



Research Evidence Base

saxonTM
READING FOUNDATIONS

At Heinemann, we believe every student deserves access to high-quality literacy instruction, and every teacher deserves tools that support their practice. For over 40 years, we've partnered with educators to deliver supplemental resources that respond to real classroom needs and integrate seamlessly with existing programs.

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Introduction

Saxon Reading Foundations is a comprehensive foundational literacy program for Grades K–2 grounded in decades of converging research on how children learn to read. Drawing from cognitive science, reading research, and educational psychology, the program is designed to reflect established principles of effective early literacy instruction and to translate those principles into daily classroom practice that supports mastery, automaticity, and transfer.

This Research Evidence Base presents a comprehensive synthesis of the theoretical foundations, instructional design features, and empirical evidence supporting *Saxon Reading Foundations*. It documents how the program aligns with widely accepted research frameworks, including the Science of Reading, the Simple View of Reading, the Reading Rope, and the Active View of Reading, and how those frameworks are operationalized through explicit, systematic, and cumulative instruction across the essential components of literacy.

Across its instructional design, materials, and implementation supports, *Saxon Reading Foundations* reflects research-based principles through incremental skill development, continual review, multisensory routines, diagnostic teaching, and aligned differentiation within a coherent Scope and Sequence. The program is intentionally designed to support diverse learners by providing clear instructional routines, cumulative practice opportunities, and multiple entry points for learning, while maintaining a strong focus on foundational literacy outcomes.

This Research Evidence Base highlights the research evidence that supports *Saxon Reading Foundations*' instructional approach and content, as well as specific examples illustrating how the program aligns with the research to foster students' growth as readers and writers. The evidence base includes findings from research studies that have examined instructional practices such as explicit instruction and distributed practice, approaches that have been shown to support durable learning and have stood the test of time.

In addition to summarizing the research foundations and instructional alignment, this document presents strong empirical evidence of effectiveness. An third-party randomized control trial evaluating *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* (now called *Saxon Reading Foundations*) demonstrated statistically significant and educationally meaningful impacts on students' foundational literacy outcomes, meeting the highest standard of evidence under ESSA Tier 1: Strong Evidence.

Together, the research foundations, instructional design, logic model (research-based theory of action), and evidence of impact presented in this paper provide a clear and defensible rationale for *Saxon Reading Foundations* as a research-aligned and evidence-supported approach to early literacy instruction.

Literacy today

Learning to read is one of the most important steps in a child's educational development. Today, students learn to read across a variety of genres and formats, from environmental texts, to the classics, to graphic novels. With new formats come new opportunities and challenges, as students encounter and interact with traditional print and digital content in all aspects of their daily lives.

And yet, results from the 2024 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading exams showed that only 31% of fourth-grade students scored proficient or higher in reading, a 5% decline since 2017 (U.S. Department of Education, 2025). The most recent NAEP data highlights the great need to improve the reading skills of students from diverse backgrounds, especially racially and ethnically diverse students, English learners, and students with disabilities. Persistent gaps in reading performance on the NAEP underscore the need to strengthen foundational literacy development in the earliest grades through effective programs that provide systematic, explicit instruction. The results also emphasize the urgency for effective literacy interventions to differentiate instruction based on students' needs, ultimately developing all students into the confident and capable readers they deserve to become (Murphy, 2010).

There are many costs to the lack of reading proficiency. Research has shown that the inability to read proficiently in third grade is linked to

difficulties learning in other subject areas, difficulties reading in later grades, and decreased likelihood of attending college (Tennessee Department of Education, 2016). Recent studies of college enrollment statistics have found that up to 60% of students in the United States are unprepared for college-level work in reading, math, or both. College-bound students and families across the country spend an estimated \$1.3 billion on remedial coursework every year (Jimenez, Sargrad, Morales, & Thompson, 2016). An estimated 93 million adults in the United States read at or below basic levels and face challenges finding living wage jobs as a result (Tennessee Department of Education, 2016).

The interest in the challenge of teaching children to read is long-standing. In 1997, the United States Congress convened the National Reading Panel to review the scientific research evidence on reading and the implications for reading instruction. The National Reading Panel's landmark 2000 report synthesized decades of scientific research and identified five essential components of effective early reading instruction, specifically phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, establishing a foundational framework that continues to guide evidence-based reading practices (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development [NICHD], 2000). The 5 Pillars of Reading—also known as the Big 5—remain widely accepted by researchers and educators as core elements of effective reading instruction.

Program overview

Saxon Reading Foundations is a research-based foundational literacy program for Grades K–2 that provides explicit, systematic, and cumulative instruction across the essential components of early reading and spelling. The program is designed to develop students’ phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, handwriting, spelling, fluency, vocabulary, and early comprehension through a tightly sequenced Scope and Sequence that prioritizes mastery, automaticity, and instructional coherence.

A defining feature of *Saxon Reading Foundations* is its incremental development and continual review. New skills are introduced in small, carefully sequenced steps and reinforced through daily spiraling practice. This design ensures that students receive repeated, distributed opportunities to apply previously taught skills while building new knowledge in manageable increments. Lessons follow a consistent instructional structure across grades, supporting clarity, reducing cognitive load, and enabling teachers to deliver instruction with precision and responsiveness.

The program integrates a robust multisensory instructional framework that engages visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile modalities to strengthen phoneme–grapheme associations and support accurate decoding and encoding. Purposefully aligned materials, including Letter Tiles, Review Decks, handwriting supports, and controlled, developmentally sequenced decodable texts reinforce lesson objectives and provide students with multiple pathways for learning and practice.

Across all essential components of literacy, *Saxon Reading Foundations* integrates research-aligned instructional practices that support multilingual learners’ access to foundational reading

instruction while simultaneously strengthening language development through explicit routines, cumulative practice, and targeted scaffolds. These supports are embedded within daily instruction to promote equitable access to core literacy skills while maintaining high expectations for all learners.

Text-based application is central to the program’s design. Students engage with controlled, developmentally sequenced Decodable Readers, leveled Fluency Readers texts, and fluency word lists that include only previously taught letter–sound correspondences and high-frequency words. This alignment ensures that students experience success as they apply newly learned skills and build confidence as emerging readers.

Assessment is embedded throughout the instructional cycle. Daily routines, cumulative review tasks, unit assessments, and beginning-, middle-, and end-of-year phonics assessments provide ongoing opportunities to monitor progress, diagnose instructional needs, and inform responsive teaching. These assessment structures support targeted differentiation and ensure that instruction remains aligned to each student’s developing skill profile.

To support strong implementation, *Saxon Reading Foundations* includes comprehensive instructional materials, differentiation resources, multilingual learner supports, and digital access through Heinemann Flight. Professional learning offerings, including Getting Started sessions, leader learning and support resources, follow-up learning and personalized coaching are designed to support high-fidelity implementation by helping educators translate the program’s research-aligned design into effective classroom practice.

Kindergarten

TEACHER'S MANUAL BOX



Teacher's Manuals

CLASSROOM MATERIALS BOX



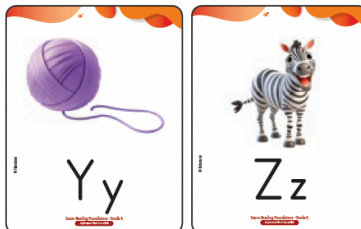
Fluency Readers



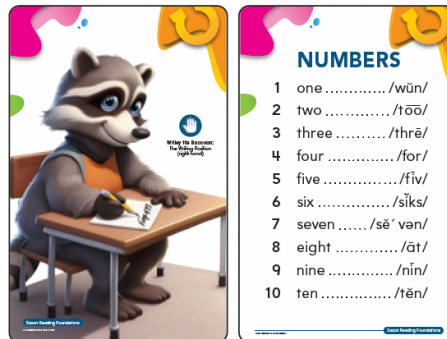
Review Decks



Kid Cards



Wall Cards



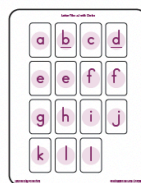
Posters

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT KIT



Student Workbooks

Teacher's Assessment Workbook



Letter Tiles



Decodable Readers



Alphabet Handwriting Strip

Grade 1

TEACHER'S MANUAL BOX

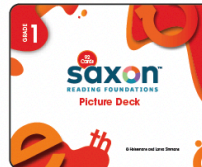


Teacher's Manuals

CLASSROOM MATERIALS BOX



Fluency Readers



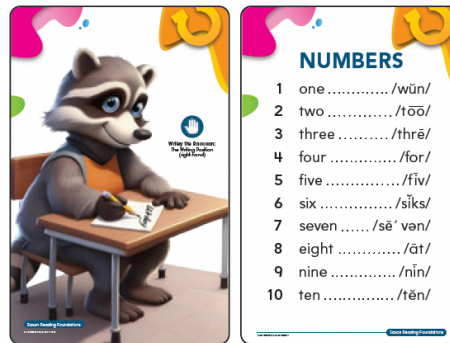
Review Decks



Kid Cards



Wall Cards

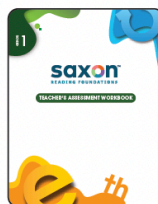


Posters

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT KIT



Student Workbooks



Teacher's Assessment Workbook



Letter Tiles



Decodable Readers



Spelling Dictionary and Reference Booklet



Alphabet Handwriting Strip

Grade 2

TEACHER'S MANUAL BOX



Teacher's Manuals

CLASSROOM MATERIALS BOX



Fluency Readers



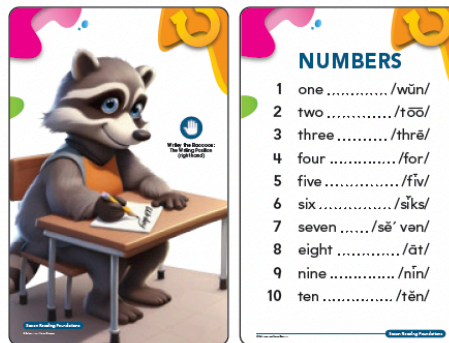
Review Decks



Kid Cards



Wall Cards



Posters

INDIVIDUAL STUDENT KIT



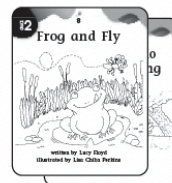
Student Workbooks



Teacher's Assessment Workbook



Letter Tiles



Decodable Readers



Spelling Dictionary and Reference Booklet



Alphabet Handwriting Strip

Theoretical foundations

The Science of Reading

The Science of Reading refers to a vast, interdisciplinary body of research from cognitive psychology, neuroscience, linguistics, and education that explains how children learn to read and which instructional practices most effectively support their development. Decades of converging evidence show that learning to read is not a natural process; unlike spoken language, reading must be taught explicitly because it requires children to connect the sounds of spoken language with the written symbols of print. Neuroscience research demonstrates that written language is a relatively recent human invention and that learning to read reorganizes neural pathways in the brain (Dehaene et al., 2010). Cognitive scientists similarly emphasize that reading does not develop naturally and instead requires explicit, systematic instruction in the elements of written language (Seidenberg, 2013, 2017). Neuroscientific research further underscores that learning to read involves the gradual reorganization of neural systems originally developed for other functions, making fluent word recognition and comprehension dependent on instruction that supports efficient integration of visual, phonological, and language processes (Wolf, 2007).

Together, the Science of Reading provides the empirical foundation for several complementary theoretical frameworks that explain how reading develops and why particular instructional practices are effective. The Simple View of Reading offers a foundational explanatory model of reading comprehension, the Reading Rope elaborates this model by illustrating how component skills strengthen and integrate over time, and the Active View of Reading extends these frameworks by emphasizing the active, self-regulated processes that support skilled reading. Considered collectively, these models translate converging research findings into coherent explanations of how word recognition, language comprehension, and cognitive processes interact to support reading development.

The Simple View of Reading

One of the most influential theoretical models emerging from the Science of Reading is the Simple View of Reading, which demonstrates that skilled reading comprehension depends on the multiplicative relationship between word recognition and language comprehension, each of which requires systematic and intentional instruction (Gough & Tunmer, 1986).



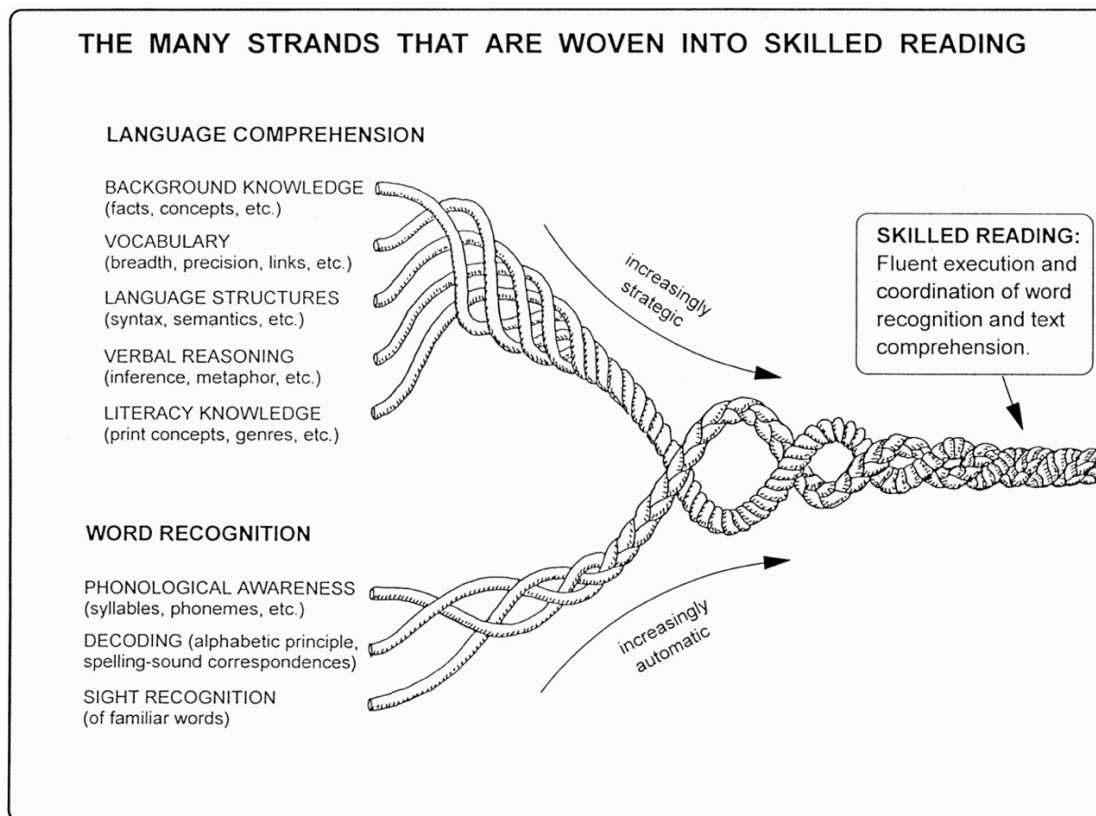
The Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986)

According to the Simple View of Reading, readers must be able to accurately and efficiently decode the words on the page while simultaneously drawing on their knowledge of vocabulary, syntax, and broader language structures to construct meaning. Word recognition involves connecting the spellings of words to their corresponding sounds and blending those sounds to read whole words, forming the foundation upon which fluent reading and ultimately comprehension is built. If either component is underdeveloped, reading comprehension is constrained.

The Reading Rope

Building on the Simple View of Reading, Hollis Scarborough's (2001) Reading Rope expands the framework by illustrating how word recognition

and language comprehension develop and integrate over time. The Reading Rope provides a more detailed representation of how the components of the Simple View strengthen and interact through instruction and practice. The word recognition strand includes phonological awareness, decoding, and the automatic recognition of familiar words, while the language comprehension strand encompasses background knowledge, vocabulary, language structures, verbal reasoning, and literacy knowledge (Scarborough, 2001). As each strand becomes stronger and more efficient, they intertwine to form a cohesive "rope" that supports fluent, accurate, and meaningful reading. Weaknesses in any strand can compromise overall reading proficiency, underscoring the importance of systematic, explicit instruction across all component skills.



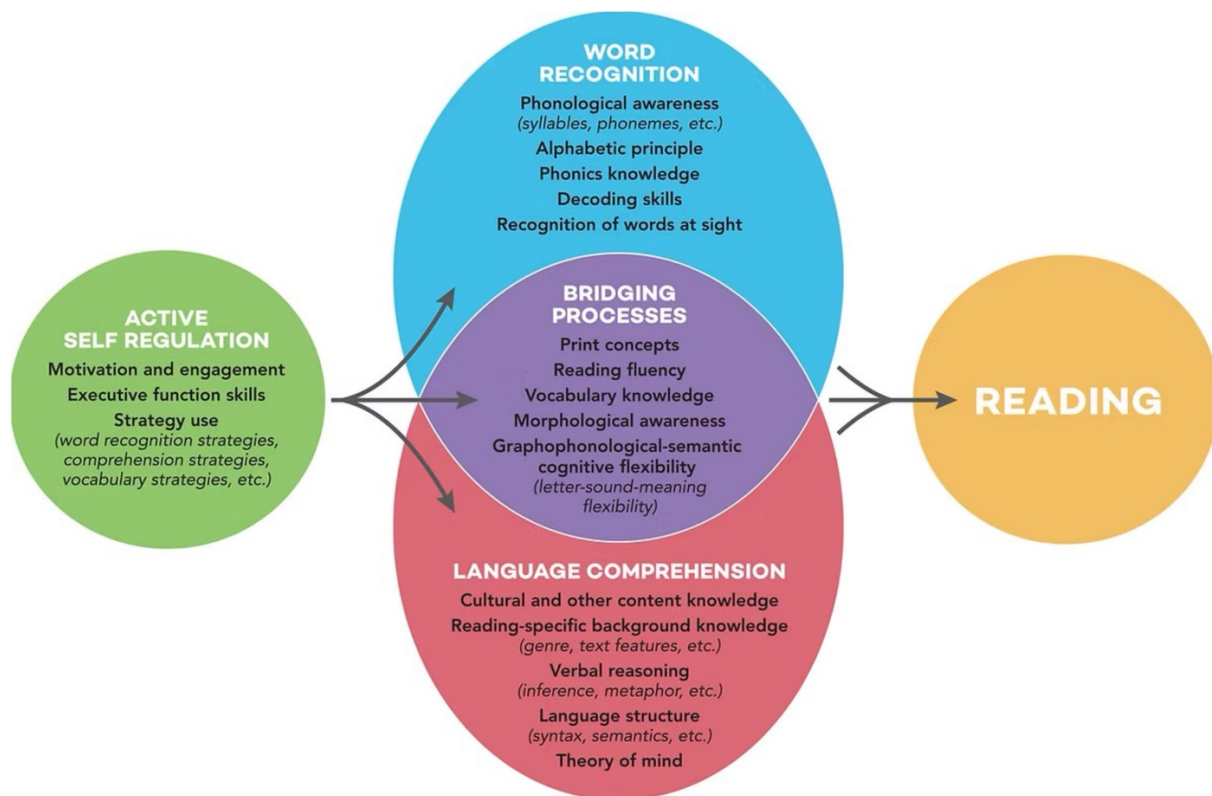
The image, used with permission from the Publisher, originally appeared in the following publication: Scarborough, H. S. (2001). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory, and practice. In S. Neuman & D. Dickinson (Eds.), *Handbook of early literacy research* (Vol. 1, pp. 97–110). Guilford Press.

The Active View of Reading

While retaining the core structure of the Simple View of Reading and the Reading Rope, Duke and Cartwright's (2021) Active View of Reading extends these frameworks by foregrounding the active, self-regulated processes that influence how readers coordinate word recognition and language comprehension during reading. The Active View of Reading incorporates insights from recent research to highlight the role of executive function skills, motivation and engagement, strategy use, and metacognitive control in supporting reading development. Unique to this model is its emphasis on the processes that bridge word recognition and language comprehension, including fluency,

morphological awareness, and vocabulary, all of which contribute to reading success.

The Active View of Reading reinforces the understanding that reading is an active cognitive process and that skilled reading requires not only accurate decoding and strong language knowledge, but also the ability to regulate attention, monitor understanding, and flexibly apply strategies. Each construct within the model is grounded in research demonstrating that these processes are malleable and can be strengthened through targeted instruction, supporting improved reading comprehension and addressing reading difficulties.



The Active View of Reading, Reader Model (Duke & Cartwright, 2021)

How *Saxon Reading Foundations* aligns with the research on the Science of Reading

Saxon Reading Foundations reflects the Science of Reading by aligning its instructional design with the core assumptions shared across the Simple View of Reading, the Reading Rope, and the Active View of Reading. The program provides explicit, systematic, and cumulative instruction in the foundational components of skilled reading, reflecting decades of multidisciplinary research demonstrating that children learn to read most effectively through structured teaching of phonological awareness, phonics, spelling, and fluency. New concepts are introduced in manageable instructional increments, reinforced through daily spiraled review, and applied through multisensory routines and carefully aligned decodable texts. These design features are consistent with research emphasizing explicit instruction, frequent opportunities for practice, and the development of accurate and automatic word recognition.

Saxon Reading Foundations also reflects key principles of Structured Literacy and cognitive science through its carefully sequenced instruction, cumulative review, and opportunities for retrieval and application. Skills are taught explicitly, practiced across multiple contexts, and revisited through spaced review designed to strengthen retention and automaticity. Lessons incorporate gradual release of responsibility, immediate corrective feedback, and ongoing opportunities for guided and independent practice, features associated with durable learning and reduced cognitive load for beginning readers.

Beyond foundational decoding skills, the program supports vocabulary and language

development through instruction in morphology, including prefixes, suffixes, and meaningful word parts. This instruction helps students recognize relationships among words, expand vocabulary knowledge, and strengthen both decoding and encoding, reflecting research highlighting the importance of morphological awareness in reading development.

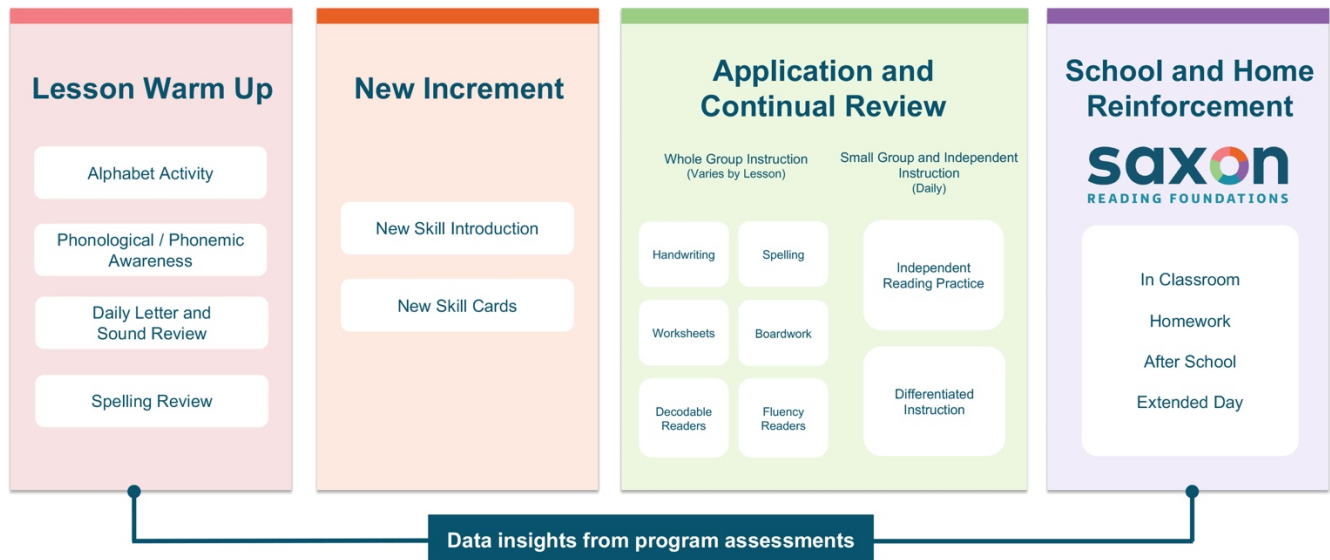
Consistent with the Simple View of Reading and the Reading Rope, *Saxon Reading Foundations* provides a robust framework for developing the word recognition processes that support skilled reading. Explicit instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness, decoding, spelling, and fluent word reading helps students build the accuracy and automaticity needed to free cognitive resources for comprehension. As word recognition becomes increasingly efficient, students are better positioned to focus on constructing meaning from text.

Saxon Reading Foundations also aligns with the Active View of Reading by supporting the interdependent cognitive and linguistic processes that contribute to skilled reading. The program strengthens speech-to-print connections through articulation supports that help students attend to how sounds are produced while learning corresponding spellings. Structured routines that incorporate oral language modeling, connected reading, guided practice, and immediate feedback promote sustained attention, self-monitoring, and strategic engagement with print. Through systematic instruction and ongoing cumulative practice, the program supports students' progression from foundational skill acquisition to increasingly complex reading demands.

Instructional approach

This chapter describes the instructional approach that guides the design and implementation of *Saxon Reading Foundations* and explains how the program translates research-based principles into daily classroom practice. The chapter begins by examining *Saxon's* instructional design, highlighting the deliberate sequencing of skills, coherent lesson structure, and integration of reading, spelling, and writing to support cumulative knowledge and skill development over time. It then situates Structured Literacy as the organizing instructional framework, clarifying how the program provides explicit, systematic, and cumulative instruction in the foundational and language skills necessary for proficient reading and writing, including phonology, orthography, morphology, syntax, semantics, and comprehension. The chapter also describes the program's use of multisensory instruction, which engages visual, auditory, and kinesthetic modalities to strengthen learning, support memory, and promote automaticity. Finally, the chapter addresses diagnostic teaching and the use of assessments, explaining how ongoing formative assessment and data-informed decision making are used to monitor student progress, adjust instruction, and provide targeted support for diverse learners.

Saxon Instructional Model



Instructional design

Research on effective instruction consistently demonstrates that students acquire complex skills most successfully when instruction is explicit, systematic, incremental, and cumulative (National Reading Panel [NRP], 2000; Rosenshine, 2012). Cognitive science further shows that predictable lesson structures reduce extraneous cognitive load, allowing students to devote working memory to learning new content rather than navigating instructional routines (Sweller, 1988). For foundational literacy skills such as phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, handwriting, and fluency, research indicates that mastery depends on carefully sequenced instruction, frequent distributed practice, and continual opportunities to apply new learning in meaningful contexts (NRP, 2000; Rosenshine, 2012).

Cognitive science further demonstrates that durable learning depends not only on initial instruction but on how knowledge and skills are practiced and revisited over time. Studies on retrieval practice show that actively recalling previously taught information strengthens memory representations and improves long-term retention more effectively than additional exposure alone (Karpicke & Roediger, 2008). Complementary research on distributed, or spaced, practice indicates that learning is more durable when instruction and practice are spread over time rather than massed within short instructional periods (Cepeda et al., 2006).

In addition, research on practice variability suggests that applying skills across varied contexts and tasks rather than through uniform repetition supports transfer and flexible application of learning, even when such practice initially appears more challenging for students

(Schmidt & Bjork, 1992). Together, these findings underscore the importance of instructional designs that incorporate cumulative review, frequent opportunities for retrieval, and consistent application of learning across reading, spelling, and writing activities to support long-term literacy development.

Effective instructional design in the early grades also requires intentional integration of reading, spelling, and writing. Research grounded in cognitive psychology and reading science demonstrates that decoding and encoding draw on shared phonological and orthographic processes and are mutually reinforcing (Ehri, 2014). Instructional models that connect these skills—rather than teaching them in isolation—support stronger orthographic mapping, greater automaticity, and more durable learning (Ehri, 2014; LaBerge & Samuels, 1974).

Finally, research emphasizes that instructional design must be responsive to learner variability. Because students differ widely in prior knowledge, rate of skill acquisition, and need for practice, high-quality instructional systems incorporate ongoing assessment, flexible pacing, and built-in differentiation while maintaining coherence and high expectations for all learners (Gagné, Briggs, & Wager, 1992).

How *Saxon Reading Foundations* aligns with the research on instructional design

Deliberate skill sequencing and incremental design

Saxon Reading Foundations reflects these research-based principles through a deliberately engineered instructional design that emphasizes explicit teaching, incremental learning, cumulative review, and consistent lesson architecture across Grades K–2. The program’s Scope and Sequence is carefully structured so that foundational literacy skills develop in a logical progression, with each new lesson building directly on previously taught and practiced concepts. Grade-level Unit Guides further support instructional coherence by helping teachers understand how individual lessons connect to broader unit goals and cumulative skill development across the year. Lessons are designed to be taught in order, as mastery of earlier content is essential for success with subsequent instruction.

Each lesson introduces one new, accessible instructional increment, such as a letter–sound correspondence, spelling pattern, decoding routine, or handwriting element, which is explicitly modeled by the teacher and immediately practiced. This incremental approach reflects research demonstrating that learners benefit from receiving new information in small, manageable units that can be processed, practiced, and retained before additional complexity is introduced. New learning is never presented in isolation; instead, it is embedded within a broader cycle of review and application that ensures continuity and coherence.

Consistent lesson architecture and reduced cognitive load

A defining feature of *Saxon’s* instructional design is its consistent lesson architecture. Daily lessons

follow a predictable structure designed to reduce cognitive load and support instructional fidelity. Across grades, each lesson includes a structured warm-up, explicit instruction of a new concept, guided and independent practice, application through reading and writing, opportunities for differentiation, and periodic assessment.

This predictable structure allows students to focus attention on learning rather than on task transitions, while enabling teachers to deliver instruction with consistency and precision. By minimizing variability in lesson format, the program supports efficient use of instructional time and helps students internalize routines that promote engagement and successful practice.

