

Guide for Teachers (Version 1.0)

https://gotectonic.org/p

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Overview

Reading is the foundation of success at school. As a teacher, I have found the systems available for teaching reading consistently fall short. They are often expensive, complicated to implement, and not very effective.

I have spent the last decade developing a reading system that:

- Is simple to set up
- Rapidly develops decoding skills
- Reduces the need for one-to-one teaching and intervention
- Supports students who would normally struggle to make progress



The result is Paper Castle. An app that allows students to practice reading independently for ten minutes each day while also receiving feedback when they make a mistake. Additional features include spelling practice, levelled decodable books, and intervention support for the main stages of decoding development.

Paper Castle is designed from the ground up to be compatible with other phonics programs. Here's how:

- It moves through a standard phonics progression (i.e. letter sounds, CVC blending, consonant blending...)
- The codes taught (i.e. long graphemes such as /sh/) are similar to other programs
- If students already know the letter sound or code, they do not need to learn the mnemonics (e.g. /sh/ sheep shop) to make progress

You may find some differences. However, Paper Castle works well for intervention if students are not making the expected progress with another phonics system.

Features

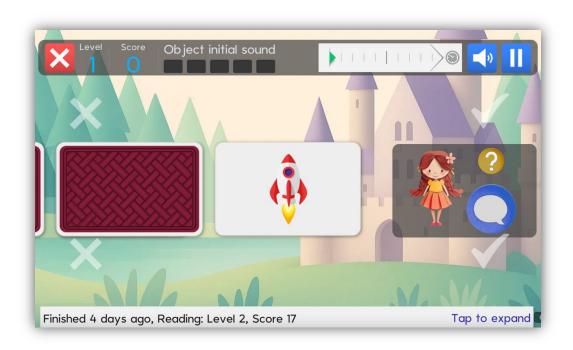
Reading

Once students have launched the app, they click 'Reading' to begin the reading practice. The three options that come up are:

- 1. 'Start' begins practice from level 1, which is for students still learning their letter sounds
- 2. 'Boost Start' will test to see if students should skip some levels, which is for students who are confident with their letter sounds
- 3. 'Practice Mode' does not have a timer and lets you jump to any level, which allows for one-to-one intervention if students are having difficulty with a specific level



Before practice begins, the Sound Check plays music to make sure the audio is working. You can also bring the Sound Check back up during practice to help a student who cannot hear the audio.



At the beginning of each level you will hear the instructions for the level. You can have these repeated by tapping the girl. Students should say the answer for the card. For example, for level 1 they need to say the initial sound, so if the picture is a goat they need to say /g/. If they cannot say the answer, they should press the yellow question mark to initiate the training. If they can say the answer, they then press the blue button to hear

what the girl says. If the girl's answer matches their own, they should drag the card to the right (towards the \checkmark). If the girl's answer is different, they should drag it to the left (towards the X). It is important to encourage students to say their answer when a new card appears, rather than just pressing the blue button straight away.



As students answer questions correctly, they accumulate points and green cards. If they have five green cards, they will move to the next level. Making a mistake or pressing the question mark button will remove all of their green cards. It will also show the training to teach them the answer and move the card to the next spot in the queue. Having the card come up again next, helps with consolidation.



The timer runs for ten minutes and then a Finished screen appears.



Results will also be displayed in the log at the bottom of the screen. These results should persist even through device restarts.

Spelling

The Spelling practice is very similar to the Reading practice. There are three main differences:

- 1. The levels use letters, rather than numbers, so the results can be recorded on the same sheet as reading without causing confusion
- 2. If students get the first question of the level correct, they move straight to the next level
- 3. Students only need to get three answers correct in a row to move to the next level

Spelling should be commenced once a student has successfully completed the Reading section of the app. It begins with segmenting practice (i.e. sounding out words) and then teaches strategies for memorising the spelling of words in the final three levels.

Book Corner



The book corner has four levels of decodable books (see buttons on the left) each with six books. The simplest level is suitable for students who have reached level 7 in Reading. Students can tap each word in a book to hear it read aloud.

Guides

If you need to download this guide or find any related documents, such as the class tracker, just click on Guide.

ABC (Alphabet, Blending, Codes)

See 'Accelerating Progress' later in this guide.

Implementation

Accessing

To make it easy to share and to set up, Paper Castle is free and does not require a login. It is a web-app and can be run through any browser, meaning it can be used on an iPad, PC, or Chromebook. The app can be used with a touch screen or a mouse. Students will need headphones. If the sound is not working on an iPad, make sure Silent Mode is disabled.



