

Blumenfeld's
Alpha-Phonics

**A Primer for
Beginning Readers**

Samuel L. Blumenfeld

*An effective, step-by-step, intensive
phonics program for teaching
reading to beginners of all ages*

**STUDENT WORKBOOK &
INSTRUCTION MANUAL**



STOREHOUSE
P R E S S

VALLECITO, CALIFORNIA

Blumenfeld's Alpha-Phonics®
Student Workbook and Instruction Manual

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Dedicated to the
Memory of

Watson Washburn
Eleanor “Yie” Parkman
Bettina Rubicam
and
Rudolf Flesch

*For their untiring efforts
to restore intensive phonics in
primary reading instruction.*

PREFACE

Blumenfeld's Alpha-Phonics was created to provide parents, teachers and tutors with a sensible, logical, easy-to-use system for teaching reading. It is an intensive phonics instruction program based on the author's many years of research and experience in the reading instruction field. It answers the need for a practical instruction program that anyone who wants to teach reading can learn to use with no special training.

This *Alpha-Phonics Workbook* is the centerpiece of the program and contains all of the lessons to be learned by the student. The instructions for teaching the lessons will be found in the Lesson Instructions created for easy use by parents, teachers, and tutors.

The Workbook teaches our alphabetic system—with its 26 letters and 44 sounds—in the following sequence: First, the alphabet, then the short vowels and consonants, the consonant digraphs, followed by the consonant blends, and finally the long vowels in their variety of spellings and our other vowels.

This program can be used to teach reading to beginners of all ages, older students in need of remediation, nonreaders, adults who wish to improve their reading skills, dyslexics, the learning disabled, and non-English speakers who wish to learn to read English and improve their pronunciation.

It can also be used as a supplement to any other reading program being used in the classroom. Its systematic approach to teaching basic phonetic skills makes it particularly valuable to programs that lack such instruction.

The program's step-by-step lessons in large, easy-to-read print make it suitable for both direct one-on-one tutoring and regular classroom use.

All of the lesson pages were carefully designed to eliminate distraction and help the learner focus his or her attention on the work at hand. The program, as a whole, is flexible enough so that any parent, teacher, or tutor can adapt it to his or her own teaching style or situation.

If you have never taught reading before in this sensible, systematic way, you will be pleasantly surprised by the results.

— Samuel L. Blumenfeld

**The
Alphabet
and
Pre-reading
Alphabet Exercises**

Aa Bb Cc Dd

Ee Ff Gg

Hh Ii Jj Kk

Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp

Qq Rr Ss

Tt Uu Vv

Ww

Xx Yy Zz

A B C D
E F G
H I J K
L M N O P
Q R S
T U V
W
X Y Z

Capital Letters
(Also known as upper case letters)

a b c d
e f g
h i j k
l m n o p
q r s
t u v
w
x y z

Small Letters
(Also known as lower case letters)

Pre-reading Alphabet Exercises

A	B	C	a	b	c
B	B	C	b	b	c
C	A	B	c	a	b
B	C	A	b	c	a
C	B	A	c	b	a
C	C	A	c	c	a
C	A	C	c	a	c
C	B	C	c	b	c
D	E	F	d	e	f
E	F	D	e	f	d
F	E	D	f	e	d
F	E	F	f	e	f
F	D	E	f	d	e
F	F	D	f	f	d
E	E	F	e	e	f
F	D	F	f	d	f

G
G
I
H
H
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G
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J
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L
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K
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j
j

M N O
M O M
O N N
N O M
N M O
O M O
O O N
O N M
P Q R
R P Q
Q Q P
Q P Q
R R P
R P R
P R P
R P P

m n o
m o m
o n n
n o m
n m o
o m o
o o n
o n m
p q r
r p q
q q p
q p q
r r p
r p r
p r p
r p p

S T U
S U S
T S U
T U T
T S S
S T S
U T S
U U S

s t u
s u s
t s u
t u t
t s s
s t s
u t s
u u s

V W X Y Z
Z V W X X
W W Y Z X
W Y W Y Z
X Y Z V V
Y Z Y X V
Z X Y X W
W Z X Y V

v w x y z
z v w x x
w w y z x
w y w y z
x y z v v
y z y x v
z x y x w
w z x y v

Blumenfeld's
Alpha-Phonics
Student's Lessons

Lesson 1

a → m → am

a → n → an

a → s → as

a → t → at

a → x → ax

Aa

Mm

Nn

Ss

Tt

Xx

Lesson 2

S → am → Sam

m → an → man

h → as → has

s → at → sat

t → ax → tax

Hh

Lesson 3

am an as at ax
Sam man has sat tax

Sam sat.
Sam has an ax.

Lesson 4

a → d → ad
d → ad → dad
w → ax → wax
D → an → Dan

Dan sat.
Dad has wax.

Dd Ww

Lesson 30

ch

ch → ap

chap check chick chop chuck
chat chess chill chug
chin chum
chip

ri → ch

rich much
 such

Lesson 31

wh

wh → en

when
whack

what

which
whim
whiff
whip
whiz

Lesson 43

nd

and	end	wind	bond	fund
band	bend		fond	
hand	fend		pond	
land	lend			
sand	mend			
wand	rend			
	send			
	tend			

nt

ant	bent	pent	hint	bunt
pant	cent	rent	lint	hunt
rant	dent	sent	mint	punt
want	gent	tent	tint	runt
	Kent	vent		
	lent	went		

Lesson 44

Bill is mending his tent.

Kent went hunting.

Jack went with Kent.

Bob lent Ann his fishing rod.

Ann is fishing at the pond.

Bob wants his rod back.

Bob went to the pond.

Jill is fond of Philip.

Philip sent Jill a bag of mints.

The cat sat on the ant hill.

Beth is running in the wind.

Kent is in the band.

Mom will mend Pam's socks.

Lesson 45

er → her

let-ter	letter
bet-ter	better
hunt-er	hunter
lend-er	lender
send-er	sender
but-ter	butter
ten-der	tender
chat-ter	chatter
big-ger	bigger
sum-mer	summer
win-ter	winter
sis-ter	sister

Butter is better.
Ken has a sister.
Her hat is bigger.
Bill sent a letter.
Her dad is a hunter.
Summer is better than winter.

Lesson 46

nk

bank ink honk
Hank kink bunk
lank link dunk
rank mink hunk
sank pink junk
tank rink
yank sink
wink

nch

ranch bunch
bench hunch
inch lunch
finch munch
pinch punch

nc

zinc

Lesson 47

Hank put cash in the bank.
Bob put gas in the tank.
Beth put the dish in the sink.
Bill had a bunch of junk.
Dan sat on a bench.
Dad has a ranch.
Tim had lunch with Bess.
Bev had punch with her lunch.
Pam has the top bunk.

Lesson 48

ct

act
fact
pact
tact
duct

ft

aft
raft
left
gift
lift
rift
sift
loft
soft

pt

apt
kept
wept

xt

next
text

Bill got a raft as a gift.
He left his raft at the pond.
The raft is big.
Can Bill lift the raft?
The fact is that he can't.
But Jack and Bill can lift the raft.
Ann got a gift.
Jan will get the next gift.
Can Beth act? Yes, she can.
Liz will sift the sand.

Lesson 49

sk**sp****st**

ask	asp	cast	pest	list
bask	gasp	fast	test	mist
cask	rasp	last	rest	cost
mask	lisp	mast	vest	lost
task	cusps	past	west	bust
desk		vast	zest	dust
disk		best	chest	gust
risk		jest	quest	just
dusk		lest	fist	must
rusk		nest	gist	rust
whisk				

Jim sat at his desk.
Jill will pass the test.
Beth did her best.
Bill went west.
Bob did his task.
Hank can run fast.
The metal chest was full of rust.