Integration of reading, spelling, and writing

Saxon Reading Foundations integrates systematic practice across skills within every lesson. Students engage daily in phonological and phonemic awareness activities, phonics instruction aligned to the alphabetic principle, spelling and encoding tasks, handwriting practice, fluency development, and application in controlled decodable texts. These components are intentionally interwoven: students apply newly learned phonics patterns in spelling and handwriting, then encounter the same patterns in reading, reinforcing sound–symbol relationships across modalities.

Text-based application is central to the instructional design. Students read Decodable Readers and leveled Fluency Readers that include only the letters, spelling patterns, and high-frequency words that have been explicitly taught. This tight alignment between instruction and text reflects research demonstrating that

controlled text supports accurate decoding, builds confidence, and promotes automaticity by preventing reliance on guessing or compensatory strategies. As students progress, texts increase in complexity while remaining aligned to the cumulative Scope and Sequence.

Cumulative review and distributed practice

A defining feature of *Saxon Reading Foundations* is incremental continual review. Daily lessons begin with structured warm-ups that revisit previously taught content, including letter–sound review, spelling–sound review, alphabet activities, and high-frequency word practice. These routines ensure that essential skills remain active in students’ working memory and are strengthened through distributed practice.

Research shows that such spiraled review supports long-term retention and prevents erosion of foundational skills, particularly for students who require repeated exposure. Because skills are never taught once and abandoned, students encounter frequent opportunities to reinforce learning across contexts and over time, supporting mastery and automaticity.

Assessment-informed instructional decision making

Assessment is embedded throughout the instructional cycle and plays a critical role in supporting instructional design. Before instruction begins, teachers administer diagnostic assessments, such as phonological and phonemic awareness measures to determine appropriate entry points. Throughout the program, frequent formative assessments, oral and written reviews, and unit assessments provide ongoing data about student progress.

Students are considered successful when they demonstrate at least 80 percent accuracy on assessment tasks; when mastery is not reached, teachers are guided to targeted remediation activities aligned to the specific skills needing reinforcement. The pace of instruction is intentionally flexible. Teachers may slow instruction, repeat lessons, or pause to reteach concepts based on assessment data and daily observation. Importantly, pacing adjustments occur within the same instructional sequence rather than through fragmented or disconnected interventions, preserving coherence while responding to learner needs.

Translating research-based instructional design into daily classroom practice

As an integrated system, *Saxon Reading Foundations* operationalizes established principles of effective instructional design through deliberate sequencing, incremental pacing, cumulative review, and consistent lesson architecture. Explicit teaching; tightly aligned reading, spelling, and writing routines; and distributed practice work together to reduce cognitive load, strengthen retention, and support transfer of learning. Embedded assessment and flexible pacing further ensure that instruction remains responsive to learner variability while preserving coherence across the Scope and Sequence. Through this integrated design, *Saxon Reading Foundations* operationalizes research-based guidance on how students learn complex foundational literacy skills within a practical, classroom-ready instructional system that supports mastery, automaticity, and equitable access to early reading success across Grades K–2.

Structured Literacy

Structured Literacy is an evidence-based approach to reading instruction characterized by explicit, systematic, incremental, and cumulative teaching of the linguistic elements that underlie skilled reading. Grounded in decades of research from cognitive science, linguistics, and reading research, Structured Literacy reflects the understanding that written language must be taught directly and that instruction should follow the structure of the language while supporting gradual mastery over time. Research consistently demonstrates that this approach is particularly effective for beginning readers and for students at risk for reading difficulties, including students with dyslexia.

Systematic

Research on effective literacy instruction emphasizes systematic organization, in which instructional content is sequenced to reflect the linguistic structure of the language and the way students acquire new skills. Instruction that follows a clearly defined scope and sequence ensures that prerequisite knowledge is established before more complex concepts are introduced. This predictability reduces cognitive load, allowing students to focus attention on learning new content rather than navigating instructional routines.

Explicit

A central feature of Structured Literacy is explicit instruction, in which teachers clearly explain concepts, model procedures, and guide students through structured practice with feedback. Research shows that combining explicit literacy instruction with appropriate practice activities produces significant, positive effects for beginning readers and writers, including students at risk for later reading difficulties (Fien et al., 2015). Explicit instruction makes the structure of

written language visible, ensuring that students do not have to infer critical linguistic concepts independently. Research also demonstrates the value of differentiated instruction embedded within explicit teaching for improving literacy achievement for most students (Al Otaiba et al., 2009).

Incremental

Instruction is most effective when new information is introduced in small, manageable increments that allow learners to process, practice, and consolidate understanding before additional complexity is introduced. Research on instructional pacing highlights the importance of incremental steps when teaching complex cognitive skills (Brophy & Evertson, 1976; Rosenshine & Stevens, 1986). Cognitive research further underscores limits on working memory, emphasizing the need for instructional designs that allow time for new learning to be meaningfully integrated (Hirsch, 1996).

Cumulative

Cognitive science demonstrates that learning is cumulative, with complex skills built from the mastery of simpler, component skills (Gagné, Briggs, & Wager, 1992). Reading research similarly shows that lower-level reading skills must be secured before higher-level skills can develop efficiently. A comprehensive review by the National Reading Panel concluded that explicit, systematic phonics instruction guided by a clearly defined plan and sequence and taught directly was more effective than responsive phonics instruction or no phonics instruction at all (NICHD, 2000). Based on this review, the panel reported that an estimated 60 percent of early readers require systematic, explicit, and cumulative phonics instruction to learn to read successfully (NICHD, 2000).

How *Saxon Reading Foundations* aligns with the research on Structured Literacy

Explicit, teacher-directed instruction

Saxon Reading Foundations aligns with Structured Literacy research by embedding explicit, teacher-directed instruction within every lesson across Grades K–2. New concepts, including phonological awareness skills, letter–sound correspondences, spelling patterns, and decoding routines are introduced through direct explanation and modeling rather than discovery-based activities. Teachers articulate instructional targets clearly, demonstrate procedures step by step, and guide students through structured practice with immediate feedback. This explicit approach reflects research demonstrating that beginning readers and particularly students at risk for reading difficulties benefit most when instruction makes linguistic concepts visible and actionable.

Systematic and sequential Scope and Sequence

Structured Literacy emphasizes instruction that follows the linguistic organization of English, progressing from simpler to more complex skills. *Saxon Reading Foundations* operationalizes this principle through a clearly defined, cumulative Scope and Sequence that introduces foundational skills in a deliberate progression. Instruction begins with phonological and phonemic awareness and basic sound–symbol correspondences before expanding to more complex phonics patterns, spelling generalizations, syllable structures, and morphological elements.

Each lesson is designed to build directly on previously taught content, and lessons are intended to be taught in sequence. This

systematic design ensures that students are not asked to apply skills they have not yet developed and supports the gradual accumulation of knowledge required for accurate decoding and spelling.

Incremental instruction with cumulative review

A defining feature of *Saxon Reading Foundations*' alignment to Structured Literacy is its use of incremental instruction paired with continual cumulative review. Each lesson introduces a single new instructional increment, such as a sound, spelling pattern, or decoding routine, allowing students to focus attention on one new concept at a time. Previously taught skills are revisited daily through structured warm-ups, Review Deck routines, spelling–sound review, and repeated application across reading and writing tasks.

This cumulative design reflects research showing that distributed practice and frequent review are essential for long-term retention and automaticity. Because skills are never taught once and abandoned, students encounter repeated opportunities to reinforce learning while new content is introduced, reducing skill erosion and supporting mastery over time

LESSON	LESSON WARM-UP			DIFFERENTIATION			NEW INCREMENT		APPLICATIONS AND CONTINUAL REVIEW	
LESSON TITLE	ALPHABET ACTIVITY	DAILY LETTER, SPELLING, AND SOUND REVIEW	PHONEMIC/ PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS	OPTIONS FOR DIFFERENTIATION			NEW CONCEPTS (PHONICS/PRINT AWARENESS)	SIGHT WORDS	REVIEW	READERS
Administer the Beginning of Year Assessment before beginning the lessons.										
1 The Letter <i>N</i>	- Recognize vowels - Say the alphabet		New Concept: Recognize alliteration	Support: connect letter <i>n</i> to the sound /n/ Reinforce: distinguish between capital <i>N</i> and lowercase <i>n</i> Extend: come up with words that start with each letter sound			- Vowel and consonant - Capital and lowercase - Initial - Voiced and unvoiced sounds - Reading and spelling consonant <i>n</i>			
2 The Letter <i>O</i>, Part 1	- Recognize vowels - Say the alphabet	Daily Letter and Sound Review - Practice letter recognition - Practice letter sounds Spelling Sound Review - Spell letter sounds	Review Concept: Recognize alliteration	Support: connect letter <i>o</i> to sound /ō/ with sign language Reinforce: connect capital and lowercase letters <i>n</i> and <i>o</i> to their sounds Extend: identify words that begin with /ō/ or /n/			- Final - Reading and spelling vowel <i>o</i> - Short vowel sound /ō/ - Breve - Coding - Blending - The short vowel rule (<i>ŏ</i>) - Table of contents - Page numbers		- Review initial position - Read words with letter <i>n</i> - Identify vowels and consonants	
3 The Letter <i>O</i>, Part 2	- Recognize vowels - Say the alphabet	Daily Letter and Sound Review - Practice letter recognition - Practice letter sounds Spelling Sound Review - Spell letter sounds	New Concept: Blend two syllables to form a word	Support: use gross motor skills to skywrite letter <i>o</i> Reinforce: name the two sounds of letter <i>o</i> Extend: sort words with /ō/, /ō/, and /n/	© Heinemann and Lorna Simmons		- Long vowel sound /ō/ - Macron - Accent mark - The long vowel rule (<i>ŏ</i>→)		- Review initial position - Code and read words with letters <i>n</i> and <i>o</i> - Identify vowels and consonants - Review the short vowel rule (<i>ŏ</i>)	
4 The Letter <i>T</i>	Name each letter in alphabetical order	Daily Letter and Sound Review - Practice letter recognition - Practice letter sounds Spelling Sound Review - Spell letter sounds	New Concept: Blend three syllables to form a word	Support: practice the letter shape (<i>t</i>) with kinesthetic movements Reinforce: distinguish between words that start with /t/ and words that do not Extend: identify letters by their sound (<i>n</i> , <i>o</i> , <i>t</i>)			Reading and spelling consonant <i>t</i>		- Review initial position - Code and read words with letters <i>n</i> and <i>o</i> - Blend sounds - Review the short vowel rule (<i>ŏ</i>) - Review the long vowel rule (<i>ŏ</i>→)	

Integration of decoding, encoding, and handwriting

Structured Literacy emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between reading and spelling. *Saxon Reading Foundations* integrates decoding, encoding, and handwriting within the same instructional cycle, reinforcing sound–symbol relationships bidirectionally. Students apply newly learned phonics patterns when reading words, spelling those words orally and in writing, and forming letters during handwriting instruction.

Writing letters and spelling words while articulating sounds strengthens phoneme–grapheme mapping and supports orthographic mapping. This integrated approach aligns with research demonstrating that coordinated instruction in reading, spelling, and handwriting leads to more stable representations of written language and supports both accuracy and automaticity.

Controlled text to support accurate application

Saxon Reading Foundations aligns with Structured Literacy research through its use of fully controlled decodable and fluency texts. Decodable Readers and Fluency Readers include only the letter–sound correspondences, spelling patterns, and high-frequency words that have been explicitly taught. This tight alignment ensures that students can apply decoding strategies successfully rather than relying on guessing or contextual cues.

As students progress through the Scope and Sequence, text complexity increases gradually while remaining instructionally aligned. This design supports accurate word recognition, builds confidence, and provides repeated opportunities to apply Structured Literacy skills in connected text.

Diagnostic teaching and responsive differentiation

Diagnostic responsiveness is a core component of Structured Literacy and a central feature of *Saxon Reading Foundations*. Teachers continuously monitor student performance through oral responses, written work, and periodic assessments aligned to the Scope and Sequence. Mastery benchmarks guide instructional decisions, including pacing adjustments, lesson repetition, and targeted reteaching.

When students require additional support, teachers are directed to aligned remediation activities and differentiation resources that reinforce the same instructional targets rather than introducing alternative or disconnected content. This approach preserves instructional coherence while responding to individual learner needs. Students who demonstrate early mastery are provided with extension opportunities that deepen application without accelerating beyond the program’s linguistic progression.

Supporting diverse learners within core instruction

The explicit, systematic, and cumulative design of *Saxon Reading Foundations* makes Structured Literacy accessible to a wide range of learners within Tier 1 instruction. Students with dyslexia benefit from clear routines, repeated exposure, multisensory reinforcement, and explicit modeling. Multilingual learners benefit from predictable lesson structures, oral language support, and opportunities to rehearse and apply skills across modalities.

Because differentiation is embedded within daily lessons and guided by assessment, *Saxon Reading Foundations* supports learner variability without fragmenting instruction or lowering expectations. All students engage with the same

core content while receiving the level of support or extension they need to achieve mastery.

Structured Literacy in daily practice

Taken together, these features demonstrate that *Saxon Reading Foundations* does not merely reference Structured Literacy as a framework but operationalizes its principles through daily instructional routines. Explicit instruction, systematic sequencing, incremental pacing,

cumulative review, integrated decoding and encoding, controlled text, and diagnostic responsiveness function as an integrated system. Through this design, *Saxon Reading Foundations* translates Structured Literacy research into consistent, classroom-ready practice that supports accuracy, automaticity, and transfer for diverse learners across Grades K–2.

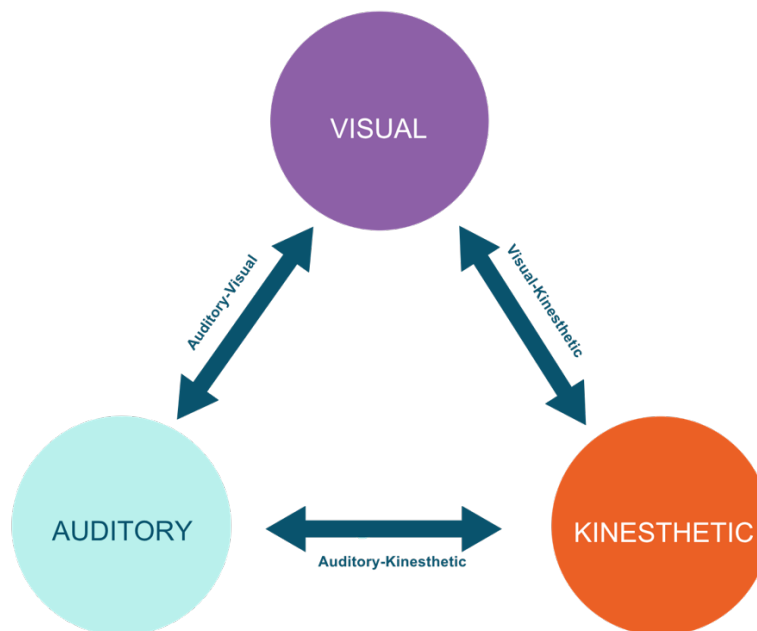
Multisensory instruction

A foundational influence on multisensory literacy practice is the Orton-Gillingham (OG) approach, developed by Samuel Orton and Anna Gillingham for students with reading difficulties. OG integrates visual, auditory, and kinesthetic processes through what Orton and Gillingham termed the language triangle, in which students see letters, say their sounds, and write them (Gillingham & Stillman, 1956). This coordinated sensory linkage strengthens phoneme–grapheme associations that underlie decoding, spelling, and word recognition.

The OG approach also emphasizes that multisensory instruction must be embedded within a structured, sequential, and cumulative design. Instruction progresses in manageable increments, with each new concept explicitly taught, practiced intensively, and reviewed consistently to build durable learning (Gillingham & Stillman, 1956).

In K–2 classrooms, this means students repeatedly see, hear, articulate, and physically encode letters and sounds as they move from simple to more complex word structures, supporting the development of strong phonemic awareness and stable orthographic representations.

Engaging students’ senses through sight, sound, and movement deepens their understanding of phonological and orthographic patterns (Neumann et al., 2012) and supports learners who benefit from physically experiencing concepts through kinesthetic activity (Gardner, 1999; Zaxxai, 1997). When paired with explicit, systematic instruction, multisensory teaching can help young children, particularly those at risk for reading difficulties, internalize foundational language skills (Birsh, 2011).



The Orton-Gillingham Language Triangle

Multisensory instruction also enhances motivation, engagement, and early reading confidence. Research shows that multisensory games and hands-on activities increase curiosity, sustain attention, and make reading practice more enjoyable (Bisso & Luckner, 1996). These activities improve instructional variety, promote active learning, and provide meaningful opportunities for students to rehearse and internalize new phonics, phonemic awareness, and decoding skills (Birsh, 2011). Studies further demonstrate that multisensory games can accelerate decoding accuracy by giving children repeated, supported practice manipulating sounds and word parts (Adams, Foorman, Lundberg, & Beeler, 1998), and that metalinguistic games serve as particularly effective early interventions for children at risk for reading difficulties (Blachman, 1991).

Multisensory instruction plays a particularly important role in early phonological awareness and basic decoding interventions in kindergarten and first grade. In a primary-grade study of an explicit, systematic multisensory program, students in K–2 who received daily lessons that combined visual letter cues, oral sound production, and tactile–kinesthetic activities (such as tracing and manipulating letters) showed significantly larger gains in phonemic awareness and CVC word decoding than comparison students in traditional instruction, with mean decoding scores nearly doubling over an eight-week period (Al Otaiba, 2009; McGee & Ukrainetz, 2009). Experimental work with kindergarten learners similarly found that a multisensory approach to phonological awareness, in which letter-sound practice is

integrated across visual, kinesthetic, and auditory modalities, yielded higher post-test performance on letter-sound knowledge and sound manipulation than teacher-talk-only lessons, suggesting that such routines support the foundational skills required for later literacy development (Rostan et al., 2021).

There is also evidence that multisensory approaches embedded within tiered early-reading interventions benefit K–2 students who are at risk for reading difficulties. Action-research and quasi-experimental studies of multisensory phonics tutoring for kindergarten and first-grade children identified as at risk show that programs combining explicit instruction with manipulatives, letter tiles, and coordinated oral responses yield significantly higher growth in word reading and basic decoding than business-as-usual small-group support, with some cohorts closing much of the gap to grade-level expectations by the end of first grade (Foorman et al., 2016; McGee & Ukrainetz, 2009). Early-grade phonological-awareness reviews further underscore that interventions which require children to hear, say, and manipulate sounds using concrete supports (e.g., counters, tiles, and movement) are especially effective for young students with speech–language impairments or emerging reading problems, strengthening both segmentation and blending skills that feed directly into Grade 1 and Grade 2 decoding performance (Fazio, 1997; Pokorni et al., 2004; Warrick et al., 1993).

How *Saxon Reading Foundations* aligns with the research on multisensory instruction

Multisensory instruction embedded within explicit teaching

Saxon Reading Foundations aligns with multisensory literacy research by embedding multisensory routines within explicit, teacher-directed instruction rather than treating multisensory engagement as an add-on or independent activity. Across Grades K–2, multisensory elements are introduced through direct modeling and guided practice, ensuring that students understand not only what to do, but why specific actions support learning. Teachers explicitly link sensory experiences, such as saying sounds aloud, manipulating letter tiles, and forming letters by hand, to the instructional target being taught.

This approach reflects research emphasizing that multisensory instruction is most effective when it is tightly aligned to linguistic content and delivered through explicit instruction, rather than exploratory or discovery-based activities.

Coordinated auditory, visual, and kinesthetic–tactile routines

Multisensory instruction in *Saxon Reading Foundations* systematically engages auditory, visual, and kinesthetic–tactile modalities in coordinated ways to strengthen phoneme–grapheme associations. Students hear and articulate sounds, see corresponding letters and spelling patterns, and physically encode those patterns through handwriting and structured manipulation of materials. These modalities are intentionally synchronized so that sensory input reinforces, rather than competes with, linguistic processing.

For example, during phonics and spelling instruction, students articulate sounds while simultaneously forming letters or spelling words, reinforcing sound–symbol relationships through multiple neural pathways. This coordinated engagement supports accurate decoding and encoding by strengthening memory and supporting orthographic mapping.

Multisensory routines aligned to the Scope and Sequence

Saxon Reading Foundations operationalizes multisensory instruction through routines that are tightly aligned to the program’s Scope and Sequence. Multisensory activities are introduced only after the relevant phonological or phonics content has been explicitly taught, and instructional materials such as Letter Tiles, Review Decks, handwriting supports, and decodable text reflect only previously taught sounds and patterns. Because multisensory routines correspond directly to the instructional sequence, students are not exposed to extraneous or unaligned content. This alignment ensures that multisensory engagement reinforces current learning targets and supports cumulative skill development rather than introducing cognitive overload.

Integration of multisensory instruction across reading, spelling, and handwriting

Multisensory instruction in *Saxon Reading Foundations* is integrated across reading, spelling, and handwriting within the same lesson cycle. Students apply new letter–sound correspondences and spelling patterns by reading words, spelling those words orally and in writing, and forming letters using explicit handwriting routines. This bidirectional practice reinforces

the reciprocal relationship between decoding and encoding.

Handwriting plays a central role in this integration. Writing letters while saying sounds aloud strengthens phoneme–grapheme connections and supports automatic letter formation, reducing cognitive demands during reading and spelling. This integrated multisensory design reflects research demonstrating that coordinated reading and writing experiences lead to more durable literacy learning.

Supporting attention, memory, and automaticity

The structured multisensory routines used in *Saxon Reading Foundations* support attention, working memory, and the development of automaticity. Because lesson structures and multisensory activities are predictable across days and units, students can focus cognitive resources on the instructional content rather than on learning new procedures. Repeated engagement with familiar multisensory routines provides distributed practice that strengthens retention over time.

These routines are particularly supportive for beginning readers and students who require repeated exposure to consolidate foundational skills. By reducing ambiguity and providing multiple, consistent pathways for learning, multisensory instruction supports accurate and fluent application of literacy skills.

Multisensory instruction as a tool for differentiation

Multisensory instruction in *Saxon Reading Foundations* supports differentiation within core instruction by providing multiple access points to learning without altering instructional goals. Students who require additional reinforcement benefit from repeated, scaffolded, multisensory practice aligned to the same targets, while students who demonstrate early mastery apply skills in more complex reading and writing tasks.

Because multisensory supports are embedded within daily lessons and aligned to assessment-informed decision making, differentiation occurs without fragmenting instruction or introducing parallel curricula. This design supports equitable access to foundational literacy instruction for diverse learners, including students with dyslexia and multilingual learners.

Multisensory instruction in daily practice

Collectively, these features demonstrate that *Saxon Reading Foundations* operationalizes multisensory instruction as an integral component of a structured, research-aligned literacy system. Multisensory routines are explicit, purposeful, and tightly aligned to linguistic content, the Scope and Sequence, and daily lesson objectives. By coordinating auditory, visual, and kinesthetic–tactile engagement within consistent instructional routines, *Saxon Reading Foundations* translates multisensory research into classroom-ready practice that supports accuracy, automaticity, and durable learning across Grades K–2.

Diagnostic teaching and use of assessment

Assessment and data are essential components of effective instruction. Diagnostic teaching involves continuously monitoring students' progress through informal observations and formal standardized measures, and then adjusting instruction to address emerging needs. Teachers who want to maximize learning need multiple sources of information about how their students are performing (Al Otaiba et al., 2011). The right kinds of data help teachers select the instruction that will most benefit their students, identify learners who may need additional support outside the classroom, and provide feedback on how well instruction is meeting students' needs.

By measuring the key essential skills, assessment data can help teachers improve student achievement by providing a detailed description of each student's progress, as well as an aggregate portrait of how a class or grade has progressed. Thoughtful use of various formative, interim, and summative data ensures that all students receive instruction that meets these criteria (Pane et al., 2015):

- Instruction is appropriate for the students' level of development and needs
- Instruction is efficient and seamless
- Instruction provides students the time they need to master the skills and strategies that are taught
- Instruction is sequenced flexibly, accommodates individual progress, and answers the critical question of "what next?"

Diagnostic assessment does more than identify what students know; it provides the essential information teachers need to tailor instruction so that each learner receives the appropriate level of support, scaffolding, or acceleration. Because

assessment data reveal the specific foundational skills in which students require reinforcement or extension, they form the bridge to effective differentiated instruction grounded in individual student needs.

Effective differentiated instruction in K–2 also relies on strategic small-group work that responds to the diverse needs of striving readers, multilingual learners, and students with dyslexia. Research shows that students in early grades make greater literacy gains when teachers use assessment results to form flexible skill-based groups and implement targeted instruction that provides the right amount of support, scaffolding, and practice (Al Otaiba et al., 2009).

Additional evidence indicates that early, precise differentiation is particularly beneficial for students at risk for reading difficulties, enabling them to receive explicit, multisensory practice in phonological awareness, decoding, and high-frequency words, all of which may require intensified and repeated exposure (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 2008). Because students vary widely in the pace at which they acquire foundational literacy skills, differentiation that includes targeted small-group instruction, strategic scaffolding, and opportunities for extension supports both equity and acceleration, helping all learners move toward automatic, accurate, and fluent reading.

Using diagnostic assessments to guide differentiated instruction ensures equity by giving each student the specific support they need to progress, regardless of their starting point. When teachers adjust pacing, scaffolds, and small-group instruction based on data, they help close early skill gaps and provide all learners with fair access to foundational reading success.

How *Saxon Reading Foundations* aligns with the research on diagnostic teaching and use of assessment

Assessment embedded within daily instruction

Saxon Reading Foundations aligns with research on diagnostic teaching by embedding assessment and instructional decision making within the daily instructional cycle rather than treating assessment as a separate or infrequent event. Across Grades K–2, teachers continuously gather evidence of student learning through oral responses, guided practice, written work, and structured review activities embedded in lessons.

In *Saxon*, daily lesson routines, such as oral responses during phonological awareness activities, letter–sound and spelling–sound review, guided blending, and written practice, provide continuous, informal evidence of student understanding. These embedded checks allow teachers to identify errors, misconceptions, or hesitations in real time and to provide immediate corrective feedback.

Assessment

LESSON 20

LESSON PREPARATION

MATERIALS

- Alphabet Handwriting Strips
- Review Decks
- Assessment 3
- Assessment 3 Recording Form
- Spelling Test 1
- Fluency Reader 2 (A Sprint to the Frog Pond)
- Fluency Assessment Recording Forms
- Fluency Word List 2
- Fluency Passage 2 (all levels)
- Kid Card Decks (all colors)
- tokens
- Fluency Reader 2 (Who Is Fast?; Dog's Plan)

BEFORE CLASS

- Add the **Orange Cards 33–40** and the **Blue Cards 43–88** to the **Kid Card Decks**.
- Gather the **Pink Kid Cards 1–10**, the **Green Kid Cards 1–10**, the **Purple Kid Cards 1–6**, and the **Red Kid Cards 1–6**. (These cards now form the **Pink, Green, Purple, and Red Kid Card Decks**.)

MULTILINGUAL LEARNER SUPPORT

RESPOND TO TEXT Light Provide a response frame for children to respond verbally to an open-ended question about **Fluency Reader 2**. For example: *"Is it fun to run in a race?"* It is/is not fun to run in a race because _____. Display the response frame, give an example, and have partners take turns sharing ideas.

Lesson Warm-Up

Alphabet Activity

OBJECTIVE: To review the alphabet and identify vowels

- Children should have their **Alphabet Handwriting Strips** available.

"Let's divide into teams to say the alphabet."

"This half of the room will be the consonant team and say the consonants. This half of the room will be the vowel team and say the vowels. Everyone on your team will say the letters together."

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Formative checks to guide immediate instructional decisions

Formative assessment is a core feature of *Saxon Reading Foundations'* instructional design. During phonological awareness activities, phonics instruction, spelling routines, and fluency practice, teachers listen for accuracy, hesitation, and error patterns in students' responses. These observations inform immediate instructional adjustments, such as providing corrective feedback, repeating a routine, or

offering additional guided practice before moving forward. Because formative assessment is integrated into instruction rather than layered on top of it, teachers can address misunderstandings as they arise, preventing small gaps from compounding into larger difficulties.

Assessment

Written Assessment (Whole Class)

- Distribute the **Student Response Page** and the independent practice page for **Assessment 2**.
- **Section A:** Give the following sounds for #1–5 as children record the letters: /t/, /p/, /ă/, /ā/, /n/.
- **Section B:** Have children spell the word for the picture by #6.

"Put your finger on the picture by #6. It is a picture of a light switch. It is turned on."

"Listen to the sounds in the word, spell the word on on the lines."

- Give children a chance to spell the whole word, children to help them spell.

"Now, let's check our spelling by reading the word on."

- Continue with #7 log.

Oral Assessment (One-on-One)

- The rest of the assessment will be conducted orally one-on-one. While children wait for their turn with you, have them code and read the words for #9–12. They should stop when they read #13, which is a sight word. Remind children that sight words don't follow the rules they are learning so they will not code these. Then ask them to practice reading the decodable sentences for #14–15, coding any unfamiliar or challenging words to help them read the sentences more smoothly.

- Once students have prepared for the oral assessment, have them draw lines from the words in the sentences.

Assessment 2 Practice Worksheet

- Have the **Teacher's Assessment** Turn to the **Teacher's Response** page.
- With one child at a time, read the words and sentences aloud. Have the child write the words and sentences on the lines. Have the child read the words and sentences aloud. Have the child write the words and sentences on the lines. Have the child read the words and sentences aloud.

Name _____

Assessment

A.

1. _____ 2. _____ 3. _____ 4. _____ 5. _____

B.

