



# VOWAC®

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~~A horse~~ chameleon  
of another color  
Orton-Gillingham approach  
used in VōWac® lessons



Reading is one thing. Understanding how and why words are spelled a certain way is another thing.

Children that have strong word attack (decoding) skills tend to have a higher level of comprehension, greater fluency, and a better understanding of the mechanics and construction of the English language.

Decoding skills have proven to be essential to higher reading scores. Of course, there are many factors that affect test scores. Some are under your control – some are not. Making sure decoding skills are taught definitely **IS** in the teacher's hands.

This is exactly what **VōWac®** skills and spelling cultivates. Each **VōWac®** lesson provides a structural, cognitive, and sequential approach to language instruction.

Sounds like the **Orton-Gillingham (OG)** approach? It is! **OG**, developed in the 1930's was primarily used for students with dyslexia. Even today, the **OG** approach is interpreted as a method to be used only for remediation. However, the multi-sensory component found in **OG** and in all **VōWac®** lessons impacts all children, young and old.

The unique aspect of this type of instruction is that it allows the teacher to teach to a student's strongest learning modality; auditory, visual, or kinesthetic, while strengthening the weaker modality at the same time.

The mechanics and construction of the English language

## 3rd & 4th Grade Still need skills instruction

Most basic skills a child will need are taught in K - 2. These skills allow a child to demonstrate an understanding of simple and complex letter-sound-symbol relationships. It will also include a large core of high-frequency words and a repertoire of word solving strategies

Unfortunately, many schools of thought embrace the idea that phonics skills do not need to be taught after grade two. It is true, there are not many new skills taught after second grade, but it is imperative that teachers grade three on up, insist students continue to apply learned decoding skills from the primary years.

This becomes essential beginning in grade three and four, when almost 150 different prefixes, suffixes, and roots are being introduced.

VōWac® teaches almost 150 affixes and roots by the end of grade four. Considering the typical vocabulary a fourth grader should have accumulated by that time, the affixes and roots potentially increase his vocabulary by an additional, not up to, but an additional 90,000 to 120,000 words.

It is easy to see that instruction at the primary level truly is just the tip of the iceberg.



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## Build a strong foundation



Preschool is the perfect time to begin building a solid foundation for reading and language.

Most of your child's learning happens as natural as he plays and experiences the many ups and downs of life. Reading skills, however, must eventually be taught.

As your child gets older, there are many things you will teach him to do; picking up toys, putting on socks and shoes. Believe it or not, a parent can teach their child to read, too!

Before formal reading instruction begins, it is important to identify five essential skills your child must master.

Understanding **print awareness** is the first. This is simply recognizing that the print on a page represents words that have meaning and are related to our verbal language.

Be sure to read books together. This will teach your child the basic concepts of how to hold a book properly, reading from left to right, and moving from front to back.

While in the car, point out road signs. Identify store signs, not just by logo but the letters. Point out food cans and boxes at the store. And while cooking, discuss the ingredients of a recipe. Create as much verbal language exchange as possible.

There are many activities you can do to promote **letter knowledge**. Your child should be able to recognize the names of the letters of the alphabet as well as the sounds they make. Singing the alphabet song together is always fun. Try starting at different letters. Use an alphabet strip to point out the letters as you sing. Spend some time showing the difference between upper and lower case letters. Letter blocks, play dough, and refrigerator magnets are all excellent mediums to use when

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Sample pages of the 170+ available from the

Preschool CD. Available only from VōWac® Publishing Company.  
Item PK-CD

## Orton-Gillingham approach

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deals with the how and why of the language. Once a child understands how and why words are spelled and pronounced a certain way, mastery of the language is much easier to attain.

The structure of the language becomes more complex as more and more skills are learned. Students must understand and be able to identify common rules and vowel patterns. Though they may not know what they are called, students must understand phonemes and morphemes, such as prefixes, suffixes, and roots.

One of the parallels VōWac® uses is a chameleon. A chameleon is unique because it changes color according to its surroundings and environment. Vowels are exactly like a chameleon. Depending on where they are in a word and what surrounds them, help determine what they say.

VōWac® strongly urges teachers to continue to *push the student's envelope*. Make sure they are using newly acquired decoding skills in **ALL** content areas; especially when introducing new vocabulary. Be sure to avoid teaching a skill in isolation. Make it practical. Make it relevant.

