

Phonemic Awareness Development: A Diagnostic for Instruction (PADDI)

Welcome to the PADDI,

The Phonemic Awareness Development: A Diagnostic for Instruction (PADDI) is a set of free, informal diagnostic tools designed to help teachers identify where to begin phonological awareness instruction with students of any age. Using the PADDI, teachers can identify and teach phonemic awareness (PA) skills to fuel reading and spelling development. Teachers can use PADDI scores and qualitative information to check accuracy and efficiency at each PA level, then use this information to group students for PA instruction. The PADDI makes it easy to document student mastery of PA concepts and track progress.

The PADDI includes two diagnostic assessments. Both assessments appear in three forms (A, B, C) so that teachers can monitor progress over the school year.

1. The PADDI–Kindergarten through Adult (PADDI–KA) identifies where to begin instruction for students of any age. It uses a deletion task (for example, **Say “part,” but don’t say /p/**) to assess the ability to isolate and manipulate speech sounds in spoken words. Performance on deletion tasks is highly correlated with later reading and spelling skills.
2. The PADDI–Foundations (PADDI–F) is designed for preschool students and those who have difficulty on the practice items of the PADDI–KA. It uses segmentation and blending tasks to assess a student’s ability to isolate and combine speech sounds in spoken words. These skills support accurate decoding and spelling by sound.

Like previous, informal PA assessments, the PADDI–KA uses standard oral deletion tasks to assess an individual’s ability to isolate and manipulate speech sounds in spoken words. The ability to easily perform deletion tasks indicates efficient phonological processing that is crucial for reading and spelling development. Phonological processing that is automatic at the phoneme level supports fluent decoding, orthographic mapping, word recognition, and spelling (Kilpatrick, 2016, 2020; Paige & Rupley, 2026). The PADDI–KA presents a similar sequence of items as the Test of Auditory Analysis Skills (Rosner, 1975): syllable deletion, deletion of first sounds, deletion of final consonant sounds, deletion of the first sound in initial consonant clusters, then the deletion of the second sound in initial consonant clusters. Like the Phonological Awareness Screening Test (PAST; Kilpatrick, 2016; 2024), responses are scored for accuracy and speed.

The PADDI–KA includes several novel features that support effective assessment and instruction. Syllable items are limited to two-syllable words to get students to phoneme-level instruction sooner. To reduce linguistic bias in PA assessment, we made every effort to include items that are phonologically friendly to speakers of General American English (GAE), African American English (AAE), and Spanish (see more information on page 26). To facilitate grouping of students with more advanced PA skills, the PADDI includes a few additional items that assess final cluster deletion. The scoring system accounts for accuracy and efficiency while maintaining ease of score interpretation.

Author Note: We thank Dr. Dandan Wei for her many contributions to the PADDI. We are grateful to teachers across the country who provided feedback to make this a more useful tool.

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Author Profiles

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Jill Lang, Ed.D., CCC-SLP, is a school-based speech-language pathologist and certified Structured Literacy Dyslexia Interventionist. She brings over 15 years of experience supporting improved language and literacy outcomes for diverse learners. Dr. Lang bridges research and practice to empower educators to incorporate evidence-based practices that grow thriving readers.

Melissa Farrall, M.Ed., Ph.D., S.A.I.F., is the author of *Reading Assessment: Linking Language, Literacy, and Cognition*, and the co-author of *All About Tests & Assessments* published by Wrightslaw. Dr. Farrall retired as Director for Evaluation at the Stern Center for Language and Learning. She trains evaluators and teaches courses on the assessment of reading, writing, and language through the Stern Center and Vermont State University. She serves on the Orton-Gillingham Academy Research Advisory Board.

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Lucy Hart Paulson, Ed.D., CCC-SLP, is an author, literacy specialist, and speech-language pathologist with years of experience working with educators and students in a wide range of educational settings. Dr. Paulson was an associate professor, teaching and conducting research in the areas of language and literacy development and disorders. She provides professional development by blending areas of language and literacy together to support effective and engaging language-based literacy instruction for all children. Finally, Dr. Paulson is the co-author of the *Language Essentials for Teachers of Reading and Spelling (LETRS) for Early Childhood Educators 2nd Edition*.

