

**State of Israel  
Ministry of Education  
English Inspectorate**

**Guidelines for the Teaching of English  
at the Pre-Foundation Level**



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## **Acknowledgements**

Lisa Amdur, Coordinator of Curriculum Committee, Ministry of Education

Dr. Elisheva Barkon, Oranim, Academic College of Education

Ora Gvirsman, Hadar Elementary School

Michele Horowitz, Levinsky College of Education

Dr. Sarah Schrire, Kibbutzim College of Education, Arts, and Technology

Dr. Judy Steiner, Chief Inspector for English Language Education

Nira Trumper-Hecht, Kibbutzim College of Education, Arts, and Technology

## **Read and commented**

Aharona Korman Gvaryahu, National Counselor for Learners with Learning Disabilities  
and Special Needs, Ministry of Education

Fran Sokel, Regional Inspector for English, Ministry of Education

## **Table of Contents**

Foreword	4
Introduction to the Pre-Foundation Benchmarks	5
MUSTS for Teaching at the Pre-Foundation Level	8
Pre-Foundation Benchmarks and Suggestions for Teaching and Assessing	10
Class Progress Chart	16

**Guidelines for the Teaching of English  
at the Pre-Foundation Level**

**Foreword**

This document defines the benchmarks and provides the guidelines for the teaching of English at the pre-foundation level. The primary focus of instruction at this level is on establishing aural/oral skills which later form the basis of success in reading and writing. The benchmarks for the pre-foundation level define what pupils need to know and are able to do in the initial stages of language acquisition. These include extended aural/oral practice and the development and consolidation of basic alphabetical knowledge. A smooth transition to the foundation level is contingent on following the stages outlined in these pre-foundation benchmarks.

This document consists of four parts:

- introduction to the pre-foundation benchmarks
- a list of 'musts' for teaching at the foundation level and the rationale for each
- benchmarks accompanied by suggestions for instruction and assessment
- a table for monitoring student progress

## **Introduction to the Pre-Foundation Benchmarks**

The pre-foundation benchmarks comprise two stages: (a) reading readiness and (b) beginning reading and writing, both forming the basis for the transition to the foundation level. While teachers should ensure that pupils achieve each and every one of the pre-foundation benchmarks, they should also allow for individual differences in the rate of progress.

The benchmarks are presented in a linear progression mainly to facilitate explicit instruction, however it should be kept in mind that language development does not necessarily follow a rigid sequence and there may also be natural overlap of some of the benchmarks. Furthermore, progression may not always be constantly forward; some pupils may take two steps forward and then one step backward.

As success in reading and writing rests on a sound base in aural/oral skills, it is recommended that an extended amount of classroom time be spent on intensive aural/oral work prior to explicit reading and writing instruction. Exposure to rich input and practice with familiar and new language should also continue parallel to reading and writing instruction.

Together with aural/oral instruction teachers should also create a print-rich environment. This provides exposure to the shapes of letters, spaces between words, directionality, orthographic patterns and high frequency sight words which all heighten the awareness of where words begin and end as well as the position of sounds within words. It is recommended that teachers have an abundance and variety of printed materials available in the classroom which are referred to frequently. These include alphabet charts, bulletin boards, labeled objects, posted signs, posters, word walls, story books, pupils' names and birthdates.

Finally the introduction of children's literature into classroom teaching is also highly recommended as it plays two major roles at the pre-foundation level. Exposure to literature provides opportunities to become familiar with language patterns, vocabulary, stress, rhythm, and intonation. Furthermore it acquaints pupils with cultures and enhances appreciation of literary works.

The benchmarks for the level of pre-foundation are divided into two main stages: (1) reading readiness, and (2) beginning reading and writing. The stage of readiness includes the following: (1) aural/oral and (2) alphabets. The stage of beginning reading and writing includes the following: (1) decoding and encoding, (2) writing, and (3) fluency. These are described below.

## **READING READINESS**

In the present document reading readiness refers to establishing both an aural/oral language base and providing explicit instruction in alphabets (letter sound correspondence).

### ***Aural/oral stage***

This stage is comprised of: (a) listening and speaking and (b) phonemic awareness, segmentation and blending.

