

Reading » Phonics/Alphabetics » Letter Skills: Flashcards: Incremental Rehearsal

This strategy uses a (nearly) errorless-learning approach to reinforce skills and motivate the student. It can be used with letter names (as shown here) or adapted to teach letter sounds.

PREPARATION: Before beginning the intervention:

Create a set of flashcards containing the letters that are the focus of the intervention (e.g., lower-case, upper-case, mixed-cased). All cards should be easily legible to the student.

Conduct a baseline skill-assessment using the flashcards as follows: Hold up each flashcard and ask the student, "What is the name of this letter?". If the student answers correctly within 3 seconds, say, "Yes, the letter name is _____" and place that flashcard in the KNOWN deck. However, if the student gives an incorrect answer or hesitates for 3 seconds or longer, say, "The name of this letter is _____. What is the name of this letter?" When the student answers correctly, say, "Yes, the name of this letter is _____" and place that flashcard in the UNKNOWN deck. At the end of this baseline assessment, all letter cards should be sorted into KNOWN and UNKNOWN decks. Save these decks for use during the intervention sessions.

INTERVENTION: Follow this sequence during each session:

STEP 1: Draw a card from the UNKNOWN deck. Hold the card up and say, "The name of this letter is _____. What is the name of this letter?" If the student answers correctly within 3 seconds, say, "Yes, the letter name is _____". If the student gives an incorrect answer or hesitates for 3 seconds or longer, say, "The name of this letter is _____. What is the name of this letter?"

STEP 2: Draw a card from the KNOWN deck and pair it with your first, UNKNOWN letter-card (we will call this growing card collection your DAILY deck). For each of the 2 cards, hold the card up and ask the student, "What is the name of this letter?". If the student answers correctly within 3 seconds, say, "Yes, the letter name is _____". If the student gives an incorrect answer or hesitates for 3 seconds or longer, say, "The name of this letter is _____. What is the name of this letter?" When the student answers correctly, say, "Yes, the name of this letter is _____"

Whenever the student commits an error, continue to drill using your current set of flashcards until the student can run through all cards once without an error before moving on.

STEP 3: Continue to repeat this sequence, adding flashcards to your DAILY deck one at a time from the KNOWN Letters deck and following the question format outlined in step 2. Each time that you draw a new card, prompt the student to give the names of the whole series of letter cards in your DAILY deck, always beginning with the original UNKNOWN card and then moving sequentially through the growing series of KNOWN cards that follow it.

STEP 4: When your DAILY deck has expanded to include one UNKNOWN card followed by 9 KNOWN cards (a ratio of 90 percent 'known' material to 10 percent 'unknown' material), you are ready to refresh your DAILY deck as follows:

- Discard the last KNOWN letter card that was most recently added to the student's DAILY deck, placing it at the bottom of the KNOWN deck. The UNKNOWN letter card that you drew in step 1 is now treated as a new KNOWN letter and is retained as part of the nine-card DAILY deck for future drills.
- Start the sequence again: Draw a new letter card from the UNKNOWN deck and review that single card with the student. Then incrementally add cards from your Daily deck until your reach 10 cards total.

Repeat the process until the end of the session.

Tucker, J.A., & Burns, M.K. (2016) Helping students remember what they learn: An intervention for teachers and psychologists. *NASP Communique*, 44(6), 23.