

## Literacy Plus Newsletter

# Reading Fun with Common Vowel Graphemes



### Newsletter articles:

- Reading Fun with 29 Commonest Vowel Graphemes
- Microsteps Empower Learning : Manage Cognitive Load & Keep Confidence High
- Easy Progress Monitoring with 30 Second Efficiency Tests
- Maximise Statistical Learning: Reduce Confusion Then Give Lots of Practice

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## Hello keen literacy educators,

**This newsletter's topic is Reading Fun with Common Vowel Graphemes.**

In Australia and other Anglophone nations, it's a very big job for kids to master word reading of words and syllables containing the many different vowel spelling patterns of English words.

English vowels are the hard part of word reading development because lots of words don't use their vowel's commonest, 'regular,' spelling pattern. Just listen to the different vowel sounds in these word pairs: was/has, come/home, ball/bat, fast/fat.

Fortunately, 29 frequently occurring vowel graphemes are quite regular. It's powerful for kids to be skilled at these vowels and reading and writing words containing them (vowel words). Effective teaching of these vowels and vowel words is the focus of this newsletter.

Kids' learning needs differ greatly. Advanced readers often need only a brief introduction to vowels to be able to use them effectively. Average readers benefit from fun games and practice with vowel words. Weak word readers need strategic skilful word reading instruction with lots of practice and careful monitoring of skill development.

Learning to read English vowels correctly has high cognitive load. This makes it harder for weak readers to master vowels and easier for them to forget them. Weak readers' vowel learning can break down at four learning stages: Initial Learning, Mastery & Automaticity, Maintenance, and Generalisation. Careful instruction builds confident effective skills and avoids these learning breakdowns.

The articles for this newsletter focus on effective teaching of vowels and vowel word reading. So do our free downloads: two R Vowels Postergames, a poem on avoiding learning breakdowns, the Galletly Diagnostic Vowel Word Reading Tests and the full teaching materials for R Vowels (Ch6).

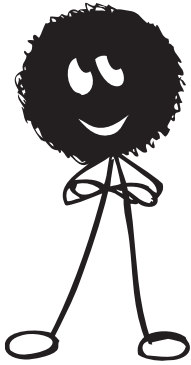
Susan Galletly  
BSPThy GradDipTeach MEd PhD.

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# Reading Fun with 29 Commonest Vowel Graphemes



Check out the 29 Commonest Vowels video on the Literacy Plus website for easy explanations of these vowels. It's a very useful video for children, parents and colleagues.



Five vowel letters plus three consonant 'vowel friends' (y r w) make our 29 commonest written vowels.

- One-letter vowels:  
a e i o u and sometimes y
- Two-letter vowels, of two types:
  - Vowel + Vowel (VV)  
e.g., i-e oa ie ai oo
  - Vowel + Consonant Friend (VC)  
e.g., ar aw ay

Check out the 29 vowel graphemes on the following page. They're in a logical order for introducing and teaching vowel skills.

Kids benefit greatly by knowing these vowels well: knowing not just each vowel's sound and being able to read and write words with it (that's Cognition), but also knowing the vowel's group, rules or slogans about the vowel, other vowels that say the same sound, and so on... that's Metacognition! Metacognition gives vowels personality, making them easier to remember.

Literacy Plus lists metacognition points

when introducing vowels in their vowel groups. We also give some vowels catchy titles, such as Bossy-e and Chookoo Cuckoo, and catchy slogans and explanations, e.g., the sound of R Vowels er ir ur is the sound in 'sir', the 'soldier' sound, with a saluting action used as a hint when helping children to learn the sound of er ir ur.

Literacy Plus chapter names show the vowel groups which are successively introduced:

**Sounds & Vowels teaches 10 vowels:**

- Section B: a-e-i-o-u
- Section C: Bossy-e vowels
- Section D: a-e-i-o-u with Consonant Blends

When kids can read words and syllables using vowel words with Sounds & Vowels' ten vowels, there are hundreds of words they can read and write, and book reading becomes steadily easier.