Listening and speaking: Pupils are taking their first steps in learning lexical items and basic sentence patterns. Teachers should engage pupils in activities such as listening to stories and songs. Pupils should also be encouraged to repeat words, lexical chunks and sentences, sing songs and recite chants.

Phonemic awareness, segmentation and blending: Pupils are attending to the distinctive sounds of the language and its intonation, learning to recognize, segment and blend sounds that combine to make meaningful words. Teachers should engage pupils in activities that draw attention to individual sounds and their positions in different words as well as provide opportunities for sound manipulation.

### ***Alphabets stage***

Pupils are learning the names and shapes of letters, their sounds, as well as the correspondence between them. They are attending to sound patterns, letter sequences and common letter combinations. Teachers should engage pupils in intensive practice of letter recognition and formation.

## **BEGINNING READING AND WRITING**

Reading at the pre-foundation level includes: (a) decoding and encoding, (b) writing and (c) fluency.

Decoding and encoding refers to the ability to break up words into their components and create words by combining components. The ability to decode and encode allows the pupil to eventually recognize words without effort, thus leading to automaticity in reading. Automaticity enables readers to focus attention on meaning construction - a crucial goal in reading instruction. Automaticity is made possible through the building of sight vocabulary of high-frequency words and lexical chunks. This requires focusing attention on decoding and encoding through ample practice with the reading of easy, interesting and relevant texts with no unfamiliar vocabulary and writing activities that support or focus on how lexical items are spelled.

Writing is combined with reading instruction. Pupils need to continuously engage in writing tasks that support reading. Both processes focus on letters and sounds and therefore reinforce awareness of spelling patterns and automatic recognition of words. In addition to writing that focuses on encoding, aural/oral practice familiarizing pupils with more language must continue.

Fluency refers to the ability to read with appropriate phrasing, expression, pace and intonation (i.e., prosody). More explicitly, it refers to the ability to process language in lexical chunks/phrases rather than word by word, thus increasing intelligibility. Fluency development forms the bridging link between decoding and comprehension. In general, fluency is gained through exposure, observation, and practice. Teachers should engage pupils in listening activities that draw awareness to lexical chunks, and reading aloud with appropriate phrasing, expression, pace and intonation after having received adequate opportunities for rehearsal.

Pupils who have a sound base in the skills described in the pre-foundation benchmarks will be able to direct attention to developing reading comprehension. To ensure this sound base, pupils require extensive practice in reading texts with familiar vocabulary suited to their level. In addition, they need exposure to texts at a higher level than those they are able to read independently in order to encounter a wider vocabulary and range of grammatical patterns.

## ***MUSTS*** **for Teaching at the Pre-Foundation Level**

	<b>Must</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
1	Ensure a period of listening and speaking (aural-oral) practice prior to the teaching of reading. Allow one year prior to fourth grade or three to four months for those beginning in fourth grade.	Listening to and speaking English exposes learners to high-frequency topic vocabulary, lexical chunks and language patterns that will later form the basis of initial reading of simple texts.
2	Afford many opportunities for learners to listen to and recite rhymes, chants, songs, simple dialogues, etc.	Extensive repetition reinforces listening comprehension and speaking skills. It also creates an essential foundation for language learning.
3	Read aloud to model correct pronunciation and expression. Ensure that pupils practice stress, rhythm and intonation.	Reading aloud with correct pronunciation, stress, rhythm, chunking, and intonation facilitates comprehension.
4	Spend sufficient time focusing on the alphabetic code (both sounds and names of letters). Pupils need practice with letters in both upper and lower case.	Decoding and encoding require mastery of letter-sound correspondence. Sounding out, naming and forming letters constitute the foundations for reading and writing.
5	Provide pupils with extensive practice in reading previously learned lexical items (in the aural/oral stage) both in isolation and familiar texts.	Extensive practice with familiar texts builds automatic word and phrase recognition and contributes to the development of a large sight vocabulary (all necessary to free cognitive processes from decoding to 'meaning making').