Lesson 50

lb

bulb

ld

held
meld
weld

lf

elf
self
golf
gulf
shelf

lk

milk
silk
bulk
hulk
sulk

bald

calf
half

talk
walk

Lesson 51

lm

elm
helm
film

lp

help
kelp
yelp
gulp
pulp

lt

belt
felt
melt
pelt
welt
hilt
jilt
tilt
wilt
quilt

halt
malt
salt

Lesson 67

st

stab	stank	stilt	stub	strand
stack	stash	sting	stuck	strap
staff	stem	stink	stud	string
stag	step	stint	stuff	strip
stamp	stick	stock	stung	strum
Stan	stiff	stomp	stump	strut
stand	still	stop	stunt	

str

Lesson 68

sw

swam
swell
swept
swift
swim
swing
swish
Swiss
switch

swan
swamp

sc

scab
scalp
scam
scamp
scan
scant
scat
Scott
scuff

sk

skid
skill
skim
skimp
skin
skip
skit
skunk

scr

scram
scrap
scratch
scrimp
script
scrod
scrub
scrunch

Lesson 69

tr

track	trek	trip	trump
tram	trench	trod	trunk
trance	trend	trot	trust
trap	trick	truck	
trash	trim	trudge	

thr

thrall	throb
thrash	throng
thresh	thrush
thrift	thrust
thrill	

tw

twang
twelve
twig
twill
twin
twist
twit
twitch

Lesson 73

Long a as a-e

Abe	ace	ade	safe	age
babe	face	fade		cage
	lace	made		page
	pace	wade		rage
	race	blade		sage
	brace	glade		wage
	grace	grade		stage
	place	shade		
	space	spade		
	trace	trade		

Lesson 73

(Continued)

bake	ale	came	cane	ape
cake	bale	dame	Dane	cape
fake	dale	fame	Jane	gape
Jake	hale	game	lane	tape
lake	male	lame	mane	drape
make	pale	name	pane	grape
quake	sale	same	sane	scrape
rake	tale	tame	crane	shape
sake	scale	blame	plane	
take	stale	flame		
wake	whale	frame		
brake		shame		
drake				
flake				
shake				
snake				
stake				
ache				

Lesson 73

(Continued)

bare	base	date	cave	daze
care	case	fate	Dave	gaze
dare	chase	gate	gave	haze
fare		hate	pave	maze
hare		Kate	rave	blaze
mare		late	save	craze
rare		mate	wave	glaze
ware		rate	brave	graze
blare		crate	crave	
flare		grate	grave	
glare		plate	shave	
scare		skate	slave	
share		slate	have	
snare		state		
spare				
square				
stare				
are				

Lesson 93

Long e as y

Abby	daddy	taffy	baggy	Billy
Tabby	caddy	daffy	saggy	Sally
Libby	paddy	jiffy	Maggy	silly
lobby	Teddy	puffy	foggy	Molly
Debby	muddy	stuffy	Peggy	Polly
baby	study		muggy	chilly
		Harry		daily
mammy	Danny	carry	messy	
mommy	Denny	Barry	sissy	Betty
mummy	Lanny	Perry	fussy	batty
tummy	Benny	Terry	easy	catty
Tommy	Jenny	merry		fatty
Timmy	Lenny	hurry	busy	nutty
Jimmy	Kenny	sorry		putty
Sammy	penny	Gary	hazy	city
	bunny	marry	lazy	pity
happy	funny	berry	crazy	
pappy	sunny	cherry	dizzy	pretty
peppy		very	fuzzy	
poppy	money	furry		candy
puppy	any	worry	key	handy
	many			sandy

Lesson 120

f as ph

Phil	phone	phantom	photograph
Philip	phony	pharmacy	telegraph
	photo	pharmacist	telephone
Ralph	phonics	Philadelphia	graphic
graph	Phoenix	philosopher	emphasis
	phase	philosophy	emphatic
	phrase		

Lesson 121

sh as ti

sh as ssi, ci, and ce

nation	patient	fission	racial
station	patience	mission	facial
ration	action	admission	special
lotion	fraction	session	crucial
motion	traction		musician
notion			ocean

sh as ci, sci, and xi

sh as su and ssu

atrocious	obnoxious	sure	issue
ferocious		insure	tissue
conscious		assure	
conscience		fissure	

Lesson 121

(Continued)

zh as **si** and **su**

ch as **tu** and **ti**

fusion measure
confusion pleasure
illusion treasure
intrusion leisure

capture question
fracture digestion
gesture indigestion
picture suggestion

The ocean can be ferocious.

Ralph is a musician and won a special prize
at the fair.

Jeff went to the train station to pick up Kate.

Did you see Gail's picture on the table?

Betty had a crucial question for the teacher.

"Thank you for being so patient," said Dad.

Mom bought a box of facial tissues.

She phoned the pharmacy for special lotion.

Didn't you think that motion picture was
obnoxious?

It sure was a pleasure to see Grandma and
Grandpa this weekend.

Grandma brought an album of photographs
from Phoenix, which we will treasure.

Dad will measure the wood to a fraction
of an inch.

The doctor's suggestion cleared Philip's
confusion about his indigestion.

Lesson 128

y as **short i**

cyst

gym

hymn

Lynn

myth

gymnast

mystic

system

symbol

symptom

rhythm

syrup

lyric

syntax

Phyllis

Sheryl

cryptic

physic

physics

gymnasium

mystery

syllable

sympathy

synonym

hysteric

hypnosis

cylinder

typical

tyranny

synthetic

mystical

physical

physician

ORDER OF LESSONS

Lessons

1. Short **a**; consonants **m, n, s, t, x**
2. Initial consonants **S, m, h, s, t**
3. Review sentences
4. Consonants **d, D, w**
5. Alphabetic word building
6. Short **a** sentences; punctuation
7. Word building with short **a**; consonant **l**
8. Consonants **l, b, c, g, f, j, l, n**
9. Consonants **p, r, t, v, w, y, z**; final consonant **k**
10. Review of short **a** words
11. Consonant digraph **ck**; **qu**
12. **a** as a word
13. Sentences
14. Nonsense syllables with **short a**
15. Short vowels **a, e, i, o, u**
16. Short **e** words
17. Short **e** sentences
18. Nonsense syllables with **short e**
19. Short **i** words; **f** as **ph**
20. Short **i** sentences
21. Consonant digraph **th**
22. Sentences
23. Short **o** words
24. Short **o** sentences
25. Plural **s, es**, and **'s**
26. Sentences
27. Short **u** words
28. Short **u** sentences
- 28a. Consonants **b** and **d**
29. Consonant digraph **sh**
30. Consonant digraph **ch**
31. Consonant digraph **wh**
32. Review of **sh, ch, wh** words
33. Sentences
34. Verbs **to be** and **to have**
35. Sentences with verbs **to be** and **to have**
36. Contractions
37. Sentences with contractions
38. Two-syllable, short vowel words
39. Sentences with two-syllable, short-vowel words
40. **a** as in **all**; sentences
41. Consonant blend **ng**; **ing** words

86. Sentences
87. Long **e** as **ee**
88. Sentences
89. Long **e** as **ea**
90. Sentences
91. Long **e** as **e-e**; sentences
92. Long **e** as **ie**; sentences
93. Long **e** as **y**
94. Sentences
95. **ies** in verbs and plural nouns
96. Review of long **e** words
97. Sentences
98. Long **i** as **I, y, ie, uy**; sentences
99. Long **i** as **i-e**; sentences
100. Long **i** as **igh**; sentences
101. Spelling forms **ough** and **augh**
102. **f** as **gh**
103. Long **o** as **o-e**
104. Sentences
105. Long **o** as **oa**; sentences
106. Long **o** as **ow**; sentences
107. Long **o** as in **old**; sentences
108. Common irregular words; sentences
109. **oo** as in **good food**
110. Sentences
111. **ould** sounding as **ood** in **wood**; sentences
112. **ow** and **ou** as in **cow** and **ouch**
113. Sentences
114. **oy** as in **boy**; **oi** as in **oil**; sentences
115. Long **u** as **u-e**; sentences
116. Long **u** as **ue** and **ui**; sentences
117. Long **u** as **ew** and **eu**; sentences
118. **er, ir, or, ur, ear**; sentences
119. Words ending in **le**; silent **t**; sentences
120. **f** as **ph**
121. **sh** as **ti, ssi, ci, ce, sci, xi, su, ssu**;
zh as **si, su**; **ch** as **tu, ti**; sentences
122. **n** as **kn**
123. **m** as **mb**; **t** as **bt**
124. Silent **h**
125. **r** as **wr**
126. **s** as **st**; **f** as **ft**
127. **k** as **ch**; **s** as **ps**
128. **y** as short **i**

ENGLISH ALPHABETIC SYSTEM
COMMON SPELLING FORMS

Sound

Vowels

short a	a as in cat
short e	e as in met ; ea as in bread
short i	i as in sit ; y as in myth, gym
short o	o as in top
short u	u as in cup ; ou as in precious
long a	a-e as in ate ; ai as in wait ; ay as in way ; ei as in veil ; igh as in eight ; a as in apron ; ey as in they
long e	ee as in tree ; ea as in eat ; ie as in field ; e as in me ; e-e as in eve ; y as in happy, city ; ei as in receive
long i	i-e as in time ; igh as in high ; y as in try ; ie as in lie ; i as in item
long o	o as in go ; o-e as in home ; oa as in boat ; ow as in snow ; oe as in toe
long u	u-e as in use ; ew as in new ; ue as in true ; iew as in view
oo	oo as in food
oo	oo as in good ; oul as in could, should
ou/ow	ou as in out ; ow as in cow
oi/oy	oi as in oil ; oy as in boy
a (ah)	a as in car, father
a	a as in care, there, heir, fair
a/au/aw	a as in all ; aw as in law ; au as in cause ; ough as in ought ; augh as in taught ; o as in loss
er	er as in germ ; ir as in girl ; ur as in fur ; ear as in earn ; or as in work
o	o as in born, core