**Two Vowels Talking teaches 19 vowels:**

- Ch 3: Cry Baby Y
- Ch 4: When Two Vowels Go Out Walking (ai ea ee ie oa)

- Ch 6: R Vowels (ar er ir or ur)
- Ch 8: W Vowels (aw ew ow)
- Ch 9: Rainy Day Oi Boys (ai-ay oi-oy)
- Ch 10: Steadmeat's Two ea Sounds
- Ch 11: OO-Vowels (Chookoo Cuckoo's 2 OO sounds)
- Ch12: OU-Vowels (Ouch Grouch's Pinch Sound OU and its four other infrequent sounds)
- Ch 13: Two Vowel Consolidation: games using all 29 vowels mixed together

While most of the vowels say one sound, some say two – notice their number two. The last vowel taught, OU, actually has five sounds – that's why it's kept till last.

By working thoroughly on each vowel group using a careful progression of vowel microsteps, kids aren't overwhelmed and confused, which makes learning breakdowns less likely. They become increasingly skilled at reading and writing words, and, using Echo Reading (discussed in Newsletter 1), will be able to read and enjoy more and more great books.

**Free Downloads**



**Cow Barn Chaos (real word and pseudoword versions)**

The Literacy Plus R Vowel Postergames



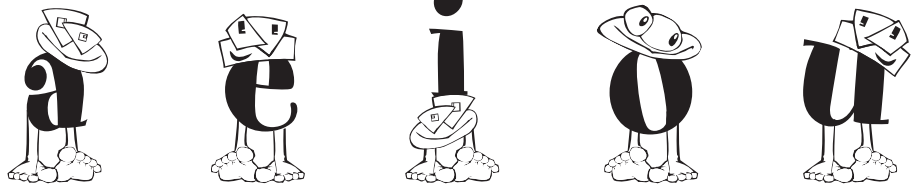
**Powerful games for high instructional intensity (words read per minute):**

You'll be amazed at the high instructional intensity these games provide.

