

## **Decoding the Ethics Code: A Practical Guide for Psychologists**

What is Decoding?

A Critical Foundation for Reading Success

Effective reading strategies range from visualizing and questioning to pre-reading and decoding. Reading strategies are used to help students become efficient readers. Many of these reading strategies are foundational and must be taught and mastered by the student before other strategies can be effective.

What is decoding?

Decoding is the process of translating print into speech by rapidly matching a letter or combination of letters (graphemes) to their sounds (phonemes) and recognizing the patterns that make syllables and words. There is an area in the brain that deals with language processing and does this process automatically.

Unfortunately, about 30 percent of students do not access this part of their brain and therefore must be taught decoding strategies very explicitly and systematically, meaning that we start with the simplest sound/letter concept and build to the more complex. This method of phonics instruction has been proven to be the most effective in helping students gain decoding skills.

Why is decoding important?

Decoding is important because it is the foundation on which all other reading instruction builds. If students cannot decode words their reading will lack fluency, their vocabulary will be limited and their reading comprehension will suffer. Teaching higher-level reading strategies to students stuck at the word level is ineffective. We might as well be banging our head against a wall.

How should decoding be taught?

Explicit, systematic and multi-sensory phonics instruction produces effective decoding skills. Phonics can be taught both implicitly or explicitly. Implicit phonics begins with a whole word and then looks at beginning sounds, ending sounds and context clues. Explicit phonics does the reverse by building from a single letter to a word. Because of poor results with implicit phonics, phonics instruction has been given a negative connotation—"phonics is not really effective unless it is taught explicitly and systematically. Phonics taught any other way could be compared to an alphabet soup of sounds. The way it is taught is what determines the level of success, particularly for those with learning disabilities such as dyslexia.

Presenting phonics and instructing it in a logical sequence, in which one concept builds upon the next, is another essential component of teaching phonics and decoding. This systematic approach helps students master skills quickly and move to the next concept seamlessly. Teaching phonics using a multi-sensory approach reaches all learning styles in a classroom and gives those struggling readers the visual and hands-on instruction they need. When phonics is taught

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according to these guidelines, students will be able to find decoding success and it will quickly become an automatic process for them.

### Results

Automatic recognition of individual words leads to fluent reading of strings of words, which in turn leads to full comprehension—the goal of reading instruction. When this process is automatic and efficient then additional reading strategies can be taught to help the students glean more from what they read and have a successful and fulfilling experience with text. What more could we want?

To learn more about reading instruction, check out our list of reading strategies as well as other great teacher resources.

## Reference

[CLEP® Human Growth & Development Book + Online \(CLEP Test Preparation\)](#)

[Donald Seldin: The Maestro of Medicine](#)