CONTENTS

The Big Five ........................................................................................................................................... 3
Three phases of literacy development ..................................................................................................... 4
Neurological processes in reading ........................................................................................................... 5
Teaching Implications ............................................................................................................................. 6
The Steps Literacy Programme .............................................................................................................. 7
  Results from a 2-term trial at Whangaparoa Primary School in 2011 .............................................. 7
Course Components ...................................................................................................................................... 9
The Steps Software Programme ............................................................................................................. 10
StepsWeb .................................................................................................................................................... 11
Workbook Courses ...................................................................................................................................... 14
Supporting Materials ............................................................................................................................... 18
Teaching Principles ..................................................................................................................................... 19
Summary of Key Principles ..................................................................................................................... 21
Steps – the Four-Tier Model .................................................................................................................... 23
  Sample Lesson Plan - Two learners. Three 50 minute sessions per week ............................. 24
  Sample Lesson Plan - Three learners. Four 60 minute sessions per week ............................. 25
How to get started ..................................................................................................................................... 26
  Resourcing ............................................................................................................................................... 26
  Process ....................................................................................................................................................... 26
Frequently Asked Questions ..................................................................................................................... 27
  Can I work with larger groups? ............................................................................................................. 27
Method for Teaching Individual Words – 3,3,3 ..................................................................................... 29
  Teaching a multi-syllabic or complex word ....................................................................................... 31
  Word Race ............................................................................................................................................... 31
Whole-class Options ................................................................................................................................... 33
  Custom courses (only available on Steps at present) ................................................................. 34
**The Big Five**

Dyslexic learners often exhibit difficulties (or signs of a residual difficulty) in each of these areas, which is why we often refer to them as **‘The Big Five’**. However, many other learners, including those in the ‘slow learner’ category have similar weaknesses.

Therefore, any approach which addresses these difficulties is relevant to both dyslexics and other learners with processing weaknesses.

*Key point:* Always remember that there is a reason why a learner is struggling. Some learners may be struggling because of physical reasons, such as school disruption. Most, however, struggle because of weaknesses or deficiencies in some or all of the following processing skills. **Effective remediation needs to focus on these deficiencies, not just address the academic issues.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motor Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Gross motor skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fine motor skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Proprioception</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Spatial awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Laterality/dominance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sequencing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Visual sequencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Auditory sequencing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sequencing of ideas/planning skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pattern recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Comprehension</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Visual Perception</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Visual discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Visual figure-ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tracking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Perceptual organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Visual recognition/visual memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Irlen Syndrome</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phonological Awareness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Auditory discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Onset + rime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Phonemic awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Rhyme and syllable awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Word retrieval/verbal fluency</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Memory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Visual and visual sequential memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Auditory sequential memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Working memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Kinaesthetic memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Visualization</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Memory Quote:** Non-impaired readers only need 4-14 exposures to a word. Dyslexic learners may need 500 – 1300. *Bateman, B (1991)*
Three phases of literacy development

Logographic Phase
Basic sight vocabulary – high frequency words, or words with special significance
Words recognised holistically – from overall shape, not decoded
Similar looking words confused
No understanding of sound/letter correspondence

Alphabetic Phase
Recognition of sound/letter correspondence
Decoding and encoding take place
Phonic knowledge used
Learner can spell simple, regular words
Errors are phonetic (coff/cough)
Lack of sophisticated knowledge of word structure
Reading slow and laboured – limited fluency. Decoding main strategy

Orthographic Phase
Rapid whole word recognition – holistic
Words become sight vocabulary
Understands sophisticated spelling patterns
Reading fluency achieved – recognises words holistically

Frith (1985)
Neurological processes in reading

Non-impaired Reader (normal reader)

Impaired Reader (Dyslexic or similar)

Dyslexic learners have an impaired occipito-temporal (word form area). They therefore over-rely on the wrong areas, particularly Broca’s area. Broca’s area therefore develops as instruction progresses:

- Wrong strategies being employed
- Wrong areas being developed

Consequence: Reading fluency never develops correctly!
Teaching Implications

Teachers need to:

- Practise and develop word analysis strategies.
- Provide the right activities/practice to transfer the word into the occipito-temporal

In other words: Make the word into sight vocabulary

How?

There are a number of activities which will help. Some of the most effective are below:

- Speed reading exercise (in Steps workbooks)
- Sight vocabulary games (Stargame is particularly effective)
- Word Flash activity (Steps software and/or StepsWeb)
- Targeted reading practice – geared towards developing reading fluency, not decoding ability!

What is targeted reading practice?

The targeted reading practice referred to here is reading practice which is specifically designed to develop instant visual recognition, sight vocabulary and reading fluency (rather than to develop decoding skills).

There are a number of possible activities which meet this criteria:

- Reading at slightly below the current level of the learner’s ability, i.e. at a level where most of the words are within the learner’s existing sight vocabulary and he/she has to do very limited decoding. Caution: by definition, this can be boring and demotivating because it is below the learner’s intellectual level. This type of reading should therefore be limited to a very small amount. The teacher can explain to the learner that they are going to do a very small amount of this kind of reading practice just to develop speed and confidence.
- Shared or supported reading. There are several ways of doing this, but generally shared reading involves reading a text together, with emphasis on reading for expression and meaning. The teacher may read the text to the learner first, with the learner following the text. Then the learner has a go.
- Prepared reading. The teacher can enter the relevant key vocabulary or difficult words into Steps so that the learner can become familiar with them before reading the book or passage. In this way, the learner is not required to decode and can concentrate on the meaning.
The Steps Literacy Programme

Key Points

- Highly specialist approach which can be used by non-specialists
- Caters for all learners aged 6 – adult
- Suitable for individual or small-group use as well as whole-school
- Highly effective (see below)
- Develops processing/perceptual skills, memory and cognitive efficiency, as well as the language/literacy aspects
- Strong emphasis on language development, including vocabulary, comprehension & verbal reasoning
- Suitable for ESOL learners
- Home software programme available