Consonants

b	b as in bat, cab
d	d as in did
f	f as in fan ; ph as in phone ; gh as in rough, laugh
g	g as in get ; gh as in ghetto
h	h as in house ; wh as in who
j	j as in jam , g as in gem, angel, ginger ; dge as in fudge
k	k/ck as in kick ; c as in cat ; ch as in chorus ; qu as kw (quit = kwit); x as ks (rex = wrecks)
l	l as in lull
m	m as in mom
n	n as in nut ; kn as in knee ng as in sing ; nk as in sink
p	p as in pep
r	r as in ran, car ; wr as in wrap, write
s	s as in sell ; c as in cell ; ps as in psychic
t	t as in ten, net
v	v as in van, have ; f as in of
w	w as in well
y	y as in yes
z	z as in zoo ; s as in has
th	th as in the, with, father th as in thin, think, truth
ch	ch as in chin, rich ; tch as in catch ; tu as in capture, picture ; ti as in question
sh	sh as in she, wish ; ti as in nation, patient ; su as in sure ; ci as in special, precious ; ce as in ocean ; ssi as in mission ; sci as in conscious ; xi as in noxious ; ssu as in issue
wh	wh as in where, when
zh	su as in pleasure ; si as in fusion

Teaching Cursive

Introducing Cursive

One of the most important tools of literacy that an individual must acquire is good cursive handwriting. Cursive is a flowing form of handwriting in which all the letters of a word are joined. Manuscript, or print-script, which most children are taught in the first grade, is really a form of hand printing or lettering.

Most schools require children to learn cursive by the third grade. Unfortunately, many children fail to make a good transition from manuscript to cursive mainly because the third-grade curriculum does not provide enough time for or supervision over handwriting development. The result is a poor, often illegible handwriting.

But the simple truth is that most children can be taught cursive in the first grade, thereby eliminating the need for a difficult and chancy transition period in the third grade.

The virtue of teaching cursive in the first grade is that the teacher can spend more time supervising its correct acquisition. Also, students will begin developing an active tool of literacy, which they will be using for the rest of their lives.

The most important task for the parent or tutor in teaching cursive is to make sure that the student learns to hold the writing instrument correctly and form the letters correctly; that is, knowing where the letter starts and where it ends.

Cursive was developed to permit writers to obtain a fast, fluent, legible script with minimum expenditure of energy. It takes time to develop a good cursive handwriting, and that is why it is wise to begin cursive instruction in the first grade.

Most children, as they learn the letter forms, begin writing cursive in a large awkward scrawl. This is quite natural because the child is being required to perform a manual physical task, which requires considerable dexterity and precision. But in a few weeks or months, that scrawl will evolve into a neat, legible script.

There are some youngsters – and adults – who experience great difficulty in learning to write. This is usually a physical problem that has nothing to do with intelligence. This condition is called dysgraphia and can only be overcome with a great deal of practice and perseverance. Dysgraphics usually find it equally hard to learn manuscript as well as cursive. Therefore, it makes sense to concentrate on cursive, since ultimately it is the more useful and required tool of literacy.

It is very important to teach the learner to form the letters correctly the first time, for there is nothing more difficult than trying to break bad habits once they are acquired. Such future agony can be avoided by having the child do it right the first time.

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee
Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj
Kk Ll Mm Nn
Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss
Tt Uu Vv Ww
Xx Yy Zz

Blumenfeld's
Alpha-Phonics
A Primer for
Beginning Readers

Samuel L. Blumenfeld

Instruction
Manual

INTRODUCTION

This course of instruction will enable any parent, teacher, or tutor to teach reading to anyone who needs to learn it: beginning readers of all ages or poor readers in need of retraining. The method is based on a thorough analysis of the English writing system, how it works, and how best it can be taught.

Written English is a purely alphabetic system, regardless of what we may think of its many eccentricities and irregularities. An alphabet, by definition, is a set of graphic symbols that stands for the irreducible speech sounds of a particular language. Therefore, all of our written words stand for spoken sounds, no matter how irregular the spellings may be. Incidentally, an irreducible speech sound is an isolated vowel or consonant sound.

We must not forget that the invention of the alphabet is based on one of man's greatest discoveries: that all of spoken language is composed of a relatively small number of different, irreducible speech sounds. (In English, only 44!)

This is one of the great discoveries that has enabled man to do much more with much less. Instead of wrestling with a writing system using thousands and thousands of symbols representing thousands of individual ideas and words, as in Chinese characters or Egyptian hieroglyphics, man could create a writing system using less than fifty symbols to handle an entire language.

It is vitally important to understand the difference between an alphabetic writing system and an ideographic one. An ideographic system uses graphic symbols to represent ideas, feelings, actions, things, etc. It is basically independent of any particular spoken language although its symbols may represent specific words of a language. For example, the "no-smoking" icon (the cigarette in a circle with a slash through it) is an ideograph representing an idea. It can be interpreted by the viewer as "no smoking," "smoking not permitted," "smoking forbidden," or in French as "*defense de fumer*," in Spanish as "*no fumar*," or in German as "*nicht rauchen*." In an ideographic system, language is used to interpret the symbols. Precision and accuracy are therefore hard to achieve with an ideographic system.

An alphabetic system, on the other hand, is a sound-symbol system used merely to represent on paper a particular spoken language. The spoken words stand for the ideas, concepts, feelings, etc., while the written words are mere graphic representations of the spoken words. Therefore, in an alphabetic system, the relationship between written and spoken language is one of precision and exactness. The spoken word may be subject to interpretation,

but the written word is an exact representation of a specific spoken counterpart. Thus, alphabetic writing is an important tool of thought, for the thought process uses the spoken language for its development.

The invention of the alphabet, which took place about 2000 B.C., not only made hieroglyphics and every other ideographic system obsolete, it permitted a tremendous expansion of vocabulary because now there was a writing system that could easily accommodate it. The greatest works of the ancient world have come down to us through alphabetic writing: the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, the Greek dramas, the Bible. Without the alphabet, man's intellectual and spiritual development would have been seriously retarded. So we must regard the alphabet with great awe and respect. It is civilization's prize possession.

It stands to reason that a thorough knowledge and understanding of the English alphabetic system will enable a student not only to read well, but also to spell well. We often forget that our writing system is a two-way process: to be used both for reading **and** writing, decoding and encoding; and to become truly literate, a student must become proficient in both.

Knowledge alone, however, does not lead to reading fluency. To gain fluency requires much practice, drill, review, and frequent use so that reading becomes effortless -- so effortless that we might call this ability a "phonetic reflex."

Blumenfeld's Alpha-Phonics makes full use of all of these proven techniques of learning. Moreover, it teaches in a logical, systematic way facts about our alphabetic system, which are usually taught rather haphazardly if at all. And it makes these facts operating knowledge for the student who wishes to learn to spell accurately and enlarge his vocabulary.

No one denies that the English alphabetic system is somewhat complex. But its complexity is hardly an excuse for not teaching it.

For far too long, teachers of reading have avoided the difficulties of our alphabetic system by teaching sight vocabularies, whole-word configurations, context clues, and incidental phonetic clues. While such methods may produce some initial success on the primary level, they are, in the long run, injurious because they violate the basic nature of our writing system and are not in harmony with its principles. They do not provide the student with a fundamental understanding of the symbolic system we use in reading and writing, an understanding that he or she must have in order to become truly literate.

It was Dr. Samuel T. Orton, the world's foremost expert on dyslexia, who first warned educators that the look-say, whole-word method could be harmful. He wrote in the *Journal of Educational Psychology* in 1929 that the whole-word method "may not only prevent the acquisition of academic education by children of average capacity but may also give rise to far-reaching damage to their emotional life."

Blumenfeld's Alpha-Phonics was created to make it unnecessary for any teacher to expose a child to teaching methods that can be harmful.

