vocabulary: Key Words and Phrases

Apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words: It's not enough for students simply to be exposed to phonetic skills and strategies in whole-class lessons; they also need to have daily opportunities to read and write on their own so they can try out these skills and strategies.

Common prefixes and suffixes: Prefixes are meaningful units of letters that come before a root word, and suffixes are meaningful units that come after a root word. The most common prefixes are dis-, re-, un-, and in- (im-, il-, ir-), all of which mean “not.” The most common suffixes, which include inflectional endings, are -s and -es, -ed, -ing, and -ly. (Others that come up a lot are -less, -able, and -tion.) Common prefixes and suffixes show up frequently in elementary-age texts.

Consonant digraphs: These are two or more consonants representing a single sound, such as kn and ck. They are different from consonant blends because in blends all of the two or three consonant sounds are heard (e.g., dr and str). Both consonant digraphs and blends can come at the beginnings or ends of words.

Decoding: This refers to applying knowledge of letter-sound relationships to a set of letters, thus making it into a meaningful word. Decoding is the opposite of encoding, which involves changing spoken words into print.

Final -e convention: This refers to how the vowel in CVCe (consonant-vowel-consonant-silent e) words is given a long sound by the silent e. For example, the word rob is changed to robe and tap to tape. This is often referred to as a split digraph, where two vowels that make one sound are split by a consonant, such as a-e in take and i-e in bite.

Grade-level phonics: This refers to phonics instruction that is appropriate for students at a particular age and grade level, and from which they are likely to benefit. For example, it would be unwise and inappropriate to try to teach diphthongs to kindergarten students. (Consonant and vowel sounds would be more appropriate.) Likewise, in second grade it makes little sense to spend instructional time on consonant sounds, since most students have advanced far beyond that point.

Graphemes: These are letters (or a single letter) that represent or spell a sound in a word. The concept of graphemes applies to written language, whereas the concept of phonemes (the smallest meaningful units of sound) applies to spoken language. The two together are sometimes referred to as the grapheme-phoneme relationship (or letter-sound) relationship.

High-frequency words: These are often referred to as sight words because many do not sound like what their spelling suggests (e.g., does and our), and therefore readers must recognize them accurately and automatically on sight. It is crucial for students to recognize an ever-growing bank of sight words instantaneously, since such words make up a high percentage (as much as 50%) of the words school-age students read in and out of school. Instant recall of these words allows students to attend to the messages, as well as other more challenging words, in the texts they read. Two lists of high-frequency words to which we often refer are the Dolch list of 220 words and the Fry list of 600. As students progress through the grades, they will need to commit thousands more words to sight.

Inflectional endings: These are added to the end of a root word to change its meaning (i.e., -s, -es, -ed, -ing).

Irregularly spelled words: These are words that do not follow regular spelling patterns, such as been and come, and as such cannot be easily sounded out.

Phonics: This method of teaching reading relies on matching the sounds that letters and letter combinations make with words in print.

Regularly spelled words: These are words that follow regular spelling patterns, such as team and bake.

Vowel team conventions for representing long vowel sounds: This occurs when two vowels together make the same long vowel sound almost all of the time, such as -oa, -ai, -ee, and -ea. The ditty “When two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking” is one that students learn early on and can be relied on much of the time. That said, frustration can set in when students happen upon words that don’t follow the convention, like ready, said, and chief.

Word analysis skills: These skills involve breaking a word down into its smaller parts—its root, prefixes, and suffixes—so it can be read and understood. This is different from phonics, which relies on matching sounds to letters and letter combinations.
Planning Page: Foundational Skills Standard 3

Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

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The standards guide instruction, not dictate it. So as you plan lessons remember you aren’t teaching the standards, but instead are teaching students how to read, write, talk, and think through well-crafted lessons that draw from the pedagogy embedded within the CCSS document. Engaging lessons often have several ELA standards within them, and integrate reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language.