Carol Tolman, Ed.D., is an author and international literacy consultant for states, districts, and schools across all grade levels. As co-author of LETRS, Dr. Tolman supports professional development and coaching experiences for all literacy stakeholders.

The PADDI is an open-source tool for educators and parents. Feel free to copy and share it in its original form. Please reference this work as: Ashby, J., Lang, J., Farrall, M. L., Beenen, K. T., Paulson, L. H., & Tolman, C. (2026). *Phonemic Awareness Development: A Diagnostic for Instruction*. <https://pearsforteachingreading.org>

Learning to Give the PADDI

The PADDI (pronounced “paddy”) is designed with educators in mind, yet all tools take a little time to learn. Before giving it to a student, you will find it helpful to read and highlight instructions that describe the presentation of items, prompting, and feedback. In addition, be sure to attend to the stopping rule and the point system for scoring. Once you are familiar with the tool, you could practice giving the PADDI to a friend before you give it to any students. With this preparation, you will find it easier to give the PADDI when you work with a student. Familiarity with the PADDI encourages confident administration and minimizes worries about “what do I do next?” A little practice allows you to focus on the quality of the student’s responses.

PADDI–Kindergarten through Adult (PADDI–KA)

The PADDI–KA is an informal diagnostic that guides instruction; it is not a screening tool. It can make useful contributions to all phases of multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS). Student performance on the PADDI can support effective literacy instruction in several ways. Educators can administer the PADDI to identify gaps in PA performance, then group students for PA instruction. This informal diagnostic also provides key information for setting instructional goals, planning specific lesson activities, and monitoring progress. The PADDI is suitable for students diagnosed with dyslexia and specific learning disorders. However, it alone cannot identify a phonological deficit. Three forms are provided so that students’ PA skills may be initially assessed, then reassessed throughout the school year. Reassessment with the provided alternative forms can identify response to intervention. Pilots of the PADDI forms affirm item selection choices, item gradients, and teacher perceptions of usability.

General Directions for Administration

Materials: Test Scoring Form and a pencil. When assessing kindergarten students, have a copy of the PADDI–Foundations on hand to assess more fundamental skills as needed (see page 18).

Starting Point: Students ages 5 and older should begin with the practice items on the PADDI–KA. If a student’s answers are incorrect on both practice items, shift to administering the PADDI–F, which tests more fundamental phonological skills. If a student responds incorrectly to Item 2 in the PADDI–KA, shift to administering the PADDI–F.

Item Presentation: Be sure that the student is facing you and looking at your mouth as you say each word normally. The student should echo, or repeat, each item after you say it. If the student forgets the word, it is fine for you to say it again and ask the student to repeat it. Please note this with an “R” on the score sheet.

The / / symbols represent virgules and refer to the speech sound of the letter(s) between the two virgules. For /s/, you would say “sssss.” Always say the speech sound between the virgules, the / / marks. Do not say the letter name.

Prompt (as needed to gain attention at the start of each item): **Listen carefully . . .**

- Teacher: **Say “daylight.”** The student should say “daylight.”
 - This step can be repeated if you are uncertain that the student has said the correct word. Accept dialect-based and language-based variations, noting them in the blank.
- Teacher: **Now say it but don’t say “light.”** The student should say “day.”

Recording Automaticity: Two points are awarded for responses provided within two seconds. Thinking the phrase “one thousand one, one thousand two” takes about two seconds. Accurate answers provided after you have finished this phrase should be discretely scored as a 1. Using this approach minimizes student anxiety and allows them to continue responding at their own pace.

Record Possible Errors: If you think an answer may not be correct, note the student response in the item blank. Do not circle a score at this time. Continue to administer items until you are certain they met the stopping rule, then review their responses.

Feedback: Provide corrective feedback *only* during the Practice and on Test Item 3. The items on the PADDI should never be demonstrated or taught to the student.

Stopping Rule: If a student answers the second practice item correctly, continue administering the PADDI–KA items until the student scores three consecutive incorrect responses (0’s) on the test items (1–20). Discontinue after three consecutive 0’s.

Directions for Scoring

- Give 2 points for accurate and confident responses provided within two seconds.
- Give 1 point if the response is correct but uncertain or slow (i.e., delayed beyond two seconds).
- Give 0 points if the response is incorrect.

Articulation Considerations When Scoring

Students’ dialect, first language, and articulation development should be considered when scoring a response.

