

## **The Five Learning Stations**

Picture Packets  
Worksheets  
Books  
Stamping/Writing  
Handwriting/Decoding

### **Picture Packet Station**

Two-Sound Word Cards  
Three-Sound Word Cards  
Phrase Cards  
Transition Sentence Cards Cards  
Vowels-Only Cards

### **Picture Packets Station**

The first learning station to which the students are introduced is the Picture Packet Station. Although the reality of the classroom is that the introduction of Two-Sound Picture Packets is followed by the successive introductions of Two-Sound Worksheets, Two-Sound Books, two-sound stamping activities, and the beginning handwriting activities, this reality is to be ignored in the discussion that follows. Instead, the whole range of Picture Packet activities from the two-sound level through the vowels-only level will be described before the activities for the Worksheets Station are discussed. This form of presentation is used here so that all of the information on each station may be contained in its own separate section.

### **Two-Sound Word Cards**



Students are ready to begin the Two-Sound Picture Packets as soon as:

- 1) The students know at least the first eight sounds.
- 2) The teacher is content with the level of expertise demonstrated by the majority of the class with the Two-Sound Flipbook.
- 3) Through the use of the Two-Sound Flipbook, the students have learned the vocabulary of the Picture Packets they will be using.
- 4) The students have learned to work effectively at the preliminary learning stations.

The Individual Assessment Sheet that is contained in the Blackline Masters, and that is discussed in the Appendix, can serve as a guide, but the actual decision on when to introduce the Picture Packets is made by the

classroom teacher using his or her own best judgment. It is much better, however, to wait a little too long to introduce the Packets than to introduce them before the learning groups as a whole are ready for them.

If the class has a Workjobs station as one of its preliminary stations, it is a good idea to introduce the Picture Packets at that station. The two reasons for this are: First, the Workjobs station requires the most supervision, therefore eliminating it as the Packets are introduced means the teacher will not have to check Workjobs. Second, any students in each group who are not yet quite ready to begin work with the Packets may continue to work on Workjobs at the same station, with no formal separation made between the ready and the not yet ready.

This was not the choice made by Ms. X, but then this manual is meant to serve as a guide to what might be done, and not as a set of hard and fast rules that must be followed regardless of the situation that exists in any individual classroom. The teacher's judgment always takes precedence.

The use of the Picture Packets is explained to each group as it rotates through the Picture Packet Station. Although it must be repeated five times, the small group presentation is used to ensure everyone has a chance to demonstrate their understanding of what is expected of them.

On the day the first Picture Packets are to be introduced, the teacher announces to the class that he or she will be introducing a new material at the Workjobs station (or whatever other station is chosen). The reason the announcement is made is to make sure everyone in class understands that each group will get its turn to see and use the new materials. If the teacher simply starts by teaching one group a new activity, some members of the remaining four groups may feel they aren't going to know what's going on unless they go to the teacher's station right then to watch. These students need to be reassured in advance that they are not to be slighted.

The first day's Packets and Cards are the Triangle Packets and the Triangle Level Two-Sound Word Cards. All eight of the Triangle Packets and the corresponding word cards are introduced on the same day because they all make use of essentially the same vocabulary. Introducing all eight packets also ensures there will be an ample amount of material available at the station.

Even though one or two students within each learning group may not be completely ready to attempt two-sound blending with the first eight sounds, the Triangle Packets are presented to every student in each group. There will be time enough in the coming days to sort out the Anthonys in the room for modification of the materials to be used.

To begin the presentation, the teacher selects one Picture Packet. Five of the ten picture cards are set out on the Station table so the children may see them. The teacher then helps the children in the group blend the five words that match the cards. The teacher selects both the five pictures and their matching words before the children come to the station, to guarantee that the five words that are to be read do, in fact, match up with the five pictures placed on the table.

Teacher: (Holding up a word card) "Where do I start?"

Children: "At the arrow."

Teacher: (Sliding a finger starting at the arrow, across both sounds) "Say the sounds along with me."

All: " eeeeeeeeeee rrrrrrrrrrrr "

Teacher: "Again."

All: " eeeeeeeeeee rrrrrrrrrrrr "

Teacher: "Say it fast."

All: "Ear."

The blending process is the same as the one the children have used with the Two-Sound Flipbook. The teacher holds the word card that the group has just read as the children decide which picture goes with it.