Results from a 2-term trial at Whangaparoa Primary School in 2011

Learners were all below 20th percentile in all aspects when starting the trial and were more than two years behind in reading and spelling. These learners had been through Reading Recovery and had on-going remediation, without showing significant improvement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year Group</th>
<th>No of learners</th>
<th>Average Reading gain</th>
<th>Average Spelling Gain</th>
<th>Verbal Reasoning Gain</th>
<th>Non-Verbal Reasoning Gain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17 mths</td>
<td>10 mths</td>
<td>24 mths</td>
<td>15 mths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12 mths</td>
<td>13 mths</td>
<td>26 mths</td>
<td>27 mths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11 mths</td>
<td>14 mths</td>
<td>22 mths</td>
<td>18 mths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>15 mths</td>
<td>16 mths</td>
<td>17 mths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>14 mths</td>
<td>13 mths</td>
<td>12 mths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>13 mths</td>
<td>13 mths</td>
<td>21 mths</td>
<td>18 mths</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These learners were taught in groups of 9 with 2 teacher aides, closely supported by a teacher. In other words, overall teacher : pupil ratio was roughly 1 : 4. Pupils received 4 x 40 minute sessions per week.

All pupils were on the full Steps Remedial Programme, using:

- **Workbook courses**
- **Software activities**
- **Game/activity materials**
See below for sample profiles from two children in this study. The pre- and post-testing was done using LASS Junior or CoPS and Lucid Ability.

**Year 5 Pupil from Whangaparaoa Trial**

![Graph showing LASS Junior Assessment & Lucid Ability Assessment / Schonell Spelling](image)

**Year 2 Pupil from Whangaparaoa Trial**

![Graph showing CoPS Assessment](image)
Course Components
Steps provides a three-strand approach consisting of:

- Steps Software Programme and/or StepsWeb
- Workbook courses (Steps to Literacy Initial & Steps to Literacy)
- Hands-on game/activity materials (Schools Resource Pack)

If used for whole-school activities, learners do not need the workbook materials (although some schools choose to use the workbooks for entire classes). However, if used for remedial literacy, learners ideally need all three components. The Steps software programme can also be used to reinforce other teaching materials/courses.

*Research shows that, for learners with remedial needs, learning gained only by computer is not transferred. These learners need all aspects.*

The lower the level of literacy, the more important it is to include the hands-on game/activity materials. In the beginning stages, most of the ‘active’ teaching can and should be done using these materials. The computer and workbook activities are intended to reinforce the teaching.

Every learner who is on using the workbook courses needs his/her own workbook. Workbooks are not photocopiable! There are hundreds of printable worksheets from Steps itself or photocopiable supplementary worksheets in the Resource Manuals.

*Please respect our intellectual property by not photocopying the workbooks! See the Photocopy Section below for information about limited photocopy permissions for individual pages.*

Who are the courses designed for?
Simple answer: Any learner with literacy needs!

- All materials are designed to be non age-specific. All pictures or illustrations are appropriate for adults or older teenagers, as well as for younger children.
- The teaching approach is appropriate for learners with processing or perceptual difficulties such as dyslexia, but can be used with all learners, including those who just need a ‘boost’.
- ESOL learners and learners with language difficulties will also benefit from the programme.
- The higher levels (Steps 5 and 6) incorporate quite high level vocabulary and can therefore be used for extension.
The Steps Software Programme

Steps is a software programme which supports the Learning Staircase remedial literacy courses, but can also be used to support any research-based literacy approach or materials.

Lists
- High Frequency (based on Dolch/Fry), Spelling Patterns/Rules, Word Families
- ESOL Wordbank (1500 words split into topics)
- Steps to Literacy Initial and Steps to Literacy remedial workbook courses
- Spelling Test (use for pre- and post-testing)
- Homophones, Plurals, Grammar points
- Self-Teach Course (designed for learners with no access to tutoring)
- Facility to add your own complete customized course, including Māori lists

Topics
- Alphabet Reference Section - letter formation, letter name and letter sound, alphabet sequencing. Customisable reversals activity included.
- Numbers Reference Section - number recognition (digits and words), sequencing. Customisable reversals activity included.
- Days of the week, months
- Grammar & Vocabulary
- Directionality (left/right/up/down)
- Spelling Topics ('er' sounds, ei/ie, etc)
- Auditory discrimination activities
- Spelling Rules

Games
- Alphabet sequencing, keyboard awareness
- Perceptual/spatial awareness and fine motor control
- Medial vowel sound activities (customisable levels)
- Tracking/visual discrimination, perceptual organisation
- Spelling, sight vocabulary, grammar, vocabulary
- Visual and auditory memory
- Spatial awareness

Māori Materials
- Topic lists under Wordlists (sentences in Māori)
- Vocabulary learning course (sentences in English)
- Colours, days, months, numbers activities (under General)
StepsWeb is the online version of Steps. It can be used on any device capable of using Chrome or Safari, and obviously needs internet access.

**Content and Structure**

There are some differences in content and structure between Steps and StepsWeb. These are summarized on the following page and briefly described here.

StepsWeb has the following:

- Courses section (covers Steps to Literacy Initial and main Steps to Literacy courses – not First Steps)
- Wordlists section as on Steps
- Placement Test instead of Spelling Test
- Visual Recognition Speed Test

*Note: StepsWeb does not include the General Section or a separate Games section.*

**Features**

- The Courses section is fixed progression – learners have to do the activities in order and cannot progress unless they achieve a medal.
- A selection of games are integrated into the Courses progression at an appropriate level.
- Individual and admin wordlists can be created. It is not yet possible to create complete courses on StepsWeb, but this feature will be added shortly.

