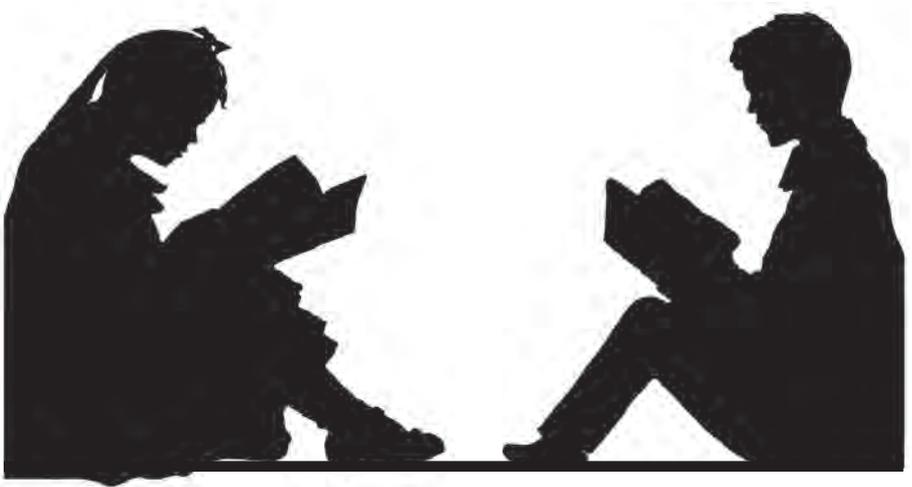


Noah Webster's Reading Handbook

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Darrel A. Trulson

Christian Liberty Press

Adapted from *The American Speller* by Noah Webster
Originally published by Wilmington, DE: Bonsal & Niles, 1800?
Also known as *The Blue-Backed Speller*

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2020 Printing

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A publication of

Christian Liberty Press
502 West Euclid Avenue
Arlington Heights, IL 60004
www.christianlibertypress.com

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Copyediting by Diane C. Olson
Layout and images by Jodee Kulp @ Graphics Arts Services,
Brooklyn Park, MN
Cover design by Bob Fine

ISBN 978-1-930092-24-2
1-930092-24-5

Printed in the United States of America

Preface

Noah Webster is still highly regarded in educational circles even though he has been dead for over 160 years. His reputation has survived the test of time because he played a key role in laying the foundation for the standardized word meanings and pronunciation in the English language when the United States was a very young nation.

Webster was the first American to produce an authoritative and comprehensive dictionary for the people of the United States. His first dictionary was completed and printed in 1828. Although Webster's dictionary brought him long lasting notoriety and fame, this was not his only significant publication. Several years before his dictionary was in print, Webster produced a practical book that was used in the schoolhouses of America to teach primary reading, phonics, and spelling. This book, known as *The American Spelling Book* or popularly referred to as *The Blue-Backed Speller*, was an instant success and endured as the standard reading text in America for over a century. In fact, the printing royalties from this reading handbook helped to sustain Webster financially during those years in which he was preoccupied with working on his new, famous dictionary. Millions of copies of *The Blue-Backed Speller*, along with books like the Bible and the McGuffey's readers, gave young people in America an excellent foundation in the areas of reading, phonics, and spelling.

The book that follows, *Noah Webster's Reading Handbook*, is an updated and modernized version of the old *Blue-Backed Speller*. It may be used in any grade to teach the fundamentals of phonics and reading, or as remedial work for older students. We are confident that this book will carry on the tradition of providing students with an excellent foundation in reading, spelling, and Biblical values.

