

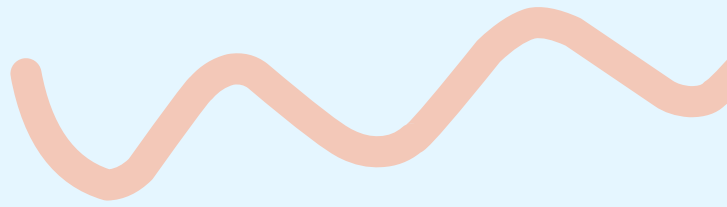


PODCAST LISTENING GUIDE:

# *Phonics*



# Hi Teacher Friends!



## Welcome to the Podcast Listening Guide!

We know the Science of Reading can sometimes feel big and overwhelming. That's why we started the Melissa & Lori Love Literacy podcast. Each week, we talk with researchers, teachers, and literacy experts who break down the research and share ideas you can try right away.

This guide pulls those conversations together around one focused topic. Use it for:

- **your own learning**
- **team discussions**
- **school-wide PD**

You'll find:

- **episodes grouped by theme**
- **conversation starters and classroom takeaways**
- **space to jot down notes or next steps**

There is never enough time in a teacher's day. Between lessons, kids who need you, and stacks of grading, it is a lot. Podcasts make learning feel doable. You can listen in the car, while setting up your room, or when you finally have a quiet moment to yourself at home.

However you use it, we hope this guide helps you feel encouraged, supported, and ready to try something new.