All schools who have a network licence for Steps will also receive 15 free log-ins for StepsWeb. Further log-ins can be purchased as needed. Prices range from $5 - $10 for additional log-ins.

Licence periods for StepsWeb will be the same as for Steps Network. If log-ins are purchased during this period, they will be charged for the remaining period of the licence, pro-rata.
## Steps and StepsWeb Comparison Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features</th>
<th>Steps Network</th>
<th>StepsWeb</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activities for wordlists</td>
<td>Full range, including Sound Boxes</td>
<td>Activities selected for maximum impact and usability on web-based platform.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities in Courses</td>
<td>Free choice (need to monitor)</td>
<td>Fixed progression (users locked into correct order – need bronze medal to progress)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional Wordlists Section</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Section (additional teaching activities)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make own lists</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Record new words</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add Definitions</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add Clues</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Users</td>
<td>Unlimited computers/users within one institution. 15 free log-ins to StepsWeb included in Network price</td>
<td>Single-user logins. 15 free log-ins included in network price. Additional log-ins at $5-$10 pa per learner, depending on numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Games</td>
<td>Full access to additional games</td>
<td>Games incorporated into Courses progression at the right level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Printable resources</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workbooks available</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of accents (UK, Kiwi &amp; Aussie)</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full logs</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set homework</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement/spelling tests</td>
<td>Schonell Spelling Test</td>
<td>Placement Test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnostic information</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Learner performance analysed through Class Progression feature. Accuracy ratings for reading/spelling accuracy, language/comprehension and phonic knowledge/skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical</td>
<td>Mac or PC (computer or laptop) See website for specifications</td>
<td>Mac, PC, iPad, Android tablet, Chromebook Browser requirements on website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet access needed</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Features

- Easily monitored. Learners do each activity in the order specified
- Printable pupil records, custom settings for individual pupils
- Highly motivational – learners earn medals for successful completion
- Develops phonological awareness, including phonemic awareness, segmenting, blending, rhyme, phoneme transposition, onset + rime
- Analyses learner’s errors and produces individualised revision units.
- Strong emphasis on comprehension and language development – all words used in context.
- Compatible with phonics and whole language approaches
- Learners progress at their own individual pace
- Can be used for whole-class teaching using data projector
- Suitable for general literacy support, remedial literacy, ESOL and extension
- Users can add and record Māori or Pasifika materials – or materials in any text-based language
- Diagnostic features – Steps and StepsWeb will analyse a learner’s errors and create individualized revision
  - Additional diagnostics – StepsWeb will analyse a learner’s performance and identify learners with language difficulties, poor sight vocabulary and/or weak phonetic knowledge and skills (learner needs to be allocated to a class)
  - Visual Recognition Test – StepsWeb will measure the learner’s speed of visual recognition of words.

General Points

- Remedial learners need the workbooks or similar structured written course materials
- Non-remedial (or extension) learners can follow the same Courses progression, without workbook support.
Workbook Courses

The remedial literacy courses are based on individual learner workbooks. The courses are currently at two levels:

Note:  SA = Spelling Age  RA = Reading Age.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steps to Literacy Initial</th>
<th>Steps to Literacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below SA 7</td>
<td>SA 7 to SA 11+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial A</td>
<td>&lt; SA 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial B</td>
<td>SA 6 - 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial C</td>
<td>SA 6 - 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial D</td>
<td>SA 6-7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial E</td>
<td>SA 6 – 7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial F</td>
<td>SA 6 – 7.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In practice, you are likely to find that there is some overlap between the end stages of Steps to Literacy Initial and the beginning levels of Steps to Literacy. This is intentional. Most learners in this category will benefit from re-capping common phonic patterns and the skills required at the higher Steps to Literacy level are more advanced and include proof-reading and dictation.

When making a transition between the two courses, it is advisable to re-test your learner’s spelling level. In some cases, a re-test will indicate that the learner is well above the 7 year Spelling Age needed for Steps to Literacy 1. In this case, it is acceptable to place the learner on the appropriate level, which may mean skipping Step 1 and possibly Step 2 and going straight to Step 3. However, if you feel that your learner is only just above the level to go to Step 2 and would benefit from starting at Step 1 anyway, this is also fine.

Both Steps to Literacy Initial and Steps to Literacy are intended as remedial courses. However, the progression in both levels is logical and progressive. This means that the courses can be used by all learners and the progression is suitable as a whole-school or whole-class literacy progression. Learners with no particular literacy difficulties may just follow the software courses, without doing the workbook courses as well. However, remedial learners will need to use the workbook materials as well and would benefit from using the hands-on game and activity materials in the Schools Resource Pack.

The Steps courses are not intended to cover every aspect of the literacy curriculum. It is, of course, important to include plenty of extra reading practice, free writing activities and oral activities. Learners with severe difficulties would also benefit from additional word family work, which can be provided by the Steps software programme, or supplementary manuals. However, care should be taken not to overload learners.
If a learner is following the Steps courses, he or she should not also have class spelling lists. By definition, a standard class spelling list is likely to be too difficult for a remedial learner anyway. In addition, following effectively two different progressions will overload learners (particularly those who were struggling anyway).

There is a full range of additional printable resources available through the Steps software programme. Supplementary worksheets which provide extra reinforcement are also available in the Resource Manuals for Steps to Literacy Initial and Step 1 of Steps to Literacy. These are photocopiable and intended to be used as required for that individual learner, as are the game/activity materials in the Resource Kits for these levels. Additional game/activity material is available using materials in the Schools Resource Pack.

