

Spot and Dot Smart Strategy™

Many students haven't mastered basic phonics rules that cause students to struggle when they encounter unfamiliar or multisyllabic words. Moreover, as a result, these readers often tend to dislike reading and consequently don't read very much.

Often the problem is caused by the reader not knowing how to break words into smaller chunks (syllables), sound out, and blend the syllables together to pronounce the word. Many of these words are known words but are not familiar when seen in print and can't be read by the student.

I have developed Smart Strategies™ to help readers solve unfamiliar or multisyllabic words. I call this strategy Spot and Dot. The strategy helps students read with less effort and helps increase interest for reading.

Herewith are the steps:

1. Determine that the reader knows the vowels and consonants, and knows the sounds associated with each letter.
2. For vowels, check if the student knows the sounds of short vs. long vowels. This may seem elemental, but you may be surprised.
3. A long vowel says its name /A/ as in 'ape'. A short vowel has a different sound -/a/ as in 'and'.
4. Next, learn if the reader knows what a syllable is. Explain that a syllable is part of a word that has a vowel in it but is not a whole word.
5. Introduce the CVC concept. Most basic sight words follow the CVC pattern where the first letter is a consonant followed by a vowel and ending with a consonant - sit, hit, hat, bat, cot, cut, set. The vowel is short in a CVC word.
6. The reason to determine that students understand CVC is because many syllables are CVC syllables.
7. The vowels in CVC words and syllables are referred to as **Closed vowel** because the vowel is closed in between two consonants.
8. (With Pre-K to 2nd grade readers I say the vowel says its special name - not its real letter name when it is closed in by consonants. (The reason I don't use the term short vowel with these young students is because they may associate short with stature).
9. Have student spell words with short vowels: Dictate the words in 5 above and add others as needed.
10. For multisyllabic words Introduce the Spot and Dot concept for longer words.

SPOT & DOT

11. Teach students to **Spot** the vowels and put a **Dot** beneath each vowel. Next, build a bridge.
12. A bridge is a line that extends down from each vowel and is connected by a line. (See the example for basket below).
13. **Balsket**. Dots are placed under the vowels a and e in basket with a connecting line.
14. Divide the word into syllables following the CVCCVC vowel pattern. In this vowel pattern two consonants are together on the bridge, in this case S&K, the word is broken into syllables between the two adjacent consonants: **Bas/ket**.
15. For words that only have one consonant on the bridge following the first vowel, the word is usually broken between the vowel and the consonant - **pi/lot**. This is known as an **Open vowel** because it is not closed in between consonants.