OUR ALPHABETIC SYSTEM

The English alphabetic system may be complex, but it can be taught and it should be taught. We have an alphabetic system of great range and flexibility. Our spellings reveal much about the history and development of our language, and once the eccentricities of the system are learned, they are learned. They do not change. The reward for learning this system is to have for one's personal use and enrichment the entire body of our published literature. Such a literary treasure is indeed the priceless inheritance of everyone who can read.

Our English alphabetic system is complex for a variety of reasons: (1) it uses 26 letters to stand for 44 sounds; (2) it uses five vowel letters to stand for at least 20 vowel sounds; (3) many consonant letters stand for more than one sound; (4) some sounds, particularly the long vowels, have more than one spelling; (5) the invasions of foreign languages have enriched English but complicated its spellings; (6) pronunciations have changed over the centuries but the spellings have not, creating many irregularities.

Despite all of this, our system is more than 80 percent consistent or regular, with most of the irregularities consisting of variant vowel spellings.

In developing this instruction program, we have taken all of the above into account. Therefore, we start out by teaching the student the short vowels, which are the most regular in spelling, in conjunction with the consonants. Then we teach the consonant blends – final blends first, then the initial blends. Last, we teach the long vowels in their great variety of spelling forms.

Thus, we proceed from the simple to the complex in easy stages, giving the student plenty of practice and drill along the way. By teaching the letter sounds in their spelling families, the student learns to read and spell in an orderly, systematic, logical way, as well as to pronounce the language with greater accuracy.

To some teachers and tutors, this will seem like an overly academic way to teach reading. And it is, on purpose, because we want the student to learn to enjoy using his mind.

In teaching someone to read English, we must decide what should come first: learning the alphabetic system or enjoying inane stories with lots of irregular sight words. The latter may seem to be much more fun for teacher and student; but does it accomplish what we want to accomplish? If our goal is high literacy, it does not.

We know from experience that the student will derive much deeper satisfaction by learning the alphabetic system first, because it will give him or her a much greater overall reading mastery in a shorter period of time.

Competency and skill are the two most important ingredients of self-confidence, and self-confidence is the cornerstone of self-esteem. Learning to read is the student's first real exposure to formal education, and a positive attitude can be instilled in the young mind by how we approach the subject at hand.

It is obvious that one learns faster and better when the knowledge one is expected to acquire is organized in such a way as to make its acquisition as easy as possible. This is the concept behind *Blumenfeld's Alpha-Phonics*. Our aim is to provide the student with the kind of basic knowledge that will become the solid foundation of all his or her future academic work.

While we have organized this course in a certain order to make sure that what should be learned is learned, we have also done this to make the teaching of reading as easy for you as possible.

TEACHING THE ALPHABET

For a younger child who has not yet learned the alphabet, the fastest and most efficient way to teach it is to have the child repeat it after you in alphabetical order while you point to the letters. Thus the child learns the alphabet both orally and visually. Usually the oral learning will be faster than the visual; since the oral alphabet, when repeated often enough, is learned almost like a melody or a poem. The alphabet lends itself easily to this kind of learning since it can be broken up into rhythmical and rhyming lines as follows:

A	B	C	D		a	b	c	d	
	E	F	G			e	f	g	
	H	I	J	K		h	i	j	k
L	M	N	O	P	l	m	n	o	p
	Q	R	S			q	r	s	
	T	U	V			t	u	v	
		W					w		
	X	Y	Z			x	y	z	

Capital Letters

(Also known as upper case letters)

Small Letters

(Also known as lower case letters)

It will take some time before the child's visual learning catches up with his oral knowledge. Indeed, some children learn to recite the alphabet perfectly long before they are able to identify all of the letters at random. This is perfectly normal since the child has had much oral practice learning to speak the language. However, now he is required to do highly precise visual learning, which may take some getting used to, especially if the child has had little exposure to print.

Children with photographic memories will learn visually much faster than those not so favorably endowed. The slowest learners will be those with weak visual memories. These children will benefit most from simply alphabetic exercises, such as repeating the letters at random, several at a time, as in the Prereading Alphabet Exercises in the Workbook.

Both oral and visual learning of the alphabet should be accompanied by kinesthetic learning, that is, by having the student draw the letters in both capital and lower-case forms. Drawing the letters will help the student learn their different shapes more thoroughly. A lined notebook or writing tablet should be used by the student for doing this work.

Another effective way for the child to learn to identify letters at random is to ask him or her to pick out specific letters from advertisement print matter in newspapers and magazines. In this way the student learns to recognize the letters in different sizes and type faces. This is also a good way to check on the child's vision.

Pictures are not necessary in teaching the alphabet if you do it in the systematic manner prescribed in this program. The picture the child should be looking at is the letter itself, not an apple, or a bumblebee, or an elephant.

Pictures are a distraction that can only delay learning the alphabet directly as a set of graphic symbols. We make this point because shortly after the letters are learned, the student will be taught to identify them with speech sounds, and this is very crucial.

A letter is a symbol of a sound. It is not the symbol of anything else. The letter is supposed to stimulate the mouth, lips, and tongue to make particular sounds. It is not supposed to make the student think of an apple or an elephant. He must convert groups of letters into speech, and the student will be able to do this more readily the better he associates the letters with sounds.

A word of caution: When a student is having uncommon difficulty learning or mastering any phase of the instruction, do not become impatient and do not scold. Analyze and try to pinpoint the cause of the difficulty. You may simply have to take more time than you thought necessary. Some students take a year to master what others can master in a month. Remember, the goal is not to win a race but to teach a person to read -- no matter how much time it takes to do the job well.

TEACHING THE LETTER SOUNDS

Assuming the student has learned the alphabet, we are now ready to teach the letter sounds. The student's knowledge of the alphabet does not have to be letter perfect before we move on to this next phase, for the simple reason that the student will learn the letters better as they are used.

When you are ready to teach the letter sounds, you might explain to the student something about how and why the alphabet was invented. Older students are usually quite fascinated to learn that the entire English language is made up of only 44 irreducible speech sounds. Try if possible, to appeal to the learner's intellectual curiosity. You never know what kind of a response you will get.

Students are very sensitive about their ability to learn. This is particularly true of remedial students whose self-esteem has been badly battered by failure. A learning block, or handicap, is not a reflection of basic intelligence. We all know of highly intelligent people who have trouble doing simple addition. We also know that many so-called dyslexics are very bright and have an excellent vocabulary. Therefore, always appeal to a student's basic intelligence.

When teaching younger students the letter sounds you might simply say: "Now we are going to learn the sounds the letters stand for so that you can put the letters to work for you. Each letter stands for a different sound. You will be able to read words by knowing the sounds the letters stand for."

The essence of what you want to convey to the student is that letters have meaning – they stand for sounds – and that the letters in a written word tell the reader how to say it.

In teaching the letter sounds, it is important to convey the idea that the distinct sounds of our language can be isolated and represented by written symbols. Obviously the alphabet was invented by someone who spoke clearly and heard clearly and could distinguish between the fine differences of speech sounds, between the **t** and the **d**, between **s** and **z**, **m** and **n**, short **a** and short **e**. But a student's attunement to speech sounds may not be very sharp. In fact, some students may articulate very poorly and require a good deal of work to improve their pronunciations. Therefore, spend as much time as is needed to sharpen your student's attunement to the isolated, irreducible speech sounds of our language as you teach the letter sounds. Be sure to pronounce all words clearly.

The alphabet is a tremendously exciting invention based on a great discovery: that all of human language is composed of a small number of irreducible speech sounds. In teaching the alphabet, you can convey to your student the excitement of this great discovery and the marvelous invention based on it. “Did you know that every word you speak can be put down on paper?” you tell the student. That’s exciting. “And that’s what you are going to learn to do -- to put down on paper every sound of speech you make.”

Thus, you’ve established the concept of a set of written symbols representing speech sounds. This is the association you want to establish in the student’s mind: that letters on paper stand for sounds he can make with his voice, and that the sounds he makes can be put down on paper by way of letters representing them.

Some Practical Suggestions

Please note that this manual is written as if addressed to an instructor who has one student. However, the information in this manual applies equally to a teacher who has a classroom of students.

Ideally, each student should have his or her own copy of *Blumenfeld’s Alpha-Phonics*, plus a lined notebook in which to write the words being learned. This will reduce the need for time-consuming board work by the teacher.

Writing the words helps in learning to spell them correctly. Also, it is advisable to assign some written homework after each learning session. The purpose of homework is to speed up the acquisition, retention, and improvement of skills.

ISOLATING THE LETTER SOUNDS

In articulating or pronouncing the letter sounds, the best way to isolate a consonant sound is to listen to what it sounds like at the end of a word and repeat it in isolation.