Course Philosophy

The workbook courses provide a highly structured literacy progression, which covers the knowledge needed for literacy acquisition, but also a strong emphasis on building the processing and perceptual skills needed for literacy. In this way, the courses address the processing/perceptual skills, which are weak in many dyslexics and other learners with major learning difficulties.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Literacy skills and knowledge</th>
<th>Processing skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Letter/sound correspondence</td>
<td>Verbal reasoning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phonic and orthographic</td>
<td>All aspects of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge</td>
<td>phonological</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decoding</td>
<td>awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encoding</td>
<td>including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rapid whole-word recognition</td>
<td>rhyming skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading fluency</td>
<td>syllabification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension</td>
<td>alliteration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td>auditory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter formation</td>
<td>phonemic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pen/pencil grip</td>
<td>awareness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handwriting</td>
<td>phoneme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing from dictation</td>
<td>manipulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proof-reading</td>
<td>blending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and segmentation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>onset + rime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>analogical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>transfer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>word retrieval</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Visual</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>discrimination</td>
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<td>Visual</td>
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<td></td>
<td>figure-ground</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tracking and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>peripheral vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Visual, auditory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and kinaesthetic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sequencing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Steps to Literacy Initial is designed to provide a very tightly structured literacy progression and to build a really well-consolidated sight vocabulary. Sufficient reinforcement is provided so that the learner finishes the course being able to recognise all the sight vocabulary words instantly, automatically and without hesitation. Lists include high frequency words, common word families, phonic patterns and common vocabulary (colours, days, months, numbers).

Steps to Literacy includes a comprehensive, logically structured literacy progression, covering key phonic patterns. Words are taught as reading and spelling words and activities are included (speed reading and Word Flash) which specifically develop the part of the brain (occipito temporal) which is responsible for holistically recognising the word from its visual pattern. This is essential if reading fluency is to develop.

The emphasis in Steps to Literacy changes as the course progresses. In the earlier Steps (1 – 4), there is a strong emphasis on basic reading/spelling skills, including instant visual recognition. As the learner gets towards the later Steps (5 & 6), the emphasis changes to language processing and vocabulary development. More advanced vocabulary is incorporated. Learners are expected at this level to be able to use dictionaries.

Activities stimulate discussion about words and meanings. There is a strong emphasis on developing both expressive and receptive language skills.

Levels

The Spelling Test (Steps) or the Placement Test (StepsWeb) give guidance about the appropriate starting point for learners. The start point on the Courses section will automatically be set, but can be over-ridden by the teacher, if necessary.

With Steps, learners are placed on a particular spelling level based on their Spelling Age (SA), not their Reading Age (RA). Able dyslexic learners often have a Reading Age which is much higher than their Spelling Age. This is usually because they are using the context to compensate for their lack of phonic/orthographic knowledge and weaker processing skills. With learners in this category, the Spelling Age is a better indication of what the learner actually understands about text.

The above levels are meant as guidelines only. There will be some discretion needed if a learner is borderline. If the teacher feels that this learner is an able learner who will make quite quick progress, he/she is likely to put the learner on the recommended level. If, on the other hand, the learner is likely to make slow progress or has major confidence issues, it may be more appropriate to start the learner one level lower. If in doubt, it is always better to start a little too low but progress quickly and easily, than to start too high and to
struggle. Consolidation at lower levels is always valuable, particularly with learners who have processing difficulties.

You can also use the Reading Age to determine whether to go up or down for borderline learners. See the following examples:

**Learner with SA 7.6 and RA 8.2 Start with Step 1**

**Learner with SA 7.6 and RA 6.5 Start with Steps to Literacy Initial D**

**How do I find out the Spelling Age?**

You can use any reputable well-standardized spelling test (Burt, Peters, Schonell, etc). We use the Schonell test because it is very reliable and well established. It is also not a test which is commonly used in class nowadays and it is handy to have a test which is not being routinely used in class. A copy of Schonell is in the Steps to Literacy Teacher Manual, together with instructions on administration. It can also be easily downloaded from our website at:

http://learningstaircase.co.nz/professional-development/printables/. This section of the website also contains a variety of additional resources for teachers and parents.

Alternatively, you can use the Spelling Test function on the Steps software programme. This will give you a SA (disguised as Level, so it doesn’t demoralize older learners!). It will also suggest the correct starting point for that learner.

Example of how the Levels equate to Spelling Ages:

- **Level 6.1 = Spelling Age 6 years 1 month**
- **Level 9.3 = Spelling Age 9 years 4 months**

If you choose to use another pencil and paper spelling test, you can just enter the spelling age into Steps and it will recommend a starting point. This facility is available through the Admin section.

**Can the materials be photocopied?**

Workbooks are not photocopiable. Each learner needs his/her own workbook. We do try to be flexible however. If schools wish to send work back for homework, but do not want to take the risk of books not being returned, we have no objection to individual pages being photocopied and sent home, providing that the learner has his own workbook at school. Likewise, if a teacher is really unsure about the right level for a learner, he/she can
photocopy one complete unit and try the whole unit before making a decision. This way, there is no risk of wasting a whole workbook if the level was not correct.

_Please do not abuse the above concessions. We have tried to price the workbooks very reasonably so that they are not too expensive for school use. In practice, each workbook is likely to represent a term’s work. If you take account of time spent photocopying, a term’s work for a learner is likely to be very similar in cost to purchasing a workbook anyway!_

**What Manuals are available to help me to learn how to use the courses?**

There is a Teacher Manual for *Steps to Literacy Initial* and another for *Steps to Literacy*. These will show you how to teach each aspect of the courses. The Software Manual for Steps can be found on your desktop once you have installed Steps. This will show you the software programme itself and explain all of the activities. This Manual can be accessed on computer or printed if you prefer. Just bear in mind that the Manual will automatically update as you download upgrades, so your printed version may become dated!

**Supporting Materials**

When starting to use the courses, you will need the appropriate Teacher Manual, plus workbooks for each of your learners.

You _can_ use the workbook courses without *Steps* (software) or *StepsWeb* (online). They can be used without any software support, although this makes teaching much harder as you need to provide the reinforcement in different ways! The progress table at the beginning of each unit of *Steps to Literacy* refers to the software/online activities.