There are a number of commercial reading systems that incorporate the **OG** approach. Some are much more intensive than others. Most are designed to be used in a small group setting or one-on-one. VōWac® is unique because it is designed for whole-class delivery. It was designed to be a supplement to any reading basal program.

The lessons are easy to teach, following the **OG** scope and sequence of skills. Many **OG** purists will tell you that you have to have formal training to properly teach **OG** methods. Not true. There's no denying; formal **OG** training will provide an in-depth study into the approach and its delivery. VōWac® lessons were created by, Mary Gomer, an **OG** trained teacher with teachers in mind. She made it easy to use the **OG** method in hopes that any and all teachers would be able to deliver basic and sound instruction to all children, regardless of ability.

It is with this in mind that we offer schools an opportunity to enrich their existing curriculum using one of the most effective approaches available...and do it easily and cost effectively.



Sample pages from the **NEW** Preschool CD. Order yours today!

## Build a strong foundation (continued from pg. 2)

exploring letters. Use a small chalk or white board to practice writing the letters.

Reading nursery rhymes and rhyming picture books will help develop **phonemic awareness**. There are countless clapping and rhyming games you can play with your child. *Pat-a-cake*, *Miss Mary Mack*, and *I Went to a Chinese Restaurant* are a few.

Silly songs are always rib-tickling. Try changing the beginning sound in some of the words. For example, sing, "Bary had a bittle bamb, bittle bamb. Bary had a bittle bamb, its bleece was blite as bow."

Playing *I Spy* will encourage children to identify words that begin with specific letters. "I spy with my keen eye something that starts with /b/."

Reading aloud to your child daily will develop and improve **listening comprehension**. This important skill will increase vocabulary and help him better understand the world surrounding him.

Be sure to attend story time at your local library. They will better learn to interact with books and have an opportunity to spend time with other children

acting out plays and playing games that promote reading.

Set an example. Make sure your child sees you reading and enjoying books.

And finally, give your child the **motivation to read**. Expose him to both fiction and nonfiction. As you are reading, discuss the story. Ask questions about events in the story. "What do you think will happen next?" "Why did the little girl chase the dog?" This will also help build your child's vocabulary.

Storytelling and imaginative play is a great way to get children to express themselves and enhances the language experience.

VōWac® offers two tips of advice. Be sure your child is ready. Pushing a child to read too early can have a huge negative impact that will last a long time.

Secondly, have fun. Make it enjoyable. Keep the time frame to about 15 - 20 minutes depending upon the child's ability and attention span.

Promoting these essential skills will give your child a serious advantage when they begin school.

VōWac® challenges you to find a more effective word attack program. Take advantage of our pilot offer. VōWac® will loan your school at least two teacher kits (Levels K & 1 or 1 & 2). Up to 18 workbooks per classroom for two rooms are free (pay only s/h). Use VōWac® for the entire school year. Compare it to your existing skills program or any other under consideration. If you can find another program that gives you better results - buy it. Since 1983, over 95% of schools participating in our pilot adopt VōWac® in part or whole. We also offer the free use of a training DVD. Take the challenge. Your students deserve it!

## CHUNK IT!

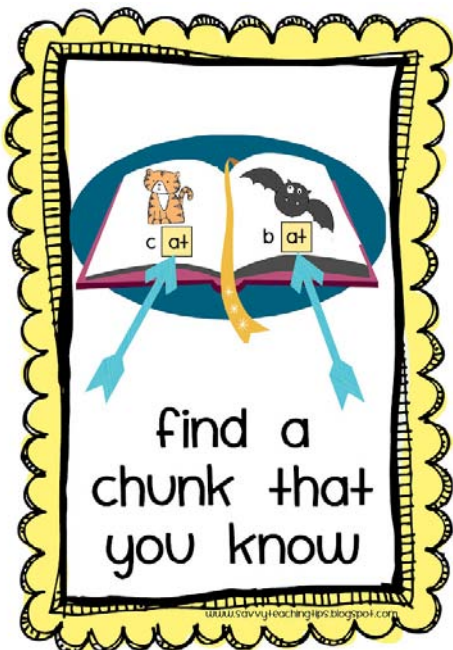
In first grade, after your students have studied short vowel patterns, blends, digraphs, r-control patterns, and some of the long vowel patterns, they will start to run into independent reading books containing multisyllabic words. Their response will often be to freeze. Often these words will intimidate an emergent reader.

