

# Reading Foundations Skills Glossary

**Affix:** a morpheme attached to the beginning or end of a baseword to modify its meaning.  
Example: “im” in “impossible”, “ing” in “jumping”.

**Articulatory Gestures:** Mouth movements necessary to enunciate sounds in language.

**Automaticity of Words from Memory:** The ability to recognize the pronunciations and meanings of written words immediately upon seeing them without expending any attention or effort decoding the words.

**Base Word:** The root part of a word in which the base element or basic meaning is contained.  
Example: “possible” in “impossible”, “jump” in “jumping”.

**Decode:** The ability to apply knowledge of letter-sound relationships in reading.

**Digraph:** Two letters used to represent one phoneme. Example: “sh” or “ea”.

**Encode:** Ability to apply knowledge of letter-sound relationships in writing.

**Grapheme:** A letter or a number of letters that represent a sound (phoneme) in a word. Another way to explain it is to say that a grapheme is a letter or letters that spell a sound in a word. Some written scripts are simple in which one letter usually represents one sound.

**Graphophonic Cues:** These involve the letter-sound or sound-symbol relationships of language. Readers identifying unknown words by relating speech sounds to letters or letter patterns are using graphophonic cues. This process is often called *decoding*.

**Graphophonemic Knowledge:** The recognition of letters and the understanding of sound-symbol relationships and spelling patterns. Note: Graphophonemic knowledge is often referred to as *phonics*.

**Graphophonological Relationships:** The ability to match letters (graphemes) and sounds (phonemes).

**Letter Identification:** The ability to name a letter in two forms: uppercase and lowercase, as well as the ability to recognize letters both in isolation and within a word.

**Morpheme:** The smallest grammatical units of a language, each constituting a word or meaningful part of a word that cannot be divided into smaller independent grammatical parts. Example: “unfruitful” has three morphemes, the affixes “un” and “ful” and the baseword “fruit”.

**Phoneme:** Any of the perceptually distinct units of sound in a specified language that distinguish one word from another, for example /p/, /b/, /d/, and /t/ in the English words *pad*, *pat*, *bad*, and *bat*.

**Phoneme segmentation:** The ability to break words down into individual sounds.

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**Phonics:** A method of teaching reading by correlating sounds with letters or groups of letters in an alphabetic writing system.

**Phonological Awareness-Phonemes:** The ability to recognize that words are made up of units of sound (called phonemes) and the ability to manipulate phonemes (segment, delete, substitute, blend).

**Phonological Awareness-Syllables:** The ability to recognize that words can be divided into syllables, to segment and blend syllables in multisyllabic words, and to identify syllable type.

**Plural:** More than one.

**Possessive:** Shows ownership

- Singular possessive: adds an 's, belonging to one person or animal
- Plural possessive: adds an s', belonging to a group of people or animals
- Possessive personal pronouns: no apostrophe (his, hers, yours)

**Prefix:** An affix placed at beginning of base word. Example: "un" in "unkind".

**R-controlled:** Any vowel followed by r.

**Salient Sound:** The most noticeable or strongest sound in a word.

**Schwa:** a vowel sound typically occurring in unstressed syllables in English. Example: "alone". The "a" in "alone" is an unstressed syllable and makes a schwa sound (in this case pronounced /u/). The symbol for this sound is /ə/.

**Suffix:** An affix placed at end of the base word; changes the part of speech (educate, educator, education, educated)

**Syllable:** an individual beat in a word containing a vowel sound." For example, the word "moment" contains two syllables (or beats), each with it's own vowel sound; "mo" and "ment".

**Syllable Types:**

- **Closed:** syllable with a single vowel followed by one or more consonants (vowel sound is "closed" by the consonant.) Note: Vowel is usually short. Examples: cab, dog, in, dish, letter
- **Open:** syllable that ends with a single vowel (vowel is not closed by a consonant; it is left open.) Note: Vowel is usually long. Examples: hi, me, go, sky
- **V-C-e:** syllable with a single vowel followed by a consonant, then the vowel e. First vowel is usually long and final e in the syllable is silent. Examples: bike, skate, note, close
- **V-r:** (ar, er, ir, ur, or): syllable with one or two vowels followed by the letter r. The r influences or controls the vowel sound. Examples: car, her, for, dollar
- **Vowel Teams:** (oa, ue, ai, ea, ie, ay, a/ew, oo): syllable that has two consecutive vowels. Note: The letters w and y act as vowels. Examples: long vowel teams (meat, road, mail, say); variant vowel teams (amount, look, paw)
- **C-le (al, el):** syllable that has a consonant followed by the letters le, al, or el. The vowel sound in this syllable type is the schwa (/ə/).

**Vowel Diphthongs:** Two or more letters that begin with one vowel phoneme (sound) and glide into another (**ouch**, **point**).

**Vowel Team:** Any vowel or letter combination that equals a vowel sound.