***MUSTS***  
**for Teaching at the Pre-Foundation Level**  
**(continued)**

	<b>Must</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
6	Set vocabulary acquisition goals and ensure pupils achieve them by monitoring their progress.	Communication in general and reading comprehension in particular hinge on vocabulary knowledge.
7	Expose learners to varied text types and multiple texts to ensure the recycling and recontextualizing of previously learned lexical items.	Repeated encounters with lexical items in varied contexts (within and across texts) consolidate and enhance vocabulary knowledge.
8	Direct pupils' attention to the spelling of words, spelling patterns and rules. Engage pupils in extensive spelling practice.	Practicing spelling (encoding) facilitates decoding and draws awareness to spelling patterns and rules necessary both in reading and writing.
9	Create opportunities for learners to manipulate sounds and letters in writing their own words and texts.	Manipulation of sounds and letters allows for the internalization and application of alphabetic knowledge in reading and writing.
10	Introduce children's literature compatible with pupils' age and language knowledge at all stages of language instruction.	Exposure to literature nurtures literary and cultural appreciation and boosts motivation to learn the language.

## Pre-Foundation Benchmarks and Suggestions for Teaching and Assessing

READING READINESS	Benchmark	Sample Classroom Activities	Pupil Performance: Evidence of Achieving the Benchmark
	Pupils will be able to:	The teacher:	Pupils will achieve the benchmark when they:
<b>Aural / Oral Listening and Speaking</b>	understand and use language to carry out simple tasks and to engage in simple interactive activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• exposes pupils to repetitive patterns with variation through authentic storybooks (e.g. "The Gingerbread Man"). S/he has pupils join in the repetition of chunks of language (Run, run as fast as you can. You can't catch me, I'm the Gingerbread Man!)</li> <li>• reads stories interactively, encouraging pupils to predict, join in, and act out parts of the story, e.g. teacher / pupil begins the story and others continue.</li> <li>• encourages pupils to re-tell a story using chunks of language from the story or from previous knowledge.</li> <li>• encourages pupils to create variations and their own versions of a story/song orally or and/or in pictures.</li> <li>• encourages pupils to express their likes/dislikes of a story/song: I liked this story/song; I didn't like this story/song/chant because...</li> <li>• encourages pupils to follow simple instructions: open the book, join in, clap when you hear..., etc.</li> <li>• exploits an interactive print-rich environment for on-going activities.</li> <li>• communicates in English: short conversational dialogues / conversations, such as: Hello, Good Morning, How are you today?, I'm fine thank you.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• draw or arrange a sequence of pictures to represent a learned story and "read" it either individually or in small groups.</li> <li>• choose a picture and match it to what the teacher says.</li> <li>• complete a lexical chunk/phrase begun by the teacher.</li> <li>• arrange a picture puzzle of a learned story according to the order of events.</li> <li>• make a "copy cat" story book based on a story studied in class. This can be done individually, in groups or as a class activity.</li> <li>• participate in short dialogues / conversations and / or role plays.</li> </ul>

## Pre-Foundation Benchmarks and Suggestions for Teaching and Assessing (continued)

READING READINESS	Benchmark	Sample Classroom Activities	Pupil Performance: Evidence of Achieving the Benchmark
	Pupils will be able to:	The teacher:	Pupils will achieve the benchmark when they:
<b>Aural / Oral Phonemic Awareness, Segmentation and Blending</b>	identify the sound(s) of a letter as it appears in different positions and in different words e.g. /c/ or voiced / unvoiced sounds that are different phonemes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• plays the game “I spy”.</li> <li>• asks pupils: Whose name starts with the sound /b/? Who has the sound /d/ in their name? Whose name ends with /t/?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• listen to teacher say two words. Pupils raise their “happy faces” if the sounds are the same or their “sad faces” if they are different ☺ ☹</li> <li>• listen to teacher say two words. Pupils raise their “happy faces” if a given sound is in the same position or their “sad faces” if a given sound is in a different position ☺ ☹</li> </ul>
	manipulate sounds to play with words (add or remove from word).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• says the word “tap” and asks the pupils to replace the /t/ with /c/ and say the new word.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• listen to the word ‘tar’ and then the word “star” and are asked: What sound is added? /s/</li> <li>• listen to the word ‘star’ and are asked to add /t/. What is the new word?</li> <li>• listen to the word “start” and are asked to remove the final sound and say the word “star”.</li> </ul>

