

Word Recognition: The Orton-Gillingham Approach

The ability to communicate requires strong receptive and expressive language skills. For many students, oral language (speaking and listening) skills far exceed print language (reading and writing) skills. As educators, the deeper our knowledge of these language systems, the better equipped we are to support our students.

Orton-Gillingham (OG) is a structured approach for teaching students how to connect spoken and print language. It follows an explicit, systematic, and multimodal lesson structure for delivering synthetic phonics instruction. An OG lesson's part-to-whole, cumulative review, and back-mapping structure supports students in applying and generalizing their knowledge to improve decoding and encoding skills.

This three-day course covers the following topics to support educators in improving students' reading and spelling outcomes.

Course Objectives

- Examine the role of oral language development in reading proficiency.
- Outline the progression from phonological to phonemic awareness and how these skills support decoding and encoding.
- Connect the research on the instructional design of an OG lesson (cognitive load, instructional hierarchy, and forms of practice).
- Summarize research on the impact of dysfluent handwriting on written expression and describe evidence-based practices for handwriting instruction.
- Explain the alphabetic principle and the reciprocity between reading (decoding) and spelling (encoding).
- Identify the six basic syllable types in English and explain how knowledge of syllable types supports decoding unfamiliar words.
- Apply knowledge of common syllable division patterns to support decoding of multisyllabic words.
- Identify phonetically irregular words and describe evidence-based practice for supporting students to read and spell irregular words.
- Apply knowledge of suffix addition rules to support reading and spelling words with common affixes.
- Examine the importance of decodable text to develop word recognition proficiency.
- Outline the importance of transcription skills through sentence dictation for written expression proficiency.
- Observe OG lesson demonstrations, engage in partner practice or lesson components, and debrief to address implementation questions.

Day 1

- Overview of how the Orton-Gillingham approach fits within a reading science framework
- Impact of cognitive load on instructional design
- The importance of oral language development in supporting word recognition and language comprehension
- Best practices for instruction and assessment of phonological and phonemic awareness
- The importance of letter recognition and formation, and best practices for instruction and assessment of letter knowledge
- Using a Picture Deck to teach letter names, sounds, and keywords simultaneously
- Supporting students through the stages of blending
- Overview of kindergarten and 1st grade OG lesson components
- Demonstration of (K/1) OG lesson

Day 2

- Basic English orthography rules
- Using a Basic Deck to teach phoneme-grapheme correspondences
- Supporting students to apply knowledge of syllable types to decode and encode unfamiliar words
- Research summary on the importance of controlled, decodable text
- Demonstration of 1st/2nd Grade OG lesson

Day 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaching common spelling generalizations• Introduction to suffix addition rules• Applying knowledge of syllable types and common syllable division patterns to decode multisyllabic words• Overview of intermediate (3rd and up) grade OG lesson components• Demonstration of 3rd/4th Grade OG lesson