Conducting Initial Placement
Instructions and Worksheet

Date: _____ Name: _____

Quick Reference Instructions

Step 1: Estimate the learner's reading level and determine phonics needs, if any, noting the earliest phonics need.

Mark the learner's grade (Gr) and estimated reading level (ERL) on the Conducting Initial Placement Worksheet (right). If appropriate, mark the learner's earliest phonics need on the Phonics Testing Levels table (right).

Step 2: Determine the testing level and locate the story.

If you checked a phonics need on the Phonics Testing Levels table (right) and the ERL is third grade or below, select the placement story at the testing level that corresponds to that phonics need. If not, select the placement story at the testing level closest to the learner's ERL.

Step 3: Conduct a one-minute timing using the testing level.

Record the testing level, and as you conduct the timing, tally the learner's errors in the Errors column of the Placement Testing Results table (right).

Step 4: Calculate the words correct per minute (wcpm) score.

Record the number of words attempted. Then, subtract the number of errors to calculate the wcpm score for the level tested.

Step 5: Determine whether the level of the placement story is appropriate for the learner.

If the learner's wcpm score falls within the range for the testing level of the placement story (see table, right), use that level in step 6 to select the initial level.

If not, select a higher or lower placement story based on whether the learner's wcpm score was above or below the range. Then, repeat steps 3 through 5 until you find an appropriate level.

Initial Placement Ranges

Testing Level	WCPM Score
1.0 to 3.0	30 to 60
3.5 to 5.0	60 to 80
5.6 to 7.0	80 to 100
8.0	100 to 140

Step 6: Select an appropriate series and level.

Select a series and level from the Placement Testing Levels and Options table (below). Appropriate options are listed in the column under each testing level. (The Phonics Testing Levels table, in steps 1–2 of the Worksheet, can also help with appropriate phonics level and set selection.)

Note: Select a phonics level only if the level reinforces the learner's earliest phonics need *and* falls within the appropriate range.

Write your selections on the worksheet to the right.

Placement Testing Levels and Options

Testing Levels	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0	4.5	5.0	5.6	6.0	7.0	8.0
Sequenced Series Levels*	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0	4.5	5.0	5.6	6.0	7.0	8.0
Phonics Series Levels*	0.8	1.3	1.8	2.3	2.6, 2.7**	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Idioms Series Levels	—	—	—	—	3.0	3.5	4.0	4.5	—	—	—	—	—

*Levels are also available in the Blind and Visually Impaired series.

**Levels 2.6 and 2.7 are intended for students who need review in short and long vowels and are ready to read two-syllable words.

Step 7: Set an initial goal.

To set an initial goal, add 30 (Gr 1–4) or 40 (Gr 5+) to the learner's wcpm score on the placement story and round down to the nearest 5.

Calculate and record the goal.

Conducting Initial Placement Worksheet

Steps 1–2: Estimate reading level, check earliest phonics need (if any), and select testing level.

Gr: _____ ERL (estimated reading level): _____

Phonics Testing Levels (for ERL ≤ 3 only)

Check Earliest Phonics Need	Phonics Level[1]	Set[2]	Testing Level[3]
☐ Short a, o, and i	0.8	Odd	1.0
☐ Short u, e, and mixed	0.8	Even	1.0
☐ Long vowels w/ silent e	1.3	Odd	1.5
☐ Long-vowel teams	1.3	Even	1.5
☐ Digraphs	1.8	Odd	2.0
☐ Blends	1.8	Even	2.0
☐ R-controlled & soft c/g	2.3	Odd	2.5
☐ Other letter combos	2.3	Even	2.5
☐ Short a, e, and i	2.6[4]	Odd	3.0
☐ Short o, u, and mixed	2.6[4]	Even	3.0
☐ Long a, e, and i	2.7[4]	Odd	3.0
☐ Long o, u, and mixed	2.7[4]	Even	3.0

[1] The level from the Phonics series that reinforces specified skills.
[2] The set within the Phonics level that reinforces specified skills.
[3] The placement testing level that corresponds with the Phonics level.
[4] Levels 2.6 and 2.7 are for learners who need review in short and long vowels and are ready for two-syllable words.

Testing Levels

1.0 1.5 2.0 2.5 3.0 3.5 4.0 4.5 5.0 5.6 6.0 7.0 8.0

Steps 3–4: Record testing level, conduct one-minute timing, and calculate wcpm score.

Record the testing level, tally the errors during the cold timing, and calculate the wcpm score on the table below.

Placement Testing Results

Testing Level	Words Attempted	*minus*	Errors	*equals*	WCPM Score
		–		=	
		–		=	
		–		=	
		–		=	

Step 5: Determine whether the placement story is at an appropriate level (and if not, keep testing).

Compare the wcpm score from the Placement Results table with the Initial Placement Ranges table and determine whether the tested level is appropriate. If so, go to step 6. If not, repeat steps 3–5 with another story.

Step 6: Select an appropriate series and level.

Mark your selections below.

Series: _____ **Initial Level:** _____ **Set:** _____ (if Phonics series)

Step 7: Set an initial goal.

_____ (wcpm) + _____ (+30 Gr 1–4, +40 Gr 5+) = _____ = **Initial Goal** = _____ (round answer down to nearest 5 for initial goal)

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