Paper Castle can be installed as a web-app on an iPad:

1. Load it in Safari 📝



2. Click the share button



3. Select 'Add to Home Screen' +



Scheduling

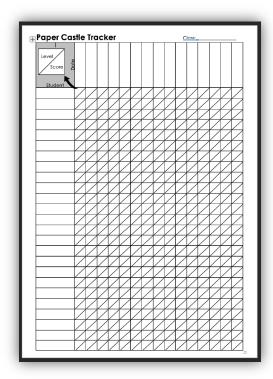
Paper Castle can be completed by the whole class at the same time if you have enough devices. It also works well with rotations since students can do it independently once they are familiar with the process. The standard reading practice takes ten minutes to complete and has a timer. However, allow at least 15 minutes for it to be started and completed during rotations. If students have time after completing their practice, encourage them to explore other parts of the app such as Spelling or the Book Corner.

There are two important reasons for having students complete Paper Castle every day:

- 1. They will make much quicker progress
- 2. If it is not a daily habit, students may become reluctant to complete the practice

Record keeping

At the end of each practice session, the level and score that the student achieved is displayed. In the short-term, the level they achieve will fluctuate as students consolidate their learning. In the long-term their level should increase, although some students will need one-to-one intervention to continue progressing (see 'Accelerating Progress' below).



One column of the class tracker is completed each session.



This is how the level and score are recorded in a single box.



If the student achieves a personal high score, the result is circled. Ask students not to talk about their level as it can make other students jealous. However, praise or reward students who achieve a personal high score.





If a student is absent, put a vertical line through the box. This ensures results aren't written in the wrong column. If a student claims to have finished but no score is displayed in the log, put a tick the first time. The second time they should complete the practice later.

If you're a classroom teacher without an assistant, recording this information during rotations can take some thought. Some apps record results and make them available on a web portal. Paper Castle doesn't do this for two reasons:

- 1. To avoid requiring signup and login (making implementation much simpler)
- 2. You, as the teacher, are better aware of student progress

Accelerating Progress

There are three ways to support students with their progress in Paper Castle.

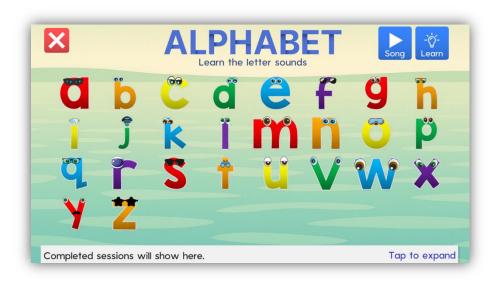
- 1) If a student is making slow progress, watch them complete their practice. This can sometimes reveal obvious problems, such as the student not trying to read the card when it appears.
- 2) Try the challenging level with them. Just launch Paper Castle, click 'Reading' and then 'Practice Mode'. From there you can jump to any level.
- 3) Support them with the three foundational reading stages. If you launch Paper Castle, you will see these three buttons representing the three stages:



Only move to the next stage once students have mastered the previous stage.

A - Alphabet

Learning the lower-case letter sounds



- Click on each letter to see the story for that letter
- Click 'Learn' to launch a tool for learning the letter sounds (see <u>The 'Learn' Game</u> below)
- Click 'Song' to hear the alphabet song (each letter will highlight as the song plays to help students connect the letter names and symbols)

One of the first steps in learning to read is memorising the 26 letter sounds. However, this can be very challenging because it involves connecting an abstract symbol (e.g. the letter 'b') to an abstract sound (e.g. the sound /b/). The human memory system, particularly at a young age, tends to filter out abstract information.

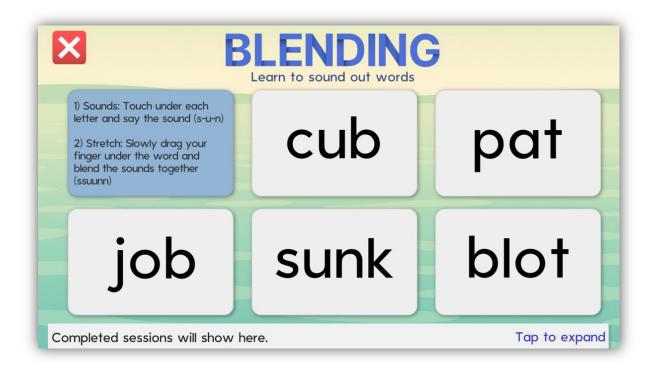


Psychology research shows that we pay more attention to - and are more likely to recall - tangible objects, characters (both real and fictional), and anything that evokes emotion. That's why in Paper Castle each letter has a short animated story where it's a character in an emotional situation. For example, the letter 'b' kicking someone's ball into the lake.

