

Saxon Reading Foundations and the Orton-Gillingham Approach

The Orton-Gillingham method of systematic, cumulative, explicit, and multisensory reading instruction is time-tested and proven to build strong readers. Dr. Samuel T. Orton and Anna Gillingham's pioneering scientific research in systematic phonics instruction demonstrated the importance of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic elements to what they termed the **language triangle**. Their studies spanned more than twenty years and drew on the fields of neurology, speech pathology, educational psychology, and public school teaching (Gillingham & Stillman, 1956).

Saxon Reading Foundations utilizes the Orton-Gillingham approach through explicit, systematic, and multisensory phonics instruction. Children are taught the sounds, the letter or letters that make the sounds, and how and why these letters come together to form words using auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learning. In each lesson a single, accessible phonics increment, or concept, is introduced. These concepts are then continually practiced and reviewed in every subsequent lesson so that students are able to read and spell words of increasing complexity. Phonics instruction is reinforced through a variety of engaging activities.

Multi-Sensory Instruction

Saxon Reading Foundations incorporates multisensory instruction in a variety of ways. Children participate daily in fast-paced **flashcard** activities covering key phonics concepts such as letters, sounds, spelling, and sight words. Additional **card decks** provide individualized practice or remediation through games of varying difficulty levels. **Worksheets** allow children to apply what they have learned and allow teachers to track children's progress daily. Students see, speak, and write the letters, and instruction incorporates kinesthetic movements such as skywriting and tapping and clapping for sounds and syllables. The Resources for Differentiation booklet and Options for Differentiation in each lesson provide additional ideas for making instruction multisensory. Teachers can focus on multisensory reinforcement of letter shapes and sounds, as well as phonemic awareness activities and other pre-reading activities for striving readers. Working with children in small groups organized by skill level enables teachers to tailor activities to the skills each child needs to improve.

Structured, Sequential, and Cumulative

Saxon Reading Foundations builds foundational skills with a unique, evidence-based method. The program provides systematic, explicit, incremental, and cumulative instruction with application and continual review across English language arts and early literacy with a specific focus on phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, spelling, and fluency. Flexible implementation options allow the program to be used as a stand-alone or to supplement any core reading program.

Each grade level begins with lessons on the easiest concepts and **systematically** progresses to more challenging concepts. For example, kindergarten begins with basic letter sounds and CVC words and later progresses to more complex sounds, including digraphs and r-controlled syllables. The program follows a research-based Scope and Sequence that orders the concepts into progressing levels of difficulty.

Every lesson at each grade level of the *Saxon Reading Foundations* program contains teacher-led **explicit** instruction on foundational reading and spelling skills. The teacher uses direct instruction and models of the coding method for reading new words.

New concepts are presented in small increments that are reviewed daily for the entire year. New Increment sections introduce a new concept to the students and provide adequate practice before moving students onto the next new topic. All content is **cumulative** and builds upon one skill to the next.

Language-based

The instructional routines and practices in *Saxon Reading Foundations* build upon students' understanding from week to week. Students connect sounds and symbols auditorily by seeing the symbols that make the sounds on **Letter Cards**, **Picture Cards**, and **Wall Cards**, and reading each sound aloud (reading). Students also connect sounds and symbols visually through an encoding process (spelling) by completing a spelling activity for each lesson. Students are expected to identify and write the symbols that make various sounds in these activities.

By learning the most common ways to spell specific sounds, children can successfully spell all words with regular spelling patterns and are not limited to merely memorizing words. A series of short, simple rules explaining typical spelling patterns is taught and continually reviewed. Each spelling rule is posted on a wall card for children to refer to when needed. Words that do not follow the spelling rules, called irregular spelling words, are also taught and practiced.

The Student Spelling and Dictionary Reference Booklet is available for each student in Grades 1 and 2 and serves as a useful resource to help students master spelling rules and recognize irregular spellings.

Spelling Deck Spelling Cards teach regular spelling patterns for common sounds. Each Spelling Card includes an Articulation Support photo of a child modeling the mouth position for the sound featured on the card, along with text instruction about how children should position their mouths to produce and properly articulate each sound.

Spelling Rule Wall Cards explain rules for spelling specific sounds and serve as reference tools.

Sources

Gillingham, A., & Stillman, B. W. (1956). *Remedial training for children with specific disability in reading, spelling, and penmanship*. Cambridge, MA: Educators Publishing Service, Inc.