

Orton-Gillingham Fact Sheet

What is the Orton-Gillingham Approach?

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The Orton-Gillingham (OG) approach is a structured, evidence-based way of teaching reading, spelling and writing.

It was originally developed by neurologist Dr Samuel Orton and educator Anna Gillingham to support children with dyslexia and language-based learning difficulties.

Today, Orton-Gillingham is widely used to support students who experience difficulties with:

- Reading
- Spelling
- Writing
- Phonological processing
- Dyslexia

O-G

The approach is also beneficial for many students who need explicit, systematic literacy instruction.

What Makes Orton-Gillingham Different?

Orton-Gillingham is:

Structured and Sequential

Skills are taught in a carefully planned order, beginning with the foundational skills needed for reading and spelling success.

Students master one skill before moving to the next.

Explicit

Concepts are directly taught rather than assumed.

Students are shown:

- What the skill is
- How it works
- When to use it
- Why it works

Multisensory

Students learn using:

- Visual pathways (seeing)
- Auditory pathways (hearing)
- Kinesthetic pathways (movement)
- Tactile pathways (touch)

For example, students may:

- Say sounds aloud
- Trace letters
- Tap sounds
- Write while speaking
- Manipulate sounds and words physically

Diagnostic and Responsive

Teaching is continually adjusted based on student performance.

Lessons are personalised so instruction matches the learner's needs, strengths and pace.

What Skills Does Orton-Gillingham Teach?

The approach teaches the structure of the English language, including:

- Phonological awareness
- Phonics
- Decoding
- Encoding (spelling)
- Syllable types
- Morphology (prefixes, suffixes and roots)
- Fluency
- Reading comprehension
- Written expression

Students learn the patterns and rules within English rather than relying on memorisation alone.

Who Benefits from Orton-Gillingham?

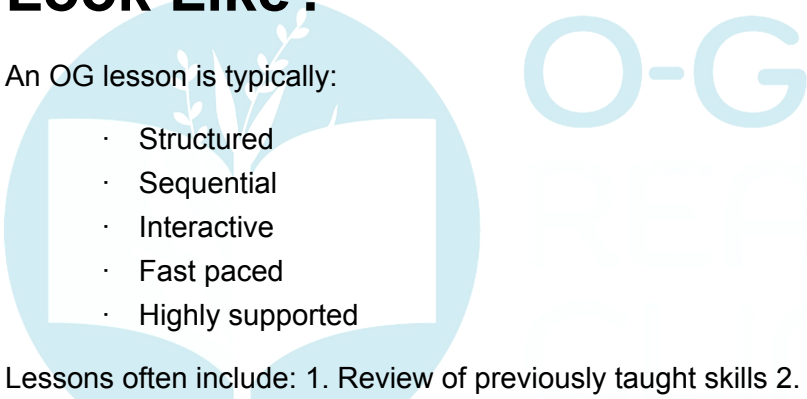
Orton-Gillingham is commonly used with:

- Students with dyslexia
- Students with reading difficulties
- Students with language-based learning difficulties
- Students needing explicit literacy instruction
- Students who have not responded well to traditional literacy approaches

Many students without dyslexia also benefit from structured literacy teaching.

What Does an Orton-Gillingham Lesson Look Like?

An OG lesson is typically:

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- Structured
 - Sequential
 - Interactive
 - Fast paced
 - Highly supported

Lessons often include: 1. Review of previously taught skills 2. Phonological awareness activities 3. Explicit teaching of a new concept 4. Reading practice 5. Spelling and dictation 6. Application to words and sentences

Students receive immediate feedback and repeated practice to support mastery.

Why is Orton-Gillingham Effective?

Research supports structured literacy approaches for students with dyslexia and reading difficulties.

Orton-Gillingham helps students by:

- Breaking learning into manageable steps
- Teaching language patterns explicitly
- Providing repeated practice
- Using multisensory learning pathways
- Building confidence and success through mastery

Common Signs a Child May Benefit from OG Instruction

- Difficulty learning letter sounds
 - Slow or inaccurate reading
 - Difficulty spelling
 - Guessing words when reading
 - Trouble remembering phonics patterns
 - Frustration or anxiety around literacy tasks
 - Family history of dyslexia or reading difficulties
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Important to Know

Orton-Gillingham is not a “quick fix.”

Students often require:

- Consistent instruction
- Repetition and review
- Explicit teaching over time
- Ongoing practice and support

Progress may be gradual, but systematic intervention can significantly improve literacy skills and confidence.

Australian School Context

Many Australian schools and literacy clinics use structured literacy approaches influenced by Orton-Gillingham principles.

OG-based intervention may support:

- Reading intervention
 - Dyslexia support
 - Individual learning plans
 - Classroom accommodations
 - Literacy intervention programs
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This fact sheet is intended for educational purposes and does not replace professional educational or medical advice.