6. _____



Mastery benchmarks aligned to the Scope and Sequence

In addition to daily formative checks, *Saxon Reading Foundations* includes regularly scheduled formal assessments that align directly to the instructional sequence. Oral and written phonics and spelling assessments, fluency checks, and unit assessments are administered at systematic intervals to evaluate mastery of recently taught concepts.

These assessments are intentionally aligned to the program's Scope and Sequence so that results

clearly indicate which specific skills have been mastered and which require additional practice. Students are expected to demonstrate at least 80 percent accuracy to indicate mastery; when this threshold is not met, teachers are provided with clear guidance for targeted remediation. At the program level, *Saxon* also uses recurring assessment touchpoints, such as unit assessments and phonics assessments administered across the year, to support monitoring and instructional planning.

Where Should They Be?									
	Grade K			Grade 1			Grade 2		
	Beginning of Year	Middle of Year	End of Year	Beginning of Year	Middle of Year	End of Year	Beginning of Year	Middle of Year	End of Year
Part A & B: Letter Names									
Uppercase	0/26	15/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26
Lowercase	0/26	15/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26
Part C & D: Letter Sounds									
Consonants	0/23	12/23	21/23	21/23	21/23	23/23	23/23	23/23	23/23
Long Vowels	0/5	3/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5
Short Vowels	0/5	3/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5
Other Vowels	0/4	0/4	0/4	0/4	1/4	4/4	4/4	4/4	4/4
Part E: CVC	0/10	5/10	10/10	10/10	10/10	10/10	10/10	10/10	10/10
Part F: Consonant Digraphs	0/12	0/12	4/12	4/12	4/12	12/12	12/12	12/12	12/12
Part G: Consonant Blends	0/15	5/15	10/15	10/15	14/15	15/15	15/15	15/15	15/15
Part H: VCe	0/12	0/12	10/12	10/12	10/12	12/12	12/12	12/12	12/12
Part I: Vowel Digraphs	0/15	0/15	3/15	3/15	3/15	15/15	15/15	15/15	15/15
Part J: Vowel Diphthongs & Other Combinations	0/12	0/12	3/12	3/12	3/12	12/12	12/12	12/12	12/12
Part K: Vc cv	0/6	0/6	2/6	2/6	4/6	6/6	6/6	6/6	6/6
Part L: Final Stable Syllables	0/12	0/12	0/12	0/12	2/12	7/12	7/12	9/12	12/12
Part M: Affixes	0/20	0/20	1/20	1/20	5/20	16/20	16/20	16/20	20/20
Part N: Vcv	0/12	0/12	0/12	0/12	0/12	12/12	12/12	12/12	12/12
Part O: Hard/Soft c/g and More Multisyllabic Words	0/16	0/16	0/16	0/16	2/16	3/16	3/16	4/16	16/16

Saxon Reading Foundations Assessment, Grade Level Benchmarks

Assessment-informed pacing, grouping, and instructional coherence

Diagnostic assessment is used to determine appropriate entry points and pacing. At the beginning of instruction, teachers administer phonological and phonemic awareness assessments to identify students' readiness for phonics instruction and to determine whether foundational oral language skills require reinforcement.

Throughout the program, assessment data guide decisions about whether to continue forward, pause to reteach a concept, or provide additional practice through differentiated activities. Importantly, pacing adjustments occur within the same instructional framework rather than through fragmented or disconnected interventions, preserving instructional coherence, while structured remediation and extension pathways respond to individual learner needs.

What Do I Do with the Results?

To determine whether a student needs support, reinforcement, or extension, please refer to the **Where Should They Be?** chart. If a student scores less than the score indicated for both the grade-level and time of year, the activities in the **Support** column will be most effective. It is essential to begin exposing them to the skill(s) in various ways, ensuring they have the number of exposures needed to be successful readers. Have children practice where they see some success and slowly add more challenging items.

If a student tests at the target score for the grade-level and time of year, the activities in the **Reinforce** column will be most effective. If a student scores higher than the score indicated for the grade-level and time of year, the activities in the **Extend** column will be most effective. Refer to the **Resources for Differentiation Guide** found on Heinemann's Flight platform for specific directions.

	Support	Reinforce	Extend
Parts A & B: Letter Names	1. Letter/Sound Identification in Resources for Differentiation. 2. Using Letter Tiles, ask the students to pull the letter that you say. Start with the letters they know plus one unknown. Keep adding more as they learn them. 3. Ask students to touch and name the alphabet using the alphabet strip. If they can't name a letter, provide the keyword for that letter to help them remember the name. 4. Sand Letters in Resources for Differentiation.	1. Letter/Sound Identification in Resources for Differentiation. 2. Using Letter Tiles, ask the students to pull the letter that you say. Start with the letters they know plus one unknown. Keep adding more as they learn them. 3. Ask students to touch and name the alphabet using the alphabet strip. If they can't name a letter, provide the keyword for that letter to help them remember the name.	1. Letter/Sound Identification in Resources for Differentiation.
Parts C & D: Letter Sounds	1. Letter/Sound Identification in Resources for Differentiation. 2. Using Letter Tiles, ask the students to pull the letter for the sound that you say. Start with the letters they know plus one unknown. Keep adding more as they learn them. 3. Ask students to touch each letter on the alphabet strip and say its sound. If they can't give the sound, say the keyword for the given letter and then have them identify the sound. 4. Play Sound Scamper from Resources for Differentiation. Use single sounds. 5. Sand Letters in Resources for Differentiation.	1. Letter/Sound Identification in Resources for Differentiation. 2. Using Letter Tiles, ask the students to pull the letter for the sound that you say. Start with the letters they know plus one unknown. Keep adding more as they learn them. 3. Ask students to touch each letter on the alphabet strip and say its sound. If they can't give the sound, say the keyword for the given letter and then have them identify the sound. 4. Play Sound Scamper from Resources for Differentiation. Use three-letter words.	1. Using Letter Tiles, ask the students to pull a letter and give you a word that begins with that sound. 2. Ask students to spell words appropriate for their level using letter tiles. 3. Spelling Lineup from Resources for Differentiation. 4. Spelling Relay from Resources for Differentiation. 5. Sound Solutions from Resources for Differentiation.

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Structured remediation and extension pathways

Saxon Reading Foundations supports assessment-informed differentiation through structured remediation and extension pathways. When assessment data indicate that students need additional support, teachers are directed to targeted activities in the Resources for Differentiation booklet and lesson-embedded

Options for Differentiation. These activities reinforce the same instructional targets using

additional practice, multisensory routines, and scaffolded support, ensuring that remediation remains aligned to the core instructional sequence.

Students who demonstrate early mastery are provided with extension opportunities that deepen application without introducing gaps or accelerating beyond the program's linguistic progression

OPTIONS FOR DIFFERENTIATION LEVELS			
	● Support	■ Reinforce	▲ Extend
For children who	• are struggling to learn a particular skill • are struggling to understand or integrate a concept	• demonstrate on-level understanding of a concept • demonstrate on-level acquisition of a skill	• demonstrate above-level understanding of a concept • demonstrate above-level mastery of a skill • can benefit from more challenging activities
Support provided with	• multisensory activities that address different types of learners • additional instruction, including support to develop phonemic awareness and alphabet knowledge • structured practice of basic skills taught in the lesson	• games and activities for practicing skills and concepts taught in the lesson • multisensory activities that engage all types of learners and support skill acquisition • cumulative review of recent skills to help support integration of new skills	• enrichment games and activities that stretch children's learning • multisensory enrichment activities • cumulative review of recent skills to integrate and build on new skills

Saxon Reading Foundations Options for Differentiation Levels

Progress monitoring to identify trends over time

Assessment practices in *Saxon* also support progress monitoring over time. Teachers use repeated measures, such as fluency word lists, fluency readers, and phonics checks, to observe growth in accuracy, automaticity, and application across lessons and units. Recording forms and tracking tools help teachers document progress, identify patterns of difficulty, and communicate student growth.

This longitudinal use of assessment data aligns with research emphasizing that diagnostic teaching depends on recognizing trends in performance rather than relying on single data points.

Instructionally actionable diagnostic teaching

Crucially, diagnostic teaching in *Saxon Reading Foundations* is instructionally actionable. Assessment results are not simply reported; they are paired with explicit guidance for instructional response. Teachers are prompted to reteach specific concepts, repeat lessons when necessary, adjust grouping, or provide focused small-group instruction based on identified needs. Because assessments are aligned tightly to lesson objectives and instructional routines, teachers can respond efficiently without redesigning instruction or introducing misaligned materials.

Supporting diverse learners through diagnostic responsiveness

The program's diagnostic framework supports equitable instruction for diverse learners. Multilingual learners, students with dyslexia, and students who require additional practice benefit from frequent assessment opportunities that identify skill gaps early and allow teachers to intervene before misunderstandings become entrenched. At the same time, students who progress more quickly are not constrained by fixed pacing schedules, as assessment data allow teachers to move forward when mastery is demonstrated.

Diagnostic teaching in daily practice

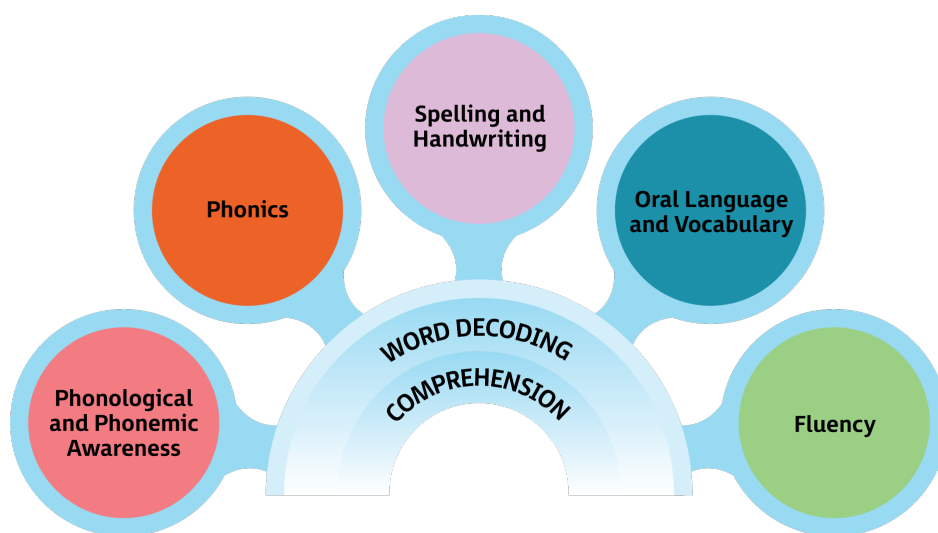
In combination, these features demonstrate that *Saxon Reading Foundations* operationalizes research-aligned diagnostic teaching by integrating assessment, instruction, and differentiation within a single coherent system. Daily embedded checks, formal mastery-aligned assessments, an 80 percent mastery benchmark, structured remediation and extension pathways, and ongoing progress monitoring function together to guide instructional decisions while maintaining alignment to a coherent Scope and Sequence.

Essential components of literacy

Decades of converging research in reading science, cognitive psychology, and linguistics demonstrate that proficient reading develops through the coordinated acquisition of a set of essential, interrelated literacy components. In the early grades, these components must be taught explicitly, systematically, and cumulatively to ensure that all students, particularly those at risk for reading difficulties, develop the foundational skills necessary for accurate, fluent, and meaningful reading. When instruction addresses these components intentionally and in concert, students are more likely to build the automatic word-recognition and language-comprehension skills that underlie long-term reading success.

This chapter synthesizes the research base supporting the essential components of early literacy and explains why each plays a critical role in beginning reading development. Drawing on landmark findings from the National Reading Panel and subsequent advances in reading research, the chapter reflects widely accepted models such as the Simple View of Reading, the Reading Rope, and the Active View of Reading, all of which emphasize the interdependence of foundational decoding skills and language comprehension. Together, these perspectives underscore that weaknesses in any one component can constrain overall reading development, while strong, well-integrated instruction across components supports equity and acceleration in early literacy outcomes.

The sections that follow examine each essential component in turn, including alphabet knowledge; phonological and phonemic awareness; phonics and word recognition; spelling and orthographic mapping; fluency development; vocabulary and morphology; comprehension; handwriting and transcription skills; and oral language, speaking, and listening. For each component, the chapter summarizes key research findings and then describes how *Saxon Reading Foundations* addresses these areas through its instructional design, materials, and routines. Taken together, this chapter demonstrates how comprehensive, research-aligned instruction across the essential components of literacy supports students' development as accurate, fluent, and confident readers in the primary grades.



Saxon Reading Foundations Instructional Areas

Alphabet knowledge

Alphabet knowledge, defined as children's understanding of letter names, shapes, and letter–sound correspondences, is a foundational component of early literacy. Early proficiency strongly predicts later reading achievement because it supports the alphabetic principle and accurate decoding (Castles et al., 2018; Ehri, 2020; Moats, 2020a). Mastery of letter–sound relationships allows children to map sounds onto print, forming the basis of word recognition and phonics learning.

Research shows that alphabet knowledge does not develop incidentally; it requires explicit, systematic instruction. Children benefit from direct teaching of letter names and associated sounds, supported by guided practice. Structured instruction that moves from easier to more complex skills helps students discriminate letter forms, connect letters to key sounds, and apply this knowledge when analyzing simple words (Gough & Tunmer, 1986; NICHD, 2000). This approach fosters both visual recognition and the phonological connections essential for decoding.

Effective instruction is also multimodal, engaging students visually, auditorily, and kinesthetically. Children learn letters more efficiently when they manipulate, trace, or form them; hear and produce their sounds; and engage with print in meaningful contexts (Adams, 1990; Gillingham & Stillman, 1956). Multisensory techniques strengthen memory for letter–sound associations, while playful routines, such as letter games, picture card activities, and environmental print exploration, reinforce learning and maintain engagement (Bisso & Luckner, 1996; McGee & Schickendanz, 2007).

Because alphabet knowledge develops over time, instruction must be cumulative, with frequent

review. By revisiting previously taught letters while introducing new ones, spiraling instruction supports retention and helps prevent early skill gaps that can contribute to later reading difficulties (NRP, 2000; Stanovich, 1988). When aligned with phonological awareness and early phonics, alphabet knowledge provides a strong foundation for decoding, fluency, and comprehension.

Recent research deepens our understanding of why some letters are easier to learn than others. Letter difficulty varies based on the position of a sound within the letter name, frequency in print, visual similarity to other letters, and the developmental order of phoneme acquisition (Jones, Clark, & Reutzel, 2012; Jones & Reutzel, 2012). Large-scale analyses show that letters like *x* and *o* are mastered earlier, while *d*, *q*, and vowels with multiple sounds remain challenging across the year (Demchak et al., 2025).

Research also challenges the traditional "letter-a-week" pacing model. Studies show that completing alphabet instruction within weeks rather than months produces stronger outcomes in letter–sound knowledge, word reading, and spelling, particularly for students at risk (Jones & Reutzel, 2012; Sunde et al., 2020). Accelerated pacing enables multiple distributed review cycles, which memory research identifies as optimal for long-term retention. For example, Jones and Reutzel's Enhanced Alphabet Knowledge (EAK) instructional model operationalizes these findings through brief, explicit daily lessons that teach letter names, sounds, and written forms while allowing teachers to revisit difficult letters and differentiate instruction (Jones, Clark, & Reutzel, 2012; Jones & Reutzel, 2012).

How *Saxon Reading Foundations* aligns with the research on alphabet knowledge

Saxon Reading Foundations aligns closely with research on alphabet knowledge by providing explicit, systematic, and cumulative instruction in letter names, letter forms, and letter–sound correspondences across Grades K–2. The program treats alphabet knowledge as a foundational skill set that must be taught deliberately, practiced frequently, and reinforced across multiple instructional contexts to support accurate decoding, spelling, and fluent reading.

Instruction in alphabet knowledge begins with explicit teaching of letter names and associated sounds, ensuring that students learn to recognize and produce both efficiently. New letters and sounds are introduced in small, manageable increments and are modeled clearly by the teacher. Students are guided to say letter names, articulate corresponding sounds, and connect these sounds to printed letter forms, reducing ambiguity and supporting accurate sound–symbol mapping. This explicit approach aligns with research emphasizing that alphabet knowledge does not develop incidentally and must be taught directly.

Alphabet knowledge is reinforced through daily cumulative review, a core feature of *Saxon Reading Foundations*. Lessons routinely include structured warm-ups and Review Deck activities that revisit previously taught letters and sounds while introducing new ones. Students engage in rapid retrieval of letter names and sounds, helping to build automaticity and prevent early skill erosion. Because previously taught letters remain active in daily instruction, students receive the distributed practice shown to strengthen long-term retention and reduce gaps in foundational skills.

The program integrates multisensory routines to strengthen alphabet knowledge and support memory. Students see letters, say letter names and sounds, and physically form letters through handwriting and encoding activities. Writing letters while simultaneously verbalizing their sounds reinforces phoneme–grapheme connections and supports the development of orthographic representations. These coordinated visual, auditory, and kinesthetic experiences are embedded within predictable lesson structures, ensuring that multisensory instruction supports, rather than distracts from explicit alphabet learning.

LESSON 16

The Letter F

NEW CONCEPTS
• reading and spelling consonant f • the blend ff

LESSON PREPARATION

MATERIALS

- Alphabet Handwriting Strips
- Letter Tile f
- Letter Tiles (in containers)
- Review Decks
- Letter Card 11
- Picture Card 15
- Sight Word Card 3
- Spelling Card 14
- Worksheet 16
- Spelling List 1
- Handwriting Practice Ff
- Sight Word Practice 1

BEFORE CLASS

- Cover the picture on the **Ff Alphabet Wall Card**.
- Fold **Spelling List 1** in half lengthwise (with the words facing out).
- Although two **Letter Tiles f** are included in each **Letter Tile** set, the additional **f** will not be needed until Lesson 52.

MULTILINGUAL LEARNER SUPPORT

SUPPORT ARTICULATION **Substantial** Some multilingual learners may have difficulty distinguishing between /f/ and /p/. Model each sound while showing **Spelling Cards 5** and **14** and describing the mouth positions. Then have children practice making the sounds /f/ and /p/ using a mirror to check their own mouth positions.

Lesson Warm-Up

Alphabet Activity

OBJECTIVE: To review vowels and the alphabet

- Children should have their **Alphabet Handwriting Strips** available.

"How many letters are in the alphabet?" 26

"What two kinds of letters make up the alphabet?" vowels and consonants

Lesson 16 • The Letter F 149

Saxon Reading Foundations Grade 1 Alphabet Lesson

Handwriting instruction plays a central role in *Saxon's* approach to alphabet knowledge. In Kindergarten, students learn the basic strokes that underlie all manuscript letters and practice

forming uppercase and lowercase letters using clear talk-throughs, skywriting, and guided practice pages. Alphabet Handwriting Strips provide a continuous visual reference for correct letter formation, orientation, and stroke sequence. These routines help students internalize letter shapes and reduce cognitive load during reading and spelling tasks by making letter production increasingly automatic.

Alphabet knowledge is also tightly integrated with phonological awareness, phonics, and spelling instruction. Students do not learn letters in isolation; instead, they apply letter knowledge during sound-manipulation activities, blending routines, spelling practice, and reading of controlled decodable text. As students encounter letters repeatedly in meaningful reading and writing contexts, they strengthen the reciprocal

relationship between recognizing letters and using them to decode and encode words.

Assessment supports the development of alphabet knowledge through frequent monitoring and diagnostic feedback. Teachers observe students' oral responses during letter-sound review, evaluate written letter formation during handwriting tasks, and use targeted assessments to determine mastery. When assessments indicate confusion with specific letters or sounds, teachers are guided to reteach and reinforce those elements using aligned instructional routines and differentiation resources. This diagnostic use of assessment ensures that alphabet knowledge gaps are identified early and addressed before they interfere with decoding and spelling development.

LESSON 16

Daily Letter and Sound Review

OBJECTIVE: To practice letter recognition, affixes, letter sounds, and sight words

- Quickly review **Letter Cards 1–10**. Have children name each letter.
- Show **Affix Card 1**.
"What is this called?" **suffix** -s
- Quickly review **Picture Cards 1–14**. Have children name each keyword and sound.
- Show **Sight Word Cards 1 and 2**. Have children read each word.

Spelling Review

OBJECTIVE: To practice spelling letter sounds and words

- Seat children where they can write comfortably.
- Distribute **Worksheet 16**. Make sure children turn to the correct side.
- Quickly review the following ten spelling sounds. Children should echo the sounds, name the letters that make them, and write the responses on the lines by #1–10.

1. /ō/ o	6. /ī/ i
2. /ā/ a	7. /z/ z, s
3. /ī/ i	8. /ā/ a
4. /s/ s	9. /l/ l
5. /d/ d	10. /ō/ o

REMINDER: You may choose instead to review ten sounds children most need to practice; or let children use their own paper, and review the entire **Spelling Deck**.

"Let's practice spelling words. Put your finger by #11. Spell the word last."

TIP: Words with blends may be especially difficult for children to spell. If children need help, unblend and count the sounds in the word. Then have children name and write the letter that makes each sound.

- Spell each word out loud after children write it, so they can check and correct their work immediately.
- Repeat with #12 (snap).
- Have children set their worksheets aside for use later in the lesson.

Lesson 16 • The Letter F

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Saxon Reading Foundations Grade 1 Letter and Sound Review

Phonological and phonemic awareness

Phonological awareness is the ability to identify and manipulate words, syllables, and sounds in oral language. Phonemic awareness, a subcategory of phonological awareness, is both the awareness that words are composed of separate sounds and the ability to hear and manipulate those sounds. Phonological awareness precedes effective phonics instruction. It is important for children to be able to hear and identify individual sounds so that they can develop the skills to connect those sounds to spellings and become successful readers and spellers.

High-quality phonological awareness instruction is essential in the earliest grades because research consistently shows that children's ability to attend to the sound structure of language plays a causal role in learning to read. Explicit instruction that teaches students to segment, blend, and manipulate sounds produces significantly stronger outcomes than indirect or immersion-based approaches, underscoring that phonological awareness is one of the strongest predictors of early reading achievement (Brady, 2012; National Reading Council, 1998; National Reading Panel, 2000).

Studies also emphasize that early reading development depends on robust phonological skills and that deficits in these areas are closely linked to later difficulties in word reading and decoding (Clayton et al., 2020; Liben & Liben, 2019). When phonological and phonemic awareness are taught systematically and paired with opportunities to connect sounds to letters, children are better able to transfer these skills to accurate decoding, a practice shown to accelerate progress in beginning readers (Adams, 1990; Brady, 2012). Effective reading instruction in the early grades focuses on helping students understand the role that phonemic awareness

plays in learning to read and write. Phonemic awareness refers to the ability to identify and manipulate individual speech sounds in oral language (NICHD, 2000). A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a given language that can be recognized as being distinct from other sounds in the language. For example, the word *cap* has three phonemes (/k/, /a/, /p/), and the word *clasp* has five phonemes (/k/, /l/, /a/, /s/, /p/). Phonemic awareness is essential to reading because hearing the individual sounds in words is key to matching them with the letters when learning to decode.

The importance of phonemic awareness in learning to read has been well documented. The National Reading Panel reviewed decades of reading research and concluded that phonemic awareness and letter knowledge are the two best indicators of how well children will learn to read during the first two years of instruction. Recent research also shows that phonemic awareness is an essential precursor to reading, and that listening to and using language helps many, though not all, students gain this awareness prior to entering school (Brady, Braze, & Fowler, 2011).

Alphabet knowledge is closely linked to phonological and phonemic awareness, and research underscores the importance of integrating these domains during instruction. Studies consistently show that children who understand both the sounds in spoken language and the letters that represent those sounds progress more rapidly toward skilled decoding (Brady, Braze, & Fowler, 2011; Ehri et al., 2001). Activities such as identifying initial sounds, blending phonemes, and segmenting words become more powerful when children can connect these spoken sounds to printed letters. This reciprocal relationship strengthens both phonemic awareness and orthographic processing, supporting the development of automatic word recognition.

How *Saxon Reading Foundations* aligns with the research on phonological and phonemic awareness

Saxon Reading Foundations aligns strongly with research on phonological and phonemic awareness by providing explicit, systematic, and cumulative instruction in sound awareness across Grades K–2. The program treats phonological and phonemic awareness as foundational skills that must be intentionally developed and continuously reinforced to support accurate decoding, spelling, and fluent reading.

Instruction in phonological and phonemic awareness begins with explicit teacher-led routines that guide students to attend to, identify, and manipulate the sound structure of spoken language. Across daily lessons, teachers use clear verbal prompts and guided practice to model sound awareness tasks, including identifying initial, medial, and final sounds; blending and segmenting syllables and phonemes; and manipulating sounds within words. Students are not expected to infer sound relationships independently; instead, instruction makes the sound structure of language visible and accessible through direct explanation and modeling.

Phonological and phonemic awareness instruction in *Saxon* follows a systematic progression from broader to more fine-grained sound skills. Early instruction emphasizes listening skills, rhyming, word awareness, and syllable segmentation before moving to onset–rime awareness and phoneme-level blending and segmentation. As students progress, instruction focuses increasingly on isolating, blending, segmenting, and manipulating individual phonemes. This progression reflects the research-aligned principle that students must develop sensitivity to larger sound units before they can reliably attend to individual phonemes.

The program integrates daily cumulative practice to strengthen phonological and phonemic awareness over time. Previously taught sound skills are revisited frequently through warm-ups, oral response routines, and Review Deck activities. These repeated opportunities ensure that sound awareness skills remain active as new skills are introduced, supporting consolidation and automaticity. Because phonological and phonemic awareness are continually reinforced rather than taught in isolation, students receive the distributed practice shown to support durable learning.

Phonological/Phonemic Awareness Activity

OBJECTIVE: To categorize words by medial phonemes



“Let’s practice what we already know! Say the first word with me: ten. Now say these words with me: cat, gem. Which word has the same middle sound as ten—cat or gem? Yes! Ten and gem. Today, we are going to play the opposite game. We will listen to find the word that has a different middle sound.”

“Let’s play Mystery Word to find the word that does not have the same middle sound.”

• I DO •

“Watch me. The word is sun. I am thinking of a word that does NOT have the same middle sound as in the word sun. Listen: sun, cup, bus, net. The mystery word is net! Net does not have the same middle sound as the words sun, cup, and bus.”

- Repeat with pin, big, sit, and lock.

• WE DO •

“Let’s practice together now! I am thinking of a word that does NOT have the same middle sound as the word mess. Say the word mess with me and listen for the middle sound: mess. Listen: mess, jet, five, hen. Now say them with me: mess, jet, five, hen. Which word does NOT have the same middle sound as mess? Yes! Five does not have the same middle sound as mess.”

- Repeat with got, top, win, and sock.

• YOU DO •

“Now it’s your turn!”

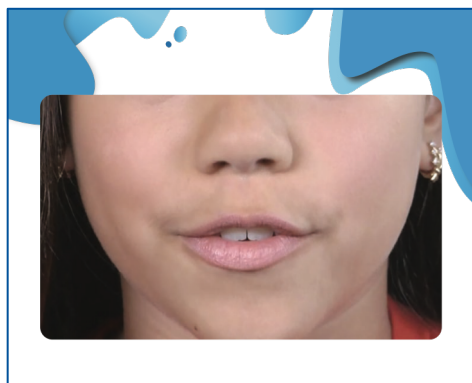
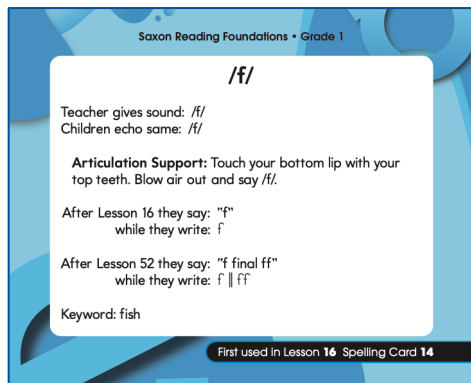
- Have children repeat the steps to find the mystery word using the following groups of words: fan, cat, bus, dad; pot, log, ram, hop; beg, cot, yes, wet.

Saxon Reading Foundations Kindergarten Activity

Multisensory routines play a purposeful role in supporting sound awareness within *Saxon Reading Foundations*. Students engage in coordinated auditory, visual, and kinesthetic–tactile activities, such as tapping, clapping, finger tracking, or using physical markers, to represent

sounds during blending and segmentation tasks. These routines are tightly aligned to instructional targets and embedded within predictable lesson structures, allowing students to experience sounds through multiple modalities while maintaining instructional clarity. Multisensory engagement supports accurate perception of sounds and helps students internalize phoneme sequences essential for decoding and spelling.

Phonological and phonemic awareness instruction in *Saxon* is integrated with phonics, spelling, and handwriting, reinforcing the alphabetic principle. Students apply sound manipulation skills as they connect phonemes to graphemes during phonics instruction, encode sounds into letters during spelling, and articulate sounds while forming letters in handwriting tasks. This integration ensures that phonemic awareness instruction directly supports reading and writing development rather than functioning as a disconnected oral skill.



Saxon Reading Foundations Spelling Cards

Assessment supports phonological and phonemic awareness development through frequent diagnostic monitoring. Teachers observe students' oral responses during sound awareness activities, listen for accuracy and automaticity during blending and segmentation tasks, and use targeted assessments to identify students who require additional support. When assessments indicate difficulty with specific sound skills, teachers are guided to reteach and reinforce those skills using aligned routines and differentiation resources. This diagnostic approach allows instruction to respond to individual needs while maintaining alignment to the program's Scope and Sequence.

The program's design also supports flexible pacing and differentiation for diverse learners. Students who require additional practice, such as students with emerging phonemic awareness skills, students with dyslexia, or multilingual learners acquiring new English phonemes, receive repeated, scaffolded opportunities to engage with sounds through structured routines and small-group activities. At the same time, students who demonstrate early mastery continue progressing through increasingly complex sound manipulation tasks without gaps. Because instruction remains explicit and cumulative, pacing adjustments do not compromise coherence or instructional rigor.