A variety of game and activity materials are available. The *Schools Resource Pack* contains extensive game and activity materials, including a set of 6 wipe-clean gameboards which provide additional variety. This set of materials is designed to support any literacy teaching approach or materials, not just the Steps to Literacy or Steps to Literacy Initial courses.

**Steps Home Edition**

Teachers may wish to recommend that parents purchase the Home Edition of Steps or the home version of StepsWeb. Parents are often anxious to help their children, but it is sometimes difficult for teachers to suggest appropriate activities. Many parents (even teachers!) cannot work effectively with their own children and some do not know what to
teach. Using the Steps home programme, however, enables them to ensure that their children are doing reinforcement which directly supports the school or tutor. The software is enjoyable and varied, which means less conflict about the dreaded issue of ‘homework’.

The Home Edition of **Steps** currently costs $80 pa for up to 5 learners. **StepsWeb** is $80 pa for the first learner in a family, plus $40 pa for each additional family member when purchased together. (Please check current prices before ordering).

**Teaching Principles**

Detailed teaching notes for the workbook courses are contained in the Teacher Manuals. The Steps Manual covers using the software. However, there are a few key points which are worth a special mention:

- Learners can be taught in a small-group situation (2-6), but *must* be allowed to progress at their own individual rate. To do this, it is essential that there is a computer or laptop available for each learner. The teacher can be working 1:1 with one learner while others are working at an appropriate level individually on computers or doing individual written work. Don’t teach the whole group together (although you can play games together if their literacy levels are similar). Teach individually, but in a group setting.

- One of the biggest problems with this category of learner is the amount of reinforcement which is required. This varies hugely from learner to learner. Keep going back and re-checking previous work and, if necessary, re-teaching it. Don’t leave gaps!

**Differences between Steps to Literacy Initial and Steps to Literacy**

With both courses, workbooks are broken into units. Each unit covers a ‘key word list’, which is a phonics-based list or (in the case of Steps to Literacy Initial) a list which is based on sight vocabulary or word families.

Learners need to do the Steps activities for the A and B lists for each unit. The computer activities need to be done in the order specified, i.e. learner starts in the top left corner and works across each line. The learner needs to achieve at least a Bronze medal for each activity before moving on. A green tick means that the activity has been completed, but not adequately.

On Steps to Literacy Initial, the A list is the key word list for that unit and there is a full range of computer activities to complete. The B list is either a phonics list or a reading list. The phonics lists are regular words which the learner has not yet been taught, but which the learner can decode or encode with no difficulty. The purpose behind the phonic lists is to build the learner’s confidence at tackling unknown words. The reading list is a list of
those words which have been introduced in the reading passage. These may include irregular words or regular words with phonic patterns which are not yet known. The activities on Steps for reading lists is limited to those activities which do not require the learner to actively remember the spelling of those words, but simply to understand their meaning and be able to recognise them.

In Steps to Literacy Initial, words are frequently recycled to build genuine automaticity. Only 8 new words are introduced in each unit, but the computer activities will include words which have been previously taught in order to provide additional practice.

**How much progress should I expect?**

This varies hugely from one learner to another. As a general rule, the ‘average’ learner in this category can be expected to make between 2 and 3 years improvement in Reading and Spelling Ages in one year’s tuition with one hour’s tuition per week. Some schools have reported progress considerably in excess of this.

However, a learner with major processing and perceptual difficulties may take much longer, particularly in the early stages when these processing and perceptual skills are starting to develop. See the progress table below for indicators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lower ability learner</th>
<th>Able dyslexic</th>
<th>Major processing/perceptual difficulties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How should I structure my lesson?**

This can vary hugely. A sample lesson plans is below, but there are some key principles.

- Sessions with more than one learner should be a minimum of 40 minutes
- Start with only two learners at a time until you get used to methods/materials. Learners with mild needs can then be taught in slightly larger groups, but moderate-high needs generally need groups of a maximum of 3 learners.
- Each learner needs a computer
- Allow each learner to progress at his/her own rate
- Games should be short, relevant and based on chance, not skill
- Incorporate huge amounts of reinforcement
- Keep checking previous word lists and Word Race words – re-teach as necessary
- Go back over previous speed readings and reading passages
- Only do 3,3,3 and Word Race once a week for each learner.
Can I include other materials?
Yes, provided that they are directly reinforcing or supporting the core literacy progression in Steps. Don’t go off on a tangent and include other spelling work. Extra reading is fine, extra phonological or language work is great, but don’t include other spelling patterns or materials (other than appropriate word families). The key aspect of the course which makes it successful is its structure. The moment you introduce other spelling materials, you dilute the structure. This is what made many of these learners fail in the first place.

Summary of Key Principles

- Remedial learners taught individually within group setting
- Each learner progresses at their own rate
- Continual re-checking, reinforcement – circular progression
- Remedial learners need the ‘transfer’ of doing written work as well as the computer activities
- Each learner needs his/her own workbook and a computer/laptop to work on
- **Steps does not replace teaching! It is intended to reinforce good teaching.**

Do

- Keep checking retention – circular progression!
- Provide enough ‘teaching time’ for each learner
- Use the computer activities as teaching tools – ensure learners know what they’re expected to do for each activity
- Monitor computer activities/results

Don’t

- Expect the computer to replace a teacher
- Expect learners with moderate – severe needs to progress with only computer activities
- Expect a teacher/teacher aide to work with too big a group
- Expect a remedial literacy learner to cope with class spellings as well
- Water down the programme!