We can't wait to keep learning with you,

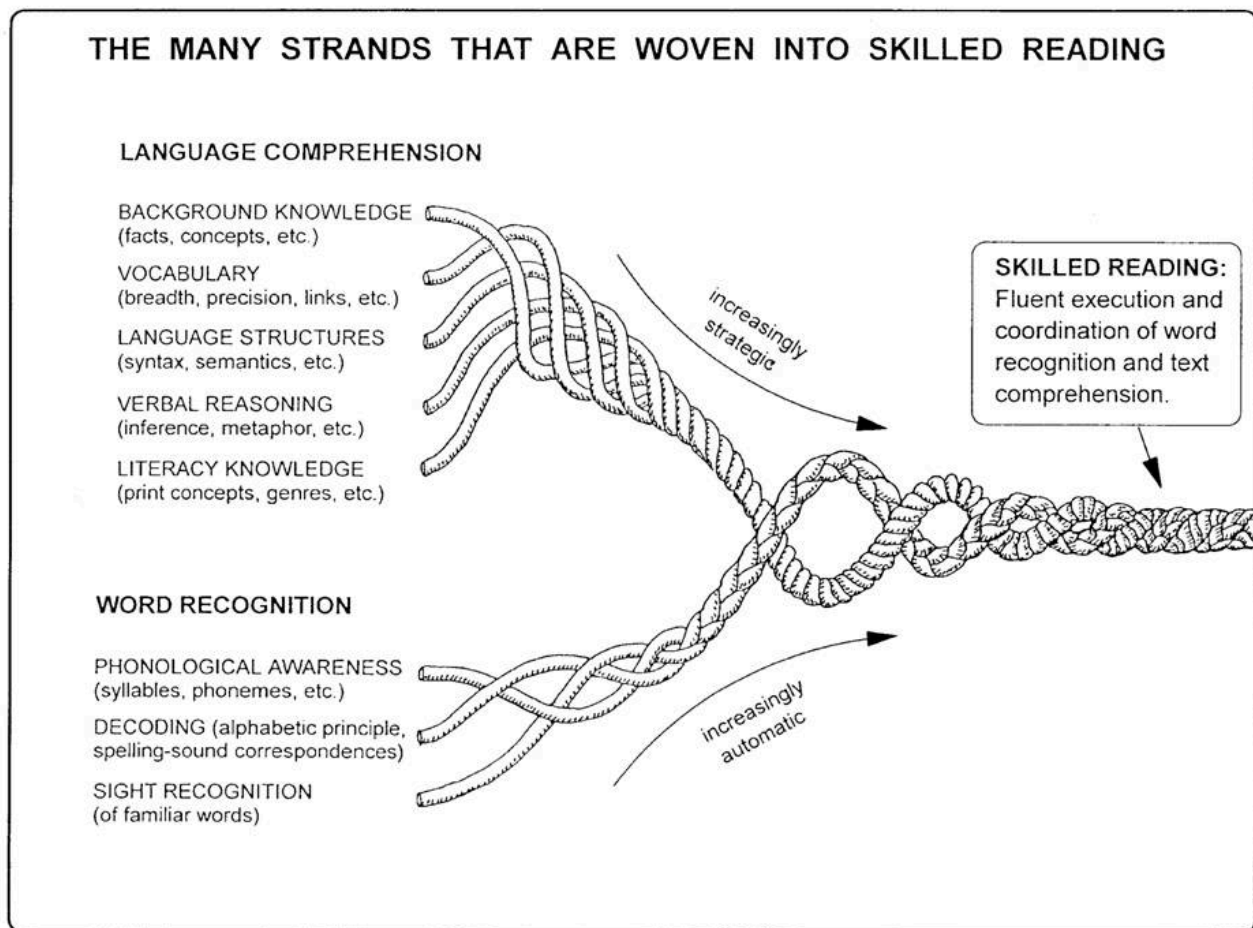
♥ *Melissa & Lori*



# Phonemic Awareness

## Why is teaching phonics important?

Teaching phonics is essential because it helps students understand how letters and sounds work together to read words. In Scarborough's Reading Rope, phonics is a key part of the word recognition strand, supporting accurate and automatic reading. When students can decode efficiently, their brains are freed up to focus on meaning and comprehension. Strong phonics instruction lays the foundation for skilled reading.



**LISTEN:** [Ep. 178: The Simple View and Scarborough's Reading Rope with Hugh Catts](#)

# Phonics

Here are three big takeaways about phonics instruction from Melissa & Lori Love Literacy podcast straight from the voices of researchers and real classrooms:

## 1 Be Explicit

Phonics shouldn't be left for students to "figure out." Teachers need to clearly model how sounds and letters connect, using precise language, and guided practice. When instruction is explicit, students know exactly what to pay attention to and how to apply it when reading.

## 2 Follow a Systematic Scope & Sequence

Phonics skills should build in a logical order, from simple to more complex. This ensures students have the foundation they need before tackling harder patterns. A strong sequence helps prevent gaps and supports all learners, especially those who struggle.

## 3 Connect to Reading & Writing

Phonics is most powerful when it's applied right away in reading and writing. Students should practice with decodable texts and use encoding (spelling) to reinforce what they've learned. This connection helps move skills from practice into automatic, meaningful reading.

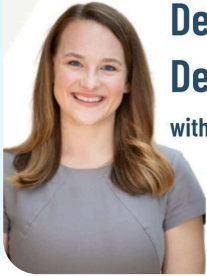


Together, these practices help students build strong, automatic decoding skills that support fluent reading and free them to focus on understanding text. The episodes in this guide feature insights from researchers and teachers like Molly Ness, Julia Lindsey, Katie Pace Miles, & Julie Washington. You'll find practical, evidence-based strategies you can try tomorrow, such as a four-step orthographic mapping routine.

LISTEN AGAIN: Episode 120

Research-Based  
Routines for  
Developing  
Decoding Skills

with Julia Lindsey



EPISODE: 120

# Research-Based Routines for Developing Decoding Skills

with Julia Lindsey

 LISTEN TO THE EPISODE

Expert and author Julia Lindsey breaks down what research says young readers need to decode words efficiently, from oral language to multisyllabic word reading. Drawing on ideas from her book *Reading Above the Fray*, she highlights how small changes can lead to big gains in student learning.

You'll hear practical "instructional swaps" you can use right away to strengthen your teaching. It's all about making decoding instruction more efficient, effective, and impactful for students.

## Episode Resources

Check out [these printable decodable books](#) from Julia! These texts are designed to build decoding skills while also building basic knowledge about the world.

## While You Listen

What I Want to Remember	What I Want to Try
<p><i>Listen for what research says about what readers need to decode words efficiently.</i></p>	<p><i>Notice the instructional swaps Julia shares that you can put into practice tomorrow.</i></p>

# Making Words Stick

with Molly Ness & Katie Pace Miles



EPISODE: 229

# Making Words Stick

with Molly Ness & Katie Pace Miles

 LISTEN TO THE EPISODE

Experts Katie Pace Miles and Molly Ness break down orthographic mapping and why it's key to building fluent readers. They explain the difference between memorizing words and truly mapping them in the brain using sounds, spelling, and meaning.

You'll learn a simple four-step routine from their book *Making Words Stick* to help words "stick" for your students. Listen for practical strategies and ideas you can use right away in your classroom.

## Episode Resources

Grab [this clear, classroom-friendly one-pager](#) that explains orthographic mapping and shares an easy four-step routine to help words stick in students' memory.