# 29 Vowels For Reading Fun

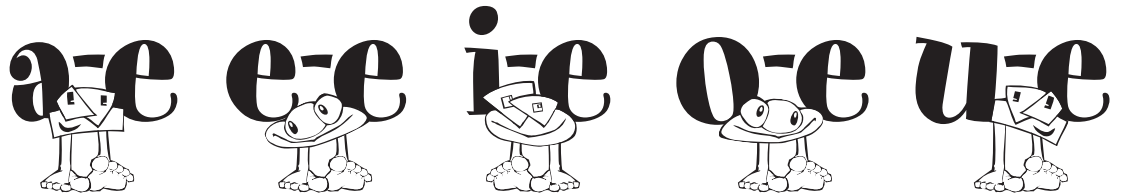
**a e i o u**

Sounds & Vowels: Section B & D



**Bossy-e**

Sounds & Vowels: Section C



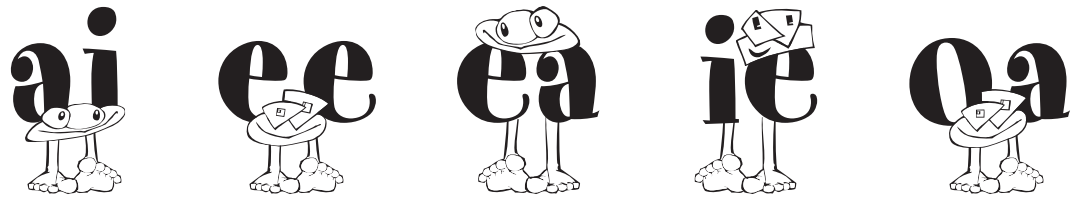
**y**

Two Vowels Talking: Ch 3



**Two Vowels Go Walking**

Two Vowels Talking: Ch 4



**R Vowels**

Two Vowels Talking: Ch 6



**W Vowels**

Two Vowels Talking: Ch 8



**Rainy Day oi Boys**

Two Vowels Talking: Ch 9



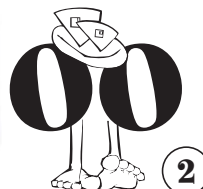
**Steadmeat Deadmeat**

Two Vowels Talking: Ch 10



**Chookoo Cuckoo**

Two Vowels Talking: Ch 11



**Ouch Grouch**

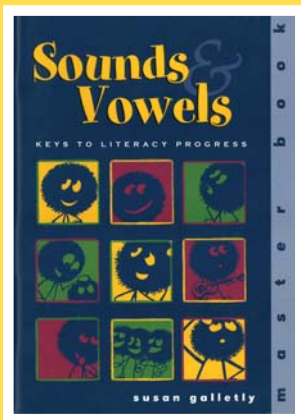
Two Vowels Talking: Ch 12



25% OFF  
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### Sounds & Vowels Value Pack - NOW \$462.75

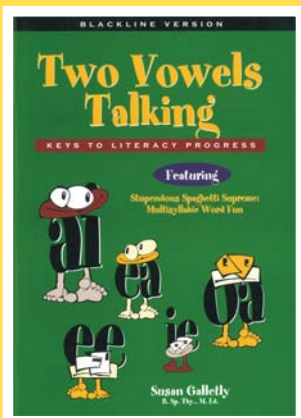
(SAVE \$142.25 off Value Pack and \$342.65 off cost of individual items)



This pack includes the Sounds & Vowels Masterbook, Blackline Student Workbook, Postergames, Wallcharts, Playing Cards and the Literacy Plus CD.

### Two Vowels Talking Value Pack - NOW \$516.75

(SAVE \$172.75 off Value Pack and \$512.75 off cost of individual items)



This pack includes the Two Vowels Talking Blackline Masterbook, Postergames, Playing Cards and the Literacy Plus CD.

Our products are sold through Pro-Ed Australia  
www.proedaust.com.au

Sale ends 01/06/2015

## Microsteps Empower Learning Manage Cognitive Load & Keep Confidence High

Learning to read vowels and vowel words has very high cognitive load. This makes choosing effective learning tasks for at-risk readers a major teaching challenge, because weak word readers have reduced processing capacity, and are easily overwhelmed.

When we manage cognitive load well, kids are not stressed, learn well and make good reading progress.

### It's common for weak readers to have learning breakdowns in four areas of vowel learning:

- **Initial Learning:** struggling to remember vowels being taught.
- **Mastery & Automaticity:** problems building fast effortless reading.
- **Generalisation:** problems reading vowels in lots of different contexts.
- **Maintenance:** problems making permanent memories of learned vowels.

These breakdowns are particularly common in kids with a family history of reading difficulties. These kids are often '*clever at forgetting*' and require very careful teaching. Our free download, *A Poem for Your Pleasure*, explains teaching principles to avoid these breakdowns. It's a great handout for parents and teachers.

### Keys to managing cognitive load effectively include:

- 1 Careful, sequenced teaching, using microsteps to keep cognitive load low.
- 2 Successful engaged learning: the child having lots of success while learning, enjoying learning, and being strongly and actively engaged while learning – never passive.

- 3 Optimal instructional intensity: strategically varying the number of practices per minute of learning time.
- 4 Matching teaching content to the child's level of confidence and skill.

We reduce cognitive load hugely by introducing vowels and vowel words carefully, and using microsteps.

In the table on the next page, you'll see ten microsteps, for effective learning preventing learning breakdowns.

To help you explore microsteps, download free the complete games and teaching section for R Vowels (Two Vowels Talking Ch 6). Use it to reflect on practical examples of what each microstep can look like, using the pages referenced in the microsteps table.

The free Postergames for this newsletter are the R Vowels games, Cow Barn Chaos, real word and pseudoword versions. Play them, noticing and experimenting with microsteps and instructional intensity.

Don't wait for one vowel group to be finalised before moving onto another vowel group. Once words in one vowel group are being confidently read at a Mastery & Automisation level, start teaching the next vowel group.

