

## Just Words® Lesson Activities: Alignment to the Science of Reading

The Science of Reading (SoR) is a compilation of evidence from a comprehensive and still-growing body of research that consists of tens of thousands of studies about teaching and learning reading. These studies have taken place over the last 40+ years, in multiple countries and languages. To put it simply, the Science of Reading shows us what works in reading instruction. That entails using a Structured Literacy approach, which is effective for all students but especially beneficial for those who struggle. The Just Words® program follows such an approach.

Just Words is grounded in the Science of Reading. It supports students who have not mastered the foundational skills of language structure typically learned in grades K–3 with strategies that will allow them to independently read and spell words and build the skills necessary to access and master grade-level standards. Outlined below are the Just Words lesson activities, the rationale behind those activities (i.e., why we do them), and the research citations that support that rationale (i.e., why they work).

Just Words Lesson Activity	Lesson Activity Description	Research Rationale (i.e., why we do this Lesson Activity)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Dictation/Check-Up</b></li> <li>• <b>Dictation/Composition Book</b></li> <li>• <b>Dictation/Dry Erase</b></li> </ul> <p>Instructor Manual, pp. 30-31</p>	<p>The teacher dictates sounds, single-syllable or multisyllabic words, words with spelling options, high frequency words, phrases, or sentences.</p> <p>Students repeat the sound, word, phrase, or sentence and then write it on their Dry Erase Tablets or in their Student Composition Books.</p> <p>For sounds: at least one student names the corresponding letter.</p> <p>For single-syllable words: students tap the word and spell it aloud chorally after writing it but before proofreading and marking it up independently.</p>	<p>This activity develops the alphabetic principle, phonological awareness at the phonemic level (phoneme segmentation), automatic word recognition, independent spelling, auditory memory for words, and sentence proofreading skills while reinforcing students’ understanding of word structure.</p> <p>Orthographic mapping of print to sounds contributes to fluent reading and accurate spelling; spelling perhaps has the greater impact on the</p>

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	<p>For multisyllabic words: students orally segment and name syllables, touch the syllable frames when using Dry Erase Tablets, and name syllables again while spelling and writing them in the Syllable Frames printed on their Dry Erase Tablets. Students immediately read the word back, scooping syllables from left to right (and circling the suffix if required) to proofread their work. Lastly, they mark up the word.</p> <p>For words with spelling options: students tap individual sounds to help isolate and identify spelling options. They write the word, leaving an empty box for the option, write out possible spelling options (the entire word), and name letters. One student uses a spell checker or dictionary to find the correct spelling and all students write the correct letter(s) in the empty box. They proofread and mark up the words.</p> <p>For multisyllabic words with an option: After students repeat the entire word, they name each syllable and follow spelling option procedures for the syllable that contains spelling options.</p> <p>For high frequency words: Students orally spell and write the high frequency/sight word with a finger on their desks, then say the whole word before writing it on their Dry Erase Tablets or in their Composition Books, naming letters and saying words as they write. Students reference their Student Notebooks to make corrections and check the spelling of high frequency words. Students spell the word aloud, chorally.</p> <p>For phrases: Students write the phrase on their Dry Erase Tablets or in their Student Composition Books independently. They check their work for capitalization of proper nouns and circle high frequency words, using their Student Notebooks (as needed) to confirm correct spelling. Students proofread phonetic words by tapping sounds and scooping multisyllabic words and finally re-read the entire phrase aloud while scooping with a finger, pencil, or marker.</p>	<p>quality of the stored orthographic representation for reading (Perfetti, 2007).</p> <p>Addressing phonemic awareness as part of decoding instruction is beneficial for all students, including older students who are still developing word recognition skills that involve decoding and spelling words (Paige et al., 2023).</p> <p>There is strong and consistent research support for teaching spelling explicitly that leads to improvements in spelling, reading, and writing (Graham &amp; Santangelo, 2014).</p> <p>Reviewing students' writing in response to sentence dictation allows teachers to assess development of spelling and other writing mechanics. Effective spelling instruction explicitly teaches students sound-spelling patterns, and therefore, an assessment of students' spelling skills can help teachers to understand students' grasp of sound-spelling patterns (Joshi et al., 2008).</p>