Together, these features demonstrate that *Saxon Reading Foundations* operationalizes research-aligned phonological and phonemic awareness instruction by combining explicit teaching, systematic progression, cumulative review, multisensory engagement, and diagnostic responsiveness. Through daily, integrated sound awareness practice embedded within reading and writing instruction, the program ensures that students develop the phonological foundations necessary for successful decoding, spelling, and fluent reading.

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS INSTRUCTION GUIDE

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Phonics

Numerous independent studies and expert panels have concluded that phonemic awareness and phonics have a direct and positive impact on reading acquisition, and research has also shown that a foundation in phonemic awareness and phonics can positively affect other key elements of literacy, such as fluency, vocabulary development, and comprehension (Ehri et al., 2001).

Research has indicated that explicit and systematic instruction in phonics is a key element of effective reading programs, and an estimated 60 percent of early readers require explicit and systematic phonics instruction in order to learn to read (NICHD, 2000). The National Reading Panel reviewed 38 research studies and concluded that explicit and systematic phonics instruction—that is, instruction that was based on a clearly defined plan and sequence and that was directly taught to students—was more effective at helping children learn to read than responsive phonics instruction—individualized phonics mini-lessons provided if and when children need them—or no phonics instruction at all (NICHD, 2000).

Effective reading instruction in the early grades focuses on helping students learn letter-sound correspondences. After learning to hear the sounds of speech, the next step for students is to learn phonics—the relationship between written letters (called graphemes) and the individual sounds they represent (phonemes). As these understandings fall into place, students begin to decode. Initially, they may recognize familiar words by sight, but gradually they should apply what they know about letter-sound correspondences to decode words as they read and to encode words as they write.

In addition to teaching phonics skills explicitly with detailed explanations, modeling, and

practice, effective reading teachers also include instruction in syllable structure, which can help guide pronunciation of a written word, and morphology (knowledge of word parts like roots and affixes), which can also provide reliable information about pronunciation and meaning. Mastering advanced decoding skills like syllable structure and morphology can facilitate reading multisyllabic words.

Effective reading instruction helps students master sound-symbol associations in two directions: visual to auditory (reading), and auditory to visual (spelling). Reading requires segmenting of whole words into the individual sounds, while spelling involves the blending of sounds and letters into whole words. As such, learning to spell reinforces learning to read; spelling and reading are the productive and receptive sides of the same coin.

Saxon's approach to reading instruction is modeled on the Orton-Gillingham method of systematic, cumulative, explicit, and multisensory reading instruction. 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 span more than twenty years and drew on the fields of neurology, speech pathology, educational psychology, and public school teaching (Gillingham & Stillman, 1956).

Research also shows that teaching students to read by using decodable and strictly controlled text is highly effective for beginning reading success. Using controlled, high-frequency text provides practice with the words found in most beginning reading materials through third grade (Adams, 1990).

How *Saxon Reading Foundations* aligns with the research on phonics

Saxon Reading Foundations aligns closely with research on phonics instruction by providing explicit, systematic, incremental, and cumulative teaching of sound–spelling relationships across Grades K–2. The program is designed to ensure that students develop accurate, automatic decoding skills by learning how letters and letter patterns represent the sounds of spoken language and by applying this knowledge consistently in reading and spelling.

Phonics instruction in *Saxon Reading Foundations* is explicit and teacher-directed. Each new phonics concept, such as a letter–sound correspondence, spelling pattern, or phonics generalization is clearly modeled by the teacher using direct explanation and demonstration. Teachers articulate sounds precisely, model blending and decoding routines, and guide students through structured practice to ensure accurate application. Students are taught exactly how to use phonics knowledge to decode words rather than being expected to infer patterns independently. This explicit approach reflects research emphasizing that systematic phonics instruction is most effective when instructional routines are clearly explained and practiced with guidance and feedback.

The program follows a systematic and sequential Scope and Sequence that progresses from simple to increasingly complex phonics concepts. In Kindergarten, students learn foundational consonant and short-vowel correspondences and begin blending and segmenting simple words. In Grade 1, instruction expands to include long-vowel patterns, digraphs, blends, and early vowel teams, while maintaining continuous review of previously taught concepts. By Grade 2, students apply their phonics knowledge to more

advanced patterns, including *r*-controlled vowels, variant vowels, vowel teams, affixes, and syllable-division routines that support multisyllabic decoding. This structured progression ensures that phonics instruction aligns with the linguistic organization of English and supports steady development of decoding proficiency.

Incremental instruction is a defining feature of *Saxon's* phonics design. Each lesson introduces one new, manageable phonics increment, allowing students to focus attention on a single instructional target at a time. New learning is immediately reinforced through guided practice, oral responses, written work, and application in reading and spelling. This incremental approach minimizes cognitive overload and supports accurate learning, particularly for beginning readers and students who require additional support.

Phonics instruction in *Saxon Reading Foundations* is cumulative, with previously taught sound–spelling relationships revisited daily. Structured warm-ups, Review Deck routines, and written practice ensure that earlier phonics patterns remain active as new patterns are introduced. Students repeatedly apply known phonics elements while learning new ones, strengthening retention and automaticity. This cumulative design reflects research showing that distributed practice and continual review are essential for preventing skill erosion and supporting long-term mastery.

The program integrates multisensory routines to reinforce phonics learning within an explicit instructional framework. Students hear sounds, see letters and spelling patterns, and engage in

Phonics instruction in *Saxon* is tightly integrated with spelling, handwriting, and reading application. Students apply phonics knowledge

bidirectionally: decoding words during reading and encoding sounds into letters during spelling and writing. Writing letters and spelling words while verbalizing sounds reinforces sound–symbol associations and supports orthographic mapping. Students then encounter the same phonics patterns in controlled decodable text, allowing them to apply new learning immediately in connected reading. This integration ensures that phonics instruction supports fluent word recognition rather than remaining an isolated skill.

Grade 1 Teacher's Manual

• Repeat the steps to have children find the mystery word using /r/ /b/ /m/, ram; /l/ /j/, it; /m/ /b/, bat; and /m/ /b/, me.

Daily Letter and Sound Review

OBJECTIVE: To practice letter recognition, affixes, letter sounds, and sight words

• Quickly review the **Letter, Affix, Digraph, and Sight Word Deck**.

Spelling Review

OBJECTIVE: To practice spelling

• Seat children where they can write.

• Distribute **Worksheet 27**. Make a list of words that begin with the letter **e**.

• Quickly review the following ten echo the sounds, name the letter appropriate responses on the line.

1. /m/ m
2. /r/ r
3. /g/ g
4. /d/ d
5. /b/ b

"Let's practice spelling words. Pa am."

• If children need help, unblend the word and write the letter that makes the sound.

• Spell each word out loud after it correct their work immediately.

• Repeat with #12 (camp).

• Have children set their worksheet.

New Increment: The

"Echo these words and listen for position. Raise your hand when loud."

• Point to your mouth as you say "elf," "end," and "elm."

"What sound do you hear in the word?"

• Have children touch their throats to feel the sound.

PHONICS LESSONS

New phonics concepts are introduced in the "New Increment" section of lessons.

LETTER TILES

Tiles feature an uppercase side and lowercase side—the teacher specifies which side students use each day to practice letter recognition. Tiles are given as the letters are taught, focusing on learned letters.

EXAMPLE WORDS

Teachers introduce new phonics skills by writing example words on the board. For new sound-spellings, affixes, and syllable types, an appropriate Review Deck will be shown to illustrate the new phonics skill.

• Write the following on the board:

elf end elm

"What letter do you see that might make the /e/ sound?"

• If children do not know the name of the letter, say it for them.

"All of these words begin with /e/, and e is the first letter in all of these words. E must be the letter making the /e/ sound."

"/e/ is the short sound of e. What's the long sound of e?"

"Right! The long e says its name. Is e a consonant or a vowel?"

• Select children to code the words, read them, and sentences:

elf end elm

• Leave the words on the board for the remainder of the lesson.

• Write the following on the board:

are

• Have children say the word are.

"This word is are. Repeat after me: are, are, are."

• Model a sample sentence using the word are.

"The peaches are ripe."

• Remind children what sight words are.

"This word is irregular, so it doesn't follow all of our call words that don't follow our rules?" sight word.

• Teach children the sound-spelling in the word are: the *"a"* sound.

"However, it does follow some of our rules. Let's see already in the word are."

"I see letter r in the middle of this word. What sound spell?" /r/

• Teach children that the letters a and r together spell are, and that the letter e on the end is silent. Tell the children the word are and they will have to memorize the word.

"Let's say the word again: are. The word are is irregular, so it doesn't follow all of our call words that don't follow our rules?" sight word.

NOTE: Letters a and r together will be taught in Lesson 71.

Handwriting E

• Have children where they can write comfortably.

• Write a capital E on the board in the handwriting you want children to learn. (Specific handwriting strokes are described in the **Handwriting Instruction Guide**.)

"This is a capital E. Let's practice skywriting capital E's."

• Have children skywrite capital E's.

"Get out your worksheet."

• Draw handwriting lines on the board. Write a capital E on the lines, using the strokes taught earlier.

• Have children write a capital E on their worksheets. They should name the letter as they write it. Assist any children who need help.

• Write a lowercase e on the lines in the handwriting you want children to learn.

"This is a lowercase e."

• Have children skywrite lowercase e's and then practice writing a lowercase e beside the capital E on their worksheets. They should name the letter as they write it.

• Have children set their worksheets aside for use later in the lesson.

• Leave the handwriting lines and letters on the board for the remainder of the lesson.

OPTIONAL HANDWRITING PRACTICE: For additional handwriting practice in class or as homework, distribute **Handwriting Practice Ee**. Have children practice writing capital and lowercase e's using the strokes you've taught.

Spelling with Letter Tiles

• Distribute the **Letter Tile** containers and a set of **Letter Tile e**. (Make sure patterns match.)

• Point out the capital and lowercase e's, and let children examine the two sides.

"Hold up your Letter Tile. Turn it so I can see the green capital E."

• Repeat with the purple lowercase e.

HANDWRITING

Students practice handwriting skills and learn letter shapes with multisensory activities.

"Who can use the word are in a sentence?" various answers

"You'll see this sight word often, so you must be able to recognize it. You will have to remember that letters a and r together spell the sound /ar/, and the letter e at the end of the word is silent."

• Have children turn to page 31 in their reference booklets and check off the word.

Handwriting E

• Have children where they can write comfortably.

• Write a capital E on the board in the handwriting you want children to learn. (Specific handwriting strokes are described in the **Handwriting Instruction Guide**.)

"This is a capital E. Let's practice skywriting capital E's."

• Have children skywrite capital E's.

"Get out your worksheet."

• Draw handwriting lines on the board. Write a capital E on the lines, using the strokes taught earlier.

• Have children write a capital E on their worksheets. They should name the letter as they write it. Assist any children who need help.

• Write a lowercase e on the lines in the handwriting you want children to learn.

"This is a lowercase e."

• Have children skywrite lowercase e's and then practice writing a lowercase e beside the capital E on their worksheets. They should name the letter as they write it.

• Have children set their worksheets aside for use later in the lesson.

• Leave the handwriting lines and letters on the board for the remainder of the lesson.

OPTIONAL HANDWRITING PRACTICE: For additional handwriting practice in class or as homework, distribute **Handwriting Practice Ee**. Have children practice writing capital and lowercase e's using the strokes you've taught.

Spelling with Letter Tiles

• Distribute the **Letter Tile** containers and a set of **Letter Tile e**. (Make sure patterns match.)

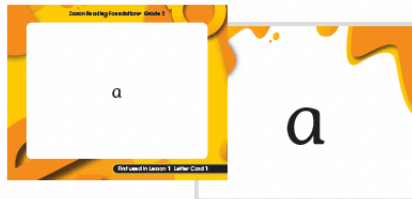
• Point out the capital and lowercase e's, and let children examine the two sides.

"Hold up your Letter Tile. Turn it so I can see the green capital E."

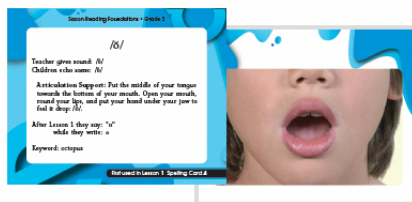
• Repeat with the purple lowercase e.



Phonological Awareness Picture Cards are used for activities in the Kindergarten Phonological Awareness instruction and provide engaging ways to reinforce concepts.



Letter Cards are a valuable tool for reviewing and reinforcing letter names and recognition of letters and letter clusters in written form.



Spelling Cards are designed to instruct students in regular spelling patterns associated with common sounds.



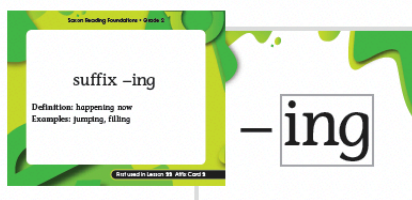
Alphabet/Accent Cards aid in accenting practice without sounding out new words. The cards feature small alphabet sequences that reinforce alphabetical order.



Picture Cards showcase illustrations that depict keywords, serving as visual aids to help students recall specific letter sounds.



Sight Word Cards aid in reviewing common words that defy phonics rules. Students practice decoding phonetic elements and memorizing irregular elements.



Affix Cards serve as a helpful tool for reviewing prefixes and suffixes, enhancing vocabulary and comprehension.

Phonics Assessment Recording Form

Name _____

BOY Date _____ **MOY Date** _____ **EOY Date** _____

(BOY- Beginning of Year) (MOY- Middle of Year) (EOY- End of Year)

Test administrator: Point to the letters/words, moving from left to right. Have a row be missed or read incorrectly.

HOW TO RECORD STUDENT ANSWERS:
Use a different color when assessing BOY, MOY, and EOY. Only mark letters/w correctly by putting a slash through letters/words. If a student reads any letters self-corrects, write "sc" over them but do not count them correct.

Where Should They Be?

	Grade K			Grade 1			Grade 2		
	Beginning of Year	Middle of Year	End of Year	Beginning of Year	Middle of Year	End of Year	Beginning of Year	Middle of Year	End of Year
Part A & B: Letter Names									
Uppercase	0/26	15/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26
Lowercase	0/26	15/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26
Part C & D: Letter Sounds									
Consonants	0/23	12/23	21/23	21/23	21/23	23/23	23/23	23/23	23/23
Long vowels	0/5	3/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	4/5	4/5	5/5
Short vowels	0/5	3/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	4/5	4/5	5/5
Other vowels	0/4	0/4	0/4	0/4	1/4	4/4	4/4	4/4	4/4
Part E: CVC	0/10	5/10	10/10	10/10	10/10	10/10	10/10	10/10	10/10
Part F: Consonant Digraphs	0/12	0/12	4/12	4/12	4/12	12/12	12/12	12/12	12/12
Part G: Consonant Blends	0/15	5/15	10/15	10/15	14/15	15/15	15/15	15/15	15/15

PART A: Letter Names BOY: /26 MOY: /26 EOY: /26

Directions for student: "Please tell me the letter name for each capital letter what it is, just do your best and then move on to the next letter." "Ready? GO"

L O G H T P A
N M I S F R K
B U Z C E Y D
V J X W Q

What Do I Do with the Results?

If a child is not keeping up with the suggested score, it is essential to begin exposing them to the skills in various ways, ensuring they have the number of exposures needed to be successful readers. Go to their level and have them practice where they see some success and slowly add more to make sure there is some learning taking place.

To determine whether a student needs Support, Reinforcement, or Extensions, please refer to the "Where Should They Be?" chart. If a student scores less than the score indicated for the grade-level and time of year being assessed, the activities in the **Support** column will be most effective. If a student scores right at the score indicated for the grade-level and time of year being assessed, the activities in the **Reinforce** column will be most effective. If a student scores more than the score indicated for the grade-level and time of year being assessed, the activities in the **Extend** column will be most effective.

	Support	Reinforce	Extend
Part A & B: Letter Names	- Letter/Sound Identification in Resources for Differentiation. - Using Letter Tiles ask the students to pull the letter that you say. Start with the letters they know plus one unknown. Keep adding more as they learn them. - Ask students to touch and name the alphabet using the alphabet strip. Hold up card with letter, if they can't name it ask them to say the alphabet until they retrieve the name of the letter. - Send Letters in Resources for Differentiation.	- Letter/Sound Identification in Resources for Differentiation. - Using Letter Tiles ask the students to pull the letter that you say. Start with the letters they know plus one unknown. Keep adding more as they learn them. - Ask students to touch and name the alphabet using the alphabet strip. Hold up card with letter, if they can't name it ask them to say the alphabet until they retrieve the name of the letter.	Letter/Sound Identification in Resources for Differentiation.

Saxon Reading Foundations Phonics Assessment and Guidance

Assessment plays a key role in supporting effective phonics instruction. Teachers continuously monitor students' decoding accuracy during oral reading, blending routines, and written practice. Regular phonics and spelling assessments aligned to the Scope and Sequence provide clear indicators of mastery. When assessments show that students have not yet secured a phonics concept, teachers are guided to reteach and provide additional practice using aligned instructional routines and differentiation resources. This diagnostic use of assessment ensures that phonics instruction remains responsive while maintaining coherence.

The program's design also supports flexible pacing and differentiation. Students who need additional practice with specific phonics patterns receive targeted reinforcement through small-group activities, additional worksheets,

and multisensory routines, while students who demonstrate mastery progress to more complex patterns without gaps. Because pacing adjustments occur within the same structured framework, instruction remains systematic and cumulative for all learners.

Together, these features demonstrate that *Saxon Reading Foundations* operationalizes research-aligned phonics instruction by combining explicit teaching, systematic sequencing, incremental pacing, cumulative review, multisensory reinforcement, and diagnostic responsiveness. Through daily, integrated phonics instruction embedded within reading and writing activities, the program ensures that students develop the accurate, automatic decoding skills essential for fluent reading and spelling.

Spelling

Once students know a small set of consonant and vowel sounds and their corresponding letters, they can begin to decode by sounding out and blending these elements into words in isolation and in connected text. In doing so, they rely on recognizing letter shapes, understanding the order of letters in words, accessing the sounds those letters represent, and integrating meaning from context or illustrations to construct basic comprehension (Adams, 1990; Cunningham & Allington, 2011). This same knowledge base forms the foundation for encoding, the reciprocal process of segmenting spoken words into phonemes and representing those phonemes with graphemes. Early decoding and encoding are mutually reinforcing: as students practice one, they strengthen the cognitive processes required for the other.

As students acquire letter–sound knowledge, they begin forming connections that support orthographic mapping, the mental process that enables readers and writers to link spellings, pronunciations, and meanings of words in long-term memory (Ehri, 2014). Automatic access to these letter–sound relationships reduces cognitive load during both reading and writing, freeing students to focus on constructing meaning. Research in cognitive psychology confirms that repeated, varied practice with letters and sounds contributes to the development of automaticity—one of the hallmarks of skilled decoding and encoding (Anderson, 1983; LaBerge & Samuels, 1984). In other words, as students become more efficient decoders, they also become more efficient spellers, and vice versa.

Because developing writers naturally draw on their emerging phonological and orthographic understanding, many K–2 students initially use invented spelling, often representing only the

most salient sounds, typically consonants, as they attempt to convey ideas.

Over time, these approximations evolve into more conventional spellings as children strengthen their phonemic segmentation skills and develop familiarity with spelling patterns through explicit and systematic instruction. A well-structured word-study program helps teachers interpret early spellings diagnostically, revealing how students are mapping sounds to letters and when more direct instruction in phonics or spelling patterns is needed (Cunningham & Allington, 2011; Ehri, 2014). Because encoding requires students to isolate each phoneme and choose graphemes to represent those sounds, spelling is more than a writing skill; it is a powerful instructional pathway for making decoding knowledge permanent.

Understanding how words are spelled strengthens both reading and writing by helping students internalize recurring patterns in English orthography. To read and write fluently and to appreciate how words function in meaningful contexts, students need literacy experiences that integrate authentic reading and writing with explicit, purposeful word study. In spelling instruction, students examine sound–symbol relationships, structural elements of words (such as onset–rime units, syllable patterns, and morphemes), and the meaningful units that determine how words are built. This knowledge, once acquired, becomes generative: students apply it not only to words they are reading and writing but also to unfamiliar words they encounter, supporting both comprehension and vocabulary development (Templeton, 1998).

The history of the English language also contributes to its spelling system, which reflects

Anglo-Saxon, Latin, Romance, and Greek influences. Understanding these influences gives students insight into why English contains seemingly irregular spellings and why many complex or multisyllabic words follow historical, not purely phonetic, patterns. Research shows that when students learn how word origins and language structures influence spelling, they are better able to analyze and decode unfamiliar words (Henry, 1987, 1988). Instruction in word origins, including patterns of Latin, Greek, and

Anglo-Saxon derivation, is therefore an essential component of morphological instruction, helping students connect spelling, meaning, and structure (Abbott & Berninger, 1999; Henry, 1987, 1988, 2010). Although introduced gradually in K–2, this knowledge becomes especially important as students progress and encounter more morphologically complex vocabulary.

How *Saxon Reading Foundations* aligns with the research on spelling

Saxon Reading Foundations aligns closely with research on spelling development by treating spelling as an integral component of foundational literacy instruction rather than as an isolated writing task. Across Grades K–2, spelling instruction is explicit, systematic, and cumulative, reinforcing the reciprocal relationship between encoding and decoding and supporting the development of accurate, automatic word reading and writing.

Spelling instruction in *Saxon Reading Foundations* is explicit and teacher-directed. Students are taught how to segment spoken words into individual phonemes and how to represent those sounds using appropriate graphemes and spelling patterns. Teachers model the spelling process by clearly articulating sounds, demonstrating sound-to-letter mapping, and guiding students through structured practice. Students are not expected to infer spelling patterns independently; instead, instruction makes sound–spelling relationships transparent and actionable through direct explanation and modeling.

The program follows a systematic and sequential progression in spelling instruction that mirrors its phonics Scope and Sequence. In the early stages, students spell simple consonant–vowel–consonant words using foundational letter–sound correspondences. As instruction progresses, students are introduced to more complex spelling patterns, including long-vowel spellings, digraphs, blends, vowel teams, *r*-controlled vowels, variant vowels, affixes, and multisyllabic spelling patterns. This progression ensures that spelling instruction reflects the linguistic structure of English and builds logically from simple to complex forms.

Spelling instruction in *Saxon* is incremental, with each lesson introducing a manageable spelling target aligned to current phonics instruction. New spelling patterns are practiced immediately through oral spelling, written encoding tasks, and guided dictation. By focusing attention on a single new pattern at a time and reinforcing it through multiple applications, the program supports accurate learning while minimizing cognitive overload, particularly for beginning readers and writers.

A defining feature of *Saxon Reading Foundations* is its emphasis on cumulative spelling practice. Previously taught spelling patterns are revisited daily through structured warm-ups, Spelling Sound Review routines, worksheets, and Review Deck activities. Students repeatedly apply known spelling patterns while learning new ones, strengthening retention and supporting long-term mastery. This cumulative design aligns with research emphasizing that spelling knowledge develops through repeated, distributed practice rather than one-time exposure.

Spelling instruction is tightly integrated with phonics, handwriting, and reading application. Students encode words using the same sound–spelling relationships they apply during decoding, reinforcing the bidirectional nature of literacy development. Writing letters and spelling words while saying sounds aloud strengthens phoneme–grapheme connections and supports orthographic mapping. Students then encounter these same spelling patterns in controlled decodable text, allowing immediate transfer between spelling and reading. This integration ensures that spelling instruction directly supports fluent word recognition rather than functioning as a separate skill.

Spelling with Letter Tiles

- Distribute the **Letter Tile** containers and **Letter Tile f**. (Make sure patterns match.)
- Point out the capital and lowercase *f*'s, and let children examine the two sides.

"Hold up your Letter Tile. Turn it so I can see the green capital F."

- Make sure children have the capital *F* turned toward you.

"Now turn it so I can see the purple lowercase f."

- Have children take the other tiles out of their containers. Tell children which side to use, and have them lay their tiles in a row.
- Have children spell the following with their **Letter Tiles**:

fan if soft

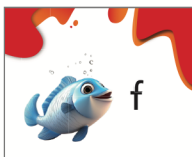
"Let's try spelling one of our sight words today."

"Use your Letter Tiles to spell the word said. If you can't remember how to spell it, look it up in your booklet."

- Make sure children arrange the tiles correctly.
- Choose additional words from the **Spelling Word List**, if desired.
- Have children return the tiles to the containers. Collect the containers.
- Reinforce the name, sound, and shape of *f* throughout the day.



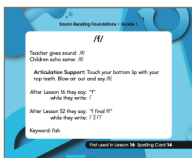
Letter Card 11



Picture Card 15



Sight Word Card 3



Spelling Card 14

New Deck Cards for F

- Show **Letter Card 11** and have children name the letter.
"Our new keyword for f begins with /f/. See if you can guess it."
- Introduce the keyword *fish* with the following riddle:
"This animal lives in the water. It swims all the time. It has fins, scales, and gills. What do you think it is?" fish
- Show **Picture Card 15** and uncover the picture on the wall card.
"When you see this card, say fish, /f/."
"The keyword fish helps us remember the /f/ sound because fish begins with /f/."
- Show **Sight Word Card 3**.
"What is this word?" of
"Get out your worksheet and put your finger by #13."
- Follow the instructions on **Spelling Card 14**. Children should write a lowercase *f* beside #13.
- Have children set their worksheets aside for use later in the lesson.
- Add the four new cards to the **Review Decks**.

Name _____

Ff _____

1. _____ 14. _____

2. _____ 15. _____

3. _____ 16. _____

4. _____ 17. **o f f**

5. _____ 18. **f i z z**

6. _____ 19. **f i s t**

7. _____ 20. **f a s t**

8. _____ 21. **f a n s**

9. _____ 22. **f i t**

10. _____ 23. **n o**

11. _____ 24. **p o n d**

12. _____ 25. **s l i p**

13. _____ 26. **a s**

Saxon Reading Foundations 1

WORKSHEET 16

Saxon Reading Foundations Grade 1 Spelling Worksheet

The program incorporates multisensory routines to reinforce spelling accuracy and memory. Students hear sounds, see spelling patterns, and engage in kinesthetic activities, such as tapping, tracing, and writing while encoding words. These multisensory experiences are intentionally aligned to spelling targets and embedded within predictable lesson structures, supporting accurate encoding while maintaining instructional clarity and coherence.

Assessment supports spelling development through frequent diagnostic monitoring and mastery checks. Teachers observe students' oral spelling responses, review written spelling work,

and administer spelling assessments aligned to the Scope and Sequence. When assessments indicate difficulty with specific spelling patterns, teachers are guided to reteach and reinforce those patterns using aligned instructional routines and differentiation resources. This diagnostic approach allows instruction to respond to individual needs while preserving the cumulative structure of the program.

Saxon Reading Foundations also supports flexible pacing and differentiation in spelling instruction. Students who require additional practice receive targeted reinforcement through small-group activities, additional worksheets, and multisensory routines, while students who demonstrate early mastery continue progressing to more complex spelling patterns. Because pacing adjustments occur within the same structured framework, instruction remains systematic and coherent for all learners.

Together, these features demonstrate that *Saxon Reading Foundations* operationalizes research-aligned spelling instruction by integrating explicit teaching, systematic sequencing, incremental pacing, cumulative review, multisensory reinforcement, and diagnostic responsiveness. Through daily, integrated spelling practice embedded within reading and writing instruction, the program ensures that students develop accurate encoding skills that support decoding, fluency, and overall literacy development.

Fluency development

Fluency, the ability to read connected text smoothly and easily, is a critical reading ability that supports both surface-level and deeper literacy learning (Denton et al., 2013). It serves as a bridge between decoding and comprehension, enabling students to shift from laborious word identification to meaningful interpretation of text (Pikulski & Chard, 2005). When students can identify words quickly and accurately, they free cognitive resources to draw on vocabulary, background knowledge, and linguistic understanding to comprehend what they read. Fluency comprises three key elements: accuracy (pronouncing words correctly), rate (reading at an appropriate speed to support comprehension), and prosody (reading with meaningful phrasing, intonation, and expression). Accuracy monitoring and self-correction are also essential components, as skilled readers continuously evaluate whether the text makes sense and adjust their reading accordingly.

A central prerequisite for fluency is automaticity, the rapid, effortless execution of lower-level reading skills. Research in cognitive science underscores the importance of automaticity for expertise. Anderson's theory describes expertise as a developmental progression through cognitive, associative, and autonomous stages (Anderson, 1983). In the early cognitive stage, learners consciously rehearse facts and procedures. During the associative stage, they refine accuracy through practice and feedback. At the autonomous stage, skills become automatic, reducing working memory demands. This framework applies directly to reading: strong readers reach the autonomous stage of word identification, recognizing letters and words effortlessly so they can devote attention to making meaning (LaBerge & Samuels, 1984).

As word identification becomes automatic, readers gain the "cognitive space" needed to comprehend increasingly complex text (Baker et al., 2017).

Although fluency is often associated with oral reading, which involves reading aloud with accuracy, expression, and appropriate pacing, this view captures only part of the construct. Fluency is equally important during silent reading, where strong readers recognize words and their meanings automatically and can attend primarily to comprehension (NICHD, 2000). Fluent readers may not always read quickly; they may pause to reread or clarify unfamiliar vocabulary. Their ability to sustain attention and read longer passages reflects reading stamina, or the perseverance, engagement, and flexible strategy use needed to make sense of extended text (Trainin, Hiebert, & Wilson, 2015). Building fluency, therefore, involves supporting both expressive oral reading and efficient, comprehension-oriented silent reading.