## While You Listen

What I Want to Remember	What I Want to Try
<p><i>Pay attention to what orthographic mapping is and why it is important for reading development.</i></p>	<p><i>Listen for the four-step routine that helps make words stick.</i></p>

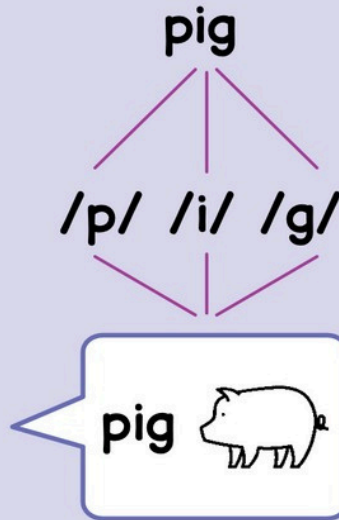
# Making Words Stick

Molly Ness, PhD  
Katie Pace Miles, PhD

We **see** the printed word.

We **connect** it to what we know about phoneme-grapheme relationships.

We connect the letters and sounds to **read** the word and identify it from our vocabulary.



Phase	Predominant Representation
Pre-Alphabetic	No mappings
Partial Alphabetic	
Full Alphabetic	
Consolidated Alphabetic	

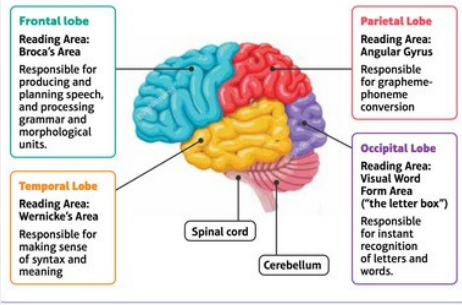
Understanding Ehri's phases of reading development lets us know where students are in their ability to make words stick in memory. Their letter-sound skills serve as the glue that sticks the word in memory, and the meaning more securely anchors it there.

What is OM? Why does it Matter?

## ORTHOGRAPHIC MAPPING

OM is the process by which the letters in the spelling of a word are bound to the sounds those letters make. This spelling-to-pronunciation connection is the glue. Orthographic mapping is the key to fluent reading; it enables students to read words by sight and to work towards comprehension.

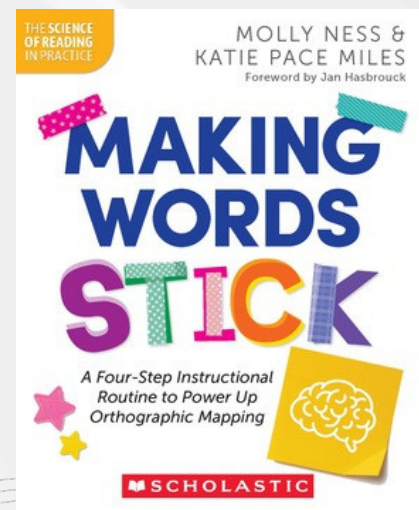
The more we build our students' orthographic mapping, the more we increase their ability to understand what they read. If students have not mapped words, they expend precious cognitive energy on decoding - and as a result their comprehension may suffer. We've devised a four-step process (below) to assist students in making words stick.



### The Reading Brain

Multiple regions of the brain connect so that we instantly recognize and map words!

Step	Goal
1 See & Say	Students see the word and then make a phonological representation of the word, in order to access the word's sound structure. Simply put, they hear the word and say the word aloud while looking at it.
2 Segment & Spell	Students identify the word's grapheme-phoneme correspondences by mapping the word's sounds to its letters.
3 Study & Suss Out	Students explore the meaning of the word and its usage. They understand multiple meanings of the words, as well as its syntax and semantics.
4 Search & Stick	Students move toward automatically recognizing the word, as well as instantly retrieving the word when it appears in text.



www.drmollyness.com  
www.drkatiepacemilesphd.com

COMING SOON

Research-backed  
Routines for  
Differentiating  
Phonics Instruction

with Wiley Blevins



EPISODE: 260

**Research-Backed  
Routines for  
Differentiating Phonics  
Instruction**  
with Wiley Blevins

▶ LISTEN TO THE EPISODE

Differentiation in phonics doesn't have to be complicated—it lives right inside strong, consistent routines. We explore what that looks like in both whole group and small group instruction with expert Wiley Blevins. He helps us unpack how routines like blending, high-frequency words, and dictation can flex to meet all learners. We also dig into how students transfer skills to reading and writing with decodable text.

You'll walk away with practical ways to make phonics instruction more responsive—and more effective—for every student.

**Episode Resources**

If you want to learn more, Wiley shows teachers how to bring phonics routines to life with flexible, high-impact moves in this book [Differentiating Phonics Instruction for Maximum Impact](#).