Michael J. McHugh
Christian Liberty Press, 1993

Introduction

This *Handbook* is very simple to use. First of all, the alphabet charts at the beginning of the book should be repeated every day until the student has them memorized. Please note that it is not as important to teach the names of the letters, as it is to teach the sounds they make. After your student has the letters and their principal sounds memorized, you can move into the rest of the book. We recommend that you spend as much time as necessary on each page, especially in the beginning, as you instruct the student on the various letters, blends, words, and sentences. Do not move on to a new page until your student can sound out all the letters and words on the current page. To sound out a blend, or word, pronounce the first letter or blend and then add the final letter or blend (“tr”–“ail”–”trail”). Emphasize each sound separately and then tie them together. Teach the concept to your student that vowels and consonants go together to form blends, and the blends are the building blocks of all the words we use. Eventually, sentences are presented in the lessons to teach how the words are connected together to express ideas and thoughts. Have your student sound out all the words in the sentences. Then, after having learned the words, encourage him to read the sentences more quickly. Try skipping back to sentences learned in prior lessons, so that the student does not simply memorize the sentence being taught, but is actually reading the words by the way of decoding the sound.

The charts in the back of the *Handbook* are to be taught during the course of your instruction. Refer to the bottom of the lesson page to see which chart to use. These charts are effective for review purposes and to help the student who is having difficulty in understanding a particular blend. It is a good idea to regularly go through the lessons and review prior sections with your students. Important principles taught one day can easily be forgotten a week or so later. If resources permit, purchase a set of flash cards to help in the memorization of the vowels and consonants. As your student begins reading, write the common or troublesome words onto index or recipe cards. Review these daily until

your student can say them without hesitation. This will offer you variety in your teaching style and help your student to assimilate what he has learned more quickly. It is recommended that you spend no more than twenty minutes at a time on each lesson or subject. A younger student with a short attention span will benefit more from two or three short periods than one long lesson. You may discover that a student will have difficulty grasping certain concepts. If this occurs, simply take a break from the subject for a few days and then come back to it fresh. This time away from the subject is sometimes needed for conceptualization to completely occur before moving on to new material. Finally, begin and end each reading session with prayer and thanksgiving for the opportunity the Lord has provided each of us to learn how to read. Reading is a precious gift and one which your student will value the rest of his life.

The Alphabet

Memorize the alphabet, learning both the letters and sounds they represent. Drill the sounds of the vowels and consonants daily until they are mastered.



ant



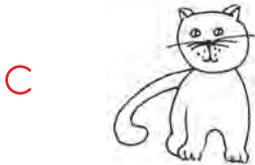
gum



bug



hat



cat



ink



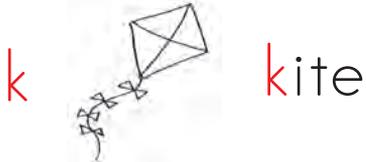
duck



jet



egg



kite



fan



lamp

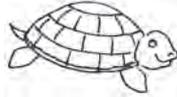
The Alphabet

m



mop

t



turtle

n



nest

u



umpire

o



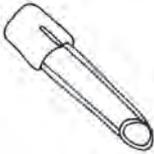
ostrich

v



van

p



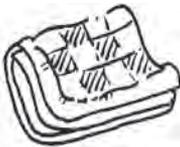
pin

w



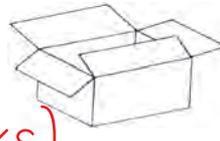
walrus

qu



quilt

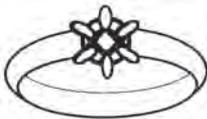
x



box

(ks)

r



ring

y



yarn

s



seal

z



zebra

The Short Vowels

A a



E e



I i



O o



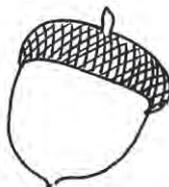
U u



ă ă ă ă ă

The Long Vowels

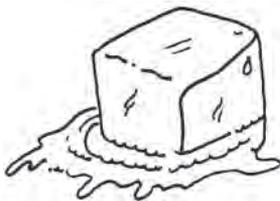
A a



E e



I i



O o



U u



ā ē ī ō ū

The Consonants

B b

K k

S s

C c

L l

T t

D d

M m

V v

F f

N n

W w

G g

P p

X x

H h

Q q

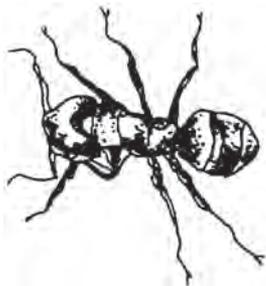
Y y

J j

R r

Z z

Aa



ant

As the following words are read, listen for the a-ant sound.



