



*A student glanced at the word **hummingbird** and read aloud: “Once a hamburger perched on her red jacket...”*

*Children who learn to read strictly through word memorization often get confused as more words are taught. Rather than looking at the letters and phonetically decoding the word, they look at the whole word—like confusing **house** with **horse**.*

...once a child falls behind, he must make up thousands of unread words to catch up to his peers who are continuing to move ahead.

*From *Overcoming Dyslexia*
by Sally Shaywitz*

THE PROBLEM: Teaching Struggling and Beginning Readers

Too many children struggle when learning to read. Reading failure and poor reading skills can have long-term consequences on a person’s abilities and opportunities. An extensive knowledge base now exists to show us the skills children must learn in order to read well. The National Institute for Literacy published *Put Reading First* to provide evidence based reading research for educators, parents, and policy makers:

Key findings from scientific research conclude:

- ✦ **Phonemic awareness instruction** improves children’s word reading and reading comprehension. It helps children learn to spell. (**Phonemes:** the sounds of our language)
- ✦ **Systematic and explicit phonics instruction** is more effective than non-systematic or no phonics instruction. (**Phonics:** associating letters with sounds)

In the past, many college courses on reading instruction have included minimal or no instruction on how to teach phonics.

Building a Good Foundation

When children take to reading naturally, we call them “natural readers.” Many are able to get by in reading by memorizing words (sight reading). For them, phonics instruction is often bypassed. For the struggling reader who has difficulty reading or spelling new words (or words they could not memorize), phonics is critical. Without it, they resort to guessing. **Example:** *hummingbird* can be read (decoded) by a 1st or 2nd grader with a phonics background. It is considered 5th to 7th grade level as a sight word. Without this foundation, they can have problems with spelling (encoding), not having learned the many choices for spelling a sound. For example, long **a** can be spelled: **a**-consonant-**e** (*rake*), **ai** (*rain*), **ay** (*hay*), **ei** (*vein*), **eigh** (*eight*), **ey** (*obey*). Not knowing the choices for spelling a word means students are unable to look it up in the dictionary and independently learn the correct spelling. Without this foundation, they do not have the codes and strategies to process the words. Instead, it becomes a guessing game.

Dyslexia: Difficulty with Language

Some students, no matter how bright and motivated, experience reading, spelling, and/or writing difficulties. They exhibit weakness in auditory and/or visual processing of the language. These students need to be taught the sounds of the language, and the letters which represent them. They need to learn how to put these together and take them apart—slowly and thoroughly. They have to use their hands, eyes, ears, and voices simultaneously, with lots of practice and repetition—to consciously organize and retain their learning. The *Orton-Gillingham Approach* of systematic, simultaneous multi-sensory phonics instruction can be vital to their success. With it, students are taught one skill at a time in a sequence that minimizes confusion, using multiple senses.

Many Reading Programs are Not Phonetically Based

Some reading and language arts curriculums have phonics, but do not have a good phonics sequence that carries into their reading material. Students either aren’t taught phonics at all, or they are confused by a poorly presented sequence.

With good comprehension skills, 15-year old Josh slowly read the first line of the Go Phonics® Level 2 story aloud. He stared at the word on the next line. “That’s not a word,” he said.

*He was looking at the word **nap** and seeing **uab**.*

“I know what your problem is,” said Sylvia. “I can help you.”

Go Phonics® teaches effective techniques to minimize the tendency to flip letters.

As Josh made progress, he was able to read the menu at McDonald’s® and looked forward to taking his driver’s test. He was reading in Level 5 when he had to move away to live with his dad.

If help is given in 4th grade, rather than in late kindergarten, it takes four times as long to improve the same skills by the same amount.

From Straight Talk about Reading by Susan Hall and Louisa Moats

THE SOLUTION:

Multi-Sensory Phonics with Integrated Tools that Support

To teach phonics using the multi-sensory approach, a cohesive set of tools is needed that supports instruction. The key is to have step-by-step lessons and fun, integrated tools that provide the practice and repetition for mastery. To address this, *Go Phonics®* was developed, by a unique mother-daughter partnership: Sylvia Davison, a Slingerland® trained teaching veteran, and Holly Davison, a veteran graphic designer/illustrator.

Use Proven Strategies for Success

Go Phonics® uses proven strategies that benefit ALL beginning readers, and are especially effective for students with dyslexia and language based learning difficulties.

1. Uses **simultaneous, multi-sensory instruction** for teaching the name, formation, and sound of letter(s)—vision, hearing, and touch simultaneously to promote higher retention
2. Teaches phonics skills one at a time in **building block fashion** (scaffolding)
3. Uses a **sequence that minimizes confusion** (systematic)
4. **Teaches decoding (reading) and encoding (spelling)** skills using the 42 basic sounds of the English language, helping those who cannot memorize words by sight, and helping students to read larger words independently
5. **Drills on the vowel, phonogram, and digraph sounds** daily until mastered
6. Provides integrated materials that give **substantial decoding and encoding practice** until mastery is achieved
7. **Makes the practice FUN**—transforming it into a magical experience by using games, songs, and activities
8. Gives students **preparation before reading the story** by playing a game and doing worksheets related to the new sound, and the reading and language arts skills that will be in the story
9. Provides **decodable stories with controlled vocabulary**—building on the skills taught to date, which eliminates the tendency to guess
10. Teaches **comprehension and language arts skills** within the context of the stories (to give the skills meaning and purpose)



Sylvia Davison, *Go Phonics®* author, plays the *Stuck Truck* game with a student to give her practice decoding words with **ck**. She sweeps a finger across the word on the card to encourage smoother blending of the sounds.

Background: Sylvia Davison taught 2nd grade for 25 years. She took Slingerland® training (the Orton Gillingham Approach adapted for the classroom), and then spent 18 of those years teaching whole classes of dyslexic and struggling readers. A 38-year teaching veteran, 13 years of tutoring (after retirement) allowed her to develop and field test the *Go Phonics® Program*.