This can be done with consonants **b**, **ck**, **d**, **f**, **g** (as in **tag** and **large**), **k**, **l**, **m**, **n**, **p**, **r**, **s**, **t**, **v** (**ve**), **x**, **z** (**ze**), **sh**, **ch**, **th**. Consonant **c** stands for the **k** sound before vowels **a**, **o**, and **u**; it stands for the **s** sound before vowels **e** and **i**. The letter **q** is always followed by **u** and is pronounced as if it were **kw**.

By pronouncing the isolated sounds as purely as possible, the student will be able to understand what we mean by an irreducible speech sound.

SUGGESTIONS ON WRITING INSTRUCTION

Writing is an important part of learning to read. But how should you teach the learner to write? The learner should draw the letters of the alphabet when learning the letters in isolation. But once **words** are being read, the learner should be taught to write them in **cursive script**.

Cursive helps a child learn to read. With the prevalent ball-and-stick method, it is very easy for the learner to confuse **b's** and **d's**. But with cursive, a **b** starts like an **l**, as in lead, and a **d** starts like an **a**. The distinction that is made in writing the letters in cursive carries over to the reading process.

In addition, in writing print script, the letters will be all over the page, sometimes written from left to right and from right to left. In cursive, where all the letters are joined, the child learns directional discipline because the letters must be joined from left to right. This helps in learning to spell, for how the letters join with one another creates habits of hand movement that automatically aid the spelling process.

Of course, the learner should also be taught to print. This can easily be done after the learner has developed a good cursive handwriting.

The Benefits of Cursive for the Left-Handed Learner

Another important benefit of **cursive first** is if the learner is left-handed. A right-handed writer tilts the paper counter-clockwise in order to give one's handwriting the proper slant. With the left-handed learner, the paper must be tilted in an extreme clockwise position so that the child can write from bottom up. If the paper is not tilted to the right, the left-handed child may want to use the hook form of writing. This usually happens when the child is taught ball-and-stick first with the paper in a straight up position.

Cursive First

The reason why the child should learn cursive first, is that learning to print first may prevent a learner from developing a good cursive handwriting. However, if you learn to write cursive first, you can always learn to print later very nicely. In other words, learning cursive first does not prevent the development of a good printing style, while print first will create fixed writing habits that will prevent the development of a good cursive script.

LESSON INSTRUCTIONS

Lessons 1 – 14 teach all of the consonants with just one vowel – **short a**.

After completion of the 14 lessons, the learner will be ready to read the **First Alpha-Phonics Reader**, which consists of only **short a** words.

After successfully reading the first book, the learner will have great incentive to keep on learning so that he or she can read **Book Two**.

There are **eleven little readers** in all, to be used throughout the **Alpha-Phonics** instruction program. They were created to give the learner a sense of increased mastery as he or she learns to read.

LESSON 1: (Short a; consonants m, n, s, t, x)

Have the learner turn to Lesson 1 in the Workbook. Start by telling the learner that you are now going to teach the sounds the letters stand for. Say:

“When you learned the alphabet, you learned the names of the letters. Now you’re going to learn the sounds the letters stand for. Let’s start with the first sound. Now listen to the sound I make.”

Make a **short a** sound. (The **short a** is the **a** in **at**.)

“Did you hear that sound?”

Make it again and ask the learner to repeat it after you.

“That sound is not a word all by itself, but you hear it and say it often in many words. Can you say it again?”

After the learner repeats the **short a** and hears you repeat it, print the letter **a** on a writing tablet.

*“The letter **a** that you see stands for the sound you just made. It is called the **short a**. Now I am going to say five words with that sound in it, words that you use every day: **am, an, as, at, ax**.”*

Print the words in large letters on a sheet of paper or writing tablet as they appear in the Workbook. Give examples of how each word is used in a spoken sentence, so that the learner

understands that they are words. Explain that a word is the smallest unit of speech that has meaning.

*“The **short a** sound all by itself doesn’t mean anything. But a sound that means something is a word. **Am, an, as, at, ax** are all words because they have meaning. Now each of these words has two letters in it. Can you name the letters?”*

Have the learner spell each word, saying the word after it is spelled. Spelling a word means naming its letters in proper left-to-right sequence. Ask the learner:

“Now if each of the words has two letters and each letter stands for a sound, how many sounds does each word have?”

Repeat the word **am** slowly. Write and say the **short a** sound (**a** as in **at**); then write and say the word **am** just below it.

*“Do you hear the difference between **short a** (pronounce **a**) and **am**? When we say **am**, we add another sound to the **a**. What is the sound we added to the **a** in the word **am**?”*

Say the **m** sound (**mmm**) as said in the word **am**. (To correctly isolate this consonant sound, listen to what it sounds like at the end of a word; then lift it from the rest of the word. By doing so, you will minimize injecting a vowel element.) After you’ve made the **m** sound, ask the learner:

“Did you hear it? Can you say it?”

After the learner says the **m** sound, tell him or her that the letter **m** stands for the “**mmm**” sound.

*“So if we want to write the word **am**, we must write **a-m**, because these are the letters that stand for these sounds.”*

Repeat the procedure for **an, as, at,** and **ax**. The letter **n** stands for “**nnn**,” the letter **s** stands for “**sss**.” (Actually, the **s** in **as** is a soft **s**, which sounds more like “**zzz**.” Just as the vowel letters represent more than one sound, some consonants also have variant sounds. But at this stage, we are teaching only the sounds used in the words presented in the Workbook.) The letter **t** stands for “**tuh**,” and the letter **x** stands for “**ksss**.”

Have the learner print these words, say them, and spell them. (If you wish to start teaching the learner cursive writing, this is a good place to begin.) In any case, make sure that the learner understands that each word has two sounds

and that he or she can match the right sound with the right letter. Point out how the name of each consonant letter gives a hint of the sound each letter stands for. Exaggerate the sounds so that the learner can hear them distinctly and recognize them when heard.

When you are convinced that the learner knows these letter sounds thoroughly, tell him that there are two kinds of letters in the alphabet: vowels and consonants. The letter **a** is a vowel and **m, n, s, t,** and **x** are consonants. The other vowels are **e, i, o,** and **u**. All the rest are consonants, although **y** is sometimes used as a vowel. Explain that the vowels are the most powerful letters in the alphabet, because you can't have a word without one. Consonants need vowels in order to make words. In English, consonants rarely, if ever, stand alone. You needn't elaborate at this point. We merely want to establish the fact that there are two classes of letters: vowels and consonants.

By now the learner has learned a great deal. He or she is beginning to hear words with a greater awareness of their different sounds, and the learner has seen how these different sounds are represented in the Workbook by alphabet letters. The learner sees that the letters are printed from left to right in the same sequence as they are spoken. The five words can also be printed on cards and flashed to the learner in short drills to help develop quick recognition.

LESSON 2: (Initial consonants **S, m, h, s, t**)

Usually, you can proceed into Lesson 2 in the same tutoring session as Lesson 1. However, if there is a break between the lessons, do a quick review of Lesson 1 before proceeding into Lesson 2.

Now, have the learner turn to Lesson 2. Point to the word **am**. Then point to the letter **S** in front of it. Explain that he or she has been introduced to a new word and ask the learner if he or she can figure it out by sounding it out. The word is the name **Sam**. Ask the learner how many sounds are in that word. Then ask the learner to articulate the three sounds in the order they are printed (**SSS-aaa-mmm**). Explain that we use a capital **S** at the beginning of the word, **Sam**, because it is a proper name and all proper names begin with a capital letter.

Repeat the procedure with **an**. Explain that the letter **m** placed in front of **an** makes the word "**man**" (**mmm-aaa-ann**). Then have the learner articulate the three sounds.

Then point to the next word, **as**. Introduce the new letter, **h**. Articulate the sound of **h** as "**huh**." Explain that the **h** put in front of **as** makes the word **has**. Then, ask the learner if he or she can figure out the next two words (**sat** and **tax**) by sounding them out. Again, have the learner write these words in cursive. Tell the learner to be sure to sound out as he or she writes them.

Remember, writing the words will help learners reinforce what they are learning.

LESSON 3: (Review words; first sentences)

All of the words learned in Lessons 1 and 2 have now been arranged in their spelling families. Have the learner read them. Explain to the learner that he or she now knows enough words to be able to read and write two simple sentences: **Sam sat** and **Sam has an ax**. Explain that a sentence always begins with a capital letter, whether or not the first word is a name, and that it ends with a period. Tell the learner that a sentence is a complete thought and that the period at the end of the sentence is called **punctuation**. For practice, have the learner write a page or two of the words and sentences in Lesson 3.