When students are trying to recall the letter sound, ask them what happened to the letter. If they can recall the story, ask them what the object was. From there, they should be able to isolate the sound. This process can take some thinking time, but it quickly becomes faster as they practice.

B - Blending

Sounding out words



The blending page has words for practising blending. Each time you load the page, there will be a different set of words. The blue card has a guide on how to teach blending:

Sounds and Stretch

- 1) Sounds: Touch under each letter and say the sounds (s-u-n)
- 2) Stretch: Slowly drag your finger under the word and blend the sounds together (ssuunn)

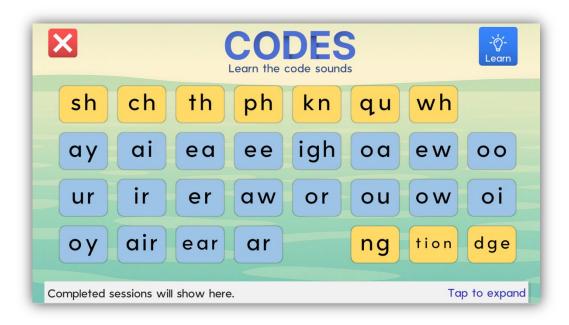
Some things to keep in mind:

- Students need to be confident with letter sounds before beginning blending
- Students should keep their eyes on the word as they stretch it, so they are paying attention to the sounds they should be blending
- Some letter sounds can't be stretched (e.g. in the word 'bun', the 'b' sound has to be short and the 'un' can be stretched)
- Students can point with a craft stick instead of using their finger



C - Codes

Memorising a set of long graphemes (e.g. the /sh/ in ship)



- Click on each code to hear the chant and see the image
- Click 'Learn' to launch a tool for learning the 30 codes (see <u>The 'Learn' Game</u> below)



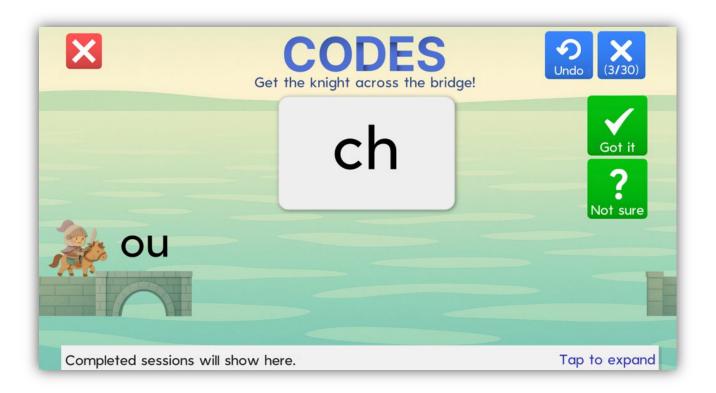
k, n knitting knight /n, n, n/

Each code has a chant and an image. The images are deliberately unusual, but child friendly, to help with memorisation. The chant begins with the letter names (e.g. 'k', 'n'). If students have said the chant enough, just saying the letters should help them recall the rest of the chant. This helps with memorisation.

When learning codes, students will usually be more familiar with letter sounds than letter names. This can make saying the letter names at the start of the chant difficult at first. However, students should improve with practice.

The 'Learn' Game

Learning the letter and code sounds is a considerable memorisation challenge. The Learn Game is designed to help a student practice these with one-to-one support. It's effective because it puts the focus on the letters or codes that the student doesn't know.



Here's how to use it.

- Ask the student to say the sound on the card.
- Tap 'Got it' if they can, and the next card will come up.
- Tap 'Not sure' if they can't, and a bridge section will be added (with that letter or code above it). Each time a bridge section is added, all of the 'Not sure' codes or letters are reviewed.
- Once six bridge sections have been added, and the student has successfully reviewed all of them, the knight crosses the bridge and the game ends.
- The game can also end if the student gets through all 26 letters or 30 codes.

Appendix

To see each level: Launch Paper Castle → Click 'Reading' or 'Spelling' → Click 'Practice Mode' → Click the right-facing arrow to go to the desired level

Reading Levels

Level	Title	Description
1	Object initial sound	Isolating the initial phoneme of a word
2	Letter Friends sounds	Saying the letter sounds for the letter characters
3	Letter sounds	Saying the letter sounds for lower-case letters
4	Word sounds	Saying a set of three sounds (e.g. d-o-g)
5	Three letter words (CVC)	Reading CVC words (e.g. dog)
6	Consonant blend words	Reading words with consonant blends (e.g. stop)
7	Letter names	Naming letters
8	Letter alternatives	Naming upper-case letters and alternative lower-case letters: a, g, y, k
9	Codes	Saying the sound for a given code (e.g. /ch/)
10	Find the code	Finding and saying the code in a word (e.g. <u>ch</u> ips)
11	Code words	Reading words with codes in them (e.g. chips)
12	Bossy e	Reading words with silent final e's (e.g. kite)
13	Special endings	Reading words with common endings (ing, y, es, ed)
14	Syllable counting	Finding and counting the syllables in words (1, 2 or 3)
15	Syllable reading	Reading multisyllable words
16	Sight words	Reading common sight words (e.g. their)