Effective reading teachers play a crucial role in developing fluency by modeling proficient reading during read-alouds, demonstrating how phrasing, intonation, and attention to punctuation shape meaning. Skilled teachers make their thinking visible by explaining how changes in inflection or emphasis signal different interpretations of a text. Just as importantly, they teach students that fluency is not about speed alone: fluent reading requires maintaining comprehension, monitoring meaning, and adjusting reading behaviors as needed. Through explicit modeling, strategic questioning, and guided practice, teachers help students understand that fluent reading blends accuracy, automaticity, expression, and meaning-making into a coordinated, purposeful process.

How *Saxon Reading Foundations* aligns with the research on fluency development

Saxon Reading Foundations aligns closely with research on reading fluency by providing explicit instruction, systematic practice, and controlled text experiences that support the development of accuracy, automaticity, rate, and prosody across Grades K–2. Fluency instruction is intentionally integrated with phonics, spelling, and decoding so that students develop fluent reading as a direct outcome of secure word-recognition skills rather than through speed-focused practice alone.

Fluency development in *Saxon Reading Foundations* is explicit and teacher-modeled. Teachers demonstrate fluent reading during daily lessons, modeling appropriate pacing, phrasing, and expression while drawing students' attention to how fluency supports meaning. Instructional routines make clear that fluency is not simply reading quickly, but reading accurately and with attention to sense and structure. Teachers provide guided practice and immediate feedback, helping students refine accuracy and expression as they read.

The program supports fluency through systematic, cumulative practice that builds automaticity over time. Students engage daily in activities that reinforce rapid and accurate word recognition, including repeated reading of familiar words and patterns, oral reading routines, and application of previously taught phonics skills. These practices ensure that lower-level decoding skills become increasingly

automatic, freeing cognitive resources for comprehension. Previously taught words and patterns are revisited continuously, preventing regression and supporting long-term retention.

A defining feature of *Saxon Reading Foundations'* fluency instruction is its use of fully controlled, developmentally sequenced text. Decodable Readers and Fluency Readers include only the letter–sound correspondences, spelling patterns, and high-frequency words that have been explicitly taught. This alignment ensures that fluency practice reinforces accurate decoding rather than encouraging guessing or compensatory strategies. As students progress through the Scope and Sequence, text complexity increases gradually while remaining tightly aligned to instruction, supporting steady growth in fluency without overwhelming learners.

Fluency instruction in *Saxon* is integrated with decoding and spelling rather than taught as a standalone skill. Students apply phonics and spelling knowledge bidirectionally as they read and reread connected text, reinforcing sound–symbol relationships and orthographic mapping. Repeated encounters with known patterns across reading, spelling, and writing tasks strengthen word recognition and support fluent reading. This integration reflects research emphasizing that fluency develops most effectively when it is grounded in accurate decoding.

Name _____

1. ask
best
end
must
help

2. still than us
win end

3. tomorrow
still
ask
help
win

4. must
best
than
end

5. us tomorrow still
ask win

6. help
than
must
tomorrow

7. us
win
end
ask
still
best

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For use with Lesson 15 • Saxon Reading Foundations 2

FLUENCY WORD LIST 1

Name _____

1. boy
round
enough
trouble
funny

2. says
white
school
something
brown

3. funny
round
school
says

4. brown
white
something
trouble
boy

5. says
school
funny
enough

6. round
something
white
trouble
school

7. brown
round
trouble
boy
enough

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For use with Lesson 70 • Saxon Reading Foundations 2

FLUENCY WORD LIST 12

Saxon Reading Foundations Fluency Word Lists

Name _____

Example:
We can look at birds.//
We can spot a bird's nest.//
First, /spot a bird.//

We can look at birds.
We can spot a bird's nest.
First, spot a bird.
After that, spot her nest.
Is it under this?
Yes! It is her nest!

5
11
15
20
24
29

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Words read in one minute ____ - Number of miscues ____ = Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM) ____

For use with Lesson 20 • Saxon Reading Foundations 2

FLUENCY PASSAGE 2

From Fluency Reader 2 #, The Bird's Nest

Name _____

Example:
"I love our trips to Bird Island," said Mom. "I can just sit here and read fiction!"

"I love our trips to Bird Island," said Mom. "I can just sit here and read fiction!"

"This section of the island has not changed," Dad said.

"I once saw some strange fish," said Terry. "I wish I could see them again!"

"Whose footprints are those?" David asked.

"A bird whose feet are like that," Dad said. "The shape is a clue. Speaking of clues, I have a surprise for you. To find it, you play the Island Action Game."

"I hid clues on the island," Dad said. "Once you find them all, you will get the surprise."

Listen carefully to the first clue."

8
16
17
24
27
34
42
47
48
56
64
73
80
88
97
98
104

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Words read in one minute ____ - Number of miscues ____ = Words Correct Per Minute (WCPM) ____

For use with Lesson 85 • Saxon Reading Foundations 2

FLUENCY PASSAGE 15

From Fluency Reader 15 #, The Island Action Game

Saxon Reading Foundations Fluency Passages

Fluency instruction in *Saxon* is integrated with decoding and spelling rather than taught as a standalone skill. Students apply phonics and spelling knowledge bidirectionally as they read and reread connected text, reinforcing sound–symbol relationships and orthographic mapping. Repeated encounters with known patterns across reading, spelling, and writing tasks strengthen word recognition and support fluent reading. This integration reflects research emphasizing that fluency develops most effectively when it is grounded in accurate decoding.

The program provides structured opportunities for repeated reading, a practice shown to support fluency development. Students reread Decodable Readers and Fluency Readers across lessons, focusing on accuracy first and then on smoothness and expression. Teachers guide students to attend to phrasing, punctuation, and meaning during rereading, helping them refine prosody while maintaining comprehension. Because rereading occurs with accessible, controlled text, students experience success and build confidence as fluent readers.

Level A			FLUENCY READERS All Fluency Readers feature only text that is decodable based on where the text is specifically introduced within the year's instruction. Fluency Readers are differentiated to ensure fluency instruction meets students where they are.
Level B			
Level C			

Assessment supports fluency development through ongoing diagnostic monitoring. Teachers regularly listen to students read aloud, observe accuracy and pacing, and note students' ability to self-correct and maintain meaning. Fluency word lists, leveled Fluency Readers, and periodic fluency assessments provide multiple data points for tracking progress over time. When assessments indicate that students require additional practice, teachers are guided to provide targeted reinforcement through aligned routines and small-group instruction. This diagnostic approach ensures that fluency instruction remains responsive while preserving instructional coherence.

Saxon Reading Foundations also supports flexible pacing and differentiation in fluency instruction. Students who need additional practice with

accuracy or automaticity receive repeated opportunities to read controlled text and engage in targeted fluency routines, while students who demonstrate early mastery progress to longer and more complex passages. Because differentiation occurs within the same structured framework, instruction remains systematic and cumulative for all learners.

Together, these features demonstrate that *Saxon Reading Foundations* operationalizes research-aligned fluency instruction by combining explicit modeling, systematic practice, cumulative review, controlled text, and diagnostic responsiveness. Through integrated, daily fluency practice grounded in accurate decoding, the program supports students' development as fluent readers who can read with accuracy, confidence, and understanding.

GRADE 2 FLUENCY COMPONENTS										
Lessons	Fluency Readers			Fluency Word Lists	Fluency Passages			Fluency Assessments		
	●	■	▲		●	■	▲	●	■	▲
15	1	1	1	1						
20	2	2	2	2	2	2	2			
25	3	3	3	3				First	First	First
30	4	4	4	4						
35	5	5	5	5	5	5	5			
40	6	6	6	6						
45	7	7	7	7	7	7	7			
50	8	8	8	8						
55	9	9	9	9						
60	10	10	10	10	10	10	10			
65	11	11	11	11						
70	12	12	12	12						
75	13	13	13	13	13	13	13			
80	14	14	14	14				Second	Second	Second
85	15	15	15	15	15	15	15			
90	16	16	16	16						
95	17	17	17	17						
100	18	18	18	18	18	18	18			
105	19	19	19	19						
110	20	20	20	20	20	20	20			
115	21	21	21	21						
120	22	22	22	22	22	22	22			
125	23	23	23	23						
130	24	24	24	24						
135	25	25	25	25	25	25	25			
140	26	26	26	26				Third	Third	Third

Saxon Reading Foundations Grade 2 Fluency Components

Vocabulary development

Vocabulary development encompasses not only learning the meanings of words and phrases but also understanding how words relate to one another (e.g., synonyms, antonyms, and categorical relationships). Because written vocabulary often differs substantially from everyday spoken language, students develop vocabulary through a combination of explicit instruction and repeated exposure to new words in meaningful contexts. As words are stored within interconnected semantic networks, multiple encounters strengthen these connections and deepen understanding—supporting both immediate comprehension and long-term retention. A substantial body of research demonstrates a strong and direct relationship between the breadth and depth of students’ vocabulary development and their reading comprehension (Cain, 2016; Castles et al., 2018; Hennessy, 2021; Moats, 2020b; NICHD, 2000; Oakhill et al., 2015; Suggate et al., 2018).

Vocabulary development extends well beyond learning individual word meanings; it reflects students’ growing ability to understand and use language flexibly and precisely. Skilled readers and writers must interpret and produce both denotative and connotative meanings, navigate figurative language, and attend to subtle meanings conveyed through tone, expression, and context (Biemiller, 2012). Contemporary research further emphasizes the role of academic and disciplinary language in vocabulary development, as this language enables students to comprehend increasingly complex informational and literary texts across content areas (Hammond, 2015, 2021; Nagy & Townsend, 2012).

Effective vocabulary instruction therefore requires both explicit teaching of essential words and instruction in vocabulary learning strategies that support independent word learning. Research indicates that repeated, meaningful encounters with words across reading, writing, listening, and discussion strengthen lexical representations and deepen conceptual understanding (Beck et al., 2013; Connor & Morrison, 2012; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1997; Foorman et al., 2016). Instructional practices such as comparing and contrasting word meanings, classifying words, and generating metaphors and analogies support deeper semantic connections and metalinguistic awareness. Classrooms that cultivate “word consciousness” through rich language experiences further encourage students to notice, explore, and use new vocabulary (Blachowicz & Fisher, 2014; McKeown, Beck, & Sandora, 2012).

Within this broader body of research, morphological awareness has been identified as a particularly powerful contributor to vocabulary development. Morphological awareness, the ability to recognize and manipulate the meaningful units within words, enables students to infer meanings of unfamiliar words and recognize relationships among morphologically related forms (Carlisle, 2004; Deacon & Kirby, 2004; Nagy et al., 2006). Large-scale syntheses and meta-analytic studies demonstrate that morphological awareness contributes to vocabulary development both directly and indirectly by supporting efficient word learning and the expansion of semantic networks (Zhang et al., 2023). Because many academic words are morphologically complex, instruction that draws attention to prefixes, suffixes, and base words

supports generative vocabulary growth beyond memorization of individual word meanings.

Morphological awareness plays an important role in vocabulary development by helping students recognize how words are structured and related through shared roots, prefixes, and suffixes (Carlisle, 2003). Research further indicates that sensitivity to morphological structure supports efficient word learning and reading development by reinforcing connections among orthography, phonology, and meaning (Rastle, 2018).

Meta-analytic evidence further indicates that explicit morphology instruction benefits students' vocabulary development and related literacy skills across elementary grades, including the early grades (Bowers et al., 2010; Colenbrander et al., 2024). These benefits are observed for younger and less-proficient readers, particularly when morphology instruction is integrated with phonics, decoding, and spelling instruction rather than taught in isolation. Such findings underscore the importance of developmentally appropriate morphology instruction as part of comprehensive foundational literacy programs.

Vocabulary development is also closely tied to students' ability to comprehend increasingly complex text, build background knowledge, and engage in higher-level reasoning. Vocabulary forms a central component of language comprehension within widely accepted models

of reading development and supports students' ability to integrate new information, make inferences, and navigate informational and literary text structures (Biemiller, 2012; NICHD, 2000). Research on knowledge-rich literacy instruction further demonstrates that topic-coherent text sets and content-rich reading experiences foster conceptual coherence and accelerate vocabulary growth (Cervetti et al., 2016; Davidson & Liben, 2019; Hammond, 2015, 2021; Knowledge Matters Campaign, 2024).

Although vocabulary becomes an increasingly strong predictor of academic achievement beginning in Grade 3 and beyond (Biemiller, 2012), the foundation for later success is established in the early grades. High-quality vocabulary instruction in Grades K–2, integrated with knowledge building, early academic language exposure, morphology, and strategic word-learning practices, provides the groundwork students need to engage meaningfully with increasingly complex texts and academic language demands.

Saxon Reading Foundations accelerates vocabulary development for multilingual learners by embedding explicit instruction, repeated contextual exposure, and morphological awareness, supporting both immediate comprehension and long-term language growth.

How *Saxon Reading Foundations* aligns with the research on vocabulary development

Saxon Reading Foundations aligns closely with research on vocabulary development by embedding vocabulary learning within a coherent literacy system that emphasizes explicit instruction, repeated exposure, and meaningful application. Across Grades K–2, vocabulary development is supported through students' growing ability to decode text, engage with spoken and written language, and apply new words in reading and discussion.

Vocabulary instruction in *Saxon Reading Foundations* is explicit and intentional. Teachers introduce and model word meanings using child-friendly explanations, examples, and structured oral language routines. Students encounter and use new vocabulary during listening, discussion, reading, and response activities, providing opportunities to rehearse word meanings, clarify understanding, and strengthen expressive language. Rather than relying solely on incidental learning, the program provides purposeful and accessible opportunities for vocabulary growth throughout daily instruction.

A defining feature of *Saxon's* alignment to vocabulary research is its emphasis on decoding-supported vocabulary access. By ensuring that students develop accurate and automatic word-recognition skills through systematic phonics and fluency instruction, the program enables students to read connected text independently. This access to print increases opportunities for repeated encounters with words in meaningful contexts, an essential condition for vocabulary growth identified in the research literature. Vocabulary development is supported through both oral instruction and students' growing ability to engage successfully with text.

Decodable Reader: Story Vocabulary

- Before distributing the reader, discuss the meanings of the following (if necessary):

figs (page 3)	sprints (page 7)
grip (page 5)	hip (page 7)
prod (page 5)	

- Distribute **Decodable Reader 4** (*Frog and the Figs*).

Saxon Reading Foundations Grade 1 Vocabulary Preview

Vocabulary learning in *Saxon* is reinforced through repeated, cumulative exposure. Words and language structures are revisited across lessons, activities, and texts, promoting deeper word knowledge and long-term retention, particularly for high-utility and high-frequency words.

Developmentally sequenced texts further support vocabulary development. Decodable Readers and Fluency Readers are written using only previously taught phonics patterns and high-frequency words, allowing students to focus cognitive resources on meaning rather than on word recognition. Because texts are accessible, students can focus on vocabulary and comprehension simultaneously, strengthening the connection between word learning and reading for meaning. As students progress through the Scope and Sequence, texts increase in linguistic complexity while remaining aligned to taught decoding skills, providing increasingly rich contexts for vocabulary growth.

Vocabulary instruction in *Saxon* is integrated with spelling and word study, reinforcing connections among word meaning, pronunciation, and spelling. As students learn to spell words accurately and recognize common spelling patterns, they develop stronger representations of words that support both reading and vocabulary growth. In later lessons, attention to meaningful word parts, such

as common prefixes, suffixes, and base words supports students' ability to recognize relationships among words and to infer meanings of unfamiliar words, aligning with research on the role of morphology in vocabulary development.

Assessment supports vocabulary development through ongoing instructional monitoring. Teachers observe students' oral responses, participation in discussion, and application of vocabulary during reading and writing tasks. These informal assessments allow teachers to identify words that require additional clarification or practice and to provide targeted support through aligned instructional routines. This diagnostic approach ensures that vocabulary instruction remains responsive while maintaining coherence with the program's instructional design.

The program's structure also supports flexible pacing and differentiation in vocabulary development. Students who require additional

exposure receive repeated, scaffolded opportunities to hear, use, and apply vocabulary, while students demonstrating early understanding encounter increasingly complex language through extended reading and discussion. Because vocabulary instruction is embedded within core instruction rather than isolated, differentiation occurs naturally without fragmenting learning.

Together, these features demonstrate that *Saxon Reading Foundations* operationalizes research-aligned vocabulary instruction by integrating explicit teaching, cumulative exposure, accessible text, oral language practice, and diagnostic responsiveness within a comprehensive foundational literacy framework. Through systematic support for both word learning and word access, the program ensures that students develop the vocabulary knowledge necessary for comprehension and continued reading success.

Building Words with the Suffixes -er and -est

MORPHOLOGY EXTENSION 2
Teach after Lesson 59

OBJECTIVE: To add the suffixes -er and -est to root words to build words with a new meaning

LESSON PREPARATION

- Affix Cards 6 and 7
- Morphology Extension Practice 2

-er
Affix Card 6

-est
Affix Card 7

I DO

Hold up Affix Cards 6 and 7. Let's learn how adding the suffix -er or -est to root words changes their meaning. Watch me do the first one. Write the word **softer** on the board. **Softer.** This looks like the word I know, **soft**, but there is an -er at the end of the word. When I box off the suffix -er like this, I can see the word that is left is the root word **soft**. I will underline the root word **soft**. I know what the root word **soft** means. If I see the suffix -er at the end of word, I know we might be comparing two items, such as blankets. **Softer.** This blanket is softer than that one. **Softer.**

softer

Write the word **softest** on the board and point to it. **Softest.** This also looks like the word I know **soft**, but there is an -est at the end of the word. I will box off the suffix -est and underline the root word **soft**. I know the suffix -est at the end of the word is used when you compare three or more items. **Softest.** Of all three blankets, this one is the **softest**.

softest

Write the word **loud** on the board. **Loud.** How could I let you know that something is more loud than something else? I know! I will add the suffix -er to show that something is more loud. Add the suffix -er and box it off. Underline the root word **loud**. **Louder.** The music got **louder** when she turned up the volume.

louder

I'll build another word. Write the word **loud** again. **Loud.** How could I let you know that something is the most loud? I know! I will add the suffix -est to show that something is the most loud. Add -est to the word **loud**, box off the suffix, and underline the root word. **Loudest.** Of the three bands, that one was the **loudest**.

loudest

Morphology Extension 2: -er, -est 5

WE DO

Let's practice together now! Write the word **faster** on the board. Let's read this word aloud together: **faster**. Do you see a word you know in this word **faster**? Yes! **Fast**. What suffix is at the end of the word? Yes! -er. Box off the suffix -er and underline the root word **fast**.

faster

How does adding the suffix -er change the meaning of the word? Yes! The suffix -er compares two items and is talking about more of something. Two runners were in the lead, but the one who ran **faster** won the race. Let's try a different one. Write the word **fastest** on the board. Let's read this word aloud together: **fastest**. What is the root word? Yes! **Fast**. What is the suffix at the end of this word? Yes! -est. Box off the suffix and underline the root word.

fastest

What does the suffix -est at the end of the word tell us about the word? Yes! It means we are comparing three or more items and talking about which is the most of something. **Fastest.** Of all ten runners in the race, she was the **fastest**.

Write the word **long** on the board. **Long.** How could we say something is more long? Yes! By adding -er. What does -er let us know about the word? Yes! That it is comparing two items and talking about more of something. Add -er to the word **long**, box off the suffix, and underline the root word. **Longer.** This book is **longer** than that one.

longer

Let's build another word together. Write the word **long** again. **Longest.** How could we show something is the most long of three or more things? Yes! By adding -est. What does the suffix -est let us know about the word? Yes! That it is the most. Add -est to the word **long**, box off the suffix, and underline the root word. **Longest.** Of the five books we read this year, this one was the **longest**.

longest

YOU DO

Now it's your turn! Write the words **stronger** and **strongest** on the board. Have children read the words aloud, box off the suffixes, underline the root words, and explain how the suffixes change the meaning of the words. Then have children think of sentences using both of these words.

Write the word **sweet** on the board. Have children add suffixes -er and -est to the word **sweet**, box off the suffixes, and explain the new meanings of both words. Have children think of sentences using both of these words.

Read the directions to students for **Morphology Extension Practice 2** and provide support as needed.

Saxon Reading Foundations 2 6

Comprehension

Comprehension, the ability to construct meaning from text, is a central goal of early reading instruction and is widely understood as the product of both decoding and language comprehension, as articulated in the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). Recent research continues to affirm that skilled comprehension requires far more than accurate word reading; it depends on vocabulary, syntax, inferencing, verbal reasoning, and broader language comprehension capacities (Cabell & Hwang, 2020; Duke & Cartwright, 2021; Hennessy, 2021; Moats, 2020a). Beginning readers benefit from instruction that supports these linguistic foundations while introducing purposeful comprehension strategies that help them make sense of a wide range of texts and text structures.

Recent evidence reinforces the pivotal role of teacher modeling in comprehension development. During read-alouds and shared reading, teachers demonstrate how skilled readers monitor understanding, ask questions, make predictions, draw inferences, and connect ideas across a text. These routines are most effective when they engage children in active, text-centered dialogue, often referred to as “analytic talk,” that prompts students to explain thinking, justify interpretations, and attend to an author’s language and structure (Duke & Pearson, 2002; McGee & Schickendanz, 2007). This interactive talk has been shown to support comprehension growth by strengthening students’ ability to reason about text and integrate new information with what they already know.

A substantial body of recent research underscores background knowledge as one of the strongest predictors of reading comprehension. Studies consistently show that readers with deeper topic knowledge comprehend more efficiently, recall information more accurately, and demonstrate stronger inferential reasoning, even when controlling for strategy use (Adams, 2010/2011;

Cervetti et al., 2016; Neuman, 2019; Willingham, 2017). Knowledge supports mental models, reduces cognitive load, and helps students to integrate new concepts into existing schema. For young learners, building knowledge through intentional exposure to coherent sets of read-alouds, informational texts, and experience-rich language activities strengthens listening comprehension long before students can access these texts independently. This expanded knowledge base, in turn, supports comprehension of increasingly complex texts across the grades.

Research also clarifies the relationship between strategy instruction and knowledge development. While comprehension strategies (e.g., summarizing, predicting, monitoring) are useful, recent syntheses indicate that strategy instruction is most effective when it is text-driven and embedded within knowledge-rich contexts, rather than taught as decontextualized procedures (Peng et al., 2024; Willingham, 2023). Strategies support meaning-making by helping students retrieve background knowledge, clarify unfamiliar language structures, and attend to important information within a text. Comprehension strategies function not as ends in themselves but as supports for integrated understanding.

Finally, increasing students’ access to high-quality literary and informational texts is essential for developing comprehension. Informational texts play an important role in building conceptual understanding, domain-specific vocabulary, and familiarity with varied text structures (Cervetti & Hiebert, 2019; Duke, 2000). Coherent, well-sequenced text sets allow students to revisit ideas across multiple readings, deepening both knowledge and language comprehension. Repeated encounters with thematic content also enhance engagement and curiosity, which are linked to sustained comprehension growth.

How *Saxon Reading Foundations* aligns with the research on comprehension

Saxon Reading Foundations aligns with research on reading comprehension by intentionally building the linguistic and cognitive foundations that enable young readers to construct meaning from text. Across Grades K–2, comprehension instruction is grounded in accurate word recognition, oral language development, and structured opportunities to engage with text through listening, discussion, and purposeful reading, ensuring that comprehension develops as decoding becomes increasingly automatic.

A central feature of *Saxon's* alignment to comprehension research is its emphasis on decoding-supported comprehension. By prioritizing explicit, systematic phonics instruction and the use of fully controlled decodable text, the program ensures that students can accurately read the words they encounter. This design allows students to focus cognitive resources on meaning-making rather than on word identification, reflecting research showing that comprehension is constrained when decoding is inefficient. As students progress through the Scope and Sequence, increasingly complex text remains aligned to taught phonics patterns, enabling steady growth in comprehension alongside decoding proficiency.

Comprehension instruction in *Saxon Reading Foundations* is explicit and teacher-guided. Teachers model how to attend to meaning, discuss key ideas, and respond to text through structured questioning and discussion routines embedded within daily lessons. Students are guided to recall events, describe characters' actions, identify important details, and explain simple cause-and-effect relationships in text. These routines help students learn what it means to understand text and to

articulate their thinking using evidence from what they have read or heard.

The program integrates listening comprehension and oral language development as foundational components of early comprehension. Through teacher read-alouds, shared reading, and structured oral discussion, students engage with text that may exceed their independent reading level while still participating meaningfully in comprehension activities. These experiences strengthen vocabulary, background knowledge, and sentence-level understanding, supporting the development of language comprehension skills that research identifies as critical precursors to later reading comprehension.

Saxon Reading Foundations supports comprehension through repeated, meaningful engagement with text. Students encounter related ideas, language structures, and vocabulary across multiple lessons and readings, allowing them to revisit and deepen understanding over time. Decodable Readers and Fluency Readers include coherent, developmentally appropriate content that enables students to build familiarity with topics while practicing comprehension behaviors in accessible texts. This cumulative exposure supports the development of mental models and reinforces connections among ideas within and across texts.

Comprehension instruction is also integrated with speaking and listening routines that promote active engagement with text. Students are regularly prompted to answer questions in complete sentences, explain their thinking, and listen to peers' responses. These structured exchanges support expressive language development and help students learn how to communicate understanding clearly, an important bridge between oral and written comprehension.

For multilingual learners, these routines provide scaffolded opportunities to practice academic language in supportive contexts.

Assessment supports comprehension development through ongoing instructional monitoring. Teachers observe students' responses during discussion, note their ability to answer questions accurately, and monitor comprehension during oral and independent reading. These informal assessments allow teachers to identify when students require additional support with vocabulary, language structures, or comprehension strategies and to respond using aligned instructional routines. This diagnostic approach ensures that comprehension instruction remains responsive without separating it from core reading instruction.

The program's structure also supports flexible pacing and differentiation in comprehension.

Students who need additional support benefit from repeated exposure to text, guided discussion, and explicit modeling, while students who demonstrate early understanding engage with longer or more complex selections as decoding skills allow. Because comprehension instruction is embedded within the same coherent instructional framework, differentiation does not fragment learning or introduce misalignment.

Together, these features demonstrate that *Saxon Reading Foundations* operationalizes research-aligned comprehension instruction by integrating accurate decoding, oral language development, explicit teaching, cumulative text engagement, and diagnostic responsiveness. Through structured opportunities to listen to, read, discuss, and reflect on text, the program supports students' development as meaning-makers who can comprehend and talk about what they read with increasing confidence and understanding.

Decodable Reader: Understanding the Story

- Select a child to read the title.
- Have children read pages 1–3.
 - "What fell on the grass?"* a fig
 - "How can you tell that Frog likes the fig?"* Frog said, "So glad I got it!"
 - "Who tells Frog to get a rod?"* Dog
 - "How do we know who said, 'Go into your log'?"* speaker tag
- Hold up a copy of the book, and point to the quotation marks in the first sentence on page 3.
 - "What are these called?"* quotation marks
 - "What do quotation marks tell us?"* exact words a character says
- Point to the comma in the first sentence on page 3.
 - "What is this?"* comma
- Select children to read pages 4 and 5.
 - "What is Dog's plan?"* have Frog use the rod to get the figs down
- Finish reading the book with children.
 - "Did Dog's plan work?"* Yes, many figs fell.
 - "Look at the picture on page 7. What is on Hog's hip?"* basket of figs
 - "Are Frog, Dog, and Hog happy?"* Yes, they have many figs to eat.
- Distribute some colored pencils to each child. Children should read the story independently and then color the pictures.



REMINDER: The comprehension questions are not decodable. A teacher or guardian should read them aloud and have children answer them.

Handwriting

Handwriting plays a vital role in early literacy development, serving as a foundational transcription skill that supports reading, spelling, and writing from the earliest stages of learning. Research consistently shows that writing and reading emerge from shared underlying processes (Ehri & Roberts, 2006; Gehsmann & Templeton, 2011/2012). Far beyond a fine-motor task, handwriting enables children to communicate their ideas, participate across content areas, and build confidence as developing writers (Donovan & Smolkin, 2011; Feder & Majnemer, 2007).

Handwriting skills develop rapidly during Kindergarten and Grade 1 as students learn to form letters with increasing accuracy, legibility, and efficiency. By Grade 2, these skills begin to stabilize, allowing children to write more fluently and with greater control (Blöte & Hamstra-Bletz, 1991). As transcription becomes more automatic, handwriting no longer competes for cognitive resources, enabling students to concentrate on generating ideas, organizing their thinking, and applying conventions of written language. Daily practice supported by explicit modeling, guided instruction, and immediate feedback strengthens both legibility and writing fluency, laying the groundwork for more sophisticated written expression (Graham et al., 2012).

Handwriting also directly supports early reading through its role in strengthening phoneme–grapheme connections. Writing letters while learning their associated sounds reinforces the neural pathways that connect oral and written language, facilitating orthographic mapping, the process through which words become stored for immediate retrieval (IDA, 2018; Moats, 2020a). Research shows that letter-writing fluency is

strongly correlated with spelling, phonological awareness, word reading, and early composition quality, highlighting its essential contribution to foundational literacy development (Puranik & Al Otaiba, 2012; Ray et al., 2022). As students gain handwriting fluency, they are better equipped to engage in the writing process and communicate their ideas effectively.

