Placement Test

Where to Start

In order to be successful in mastering and applying the concepts taught in Essentials for reading and spelling, it is vital that students first have strong underlying skills in several important areas. These skills include:

- Well developed **phonemic awareness** skills
- Knowing a majority of the **sounds for a-z**
- **Writing** lowercase a-z consistently and **legibly**

The Placement Test, starting on page 45, will aid teachers in determining if students need to strengthen these skills with the **Pre-Lessons**, beginning on page 49, before starting Lesson 1. Use the phonemic awareness, sounds of a-z, handwriting, and writing a-z sections of the Placement Test to decide whether you will start with the Pre-Lessons or with Lesson 1. If you are teaching multiple students, make a copy of the placement test for each student.

The Placement Test will also help teachers determine which level to follow in the Teacher’s Guide: Level A, B, or C. Use the reading and spelling sections of the Placement Test to help you determine the best level for your student. Students who have completed *Essentials* once can use Level B or Level C in a second year to achieve greater mastery.

**Levels A, B, and C**

Much of the instruction in each Essentials lesson is used for all students. The Spelling Analysis, Grammar, and Vocabulary exercises are separated into three levels in order provide appropriate application for students of different ages, vocabulary levels, and reading and spelling abilities.

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**Teacher Tip**

**Phonemic Awareness**

Phonemic awareness is the understanding that words are comprised of sounds. Students with strong phonemic awareness skills will be able to blend sounds that a teacher has segmented into a word and segment words into their individual sounds.
**Phonemic Awareness** Segment a word aloud as written. Ask the student to blend (glue) the sounds together to make a word.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Easily blended</th>
<th>Struggled but successful</th>
<th>Could not blend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. /p-ĭ-g/ pig</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. /h-ŏr-s/ horse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. /p-l-ă/ play</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. /s-ĕ-n-d/ send</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. /g-ar-d-ĕ-n/ garden</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. /p-ŭ-m-p-kĭ-n/ pumpkin</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. /k-ŏ-m-p-ŭ-t-ĭr/ computer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. /b-ŭ-k-sh-ĕ-l-f/ bookshelf</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If students struggled to blend words 1-6, complete the Phonemic Awareness Activities in Pre-Lessons A-J before beginning Lesson 1.

**Phonemic Awareness** Say a word aloud. Ask the student to segment the words into its individual sounds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Easily segmented</th>
<th>Struggled but successful</th>
<th>Could not segment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. dog    /d-ŏ-g/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. step   /s-t-ĕ-p/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. trip   /t-r-ĭ-p/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. stand  /s-t-ă-n-d/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. basket /b-ă-s-k-ĕ-t/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. picnic /p-ĭ-k-n-ĭ-k/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. energy /ĕ-n-er-j-ĕ/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. watermelon /w-ă-t-er-m-ĕ-l-ŏ-n/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If students struggled to segment words 1-6, complete the Phonemic Awareness Activities in Pre-Lessons A-J before beginning Lesson 1.

**Read the Sounds of A-Z** Using the Basic Phonogram Flash Cards, ask the student to read the sounds of a-z. The sounds are provided on the back of the card. Note if the student knows all, some, or none of the sounds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>i</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>c</td>
<td>j</td>
<td>qu</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>k</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>g</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>u</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the student knew fewer than 20 of the a-z phonograms, reteach and practice the sounds with the "Phonogram and Handwriting" and "Phonogram Practice" sections of Pre-Lessons A-J.

**Handwriting** Evaluate a sample of the student’s handwriting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Are the letters formed consistently each time? yes | no
Are are the letters sized appropriately? yes | no
Are all the letters sitting correctly on the lines? yes | no
Are all the letters legible? yes | no

If you answered “no” to any of the questions above, teach how to write lowercase a-z using *Rhythm of Handwriting* Cursive or Manuscript before beginning Lesson 1. (Pre-Lessons A-J contain a 10-day plan for teaching these.)

