



Beginning Reading

MORE INFORMATION ON ORTHOGRAPHIC PROMPTS

Funnix uses prompts to help children learn to process words that are more difficult to read without prompts. The prompts include blue letters, underlines for letter combinations, and squiggle underlines for combinations or letters that have an “irregular” pronunciation.

In Lesson 21, children learn to read words with the combinations E-A and A-I. The combinations are prompted by underlining them and showing the second letter in each as blue.

mean rain

The rule about blue letters throughout the program is the blue letter makes no sound, but another letter in the word says its name. For the letter combinations E-A and A-I, the letter that says its name comes just before the blue letter.

Children use this rule to discriminate between words that have a short-A sound and those that have a long-A (letter name) sound—

rain ran aim am

The next type of blue-letter word is introduced in Lesson 33. This type has a final E. The letter that says its name is not usually immediately before the E, but earlier in the word. Note that the children apply the same rule they use for letter combinations. If the word has a blue letter, that letter is silent and another letter in the word says its name. With the blue-E introduction, the range of words children read is greatly expanded—

namee savee likee tapee

The procedure for reading these words is: (1) identify the letter that will say its name, (2) say the sounds for the letters that make a sound.

Underlined letter combinations such as T-H, S-H and E-R are introduced after blue-letter Combinations. For these combinations, neither of the letters is blue. The underline lets the children know that the two letters make only one sound. Usually the sound the combination makes is different from the sound either of the individual letters makes. For example, T-H in BATH makes the sound ththth. The T-H in ANTHILL isn’t a combination. T and H make their individual sounds.

When all the prompts are present, the text shows some words with underlines and some with blue letters:

those farmer you

Note: the word YOU has two blue letters. The only remaining letter says its name—U.

The only other major orthographic prompt introduced in the program is the squiggled underline. The squiggle indicates that the underlined letters do not make the sounds that children have learned. The word **said** has the letters AI underlined with a squiggle. The O in the word **to** is squiggled. In some words, the blue-letter is squiggled, which means that the letter that is supposed to say its name doesn't—

said **to** **have** **were**

The various prompts are non-specific. The purpose of the prompting is to direct children to the appropriate strategy for attacking the word, not to provide them with direct information about the sounds they are to say. If the prompts gave direct information, there would only be one sound for a given prompt. If a line over a letter vowel indicated whether or not it was long or short, the line would be a direct prompt. An O with a line over it would always be pronounced as a long-O. It would be the only symbol pronounced with the letter name O, and it would always have a pronunciation different from an O that did not have a line over it.

In *Funnix*, many different letter combinations have the same prompt. The same underline is used for TH, SH, AR, AI, OA, ER etc. It does not change the shape of letters. It merely indicates that the underlined letters go together and the combination makes one sound.

The squiggles under AI in **said** and the O in **to** merely indicate that the underlined part makes a sound different from the regular sound. The squiggle does not direct the pronunciation of the squiggled letters.

Similarly, many words have blue letters. The blue letters do not serve as a key about which letter says its name or what its name is. The prompt simply directs the child to look for the letter that says its name.

The prompts in *Funnix* serve the parent in directing the children to read the words and help in correcting mistakes. The process of removing prompts is relatively easy because children have not used the prompts as directions for how to pronounce word parts, but merely as information for employing decoding strategies. Prompts are removed regularly. The blue letters in vowel combinations and the blue E at the end of the word start dropping out in Lesson 63. The underlining of vowel combinations starts dropping out in Lesson 82.

More on Fading Prompts

The various prompts that are introduced are systematically faded, or removed, after children have read prompted words a sufficient number of times. The first underline prompts to drop are the underlining for TH and CK. These prompts are faded before lesson 71.

The next prompts to be faded are the blue letters for the combinations AY, OA, AI and EA. Note: These combinations are still underlined, but both letters are black.

Say → Say → Say

In Lesson 77, the blue E in COME is faded, and in Lesson 78, the E in done is faded. Starting in Lesson 81, certain regular words that end in the letter E (RODE, WAVES, SORE) no longer have a blue E. Other regular and irregular words that end in E are faded on a case-by-case basis. After the word has appeared in stories a sufficient number of times, the blue E is dropped. Some of the early words that are faded include HIVE, SOME, GAMES, and BIKES, (81), and HOME, HOLES, MAKE, FINE, and WHILE (82). By Lesson 86 children also read words such as you, was, do and to with no prompts.

Fading underlining for combinations occurs regularly in Lessons 88 through 105. Newly introduced words that have combinations are often shown with the underlining and sometimes with blue letter in the word-attack exercises. These prompts, however, are quickly faded. By Lesson 109, nearly all underlining has been dropped for combinations (including SH, WH, ER and the ending ED).

By Lesson 111, virtually all prompts are faded except when new words are first introduced. The last stories children read in *Funnix* are completely unprompted.