The process of blending the words and matching them with pictures is repeated for the remaining four cards. When the first five cards have been read and matched, the first five pictures and their words are placed back in their packets, and the remaining five pictures are set out on the table for a repeat of the exercise with the remaining five words.

When the group has read and matched all ten word cards and pictures from the first triangle packet, the teacher decides what comes next. If the group was not particularly good at reading words and matching pictures, the teacher selects another triangle packet and set of cards and repeats the process of setting out five pictures at a time and matching word cards to them. In anticipation of the possibility of repeating the Picture Packet-word card lesson to a group, the teacher can divide two or three sets of triangle packets and their corresponding words into groups of five and clip the matching words and pictures together. This level of practice continues until at least half the group has become proficient at the reading and matching. As soon as at least half of the group understands, the whole group is ready to begin independent work with the packets.

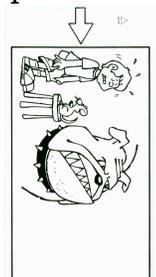
When the group is ready to begin working with the packets on its own, the children are formed into teams of two. A team of three is permissible where there is a child left over. Except under extraordinary circumstances, no child should be allowed to work alone. Each team takes one Picture Packet and the matching set of word cards. The word cards are divided in half so that each partner receives five words to read. The partners take turns. First one reads a word, and both look through the pictures for the match, then the other reads a word, and both seek the matching illustration. This is an exercise in working together. It is not a race to see which partner can read his or her words faster than the other. Children working cooperatively together are praised by the teacher. Children who still need assistance in learning to take turns receive help from the teacher.

One of the several reasons why the children are assigned to work in pairs is that blending becomes easier in twos. It is much easier for a child to hear the word that is formed when someone else says the sounds than when the child must listen only to what he or she says.

As the children in each learning group begin working in pairs or threes

with the Picture Packets, the teacher has the opportunity to observe and correct their blending techniques. At this point, none of the other stations require any direct teacher supervision, so full attention can be devoted to each group as it rotates through the Picture Packet Station.

Blending always starts with the child's finger pointing to the arrow on the word card, but the arrow itself can point in any direction.



The child must be taught that the sound pictures are always to be right side up before the child starts blending the word. In addition, the children must be taught to point to each sound as they say it, to direct their eyes in the correct sequence. Children do not see a word from left to right. They see it all at once. Without specific training, they are as apt to read the sounds right to left as they are to read from left to right.

Two-sound blending must be taught. It doesn't occur spontaneously. Teaching two-sound blending consists of surrounding each child with many models of correct blending and then allowing each child's mind to assimilate the learning patterns from the model. Some children will already have absorbed the patterns for two-sound blending merely by participating with the class in reading the Two-Sound Flipbook. Others will need to be surrounded with the concept much longer before the patterns and associations become clear to them.

As the children work at reading the word cards, they rely primarily on their own collective resources for knowing if they've read a word or a sound correctly. If no one in the group knows which sound a sound-picture represents, the teacher will provide the sound. Short of that, the children are on their own. When they finish matching words to pictures, they clean up their work and select another Picture Packet and a set of word cards. The teacher only occasionally checks the accuracy of their work.

The Reading Program has been designed specifically so that children who cannot read two-sound words are not made aware of this failure. Children who do not yet know how to play the game can sit dutifully with a Two-Sound Picture Packet, incorrectly make the sounds that they incorrectly blend into words, that they then incorrectly match to pictures, and not be aware they've just done it all wrong. Although this incorrect blending and matching isn't teaching the child to read, it also isn't building any impression in the child's mind that he or she isn't as capable of learning as anyone else.

Because the packets are not self-correcting, how a child feels about what he or she is doing is controlled by how the teacher reacts to the work. The teacher can see if a child has managed to match very few or no words to the

correct pictures, but the teacher doesn't say, "Oh, you've got them all wrong!" Instead, the teacher may praise the child for how well and how hard he or she has worked, while at the same time making a mental note to give this child additional help in the near future.

Most teachers don't label their children "dumb" or "stupid" when their work is not completed correctly, but the child is apt to apply these words to himself or herself when papers must be turned in with empty spaces on them, because the child couldn't figure out what to put in the blanks. When one's papers come back with red marks all over them, while one's neighbor's papers are returned with happy faces and one-hundred percent marked on them, the message is clear. In a paper-and-pencil environment, children who do not yet know the game are given a great deal of evidence of their ignorance. In this program, the evidence is hidden away.