If you are teaching multiple students, make a copy of the placement test for each student.
**Write A-Z When Hearing the Sounds**
Read the sounds of a-z. Do not use the letter names. Ask the student to write the correct phonogram without a visual prompt. Did the student write the correct phonogram? Was it written neatly?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Neat</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Neat</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Neat</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Neat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>l /l/</td>
<td>e /ê-ê/</td>
<td>o /ô-ô/</td>
<td>m /m/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qu /kw/</td>
<td>i /î-î-y/</td>
<td>p /p/</td>
<td>c /k-s/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>w /w/</td>
<td>z /z/</td>
<td>b /b/</td>
<td>r /r/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d /d/</td>
<td>j /j/</td>
<td>x /ks-z/</td>
<td>u /û-û-û/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h /h/</td>
<td>a /a-â-ā/</td>
<td>k /k/</td>
<td>f /f/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>s /s-z/</td>
<td>v /v/</td>
<td>t /t/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g /g/</td>
<td>n /n/</td>
<td>y /y-ĩ-ĩ-ẽ/</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the student wrote fewer than 20 of the a-z phonograms correctly, reteach the sounds of a-z with the “Phonogram and Handwriting” section and practice the sounds with the “Phonogram Practice” section of Pre-Lessons A-J.

**Reading**
Choose a grade level text. Ask the student to read aloud for three minutes. Make a mark for each word read incorrectly. Count words the student self-corrects as right. Count the total number of words read, subtract the words read incorrectly, and divide by 3. This is the number of words read per minute. If the student struggles to read the text, provide a simpler text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>yes</th>
<th>no</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Was the student confident during reading?
Ask the student to summarize what was read. Could the student summarize the text easily?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words per minute</th>
<th>________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

If the student cannot read the simpler text, begin with Pre-Lesson A. If the student is reading less than 75 words per minute, is not confident, and/or struggles to summarize the content of his reading, consider limiting the student’s reading to the Essentials Reader until either the student begins to pick up uncontrolled books voluntarily or the student has completed Essentials Lesson 20.

**Reading Words**
Ask the student to read the words on the following page without assistance. If the student misses two in a row, or more than three, stop and count the number of words read correctly.

|--------|----------------|--------|------------------|--------|--------------|--------|----------|--------|--------------|--------|-----------------|

If the student read 18-20 words correctly, consider starting Lesson 1 with Level B or Level C, depending on the spelling portion of this placement test. If a student reads fewer then five words correctly, skip the spelling portion of the placement test and begin with Level A.

**Spelling**
Read a word. Ask the student to spell it. If the student misses more than two words, stop.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>yes</th>
<th>no</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>yes</th>
<th>no</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>yes</th>
<th>no</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>yes</th>
<th>no</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. dip</td>
<td>6. move</td>
<td>11. paper</td>
<td>16. massive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. trap</td>
<td>7. they</td>
<td>12. walk</td>
<td>17. subterranean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. quit</td>
<td>8. each</td>
<td>13. banquet</td>
<td>18. audience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. the</td>
<td>9. example</td>
<td>14. poison</td>
<td>19. manuscript</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. have</td>
<td>10. large</td>
<td>15. costume</td>
<td>20. spacious</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the students misses more than two words, begin in the level (A, B, or C) indicated above the words where you stopped. If the student spells 16 or more words correctly, begin in Level C.

If you are teaching multiple students, make a copy of the placement test for each student.
Student Placement Test

Reading Words

1. dog
2. dig
3. blob
4. blend
5. quilt
6. strong
7. string
8. braids
9. bread
10. paper
11. afternoon
12. thunderstorm
13. character
14. mauve
15. century
16. disadvantage
17. illustration
18. elementary
19. delicious
20. contagious
Pre-Lesson A

Phonemic Awareness
A Kinesthetic Awareness of Sounds

- Many people have not made a strong connection between the auditory and kinesthetic components of speech. This activity is designed to heighten students’ awareness of the differences in the shape of their mouths as they produce a variety of sounds. This is particularly helpful for students who struggle with auditory processing and students who are kinesthetic learners.