Recent research further underscores handwriting’s role as a core transcription skill essential to early writing development. Handwriting and spelling work together to support written expression, and weaknesses in either area can constrain students’ ability to generate and communicate ideas (Berninger et al., 2006; Puranik & Al Otaiba, 2012; Sedita, 2023). Neuroscientific and developmental research demonstrates that handwriting is not merely a motor act, it is a component of “*Language by Hand*,” a linguistic process in which forming letters supports phoneme–grapheme mapping, orthographic storage, and the development of a robust mental lexicon (Berninger et al., 2006; Ehri, 2020, 2024; Moats, 2019). As students gain handwriting automaticity, the cognitive load required for letter production decreases, enabling greater attention to generating ideas, organizing sentences, and engaging in higher-order composing processes.

Explicit, structured handwriting instruction is particularly critical for students with dyslexia and other reading difficulties because writing letters while learning sounds strengthens visual, motor, and phonological memory, reinforcing orthographic mapping and supporting more accurate decoding and spelling (IDA, 2018; Moats, 2020a).

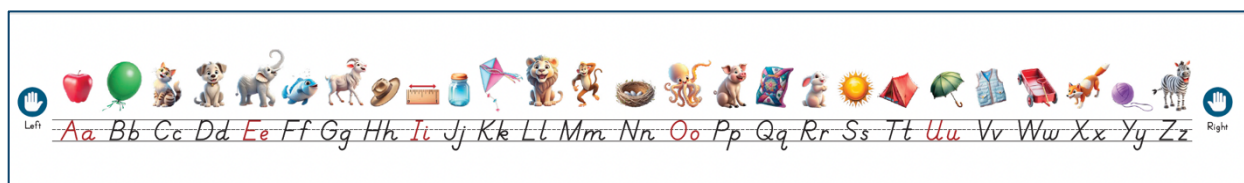
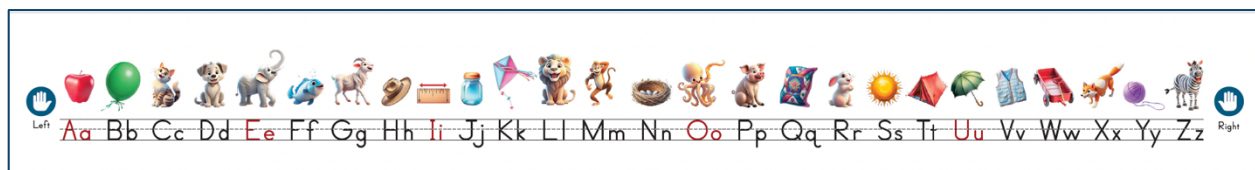
How *Saxon Reading Foundations* aligns with the research on handwriting

Saxon Reading Foundations aligns closely with research on handwriting by providing explicit, systematic, and multisensory instruction in letter formation that supports transcription fluency, phoneme–grapheme mapping, and early writing development across Grades K–2. Handwriting is treated as a foundational literacy skill that is intentionally integrated with phonics, spelling, and reading instruction rather than as a separate motor activity.

Handwriting instruction in *Saxon Reading Foundations* is explicit and teacher-directed. Teachers model correct letter formation using clear talk-throughs that describe starting points, stroke sequence, directionality, and letter shape. Students are guided step by step as they observe, imitate, and practice forming letters, ensuring that letter production is accurate and consistent. This explicit modeling aligns with research demonstrating that young learners benefit from

direct instruction and guided practice when developing transcription skills.

The program follows a systematic and incremental progression in handwriting instruction. In Kindergarten, students first learn the basic strokes that underlie all manuscript letters, providing a foundation for consistent letter formation. Uppercase and lowercase letters are then introduced and practiced in a deliberate sequence that supports motor memory and visual discrimination. In Grade 1, students continue to refine manuscript handwriting with increasing expectations for accuracy, spacing, and fluency. By Grade 2, instruction expands to include cursive handwriting alongside continued manuscript practice, supporting students' ability to write efficiently and legibly across formats. This progression reflects research indicating that handwriting skills develop over time through structured, developmentally appropriate instruction.



Saxon Reading Foundations Alphabet Handwriting Strips

Handwriting instruction in *Saxon* is cumulative, with previously taught letterforms revisited and practiced regularly. Students engage in daily handwriting routines that reinforce earlier learning while introducing new letterforms or stroke patterns. Alphabet Handwriting Strips and practice pages serve as consistent visual references, helping students maintain accuracy and reducing cognitive load during writing tasks. This cumulative design supports the development of automaticity, a key factor in freeing cognitive resources for spelling, composition, and comprehension.

A defining feature of *Saxon Reading Foundations'* handwriting approach is its integration with phonics and spelling instruction. Students form letters while simultaneously saying the corresponding sounds, strengthening the connection between motor production and phonological processing. Writing letters and spelling words while verbalizing sounds reinforces phoneme–grapheme associations and supports orthographic mapping. This integration aligns with research showing that handwriting instruction contributes directly to reading and spelling development by strengthening the neural links among sound, symbol, and movement.

Handwriting F

- Seat children where they can write comfortably.
- Write a capital *F* on the board in the handwriting you want children to learn. (Specific handwriting strokes are described in the **Handwriting Instruction Guide**.)

“This is a capital F. Let’s practice skywriting capital F’s.”

- Have children skywrite capital *F*’s.

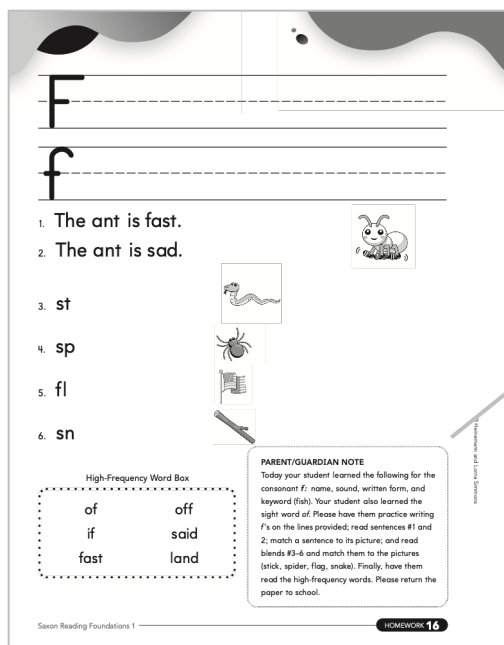
“Get out your worksheet.”

- Draw handwriting lines on the board. Write a capital *F* on the lines, using the strokes taught earlier.
- Have children write a capital *F* on their worksheets. They should name the letter as they write it. Assist any children who need help.
- Write a lowercase *f* on the lines in the handwriting you want children to learn.

“This is a lowercase f.”

- Have children skywrite lowercase *f*’s and then practice writing a lowercase *f* beside the capital *F* on their worksheets. They should name the letter as they write it. Assist any children who need help.
- Have children set their worksheets aside for use later in the lesson.
- Leave the handwriting lines and letters on the board for the remainder of the lesson.

OPTIONAL HANDWRITING PRACTICE: *For additional handwriting practice in class or as homework, distribute **Handwriting Practice Ff**. Have children practice writing capital and lowercase *f*’s using the strokes you’ve taught. For review of previously taught sight words, distribute **Sight Word Practice 1**. Have children complete the sheet in class or as homework.*



Saxon Reading Foundations Grade 1 Homework with Family Support

The program incorporates multisensory handwriting routines to support learning and retention. Students engage in skywriting, tracing, guided writing, and independent practice, combining visual, auditory, and kinesthetic–tactile modalities. These multisensory experiences are embedded within predictable lesson structures, ensuring that handwriting practice is purposeful, efficient, and aligned to instructional targets rather than incidental or isolated.

Assessment supports handwriting development through ongoing diagnostic monitoring. Teachers observe students' letter formation, spacing, and fluency during daily practice and review written work to identify errors or inefficiencies. When assessments reveal difficulties with specific letterforms or inconsistent stroke patterns, teachers are guided to provide targeted reteaching and additional practice using aligned instructional routines and differentiation resources. This diagnostic approach ensures that handwriting difficulties are addressed early before they interfere with spelling or written expression.

PARENT/GUARDIAN NOTE

Today your student learned the following for the consonant **f**: name, sound, written form, and keyword (fish). Your student also learned the sight word *of*. Please have them practice writing *f*'s on the lines provided; read sentences #1 and 2; match a sentence to its picture; and read blends #3–6 and match them to the pictures (stick, spider, flag, snake). Finally, have them read the high-frequency words. Please return the paper to school.

Saxon Reading Foundations also supports flexible pacing and differentiation in handwriting instruction. Students who need additional practice receive repeated, scaffolded opportunities to refine letter formation, while students who demonstrate mastery continue progressing to more complex writing tasks. Because handwriting instruction remains embedded within the program's coherent instructional framework, differentiation does not fragment learning or disrupt the cumulative progression.

Together, these features demonstrate that *Saxon Reading Foundations* operationalizes research-aligned handwriting instruction by combining explicit modeling, systematic progression, cumulative practice, multisensory engagement, and diagnostic responsiveness. Through daily, integrated handwriting instruction, the program supports the development of legible, fluent letter formation that strengthens spelling, reading, and written communication in the early grades.

Oral language development

Oral language is foundational in the early grades, providing the linguistic base that supports decoding, vocabulary development, and later reading comprehension. Research demonstrates that preschool and early elementary oral-language proficiency, including vocabulary, syntax, discourse skills, and listening comprehension, is one of the strongest predictors of later reading achievement (Castles et al., 2018; Hulme et al., 2015; Roth et al., 2002; Suggate et al., 2018). Because listening comprehension develops earlier than reading comprehension, strengthening oral language in Grades K–2 is essential for building the linguistic knowledge that young children will use as they begin to map print to meaning (Cain, 2016; Hennessy, 2021; Oakhill et al., 2015).

A key component of oral language development in the early grades is helping children distinguish between conversational and academic language. Teachers model how academic talk often uses more precise vocabulary, more complex sentences, and language that explains, reasons, and describes (Valencia Goodall et al., 2024). Although young children naturally shift their speech depending on the listener, they need explicit support to transfer this awareness into school-based communication (Kinsella, 2015). Developing these early academic-language habits prepares students for participating in classroom discussions, listening to explanations, and expressing their thinking clearly.

Instruction in the early grades also emphasizes the social and interactive nature of oral language. Young children benefit from structured opportunities to practice turn-taking, asking and answering questions, and engaging in simple collaborative conversations. Such routines support vocabulary growth, syntactic

development, and comprehension by giving children repeated opportunities to use language tied to meaningful ideas (Lawrence & Snow, 2011). Research highlights that early collaborative talk strengthens children’s ability to listen, build on others’ ideas, and use language to communicate in shared tasks (Frey, Fisher, & Nelson, 2013; Palmer, 2011).

Listening comprehension is another essential focus of early instruction. Young children must learn how to attend to a speaker, follow multi-step directions, recognize key details, and track simple discourse markers such as because, so, or however. These skills directly support their later ability to understand text (Cabell & Hwang, 2020; Nation, 2019). Although many K–2 students naturally listen well during engaging read-alouds, they require explicit teaching to listen purposefully in more formal situations, such as when learning new vocabulary or hearing an informational passage (Cain, 2016). Early instruction that teaches what active listening “looks and sounds like” helps students internalize behaviors necessary for academic learning.

Finally, oral language experiences, such as storytelling, explaining ideas, and participating in guided discussions help children develop the narrative and informational structures they will later encounter in written texts. These discourse-level skills support comprehension, background-knowledge building, and vocabulary growth (Cervetti & Wright, 2020; Kim et al., 2024). Research shows that early opportunities to use language to organize thoughts, describe events, and make simple inferences contribute to stronger reading comprehension as students progress through school (Hennessy, 2021; Language and Reading Research Consortium [LARRC], 2015).

How *Saxon Reading Foundations* aligns with the research on oral language development

Saxon Reading Foundations aligns with research on oral language development by embedding purposeful talk, attentive listening, and expressive language use within daily literacy instruction. Across Grades K–2, oral language is treated as an essential component of reading and writing and is integrated with phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, and comprehension instruction.

Oral language instruction in *Saxon Reading Foundations* is explicit and teacher-guided. Teachers model clear articulation, complete sentences, and appropriate academic language during instruction, providing students with consistent examples of how spoken language supports learning. Students are explicitly taught expectations for listening and speaking, including attending to the speaker, responding appropriately, and using language to explain thinking. These expectations are reinforced through predictable routines that make effective oral communication visible and attainable for young learners.

Speaking and listening skills are developed through structured exchanges embedded in daily lessons. Collaborative learning resources further support oral language development through structured opportunities for partner discussion, shared tasks, and peer interaction that strengthen speaking, listening, and academic language use within the context of literacy instruction. Students listen to directions, attend to modeled examples, and respond to prompts during phonological awareness, phonics, spelling, and reading activities. Teachers guide students to answer questions in complete sentences, explain their thinking, and use precise language. These interactions strengthen students' ability to process spoken language, follow

multi-step directions, and develop expressive and academic language skills.

Saxon Reading Foundations further supports oral language through text-based discussion. During work with Decodable Readers and Fluency Readers, teachers guide conversations about characters, events, and key details while encouraging students to cite evidence from the text. Because texts are controlled and accessible, students can focus on expressing understanding rather than decoding unfamiliar words. These discussions build narrative language, vocabulary, and early reasoning skills.

The program places a strong emphasis on oral language as a bridge to comprehension. Teacher read-alouds, shared reading, and guided listening experiences expose students to language structures, vocabulary, and ideas that may extend beyond their independent reading level. Through listening and discussion, students build background knowledge and language comprehension skills that research identifies as foundational for later reading comprehension. These oral language experiences are intentionally aligned to decoding instruction, ensuring coherence between what students hear and what they read.

Oral language instruction in *Saxon* is integrated with phonological and phonemic awareness, reinforcing students' ability to hear, produce, and manipulate sounds accurately. Students articulate sounds, blend phonemes orally, and practice precise pronunciation during daily routines, strengthening the connection between spoken language and print. This integration supports accurate decoding and spelling while

also enhancing students' clarity and confidence in spoken language.

Assessment supports oral language growth through ongoing observation and diagnostic monitoring. Teachers attend to students' oral responses, participation in discussion, ability to follow directions, articulation, and expression of ideas. When students need additional support, teachers provide targeted modeling, guided practice, and scaffolded opportunities for oral rehearsal within existing instructional routines.

Saxon Reading Foundations supports differentiated oral language development through embedded scaffolds and flexible pacing. Multilingual learners and students requiring additional support benefit from repeated opportunities to hear, practice, and use academic English in predictable contexts, while students

with strong oral language skills are encouraged to elaborate responses, use increasingly precise vocabulary, and engage in more complex discussions. Because oral language instruction is integrated throughout daily lessons, differentiation occurs without fragmenting instruction.

Together, these features demonstrate how *Saxon Reading Foundations* operationalizes research-aligned oral language instruction through explicit expectations, structured routines, cumulative practice, text-based discussion, and responsive differentiation. Through daily opportunities to listen, speak, and engage with language purposefully, students develop the oral language foundation that supports reading comprehension, written expression, and academic communication.

Listening, Speaking, and Discussion Skills Assessment Rubric

Name _____ Assessment Dates 1st _____ 2nd _____ 3rd _____

Listening, Speaking, and Discussion Skills Assessment		Does the child demonstrate mastery of this skill?									
		First			Second			Third			
Mark responses to the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd assessments in the appropriate columns.		Yes	Some-times	Not Yet	Yes	Some-times	Not Yet	Yes	Some-times	Not Yet	
Listening	1	stands or sits facing the speaker									
	2	looks at the speaker									
	3	listens quietly without making noises or distracting others									
	4	refrains from interrupting the person speaking									
	5	responds appropriately to the person speaking using body language (e.g., nodding or shaking head) or verbal responses (e.g., saying "yes" or "no")									
	6	asks on-topic questions to clarify understanding									
	7	follows oral directions that involve a short, related sequence of actions (for example: "Put your crayons away, then line up at the door.")									
	8	repeats oral directions that involve a short, related sequence of actions to confirm or clarify comprehension									

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Listening, Speaking, and Discussion Skills Assessment		Does the child demonstrate mastery of this skill?									
		First			Second			Third			
Mark responses to the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd assessments in the appropriate columns.		Yes	Some-times	Not Yet	Yes	Some-times	Not Yet	Yes	Some-times	Not Yet	
Speaking	1	faces the listener or audience when speaking									
	2	makes eye contact with the listener or audience when speaking									
	3	speaks clearly, enunciating words									
	4	speaks loudly enough to be heard and understood									
	5	answers questions using full sentences when possible									
	6	speaks using sentences with (age-level appropriate) proper grammar, vocabulary, pronouns, and verb tenses									
	7	can give oral directions that involve a short, related sequence of actions									
	8	uses appropriate language when speaking									
Discussion	1	takes turns during group discussions									
	2	takes turns when working in small groups with peers									
	3	actively listens to others when they speak									
	4	waits until a person finishes speaking before responding									
	5	listens to others during discussions									
	6	builds on others' ideas during discussions									
	7	stays on topic when asking questions and when sharing ideas during discussions									
	8	works together with peers to solve problems and resolve disagreements									
	9	uses appropriate language during discussions									

Speaking and Listening Guide

Saxon Reading Foundations Listening, Speaking, and Discussion Assessment Rubric

Differentiated instruction and support for diverse learners

Today's early literacy classrooms reflect substantial diversity in students' backgrounds, experiences, language profiles, and learning needs. Within any given classroom, students may differ in prior exposure to print, oral language proficiency, rate of skill acquisition, and responsiveness to instruction. Research underscores that effective foundational literacy instruction must be intentionally designed to respond to this variability by providing all students with equitable access to high-quality instruction while ensuring that individual learning needs are addressed through systematic differentiation.

This chapter synthesizes the research foundation for differentiated instruction in early literacy, emphasizing the importance of explicit, systematic teaching; flexible pacing; cumulative practice; and responsive instructional decision making. Advances in cognitive science and literacy research highlight that students' biology, language experiences, background knowledge, and learning contexts interact dynamically in the classroom. Instructional models that respond to learner variability while maintaining coherence and high expectations are associated with stronger and more equitable reading outcomes.

Across all essential components of literacy, *Saxon Reading Foundations* integrates research-aligned instructional practices that support diverse learners, including multilingual learners, students with dyslexia, and striving readers. By embedding explicit instruction, multisensory routines, cumulative review, and targeted scaffolds throughout daily lessons, the program ensures that multilingual learners and other students requiring differentiated support have consistent opportunities to develop decoding, language, and comprehension skills critical to early reading success. These supports are designed to function within core instruction, allowing teachers to respond to individual learner needs without compromising instructional rigor or coherence.

This chapter describes the research base for differentiated instruction and examines how *Saxon Reading Foundations* operationalizes differentiation through assessment-informed instruction, flexible pacing, and structured supports across learner profiles. The sections that follow address instructional considerations for multilingual learners, students with dyslexia, and students requiring additional or accelerated practice, illustrating how systematic differentiation can promote access, mastery, and confidence for all learners.

Differentiated instruction

Increasingly, educators recognize that students' learning trajectories are shaped by differences in biology, prior experiences, background knowledge, and relationships. Research suggests that learning is optimized when classroom environments acknowledge this variability and actively engage students in building new knowledge while connecting it to what they already know. Although students progress at different rates, the collaborative nature of elementary classrooms can support learning for all students (Melnick, Cook-Harvey, & Darling-Hammond, 2017).

Students enter school with diverse experiences and levels of readiness that influence literacy development (Sheppard, 2017). As a result, teachers must be prepared to differentiate instruction to meet a wide range of needs, including those of multilingual learners, students with disabilities, students with dyslexia, students performing above grade level, and striving readers (Opitz & Ford, 2008).

A substantial body of research underscores that differentiated instruction is essential in early literacy because young learners enter K–2 classrooms with widely varying levels of phonological awareness, background knowledge, oral language proficiency, and exposure to print. Studies consistently demonstrate that instruction aligned to each student's developmental readiness produces stronger gains in foundational reading skills than one-size-fits-all whole-group teaching. For example, research on individualizing instruction using ongoing assessment data shows that tailoring task complexity, pacing, and practice opportunities to students' needs improves their reading achievement and accelerates progress toward grade-level expectations (Connor et al., 2011).

Similarly, research in early intervention highlights that providing additional, targeted instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, and alphabetic understanding can prevent later reading difficulties and is especially effective when instruction is matched to students' current skill profiles (NICHD, 2000). When teachers adjust instruction based on diagnostic information by slowing, accelerating, or modifying practice activities, they create more equitable opportunities for students with different starting points to make meaningful progress.

Effective differentiated instruction in K–2 also relies on strategic small-group work that responds to the diverse needs of striving readers, multilingual learners, and students with dyslexia. Research shows that students in early grades make greater literacy gains when teachers use assessment results to form flexible skill-based groups and implement targeted instruction that provides the right amount of support, scaffolding, and practice (Al Otaiba et al., 2009). Additional evidence indicates that early, precise differentiation is particularly beneficial for students who are at risk for reading difficulties, enabling them to receive explicit, multisensory practice with phonological awareness, decoding, and high-frequency words—areas shown to require intensified and repeated exposure (National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities, 2008). Because students acquire foundational literacy skills at different rates, differentiated instruction that includes targeted small-group work, strategic scaffolding, and opportunities for extension supports both equity and acceleration, helping all learners progress toward accurate, fluent, and automatic reading.

How *Saxon Reading Foundations* aligns with the research on differentiated instruction

Saxon Reading Foundations aligns closely with research on differentiated instruction by embedding responsiveness to learner variability within the core instructional design rather than treating differentiation as an add-on or separate intervention. Across Grades K–2, the program is structured to support variation in students' prior knowledge, rate of skill acquisition, and need for practice while maintaining instructional rigor and alignment to a shared Scope and Sequence.

A central feature of *Saxon's* approach to differentiation is its emphasis on assessment-informed instructional decision making. Diagnostic teaching is embedded throughout the instructional cycle, with teachers using daily observations, formative checks, and periodic assessments to determine whether students are ready to move forward, require additional practice, or need targeted reinforcement. Assessment data are explicitly linked to instructional responses, allowing teachers to adjust pacing, repeat lessons, or implement focused small-group instruction without disrupting the cumulative progression of skills.

Saxon Reading Foundations combines a structured instructional sequence with the flexibility to respond to students' learning needs, a key principle of effective differentiation identified in the research. While *Saxon* lessons are designed to be taught sequentially, teachers are encouraged to slow instruction, revisit concepts, provide additional practice, or extend learning opportunities when assessment data indicate that students would benefit from additional support or reinforcement. Importantly, pacing adjustments occur within the same

instructional sequence rather than through fragmented or parallel curricula. This approach ensures that students receive the time and practice they need while maintaining instructional coherence across the class. Program-specific Pacing Guides further support differentiated instruction by helping teachers make pacing and instructional decisions while remaining aligned to the program's cumulative Scope and Sequence. Across grades, the guides emphasize that students are not expected to master new concepts immediately and that mastery develops through distributed practice, spiraling instruction, and continual review over time. The guides also provide practical recommendations for adjusting lesson pacing, reinforcing instruction, extending learning when needed, and making efficient use of instructional time, allowing teachers to balance instructional fidelity with responsiveness to learner needs.

Saxon Reading Foundations operationalizes differentiated instruction through built-in differentiation pathways embedded directly within lessons. Lesson-level Support, Reinforce, and Extend activities provide teachers with clear guidance for addressing varied learner needs. These options reinforce the same instructional targets using consistent routines, materials, and multisensory supports, ensuring that differentiation strengthens rather than dilutes core instruction. Students who require additional support receive scaffolded practice with foundational skills, while students who demonstrate early mastery engage in extension activities that deepen application without accelerating beyond the program's linguistic progression.

Daily Pacing Guide			
🕒 30–45 Minutes			
LESSON WARM-UP	NEW INCREMENT OR READERS	APPLICATION AND CONTINUAL REVIEW	EXTRA PRACTICE
🕒 10–15 minutes	🕒 10–15 minutes	🕒 10–15 minutes	🕒 As Needed
Quick review to set students up for success. Always include Spelling Sound Review. Key Activities - Alphabet Activity - Phonological/Phonemic Awareness Activity - Daily Letter and Sound Review - Spelling Sound Review	Introduce and practice new letter-sound relationships, spelling patterns, or Readers. Key Activities - Boardwork - Handwriting - New Deck Cards - Decodable and Fluency Readers	Practice with worksheets. Key Activities Worksheet	Small-group reinforcement or advanced work based on student needs. Key Activities - Options for Differentiation - Vocabulary and Comprehension Practice Routines

Saxon Reading Foundations Kindergarten Pacing Guide

Daily Pacing Guide			
🕒 30–45 Minutes			
LESSON WARM-UP	NEW INCREMENT	APPLICATION AND CONTINUAL REVIEW	CLASSROOM PRACTICE
🕒 10–15 minutes	🕒 10–15 minutes	🕒 10–15 minutes	🕒 As Needed
Quick review to set students up for success. Always include Spelling Review. Key Activities - Alphabet Activity - Phonological/Phonemic Awareness Activity - Daily Letter and Sound Review - Spelling Review	Introduce and practice new letter-sound relationships and spelling patterns. Key Activities - Handwriting - Spelling with Letter Tiles - New Deck Cards	Practice with worksheets and boardwork. Readers are used flexibly across groups. Key Activities - Boardwork - Worksheet - Homework/Extra Practice - Spelling List - Readers	Small-group reinforcement or advanced work based on student needs. Key Activities - Options for Differentiation - Vocabulary and Comprehension Practice Routines

Saxon Reading Foundations Grade 1 Pacing Guide

Daily Pacing Guide			
🕒 30–45 Minutes			
LESSON WARM-UP	NEW INCREMENT	APPLICATION AND CONTINUAL REVIEW	CLASSROOM PRACTICE
🕒 10–15 minutes	🕒 10–15 minutes	🕒 10–15 minutes	🕒 As Needed
Quick review to set students up for success. Always include Spelling Review. Key Activities - Language/Alphabet Activity - Daily Letter and Sound Review - Spelling Review	Introduce and practice new letter-sound relationships and spelling patterns. Key Activities - New Deck Cards - Spelling	Practice with worksheets and boardwork. Readers are used flexibly across groups. Key Activities - Boardwork - Worksheet - Homework/Extra Practice - Readers	Small-group reinforcement or advanced work based on student needs. Key Activities - Options for Differentiation - Vocabulary and Comprehension Practice Routines

Saxon Reading Foundations Grade 2 Pacing Guide

The program also supports targeted small-group instruction, a practice strongly supported by research on differentiated early literacy instruction. Teachers use assessment results to form flexible, skill-based groups that address specific instructional needs, such as phonological awareness, decoding accuracy, spelling patterns, or fluency development. Small-group instruction draws on the same Scope and Sequence, instructional routines, and materials used in whole-group lessons, allowing students to receive intensified support without encountering misaligned content or expectations.

Differentiation in *Saxon Reading Foundations* is strengthened by its explicit, systematic instructional design, which supports all learners while reducing the need for extensive individualization. Because lessons follow predictable structures and introduce skills in small, manageable increments with continual review, students experience reduced cognitive load and increased opportunities for success. This design is particularly supportive for students with dyslexia, multilingual learners, and striving readers, who benefit from clear routines, repeated exposure, and explicit modeling embedded in daily instruction.

The program's multisensory instructional framework also plays a key role in differentiated instruction. Visual, auditory, and kinesthetic—

tactile routines provide multiple access points to learning, allowing teachers to adjust emphasis or modality based on student needs without changing instructional goals. Multisensory supports are integrated across whole-group and small-group instruction, reinforcing skill development while maintaining consistency and coherence.

Saxon Reading Foundations supports differentiation not only for students who require additional practice, but also for those who progress more quickly. Students demonstrating early mastery are encouraged to move forward, engage in enrichment, or apply skills in more complex ways within the same instructional framework. This balance of support and extension reflects research emphasizing that effective differentiation promotes both equity and acceleration.

Together, these features demonstrate that *Saxon Reading Foundations* operationalizes research-aligned differentiated instruction through assessment-informed decision making, flexible pacing, structured small-group instruction, and integrated instructional supports. By embedding differentiation within core instruction rather than isolating it, the program ensures that all students, regardless of starting point, receive equitable access to explicit, systematic, and cumulative foundational literacy instruction.

RESOURCES FOR DIFFERENTIATION GUIDE

Hands-on Games and Activities

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Dyslexia and early literacy instruction

Dyslexia is widely understood as a language-based learning difference characterized by persistent difficulties in word reading and spelling that may affect accuracy, fluency, or both, with secondary consequences for comprehension when decoding is inefficient (IDA, 2025; Shaywitz & Shaywitz, 2020). Cross-linguistic research indicates that children with dyslexia experience disproportionate difficulty with phonological recoding (e.g., nonword decoding) and with the development of reading speed and fluency, even when learning to read in more transparent orthographies (Carioti et al., 2021). These findings are explained by psycholinguistic grain-size theory, which describes how orthographic features interact with learners' access to phonological units during early reading acquisition (Ziegler & Goswami, 2005). Rapid automatized naming (RAN) further contributes uniquely to fluency and the development of automatic word recognition, operating alongside phonological awareness in the early grades (Araújo et al., 2015).

In 2025, the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) revised its 2002 definition of dyslexia to reflect advances in cross-linguistic, cognitive, neurobiological, and developmental research.

“Dyslexia is a specific learning disability characterized by difficulties in word reading and/or spelling that involve accuracy, speed, or both and vary depending on the orthography. These difficulties occur along a continuum of severity and persist even with instruction that is effective for the individual’s peers. The causes of dyslexia are complex and involve combinations of genetic, neurobiological, and environmental influences that interact throughout development. Underlying difficulties with phonological and morphological processing are common but not universal, and early oral language weaknesses

often foreshadow literacy challenges. Secondary consequences include reading comprehension problems and reduced reading and writing experience that can impede growth in language, knowledge, written expression, and overall academic achievement. Psychological well-being and employment opportunities also may be affected. Although identification and targeted instruction are important at any age, language and literacy support before and during the early years of education is particularly effective.”

