# Activities for Bottom-Level Skills Development

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<th>Activity ideas</th>
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<td><strong>Phonemic practice</strong></td>
<td><strong>Phonics/spelling practice</strong></td>
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<td>o Use listening practice to differentiate specific phonemes, words containing the taught phonemes, spelling patterns, and sight words.</td>
<td>o Use manipulatives such as letters on index cards, refrigerator magnet letters, or toy block letters and have students make letters or words they hear. You can also create a fun manipulative using Legos. Write letters on the sides of the Legos and have students form words by putting Lego pieces together (see <a href="http://thisreadingmama.com/spelling-with-lego-letters">http://thisreadingmama.com/spelling-with-lego-letters</a>). See Chapter 11 for more activities.</td>
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<td>o Give frequent dictation practice involving specific phonemes, words containing the taught phonemes, spelling patterns, and sight words.</td>
<td>o Give each student a white board for dictation practice, and have them write what they hear. You can dictate words or sentences. Make sure you don’t over-accentuate or say the sentence too slowly. If working on one word, you can also practice phonemic addition, deletion, and substitution (e.g., write top, then write stop, then write step).</td>
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<td>o Practice recognizing and producing minimal pairs, orally and aurally.</td>
<td>o Print out minimal pair words and have students hold up the one they hear. Have students take turns saying one while other students vote on what they have heard. This works on both oral and aural acquisition of the sound.</td>
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<td>o Practice recognizing and producing rime/onset patterns and rhymes.</td>
<td>o Create a word family wall (e.g., list of words that begin with st–, list of words that end in –at; for more activities, see Chapter 1).</td>
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<td>o Develop grapheme knowledge of all of the phonemes taught—decode and encode. o Practice decoding and encoding words that are consistent with phonics rules.</td>
<td>o Play a fly swatter game with all the letters of the alphabet on the board haphazardly arranged. Say a sound and have students swat the corresponding letter. First one to swat the letter wins. (grapheme knowledge) o Have all students come up to the board (each given a little space and something to write with). Dictate words and have students write them down. At the count of three, everyone turns around and compares the answers. If you don’t have enough board space, it can also be done with individual white boards and students sitting in a circle. (encoding) o Have different words printed on paper and taped around the room. Say the words and have students run to the right word. If you have a lot of students and have room in the classroom, you can have multiple words at different locations to avoid overcrowding. (decoding)</td>
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- Develop spelling rules starting with basic consonants, vowels, and syllables.
- Introduce word stress rules, and practice hearing and applying them to all new words.
- Introduce simple morphemes (e.g., s, ing, ly, un), and practice attaching them to words that have been learned with special attention to word stress.

- Practice blending CC and CCC words (see Chapters 1 and 7 for more information on consonant clusters).

- Develop a list of sight words that are necessary but for which the phonics rules do not apply.

- Chant and add additional letters to consonant blends (e.g., ing, ring, pring, spring) while keeping to a beat. It’s okay to practice with nonsense words because the key is pronouncing them correctly while keeping to the beat.

- Create a word wall. A fun idea is to do this with a most frequently used word list (e.g., General Service List, Dolch Words, Fry’s List) and rank them (section for 1–500 commonly used words, 501–1000 commonly used words, etc.)

- For words that are harder to memorize, students can draw pictures to depict the words and create a word art wall. This works especially well for visual learners.

Activities for Mid-Level Skills Development

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<td>- Develop awareness of thought groups and collocations through listening, reading, and pronunciation activities.</td>
<td>- Use resources such as jazz chants, poetry, nursery rhymes, and simple dialogues to practice combining and connecting longer pieces of speech. While listening to the teacher recite the passage, students can mark their copy with the appropriate thought groups and collocations. Students practice by doing choral (whole class reading together) and shadow readings (reading in a quiet voice immediately following the teacher).</td>
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<td>- Teach syllable division rules, and apply stress rules and vowel lengthening and reduction rules to multisyllabic words (see Chapter 2 for more ideas).</td>
<td>- Students must first be able to hear the syllable beats that occur in words. Say a word and have students vote with their fingers the number of syllables they hear. Teach students the rules using a spelling book as a resource.</td>
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<td>- Practice morphemic additions to words, and apply stress rules and vowel lengthening and reduction rules to multisyllabic words.</td>
<td>- Group new words on a chart by the number of syllables and the syllable stress patterns. (e.g., three syllables with the middle stress syllable: ● ● ●, three syllables with the initial stress syllable: ● ● ●; for more activity suggestions, see Chapters 1 and 2).</td>
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Higher Level Reading Skills Development

Higher-level reading skills, also called top-down skills, apply cognitive faculties developed through life and educational experiences. Top-down skills incorporate background knowledge, inferencing, predicting, categorizing, and critical thinking to analyze the text. In order to perform these higher order thinking skills, cognitive resources must be freed up. Students with well-developed bottom-up skills can “activate [the] pronunciation and meaning immediately in memory [which allows them] . . . to focus their attention on comprehension rather than word recognition” (Ehri, 2014, p. 5). To reiterate, the critical point to make in this chapter is that automaticity of the lower and mid-level skills allow the brain to devote more cognitive resources to these higher order thinking skills that are critical if a learner is to move beyond basic word interpretation reading. An emphasis on these upper level skills without developing the lower and mid-level skills can lead to frustration and discouragement with the reading process. Often, the lower and mid-level skills are dismissed as beginner skills and are not addressed in intermediate and advanced classes. The bottom-up reading strategies are no longer limited to the early stages of reading, but should be a crucial component of good reading instruction at all levels (Nassaji, 2003; Walter, 2008). If an advanced L2 learner is struggling with reading comprehension, it is most likely the breakdown or gaps in the lower and mid-level skills that hinder phonological processing required to access the long-term memory.

Further Reading


References


