

# HOW TO SET UP AN ADULT BEGINNING READING PROGRAM

Research says adult nonreaders in general lack phonemic and decoding skills. The necessary instruction to fill in that gap is impossible to deliver in a large, multi-level, ABE class. This model is proposed to bring students to competency in decoding as quickly as possible so they can be successful in ABE classes. The instruction can be done by a trained teacher or tutor, but the key is to be trained.

1. Use a good decoding program.
  - a. Intensive—main concentration of the class
  - b. Systematic—no “sound of the day” or “I think he needs to learn ‘ch’”
  - c. Efficient—quick, get students to decoding competence as quickly as possible so they can move successfully into ABE classes
  - d. Easy to learn to deliver effectively
  - e. Inexpensive—always important in education
2. Assemble a list of potential students.

Those unable to fill out intake forms  
Referred by ABE teacher  
Referred by ESL teacher, able to speak English  
Referred by friends
3. Assess students individually.

ABCD placement test  
Jordan word ID test  
Read from ABCD student manuals to help determine placement in program.
4. Form a group of three to five (as many as can fit around your table and you can reach each of them).

Group students according to where they need to begin work in your decoding program. Students **MUST** be able to work at the same level and hopefully progress at about the same speed.
5. Structure of lessons  
Review/practice letter/sound combinations.  
Spelling—using Sequential Spelling for Adults, reinforces decoding  
ABCD lesson for phonemic and decoding skills instruction  
TALK OF THE BLOCK—contextualized reading practice; comprehension work; learning to read and answer questions carefully; writing answers to questions (Students are able to begin TALK OF THE BLOCK lessons within a few weeks of starting beginning reading class.) See Materials section for other practice reading suggestions.

CRAZY CARDS—practice target letter/sound combinations in current lesson and have fun! Facilitates group building and friendships.

6. Measuring Progress

This is the big issue to be solved. TABE E is too difficult to be sensitive to early learning gains. Possibilities to explore are using the GAIN or the CASAS, both of which are acceptable and may be able to show the progress beginning readers are making.

Meanwhile, the lack of appropriate testing may be at the heart of the lack of available classes for beginning readers. Funders are unlikely to back proposals with no means of measuring success.

7. Essential Ingredients

- a. The right TABLE—teacher needs to be able to reach each student's reading material to be able to help figure out words. (28X56 is perfect for 5 Ss and the teacher.)
- b. Meet two times per week for at least 1½ -2 hours
- c. Patience—teacher and other students must give each student time to figure out words, rather than jump in quickly and provide answer or help.
- d. Encourage students to explain how they understand something to other students.
- e. Encourage students to help each other—before, during and after class—but be sure they understand that doesn't mean just providing the answers.
- f. Respect—your students are adults and should be treated as such. Always remember the courage it has taken for them to try one more time, to risk embarrassment and humiliation again.

Please feel free to contact us with questions, concerns and suggestions, and to join with a support group of others teaching beginning adult readers in Philadelphia.

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