Kids will often be at different levels for three vowel groups, e.g., simultaneously at Maintenance level for Crybaby Y and Two Vowels Go Walking vowel groups (Ch3-4), at Generalisation and Mastery & Automaticity levels for R Vowels (Ch 6), and at Initial Learning level for W Vowels (Ch 8).

FREE DOWNLOAD



### R Vowels - Chapter 6 of Two Vowels Talking

A complete games and teaching section for exploring microsteps.



Microstep	Activities (using R Vowels as examples, Ch 6, Two Vowels Talking)
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**TEACHING FOR EFFECTIVE EARLY LEARNING:** Early skill development, building familiarity with the new vowel group.

1	<b>Introduce vowels in their vowel group,</b> building familiarity with the vowel graphemes and their sounds e.g., the five R Vowels: ar or er ir ur	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vowel pictures and characters (p.95 top)</li> <li>• Vowel flashcards for the vowel group (pp.45-46)</li> </ul>
2	<b>Reading lists of the vowels,</b> then gently moving to reading a few vowel words	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vowel practice lines (p.95 bottom)</li> </ul>
3	<b>Reading real words in supportive games,</b> initially reading one word per turn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cow Barn Chaos: Real Words, one word per turn (p.96)</li> <li>• Playing Memory - Pack E: firm farm form born burn barn fern (p.97)</li> </ul>

**TEACHING FOR MASTERY & AUTOMATICITY LEVELS:**

Building reading speed and automaticity, still in the context of the vowel group, using real words and pseudowords.

4	<b>Reading real words in games using high instructional intensity</b> (practices/minute) to build skill and speed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cow Barn Chaos: Real Words, reading all words per turn (p.96)</li> <li>• Playing Snap - Pack E: increasingly quickly (p.97)</li> </ul>
5	<b>Reading unfamiliar words (pseudowords) in simple games,</b> initially one word per turn, then several, aiming for faster reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cow Barn Chaos: Pseudowords (p.99)</li> <li>• Playing Memory then Snap using simple then challenge words: Pack F: tirk tarp torp terp tripp turp trupp (p.101) Pack G: snirt smert skirl sprart storp splert scurl (p.103)</li> </ul>
6	<b>Reading for speed using Rapid Reads,</b> with kids reading quickly, aiming for higher and higher scores (number read correctly in 30 seconds)	Memory Stretching activities used as a learning task (p.105)

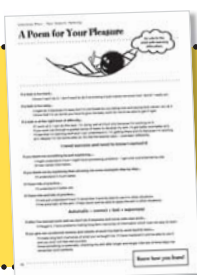
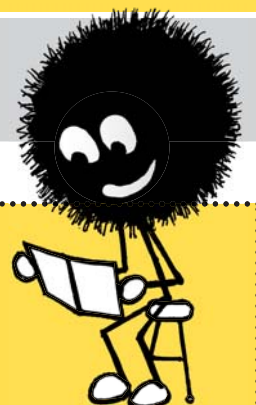
**TEACHING FOR GENERALISATION:** Reading and writing vowel words, now mixed in with previously learned vowels, in increasingly wider contexts, e.g., contrived texts, word reading of mixed vowel words, then authentic text.

7	(Optional level) Reading contrived texts packed with vowel group words	Texts packed with R-vowels, e.g., Bert and Bart are at the farm. Bert has the horse and cart. Bart has the furry cat that purrs. The farm horse takes Bert and Bart for a ride.
8	Reading mixed vowel words (the vowel group plus previously learned vowels)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frarfer's Frog Frolics Combined Vowel Words Game (p.100)</li> <li>• R Vowel flashcards now mixed with flashcards for all learned vowels (pp.45-46)</li> <li>• Listen, Say, Touch &amp; Do spelling pages (p.120)</li> <li>• (Once all vowel groups have been taught) Vowel Consolidation games using all 29 vowels (Ch.13)</li> </ul>
9	Reading vowel group words in Echo Reading	Reading diverse books and texts, with adult scaffolding of vowel group words steadily reducing as the child's reading of them becomes more confident (previously, the adult scaffolder would have read most R Vowel words)

**TEACHING FOR MAINTENANCE (PERMANENT MASTERY):** Monitoring skill to ensure they stay at automatic level.

NB. No games played. Now moved from 'practice mode' (games) to test mode (no more games and practice, just monitoring over time).