## Pre-Foundation Benchmarks and Suggestions for Teaching and Assessing (continued)

READING READINESS	Benchmark	Sample Classroom Activities	Pupil Performance: Evidence of Achieving the Benchmark
	Pupils will be able to:	The teacher:	Pupils will achieve the benchmark when they:
<b>Aural / Oral Phonemic Awareness, Segmentation and Blending</b> (continued)	segment word into: a. syllables b. onset and rime c. sounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shows a picture to class. While saying its name, s/he claps out the number of syllables. Question: How many syllables do you hear? Same activity can be done with pupils' names.</li> <li>• counts phonemes in a word. For example, k-a-t in 'cat'; b-a-ck in 'back', e-l-e-ph-a-n-t in 'elephant'.</li> <li>• shows a picture to class. While saying its name, claps out the number of syllables.</li> <li>• shows a one-syllable word to pupils such as "cat". While saying "cat", teacher asks "What sound does "cat" begin with? (the onset); pupils answer "ka". What is the end of "cat" (the rime); pupils answer "at". The teacher continues with other words that have onset and rime patterns such as man, can, fan; time, lime, rime, dime; ban, can, man, etc.</li> <li>• shows a picture/object to pupils and says the word, then asks the pupils to count the number of phonemes. For example, k-a-t in 'cat'; b-a-ck in 'back', e-l-e-ph-a-n-t in 'elephant'. Pupils are asked to choose a picture / object and do the same.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• listen to a word (cat) and are asked to raise the correct number of fingers corresponding to the number of sounds in the given word.</li> <li>• say the three sounds in the word "cat": /c/ /a/ /t/.</li> <li>• pupils identify pairs of words they hear according to either onsets or rimes.</li> </ul>
	blend sounds together	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reverses the activity presented in segmentation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• listen to a beginning sound /t/ and are asked to add it to the pattern /an/ to create the word "tan". They then add initial sounds (/p/, /r/, /f/, /m/, etc.) to the pattern /an/.</li> </ul>

## Pre-Foundation Benchmarks and Suggestions for Teaching and Assessing (continued)

READING READINESS	Benchmark	Sample Classroom Activities	Pupil Performance: Evidence of Achieving the Benchmark
	Pupils will be able to:	The teacher:	Pupils will achieve the benchmark when they:
<b>Alphabetics</b>	know the letters by their sounds, their names, and their shapes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>holds up a letter card and calls its name and says its sound.</li> <li>points to letters while pupils sing the ABC song.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>identify and say the names of the letters.</li> <li>identify letter after teacher says the name.</li> <li>identify letter after teacher says the sound.</li> </ul>
	form letters by copying correctly in the right direction and producing letters upon hearing their sounds/names.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>introduces letters, upper and lower case simultaneously. Each letter needs to be introduced separately or through letter combinations with ample practice, using an eclectic, multi-sensory approach.</li> <li>models correct formation of letters. Have pupils practice writing letters in a variety of ways: in the air, on the floor, in sand, on paper, on pupils' backs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>copy the letters.</li> <li>write the letters in the correct direction to match a sound given by the teacher.</li> </ul>
	use the letters to represent the oral sounds isolated from a stream of speech (letter-sound correspondence).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>encourages pupils to clap when they hear a particular sound within a particular word / chunk.</li> <li>has a bag with pictures or real objects, pulls out one, names it and asks pupils to say the first letter.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>listen to a word and match the initial, medial or final sound to a letter flashcard.</li> <li>hold up a letter flashcard and say its sound.</li> <li>say the sound of the letter and match it to the corresponding flashcard.</li> </ul>
	be aware of sound patterns, letter sequences and common letter combinations and be able to pronounce them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>practices aural discrimination of words that rhyme and words that do not.</li> <li>focuses attention to all positions in a word: initial, medial, final: hat-cat-fat; cat-cut, cat-cap.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>count rhyming words in a string of words produced by the teacher.</li> </ul>