Consider

- Suggesting the home programme if parents want to help
- Arranging for the learner to do some of the computer reinforcement in class time, if possible

It is not realistic to expect a learner with moderate – severe learning needs to make progress with less than a minimum of 1 full hour of active 1:1 teaching per week. This needs to be reinforced with a minimum of 1 full hour of computer reinforcement per week, plus hands-on game-type activities, which can be in a group. This can be achieved in various ways, but it is extremely difficult to include all the teaching elements in a session which is too short. See the following recommendations:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No of learners</th>
<th>Minimum session duration</th>
<th>Total teaching time per learner</th>
<th>Recommended sessions per week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual learner</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>1 hour teaching + 1 hour computer + 30 minutes games</td>
<td>5 x 30 mins OR 4 x 40 mins OR 3 x 50 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two learners</td>
<td>40 minutes</td>
<td>1 hour teaching + 1 hour computer + 30 minutes games</td>
<td>4 x 40 mins OR 3 x 50 mins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three learners</td>
<td>50 minutes</td>
<td>1 hour teaching + 2 hours computer + 30 minutes game</td>
<td>5 x 50 mins OR 4 x 60 mins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remember that one of the main things which goes wrong in the school system is that teachers underestimate quite how much remediation some of these children need. It makes more sense to ‘front load’ remediation and get them up to standard relatively quickly, than to ‘trickle-feed’ throughout their primary school years.

Notes:
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**Steps – the Four-Tier Model**

**Tier 4**  
**High Needs**  
Steps + workbooks + Game/activity materials  
*Individual or small group*  
1 – 3 per teacher  
*Between 4 x 40 mins and 5 x 60 mins per week*

**Tier 3**  
**Mild difficulties**  
More structured approach. Use Steps plus workbook materials.  
*Larger Group*  
Up to 12  
*Between 2 x 40 mins and 4 x 60 mins*

**Tier 2**  
**Learners who just need a boost**  
Use Steps to provide extra practice. Worksheet material as necessary. May use workbook materials.  
*Whole class OR large group*  
*As necessary – 1 hr/week+ ideal*

**Tier 1**  
**Learners with no particular literacy difficulties**  
Use Steps as classroom resource for whole-class teaching or individual reinforcement. No need to use workbooks, but print out worksheets as necessary.  
*Whole class use*  
*As necessary*
Sample Lesson Plan - Two learners. Three 50 minute sessions per week

- Teacher-led activity

### Session 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mins</th>
<th>Learner 1</th>
<th>Learner 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>Word Race</td>
<td>Computer – Steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Steps – practice own list</td>
<td>Work with teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Rhyme Game, followed by initial, final and medial sound activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Work with teacher</td>
<td>Computer - Steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Memory game/activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Session 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mins</th>
<th>Learner 1</th>
<th>Learner 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>Computer - Steps</td>
<td>Word Race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Work with teacher</td>
<td>Steps – practice own list</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Phonics or language game</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Work with teacher</td>
<td>Computer - Steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Perceptual game/activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Session 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mins</th>
<th>Learner 1</th>
<th>Learner 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>Computer - Steps</td>
<td>Work with teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Work with teacher</td>
<td>Computer - Steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Phonics or language game</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Group or individual work with teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Perceptual game/activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sample Lesson Plan - Three learners. Four 60 minute sessions per week

### Session 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mins</th>
<th>Learner 1</th>
<th>Learner 2</th>
<th>Learner 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Steps/workbook activity</td>
<td>Work with teacher</td>
<td>Steps/workbook activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Rhyme Game, followed by initial, final and medial sound activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>Steps/workbook activity</td>
<td>Steps/workbook activity</td>
<td>Work with teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Memory game/activity (if time permits)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Session 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mins</th>
<th>Learner 1</th>
<th>Learner 2</th>
<th>Learner 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Steps/workbook</td>
<td>Steps/workbook</td>
<td>Work with teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Vowel Ladder Game (sample game) followed by short memory activity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>Work with teacher</td>
<td>Steps/workbook</td>
<td>Steps/workbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Memory game/activity (if time permits)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Session 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mins</th>
<th>Learner 1</th>
<th>Learner 2</th>
<th>Learner 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>Computer – Steps</td>
<td>Computer - Steps</td>
<td>Word Race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Work with teacher</td>
<td>Steps/workbook</td>
<td>Steps/workbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Listening Skills activity, e.g. listening to story or passage, then discussing and answering questions – whole group activity.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-15</td>
<td>Steps/workbook activity</td>
<td>Work with teacher</td>
<td>Steps/workbook activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>Vocabulary/language game (if time permits)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Session 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mins</th>
<th>Learner 1</th>
<th>Learner 2</th>
<th>Learner 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Work with teacher</td>
<td>Computer – Steps</td>
<td>Computer – Steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Steps/workbook</td>
<td>Work with teacher</td>
<td>Steps/workbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Language activity or game</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Steps/workbook activity</td>
<td>Steps/workbook activity</td>
<td>Work with teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Visual perception game/activity (if time permits)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Organisational requirements

Quiet room with no distractions
Teaching table in centre – ideally round or oval (better for games)
Computer for each learner
Headphones for each learner – ideally ‘earmuff’ type
Plug-in microphone for recording new words – not often used
Easy access to printer is ideal – can print off worksheets/homework
Note: Seat the teacher so they can just glance up from the learner they are working with and monitor what the learners on computers are doing!

Additional resources

Essential for maximum effectiveness: Selection of hands-on game materials, including Schools Resource Pack and Stargame resources
Very beneficial: Supporting software – maths, memory, listening skills, reading comprehension

How to get started

Resourcing

❖ Steps software licence - free technical support included. Also includes 15 free online log-ins for StepsWeb.
❖ Teacher Manuals for each level of the course – consider the Initial Pack, which also includes one of each workbook, which most schools keep as a ‘reference’ pack. This also gives you two free Answer Booklets.
❖ Schools Resource Pack (if working with learners with reading/spelling ages of below 10 years).

Process

❖ Test each remedial learner using the Schonell spelling test on Steps, the Placement Test or your preferred spelling test.
❖ Use the spelling age (and background knowledge of the learner) to establish starting point. Ring us for guidance if necessary.
❖ Order workbooks for each remedial learner.