map



bat



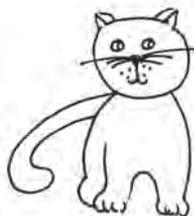
sad



pat



pan



cat

bag

rat

jam

cap

ham

wax

man

fan

tag

Ee



egg

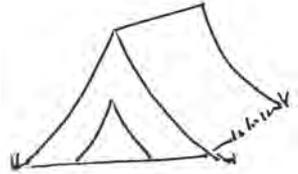
As the following words are read, listen for the e-egg sound.



net



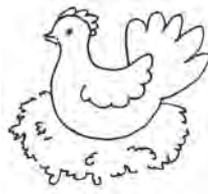
well



tent



pen



hen



wet

men

gem

pet

sell

den

bell

jet

vet

egg

Short Vowel Review

Listen to the short vowel sound as you say each of these words.

ă

ě

ĩ

õ

ũ

apple

egg

ink

otter

under

ant

engine

igloo

ox

umpire

ax

elbow

it

olive

up

map

ten

pig

Rob

tub

man

net

fit

top

nut

hat

jet

lid

doll

hum

had

Deb

did

rod

rut

bat

well

wit

lot

gum

sad

leg

bus

van

cut

cub

till

tap

sob

sit

men

Todd

dots

run

Bob

bun

Hh



hat

1. Look at the vowels and say the sounds.
2. Add the consonants and say the blends.
3. Complete the exercise and read the words.

ă

ě

ŷ

ǒ

ŭ

ha

he

hi

ho

hu

ho

ha

he

hi

hu

hat

hen

hip

hop

hum

ha

he

hi

hu

ha

hi

hu

ha

ho

he

ho

he

ho

hi

hu

hen

hill

had

hut

hot

bet

box

bat

Bill

bug

tax

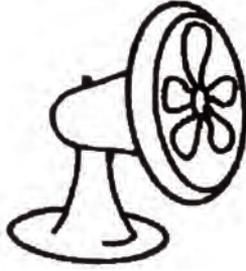
tan

top

tug

Tim

Ff



f an

1. Look at the vowels and say the sounds.
2. Add the consonants and say the blends.
3. Complete the exercise and read the words.

ă

ě

ĩ

ö

ũ

fa

fe

fi

fo

fu

fi

fa

fe

fu

fo

fad

fed

fig

fox

fun

f e

f i

f o

f e

f u

f o

f a

f i

f u

f a

hat

hem

hub

hop

hit

bib

Bob

bug

bat

bed

tab

tug

tell

tip

Tom

sob

suds

sad

sin

set

egg

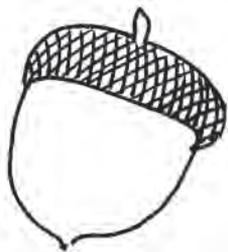
it

as

up

in

Aa



acorn

1. Listen for the long vowel sound as you say each of these words.
2. Review the short vowel words.

āy

ā_e

āi

da

ca

pa

day

cake

paid

ray

fake

laid

day

lake

pay

take

nail

Fay

bake

bay

vane

bait

hay

ape

say

gate

pail

lay

tame

may

wave

raid

pay

game

Rule: When there are two vowels in a word, the first vowel says its long sound, and the second vowel is silent.

These are the vowel blends that make up the long **A** – **a** sound: **a**, **ai**, **a_e**, and **ay**.

Look and listen to the long **A** – **a** vowels.

Ee



eagle

1. Listen for the long vowel sound as you say each of these words.
2. Review the short vowel words.

eā

eē

eēy

be

se

ke

bead

seed

key

heel

leaf

sheep

beak

bee

tree

teach

deer

bead

Jeep

keen

seat

keep

meal

eel

feet

peas

week

read

Lee

queen

heat

sleep

seal

deep

map

wet

pig

rod

bug

pat

leg

lid

doll

but

These are the vowel blends that make up the long

E – **e** sound: **e**, **ea**, **ee**, and **ey**.

Look and listen to the long **E** – **e** vowels.