International Dyslexia Association, 2025

Research and IDA’s definition of dyslexia underscore the importance of explicit, systematic, cumulative instruction in Grades K–2. Evidence from the science of reading supports direct teaching of phoneme–grapheme correspondences, integrated decoding and encoding, and sequenced practice that establishes accuracy before automaticity (Castles, Rastle, & Nation, 2018). A meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials found that systematic phonics instruction yields the most consistently reliable improvements in word-reading and spelling outcomes for students with reading disabilities, highlighting the importance of a clearly sequenced, code-focused early-grade curriculum (Galuschka et al., 2014).

In addition to phonics, instruction in morphology, introduced developmentally through high-frequency inflectional endings (–s, –ed, –ing) and high-utility affixes, strengthens decoding, spelling, vocabulary, and comprehension and provides particular benefits for students with reading difficulties (Bowers et al., 2010; Goodwin & Ahn, 2010). Multisensory routines, such as articulating sounds while forming or manipulating graphemes can further support attention and memory when they explicitly reinforce phoneme–grapheme

relationships within a structured instructional sequence (Castles et al., 2018; Galuschka et al., 2014). From a cognitive-load perspective, well-scaffolded tasks that minimize extraneous demands enable young learners to allocate working-memory resources to essential decoding processes (Sweller, 2019).

In K–2, early screening commonly incorporates family history, letter-sound knowledge, phonological awareness, and RAN to identify students at risk for persistent reading difficulties, with frequent progress monitoring used to adjust instructional intensity and support (Catts & Petscher, 2022; Sanfilippo et al., 2020). Consistent with these practices, neuroimaging studies identify under-activation within a left-hemisphere reading network, including temporo-parietal and occipito-temporal regions, among individuals with dyslexia. Intervention studies show that effective, intensive instruction is associated with more typical or compensatory activation patterns, demonstrating neuroplasticity and the impact of early, targeted teaching (Eden et al., 2004; Richlan et al., 2011).

Longitudinal research further indicates that limited early reading and writing experiences can compound over time into broader gaps in

vocabulary, background knowledge, and comprehension, often described as Matthew effects, underscoring the importance of abundant, accessible practice with decodable texts and supported writing in the primary grades (Stanovich, 1986). Because reading difficulties frequently co-occur with ADHD and developmental language disorder, universal early screening should be paired with comprehensive follow-up so that foundational word-reading instruction is coordinated with supports for co-occurring needs (Boada, Willcutt, & Pennington, 2012).

Taken together, evidence from cross-linguistic studies, meta-analyses, and neurobiological research converges on instructional priorities for the primary grades: explicit, systematic instruction in the alphabetic code; integration of decoding and encoding; developmentally appropriate morphological instruction; extensive practice in decodable texts to build accuracy and fluency; and early screening with ongoing progress monitoring to individualize instructional intensity (Castles et al., 2018; Galuschka et al., 2014; International Dyslexia Association, 2025).

How *Saxon Reading Foundations* aligns with research on dyslexia

Saxon Reading Foundations aligns closely with research on effective instruction for students with dyslexia by providing explicit, systematic, cumulative, and diagnostic foundational literacy instruction that is embedded within core classroom teaching. The program is designed to address the phonological, orthographic, and automaticity-related challenges commonly experienced by students with dyslexia while maintaining instructional coherence and high expectations for all learners.

A defining feature of *Saxon's* alignment to dyslexia research is its emphasis on explicit instruction. Lessons are teacher-directed and include clear explanations, modeling, guided practice, and immediate corrective feedback. Sound–symbol relationships, spelling patterns, decoding routines, and handwriting conventions are taught directly rather than implicitly, ensuring that students are not required to infer linguistic patterns independently. This explicit instructional approach reflects research demonstrating that students with dyslexia benefit most from clear, unambiguous teaching of foundational language structures.

The program's systematic and cumulative Scope and Sequence further supports students with dyslexia by ensuring that instruction follows the linguistic organization of English and builds skills incrementally. Foundational skills are introduced in small, manageable steps and revisited frequently through structured review. Previously taught concepts remain active in daily instruction as new learning is introduced, reducing the likelihood of gaps and supporting long-term retention. This cumulative design aligns with research emphasizing that students with dyslexia require repeated, distributed practice to consolidate phonological and orthographic learning.

Saxon Reading Foundations integrates phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, and handwriting within each lesson cycle, reinforcing the reciprocal relationship between decoding and encoding. Students analyze spoken words into phonemes, map those sounds to graphemes, write them accurately, and apply them in reading-connected text. This integrated approach supports orthographic mapping by strengthening connections among sounds, spellings, and meanings, an instructional priority identified in dyslexia research.

The program's multisensory instructional framework provides additional support for students with dyslexia by engaging auditory, visual, and kinesthetic–tactile modalities in coordinated ways. Students see letters and spelling patterns, hear and articulate sounds, and physically encode language through writing and manipulation of materials. These multisensory routines are not supplemental or optional; they are embedded within daily lessons and aligned directly to instructional targets. This design reflects research indicating that multisensory instruction is most effective when it is systematic, explicit, and integrated within a structured literacy framework.

Assessment plays a critical role in supporting students with dyslexia through diagnostic teaching and responsive instruction. Teachers use frequent formative assessments, oral responses, written practice, and periodic mastery checks to monitor students' progress and identify specific areas of difficulty. When assessments indicate that a student has not yet achieved mastery, typically defined as at least 80 percent accuracy, teachers are guided to slow pacing, repeat lessons, or provide targeted reinforcement using aligned materials. This diagnostic approach

allows instruction to respond to individual needs without introducing fragmented or misaligned interventions.

Saxon Reading Foundations also supports flexible pacing and targeted small-group instruction, both of which are emphasized in research on dyslexia-responsive teaching. Teachers form

flexible, skill-based groups to provide additional practice with phonological awareness, decoding accuracy, spelling patterns, or fluency as needed. Small-group instruction uses the same routines, materials, and Scope and Sequence as whole-group lessons, ensuring that students with dyslexia receive intensified support while remaining aligned to core instruction.

Phonics Assessment Recording Form

Name _____

BOY Date _____
(BOY: Beginning of Year)

MOY Date _____
(MOY: Middle of Year)

EOY Date _____
(EOY: End of Year)

Test administrator: Point to the letters/words, moving from left to right. Have a row are missed or read incorrectly.

HOW TO RECORD STUDENT ANSWERS:
 Use a different color when assessing BOY, MOY, and EOY. Only mark letters/words correctly by putting a slash through letters/words. If a student reads any letters self-corrects, write "sc" over them but do not count them correct.

PART A: Letter Names

BOY: /26

MOY: /26

Directions for student: "Please tell me the letter name for each capital letter what it is, just do your best and then move on to the next letter." "Ready? GO"

L O G H T P A
 N M I S F R K
 B U Z C E Y D
 V J X W Q

Where Should They Be?

	Grade K			Grade 1			Grade 2		
	Beginning of Year	Middle of Year	End of Year	Beginning of Year	Middle of Year	End of Year	Beginning of Year	Middle of Year	End of Year
Part A & B: Letter Names									
Uppercase	0/26	15/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26
Lowercase	0/26	15/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26	26/26
Part C & D: Letter Sounds									
Consonants	0/23	12/23	21/23	21/23	21/23	23/23	23/23	23/23	23/23
Long vowels	0/5	3/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	4/5	4/5	5/5
Short vowels	0/5	3/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	5/5	4/5	4/5	5/5
Other vowels	0/4	0/4	0/4	0/4	1/4	4/4	4/4	4/4	4/4
Part E: CVC	0/10	5/10	10/10	10/10	10/10	10/10	10/10	10/10	10/10
Part F: Consonant Digraphs	0/12	0/12	4/12	4/12	4/12	12/12	12/12	12/12	12/12
Part G: Consonant Blends	0/15	5/15	10/15	10/15	14/15	15/15	15/15	15/15	15/15

What Do I Do with the Results?

If a child is not keeping up with the suggested score, it is essential to begin exposing them to the skill/s in various ways, ensuring they have the number of exposures needed to be successful readers. Go to their level and have them practice where they see some success and slowly add more to make sure there is some learning taking place.

To determine whether a student needs Support, Reinforcement, or Extensions, please refer to the "Where Should They Be?" chart. If a student scores less than the score indicated for the grade-level and time of year being assessed, the activities in the **Support** column will be most effective. If a student scores right at the score indicated for the grade-level and time of year being assessed, the activities in the **Reinforce** column will be most effective. If a student scores more than the score indicated for the grade-level and time of year being assessed, the activities in the **Extend** column will be most effective.

	Support	Reinforce	Extend
Part A & B: Letter Names	- Letter/Sound Identification in Resources for Differentiation. - Using Letter Tiles ask the students to pull the letter that you say. Start with the letters they knew plus one unknown. Keep adding more as they learn them. - Ask students to touch and name the alphabet using the alphabet strip. Hold up card with letter, if they can't name it ask them to say the alphabet until they retrieve the name of the letter. - Send Letters in Resources for Differentiation.	- Letter/Sound Identification in Resources for Differentiation. - Using Letter Tiles ask the students to pull the letter that you say. Start with the letters they knew plus one unknown. Keep adding more as they learn them. - Ask students to touch and name the alphabet using the alphabet strip. Hold up card with letter, if they can't name it ask them to say the alphabet until they retrieve the name of the letter.	Letter/Sound Identification in Resources for Differentiation.

LESSON	LESSON WARM-UP			DIFFERENTIATION			NEW INCREMENT		APPLICATION AND CONTINUAL REVIEW
LESSON TITLE	ALPHABET ACTIVITY	PHONOLOGICAL/ PHONEMIC AWARENESS ACTIVITY	DAILY LETTER, SPELLING, AND SOUND REVIEW	OPTIONS FOR DIFFERENTIATION			NEW CONCEPTS (PHONICS/PRINT AWARENESS)	SIGHT WORDS	REVIEW
82 Digraph oo	Use kinesthetic response to practice the alphabet	New Concept: Segment phonemes in a word with three phonemes	Daily Letter and Sound Review: - Practice letter recognition - Practice letter sounds - Practice sight words Spelling Sound Review: - Spell letter sounds - Spell a word	Support: distinguish between the sounds /ō/ and /ōō/ in spoken words Reinforce: produce rhyming words with /ōō/ Extend: spell words with /ōō/			- Digraph oo /ōō/ sound of oo		- Spell words with digraph oo - Code and read words with digraphs and words with blends - Use context clues to read connected text - Read high-frequency words
83 Review	- Review vowels - Review the alphabet	Review Concept: Segment phonemes in a word with three phonemes	Daily Letter and Sound Review: - Practice letter recognition - Practice letter sounds - Practice sight words Spelling Sound Review: - Spell letter sounds - Spell words	Support: match sounds to spelling patterns Reinforce: identify spelling patterns within written words Extend: read words and identify spelling patterns and digraphs					- Read ūc and ū-# words - Read words with blends, digraphs, and twin consonants - Identify ū-# spelling patterns and their sounds - Spell ū-# words - Read connected text - Read high-frequency words
84 Assessment 7	- Review vowels - Review the alphabet	Review Concept: Segment syllables in words with three syllables	Daily Letter and Sound Review: - Practice letter recognition - Practice letter sounds - Practice sight words Spelling Sound Review: - Spell letter sounds		© Heinemann and Lorna Simmons	© Heinemann and Lorna Simmons			
85 Decodable Reader 10		Review Concept: Segment phonemes in words with three phonemes	Spelling Sound Review: Practice spelling letter sounds		© Heinemann and Lorna Simmons	© Heinemann and Lorna Simmons		was	- Read ūc and ū-# words, words with blends, words with digraphs - Spell ūc and ū-# words, words with blends, and words with digraphs
86 Digraph oo	Use kinesthetic response to practice the alphabet	Review Concept: Segment phonemes in words with three phonemes	Daily Letter and Sound Review: - Practice letter recognition - Practice letter sounds - Practice sight words Spelling Sound Review: - Spell letter sounds - Spell a word	Support: connect digraph oo to sound /ōō/ with sign language Reinforce: distinguish between written words where digraph oo makes the sounds /ōō/ and /ōō/ Extend: spell words with digraph oo			/ōō/ sound of digraph oo		- Spell words with digraph oo - Code and read words with digraphs - Use context clues to read connected text - Read high-frequency words

Importantly, the program's predictable lesson structure reduces cognitive load for students with dyslexia. Because lesson routines are consistent across days and grades, students can focus attention on learning new content rather than navigating changing instructional formats. This predictability supports attention, engagement, and successful participation, particularly for students who may experience difficulty with working memory or processing speed.

Together, these features demonstrate that *Saxon Reading Foundations* operationalizes research-aligned instruction for students with dyslexia by embedding explicit, systematic, cumulative, and multisensory teaching within core literacy instruction. Through diagnostic responsiveness, integrated skill development, and structured support, the program provides students with dyslexia equitable access to the foundational literacy instruction necessary for accurate decoding, spelling, fluency, and early reading success.

The Letter I

LESSON 16

NEW CONCEPTS

- reading and spelling vowel /i/
- short vowel sound /i/
- twin consonants

LESSON PREPARATION

MATERIALS

- Letter Card 10
- Picture Card 12
- Spelling Card 12
- Review Decks
- Worksheet 16
- Letter Tracing Practice II
- Handwriting Practice II

BEFORE CLASS

- Cover the picture on the **I** Wall Card.

MULTILINGUAL LEARNER SUPPORT

CONTRAST LANGUAGE Light is some languages, no spell a sound that is different from the sound the light /i/ sound in Spanish. Explain that most double consonant in English.

Lesson Warm-Up

Alphabet Activity

OBJECTIVE: To review the alphabet, with each child letter in alphabetical order

- Seal children in a circle where they can roll a ball to:

"How many letters are in the alphabet?" 26

"What two kinds of letters make up the alphabet?" vowels and consonants

PHONOLOGICAL/PHONEMIC AWARENESS

Updated Phonological/Phonemic Awareness activities have been revised to better align to the Science of Reading. These activities review skills necessary for identifying and manipulating parts of spoken language, such as words, syllables, onsets and rimes, and phonemes.

DAILY LETTER AND SOUND REVIEW

Review of sound-spellings and strengthening of letter-sound correspondence.

Phonological Awareness

OBJECTIVE: To identify the individual words in a spoken sentence

DO "Let's practice what we already know! Listen to these words: Tell me...
 ice... a... story. Now say the word you say."
 • If needed, model patting words moving to your wrist.

"Now let's say the words together from your shoulder down while story. We put words together to...
 "Let's play Show Me to break a...
 • **I DO** "Watch me."
 • Say the sentence, She can sing, arm. Pat your upper arm, elbow, can... sing.
 "Now I will say them again as...
 • Slide your hand from your upper saying She can sing. Model the n...
 • **WE DO** "Let's practice together. Bill baked pie."
 • Run your hand down your arm as children.
 "Let's put our arms for each we baked... pie. Now let's say the sentence again."
 • Slide your hand from your upper saying Bill baked pie.
 "We broke a sentence into words, make the sentence!"

Spelling Sound Review

OBJECTIVE: To practice spelling letter sounds

- Seat children in small groups where they can write comfortably.
- Distribute **Worksheet 16**.
- Review **Spelling Cards 7-11**. Children should echo the sounds (/p/, /b/, /t/, /r/, /m/), name the letters that make them, and write the lowercase letters (p, a, s, n, m) on lines 1-5 on their worksheets. Instead, you may opt to review the **Spelling Cards** you think children most need to practice.
- If necessary, after giving the children a chance to write their answers, write each letter on the board.
- Check these sheets for accuracy.

New Increment: The Letter I and Twin Consonants

"Listen to these words and see if you can tell me what sound they all start with: ice, it, igloo." /i/

"That's right! The sound you hear is /i/."

"The letter we will be learning about today is the letter I. I is a vowel. /i/ is the short sound of the vowel I."

"All vowels have at least two sounds, a short sound and a long sound. We will learn about the long sound of I later."

"I'll say the short sound and then you echo it. Echo /i/. /i/

/i/ is the short sound of the vowel I."

ALPHABET ACTIVITY

Activities that grow in complexity throughout the year and include reciting the alphabet, alphabetizing, playing alphabet games, and learning about accents and syllabication.

SPELLING SOUND REVIEW

Students learn high-utility, predictable strategies for spelling sounds and apply these strategies by reviewing the Spelling Deck and spelling words on their worksheets.

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Multilingual learners

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) identifies four key recommendations for supporting multilingual learners across elementary grades: explicit instruction in academic vocabulary, integration of oral and written language practice within content learning, regular opportunities to develop written language, and targeted small-group interventions for students needing additional support (Baker et al., 2014). For K–2 students who are developing foundational literacy skills while simultaneously acquiring English, these practices provide essential scaffolding that supports both early reading development and language growth.

Research further shows that multilingual learners may encounter challenges mapping English phonology, syntax, and orthographic patterns that differ from their home languages (Goldenberg, 2013). Because many young learners must acquire new phonemes and spelling patterns alongside early reading skills, they benefit from explicit instruction in vocabulary, language structures, and the conventions of academic English (Dutro & Kinsella, 2010). Instruction that highlights how English sounds and patterns function, especially through teacher modeling, guided practice, and corrective feedback, helps students build the linguistic foundation needed for accurate decoding and comprehension.

A growing body of research also emphasizes the importance of linking foundational literacy instruction directly to multilingual learners' developing phonological and orthographic knowledge. Many multilingual learners must learn sound–symbol correspondences that do not exist in their home language systems, making

explicit, systematic phonics instruction critical in the primary grades (Durgunoglu, Nagy, & Hancin-Bhatt, 1993). Instruction that anchors phonics, morphology, and high-frequency word learning in clear explanations and guided oral rehearsal strengthens decoding accuracy and builds linguistic confidence, enabling students to participate more fully in early reading tasks.

In K–2, structured oral language practice plays a particularly important role in supporting multilingual learners' foundational literacy development. Opportunities for choral responses, partner talk, sentence frames, and teacher-modeled language structures help students internalize new vocabulary and syntax, supporting both reading and oral language proficiency (Dutro & Kinsella, 2010; Goldenberg, 2013). These routines also strengthen background knowledge, an essential contributor to comprehension in the earliest grades.

Research underscores that multilingual learners thrive when instruction integrates explicit language teaching with meaningful reading and writing practice. By providing consistent vocabulary previewing, modeling of language structures, and opportunities to engage with academic language, teachers help multilingual learners build the linguistic tools necessary for accurate decoding, fluent reading, and early comprehension (Dutro & Kinsella, 2010; Goldenberg, 2013). This integrated approach ensures that multilingual learners develop both foundational reading skills and the academic English proficiency needed to access grade-level literacy tasks.

How *Saxon Reading Foundations* aligns with the research on multilingual learners

Saxon Reading Foundations aligns closely with research on effective instruction for multilingual learners by embedding explicit, systematic, and cumulative foundational literacy instruction within core classroom practice. Across Grades K–2, the program is designed to support multilingual learners’ access to English print while simultaneously strengthening oral language, vocabulary, and academic language development through coherent, research-aligned routines.

A defining feature of *Saxon’s* alignment to multilingual learner research is its emphasis on explicit instruction that reduces linguistic ambiguity. Teachers model sound production, decoding routines, spelling patterns, and instructional language clearly and consistently, ensuring that multilingual learners are not expected to infer linguistic relationships independently. Instructional targets are made transparent through direct explanation, modeling, and guided practice, supporting accurate application of foundational skills regardless of students’ levels of English proficiency.

The program’s systematic and cumulative Scope and Sequence further supports multilingual learners by providing repeated exposure to English sound–symbol relationships and language structures over time. Previously taught skills remain active through daily review routines as new learning is introduced in small, manageable increments. This cumulative design allows multilingual learners to consolidate foundational literacy skills while continuing to encounter and practice English sounds, spellings, and patterns in meaningful contexts.

Saxon Reading Foundations integrates oral language development directly within foundational skills instruction, rather than treating language support as a separate instructional strand. Multilingual learners participate daily in structured oral response routines, sound articulation activities, teacher-guided discussion, and choral responses that provide consistent opportunities to hear, practice, and use academic English. These routines support pronunciation, sentence formation, and listening comprehension while reinforcing decoding and spelling instruction.

The program’s use of controlled, developmentally sequenced text plays an important role in supporting multilingual learners’ reading accuracy and confidence. Decodable Readers and Fluency Readers include only the phonics patterns and high-frequency words that have been explicitly taught, allowing students to focus on applying decoding skills without being overwhelmed by unfamiliar language structures. Because texts are accessible, multilingual learners can allocate cognitive resources to comprehension and language development while reading.

Multisensory instruction further enhances access for multilingual learners by engaging visual, auditory, and kinesthetic–tactile modalities in coordinated ways. Students see letters and spelling patterns, hear and articulate sounds, and encode language through writing and movement. These multisensory routines are embedded within daily lessons and aligned to instructional targets, supporting comprehension and memory while maintaining instructional coherence.

Assessment supports multilingual learners through diagnostic monitoring and responsive instruction. Teachers use daily observations, oral responses, written work, and periodic assessments to determine whether instructional challenges stem from foundational skill development, language comprehension, or both. When assessments indicate a need for additional support, teachers are guided to slow pacing, repeat lessons, or provide targeted reinforcement using aligned routines and materials. This diagnostic approach ensures that instruction responds to individual learner needs without fragmenting the instructional sequence.

Saxon Reading Foundations also supports flexible pacing and targeted small-group instruction for multilingual learners. Teachers form flexible, skill-based groups to provide additional practice with phonological awareness, decoding, spelling, fluency, or oral language routines as needed. Small-group instruction draws on the same Scope and Sequence, instructional routines, and materials used in whole-group lessons, ensuring that multilingual learners remain connected to core instruction while receiving intensified support.

Finally, the program’s predictable lesson structure and consistent routines reduce cognitive and linguistic load for multilingual learners. Because lesson components follow familiar patterns across days and grades, students can focus attention on learning new language and literacy content rather than navigating changing instructional formats. This predictability supports engagement, confidence, and sustained participation in foundational literacy instruction.

Together, these features demonstrate that *Saxon Reading Foundations* operationalizes research-aligned instruction for multilingual learners by embedding explicit teaching, cumulative practice, oral language development, multisensory support, and diagnostic responsiveness within core instruction. Through coherent design and intentional scaffolding, the program ensures that multilingual learners have equitable access to the foundational literacy skills necessary for accurate reading, spelling, comprehension, and long-term academic success.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS GUIDE

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Saxon Reading Foundations Resources to Support Multilingual Learners Guide Booklet

Supporting Multilingual Learners

Multilingual Learner Supports

Saxon Reading Foundations lessons include Multilingual Learner Supports to provide substantial, moderate, or light scaffolding for lesson elements that may be challenging for multilingual learners.

CATEGORY	STRATEGY DESCRIPTION
Connect to Meaning	- Teach meanings of words or phrases used in the lesson that are not defined and do not have picture support. - Use multiple modalities to teach meaning; for example, show pictures or realia, act words out, or provide context sentences.
Introduce Concepts	Introduce language concepts that are used in the lesson, like <i>same/different</i>.
Reinforce Vocabulary	Provide context clues for vocabulary words that children will be exposed to or will use in the lesson.
Respond to Text	Provide response frames and sample responses to support children with responding to the Decodable Readers.
Support Articulation	Introduce new letter sounds by modeling the sound, describing the mouth position, and having children practice forming the sound on their own.
Contrast Language	Point out the differences between primary languages and English or explain how children's primary languages might not transfer to English.
Leverage Language	- Point out the similarities between primary languages and English or explain how children can use what they know about their primary languages to support their English development. - Teach cognates or have children share familiar cognates.
Model Examples	Model an example for the task before having children complete it.

Preview the Multilingual Learner Support before teaching each lesson for guidance on how to help multilingual learners understand and practice lesson content.

MULTILINGUAL LEARNER SUPPORT
CONNECT TO MEANING Moderate Use the sight words you are practicing and reviewing in relevant contexts during lessons and throughout the school day. For example: "Push the door if you want to open it, and pull it if you want to close it."



Resources to Support Multilingual Learners Guide 3

Articulation Support in the Spelling Deck

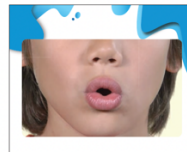
The **Spelling Cards** are used to teach and review sound-spelling correspondences. These cards are used in the New Increment section of the lesson when introducing a new letter, as well as in the Spelling Sound Review in the Lesson Warm-Up. In addition, you can use the **Spelling Cards** to support multilingual learners with articulating challenging sounds. Each **Spelling Card** features an image of a student articulating the sound on one side and models language to describe how to pronounce the sound on the other side. Model and describe the mouth position for making the sound, and guide children to correctly position their mouths and pronounce the sounds. Consider having children use a mirror to check their mouth positions against the image on the card.

MULTILINGUAL LEARNER SUPPORT

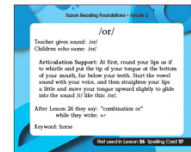
SUPPORT ARTICULATION Substantial The sound /or/ does not transfer from most other languages, so some multilingual learners may have difficulty perceiving and pronouncing it. Model the sound while showing **Spelling Card 37** and describing the mouth position. Then have children practice saying the sound and words with the sound chorally.



Spelling Card 37



Spelling Card 37 (front)



Spelling Card 37 (back)

Contrastive Analysis

The contrastive analysis resources can help you target specific areas that are challenging and identify areas where children can leverage knowledge from their first languages. Use these resources to become familiar with how each language aligns with or differs from English in the following areas:

- Language Overview
- Alphabet Knowledge
- Sound-Symbol Correspondence
- Phonological Features
- Grammatical Features

4 Saxon Reading Foundations 2

Multilingual learner supports across essential areas of literacy

Rather than isolating language support, *Saxon Reading Foundations* embeds multilingual learner scaffolds across all essential components of literacy. Supports are integrated directly into instruction, materials, and routines, allowing multilingual learners to access, practice, and master foundational skills while maintaining instructional coherence and high expectations.

Alphabet knowledge

Students receive explicit instruction in letter names, letter forms, and letter–sound correspondences, supported by multisensory routines that reduce reliance on oral English proficiency alone. Cumulative review and tactile, visual, and oral practice support automatic retrieval and long-term retention of alphabet knowledge.

Phonological and phonemic awareness

Structured routines for auditory discrimination, blending, and segmenting support English phonemes unfamiliar in students’ home languages. Repeated modeling, oral rehearsal, and cumulative practice strengthen sound awareness and support transfer into decoding and spelling.

Phonics

Explicit, systematic phonics instruction emphasizes clear modeling, controlled instructional language, and consistent routines. Fully decodable texts allow multilingual learners to apply taught sound–spelling relationships accurately without being overwhelmed by unfamiliar vocabulary or language structures.

Spelling

Spelling instruction integrates articulation, sound segmentation, and multisensory encoding routines to support phoneme–grapheme mapping. Cumulative practice with spelling patterns and attention to morphology reinforce both encoding and decoding while minimizing linguistic load.

Fluency

Fluency instruction prioritizes accuracy and comprehension alongside rate and expression through controlled, developmentally sequenced texts. Teacher modeling and supported oral reading routines provide multilingual learners with repeated exposure to fluent English reading in accessible contexts.

Vocabulary

Vocabulary development is supported through explicit instruction, repeated exposure, and contextualized use across reading, spelling, speaking, and listening tasks. Attention to word meanings and common morphological elements supports retention, transfer, and generative word learning.

Comprehension

Comprehension instruction integrates previewing, structured questioning, and text-anchored discussion to support meaning-making. Controlled texts and guided oral discussion allow multilingual learners to focus on understanding content while developing academic language.

Handwriting

Handwriting instruction uses explicit modeling and multisensory routines to support accurate letter formation and transcription fluency. Predictable routines and visual cues reinforce sound–symbol connections while reducing linguistic barriers.

Speaking and listening

Structured speaking and listening routines are embedded throughout daily lessons, providing multilingual learners with frequent opportunities to hear, practice, and use academic English. Choral responses, guided discussion, and explicit expectations for oral participation support language development alongside literacy learning.

Professional learning and implementation support

Effective foundational literacy instruction depends not only on the quality of instructional materials, but also on educators' ability to enact those materials with fidelity, precision, and responsiveness. For *Saxon Reading Foundations*, professional learning is intentionally designed to support teachers in implementing the program's explicit, systematic, and cumulative instructional model while responding to learner variability through diagnostic, data-informed decision making.

Professional learning serves as the mechanism through which the research-aligned design of *Saxon Reading Foundations* is translated into daily classroom practice. By focusing on lesson routines, instructional pacing, differentiation pathways, and assessment-informed instruction, professional learning ensures that the program's core design principles are consistently enacted across classrooms and grades. This alignment is particularly important for supporting diverse learners, including multilingual learners, students with dyslexia, and students requiring differentiated levels of support within core instruction.

To support the delivery of effective instruction, *Saxon Reading Foundations* features research-based approaches to professional learning that prepare teachers to facilitate high-impact learning experiences for their students. Professional learning solutions aligned to *Saxon Reading Foundations* are data- and evidence-driven, mapped to instructional goals, and centered on improving student outcomes; they are designed to build educators' collective capacity and foster teacher agency. Heinemann, in partnership with HMH, provides teachers with access to effective instructional strategies, embedded support, and ongoing professional learning that is directly relevant to everyday classroom practice.

This chapter describes how professional learning supports high-quality implementation of *Saxon Reading Foundations* through three integrated components:

- **Connected and personalized professional learning**, which builds teachers' understanding of the program's instructional architecture, lesson structure, and Scope and Sequence while allowing educators to deepen practice based on experience, grade level, and student needs.
- **Program-aligned professional learning for actionable instructional decision making**, which prepares teachers to use assessment data diagnostically to inform pacing, reteaching, and differentiation while maintaining alignment to the program's cumulative instructional model.
- **Coaching to strengthen teaching and learning**, which reinforces accurate lesson delivery, effective use of instructional routines, and differentiation grounded in program-aligned practices.

