

# HOW TO SPOT FAKE PHONICS

## SIGHT WORDS

Is your school's programme really Systematic Synthetic Phonics or is it a fake?

Learning words by sight, or by memorising their shape, is a limited strategy. It confuses struggling/dyslexic readers and undermines phonics teaching. Common or tricky words should be taught in sensible groups e.g. *he, she, me, be* or *could, would, should* (rather than random collections) with attention being drawn to the tricky part and the rest sounded and blended as usual with phonics all-the-way-through-the-word. **Watch for:** random word lists (to be memorised); common word walls

## BANDED READING BOOKS

For more info see:  
[iferi.org](http://iferi.org)

MIS-MATCH

Phonics teaching should be supported by decodable books or reading material that matches children's current knowledge of letters and sounds. This enables children to practise, read independently, and make rapid progress. Banded reading books are not based on phonics. Instead, they rely upon predictable, repetitive text, whole-word memorisation and **guessing**. They are not matched to phonics teaching and are confusing for children, especially struggling/dyslexic readers.

## MULTI-CUEING & GUESSING

For more info see:  
[dyslexics.org.uk](http://dyslexics.org.uk)

FLIM FLAM

When children don't have the phonics they need to read, they are encouraged to look at the pictures, to read on, or back—to **guess** what a word might be. This is called *multi-cueing* and it is not a reliable strategy! It results in children looking everywhere for the 'answer'—instead of at the word on the page where all the 'clues' that are required are there in the letters—ready to be sounded out and blended. **Also useless:** word within a word; look for a rime; chunking

## POOR PRACTICE

Reading practice should include plenty of opportunities to read by sounding out & blending printed words...

Core routines may be weak and lack necessary elements. If children are being asked to 'break' (oral segmentation) a given spoken word, then 'make' it by choosing letters—this is actually spelling (encoding)—but it is insufficient on its own. Routines should include lots of practice in **both** decoding (sounding out & blending) for reading and encoding for spelling. **Watch for incorrect terminology e.g.:** joined phoneme; split phoneme. **N.B. sounds=phonemes and letters=graphemes!**