General

❖ Start with small groups until you have established a good routine and are familiar with the materials. Maximum of two moderate-high need learners at a time. Maximum of four learners with mild needs.
❖ Log each learner into Steps (using capital letters for names).
Example costings for start-up (check current pricing)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All prices exclude gst</th>
<th>Total Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Steps Network Licence</strong>&lt;br&gt; (includes 15 free StepsWeb logins)</td>
<td>$450 pa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Combined Starter Pack</strong>&lt;br&gt; (Steps to Literacy and Steps to Literacy Initial)&lt;br&gt; two Teacher Manuals + 12 workbooks&lt;br&gt; Includes 2 x free Answer Booklets</td>
<td>$242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Schools Resource Pack</strong></td>
<td>$250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual workbooks</strong></td>
<td>$11.50 per learner (usually approx 1 term’s work)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Frequently Asked Questions

**Can I work with larger groups?**
If your learners have only very mild difficulties, you can work actively with groups of up to 6 learners at a time, providing that each learner has his/her own computer. Use the principle that the bigger your group, the longer your overall teaching time should be. Look at the following examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group size (mild difficulties only)</th>
<th>Sessions per week (can be varied, providing the same overall time is provided. Minimum times below:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – 2 learners</td>
<td>2 x 40 mins per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 learners</td>
<td>4 x 50 mins per week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-6 learners</td>
<td>4 x 60 mins per week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bear in mind that, if Steps is used only to support and reinforce classroom teaching (or small group work), it is feasible for one teacher or teacher-aide to supervise a much larger group. Just remember that it is not really possible to do any actual teaching in this situation. Learners in this situation need to be quite clear about what they are doing and not need anything other than occasional support or direction.

**Should I set homework?**

Some reinforcement can be very helpful, but it is very important that learners in this category do not get overloaded with too much written work. If you know that the learner has Steps at home, you can ask him to do some extra practice on the computer. Practising speedreading or reading passages is also useful.
One of the learners in the group is progressing much slower than the others. How can I keep them all together?

Don't try to keep them all together. The point of this method is that you are not teaching the group together (apart from some game activities). You are teaching individually within a group setting. Each learner must be allowed to progress at his/her own rate. The biggest mistake most teachers make is to allow learners to progress too quickly and not check that previous learning is being retained.

Should I also teach the spelling words my learners get from their class teachers?

No. You need to speak to the class teacher and explain that these learners cannot be expected to learn two separate lists of words. Ask if they can be excused from the normal class lists and only do the Steps lists.

I've been finding that the children have forgotten the words a few weeks later. What's going wrong?

It is likely that you’re progressing too quickly and not including enough reinforcement. You need to be continually going back and checking retention. If there are problems, it is usually due to one of three things:

- The learner is at the wrong level – you’ve put them on too high a level.
- You’re progressing too fast – this learner needs more reinforcement.
- You’re teaching too many new words using 3,3,3.

One of my learners can write the words individually from dictation at the end of the unit, but then spells the word incorrectly when he writes the sentence. Why is this happening?

There is an aspect known as ‘transfer’, which is a particular problem with dyslexic learners. When he is trying to write the sentence from dictation, he is simply not making the connection with the word he is now familiar with. You should bring his attention to the fact that it is a word he now knows (sounds obvious, but isn’t to some of these learners!). If the problem persists, include a few short sentence dictations as you go through each unit to develop the transfer aspect. Short dictations are a good activity anyway, as they are quite complex. Just be careful to keep them short and simple – don’t overload your learner.

My learner copes with the unit words when he does the dictations, but makes mistakes with other words. What should I do?

Just correct the errors and show him where he went wrong. Then enter those words into the ‘Individual Word List’ section at the back of the workbook and teach them using 3,3,3 at an appropriate point.

I’ve got a learner who really struggles with phonological awareness. Is it enough to be just working through the workbooks and computer activities?

No, it’s not enough. These learners are the ones who really need the hands-on games and activities. Games such as the Vowel Ladder Set, Rhyme Set and Short Vowel Set are particularly valuable for learners in this category.
Method for Teaching Individual Words – 3,3,3

This is a highly effective method for teaching and then reinforcing individual words. It can be used for high frequency words, irregular words or words of particular significance to that learner.

To teach the words, you will just need a supply of rough paper (one clear side) and a pencil/pen. Then you will need the Word Race pages in the back of each workbook.

The process below is intended to be used only once per week (regardless of how many times you actually work with each learner).

Use the ‘Individual Word List’ sheets at the back of each workbook to record words which need to be taught. Ideally, these should come from the learner’s own work. Go through his school books and list those words he is currently struggling with. Then identify no more than 1-5 words per week to teach, using this method.

Having identified the words you intend to teach, follow these steps:

Ask the learner to have a go at the word, writing it on a piece of rough paper. Encourage him to be aware of the sounds and try to work it out.

Write the correct version by his version clearly and in fairly large letters (always lower case). Using colour can sometimes help. Be careful to praise all the correct letters and point out when his attempt is phonically logical, even if it wasn’t correct – it shows he is developing the right skills.

Discuss what he finds the ‘difficult bit’ of the word. If possible, find a mnemonic to help him remember that bit.

ROUTE ROUTE

“We go out in the ute”
It can be as silly as you like:

Big elephants can always upset small elephants

1. Now cover up his version and only look at yours. The reason for this and for writing the word in lower case letters is that you are building a visual memory of the word and you want it to be the right one!

*Concentrating on the correct version is the first step to building a visual memory of that word.*

2. Get the learner to spell the word out loud while looking at the letters – pointing if necessary. Do this until he has done it correctly three times.

*Spelling the word out loud builds an auditory memory for the spelling. There is also an element of kinaesthetic memory (memory for movement), because there is movement involved in articulating the sounds. He is, of course, also still looking at the word, which reinforces visual memory.*

3. Cover the word and ask him to spell it to you again, this time without looking. If there is any problem, go back a stage and look at the word. Do not go on until he has spelled the word correctly three times without looking.