The effect of this hiding away is that slower learners are allowed to maintain a good feeling about themselves. There is no doubt that these students will learn to read, because all of the students in class are going to learn. It is important, however, that the classroom environment that has already been set up to surround each child with the concepts to be learned should also be set up to allow the children who take longer to absorb a concept to feel comfortable with themselves all along the way.

The Triangle Picture Packets, that assume the introduction of the first eight sounds of the program, are introduced to each of the learning groups in turn, regardless of the state of readiness of every member of the group. It is a sufficient starting point if at least half the students in a group know enough to begin. Those students not yet completely ready to read words containing sounds from the first eight are allowed to begin work anyway, because their mistakes will not do them any irreparable harm. The slower or less ready students continue to be introduced to the same activities as the rest of their respective groups until all five of the regular learning stations have been introduced. When the children have learned how to use the reading materials at each of the five stations, the teacher then has the time to modify the learning materials for students like Anthony, for whom the burden of eight sounds may initially prove to be too much.

The triangle level of activities continues for all children until some individual children show enough confidence and skill at that level to indicate they are ready for the circle level packets and word cards.

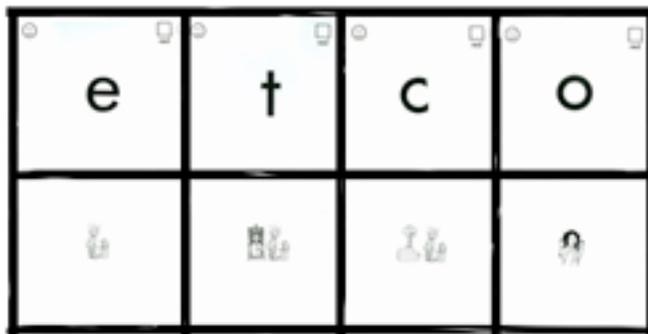
Children can move from one level to the next as soon as they are judged ready. A good rule of thumb for judging is to wait two or three days after the point when a particular child seems ready. The individual assessment sheet can be used to finalize the determination of readiness. The child who can read all the triangle words on the assessment sheet and who can say all the sounds required of the circle level is ready to move on. Children who have difficulty blending the triangle words or who seem unsure of themselves will benefit more by being allowed to stay at the triangle level. There is no reason to rush children to a level for which they are not yet ready.

It is important for both teacher and child to have a positive feeling about

whatever level is found to be the appropriate one for that child. Working diligently at the triangle level should be valued as much as working at the circle level, or the three-sound level, or whatever level is reached. The teacher should be careful not to praise a child publicly for moving to a higher level. The implied message in "Wow! Now you're ready to go on to three-sound words!" is, "There must be something less worthy about two-sound words."

The children themselves are already motivated to advance from one level to the next as soon as they become ready. It is better to confine public praise to commending students for working hard, learning a lot, reading smoothly, and working well with others. These forms of praise can be earned as a result of personal effort. They do not point out differences between students resulting from ability. The object is to eliminate the praise for the kinds of things that build up an environment of competition between children. Competition in learning separates children from one another. The best learning takes place in an environment of cooperation and sharing.

### Alphabet Packets



The Alphabet Packets are included in the kit for the benefit of those teachers who wish to teach their students the names of the letters. In the upper grades, where children can be assumed to know the names of the letters, the packets need not be used. In kindergarten and first-grade, their use is dependent both upon the teacher's feelings about letter names and upon how that teacher already goes about teaching the names. The Alphabet Packets are not an integral part of the Reading Program. Unlike the Picture Packets, the Alphabet Packets are not recycled at successively higher levels of the program.

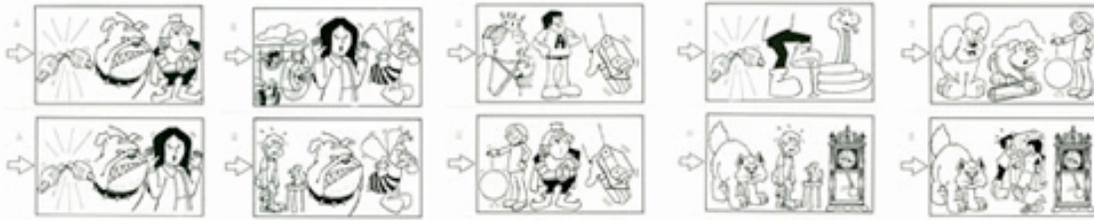
If the teacher wishes to make use of the Alphabet Packets, they are included with the Picture Packets. The geometric codings on the Alphabet Packets are consistent with the geometric codings on the Picture Packets.