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	<p>For sentences: Students work independently to write the sentence in their Composition Books and the teacher directs them to phrase and proofread the sentence.</p>	
<p><b>High Frequency Words</b> Instructor Manual, p. 32</p>	<p>The teacher presents a high frequency word on a flashcard to students. Students read it back and identify phonetically regular parts of the word, and the teacher explains any tricky parts of the word. The teacher uses questioning to guide students to identify the part(s) that have an unexpected or unknown sound. Students then write the word using two fingers on their desktops, spelling the word aloud, and saying the whole word after writing it. Students check their pretests in their Student Challenge Books to determine if they misspelled any words against their pretests and circle any mistakes.</p>	<p>This activity provides practice for automatic recognition and orthographic mapping (related to the phonetic part of high frequency words).</p> <p>Less-skilled readers improve reading rates when they read texts with a greater percentage of known high frequency words and decodable words (Compton, Appleton, &amp; Hosp, 2004; Hiebert &amp; Fisher, 2007).</p> <p>"Word recognition is developed through mastery of three strands of spoken and written language: phonological awareness, decoding and encoding, and sight recognition of high-utility words that are more difficult to decode" (Fisher &amp; Frey, 2020, p. 76).</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Just Start! Apply Concepts</b></li> <li>• <b>Just Start! Demonstration Words</b></li> <li>• <b>Just Start! High Frequency Words</b></li> </ul> <p>*Standard activity procedures are not provided. For an example from a Unit, see the Instructor Manual, p. 58.</p>	<p>Upon arrival, students get their materials and view the daily Just Start! activity on the board. They complete the Just Start! activity for the first 5 minutes of class every day.</p>	<p>This activity allows students to independently complete a five-minute task related to the lesson at hand. Just Start! activities activate prior knowledge and prepare students for the day.</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Phrase It/Practice</b></li> <li>• <b>Phrase It/Story</b></li> </ul> <p>Instructor Manual, p. 33</p>	<p><i>Phrase It/Practice</i></p> <p>The teacher selects individuals or has the class read chorally. Students first read only bold words for single-word identification decoding practice. Students read phrases, scooping with a finger. The teacher asks concept questions from Unit content, such as, “Can you find some digraphs?” The teacher asks students to select a phrase and generate a complete sentence. The teacher writes one or two student sentences on the board and asks, “What’s the Scoop?” Students scoop sentences into meaningful phrases while reading aloud, and phrasing is discussed as needed. Students mark bold words as indicated while the teacher circulates and checks work.</p> <p><i>Phrase It/Story</i></p> <p>The teacher has students read the Unit story from their Student Challenge Books and follows the “What’s the Scoop?” routine. The teacher and students do this together until students can work independently.</p> <p>If the phrases are scooped independently, the teacher selects individuals to read orally while scooping with a finger. If the phrases are scooped together, the class reads chorally.</p> <p>The teacher has students visualize and replay to prepare retelling. The teacher has students retell the passage, using visualization as a guide.</p>	<p>This activity develops automaticity of single word reading, phrase fluency, and understanding by helping students to identify and read meaningful phrases. It also reinforces word usage by constructing meaningful sentences, visualization, and retelling.</p> <p>Evidence suggests that prosodic reading facilitates reading comprehension (Arcand et al., 2014); thus, it is worthwhile to teach students how to chunk text into meaningful phrases and to pause appropriately for punctuation.</p>

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<p><b>Progress Check</b></p> <p>Instructor Manual, p. 34</p>	<p>The teacher conducts the Progress Check at the beginning of each Unit. They then dictate phrases which students repeat and then write down in their Challenge Books. After the teacher dictates all the phrases, they read them aloud again as students proofread and fix their work. Students then circle the high frequency words, underline phonetic words, and tally up the number they got correct for each. Finally, students graph their progress in the My Progress section of their Student Challenge Books.</p>	<p>This activity measures the rate of improvement in the curriculum over a period of time. It helps the teacher identify when instructional modifications may be necessary.</p> <p>Teachers' use of curriculum-based measures or other forms of monitoring progress support instructional decision-making and lead to student gains (Stecker et al., 2005).</p>