Long Vowel Review

Listen to the long vowel sound as you say each of these words.

bā

kē

dī

tō

fū

bake

keat

dive

toad

fruit

bait

keep

die

tow

few

bay

key

dry

toll

fume

hid - hide

van - vane

tub - tube

bat - bait

bed - bead

pin - pine

rod - road

hop - hope

win - wine

mad - made

cub - cube

sop - soap

kit - kite

pan - pain

cut - cute



Sue reads the poem.



Jake takes a rest.

fl



flag

Carefully watch the long and short vowels as you read the blends, words, and sentences.

flā

flē

flī

flō

flū

flǎ

flĕ

flĭ

flŏ

flŭ

fleet

flap

flick

flash

flute

float

flea

fled

flake

flip

flop

flee

flame

flag

fly

class

clam

club

clean

click

bluff

blast

bleak

bled

blame

bliss

blew

bless

blaze

black



Tim will wave and say bye.
It is time to go back home.

Consonant Blend Review

Listen to the consonant blends as you say each of these words.

gr

pr

tr

sc

sk

grass

prize

tribe

scale

sky

grate

pray

trap

scab

skid

greet

prop

trash

Scott

skull

grim – grime

fed – feed

prim – prime

grad – grade

red – read

pin – pine

mad – made

plat – plate

quit – quite

rip – ripe

Ben will pray by the bed.

Tom will pray at the meal.

We can speak to God,
if we take the time to pray.

scr spl spr str
scrub splat spray strap

Here are a few more consonant blends to learn.
Be careful as you sound these out.

scrap	scribe	spray
split	scrape	splat
stroke	scream	stream
sprain	spree	street

glade	free	come	it	blame
brim	says	toast	flip	slop
do	grace	ply	drain	at
scone	drape	prune	slate	Coke



Pat will go on a run.
He will take care
not to sprain his leg.

ll
doll



ff
cuff

This page teaches consonant blends that generally appear at the end of a word. Practice reading these words and sentences.

quill gull still well
bell fell dull smell

stiff huff stuff puff
staff cliff muff Biff

fan fret cluck hill slop
clan pet buck Bill hop
pan set puck pill flop
bran wet truck mill stop

Rule: When a word has a short vowel sound, usually the ending consonants **s**, **l**, **f**, and **z** will be doubled.

Consonant Blend Review

Listen to the consonant blends as you say each of these words.

ll

ff

ss

zz

ck

quill

puff

bass

jazz

block

bell

cliff

dress

fizz

dock

doll

staff

muss

fuzz

duck

bug

den

jet

wick

pig

fell

Ken

yes

fun

cat

hug

fix

man

nap

rip

quiz

lap

gun

tan

Ted

The day is swell.

I will play in the sun.

I will ride my bike and

talk to Beth.

God has made this fine day.

Digraph Blend Review

Listen to the consonant blends as you say each of these words.

sh

ch

wh

th

th

shed

chess

which

them

with

dish

much

when

father

thing

shop

check

whale

this

bath

skate

spin

twice

squeeze

street

swipe

stay

twins

stun

smell

snip

sway

scrape

stream

swell

spice

snail

split

spree

scream

What time is it?

Do you have a clock?

I am late for a date with Nate.

Nate will not wait.

He will go if I am late.



ld nd gh

child kind light

Here are a few more consonant blends. In these words the **i** is long when followed by **ld** or **gh**.

light

fight

find

grind

kind

night

right

wild

bind

mild

sight

flight

risk

king

pit

jig

bid

inch

ship

dill

rip

drill

ring

his

Rick

hiss

six

The blind child was mild.
She did not like to fight.
She will find it is right to be kind.

When the letters **gh** follow the long **i**, the **gh** sound is silent.

ld st th ll lt

cold post both roll colt

Here are a few more consonant blends. In these words the o is long when followed by ld, st, th, ll, or lt.

bol t	hol d	mol d
strol l	most t	bol d
fol d	poll	toll
bo th	col t	ho st

Bob	chop	lot	on	pot
lock	spot	Tom	hop	box
clock	sod	block	blond	stop

The colt is not in the fold.

Did you close the gate and lock the bolt?