The letters on the cards in each Packet contain a happy face, so the students may tell when the letter is right side up. In addition, the reverse of each letter card has the letter's name stamped out, so the child may turn the card over and read the letter name if he or she does not already know it. This feature allows the letter cards to also be used as self-checking flash cards.

The child who can read two-sound words, but who does not know all of the letter names, can look at the letter side of the card, guess at the letter

name, and then turn the card over to verify if the name was said correctly.

### Three-Sound Word Cards



When the children were first introduced to Two-Sound Picture Packets, each member of each learning group received the introduction, regardless of his or her state of readiness. When the first students become ready for the Three-Sound Packets, their introductory lessons are conducted on an individual basis.

The children who are to be introduced to the Three-Sound Picture Packets will have already learned a substantial amount of the needed vocabulary through the Three-Sound Flipbook. All that remains, then, in introducing them to the Picture Packets is to review their three-sound blending techniques with them. This may sound too easy, but it must be remembered that the first students to reach the three-sound level of the Picture Packets will be the best students in class. These students already possess the most extensive vocabularies, and they are also already the best at understanding how to blend sounds into words.

Each new cluster of students to become ready for three-sound blending will be just a little less talented in reading than were the students who preceded them. But, each new cluster will have successively more help available to them in the form of fellow students who have already reached this new level. At the two-sound level, everyone needed to be taught all of the vocabulary before work with the packets could begin, because everyone was going to begin at once, fast and slow together. Past the initial starting point, however, the faster learners are always going to reach every new point first. If they collectively do not know a word, they may ask the teacher, but there will not be much that they collectively do not know. No matter what each succeeding group of students may not know, they all have the faster learners to turn to for help: help with sounds, help with words, help with vocabulary, help with blending techniques, help with everything!

When the teacher judges that a student or two is ready to begin work with the Three-Sound Picture Packets, that student or small group of students joins the teacher for a three-sound lesson.

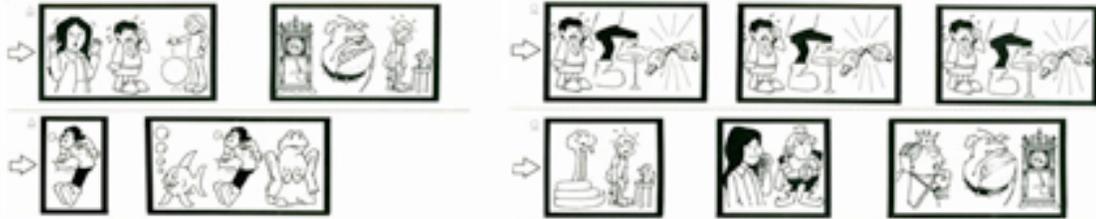


Teacher: "Starting at the arrow, lets blend this word together."  
 All: "nnnnnn rrrrrr ssssss"  
 Teacher: "Again."  
 All: "nnnnnn rrrrrr ssssss "  
 Teacher: "Say it fast."  
 All: "Nurse!"  
 Teacher: "Which of these ten pictures does this card go with?"

The teacher guides the students through reading five or six of the word cards and matching them to the appropriate illustrations. If the students understand the process, they can begin work with the Three-Sound Picture Packets. If not, the teacher may spend more time reviewing the three-sound blending process with them, or wait until another day and try again.

All five levels of the Three-Sound Picture Packets may be introduced at once if the students have already learned all forty-four sounds before beginning this new level. If not all sounds are known, the students advance through the materials in the same triangle, then circle, then square, and so on, sequence used for the Two-Sound packets.

### Phrase Cards



The transition from the Three-Sound Picture Packets to the Phrase Packets involves only the teacher's decision to do so. The teacher may be aided in this decision by information obtained from the Individual Assessment Sheets, but usually by the time students are ready for the phrase level of the program such formal assessments are no longer necessary. Students who are judged by the teacher to be ready for phrases already know all they need to know to be successful at this new level. They just don't know how much they know yet. They already know how to read each of the words they will encounter. They simply have not yet learned to combine these known words into short phrases. Only the practice and experience gained from actually reading more than one word at a time will allow the students to learn how much they already know.