Together, these professional learning supports ensure that *Saxon Reading Foundations* is implemented consistently and equitably across classrooms. By aligning professional learning with instructional design, assessment practices, and differentiation pathways, the program supports teachers in delivering explicit, systematic foundational literacy instruction that promotes mastery, confidence, and access for all learners.

Connected and personalized professional learning

Effective curriculum-based professional learning consists of ongoing, active experiences that focus on improving the rigor and impact of instructional practices and ideally replicate the learner-centered approaches that teachers are expected to provide for their students. Elements of effective curriculum-based professional learning include high-quality educative curriculum materials; transformative learning experiences that shift teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and practices; and a prioritization of equity to ensure all students meet high expectations. Functional design elements include learning designs that model inquiry-based instruction, experiences to shift teachers' beliefs, opportunities for reflection and feedback, and change management strategies that address individual concerns and group challenges. Finally, structural design features include collective participation in which teachers practice and reflect on the curriculum, models of learning that evolve from initial use to ongoing support to building capacity, and effective use of teachers' time. These elements of effective curriculum-based professional learning must exist in a system with strong leadership, adequate resources, and coherence towards common goals (Short & Hirsh, 2020).

How professional learning is delivered influences its effectiveness. Programs that incorporate teacher collaboration focused on instructional improvement, whether through PLCs, teacher teams, or structured group work, have been shown to strengthen instructional practice. Follow-up meetings and coaching after initial implementation further improve effectiveness by allowing teachers to share experiences and receive feedback. The content of the professional learning is equally important. It should focus on subject-specific instructional practices (not merely content knowledge), prioritize specific

supportive materials over general principles, and help teachers build stronger relationships with students (Hill & Papay, 2022).

Long-term connected professional learning includes cohesive features—online coaching, observations, and collaboration—all with a focus on how to ensure student well-being and meaningful student learning in digital environments. A connection between workshops, coaching, and collaboration is essential for a professional learning program to make a difference in student achievement. Connecting workshops, follow-up coaching, and support among peers can help teachers retain new knowledge, apply and refine new skills, and share effective approaches that they can scale (Aguilar, 2019).

Effective professional learning, whether in-person, online, or blended, offers teachers coherent experiences so that their learning is connected to their work in the classroom and builds proficiency. This approach includes alignment between the study of theory and practice, observation of theory and practice, individual coaching, and further practice and refinement through collaboration. Each of these components is essential to support and build on the content and pedagogy that is learned, observed, and practiced in each of the other components (Rock, 2019).

For schools to support the implementation of high-quality instructional materials, effective professional learning during the launch of the curriculum, when teachers are learning and committing to an instructional approach, is critical (Gulamhussein, 2013). Teachers' initial exposure to a concept should engage them through varied approaches and active learning strategies to make sense of the new practice (Bill

& Melinda Gates Foundation, 2014; Garet et al., 2001; Gulamhussein, 2013). An effective professional learning program should be curriculum-based and focused on targeted content, strategies, and practices (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2014; Saxe et al., 2001; Wei, 2009) and be grounded in the teacher's grade level or discipline (Gulamhussein, 2013).

Online professional learning can help solve resource challenges in implementing a scalable and sustainable model. Online professional learning platforms can create a peer-to-peer support community, building the capacity of the teaching team to support each other. Perhaps most importantly, online professional learning allows teachers to experience the agency and personalized learning they are creating for students. The unique opportunity of blended professional learning is the shift from learning as a one-time or periodic event to learning as an ongoing and embedded practice (Tucker & Wycoff, 2019).

Many school districts and providers of teachers' professional learning are moving toward a more personalized model of professional learning, taking a cue from the movement toward personalized learning for students. This approach

often focuses on short modules, which teachers can choose and then complete on their own time. The modules can incorporate aspects of gamification, micro-credentialing, and online professional learning communities. By allowing teachers to choose their own professional learning courses and activities, and complete and review content in their own place at their own pace, the learning will be better matched to their needs. Teachers will be able to set goals, find resources to help them meet those goals, refresh their learning, track their progress, and get feedback from supervisors and colleagues (Gamrat et al., 2014; Meeuwse & Mason, 2018).

Providing teachers with time and frameworks to collaborate on improving their instruction, through professional learning communities (PLCs) or teacher study groups, has the potential to improve teachers' knowledge, instructional practices, and student achievement. A study of teacher study groups focused on reading comprehension and vocabulary instruction found that teachers who participated in teacher study groups saw significant improvements in their knowledge of vocabulary instruction and their teaching practices. Students of the teacher study groups teachers also saw improvements in oral vocabulary (Gersten et al., 2010).

How *Saxon Reading Foundations* aligns with the research on connected and personalized professional learning

Saxon Reading Foundations provides a continuum of connected, personalized professional learning designed to foster teacher agency, promote collaboration, and build collective efficacy. Through strategic planning, guided implementation support, and blended learning experiences, Heinemann helps schools and districts achieve measurable gains through professional learning centered on research-based practices and student outcomes.

The *Saxon Reading Foundations* Getting Started session provides teachers with foundational program knowledge through learner-centered exploration and hands-on activities. Delivered live online or in person, this initial session helps teachers build confidence in the program's organization, lesson structure, and essential components while addressing the need for high-quality professional learning during curriculum implementation. By engaging educators in varied, active learning experiences from the outset, the session reflects research showing that teachers' introduction to a new curriculum should build understanding of instructional approaches rather than simply communicate procedures.

Live Online Follow-Up Learning

The Live Online Follow-Up Learning sessions extend and deepen teachers' initial learning by providing ongoing, topic-specific support on *Saxon Reading Foundations* resources, digital tools, assessment practices, and data use. Teachers and instructional teams can personalize their professional learning by selecting the topics most relevant to their classroom contexts. This structure reflects research showing that follow-up sessions after initial implementation, where teachers share experiences, apply new skills, and

receive feedback, are essential for sustaining instructional improvement. Topic choice further supports a personalized model of professional learning in which teachers set goals, access relevant resources, and engage with content at their own pace.

Leader Success Live Online Learning

The Leader Success Live Online Learning session ensures that school building and district leaders are equipped to support effective *Saxon Reading Foundations* implementation. In a focused one-hour session, leaders gain the program knowledge and practical tools needed to foster teacher buy-in, support diverse learning environments, and sustain a focused and coherent implementation. This offering reflects research on the importance of strong leadership as a structural condition for effective curriculum-based professional learning, including the need for leaders to actively manage change and provide coherent, well-resourced support for instructional improvement.

To extend leader learning beyond the initial session, *Saxon Reading Foundations* provides Instructional Leader Support resources that help school and district leaders translate program knowledge into ongoing implementation support. The resources provide leaders with the rationale for the program's systematic instructional sequence, a protocol for supporting implementation, and an Observation Tool aligned to *Saxon Reading Foundations* pedagogy, language, routines, differentiation, multisensory instruction, and assessment practices. Grade-level unit guidance and pacing and planning supports further help leaders identify patterns

across classrooms, provide timely and actionable feedback, celebrate effective practice, and use emerging needs to inform follow-up support. The Observation Tool is positioned as a coaching rather than evaluation resource, reinforcing a collaborative approach to building teacher capacity and supporting implementation that remains aligned to the program’s research-based design.

Together, these learning opportunities and implementation resources reflect the research-based principle that long-term, connected professional learning should link initial learning, follow-up support, leadership guidance, and collaborative feedback. This connected approach helps educators retain knowledge, refine instructional skills, and build the sustained capacity needed to implement high-quality instruction.



Teacher Name: _____ Grade: _____ Lesson #: _____
 Date: _____
 Lesson Focus / Skill: _____

Observed by: _____
 Observation Start: _____ Observation End: _____

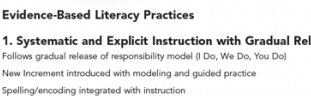
☐ Full Lesson Observed
☐ Spot Check Only → Component Observed: _____

GENERAL TIER 1 IMPLEMENTATION OBSERVATION

	YES	NO		YES	NO
Lesson is scheduled for minimum of 30 minutes	☐	☐	Pacing through unit is on track to complete	☐	☐
Classroom is organized to set students up for success	☐	☐	Evidence of formative assessments happening as prescribed within the resources	☐	☐
Evidence of appropriate lesson planning	☐	☐	Smooth/clear transitions between components	☐	☐
Lesson components and activities are presented in prescribed order for the lesson/day	☐	☐	Teacher manages materials to transition from one activity to the next	☐	☐
Teacher follows Saxon script with appropriate pacing	☐	☐	Daily Review Decks in use (e.g., Letter, Picture, Spelling, Sight Words)	☐	☐
Lesson pace is brisk and appropriate for student engagement	☐	☐	Materials prepared and accessible (e.g., cards, tiles, workbooks)	☐	☐

OBSERVATION TOOL

Saxon Reading Foundations Observation Tool



Evidence-Based Literacy Practices

1. Systematic and Explicit Instruction with Gradual Release Model
 Follows gradual release of responsibility model (I Do, We Do, You Do) ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed
 New increment introduced with modeling and guided practice ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed
 Spelling/encoding integrated with instruction ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed

2. Lesson Component Fidelity
 Alphabet Activity ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed
 Daily Letter/Sound Review implemented ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed
 Spelling Sound Review included ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed
 Phonological/Phonemic Awareness activity (if applicable) ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed
 Sight Word Review or Introduction included ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed
 Decodable or Fluency Reader and/or fluency activities integrated ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed
 Differentiated groups or tasks observed ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed
 Application/Review Worksheet used ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed
 Handwriting modeled and practiced (if applicable) ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed

3. Scaffolding and Differentiation
 Scaffolding and differentiation are aligned with student data/needs ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed
 Classroom structures are in place to support differentiation ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed
 Effective use of small group and strategic student groupings ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed
 Saxon-provided support/reinforce/extend options included ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed
 Individualized support provided during independent practice ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed
 Use of Decodable or Fluency Readers to support fluency and comprehension ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed
 Visual/auditory cues scaffold learning for students with diverse needs ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed

4. Multisensory Instruction
 Use of kinesthetic, auditory, and visual cues ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed
 Evidence of slywriting or kinesthetic letter formation ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed
 Auditory echo and response ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed
 Letter tiles or hands-on spelling ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed
 Elkonin boxes or movement-based segmentation/blending ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed
 Articulation/mouth modeling for sound production ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed

5. Use of Student Data, Assessments, and Progress Monitoring
 Formative assessment is utilized throughout instruction ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed
 The teacher modifies/adjusts instruction in response to formative data ☐ Observed ☐ Not Observed

OBSERVATION TOOL

Program-aligned professional learning for actionable insights

Grounded in the research principles of effective professional learning, program-aligned courses provide flexible, continuous, and relevant learning for teacher groups and professional learning communities. Through a blend of in-person and online group sessions, program-aligned courses provide educators with deep learning that ties theory to practice, generating sustained impact over time (Tucker & Wycoff, 2019). Effective program-aligned professional learning unpacks the research underlying a program's instructional approach, helping educators understand the rationale behind evidence-based instructional decisions.

Educators benefit from opportunities to continuously review their learning, practice implementing strategies in the classroom, and exchange feedback within their PLC throughout

the academic year. Engaging in follow-up study groups to collaboratively practice and reflect on learning after each course session ensures that educators' growth is reinforced by practice and sustained over time (Aguilar, 2019).

Effective program-aligned professional learning goes beyond general subject-matter knowledge by providing educators with personalized content that leverages program-specific resources, activities, and instructional strategies while illustrating the connection between daily classroom practice and research-based instructional principles. This focus on program-aligned, efficacy-driven content ensures that professional learning is immediately applicable and directly relevant to classroom practice (Hill & Papay, 2022).

How *Saxon Reading Foundations* aligns with the research on program-aligned professional learning for actionable insights

Grounded in the research principles of effective professional learning, Heinemann's Live Online Literacy Courses provide flexible, continuous, and relevant learning for teacher groups and professional learning communities (PLCs) implementing *Saxon Reading Foundations*. These live online course modules are led by Heinemann's instructional coaching team and are designed to equip teachers with tools, strategies, and research-grounded understanding to deepen and sustain their instructional practice.

Heinemann's course offerings are explicitly designed to unpack the research underlying *Saxon Reading Foundations*, helping educators understand the why behind the program's evidence-based instructional approach. Rather than conveying general subject-matter content, courses provide program-aligned, practice-specific learning that directly connects to the instructional resources, activities, and routines teachers use daily, ensuring that professional learning is immediately applicable to classroom practice. This focus on subject-specific instructional strategies, rather than general principles, reflects research demonstrating that content-focused professional learning tied to teachers' specific grade level or disciplinary contexts produces stronger and more durable improvements in instructional practice.

A live online course consists of six one-hour modules or a combination of modules and applied learning coaching sessions totaling six hours. Designed for groups of up to 35 participants, courses may be scheduled flexibly

across the academic year. Educators benefit from opportunities to continuously review their learning, practice implementing strategies in the classroom, and exchange feedback with their PLC throughout the year. Engaging in online study groups to collaboratively practice and reflect on learnings after each course session ensures that educators' growth is reinforced by ongoing practice and sustained over time. This blended, ongoing model reflects research evidence that professional learning is most effective when it shifts from a one-time or periodic event to a continuous and embedded practice.

Literacy course modules available to *Saxon Reading Foundations* educators include, but are not limited to, the following:

Teaching Children to Read Modules: How We Learn to Read; Phonological Awareness; Phonics; Fluency; Oral Language; Vocabulary; Building Knowledge; Comprehension

Assessing and Monitoring Student Growth Modules: Monitoring and Supporting Young Readers in Foundational Skills; Supporting Young Readers in Vocabulary and Comprehension; Facilitating Ongoing, Actionable Feedback

Culturally Responsive Education Modules: Building Connections that Deepen Learning; Building a Foundation for Culturally Responsive Education; Culturally Responsive Education: Assessing Student Learning; Culturally Responsive Education: Making Instructional Decisions

Coaching to strengthen teaching and learning

Research has demonstrated that sustained, job-embedded coaching is the most effective form of professional learning, whether it is delivered in person or online. Coaching delivered in person is most effective when coaches are highly expert and focus their work with teachers on a clearly specified instructional model or program. Other opportunities for teachers to develop their knowledge of the targeted instructional model (e.g., in courses, workshops, or coach-led learning groups) are also an important component of successful coaching programs. Online coaching shows promise for being at least as effective as in-person coaching for improving outcomes, though the research base comparing delivery systems is thin. The evidence to date, however, suggests that the medium through which coaching is delivered is less important than the quality and substance of the learning opportunities provided to teachers (Matsumura et al., 2019).

A recent meta-analysis of coaching programs found overall effect sizes of 0.49 SD on instructional practices and 0.18 SD on student achievement. Encouragingly, teachers who received online coaching performed similarly to teachers who received in-person coaching for improving both instructional practices and student achievement. The authors of this analysis identified several aspects of online coaching as potential strengths: increasing the number of teachers with whom a high-quality coach can

work, reducing educators' concern about being evaluated by their coach, and lowering costs while increasing scalability (Kraft, Blazar, & Hogan, 2018).

The best evidence for coaching is found for one-to-one coaching, where coaches observe and offer feedback on teachers' practice. There is not a great deal of research on specific coaching practices, but effective coaches might engage in co-planning, modeling, or guiding teacher reflection. Effective coaching is time-intensive, and the most successful programs have invested in the selection, training, and ongoing support of their coaches (Hill & Papay, 2022).

Online coaching can provide a framework for a shared leadership structure that focuses on facilitating teachers' autonomy, self-management, empowerment, and cooperation. Because the coach and the teacher jointly pursue the goal of increased student achievement, virtual coaching provides social support for both parties, leading to enhanced emotional and psychological strength. Any coaching relationship, whether traditional or virtual, builds on several underlying qualities of both teacher and coach. Chief among them are a willingness to change, a trusting relationship, a high level of initiative, and a personal and organizational commitment to the workplace (Blackman, 2010).

How *Saxon Reading Foundations* aligns to the research on coaching to strengthen teaching and learning

Heinemann Coaching for *Saxon Reading Foundations* is grounded in a research-based coaching framework that leverages instructional best practices proven to impact student success. It offers sustained, data-driven, and personalized support aligned to each teacher's individual learning goals, providing teachers with the agency and insights to connect their own professional growth directly to student outcomes.

Heinemann Coaching is built around a cyclical, evidence-based model that guides teachers through five stages: Analyze student data to establish goals; Set student data-informed targets; Learn new instructional skills; Apply learning in the classroom; and Review progress and reflect on results. This continuous improvement cycle reflects research evidence that the most effective coaching programs provide teachers with structured opportunities to observe, practice, and receive feedback on their instructional practice within the context of clearly specified instructional models. Coaching sessions focus on student learning evidence and may include modeling instructional strategies, responding to program-specific questions, and facilitating engaging professional learning experiences, ensuring that teachers develop confidence and the practical capacity to improve outcomes for their students.

Heinemann offers in-person, online, and blended coaching designed to support the seamless

integration of *Saxon Reading Foundations* into teachers' daily instructional practices. Coaches work with teachers in year-long collaborative cohorts of up to 20 educators, facilitating instructional planning and the effective, sustained implementation of the program in the classroom. This structure reflects research evidence that coaching is most effective when it is time-intensive, sustained over the course of an academic year, and focused on the specific instructional program that teachers are implementing. The availability of online and blended coaching delivery further supports scalability, enabling high-quality coaching to reach a greater number of teachers while reducing cost barriers and, research suggests, offering outcomes comparable to in-person coaching for improving both instructional practice and student achievement.

Heinemann Coaching outcomes, as reported by participating teachers, underscore its effectiveness: 98% of teachers report gaining new instructional strategies to apply in their classrooms; 97% report gaining knowledge and strategies that will help them become better teachers; and 91% report that they can immediately apply what they have learned in their classrooms. These outcomes reflect research demonstrating that effective coaching strengthens teachers' autonomy, self-efficacy, and professional commitment, while collaborative coaching relationships support sustained instructional improvement.

Saxon Reading Foundations **evidence of impact**

ESSA Tier 1 Strong Evidence

Study overview

The effectiveness of *Saxon Reading Foundations* (previously called *Saxon Phonics and Spelling*) was evaluated through a rigorous randomized controlled trial (RCT) conducted by the independent research firm PRES Associates during the 2006–2007 school year.

Teachers within participating schools were randomly assigned to either implement *Saxon Reading Foundations* or continue with business-as-usual literacy instruction. The study was designed to meet What Works Clearinghouse standards and qualifies as ESSA Tier 1: Strong Evidence, the highest level of evidence under the Every Student Succeeds Act.

The final analytic sample included 682 Grade 1 and Grade 2 students across six elementary schools in Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Oklahoma, and Texas, representing urban, suburban, and rural settings.

Study design

Teachers were randomly assigned within schools to either the *Saxon Reading Foundations* treatment condition or a business-as-usual control condition. The program was implemented over the course of a full academic year. Fidelity of implementation was supported through professional learning, teacher implementation logs, and classroom observations.

To account for the nested structure of the data, researchers used hierarchical linear modeling to estimate program effects while controlling for baseline differences between groups.

Participants and setting

The study included 682 students in Grades 1 and 2 from six elementary schools located across diverse geographic and community contexts. Approximately 60% of students qualified for free or reduced-price lunch, 19% were identified as English learners, and 14% received special education services. Baseline analyses confirmed equivalence between treatment and control groups on all student outcome measures.

Measures

Student outcomes were measured using the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), a norm-referenced, standardized assessments of foundational literacy skills that aligns directly with the instructional focus of *Saxon* and provides valid and reliable indicators of students' phonics, word reading, and spelling development. Specifically, Grade 1 students were administered the Word Analysis subtest and Reading Words subtest and Grade 2 students were administered the Word Analysis subtest and Spelling subtest.

Teacher outcomes were assessed through surveys examining instructional knowledge, preparation, and evidence-based literacy practices.

Key Findings

Results demonstrated that students whose teachers implemented *Saxon Reading Foundations* students achieved significantly stronger outcomes in foundational literacy skills than students in control classrooms. Positive effects were observed on all three ITBS subtests:

- Word Analysis effects size = .16
*significance at $p < .03$
- Spelling effects size = .30
*significance at $p < .02$
- Reading Words effects size = .28
*marginal significance at $p < .07$

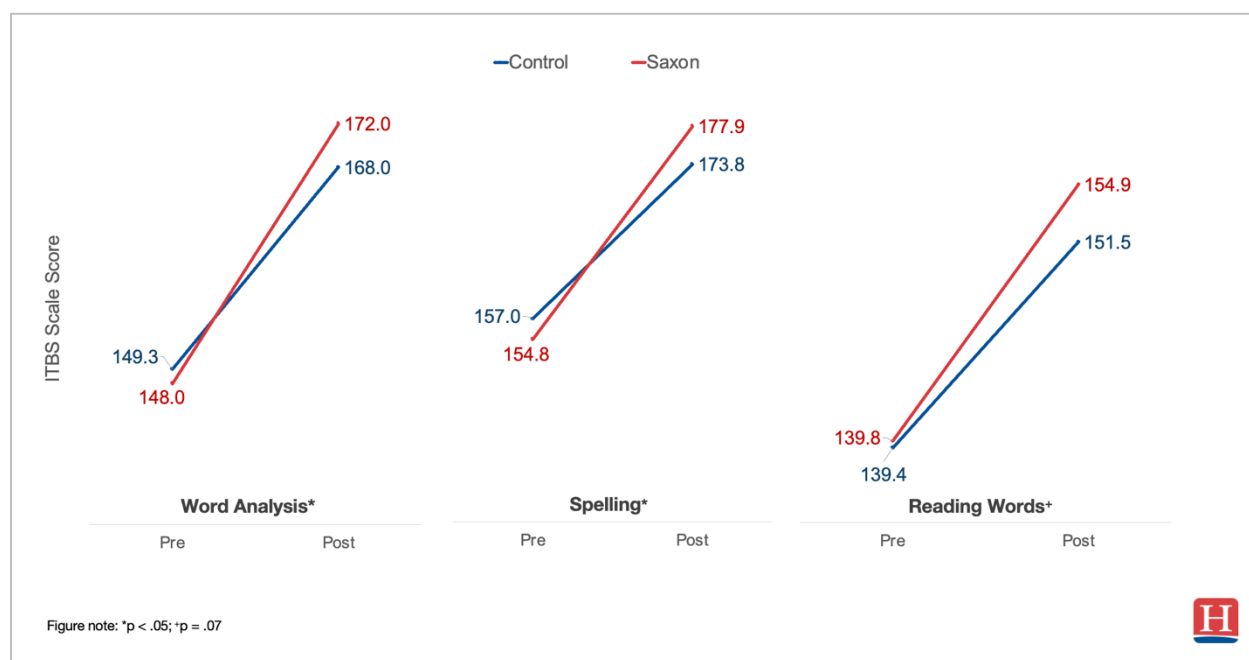
Positive impacts were also observed across multiple student populations, including students from low-income backgrounds, African American and Hispanic students, and students with lower initial literacy skills.

In addition to student achievement gains, teachers implementing *Saxon Reading Foundations* demonstrated significantly greater growth in instructional preparation and engagement in evidence-based literacy practices than teachers in control classrooms. These findings suggest that *Saxon Reading Foundations* supports both improved student literacy outcomes and the instructional capacity needed for high-quality implementation.

Importantly, study outcomes were achieved in the context of professional learning and implementation supports designed to promote high-fidelity program implementation and data-informed instructional decision making.

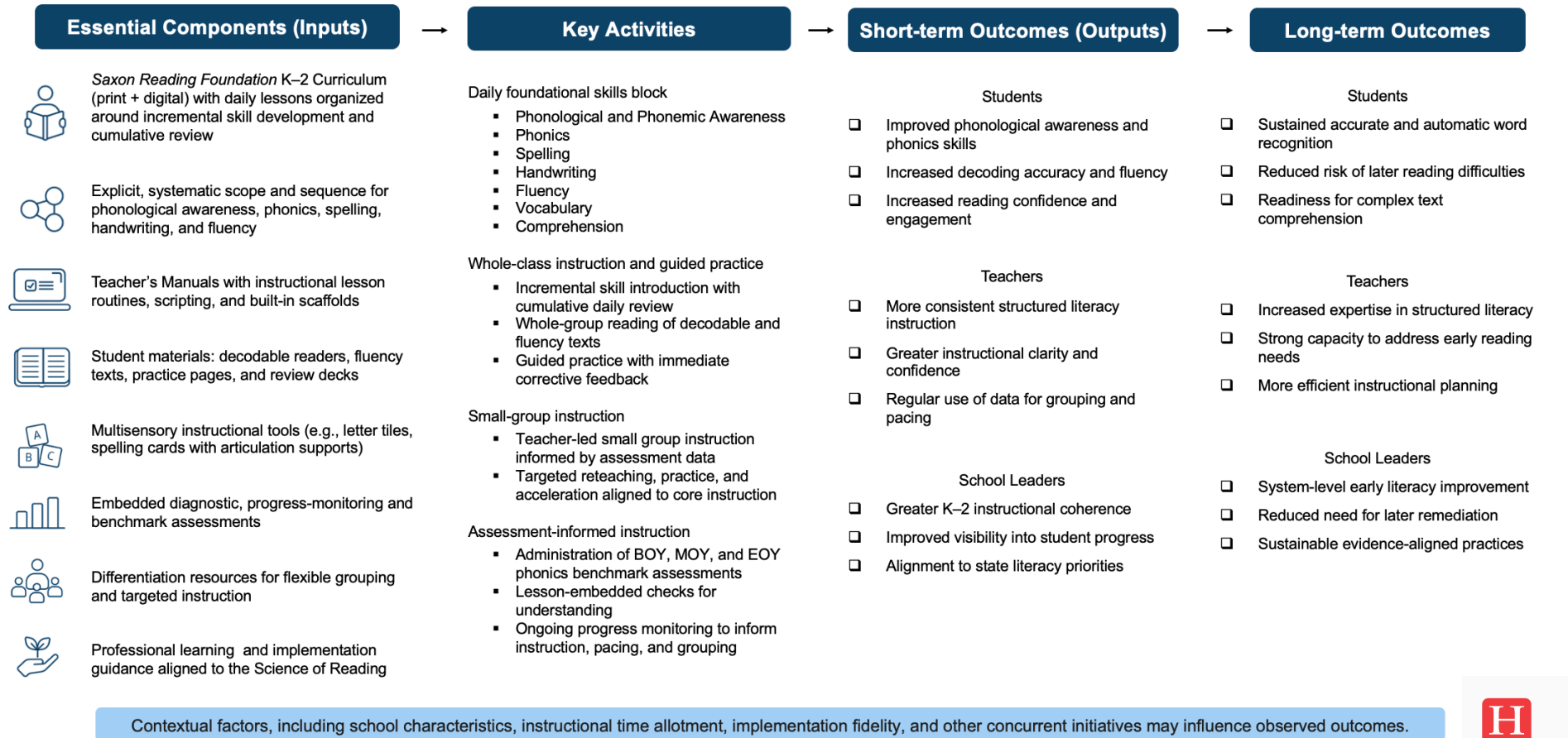
To learn more about the research study, see the *Saxon Reading Foundations* Research Results Papers.

Figure 1. *Saxon Reading Foundations* (Treatment) and Control Group ITBS Pretest and Posttest Performance



Saxon Reading Foundations Logic Model

Research-Based Theory of Action



Conclusion

Saxon Reading Foundations is grounded in a robust and coherent body of research that explains how children learn to read and identifies the instructional practices most likely to support early literacy success. Across its design and implementation, the program reflects decades of converging evidence from cognitive science, reading research, and educational psychology demonstrating that beginning readers benefit most from explicit, systematic, and cumulative instruction in the foundational components of literacy. By aligning instruction to well-established frameworks such as the Science of Reading, the Simple View of Reading, the Reading Rope, and the Active View of Reading, *Saxon Reading Foundations* operationalizes research-based principles in daily classroom practice.

This Research Evidence Base demonstrates that *Saxon Reading Foundations* is not a collection of isolated instructional features, but a deliberately engineered instructional system. The program integrates incremental skill development, continual review, multisensory routines, diagnostic teaching, and aligned differentiation within a coherent Scope and Sequence spanning Grades K–2. Instruction across alphabet knowledge, phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, spelling, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension, handwriting, and oral language is coordinated so that skills reinforce one another over time. This integrated design supports mastery, automaticity, and transfer—conditions

identified in the research as essential for fluent reading and long-term comprehension.

Importantly, the research foundations described in this paper are complemented by strong empirical evidence of effectiveness. An independent randomized control trial evaluating *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* (now *Saxon Reading Foundations*) demonstrated statistically significant and educationally meaningful impacts on students' foundational literacy outcomes, meeting the highest standard of evidence under ESSA Tier 1: Strong Evidence. These outcomes were achieved alongside professional learning and implementation supports designed to promote high-fidelity use of instructional routines, underscoring the importance of coherence between program design, teacher learning, and classroom practice.

Taken together, the research summarized in this document provides a clear and defensible rationale for *Saxon Reading Foundations* as an effective foundational literacy program for Grades K–2. The program's alignment to established reading theory, its translation of research into daily instruction, and its demonstrated impact on student learning provide strong evidence for its use as a core component of early literacy instruction. Through systematic, research-aligned foundational literacy instruction, *Saxon Reading Foundations* supports the development of accurate, fluent, and confident readers in the primary grades.

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