Spelling Levels

Level	Title	Description
A (1)	Three letter words (CVC)	CVC words (e.g. dog)
B (2)	Consonant blends	Words with consonant blends (e.g. stop)
C (3)	Code words	Words with codes (e.g. chips)
D (4)	Ending with e	Words with a silent final e (e.g. kite)
E (5)	High frequency words	Common non-phonetic words (e.g. could)
F (6)	Adding s	Words ending in 's' and 'es'
G (7)	Adding ed and ing	Words ending in 'ed' and 'ing'
H (8)	Contractions	Words containing apostrophes (e.g. we'll)
I(9)	Syllables	Multisyllable words
J (10)	Strategy: Words in words	Memorising word spelling using the words in words strategy
K (11)	Strategy: Build from the base	Memorising word spelling using the build from the base strategy
L (12)	Strategy: Say it like you spell it	Memorising word spelling using the say it like you spell it strategy

Letter-sound Mnemonics

To see each letter story: Launch Paper Castle → Click 'Alphabet' → Click the letter

Letter	Object	Story
а	apple	I tried to eat an apple one time, but it turned out to be the letter 'a', he's super sneaky.
b	ball	I was playing at the park when 'b' kicked my ball into the lake, he's so mean.
С	cake	I invited 'c' to my birthday party, but he ate the whole cake, he's greedy.
d	duck	My friend 'd' got attacked by a duck once, he was very sore.
е	egg	The other day 'e' hatched out of an egg, he's so cute.
f	fish	I last saw 'f' when he caught a giant fish and was pulled along, he was having so much fun.
g	goat	A goat charged 'g' at the farm, and I saw him jump straight over the goat, he's brave.
h	hat	'h' wants to be a magician, but his magic hat never works right, he gets so angry.
i	igloo	'i' lives in the Artic in an igloo, he is cold, cold, cold.
j	jet	My friend 'j' can come over so quickly in his jet, he's lighting fast.
k	kite	I saw 'k' start to fly away on his kite, he's okay now, but I was super worried.
I	lemon	'l' tried to eat a whole lemon, it was so gross.
m	moon	'm' went to the moon and made a new friend, it was amazing.
n	nest	'n' is about to fly out of his nest, I'm so excited.
0	octopus	'o' likes to play with everyone, even an octopus friend, he's really friendly.
р	pig	'p' lives on a farm and rolls in the mud with the pigs, he's super stinky.
q	queen	Did you know that my friend 'q' met a queen? He's so fancy.
r	rocket	'r' built a rocket, he's the smartest letter I know.
S	sun	's' loves to play in the sun, but he never puts on sunscreen, he's sunburned and sore.
t	tiger	I think 't' is still in Africa looking for tigers, but he never sees them, he's unlucky.
u	umbrella	'u' wanted to play, but it was too rainy, he felt really sad.
V	volcano	'v' escaped a volcano just in time, he was so relieved.
W	web	Once in the jungle 'w' got stuck in a web, but he just jumped out of it, he's super strong.
х	fox	'x' is always playing with foxes, and they love him, he's so kind. The /x/ sound is at the end of fox.
У	yoyo	'y' was exploring the mountains when he found a magic yoyo, he's so lucky.
Z	zebra	'z' is always dancing with all the animals, he's pretty cool.

Codes

There are 30 codes (i.e. long graphemes). To see each code image and hear the chant: Launch Paper Castle → Click 'Codes' → Click the code

Code	Mnemonic			
sh	Sheep shop			
ch	Chilli chewer			
th	Thirsty thief			
ph	Dolphin phone			
kn	Knitting knight			
qu	Quick queen			
wh	Wheeled whale			
ay	Play day			
ai	Snail jail			
ea	Jean ice cream			
ee	Bee tree			
igh	Bright light			
oa	Goat boat			
ew	Chewy stew			
00	Moon broom			
ur	Surfing turtle			
ir	Bird shirt			
er	Bigger germ			
aw	Hawk claw			
or	Corn storm			
ou	Mouse house			
ow	Cow crown			
oi	Soil coin			
oy	Royal toy			
air	Hairy chair			
ear	Ear gear			
ar	Shark park			
ng	Singing king			
tion	Emotion potion			
dge	Fudge fridge			