

## *The Revised “Orton” Phonograms for Correct Spelling*

### *Complete Phonetics Ensures Early Success*

The consonant phonograms below are taught in most basal reading methods (not “whole language” methods), but are not usually taught “explicitly” (without key words or pictures) as compiled research recommends.<sup>1</sup> In this method two sounds for the letters **c**, **g**, and **s** are taught immediately and **q** is taught with **u** with which it is always written. Only the **sounds** are dictated as the letters are written. The “key words” shown below are for teachers and parents only to determine the correct pronunciations which *can* vary from area to area.

**b** (bat) **c** (cat, cent) **d** (dog)  
**f** (fat) **g** (got, gem) **h** (hot) **j** (job)  
**k** (keg) **l** (lid) **m** (mop) **n** (no)  
**p** (put) **qu** (quit) **r** (run) **s** (sit, is)  
**t** (top) **v** (vase) **w** (wet) **x** (box)  
**y** (yet) **z** (zip)

Next are the vowels. The multiple sounds are not taught soon enough in most methods. Here vowels are taught in the order of frequency of their use in words as shown in the sample words. Third and fourth sounds of **a**, **i**, **o**, and **u**, for example, are needed early for both spelling and reading of simple words. *Note:* **y** takes the place of **i** for spelling and is used as both a vowel and a consonant.

**a** (at, ate, want, talk) **e** (end, we)  
**i** (it, like, radio) **o** (dot, open, do, cost) **u** (up, music, blue, put)  
**y** (myth, my, baby)

The following combinations are not consistently taught in most methods though they are needed for spelling. Very often the letter **r** has been taught as ‘er’ or ‘ruh’ which is incorrect. Spelling errors and students with poor auditory discrimination can be the result. Key words *are* taught with this group since it is the only way to designate the phonograms.

**er** (her) **ur** (nurse) **ir** (first) **wor** (works) **ear** (early) **oa** (boat)  
**oe** (toe)

The next phonograms are taught in pairs to illustrate their use for correct spelling (English words do not end with **i** or **u**):

**ay** (pay) **ai** (paid) **oy** (boy) **oi** (boil) **aw** (law) **au** (fault) **ew** (grew, few) **eu** (neutral, feud)  
**ey** (they, key) **ei** (veil, receive)

The following common spellings of the sounds ‘**sh**’ and ‘**zh**’ are also needed early for correct spelling.

**sh** [used at the beginning of a word (**sh**ut), at the end of a syllable (**push**), but not at the beginning of any syllable after the first one (na **tion**), except for the ending ‘**ship**’ (**worship**)] **ti** (nation) **si** (session, vision) **ci** (special) [all used at the beginning of any syllable after the first one]

The next group are 2-, 3- and 4-letter spellings of sounds more commonly represented by one letter:

**ck** (neck) **dge** (edge) **tch** (catch)  
**kn** (know) **gn** (gnaw, reign)  
**ee** (feel) **igh** (high) **eigh** (eight)  
**wr** (write) **ph** (phone)

These last phonograms are also essential phonetic information for spelling and reading.

**ow** (now, low) **ou** (out, four, you, touch) **ng** (ring) **ch** (chin, echo, chef) **ea** (eat, head, break)  
**wh** (when) **ed** (started, loved, missed) **ie** (field, lie) **ar** (far)  
**oo** (boot, foot, floor) **or** (for)  
**th** (think, this) **ough** (though, through, rough, cough, thought, bough)

<sup>1</sup> Anderson, R., et al, 1985, *Becoming a Nation of Readers*, Riggs Institute Press, Beaverton, Oregon

**Note:** Professional teaching tools (phonogram cards, audio tapes and audio CDs) are available from The Riggs Institute. 1-800-200-4840