See and Feel the Sounds

- Provide students with a small mirror so they can observe their mouths as they explore the sounds.

/p/
/p/. Say /p/ with me. /p/
What part of the mouth is used to say /p/? lips
Put your hand in front of your mouth as you say /p/. What do you feel as you say /p/? air popping out
Can you make /p/ louder and softer? no
Make sure students are not saying /pʊ/; just say /p/.

/b/
/b/. Say /b/ with me. /b/
What part of the mouth is used to say /b/? lips
Put your hand on your throat as you say /p/ and then /b/. What changes when you say /b/? My throat vibrates.
This is your voice box. You turn your voice box on when you say /b/. /b/ is a voiced sound.

Materials Needed
Small mirror

Teacher Tip

Why Do Students Guess When Reading?

Students guess at words because many programs teach reading using sight words. In that school of thought, students are taught that “the whole word” on paper is a visual representation of a spoken word, without understanding that the letters represent the sounds in the word sequentially. Students are often instructed to guess unknown words from context. This sort of teaching produces students who may have never even considered that words are made up of sounds. Their minds have been trained to focus on the word level. When students learn to sound out phonograms sequentially, there is no more need to guess at words.
Can you make /b/ louder and softer?  no
Make sure students are not saying /bʊ/ rather than /b/.

/fl/
/fl/. Say /f/ with me.  /f/
What part of the mouth is used to say /f/?  teeth and lips
Put your hand in front of your mouth as you say /f/. What do you feel?  air
Keep your hand in front of your mouth. Say /f/ and /p/. How does the air feel different?
With /p/ it explodes. It is fast and then stops. With /f/ it is softer and keeps blowing.
Can you make /f/ louder and softer?  no

/v/
Say /v/. What part of the mouth is used to say /v/?  teeth and lips
Compare /f/ and /v/. Put your hand in front of your mouth as you say them, and put your other hand on your throat. What is the same and what is different between /f/ and /v/?  The air is soft and blowing with both. /v/ is voiced and /f/ is unvoiced.
Can you make /v/ louder and softer?  no

/ŏ/
Say /ŏ/. Say /ŏ/ with me.  /ŏ/
How is your mouth shaped as you say /ŏ/?  round and open
Can you make /ŏ/ louder and softer?  yes

/ŏ/.
/ŏ/. How is your mouth shaped as you say /ŏ/?  round and open
Compare /ŏ/ and /ŏ/.  The mouth becomes rounder with /ŏ/.
Can you make /ŏ/ louder and softer?  yes

/s/
Say /s/. How is your mouth shaped as you say /s/?  slightly open, teeth close together
What is your tongue doing?  The tongue is curved on the sides near the front teeth.
Do you feel the air blowing over your tongue? Place your hand in front of your mouth. Compare the air as you say /s/, /f/, /p/.  /s/ and /f/ are steady streams. /p/ is short and popping.
Can you make /s/ louder and softer?  no
/z/
Say /z/. Compare the shape of your mouth and tongue to /s/. They are the same.
What is different? /z/ is voiced and /s/ is unvoiced.
Can you make /z/ louder and softer? no

/th/
Say /th/ as in “thin.” Where is your tongue? Sticking out slightly between the teeth.
Feel the air. Can you make /th/ louder and softer? no

/TH/
Say /TH/ as in “this.” What is different from /th/?/TH/ is voiced, /th/ is unvoiced.
Can you make /TH/ louder and softer? no

/m/
Say /m/. How is your mouth formed? It is closed, and the lips are pressed together.
Is air coming out of your mouth? no
What happens if you plug your nose? I can’t say /m/.
Where is the air coming out? my nose
Can you say /th/, /s/ and /b/ if you plug your nose? yes

/n/
Say /n/. How is your mouth formed? The tongue is pressing against the roof of the mouth.
Where is the air coming out? the nose
What happens if you plug your nose? I can’t say /n/.

/ē/
Say /ē/. How is your mouth shaped as you say /ē/? It is opened and pulled back in a tense position, like a smile. My tongue is curled against my teeth in the back.