Do not penalize students for mispronunciations due to dialect, language, or articulation. Judgments about item correctness should be based on the student’s initial production of the item, which will provide the initial phoneme string considered when performing the deletion task. If the correct segment is deleted and the remaining sounds are blended to produce a new word, score the item as correct.

- The pronunciation of initial blends with -r may differ among some English language learners. Items are scored correct if pronounced with the trilled /r/.
- A student who responds “meese” to the prompt **Say “mist,” but don’t say /t/** has demonstrated accurate phoneme deletion despite the dialectal difference in vowel pronunciation. The student would receive full credit (2) if they respond confidently within two seconds. They would receive a 1 if they responded after two seconds.
- A student who pronounces /r/ as /w/ will receive credit for the response as long as the deletion is completed correctly. For example, the student who repeats “road” as “woad,” then responds “woe” to **Say “road,” but don’t say /d/** would receive full credit (2) if they respond within two seconds. They would receive a 1 if they responded after two seconds.

PADDI–KA Specific Directions for Administration

Step 1: Directions for Practice Items and Test Items 1–2

For students in K–1, say, **In this game, you will play with sounds in words. Let's practice.**

For older students, say, **In this task, you will work with sounds in words. Let's practice.**

Practice 1: Say to the student, **Now I want you to say a word without one of its parts. Are you ready?**

Listen carefully. Say “daylight.” The student should say “daylight.” **Now say it but don't say “light.”**

The student should say “day.”

- Correct response: Say, **That's right. Let's try another one.** Go to the next practice item.
- Incorrect response: Say, **Let's try that again. Daylight without light is day. Now you try it. Say “daylight.”** The student should say “daylight.” **Now say it but don't say “light.”** The student should say “day.” If the response is correct or incorrect, say, **Let's try another one,** and continue to the next practice item.

Practice 2: Say to the student, **Listen carefully. Say “outside.”** The student should say “outside.”

Now say it but don't say “out.” The student should say “side.”

- Correct response: Say, **“That's right.”** Go to Test Items 1–2.
- Incorrect response: Say, **Let's try that again. Outside without out is side.** Say, **Let's try that again. Say “outside.”** The student should say “outside.” **Now say it but don't say “out.”** The student should say “side.” If the response is correct, say, **That's right.** Go to Test Items 1–2 and do not provide feedback. If the response is incorrect, discontinue and say, **Let's try something different.** Go to the Foundations level and begin with the practice items.

Step 2: Directions for Test Items 3 Onward

Now let's try something a little different. This time we will take away just one sound. Listen

carefully. Say “meet.” The student should say “meet.” **Now say it but don't say /m/. The student should say “eat.”**

Note: The / / symbols refer to the letter sound. Always say the sound of the letter between the / / marks. Do not say the letter name. Use the prompt, **Listen carefully,** as needed.

- Correct response: Say, **Let's do some more.** Continue with the next items in sequence until the student misses three responses in a row. Then stop the assessment.
- Incorrect response on Test Item 3: Say, **Meet without /m/ is eat.**
- Only provide feedback on Test Item 3.
- Continue with the next items in sequence until the student misses three items in a row. Then stop the assessment.

The present, beta version of this informal diagnostic is not yet fully validated. Educators who are concerned about test-retest reliability may choose to simply readminister the original form at three-month intervals to document progress.

Student Initials _____ Date _____

Circle Student's Information: K 1 2 3 4+

English Language Learner / Title I / Dyslexic

PADDI-KA Scoring Form A

Provide feedback only for the shaded items. Note all incorrect responses.

Stopping Rule: Stop after the student provides three incorrect responses in a row.