LESSON 4: (Consonants **d, D, w**)

Introduce the letter **d** and its sound, “**duh.**” Show how we can make the word, **ad**, by placing the letter **a** in front of the letter **d**. Expand **ad** into **dad** by simply placing the letter **d** in front of **ad**. Introduce the letter **w** and its sound, “**wuh.**” Place the letter **w** in front of the word **ax** and see if the learner can sound out the word, **wax**. Then, place a capital **D** in front of the letter **an** to make the name **Dan**.

Have the learner read the two new sentences. Show the learner how to write capital **D** and **W**, and lower case letters **d** and **w**. Again, have the learner write a page or two of the four new words and the two sentences in this lesson.

You may want to proceed directly into the next lesson if the learner is making quick progress. It is up to you to decide how far to proceed in one session. The lessons can vary from 15 minutes to one-and-a-half hours, depending on the age of the learner and his or her attention span. Always allow enough time for writing practice. If you are a tutor, and are only tutoring the learner once or twice a week, enough homework should be given so that what is learned is retained from session to session.

LESSON 5: (Alphabetic word building)

By now the learner should begin to understand the principle behind alphabetic word building, how each letter’s sound is used in writing words. Have the learner read the words downward in each spelling family column.

Introduce under **ad** the new words **had, sad, Tad,** and **mad**. Explain that these words are made by placing the letters already learned, **h, s, t,** and **m**, in front of the word **ad** to make these new words, just as was done with the word **dad** in Lesson 4. Point out that the word **Tad** begins with a capital letter because it is a proper name.

Expand the learner's reading vocabulary to include the **short i** words in this lesson. Introduce **ph** as another spelling of the **f** sound, as in the name **Phil**. Also see if the learner can read the two-syllable name: **Philip**.

LESSON 20: (**Short i** sentences)

Have the learner read the sentences in this lesson and write them for practice. Teach the learner the use of the comma, as shown in two of the sentences. Commas help us phrase the sentences correctly, so that they can be read fluently, with the proper pauses and inflections. There is a rhythm to speech, and punctuation helps us see that rhythm in print.

LESSON 21: (Consonant digraph **th**)

Introduce the consonant digraph **th**, which stands for the "**thuh**" sound. Articulate the sound and have the learner repeat it. Ask the learner if he or she can hear the **th** sound in such words as: **the, them, this, that, bath, Beth,** and **with**.

A consonant digraph is not a blend. We simply do not have enough letters in our alphabet to stand for all of our separate sounds, so we sometimes use two letters to stand for one irreducible sound. This is the case with **th**. Just as there is a hard **s** and a soft **s**, there is also a hard **th** as in **thin**, and a soft **th** as in **the**. Have the learner read the list of words and make sure the he or she pronounces each word correctly. The learner shouldn't have any trouble pronouncing the proper **th** sound since the spoken word is the key to how the written word is pronounced.

LESSON 22: (Sentences with **th** words)

Have the learner read the sentences in this lesson, which incorporate the newly learned **th** words. Have the learner also write the sentences.

LESSON 23: (**Short o**)

Here we concentrate on **short o** words. Have the learner articulate the **short o** in isolation and then read the words in the columns. Note that the words **son, ton,** and **won** vary in pronunciation from the rest of the words in their spelling family. Note that the words **off** and **dog** are pronounced differently in various parts of the country. Learners should say the words as they are generally said in their region.

LESSON 24: (**Short o** sentences)

The sentences in this lesson incorporate the newly learned **short o** words. Have the learner read them and practice writing them.

We introduce the **ng** consonant blend, which is found at the end of such words as **sing**, **rang**, and **long**. Explain that a blend is bringing two consonant sounds closely together so that they blend. In this case, you can hear the **n** blending with the **g**.

Expand the learner's reading vocabulary with the **ng** words in this lesson. Have the learner read across the columns so that he or she will hear the contrasting short vowel sounds as **ang**, **ing**, **ong**, **ung**. For practice, have the learner write the words.

In Lesson 41, introduce the name **Washington** as shown divided into three syllables. First, ask the learner if he or she can decode the word without help by simply sounding out the syllables and putting them together.

Have the learner read down the columns. Note that the final consonant of most short vowel syllables is doubled when adding **ing**. Have the learner write the words for spelling practice.

LESSON 42: (Sentences with **ing** words)

Have the learner read the sentences in this lesson and practice writing them.

LESSON 43: (Final consonant blends **nd**, **nt**)

In this lesson we review the final consonant blend **nd** and introduce the final consonant blend **nt**. Note that the pronunciations of **want** and **wand** are slightly different from the other words in their spelling families. The letter **w** seems to alter the sound of **short a** whenever it precedes it.

LESSON 44: (Sentences with **nd** and **nt** words)

Have the learner read the sentences in this lesson and write them to practice spelling.

LESSON 45: (Final syllable **er**; **er** words and sentences)

Introduce the syllable **er**, which is really a variant **r** sound. (The **e** in **er** is also considered a distinct variant vowel sound, but it is too minor to be taught as such.) Show how by adding **er** to many already known words, the learner can expand his or her reading vocabulary to include many new words. Have the learner read the short practice sentences and make up others, and write them for spelling practice.

LESSON 46: (Final consonant blends **nk**, **nc**, **nch**)

Introduce the learner to final consonant blends **nk** as in **tank**, **sink**, and **junk**; **nc** as in **zinc**; and **nch** as in **ranch**, **inch**, and **lunch**. Note that **nch** is made

up of a consonant digraph plus a consonant. Expand the learner's reading vocabulary to include the words in this lesson. Have the learner write the words for practice.

LESSON 47: (Sentences with **nk**, **nc**, and **nch** words)

Have the learner read the sentences in this lesson, which include the final consonant blends just learned.

LESSON 48: (Final consonant blends **ct**, **ft**, **pt**, **xt**; sentences)

Introduce final consonant blends: **ct** as in **act**; **ft** as in **aft**; **pt** as in **apt**; and **xt** as in **next**. Have the learner read the words and sentences. Some of the words may be new to the learner. Discuss them and use them in appropriate sentences to demonstrate their meanings. Have the learner write these words to practice spelling.

LESSON 49: (Final consonant blends **sk**, **sp**, **st**; sentences)

Introduce final consonant blends: **sk** as in **ask**; **sp** as in **gasp**; **st** as in **best**. Have the learner read the words and discuss those that are new. Have the learner write the words and sentences for spelling practice.

After completing Lesson 49, the learner should be able to read Book 5 of the First Readers.

LESSON 50: (Final consonant blends **lb**, **ld**, **lf**, **lk**)

Introduce final consonant blends: **lb** as in **bulb**; **ld** as in **held**; **lf** as in **elf**; and **lk** as in **milk**. The words **bald**, **calf**, **half**, **talk**, and **walk** are irregular in their pronunciations. The **a** is pronounced "au" in the word **bald**, and the letter **l** is silent in the words **calf**, **half**, **talk**, and **walk**. Since there are no other words in English that can be represented by these spellings, the learner should have no trouble reading and spelling them. Have the learner read the words and of course write them for practice.

LESSON 51: (Final consonant blends **lm**, **lp**, **lt**)

Introduce final consonant blends: **lm** as in **elm**; **lp** as in **help**; and **lt** as in **belt**. Note that the words **halt**, **malt**, and **salt** are also irregular words. As in the word **bald** in the previous lesson, the letter **a** is pronounced "au" in these three words. Have the learner read the words in this lesson and write them for practice.

LESSON 52: (Final consonant blend **mp**)

Introduce final consonant blend **mp** as in **camp**. Have the learner read the words and write them for practice.

Introduce initial consonant blends **sp** as in **spell**; **spl** as in **splash**; and **spr** as in **spring**. Note that **spl** and **spr** are blends of three consonant sounds. Expand the learner's reading vocabulary to include the words in this lesson. Have the learner write the words for practice. Make up practice sentences if desired.

LESSON 67: (Initial consonant blends **st, str**)

Introduce initial consonant blends **st** as in **stick** and **str** as in **strand**. Note that **str** is a blend of three consonant sounds. Expand the learner's reading vocabulary to include the words in this lesson. Have the learner write the words for practice. Make up practice sentences if desired.

LESSON 68: (Initial consonant blends **sw, sc, sk, scr**)

Introduce initial consonant blends **sw** as in **swim**; **sc** as in **scan**; **sk** as in **skip**; and **scr** as in **scrub**. Note that **scr** is a blend of three consonant sounds. Note the irregular pronunciation of the words **swan** and **swamp**. (The **a** in these two words are pronounced as "ah.") Expand the learner's reading vocabulary to include the words in this lesson. Have the learner write the words for practice. Make up practice sentences if desired.