10	Monitoring skill levels long-term, testing after longer time periods (1 week, 2 weeks, 1 month, 3 months)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Memory Stretching (p.105)</li> <li>• Super-Reader Star Status award (p.106)</li> <li>• Super-Rememberer Star Status award (p.106)</li> </ul>
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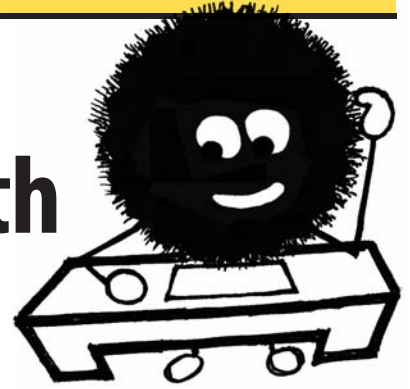
**FREE DOWNLOAD**



**Want a quick summary of how at-risk readers learn well?**

Download *A Poem for Your Pleasure: An Ode to the Child with Learning Difficulties*

# Easy Progress Monitoring with 30 Second Efficiency Tests



**Thirty second vowel word efficiency tests are an effective way to monitor kids' skill levels, progress made, and if/when skills have slipped, requiring more strategic instruction.**

They are sets of vowel words (e.g., 5 rows of 6 words) for kids to read as fast as they can as.

Use them for screening individual kids and class groups, monitoring progress, and as Rapid Read learning activities (kids practising, aiming for higher scores).

### Resources Needed

- A timer
- Two identical sets of reading words (one for the child to read and one to mark errors on and work out scores)

### Instructions

Say: "When I say go, read these words as fast as you can." Move your finger left to right, going down the rows as you explain. Say: "If you get to the bottom before I say 'Stop', go up to the top and keep reading. Ready, GO!"

Start the timer as you say 'GO'.

As the child reads, put a slash (/) through all words read incorrectly, and circle slashed words which are self-corrected.

At the 30 second mark, put a bracket (]) after the last word read, then say, 'STOP'. The child's score is the number read minus the number incorrect.

For accurate testing, don't use the exact word set you're going to use for testing while you're giving the instructions. If doing more than one word set, don't repeat the instructions. Just say, "Now this one. Ready, GO!"

## Memory Stretching Pages

**REAL WORDS**

pat part pain perk port pet ferm mean bird  
 short shirt mate sport farm form fame time  
 nurse term moan mart herd pain fur burn ban  
 bone bait barn born

Read for 30 seconds. Score = number correct - number incorrect.

25					
20					
15					
10					
5					
Date					



The Memory Stretching pages at the end of each chapter in *Sounds & Vowels* and *Two Vowels Talking* (e.g., R Vowels, pp.105-106) use 30 second efficiency tasks, with real word and pseudoword versions. They have two sets of 30 words, one real-word set and one pseudoword set, each with a table to record the date and the child's score. Use them as tests Memory Stretching tests (see p.8) or Rapid Reads.

The *Two Vowels Talking* Memory Stretching pages are followed by an awards page, with awards first for reaching Super-Reader Star Status, then for reaching Super-Rememberer Star Status.

## The Galletly Diagnostic Vowel Word Reading Tests

**These 30 second word reading efficiency tests consist of eight sub-tests, in real and pseudoword forms. They test the reading of eight types of vowel words:**

- Test 1: äëïöü VC words, e.g., up, ev
- Test 2: äëïöü CVC words, e.g., cup, dev
- Test 3: äëïöü CC words, e.g., clap, drep
- Test 4: mixed CVCe & CVC words, e.g., hope, hop; vope, vop
- Test 5: Y & 'Two Vowels Walking' ai ea ee ie oa, e.g., zy, plain, plaif
- Test 6: R Vowels: ar or er ir ur, e.g., fern, zern
- Test 7: Other common vowels aw ew ow oi oy oo ou, e.g., paw
- Test 8: 2-syllable words with regular vowels, e.g., piglet, zater

**For school screening, use real and pseudoword versions of only one or two tests:**

- For Years F-1, use Test 4
- For older kids, use Tests 6 and 7

**Download these tests for FREE!**

The download includes reading sheets, score sheets and charting sheets for monitoring kids' progress over time.

