

Cracking The Code

Cracking The Code is an intervention for struggling readers. The intervention enables readers to systematically identify letter combinations (otherwise known as exceptions to the rules) in words for reading or spelling. Struggling readers need Cracking The Code to understand the complexities of our written English language. For example: There are 44 sounds but only 26 letters and one of those letters does not have a unique sound. The additional 19 sounds use a combination of the 26 letters. Some combinations produce the same sound, for example, ai, ay, eigh, ey. Sound confusing? This is just a partial list of what readers must internalize to be fluent readers of the English language. Unlike fluent readers, struggling readers do not read enough words to see, understand and internalize the exceptions. They perceive the combinations as random and numerous. This lack of understanding leads to confusion and frustration. Cracking The Code uses an intentional, systematic approach to teach explicitly how to recognize and use the various combinations in a consistent manner.

Cracking The Code is a 12-week intervention program to use in conjunction with your current reading program. The intervention is 30 minutes a day, 4-5 times per week. Readers learn each level to mastery before moving to the next level. The first 4 levels deal with the basic phonics principles.

Level 1 Consonants

Level 2 Consonants That Go Together (Blends/digraphs)

Level 3 One Vowel pattern (Short vowel sounds)

Level 4 Two Vowel pattern (Long vowel sounds)

Levels 5-12 deal with letter combinations that are exceptions to the basic rules.

Level 5 Three Vowel pattern

Level 6 “o” patterns (diphthongs)

Level 7 “r” patterns (r controlled vowels)

Level 8 “le” pattern

Level 9 “w” pattern

Level 10 “y” patterns

Level 11 “gh” patterns

Level 12 “q” pattern

The Process

Each level requires the readers to learn a verbal pattern and a marking symbol. For example, in level 1 the reader states, “I underline...” (They name each consonant and draw a line under each consonant.) Readers always begin marking a word with the level they are learning and then apply the previous level, all the way back to level 1. For example: A student learning level four would first look for a two vowel pattern, then a one vowel pattern, then consonants that go together and then consonants by themselves.

Level 7 teaches readers to use the marking to identify the number of sounds and syllables in a word and then to use that information to pronounce the word. For example: The reader is on level 7 and the word is “source.” (Remember, they have mastered what to say and mark at each level.)

Step 1 First mark the “r” patterns

s(our)c~~e~~

Step 2 Look for any “o” patterns (none)

*Readers know letters can only be marked once. The “ou” has already been marked as part of the “r” pattern. This example demonstrates how using the order helps the readers correctly identify the combination of letters used in the word.

Step 3 Look for 3 vowels (none)

Step 4 Look for 2 vowels (none)

Step 5 Look for 1 vowel (none)

Step 6 Look for consonants that go together (none)

Step 7 Look for consonants by themselves

s (our) c~~e~~

Readers learned that each mark represents 1 sound. They learned a letter that is crossed off makes no sound. They know circled letters make a special sound. The reader states, “The word has 3 sounds and one is a special sound.” The “s” is underlined, “our” is circled and the “c” is underlined. Three marks, three sounds (The “e” is crossed off and does not count)

Next, the reader counts the vowel marks; there is one (“our” is circled). The reader states, “The word has one vowel mark therefore, it has one syllable.”

Cracking The Code empowers struggling readers to identify the number of sounds and syllables in a word and then to pronounce the word. The system works and remains constant. Readers follow twelve patterns instead of random rules.

Turning a New Page changed the cover of the student practice book to reflect what struggling readers were saying across the country, “I get it.” The research behind the program is solid. The results after using the program are significant. Visit our website, www.turninganewpage.com or call our office for more information.