*He is still building auditory and kinaesthetic memories for the word. Although he cannot see it, he is having to visualize the word, which is still reinforcing visual memory.*

4. Let him look at the word again. Ask him to visualize the word in his mind. You can ask him to ‘take a picture with your mind’. Then get him to close his eyes and see if he can still see it. It doesn’t matter too much if he can or not (although this skill can be developed). It’s the process that’s the most important thing.

*This aspect is crucial in reinforcing visual memory, but also helps to develop the skill of visualization, which is usually very weak in learners with literacy difficulties. This skill can be developed separately as well.*
5. Cover the word again and ask him to write it, saying the letters out loud as he does it. Do this until he has done it three times correctly. If necessary, go back to previous steps and repeat them.

This final stage reinforces all three aspects of memory. Kinaesthetic memory is strengthened by practicing the movement involved in writing the word, as well as by saying the letters.

For obvious reasons, this method is sometimes known as the ‘3, 3, 3’ method!

Note: There should never be any copying involved. The learner always writes the word from memory, covering over the previous attempts.

Make sure that the learner always spells the word aloud while writing it. It may help with longer words if the learner practises dividing the word into syllables first and writes each chunk.

Teaching a multi-syllabic or complex word

When teaching a multi-syllabic or complex word, it is too difficult to use individual letters. Show the learner how to break the word up into individual syllables.

Remember

It is sometimes useful to get the learner to repeat the syllables several times, tapping them out on the table.

Then get the learner to say each chunk at a time, and then write that chunk. They can do an adapted form of the 3,3,3, using the syllable chunks, instead of individual letters.

Word Race

Teaching the word is actually only the first stage. Specialist teachers have long known about the importance of phonological awareness when teaching literacy. However, the relevance of visual memory is becoming more and more widely recognised. Unless a learner can develop ‘rapid whole-word recognition’, he will never be a fluent reader. If he never becomes a fluent reader, he won’t read because it’s too much like hard work! You also can’t follow the content effectively when you are having to decode words.

Developing ‘rapid whole-word recognition' depends very largely on having a visual memory for words. Research has shown that learners with no literacy difficulties typically need
between 4-10 exposures to a word to fix it in their long-term memories. However, learners with literacy difficulties, particularly Specific Learning Disability (dyslexia), can need 300-1300 exposures to words before they become fixed in long-term memory. Most remedial methods and materials fail with these learners because they provide nothing like enough reinforcement.

The WORD RACE sheet is a light-hearted but extremely effective method for providing reinforcement for the irregular/high-frequency words taught by the 3, 3, 3 method.

When the word has been taught using the above method, the learner writes it into the first box on the left hand side of the Word Race sheet. He should be able to write it independently, with no copying, by this stage. If not, re-teach it!

Any other words taught at the same time should be entered into the left-hand column in the same way.

The next time you work with the learner, you will test all the words on the ‘Word Race’ sheet without him having seen them first.

If the word is written correctly (on rough paper), it can be entered into the next column along.

If there was a mistake, you go through the 3, 3, 3 process again.

The learner only writes words he got correct into the next column.

Once the word reaches the final column of the page, it is ‘at the finishing line’ – and should now have been learned! You don’t need to test that word regularly any more, although it is a good idea to go back occasionally and just check previous words. You will always find one or two that have been forgotten.

Just go through the whole process (including 3, 3, 3) again and enter it into ‘Word Race’ again. That’s quite natural. Some words stick better than others.

Notes
There are recording forms in Word format on the website (under Printables) and can be downloaded and copied or adapted freely.
Whole-class Options
Steps can also be used as general curriculum support, for ESOL, for Māori/Pasifika learners or as a structured literacy scheme in its own right.

Literacy course option
Every learner in the school can be logged into Steps or StepsWeb, working at his or her own level, at his/her own pace. The teacher can choose to use any of the following course progressions:

- Courses option
- High Frequency words
- Commonly Mis-spelled words
- Customized course

All of these options provide a logical, structured progression, although the Courses Option is the most comprehensive because it incorporates high frequency words, spelling patterns, word families, common words (days, months, etc) and key grammar points.

There are lots of advantages to using the Courses option. All learners in the class/school are tested and placed on the right level of the Courses (Steps to Literacy Initial or Steps to Literacy). All learners do the computer activities, reinforced where necessary by printable worksheets from Steps itself. Only those learners in the remedial category need to be on the workbooks as well.

The advantages of this are:

- Each learner works at the correct level and pace
- Steps automatically analyses the learners’ errors and provides individualized revision activities
- Steps provides printable worksheets which can be used for homework/written classwork
- Steps provides the teacher with a summary sheet each week, month or term, which gives the level and accuracy rating for each pupil in that class
- Full pupil records are provided for each learner

Curriculum Support option
The class teacher can use Steps to teach subject or topic vocabulary, including words, sentences and definitions.

Advantages are:

- Steps can provide extra reinforcement for those who need it
- The teacher can use Steps to generate subject/topic worksheets
- The teacher can ‘pre-teach’ topic or subject vocabulary
Custom courses (only available on Steps at present)

It is even possible to create a complete custom course for a school. This can be structured in such a way as to support the curriculum throughout the school. An example is given below, showing categories, subcategories and wordlists:

Mountain View School

Year One

Topics
- Family
- Animals
- The Beach

Spelling Lists
- High Frequency List 1
- at Words
- High Frequency List 2
- og Words
- High Frequency List 3

Important Words
- Number words
- Shapes
- Colours

Reading Books
- The Bike Race
- Bedtime for Bear
- The Ugly Duckling
- Plant Traps
- Space Race

Year Two

Topics
- Sports
- Plants
- Insects

Spelling Lists
- High Frequency List 6

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