# Maximise Statistical Learning

## Reduce Confusion Then Give Lots of Practice

Learning to read vowel graphemes is statistical learning: effective learning depends on how many times the particular vowel spelling pattern is encountered and practiced during reading. Unfortunately, when vowel graphemes say irregular sounds in words that kids see a lot, this drastically reduces the effectiveness of the statistical learning the child does. In addition, if the child doing the reading is feeling confused and lacks confidence, learning effectiveness is reduced even further.

### Vowel Word Statistical Learning =

$$\left[ \begin{array}{c} \text{Number of} \\ \text{Successful} \\ \text{Engaged} \\ \text{Practices} \end{array} \right] \text{ minus } \left[ \begin{array}{c} \text{Confusion} \\ + \\ \text{Low} \\ \text{Confidence} \end{array} \right]$$

### Let's use Bossy-e as an example (Sounds & Vowels, pp.113-132):

- In Bossy-e words, E at the end of one syllable words makes the vowel say its name (ā ē ī ō ū, e.g., bike mate choke). This rule works very well for >100 common words so should be easy to master.
- Unfortunately, eight very high frequency words, (have give live some come done one love), use final-e as an irregular spelling, as you'll hear by listening

to their vowel sounds. The irregular Bossy-e of these irregular words has strong negative impact, making it hard for kids to master Bossy-e

### For our kids to do effective reading:

- Teach common regular vowels well.
- Reduce the confusion caused by common irregular words by teaching the rule and showing how it works, and by referring to irregular words as 'tricky words' with silly spelling.
- Maximise statistical learning through providing lots of successful practice.

For kids in the world's many regular-orthography nations, statistical learning has no confusion. When letters always obey the rules, kids learn quickly and don't experience learning breakdowns. Their learning to read is as easy as our kids learning numbers – numbers are fully 'regular' with no nasty surprises, so statistical learning works beautifully to full effect. When there's no interference from confusing rule-breakers, learning can happen quickly and easily.

Optimising statistical learning of the 29 commonest vowel graphemes, so kids can effortlessly read words using them, builds a very solid base for continued word reading and writing progress.

### Vowels make reading and spelling confusing!

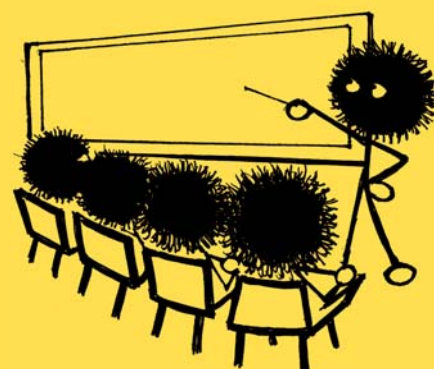
- Vowel letters a e i o u say their 'regular' ä ě ĭ ö ů sound only about 50% of the time.
- They're more 'regular' (>74%) if considered with their following letter, e.g., at ar aw.
- There are over 250 vowel spelling patterns.
- Most vowel sounds are written multiple ways, e.g., ō: boat hope go though low.
- Most written vowels say several different sounds, e.g., a: Ask dad again later.

### Exception words are 'Tricky Words'!

- Don't introduce exception words when first introducing a vowel group.
- If exception words arise, call them 'Tricky Words', which use silly spelling.

