



State of Israel
Ministry of Education
The Pedagogical Secretariat
Languages Department
Inspectorate for English Language Education



The Building Blocks Literacy Program

A step-by-step guide to teaching reading in the Israeli elementary EFL classroom

Welcome! This program shows you how to teach English reading to young learners, one clear step at a time. It is built from three building blocks that stack on top of each other: children first learn to hear the sounds of English, then to connect those sounds to letters, and finally to read smoothly and with meaning. Each building block has its own presentation with activities, examples and further reading, and this document ties the whole path together.

How the program works

Reading grows in order: sound - letter - fluency. The building blocks follow the word-recognition strand of Scarborough's Reading Rope, so skills become automatic and free children's minds to focus on understanding. Teach the blocks in sequence, and keep revisiting earlier skills as you go.

BUILDING BLOCKS 1 OF 3

Curriculum level: Pre-A1

Phonological Awareness Through Structured Practice

The goal: Develop the oral language and sound-processing skills that prepare children for reading. Everything is done by ear, playfully, with no letters yet.

What children learn

- Feel rhythm and clap syllables, and hear and make rhymes.
- Hear the first, middle and last sounds in spoken words.
- Blend spoken sounds into words, and break words back into sounds.
- Tell English sounds apart, moving from bigger sound units to single sounds - phonemic awareness grows out of phonological awareness.

Tips!

- Keep it oral, playful and short every day, using songs, movement and stories.
- Remember young EFL learners are meeting a new sound system: give extra listening for English sounds missing from their first language (for example /b/ vs /p/, /v/ vs /w/), and use minimal pairs.
- Give instructions in the pupils' L1 when helpful, but keep the sounds in English.

See the full presentation: *Building Blocks 1 - Phonological Awareness Through Structured Practice*

BUILDING BLOCKS 2 OF 3

Curriculum level: Pre-A1 and A1

Orthographic Patterns & Sight Words

The goal: connect the sounds children can now hear to the letters and patterns on the page, and build a bank of words they recognise instantly through automatic recognition.

What students learn:

- The main English spelling patterns, such as closed syllables (*cat, hop*), the silent-e pattern (*cake, ride*), and digraphs and vowel teams (*ship, rain*).
- How a word becomes a sight word - by mapping its sounds to its letters (orthographic mapping) until it is read from memory in an instant.
- Word parts that carry meaning: prefixes and suffixes, inflectional endings (-s, -ed, -ing), syllable types and word families.
- That reading and spelling are two sides of one coin, so decoding and encoding are taught together.

Tips!

- Teach each pattern explicitly with clear examples, drawing words from the Pre-Band 1 and Band 1 vocabulary lists.
- Practise with games and plenty of reading and writing, and give attention to sounds that are tricky for Hebrew and Arabic speakers (for example /i:/ vs /ɪ/ in *feel* and *fill*).
- Assess across all five skills - phoneme-grapheme knowledge, patterns, sight words, fluency and comprehension - not reading speed alone.

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Chief Inspector for Elementary English Language Education

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See the full presentation: *Building Blocks 2- Teaching Orthographic Patterns and Sight Words*.

BUILDING BLOCKS 3 OF 3

Curriculum level: A1

Reading Fluency; The Path to Comprehension

The goal: Practise until reading is smooth, accurate and expressive. Fluency is the bridge between recognising words and understanding what they mean.

Fluency does not stand alone: it is built on the child's language knowledge - the vocabulary, sentence patterns and background knowledge they already hold in spoken English. Its purpose is not speed for its own sake but reading comprehension: fluent, automatic reading is what frees the mind to think about meaning. For EFL learners, oral language must keep growing alongside every fluency step.

What children learn:

- That fluent reading is accuracy, rate and expression together - not just speed.
- That reading the words automatically frees the mind to think about the meaning.

Ten Practical Steps to Promote Reading Fluency

1. Model fluent reading.
2. Pre-teach new vocabulary.
3. Investigate words together (roots, prefixes, suffixes, tense).
4. Investigate sentences (how they are built, cause and effect).
5. Use repeated reading to build automaticity and pace.
6. Use multi-modal reading - choral, shared and shadowed.
7. Give short, targeted feedback, then an immediate re-read.
8. Work on spelling and orthographic patterns.
9. Try theatrical reading to build prosody and expression.
10. Finish with distancing - applying the skill to a brand-new text.

See the full presentation: *Building Blocks 3 - Reading Fluency*.

Putting it all together

Teach the three building blocks in order, and keep coming back to earlier skills as children grow. Small, playful steps every day build confident readers: first they hear it, then they decode it, and finally they read it fluently - the complete path from sound to meaning.