As soon as any students begin the phrase level, the teacher discontinues the use of the Three-Sound Flipbook and introduces experience stories to the whole class. These experience stories provide students at the phrase level with an abundance of practice at reading more than one word at a time.

The geometric codings for levels, triangles, circles, and so on, no longer

have meaning at the phrase level. All of the phrases may make use of any of the forty-four sounds. Therefore, the children who reach the phrase level may choose any packets they wish in any order they wish. This freedom of choice is important because it allows for a more flexible use of shared materials. All of the various levels of Picture Packet activities make use of the same set of Picture Packets. Children at the two or three-sound level may be required, say, to work at the triangle or the circle level. The fact that a student at the phrase level may make use of any of the packets means that those children working with phrases do not have to put demands on the exact same materials required for use by other children.

When the teacher determines that a student or a small group of students is ready to begin work with the Phrase Packets, these students are brought together and given a presentation on what will now be expected of them. As usual, the students who are judged ready to move to a new level receive no special praise for this accomplishment. The introduction of new materials is treated in a very matter-of-fact manner, to keep any implied pressure off students who are not yet ready for this level.

The actual technique of reading phrases combines the techniques already learned for blending two and three-sounds into words with techniques for helping children learn how to remember the word or words they have already read, while the final word or words is or are being blended. Children seem to be able to read phrases best when they blend the first word, then say it aloud to themselves, then blend the second word, say it, then say the two words together.



Child: "eeeeeee rrrrrrr...ear"  
 "aaaaaaaa k...ache"  
 "Ear ache."

The shortened form that children seem to reach rather quickly is:

Child: " eeeeeee rrrrrrr...ear..... aaaaaaaa k....ear ache."

It is important for the individual words once blended to be said aloud. Sometimes children attempt to say all of the sounds in the phrase without trying to determine which individual words the sounds make up.

Child: "eeeeeeerrrrrrraaaaaaak...???"

This problem does not usually occur for the first students who reach the phrase level of blending. It occurs for the students who reach this level much

later. By the time the later students begin reading phrases, however, they will be surrounded by appropriate models for how phrases are meant to be read.

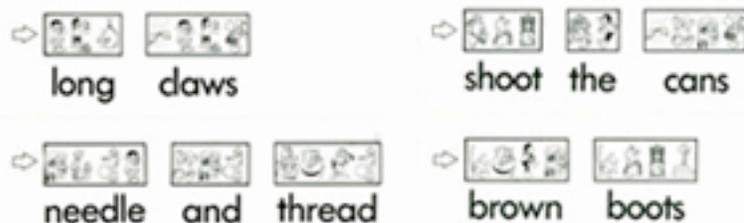
Because the program places no particular emphasis on moving from one level to the next, the situation will occasionally arise when a student who is ready to move from three-sounds to phrases does not want to move on. This is much more apt to be the case when the success at the old level was hard won. Children for whom learning to blend three-sound words had been a struggle may want to enjoy what has now become easy, and may not be as excited about making their life more difficult as the teacher seems to be. The feelings of the child in this case should be respected and dealt with patiently.

Although not many of us are weightlifters, I am sure a weightlifting example will still clarify why it is okay to exercise patience with a child who is reluctant to move on. At the beginning of weightlifting, one may find a fifty-pound weight quite heavy. As strength builds, lifting this weight becomes easier and easier. Soon, the weight passes from difficult to comfortable. We might wish to enjoy the comfort we now feel and not make our weightlifting difficult again by adding more weights, but what has become comfortable will soon become too easy. The body has built into it the eventual need to lift the next weight because it has built into it the ability to accommodate the present weight to such an extent that it becomes no challenge at all.

Our minds and the minds of our students operate in the same way. A child may reject moving on to the next level because the present level is so comfortable, and moving ahead means losing this comfort and security. But as the present level becomes easier and easier, it soon reaches a point when it is so easy it is no longer comfortable. The next level is then sought for the new challenge and the renewed sense of accomplishment it affords. If a child resists the next level for a time, it is because he or she has not yet wearied of the success so recently found. The harder the present level's success was in coming, the more apt the child is to wish to cling to it for a while longer.