Just Words Lesson Activity	Lesson Activity Description	Research Rationale (i.e., why we do this Lesson Activity)
<p><b>Students Build Words (Warm-Up/Echo Sounds and Words)</b></p> <p>Instructor Manual, p. 35</p>	<p><i>Warm-Up/Echo Sounds</i> The teacher dictates a sound and students repeat and point to the corresponding Letter Tile(s). At least one student names letter(s). One student can model with Sound Cards at the front of the room.</p> <p><i>Words (Single Syllable)</i> The teacher dictates a word and students repeat and tap the word (tapping as needed). Students build the word with Letter Tiles and all students say and spell the word aloud.</p> <p><i>Words (Spelling Option)</i> The teacher follows the above procedures. However, if a syllable has a spelling option, students use a blank tile to represent the sound with more than one spelling option. Students identify the options and place those tiles below the blank. Students try each option to see if the correct spelling is recognized. Then, they look up the word in a dictionary or spell checker. Once the correct spelling is determined, students replace the blank tile with the correct tile and spell the word orally.</p> <p><i>Words (Multisyllabic)</i> The teacher dictates a word and students repeat the word. Students name one syllable at a time while pointing to the syllable frames on their Dry Erase Tablets. Students name the syllables again, one at a time, and build the syllable in the frame with the Letter Tile(s) or blank tiles, while saying the letters. Students read the word again while scooping the syllables.</p> <p><i>Words (Within Suffix)</i> When building words, students should echo the word, isolate the base word, spell the base word (using procedures outlined above), and then add the suffix.</p>	<p>This activity develops students’ phoneme segmentation skills and automatic association of sounds to letters for spelling and additionally develops the application of spelling rules of English orthography.</p> <p>A meta-analysis conducted by Graham and Santangelo (2014) demonstrated strong support for the direct and explicit instruction of spelling as it improved spelling performance, phonological awareness, and reading skills.</p> <p>Additionally, there is a reciprocal connection between spelling ability and reading words; thus, spelling instruction facilitates word reading and fluency (Graham &amp; Hebert, 2010; Reed, 2012).</p> <p>When children encounter words that contain irregular or unexpected letters, it may interfere with decoding accuracy but not with sight word learning. Because most phonemes are spelled regularly, grapheme-phoneme connects can be formed to bond spellings to pronunciations in memory just as they are with regularly spelled words. This process of linking graphemes with phonemes, orthographic mapping, aids in sight word reading of irregular words (Ehri, 2020).</p>

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<p><b>Teacher Builds Words</b></p> <p>Instructor Manual, p. 37</p>	<p>Throughout the Just Words program, the teacher teaches concepts with cards. At the beginning of the program, they use Sound Cards. As they progress, they also use Suffix and Syllable Frames.</p> <p>The teacher makes a new word with cards and/or frames. They then explain the word structure, and teach students how to tap it out, divide it, and so on.</p> <p>The teacher makes additional words and discusses them with the class. Students read each word; they tap one-syllable words or scoop multisyllabic words and circle the suffix(es) as needed.</p> <p>The teacher discusses an example of each new concept, but then makes several words for students to decode without discussing. They make nonsense words as directed.</p>	<p>This activity teaches word structure by presenting words in segmented form. The teacher makes words with cards to teach word structure. This activity also helps with review of word structure and allows for practice decoding words with specific patterns.</p> <p>Kearns &amp; Whaley (2019) draw on research in their recommendation to support students’ abilities to read longer words by teaching syllables and affixes and helping students know how to identify and recognize them in unfamiliar words.</p>
<p><b>Teach New Sounds</b></p> <p>Instructor Manual, p. 36</p>	<p>The teacher presents the Sound Card to the students and tells them the name of the letter(s), the keyword, and the sound that the keyword represents.</p> <p>Students repeat, saying letter name-keyword-sound. They then add the keyword picture, as directed, to the Sounds section of their Student Notebooks.</p>	<p>This activity introduces students to the letter name and sound association with the help of a keyword picture. It also provides a foundation for phoneme segmentation and spelling.</p> <p>The use of mnemonics such as pairing letter names and sounds with keywords and pictures helps students learn letter-sound associations (Ehri, 2021).</p>



Just Words Lesson Activity	Lesson Activity Description	Research Rationale (i.e., why we do this Lesson Activity)
<p><b>Teach Spelling</b></p> <p>*Standard activity procedures are not provided. For an example from a Unit, see the Instructor Manual, p. 57.</p>	<p>Spelling is taught through Students Build Words (Warm-Up/Echo Sounds and Echo/Find Words). See the activity procedure above for this activity.</p>	<p>This activity introduces a new spelling concept.</p> <p>“An extensive and evolving body of research shows that direct and explicit spelling and handwriting instruction is required if all students are to master the mechanics of reading and writing” (Gentry &amp; Graham, 2010, p. 2).</p> <p>Spelling is one of the foundational skills to teach. It is related to and dependent on knowledge of the English language, meaning, pronunciation, and word origins (Moats, 2020).</p>