LESSON 69: (Initial consonant blends **tr, thr, tw**)

Introduce initial consonant blends **tr** as in **trim**; **thr** as in **thrill**; **tw** as in **twin**. Note that **thr** is made up of a consonant digraph and a consonant. Expand the learner's reading vocabulary to include the words in this lesson. Have the learner write the words for practice. Make up practice sentences if desired.

LESSON 70: (Words with consonant blends)

This is a review of all of the consonant blends learned thus far. They are all short-vowel words, unless otherwise noted as irregular within the lesson in which they were presented. Have the learner read them and write them for practice.

LESSON 71: (Sentences)

The sentences in this lesson contain only those words and sounds learned thus far. Have the learner read them aloud so that you can evaluate his or her progress. If you detect any weak spots, go back to previous drills for reinforcement. However, move as rapidly as you can into the next series of lessons, which take up the long vowels.

After completing Lesson 71, the learner should be able to read Book 6 of the First Readers.

LESSON 72: (Long a)

Explain to the learner that he or she has learned all of the short vowel sounds and how to read them, plus all of the consonants and consonant blends. Now the student is going to learn the long vowel sounds. Explain that the long vowel sounds are pronounced the same as their letter names: **a, e, i, o, u**. That will make it easy for the learner to read such words as **be, bee, we, no, so**, etc.

We start with **long a**. Ask the learner if he or she can hear the difference between the words **at** and **ate**. On Lesson 72, point to the words and have the learner follow along with you. Explain that the silent **e** changes the **short a** to a **long a**. Explain that both words have only two sounds each, but that the word **ate** has three letters, one of which seems to be silent. Explain that it is not really silent, however, because both the **a** and the **e** separated by a consonant (**a/consonant/e**) stand for the **long a** sound. Now under the word **at** point to the words **hat, fat, mat, rat**. Under the word **ate** point to the words **hate, fate, mate, rate**. Ask the learner to explain what happened when you added an **e** to the words under **at**.

Next, point to the words **Al** and **ale**. Ask the learner if he or she can read these words. If the learners have heard of ginger ale, they will be familiar with the word **ale**. Under **Al** point to **pal, Sal, gal**, and under **ale** point to **pale, sale, gale**. Ask the learner to read these words.

The words in this lesson are arranged as described above. Have the learners read the rest of the words in the two columns, comparing sounds and spellings.

LESSON 73: (Long a as a-e)

Expand the learner's reading vocabulary to include these **long a** words. Explain that in **age** the **g** is soft as opposed to the hard **g** in **get** and **gal**. Note the three irregular words and their particular spelling families: **ache, are, have**. Explain that the **ch** in **ache** stands for the **k** sound; **are** rhymes with **car**; **have** rhymes with **lav**. Seeing these irregularities in the context of their spelling families, the learner should conclude that irregularities are few and that they tend to affirm the consistency of everything else.

LESSON 74: (Sentences with long a words)

Practice sentences with **long a** words as spelled **a/consonant/e**.

LESSON 75: (Long a as ai)

Explain to the learner that there is more than one way to write **long a**. The second most common way is **ai**. Teach these **ai** words in their spelling families.

irregular words in the **ea** group. In **sweat, threat, sweater, dead, head, lead, read, bread, breath, deaf, and meant** the **ea** is pronounced as a **short e**. **Bear, pear, tear, wear, and swear** all rhyme with **air**. **Realm** and **dealt** have a **short e** variation as in **melt**. **Steak** and **break** rhyme with **cake**. **Great** rhymes with **ate**. Note that **tear** as in **teardrop** and **tear** meaning **rip** can only be read correctly in context. The same is also true of **read** (present tense) and **read** (past tense).

LESSION 90: (Long e sentences)

Practice sentences with **ea** words. Have the learner write them.

LESSON 91: (Long e as e-e; sentences)

Long e is also spelled **e/consonant/e** as in the words in this lesson. Note the exceptions: **there, where, were, eye**. **Eye** is one of the most irregular words in our written language. However, even in this case, the **y** suggests a **long i**. The distinctive spelling of the word makes it easy to learn and distinguish from its homonyms. Have the learner read the practice sentences.

LESSON 92: (Long e as ie; sentences)

Long e is also spelled **ie** as in the words in this lesson. Note the exceptions, **friend** and **receive**. **Friend** rhymes with **blend**, and **receive** reminds us of the rule “**i** before **e** except after **c**.” Have the learner read the practice sentences.

LESSON 93: (Long e as y)

This particular spelling form is usually found at the end of words as shown in the lesson. Note these irregular pronunciations: **pretty** rhymes with **city**; **busy** rhymes with **dizzy**; **money** rhymes with **sunny**; **any** and **many** rhyme with **penny**; **key** rhymes with **me**.

LESSON 94: (Long e as y sentences)

Practice sentences with **long e** as **y**. Have the learner write them.

LESSON 95: (Plural **ies**)

Teach the learner that when a word ending in **long e** as **y** is made plural, the correct spelling is **ies**. With verbs ending in **y**, we also apply the **ies** spelling change; for example, “I study often,” “He studies often.” Have the learner study the words in this lesson. Make up practice sentences.

LESSON 96: (Review of **long e** words)

Review of **long e** words in variant **long e** spellings.

LESSON 97: (Long e sentences)

and write the practice sentences. Also have the learner decode the two-syllable words.

LESSON 119: (Words ending in **le**; words with silent **t**; sentences)

Many common two-syllable words in English have an **le** ending in which the **l** sound terminates the word. Expand the learner's reading vocabulary with the words in this lesson. Note the silent **t** in **hustle**, **bustle**, and **rustle**. Also have the learner read and write the practice sentences.

LESSON 120: (Additional **f** as **ph** words)

The learner has already been introduced to **ph** as representing the "**f**" sound. This lesson has additional words for the learner to become familiar with.

LESSON 121: ("**sh**" as **ti**, **ssi**, **ci**, **ce**, **sci**, **xi**, **su**, **ssu**;
"**zh**" as **si**, **su**; and "**ch**" as **tu**, **ti**; sentences)

These words are of Latin derivation, but their pronunciations have been anglicized. Note **zh** as a separate and distinct consonant sound, like the French "**je**," without its own spelling form in English. Have the learner read and write all of the words and sentences in this lesson and note the correct spellings.

LESSON 122: (Additional **n** as **kn** words)

The learner has already been introduced to several words in which the **kn** represents the **n** sound, as in **knee**. Familiarize the learner with the other **kn** words in this lesson.

LESSON 123: (**m** as **mb**; **t** as **bt**)

There is a spelling group in which **mb** stands for the **m** sound. Expand the learner's reading vocabulary with the words in this lesson. Also note that **bt** is pronounced as **t** in **debt** and **doubt**. The **b** in these words is silent.

LESSON 124: (Silent **h**)

There probably was a time when the **h** in these words was pronounced. But now it is not. Familiarize the learner with these words. In the **gh** words, teach **gh** as representing the **g** sound as in **go**.

LESSON 125: (**r** as **wr**)

Introduce consonant digraph **wr** as representing the **r** sound. Expand the learner's reading vocabulary with the **wr** words in this lesson.

LESSON 126: (**s** as **st**; **f** as **ft**)

Practice sentences with **long e** words. Have the learner write them.

LESSON 98: (Long **i** as **I**, **y**, **ie**, and **uy**; sentences)

Introduce the **long i** sound and its several variant spellings: **y**, **ie**, and **uy**. Teach the learner these variant spellings. Introduce the letter **I** as a word. Have the learner read the sentences and write them for spelling practice.

LESSON 99: (Long **i** as **i-e**; sentences)

Introduce the **long i** spelling form **i/consonant/e**. Have the learner read all of the spelling families in this lesson. Note the irregular words **isle** and **aisle**, **give** and **live**, and **knife**. Have the learner read and write the practice sentences.

LESSON 100: (Long **i** as **igh**; sentences)

We find this archaic spelling in some of our most common words. Expand the learner's reading vocabulary to include the words in this lesson. Also, have the learner read the practice sentences and write them.

After completing Lesson 100, the learner should be able to read Book 8 of the First Readers.

LESSON 101: (Spelling forms **ough** and **augh**)

Introduce the archaic spelling forms **ough** and **augh**, representing the "au" sound, by teaching the common words in this lesson. Note the irregular pronunciation of **though** ("tho"). These words are generally easy to learn because of their distinctive spelling. Have the learner read the practice sentences, make up others, and write them.