/i/i/
Say /i/. How is your mouth shaped as you say /i/? It is open, my lips are forward and relaxed. My tongue is curled against my teeth in the back.
Compare /ē/ and /i/. Is your tongue in the same place? yes
What changes? The lips are pulled back further with /ē/, and they relax to say /i/. 
Phonograms and Handwriting
(Choose Cursive or Manuscript)

• Students needing handwriting instruction should learn cursive or manuscript with The Rhythm of Handwriting. Each pre-lesson prompts you which Rhythm of Handwriting lessons to teach.

• Students needing to learn only the phonogram sounds may skip the handwriting instruction but they should still write each letter as part of mastering the sounds.

• The order of introduction for handwriting is based upon the initial stroke needed to form each phonogram. By learning all the phonograms that begin with the same stroke, students develop the needed muscle memory more quickly. This is also the reason that the Cursive and Manuscript lessons teach the phonograms in a different order.

• Students begin by learning the lowercase letters because they represent 95% of all we read and write. Uppercase is only used for proper nouns and the beginning of sentences.

• Use the following paragraphs to teach cursive handwriting or skip to the Manuscript section on p.52. Then do the final section, Phonogram Practice, with all students.

Cursive

Paper Position and Line Names

• Position the LOE Whiteboard straight in front of the student. Ask the student to make sweeping curves on the whiteboard by opening and closing his elbow. Notice that the curve does not line up with the lines on the whiteboard. Erase the whiteboard. Ask the student to tilt the whiteboard at the angle needed to match the lines to the natural curve made by opening and closing the elbow. The whiteboard should always be positioned at this angle for writing. (The whiteboard will be tilted the opposite direction for left handed students.) Reposition the whiteboard straight in front of the student. Ask the student to notice how the shoulder and elbow become cramped when writing on the lines. Contrast this a second time with the tilted angle. It is the tilt of the whiteboard or paper that creates the slant when writing.

• Rhythm of Handwriting Cursive p. 17. Introduce the student to the terms baseline, midline, and top line.
Teaching How to Read and Write a Phonogram

- Introduce the sounds of \[\text{i}\] with the Basic Phonogram Flash Card.
- Show the Tactile Card \[\text{i}\]. Ask the student to compare and contrast how the phonogram is written in bookface vs. cursive. Discuss the connector strokes and how it is easier to write connected letters. Demonstrate how to tilt the Tactile Card at an angle for writing.
- Demonstrate how to write \[\text{i}\] using the Tactile Card and the full instructions, ending with the sounds.
  
  \[
  \text{Start at the baseline, swing up to the midline, down to the baseline, pick up your pencil, dot } /\text{i}-\text{i}-\text{è}-\text{y}/. 
  \]

- The student repeats the instructions while tracing the phonogram.
  
  \[
  \text{Start at the baseline, swing up to the midline, down to the baseline, pick up your pencil, dot } /\text{i}-\text{i}-\text{è}-\text{y}/. 
  \]

- Demonstrate how to write \[\text{i}\] while saying the bold, rhythmic directions, followed by the sounds.
  
  \[
  \text{Swing. Down. Dot. } /\text{i}-\text{i}-\text{è}-\text{y}/. 
  \]

- The student traces the phonogram as many times as needed while saying:
  
  \[
  \text{Swing. Down. Dot. } /\text{i}-\text{i}-\text{è}-\text{y}/. 
  \]

- The student writes the phonogram using his pointer finger on the LOE Whiteboard while saying:
  
  \[
  \text{Swing. Down. Dot. } /\text{i}-\text{i}-\text{è}-\text{y}/. 
  \]

- The student writes the phonogram five times using a whiteboard marker on the LOE Whiteboard while saying:
  
  \[
  \text{Swing. Down. Dot. } /\text{i}-\text{i}-\text{è}-\text{y}/. 
  \]

- Continue with \[\text{t}, \text{u}, \text{and s}\], following the same steps. Use the full instructions and the bold rhythmic instructions that are found in \text{Rhythm of Handwriting Cursive} p. 22, 25.

