

# Common Causes of Phonics Instructional Failure

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## An inadequate or nonexistent review and repetition cycle.

Focus on mastery rather than just exposure.  
Extend repetition cycles to 4-6 weeks.

## Inappropriate reading materials to practice skills.

Ensure decodable texts are an essential part of each day's phonics lessons.

## Losing time in transitions.

Avoid wasting time distributing and collecting materials for Phonics lessons. Plan for review or other instructional opportunities during these times.

## Inappropriate pacing.

Teach fast-paced and engaging lessons with high-impact activities.

## No comprehensive or cumulative mastery assessment tools.

Assess for mastery over time and use comprehensive assessment tools to place students along a phonics continuum.

## Lack of application to real reading and writing experiences.

Encourage students to apply their growing phonics skills to reading and writing daily using texts with ample decodable words.

## Ineffective use of the gradual release model.



Use a weekly dictation or guided spelling exercises to help students use and transfer their phonics skills to written words, sentences, and stories.

## Limited teacher knowledge of research-based phonics routines and linguistics.

Strong teacher capacity around phonics and linguistics, is crucial to increase student learning.



## Transitioning to multisyllabic words too late.

Place emphasis on the transitioning to multisyllabic words as students enter grade 2.

## Overdoing it (especially in isolated skills work).

Give equal attention to phonics and building vocabulary and content knowledge.