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<p><b>Unit Dictation Test/Chart Phrases</b></p> <p>Instructor Manual, p. 38</p>	<p>Students find the Unit Test pages in their Student Challenge Books. The teacher dictates sounds and words. Students repeat and write independently without using their Student Notebooks. Students mark up words as indicated.</p> <p>Next, the teacher dictates phrases and sentences (with prosody and phrasing). Students repeat, write, and proofread the phrases and sentences. Sentences are also scooped into phrases for meaning.</p> <p>The teacher reads the bold high frequency words in the phrases and sentences, and students circle the words using the red side of their Just Words Blue and Red Pencil.</p> <p>The teacher reads the italicized words in phrases and sentences. Students underline the italicized words to identify them as phonetic words using the blue side of their Just Words Blue and Red Pencil.</p> <p>The teacher meets with students individually to score their tests while other students work independently to proofread their tests, mark up phrases, and complete any unfinished activities and Unit work.</p> <p>For words with spelling options (Units 7, 9-14), students write out the options and circle their first choice. The teacher conferences with students individually. The student uses the spell checker or dictionary to check any word that has options. Words are counted as correct as long as the options are written out, even if the student did not circle that word.</p>	<p>This activity assesses mastery of Unit concepts. It also presents teachers with an opportunity to discuss each student’s understanding of the concepts and review progress during individual meetings.</p> <p>Providing opportunities for students to practice spelling words without relying on scaffolds or resources allows the teacher to determine if students are developing orthographic mapping skills and storing the spellings for later retrieval.</p> <p><b>Orthographic mapping</b> depends on letter-sound associations to connect spellings, pronunciations, and meanings and commit these to memory for automatic sight word reading and spelling (Ehri, 2014).</p> <p>Researchers found that reaching a level of mastery at 80% requires substantial repeated <b>practice</b> and noted that about seven practice opportunities were typical to achieve this level (Koedinger et al., 2023).</p>

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<p><b>Warm-Up/Drill Sounds</b></p> <p>Instructor Manual, p. 39</p>	<p>The teacher (or student Drill Leader) points to a Sound Card and says letter-keyword-sound for vowels, new sounds, and trouble spots. They say letter-sound for all other sounds.</p> <p>Students repeat, or the teacher selects an individual to respond.</p> <p>Vowels and any new or challenging sounds are practiced. Other sounds are selectively reviewed. The teacher can model as the Drill Leader. The teacher can assess a student's level of mastery and fluency with sounds when assigning a Student as the Drill Leader.</p>	<p>This activity reinforces the alphabetic principle of letter-sound associations and allows students an opportunity to warm up for each lesson by practicing the letters, keywords, and sounds they have learned. It also develops quick and automatic letter naming and production of sounds for decoding.</p>
<p><b>Warm-Up/Flashcard Review</b></p> <p>Instructor Manual, p. 40</p>	<p>The teacher presents the High Frequency Word Flashcards and students read them quickly.</p> <p>As words are mastered for both reading and spelling, the teacher eliminates them from this drill.</p> <p>The teacher presents Prefix and Root flashcards for review (after Bonus Unit I) and discusses the meaning of some of them.</p>	<p>This activity develops automatic recognition of high frequency words, Latin roots, and prefixes. Students also master the meaning of Latin roots and affixes.</p> <p>The ability to recognize words and word parts accurately and automatically requires practice and is necessary for reading multisyllabic words (Toste et al., 2017).</p> <p>Further, research suggests that knowledge of roots and meanings of derived words and knowing how to generate morphologically related words for a specific word support vocabulary knowledge. Knowing words within morphological families supports general vocabulary knowledge (Goodwin et al., 2017).</p>

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<p><b>Word Talk</b></p> <p>Instructor Manual, p. 41</p>	<p>Students quickly read the accumulated stack of Word Cards without tapping. The teacher selects 1-2 cards and asks a student to use the word(s) in a sentence. The teacher asks another student to explain what the word means.</p> <p>The teacher displays several Word Cards. The students find, read, and/or mark up as directed on various days in each Unit.</p>	<p>This activity reviews word structure and meaning of current and review Unit words. It also helps develop automatic recognition of words and vocabulary.</p> <p>Automaticity for word recognition is built through decoding instruction and repeated practice which are fundamental to building fluency. Fluent reading (accuracy, prosody, and rate) ultimately has an impact on comprehension and motivation to read (Hasbrouck &amp; Glaser, 2012).</p> <p>There is research evidence to support the contribution of word-level knowledge (word forms and meaning) to word meaning processes in comprehension (Perfetti, 2007). Helping students focus on both aspects of word knowledge may be valuable for reading comprehension.</p>

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