One way to get him comfortable with these longer words is to show him how many of the smaller sight words he already knows are simply put together to make longer words.

Teach him to identify what he already knows. Circle or write those parts using a different color. Then read the words aloud.

Introduce words with the VCCV pattern with doubles (rabbit, hammer). Show how the words can be chunked or divided between the double letters. Then start adding VCCV words with different consonants. Show him how the process to chunking is exactly the same.

Introduce words that are a little harder as you progress. Use the same chunking technique to tackle those much longer words.



# Taking the Guesswork Out of Spelling

This article was first printed in NCTE's quarterly publication, *Voices from the Middle*. The author, Jay Richards, has graciously provided permission to VoWac Publishing Company to reprint this article in *SMANTIX!*® and on our web site, [www.vowac.com](http://www.vowac.com). Mr. Richards is an 8th grade English instructor at Central Middle School in San Carlos, California.

Ask an eighth grader to spell "noticeable" and you'll likely see a look of uncertainty cross his face as his internal voice questions, "Do I keep the e or not?" Ask another to spell *blanketing* or *permitted* and you'll again notice that pause in her thinking as she wonders, "Do I double the t?"

Ultimately, many students will simply guess. Some will guess correctly and some won't, though even many of those who guess right probably can't give you a good reason why: "*Robert, why did you double the t in permitting but not double the t in blanketing?*" "*I don't know - it just looked right.*"

When a student guesses, that guess is usually accompanied by an anxious uncertainty about the decision. Students who have to guess a lot when spelling don't believe they have control over their language; they think the language has control over them.

What most students don't realize is that there's logic behind seemingly random spellings. Evidence from the past 20 years controverts the claim that English spelling is chaotic and unprincipled (Schlagel & Schlagel, 1992). There's an understandable reason why *blanketed* has one *t* and *permitted* has two. <sup>1</sup> Teaching students the patterns and rules of our language helps their spelling improve.

1. The key to this doubling dilemma involves knowing stressed syllables. In words of two or more syllables ending with a consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC), you double the final consonant before a suffix ending with a vowel when the last syllable is stressed. Hence, permit becomes permitted. If the CVC syllable before the suffix is not stressed, you typically do not double the final consonant. Hence, blanket and barrel-words in which the first syllable is stressed, not the syllable preceding the suffix, become blanketed and barreling.

Of course, those students need teachers who know the rules themselves. I've presented workshops on spelling to bright, terrific teachers who tell me afterwards, "No one ever taught me this stuff!" Being a good speller yourself doesn't really help your students unless you can explain to your students the reason why the word is spelled the way it is. A few of the "why's" to ponder:

- Why do I drop the *e* at the end of *create* to spell *creating* but keep the *e* at the end of *creative* to spell *creatively*?
- Why do I just add *s* to some words ending in *y* to make them plural (*Sundays*), though in other words ending in *y* I drop the *y* and add *-ies*?
- Why does *c* sometimes make a *k* sound and other times make an */s/* sound?
- If I'm going to add *-ness* to a word that ends in *n*, do I drop the *n* already in the word?
- What is the 1 - 1 - 1 rule?
- Why is *permitted* spelled with two *t*'s while *trumpeted* is spelled with only one?
- When should I use *-ible* and when should I use *-able*?
- Why do I drop the silent *e* in *noticing* but keep it in *noticeable*?
- Why do words like *happy*, *bossy* and *funny* have doubled consonants?

(Continued.....) Finish reading this article, ***Taking the Guesswork Out of Spelling***, available in its entirety, on our web site, [www.vowac.com](http://www.vowac.com).

## A simple game of Hangman

We've probably all played Hangman as kids. It was something to do on a rainy day and certainly kept us busy long enough for Mom to catch a break from our shenanigans. Little did we know that we were honing some important spelling skills and strategies.

Hangman is a great word game for small group or for the entire class. Wheel of Fortune™ was created from this same concept. Use words from previous and current spelling lists. Include vocabulary from all content areas.

Smartboards are a great medium for this activity. Old school teachers might even bring out the old overhead projector. Either way, your students will have fun fine tuning their spelling strategies.

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