The learning stations are set up to allow children to feel as comfortable about not moving up as they do about moving to a higher level. Since all students are working in the same group regardless of level, children who are ready to try phrases can feel comfortable using both the phrases and the three-sound cards alternately. They may even select a Picture Packet, match the Three-Sound Word Cards to it, and then attempt to match phrases to the very same Picture Packet. When a child is allowed to move up, that child is allowed to move back as well. Reading is reading, whatever form it takes.

### Transition Sentence Cards



The transition level is reserved for readers, that is, for children who really know how to play the reading game and who can play it comfortably and well. Children who work at the two, three or even phrase sound levels may drift up and down from one level to another as they build confidence in their reading abilities. No child should be rushed into the transition level. Only students who are already confident should be allowed to begin the transition activities.

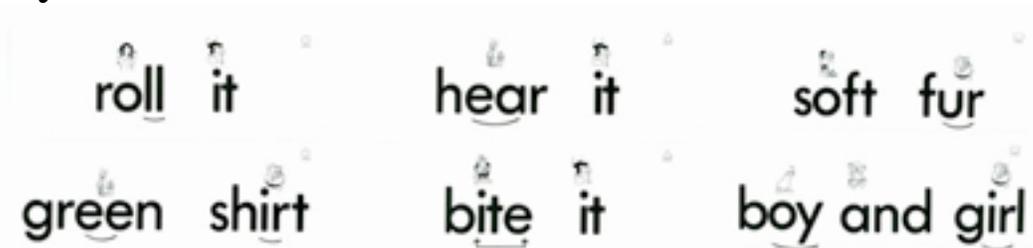
The Transition Sentences are not really sentences. They are given this designation to distinguish them from the phrases. These sentences are introduced in the same manner as were the Phrase Cards. Once again, the order of the Packets is not important. The Plain White Triangle Sentence Cards are no more or less difficult than the Cards for the Happy-Face Blue Star.

To introduce the Transition Sentences, the teacher explains to the students who are ready for this new level the procedures for reading the sentences. Since the procedures are no different than for those used to read phrases, the introductory lesson is a short one. There are no specific transitional techniques taught to the students with the introduction of the Cards. The only difference is that the Transition Sentences may contain more words or longer words than the Phrase Cards.

Although the child doesn't do anything of a transitional nature as the Cards are read, it must be noted that use of the Transition Sentence Cards is taking place at the same time transitional activities have been introduced at all of the other learning stations. As the child progresses through the transition materials at the other stations, the effect will begin to be noticed at the Picture Packet station as well.

It might seem like more should be said about teaching children how to read the Transition Sentences, because it is the transition level of the program that produces the most anxiety among teachers and parents. But, the most difficult level has already passed. It passed for each child when that child mastered the art of blending two sounds into a word. The children who can read phrases comfortably and who are practicing with the Transition Sentences have already cleared all of the hurdles. They are merely finishing out the run.

### **Vowels-Only Cards**



Children beginning the Vowels-Only Cards may drift back and forth between the Transition cards and the Vowels-Only Cards just as they were earlier allowed to alternate between the Phrase Cards and the Three-Sound Cards. The move from words to phrases was an inching forward. Moving from Transition Sentences to Vowels-Only Cards is also an inching forward, as well.

Beneath the words on the Vowels-Only Cards are loops and/or lines with arrows. The meaning of these markings is fairly straightforward. Loops are placed under the letters that are meant to be read together and not as separate sounds. For example, the **sh** or **th** letters in a word will have a loop beneath them so the child knows to treat the letters together as one sound and not as **s** and **h** or **t** and **h** separately. The lines with arrows indicate that both of the letters pointed to are used to spell that particular sound. These same lines with arrows were used to indicate spellings on the Decoding Chart. The word **sew** appears with a solid black line beneath it. This line is used to indicate outlaw words that are explained in both the Handwriting/Decoding Station section of this chapter and in the Appendix. The letters in these words offer few clues to their own sounds. If the child does not know the word, fellow classmates or the teacher are a better resource for knowing the word than the letters used to spell it.

One last vowels-only note. The Picture Packet cards for all the other levels always had the start-here arrow on each card for every level. For the vowels-only cards, the arrows are gone. By the time children are ready to read words cards that use letters and not sound-pictures, they definitely know where words start and in which direction the letters are to be read.