## 10 Teaching Rules for Optimising Vowel Learning

- 1 Know the 29 commonest vowels and how to teach them well, using microsteps.
- 2 Use vowel groups, metacognition, clear explanations and humorous titles and chants.
- 3 Use a range of engaging activities which provide lots of fun practice.
- 4 Use pseudoword activities, as well as real word activities, to build skill reading unfamiliar words.
- 5 Build word reading of each vowel group to an automatic level.
- 6 Teach vowels in isolation (their vowel group) then combination (mixed with other vowel groups).
- 7 Use multiple contexts to generalise vowel reading once skill is building well.
- 8 Use 30 second efficiency tasks to monitor learning over time, to ensure skills are maintained.
- 9 For at-risk readers, use memory stretching once words seem automatic: move from practice mode to test mode, and test skills after longer and longer periods of time.
- 10 Match instruction to kids' needs: at-risk readers need strategic instruction with lots of fun practice.



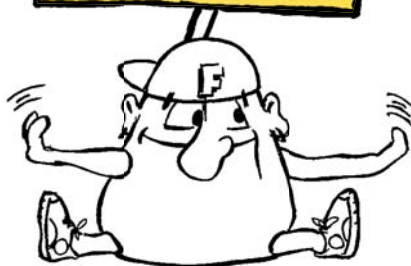
Remember things forever. Stretch memories today!

**GIVE FILER HIS INSTRUCTIONS**



Have you ever learned something so well you were sure you would never forget it, and then, weeks later, found it was gone? If you've got a Filer who gets a bit disorganised, it's good to stretch memories so they stay with you forever making you 'clever at forgetting'.

**STRETCH THOSE MEMORIES**



When you seem automatic at a skill (Correct + Fast + Supereasy!), make strong plans to remember that skill forever: tell your Filer you're going to stretch that memory now.

**MOVE FROM PRACTICE MODE TO TEST MODE**

- Check after 1 week
- Then 1 month later
- Then 2 weeks later
- Then 3 months later

**Practise till perfect!**

Read the 'For the Grown-ups' sections of *Two Vowels Talking*, *Sounds & Vowels* and *Phonological Fun* to build your understanding of kids' information processing and how Literacy Plus mottos support effective information processing. Also see the Literacy Plus CD for powerful videos on phonological awareness, working memory and long term memory.

**Next Newsletter**

**Multisyllabic Word Reading & Writing Fun**

Our next newsletter focuses on strategies for supporting children to read and write multisyllabic words. It will include the Regular-Pattern-Tricky syllable/word strategy and Schwa Hunting.

**FREE DOWNLOADS** will include two Postergames and a Schwa Hunting booklet for children to investigate the vowels of multisyllabic words.

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[www.literacyplus.com.au](http://www.literacyplus.com.au)

We hope you've enjoyed reading our second newsletter and it's given you food for thought and ideas to try with young and at-risk readers.

Do share this newsletter with others: we'd love you to spread the word about Literacy Plus newsletters. The articles make great staff meeting discussion topics.

Take advantage of our continuing special (25% off Value Packs\*) available until 01/06/2015 at [www.proedaust.com.au](http://www.proedaust.com.au)

I look forward to our next newsletter. Kind regards,

Susan Galletly  
 BSpThy GradDipTeach MEd PhD.

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**Upcoming Seminars**

For details visit our website or contact seminar organisers.

**CANBERRA**

**Friday 15 May:** Meeting the Instructional Needs of Adolescents Struggling with Literacy

**Saturday 16 May:** Ensuring a Gentle Start: Effective Earliest Word Reading Instruction for At-Risk Readers

(Free seminar resources include the *Phonological FunBook* and extensive resource downloads)

Email: [Heather.Saywell@ed.act.edu.au](mailto:Heather.Saywell@ed.act.edu.au)  
 Phone: (02) 6142 0900

**BRISBANE**

**Friday & Saturday 10-11 July:** Teaching to the Instructional Needs of Children with Reading Weakness: Theory and Practice

(Free seminar resources include the *Two Vowels Talking Standard Master Book*, *Sounds and Vowels Student Workbook* and extensive resource downloads)

Details at:  
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 Website: [www.speld.org.au](http://www.speld.org.au)