## Pre-Foundation Benchmarks and Suggestions for Teaching and Assessing (continued)

READING AND WRITING	Benchmark	Sample Classroom Activities	Pupil Performance: Evidence of Achieving the Benchmark
	Pupils will be able to:	The teacher:	Pupils will achieve the benchmark when they:
<b>Decoding and Encoding</b>	automatically decode and encode lexical items.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• presents flashcards with words (beginning with one-syllable words and with transparent patterns and pupils read the word aloud / sound out the word.</li> <li>• writes down a text (word, sentence/s) suggested by pupil. Pupil then attempts to ‘read back’ his own text written by the teacher.</li> <li>• encourages pupils to send simple “buddy messages” to each other. (Happy Birthday! Have a good day! How are you?)</li> <li>• encourages the making of collaborative and individual books that remain in the classroom. Encourage pupils to read aloud from these books.</li> <li>• recycles vocabulary from the aural-oral stage to be used in reading and writing.</li> <li>• creates word/chunk walls where pupils review the words/chunks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• locate familiar words / chunks from previously read storybooks. Pupils will find the words: Brown Bear; What do you see?</li> <li>• find rhyming words or transparent patterns in a story read aloud or on a page presented.</li> <li>• point to correct word when uttered.</li> <li>• complete a chunk in writing.</li> <li>• complete and alter frame sentences: A bird flies. A bee flies. A butterfly flies.</li> <li>• prepare a ‘lexifolio’ – a portfolio including words / lexical chunks chosen by the pupil, e.g. words the pupil likes, words the pupil found difficult, etc. From the lexifolio the pupil may also create a dictionary copying words from the lexifolio into the dictionary.</li> </ul>
<b>Writing</b>	write letters and words according to sounds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• encourages pupils to write words that rhyme and read them out loud.</li> <li>• encourages pupils to write words that can be grouped in a number of ways, such as by rhyming, spelling patterns and by topic.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• keep a writing notebook to track their writing progress throughout the year, including letter and letter combination practice, words and chunks.</li> </ul>

## Pre-Foundation Benchmarks and Suggestions for Teaching and Assessing (continued)

READING AND WRITING	Benchmark	Sample Classroom Activities	Pupil Performance: Evidence of Achieving the Benchmark
	Pupils will be able to:	The teacher:	Pupils will achieve the benchmark when they:
<b>Fluency</b>	read with the appropriate expression, pace and intonation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• models reading aloud with correct pronunciation, stress, rhythm and intonation, with emphasis on position of lips, mouth, and tongue.</li> <li>• introduces vocabulary that will enable class discussion (and pupil writing) about books. Some examples include: page, cover, title, author, paragraph, sentence, word, letter.</li> <li>• models sentences that differentiate between the period, question mark and exclamation point at the end of a sentence.</li> <li>• has pupils identify which punctuation mark is used by the tone of voice.</li> <li>• encourages pupils to say (and dictate) sentences using appropriate intonation based on the punctuation marks.</li> <li>• provides ample opportunities to practice reading easy texts in pairs, along with the teacher and individually focusing on correct pronunciation and prosody.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• read aloud a short, familiar text with appropriate chunking, pace, intonation and expression.</li> </ul>

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## Class Progress Chart

**Name of School:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Name of Teacher:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Class:** \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Pupil	READING READINESS							READING AND WRITING			
	Listening and Speaking	Phonemic Awareness, Segmentation and Blending				Alphabetics			Encoding and Decoding	Writing	Fluency
		Understands and uses language to carry out simple tasks and to engage in simple interactive activities	Identifies the sound(s) of a letter as it appears in different positions and in different words	Manipulates sounds to play with words (add or remove from word)	Segments word into: (a) syllables, (b) onset and rime and (c) sounds	Blends sounds together	Knows the letters by their sounds, their names and their shapes	Forms letters by copying correctly in the right direction and producing letters upon hearing their sounds/names			
Yossi	10/3	11/1									
Sara	10/10	11/5									
Dina	10/7	11/2									