**While You Listen**

What I Want to Remember	What I Want to Try
<p><i>Coming soon - September 2026!</i></p>	<p><i>Coming soon - September 2026!</i></p>



EPISODE: 164

## ***Misconceptions about Learning to Read***

with Carolyn Strom

 **LISTEN TO THE EPISODE**

Researcher Carolyn Strom explains why reading doesn't develop as naturally as speech and requires explicit, structured instruction. She highlights the importance of decodable texts, phonemic awareness, and following a clear scope and sequence.

She also shares practical ways to build skills through meaningful practice and engaging activities. You'll learn why memorizing words isn't enough and how mapping supports strong reading development.

### ***Episode Resources***

Carolyn Strom created [this poster](#) to help make the science of reading clear, focusing on how the brain maps sounds, letters, and meaning.

### ***While You Listen***

<b>What I Want to Remember</b>	<b>What I Want to Try</b>
<p><i>Listen for why reading doesn't develop as naturally as speech.</i></p>	<p><i>Pay attention to ways to build skills through meaningful practice and activities.</i></p>

Episode 188

## How to Teach Students to Read Irregular Words

with Danielle Colenbrander & Katie Pace Miles



EPISODE: 188

# How to Teach Students to Read Irregular Words

with Danielle Colenbrander & Katie Pace Miles

 LISTEN TO THE EPISODE

Experts Danielle Colenbrander and Katie Pace-Miles break down how orthographic mapping supports learning high-frequency and irregular words. They explain that irregular words exist on a spectrum and share practical ways to teach them effectively. They also explain how meaning, context, and morphology can support word recognition.

Walk away with helpful strategies to build students' confidence with tricky words.

### **Episode Resources**

Check out Katie's printable [Word Analysis Manual](#)—a resource packed with routines and activities to support word learning with high-frequency words (and really, any word!).

### **While You Listen**

What I Want to Remember	What I Want to Try
<i>Listen for how orthographic mapping supports learning high frequency and irregular words.</i>	<i>Listen for ways to teach irregular words and identify 1-2 strategies to try in your instruction.</i>

Science of Reading for ALL Students

Episode 151

## Language Variation and Reading

with Julie Washington



EPISODE: 151

# Language Variation & Reading

with Julie Washington

 LISTEN TO THE EPISODE

Literacy expert Julie Washington explores how language and reading work together and why language variations are a powerful asset in learning to read. She shares how recognizing African American English as a strength can transform instruction.

Discover how educators can build on students' existing language to support literacy success.

### ***Episode Resources***

Check out [this companion resource](#) by Julie Washington and Mark Seidenberg, packed with research-based insights on supporting reading success for African American children.

## ***While You Listen***

What I Want to Remember	What I Want to Try
<p><i>Listen for how teachers can build on students' existing language to support deeper learning.</i></p>	<p><i>Notice opportunities to intentionally connect students' spoken language to written language during reading instruction.</i></p>

# Bringing It All Together...



**1** How has your understanding of phonics instruction evolved after listening to these episodes? (think about explicit teaching, orthographic mapping, or the role of language)

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**2** What new insight did you gain about how students move from sounds to reading words automatically? (Ex: blending or connecting sounds, spelling, and meaning.)

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**3** What idea or moment from the episodes shifted your thinking about how students learn to read?

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# Making It Happen...



**What is one small instructional shift you're ready to try in your phonics teaching this week?**

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**How will you give students more opportunities to apply phonics skills in reading and writing?**

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**What support, resource, or planning do you need to take your next step with phonics instruction?**

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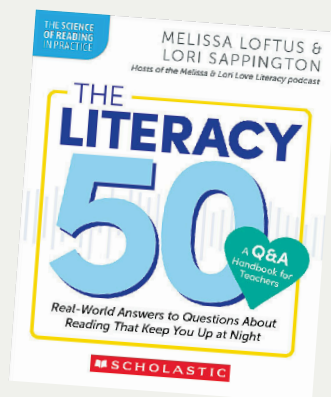
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# Learn More: Phonics



## ***The Literacy 50 Book***

Check out our book,  
*The Literacy 50: A  
Q&A Handbook for  
Teachers.* We've  
devoted an entire  
chapter to phonics.





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[\*The Literacy 50 Book\*](#)

# CERTIFICATE

OF COMPLETION

proudly presented to

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in recognition of your successful completion of the

**PHONICS LISTENING GUIDE  
(6 HOURS)**

You've shown your dedication to growing your knowledge and sharpening your practice. This achievement celebrates your commitment to learning, your curiosity about the science of reading, and your hard work turning insights into impact.

Date:

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MELISSA & LORI LOVE LITERACY