Independent Work

- \text{Rhythm of Handwriting Cursive} p. 23 – Ask the student to write the phonogram four times on each size of lines. Then ask:
  
  Which size is the easiest for you?
  Which size looks the best?
  What size is your favorite line size?

- \text{Rhythm of Handwriting Cursive} p. 24, 26, 27 – The student writes each phonogram on his favorite line size ten times while saying the bold directions and the sounds.

- Ask the student to circle the neatest letters.

Teacher Tip

Mastery

Repeat each step until the student demonstrates mastery.

Teacher Tip

Left-Handed Students

- The whiteboard is tilted the opposite direction for left-handed students. Otherwise, all other aspects of writing are the same.
- Left-handed students may prefer using whiteboard crayons instead of markers. They do not wipe off as easily as the hand moves across the board.
Paper Position and Line Names

- Position the LOE Whiteboard straight in front of the student. Ask the student to make sweeping curves on the whiteboard by opening and closing his elbow. Notice that the curve does not line up with the lines on the whiteboard. Erase the whiteboard. Ask the student to tilt the whiteboard at the angle needed to match the lines to the natural curve made by opening and closing the elbow. This is the angle the whiteboard should be positioned while writing. (The whiteboard will be tilted the opposite direction for left handed students.) Reposition the whiteboard straight in front of the student. Ask the student to notice how the shoulder and elbow become cramped when writing on the lines. Contrast this a second time with the whiteboard tilted. It is the tilt of the whiteboard or paper that creates the slant when writing.

- *Rhythm of Handwriting Manuscript* p. 13. Introduce the student to the terms baseline, midline, and top line.

Teaching How to Read and Write a Phonogram

- Introduce the sounds of \( \overline{i} \) with the Basic Phonogram Flash Card.
- Show the Tactile Card \( \overline{i} \). Ask the student to compare and contrast how the phonogram is written in bookface vs. manuscript. Discuss how tilting the paper to make words flow naturally along the lines also causes the letters to be naturally slanted.
- Demonstrate how to write \( \overline{i} \) using the Tactile Card and the full instructions, ending with the sounds.
  
  Start at the midline, straight to the baseline, pick up the pencil, dot. /i-i-ě-y/.

- The student repeats the instructions while tracing the phonogram.
  
  *Start at the midline, straight to the baseline, pick up the pencil, dot. /i-i-ě-y/**.

- Demonstrate how to write \( \overline{i} \) while saying the bold, rhythmic directions, followed by the sounds.
  
  Start at the midline. Straight. Dot. /i-i-ě-y/.

- The student traces the phonogram as many times as needed while saying:
  
  *Start at the midline. Straight. Dot. /i-i-ě-y/**.
• The student writes the phonogram using his pointer finger on the LOE Whiteboard while saying:
  *Start at the midline. Straight. Dot. /ĭ-ĕ-ĕ-y/.*

• The student writes the phonogram five times using a whiteboard marker on the LOE Whiteboard while saying:
  *Start at the midline. Straight. Dot. /ĭ-ĕ-ĕ-y/.*

• Continue with היסטוריה [t r l], following the same steps. Use the full instructions and the bold rhythmic instructions that are found in *Rhythm of Handwriting Manuscript* p. 18, 21.

**Independent Work**

• *Rhythm of Handwriting Manuscript* p. 19 – Ask the student to write the phonogram four times on each size of lines. Then ask:
  Which size is the easiest for you?
  Which size looks the best?
  What size is your favorite line size?

• *Rhythm of Handwriting Manuscript* p. 20, 22, 23 – The student writes each phonogram on his favorite line size ten times while saying the bold directions and the sounds.

• Ask the student to circle the neatest letters.

**Phonogram Practice**

• Practice reading the phonograms using the Basic Phonogram Flash Cards.

• Say a phonogram’s sound(s). Ask the student to write it on the whiteboard.

**Materials Needed**

Basic Phonogram Flash Cards taught so far