

CONTENT-FOCUSED PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Tools for fostering early word recognition

One hurdle for young students who are beginning to read is learning letter names, shapes, and sounds. To help students master these arbitrary pairings between letter shape and letter sound, using letter-embedded mnemonics has been found to be more effective than using letters on their own or letters accompanied by a picture.¹

NWEA® has created a set of embedded mnemonics to share as a part of the tools and resources available with the [Early Word Recognition professional learning offering](#).

What's an embedded mnemonic?

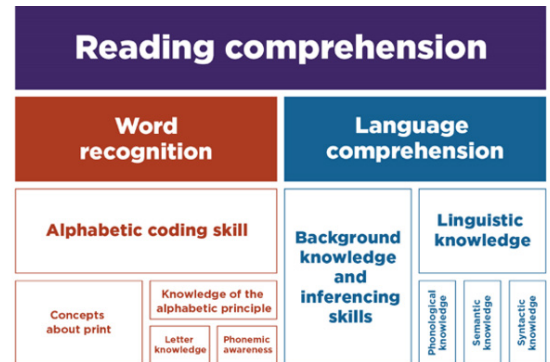
An embedded mnemonic is an image in the shape of a letter. The image typically shows an object that begins with the target sound of the letter. For example, the image of an apple can be made into the shape of the lowercase letter a. This associates the sound (/ă/) at the beginning of the target object (apple) with the letter shape (lowercase a). Six sample embedded mnemonics are included on the back of this flier.

How can embedded mnemonics help letter shapes and sounds stick?

Research has found that embedded mnemonics are helpful for readers in the prealphabetic phase who are transitioning into the partial alphabetic phase. By using embedded mnemonics during the introduction of a new letter-sound correspondence, the learner links the letter's sound to the letter's shape in their memory. These research findings have been replicated across decades and in various languages.



Learn more about NWEA's full suite of literacy-focused professional learning services at nwea.us/EWR



The Cognitive Foundations Framework

Source: Concept for graphic based on Wesley A. Hoover and William E. Tunmer, "The Primacy of Science in Communicating Advances in the Science of Reading," *Reading Research Quarterly* 57, no. 2, 399-408, <https://doi.org/10.1002/rrq.446>.

“What makes letter-mnemonics such as these so memorable? The key ingredient is the special relationship linking letter shapes to the objects that they resemble and that have names beginning with those letters.”

—Dr. Linnea C. Ehri³

¹ Linnea C. Ehri, "What Teachers Need to Know and Do to Teach Letter-Sounds, Phonemic Awareness, Word Reading, and Phonics," *The Reading Teacher* 76, no. 1 (2022): 55. <https://ila.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/trtr.2095>.

² Ehri, "What Teachers Need to Know and Do to Teach Letter-Sounds, Phonemic Awareness, Word Reading, and Phonics," 59.

³ Ehri, "What Teachers Need to Know and Do to Teach Letter-Sounds, Phonemic Awareness, Word Reading, and Phonics," 55.

Instructions for trying these sample embedded mnemonics with students

Before presenting an embedded mnemonic card, model saying and segmenting the initial sound of the embedded object. Then, present the mnemonic card and introduce the letter name and sound. Have students repeat the letter name and sound while looking at the card. Review daily until students are fluent, then review weekly.



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