The short vowel rule teaches that the vowel is usually short when it comes at the beginning or between two consonants. These pages show some of the exceptions.

ô



corn

The **o** is another vowel that is changed by the **r**.
Practice reading these words and sentences.

core

thorn

fork

horn

stork

storm

horse

pork

born

corn

cord

porch

round

flower

clouds

hour

mouth

count

snout

down

owl

cow

mouse

vowels

down

clown

pound

tower

Mark will race his skate board.

He can go fast.

Mark will take care,
or he will trip and crash.





oil



oy

cowboy

Listen for the different consonant blends and digraphs as you say each of these words.

boy

soil

coins

voice

foil

Joy

toy

Roy

point

noise

coil

joint

push

should

pull

hook

could

hood

bush

book

wood

wolf

The small boy is Roy.
He got a new toy.
Joy gave Roy the toy.
It made a putting noise.



Rule: A diphthong is a sound made up of two vowels blended together to make one sound.
The blends of **oi** and **oy** are diphthongs.

er ir ur
verse bird turtle

Listen for the blends as you say each of these words.

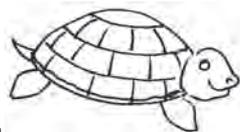
bird	nurse	curl	turn
purse	skirt	burn	hurt
verse	girl	first	dirt
church	fern	third	stir

owl	count	crown	pout
blouse	power	hour	town
growl	snout	flower	mouse

The turtle ran in a race.

He made a turn for the worse.

He did not finish first, but third.



When **e**, **i**, and **u** are followed by an **r**, they make the same sound. The sound is just like a rooster when it crows.

Reading Review

Carefully say the words and then read the story.
Look for the new words in the story.

death be-lieve heav-en wis-dom

brought per-ish thank-ful Sav-ior

The Bible

Are you able to tell which is the best book in the world? Yes, that is easy. The Bible is the best book in the world, and it is the book we should like best.

It is the only book in the world, which teaches us about Jesus, who is able to save our souls.

It is the Word of God to men, telling us that man was first made good and holy, but that he was led to sin. Now all men are sinners.

It also tells us that God loves the world so much that He sent His Son Jesus, who came and gave His life to save sinners.

All who believe in the Son of God as their Savior shall not perish, but be saved from sin, and be brought to glory in heaven. For this, we should be thankful.

Let us learn to read well that we may soon be able to read the Bible. We will learn true wisdom from it.

Reading Chart I

a ant

b bug

c cat

d duck

e egg

f fan

g gum

h hat

i ink

j jet

k kite

l lamp

m mop

n nest

o ostrich

p pin

qu quilt

r ring

s seal

t turtle

u umpire

v van

w walrus

x box

y yarn

z zebra

Reading Chart 9

Practice saying these consonant blends.

x

z

a

ax

za

e

ex

ze

i

ix

zi

o

ox

zo

u

ux

zu

tax

zest

fix

zip

next

Zac

fox

zot

had

van

pup

fax

yet

quiz

vet

well

rod

pin

wax

gag

vest

yes

pod

net

quill

big

wick

gig

Phonics Groupings

Language, in a more limited sense, is the expression of ideas by articulate sounds. In a more general sense, the word denotes all sounds by which animals express their feelings, in such a manner as to be understood by their own species.

Articulate sounds are those which are formed by the human voice, in pronouncing letters, syllables, and words, and constitute the spoken language that is addressed to the ear. Letters are the marks of sounds and the first elements of written language that are presented to the eye.

In a perfect language, every simple sound would be expressed by a distinct character, and no character would have more than one sound. But languages are not thus perfect; and the English language is no exception.

The letters used in writing, when arranged in a certain customary order, compose what is called an *Alphabet*.

The English Alphabet consists of twenty-six letters or single characters; and for lack of others, certain simple sounds are represented by two letters united. There are approximately forty-four different sounds in the English language.

There are two kinds of letters: *vowels* and *consonants*. A vowel is a simple articulate sound, formed without the help of another letter, by opening the mouth in a particular manner, and begun and completed with the same position of the organs. The letters which represent these sounds are