LESSON 102: (**f** as **gh**)

Introduce **gh** as another way the **f** sound is spelled. Expand the learner's reading vocabulary to include the words in this lesson. Note that the **ou** in **rough** and **tough** is pronounced as **short u**; the **au** in **laugh** is pronounced as **short a**. Have the learner read the practice sentences and write them.

LESSON 103: (Long **o** as **o-e**)

Introduce the **long o** sound. The most common spelling for **long o** is **o/consonant/e**. Expand the learner's reading vocabulary to include the words in this lesson. Point out the irregular words in their particular spelling families: **soul**, **come**, **some**, **one**, **once**, **none**, **done**, **gone**, **lose**, **whose**, **move**, **prove**, **dove**, **love**, **glove**, and **shove**. Note that in column 5 **close** is listed twice. The first is pronounced as in "close the door." The second is pronounced as in "stand close to the door."

LESSON 104: (Long o sentences)

Practice sentences with **long o** words spelled with **o/consonant/e**. Have the learner write them.

LESSON 105: (Long o as **oa**; sentences)

Expand the learner's reading vocabulary to include the words in this lesson. Note irregular words **broad, source, court,** and **course**. Have the learner read and write the practice sentences.

LESSON 106: (Long o as **ow**; sentences)

This is the third way **long o** is spelled. Expand the learner's reading vocabulary to include the words in this lesson. Note irregular words **owe, dough,** and **though**. Have the learner read and write the practice sentences.

LESSON 107: (Long o as in **old**; sentences)

Expand the learner's reading vocabulary to include the words in this lesson. Note the irregular words **cost** and **lost**. Have the learner read and write the practice sentences.

LESSON 108: (Common irregular words)

It is best to teach these words in the context of the practice sentences. Explain that **to, too,** and **two** all sound alike but have different meanings. **Too** is regular, while **to** and **two** are not. **Do, who,** and **you** rhyme with **too; youth** rhymes with **tooth; young** rhymes with **sung**. Have the learner write the sentences for spelling practice.

LESSON 109: (**oo** as in **good food**)

Introduce the two sounds of **oo** as in **good food**. Expand the learner's reading vocabulary to include the words in this lesson. Note irregular words: **boor, poor, moor** rime with **lure; door** and **floor** rhyme with **more**; and **flood** and **blood** rhyme with **mud**. Note also the irregular spelling of **soup** and **group**.

LESSON 110: (Sentences with **oo** words)

Have the learner read and write the sentences with **oo** words.

LESSON 111: (Spelling form **ould**; sentences)

Introduce the archaic spelling **ould** which sounds like "**ood**" in **wood**. Expand the learner's reading vocabulary to include these common words and their contractions. Have the learner read and write the practice sentences.

LESSON 112: (**ow** and **ou** as in **cow** and **ouch**)

Introduce **ow** and **ou** as in **cow** and **ouch**. Explain that **ow** stands not only for **long o** in one set of words (see Lesson 106), but also stands for the **ow** sound as in **cow** in another large set of words. Most of these words are quite common, and therefore the learner will have little trouble determining which sound applies. The irregulars in this group are **touch, doubt, rough, tough, enough, wound** (injure) **youth, four, pour, tour, your, fourth, and mourn.**”

LESSON 113: (Sentences with **ow, ou** words)

Have the learner read and write the sentences in this lesson.

LESSON 114: (**oy** as in **boy**; **oi** as in **oil**; sentences)

Introduce the **oy, oi** sound as in **boy** and **oil**. Expand the learner’s reading vocabulary to include the words in this lesson. See if he or she can figure out or decode the two-syllable words. Have the learner read the practice sentences, make up more if desired, and write them.

LESSON 115: (**Long u** as **u-e**; sentences)

Introduce the **long u** sound and its most common spelling form, **u/consonant/e**. Give examples by pronouncing such words as **use, June, cube, mule**. Expand the learner’s reading vocabulary with the words in this lesson. Note the **sh** pronunciation of **s** in **sure**. Have the learner read and write the practice sentences.

LESSON 116: (**Long u** as **ue** and **ui**; sentences)

The **long u** is also spelled **ue** and **ui**. Expand the learner’s reading vocabulary with these **ue, ui** words. Have the learner read and write the practice sentences.

LESSON 117: (**Long u** as **ew** and **eu**; sentences)

The **long u** is also spelled **ew** and **eu**. Expand the learner’s reading vocabulary with the words in this lesson. Note the irregular pronunciation of **sew** which rhymes with **grow**. Also note the irregular **through**. Have the learner read and write the practice sentences.

After completing Lesson 117, the learner should be able to read Book 9 of the First Readers.

LESSON 118: (**er, ir, or, ur, ear**; sentences)

The “**er**” sound group has a variety of spellings: **er, ir, or, ur, ear**. Note the general interchangeability of spellings in this sound group. The correct spellings, however, are best learned in spelling families. Have the learner read

Introduce **st** as representing the **s** sound and **ft** as representing the **f** sound, as in **wrestle**, **often**, and the other words in this lesson. Expand the learner's vocabulary to include these new words.

LESSON 127: (k as ch; s as ps)

Introduce **ch** as a variant spelling of the **k** sound as shown in this group of words. Introduce **ps** as representing the **s** sound, as in **psyche**.

LESSON 128: (y as short i)

Introduce **y** as **short i** as in the words in this lesson. Most of these words are of Greek origin.

After completing Lesson 128, the learner should be able to read Book 10 of the First Readers. Book 11 contains poems and songs for the enjoyment of the learner.

What Comes After Alpha-Phonics?

With the completion of the final lesson, the learner is now ready to start reading any suitable outside literature. Some learners will require continued review of the alphabetic system in order to achieve reading and spelling mastery. Learners should read and write as much as possible in order to hone their academic skills.

English literature, vocabulary development, grammar, composition, are what come next after learning to read. Achieving high literary requires learning everything that will make a student a master of his or her own language. Children, of course, teach themselves to speak their own language virtually from birth without the help of certified teachers. That's a remarkable learning achievement. But that self-taught vocabulary is limited and can only be expanded by reading great authors and their masterpieces.

As for classroom reading, it is recommended the teacher use a variety of good poetry, fiction and nonfiction texts that will stimulate the learner's appetite for the printed word. Libraries offer the young reader a tremendous variety of books on all subjects.

Children particularly enjoy reading such popular adventure and mystery series as the Hardy Boys, Nancy Drew and the Henty books. These books create a voracious reading appetite and set a healthy pattern for life-long pleasure reading.

At this point it is important to get learners into the habit of using the dictionary to look up the words they do not understand. That is the only way to increase one's reading and speaking vocabulary. Too many learners retard their own intellectual growth by never bothering to look up the words they don't understand. The student must learn that there is no shortcut to vocabulary development, without which true literacy is impossible to achieve.

Incidentally, never assume that a learner knows the meaning of a word merely because he can read it. When in doubt, ask the learner to define it.

Be on the lookout for good reading material for your learners. Once the learner realizes how much of real value can be found in the written word, reading will become an important part of that individual's life.

About the Author

Samuel L. Blumenfeld is undoubtedly one of the world's leading authorities on the teaching of reading. He has spent the last 40 years writing on American education and has lectured and held seminars in all fifty states and in Canada, England, Australia, and New Zealand. Mr. Blumenfeld is the author of *The New Illiterates*, *How to Tutor*, *Homeschooling: A Parent's Guide to Teaching Children*, and five other books on education. His articles have appeared in numerous publications, including *Vital Speeches*, *American Education*, *Home School Digest*, and *Practical Homeschooling*. Mr. Blumenfeld is widely quoted for his authoritative views on literacy and reading instruction and has been a guest on hundreds of radio and television talk shows.

After graduating from the City College of New York in 1950, Mr. Blumenfeld studied at the Sorbonne in Paris. On his return to the U.S., he entered the book publishing industry where he worked at Rinehart and Company, World Publishing Company, The Viking Press, and Grosset and Dunlap, where he served as editor of the Universal Library quality paperback series. He also served as chairman of the Massachusetts branch of the Reading Reform Foundation for twenty years. Mr. Blumenfeld has taught in public and private schools and has tutored extensively.

In 1983, Mr. Blumenfeld created his phonetic reading system, *Alpha-Phonics: A Primer for Beginning Readers*, which, since its publication, has achieved enormous popularity among homeschoolers in the United States and abroad. His direct, simple, logical method has taught thousands of children and adults to read. *Blumenfeld's Alpha-Phonics* is the culmination of years of experience and research in finding the most effective way to teach reading.