

# ExWyZee Remedial Reading

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## Treating the Phoneme Blending Deficit

Parents of reading-impaired students: ExWyZee advisories give you some guidance for providing your own home-grown remedial work on deficits in reading basics, or for using the ExWyZee Computer Program to provide it.

The Phoneme Blending Deficit: Letter-sounds are called phonemes. This advisory deals with the Phoneme Blending Deficit, a basic-skills deficit seen in most reading impaired students in grades 1-3, and seen in many above grade three. A student suffering from the Phoneme Blending Deficit has difficulty smoothly blending two letter-sounds. Given the letter-pair mo to sound out, you will hear mmm-oh, instead of mo-as-in-motel. For the letter-pair fe, you will hear the separate sounds fff-ee, instead of fe-as-in-female.

There is no phonics skill more basic and more vital than the ability to blend letter sounds. A student who can't quickly and subconsciously blend two letter-sounds is going to have difficulty sounding out words that call for blending the phonemes in 3-letter, 4-letter, and 5-letter combinations.

It's not complicated to diagnose the Phoneme Blending Deficit. Make a column of a dozen letter-pairs (fa, iv, ti, etc). Direct your student to sound out each pair, and see, for example, if she:

- \*reads the letter-pair fa as 2 sounds, fff-aaa, instead of blending the sounds as in father, fat, fate, or fall.
- \*reads the letter-pair iv as 2 sounds, i-va, instead of blending the sounds as in ivory or livery.
- \*reads ti as 2 sounds, tuh-i, instead of saying ti-as-in-tin, or ti-as-in-tine.

Think about a student who sounds out the letter pair fa as fff-aaa, says ti as tuh-iii, and says ma as mmm-aaa. That student is not likely to smoothly sound out the word Fatima. And to correct this deficit only as the student is trying to sound out whole words is like dealing with a multiplication-fact deficit as a student is trying to do 674 x 583.

If you see an indication of this deficit, the next thing is to see that the student knows what you expect to hear for blending letter sounds. An effective procedure for that is to do audio-therapy thumbs-up drills. You read letter-pairs aloud, blending some pairs correctly, some incorrectly, and you direct the student to give you thumbs-up when you blend correctly or thumbs-down when you blend incorrectly.

For most students it's not necessary to drill on single letter-pairs. You can present pairs-of- pairs (zo mi), have the student sound each letter-pair separately (zo and mi), then blend the 2 pair-sounds into one pseudo-word (zomi). Some students don't fully understand what is expected, and need the audio therapy. They need to hear you

blend the sounds, and then to say the sounds themselves. And some need to hear the contrast between correct and incorrect blending of sounds. Tell your student to give you thumbs-up when you blend sounds correctly, and thumbs-down when you blend incorrectly.

You can make your own home-grown exercises for Phoneme Blending. Just write sets of 10 letter-pairs on a tablet, (ti fo, ud la, ab ca, zo ma, ma zo, etc.) and provide 15 minutes per day on blending drills.

Advisory to come: Making the transition from sounding out words letter-by-letter to Decoding By Parts. Eg: Attacking Fatima as fa-ti-ma or fat-ima or fati-ma or fa-tima.

The ExWyZee Remedial Reading Program.  
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