

Glossary of Key Structured Literacy™ Terms



Need help translating the information you read about the structured literacy approach to teaching? This glossary of terms can help.

adjacent consonants	Consonants that appear next to one another in the same syllable of a word and that each represent a different sound and are run together (e.g. 'f' and 'l' in flip), unlike two consonants that make one sound (such as 'sh') and unlike two consonants that are split between syllables, such as in zigzag. These were previously called 'blends'.
alphabetic principle	The alphabetic principle is the idea that letters and letter patterns represent the sounds of spoken language.
alphabetic coding skills	The ability to translate letters and letter patterns into phonological forms.
blending	Pronouncing the sounds of the letters and running them fluidly together into a word or chunk.
consonant	A phoneme, that is not a vowel, with a sound made by the obstruction of air flow by the teeth, lips or tongue. All letters that are not vowels are consonants.
CVC words	Words that have the form: consonant-vowel-consonant (e.g. cat, dog)
decoding	Using letter-sound relationships to pronounce written words. A key skill for learning to read.
digraph	Two letters making one sound (e.g. a consonant digraph is /sh/ as in 'shop'; a vowel digraph is /oa/ as in 'road')
encoding	Hearing a sound and writing a symbol to represent that sound.
etymology	The study of the origins of words.
fluency	Reading accurately, at an appropriate pace and giving the appropriate tone, expression and meaning to the words.
grapheme	The written form of a sound/phoneme (i.e. letters). It can be one letter, two letters, three letters or more.

grapheme-phoneme correspondence	The relationship between sounds and the letters that represent them.
morpheme	The smallest meaning part of a word (e.g. prefix, base/root, suffix)
morphology	The study of the internal structure of words and their parts.
onset	The initial consonant sound, blend or digraph in a word, e.g. /d/ in dip, /fl/ in flip, /sh/ in ship.
orthographic mapping	The process by which the brain stores words for automatic retrieval. It links the formation of letter-sound connections to bond the spellings, pronunciations, and meanings of specific words in memory.
orthography	The representation of the sounds of a language by written or printed symbols - a spelling system.
phoneme	The smallest sound you can hear in a word (e.g. 'cat' has three phonemes c-a-t).
phonemic awareness	The ability to segment, blend and manipulate the sounds in words.
phonological awareness	An awareness of all levels of the speech-sound system, including phonemic awareness, syllables and onset-rime patterns.
rhyme	Words that sound alike (e.g. cat, mat, rat)
rime	The following vowel and all subsequent sounds in the syllable. The rime follows the onset, e.g. sh-op, scr-ap, f-ish.
Scope and Sequence	The specific progression of knowledge required for learning to read words and make sense of text. It details what to teach and the order in which it is taught.
segmenting	Breaking up a word into the smallest individual sounds.
semantics	The meaning of a word, phrase, or text.
Structured Literacy™	An evidence-based approach that is effective for students with dyslexia as well as all other students learning to read and spell. Also known as synthetic phonics and systematic phonics.

syllable	A unit of spoken language larger than a phoneme and containing a vowel sound.
syntax	The structure of sentences. Understanding that sentences are made up of words that can be categorised into parts of language (e.g. nouns, verbs, adjectives etc).
synthetic phonics/ systematic phonics	Other terms for structured literacy. The teaching of letter-sound relationships in an explicit, organised, and sequenced fashion.
trigraph	A grapheme with three letters for one sound (e.g. /igh/ as in 'light').
VC & CV words	vowel-consonant words (e.g. on) and consonant-vowel words (e.g. he).
vowel	An open phoneme where the sound is created without the lips touching and constricting the sound (e.g. a, e, i, o, u).
word recognition	The ability of a reader to recognise written words correctly and virtually effortlessly. Rapid and effortless word recognition is the main component in fluent reading.