	Item	Instructions	Correct	Score / Response	Deletion Type
P	Say "daylight."	Now say it but don't say "light."	day	Y N	Syllable
P	Say "outside."	Now say it but don't say "out."	side	Y N	Syllable
1	Say "houseboat."	Now say it but don't say "boat."	house	2 1 0 _____	Syllable
2	Say "photo."	Now say it but don't say "toe."	pho	2 1 0 _____	Syllable
3	Say "meet."	Now say it but don't say /m/.	eat	2 1 0 _____	First Sound
4	Say "cone."	Now say it but don't say /k/.	own	2 1 0 _____	First Sound
5	Say "fade."	Now say it but don't say /f/.	aid	2 1 0 _____	First Sound
6	Say "tune."	Now say it but don't say /n/.	to	2 1 0 _____	Last Sound
7	Say "toad."	Now say it but don't say /d/.	toe	2 1 0 _____	Last Sound
8	Say "bloom."	Now say it but don't say /m/.	blue	2 1 0 _____	Last Sound
9	Say "plane."	Now say it but don't say /p/.	lane	2 1 0 _____	Beginning Cluster First Sound
10	Say "broom."	Now say it but don't say /b/.	room	2 1 0 _____	Beginning Cluster First Sound
11	Say "smash."	Now say it but don't say /s/.	mash	2 1 0 _____	Beginning Cluster First Sound
12	Say "blown."	Now say it but don't say /l/.	bone	2 1 0 _____	Beginning Cluster Second Sound
13	Say "grain."	Now say it but don't say /r/.	gain	2 1 0 _____	Beginning Cluster Second Sound
14	Say "smell."	Now say it but don't say /m/.	sell	2 1 0 _____	Beginning Cluster Second Sound
15	Say "bolt."	Now say it but don't say /t/.	bowl	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Last Sound
16	Say "bump."	Now say it but don't say /p/.	bum	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Last Sound
17	Say "meant."	Now say it but don't say /t/.	men	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Last Sound
18	Say "gasp."	Now say it but don't say /s/.	gap	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Penultimate Sound
19	Say "left."	Now say it but don't say /f/.	let	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Penultimate Sound
20	Say "hind."	Now say it but don't say /n/.	hide	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Penultimate Sound

2 points = Automatic & Correct

1 point = Correct Only

0 points = Incorrect

There is no penalty if Spanish speakers pronounce items with a trilled r.

TOTAL

POINTS _____/40

PADDI-KA Checklist for Instruction

Teacher _____ Student _____

Date of PADDI-KA Administration _____ Form: A B C

Item #	Score	PA Concept & EFRS* Level	Interpreting Scores and Planning Instruction
1		Syllable D1 & D2	Example: Say “steamboat,” but don’t say “boat.” - All 2’s: learning completed 1’s & 2’s: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0’s: explicit instruction blending/segmenting syllables, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
2			
3		First Sound F1	Example: Say “seat,” but don’t say /s/. - All 2’s: learning completed 1’s & 2’s: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0’s: explicit instruction blending/segmenting three sounds, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
4			
5			
6		Last Sound I2	Example: Say “toad,” but don’t say /d/. - All 2’s: learning completed 1’s & 2’s: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0’s: explicit instruction blending/segmenting three sounds, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
7			
8			
9		Beginning Blends, First Sound H1	Example: Say “pride,” but don’t say /p/. - All 2’s: learning completed 1’s & 2’s: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0’s: explicit instruction blending/segmenting four-sound words with beginning blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
10			
11			
12		Beginning Blends, Second Sound K1	Example: Say “clone,” but don’t say /l/. - All 2’s: learning completed 1’s & 2’s: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0’s: explicit instruction blending/segmenting four-sound words with beginning blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
13			
14			
15		Ending Blends, Last Sound I1	Example: Say “felt,” but don’t say /t/. - All 2’s: learning completed 1’s & 2’s: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0’s: explicit instruction blending/segmenting four-sound words with ending blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
16			
17			
18		Ending Blends, Next-to-Last Sound M1	Example: Say “pond,” but don’t say /n/. - All 2’s: learning completed 1’s & 2’s: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0’s: explicit instruction blending/segmenting four-sound words with ending blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
19			
20			

***Note:** EFRS refers to Equipped for Reading Success (Kilpatrick, 2016).

Student Initials _____ Date _____

Circle Student's Information: K 1 2 3 4+
English Language Learner / Title I / Dyslexic

PADDI-KA Scoring Form B

Provide feedback only for the shaded items. Note all incorrect responses.

Stopping Rule: Stop after the student provides three incorrect responses in a row.

	Item	Instructions	Correct	Score / Response	Deletion Type
P	Say "daytime."	Now say it but don't say "time."	day	Y N	Syllable
P	Say "eyesight."	Now say it but don't say "eye."	sight	Y N	Syllable
1	Say "homeroom."	Now say it but don't say "home."	room	2 1 0 _____	Syllable
2	Say "banjo."	Now say it but don't say "joe."	ban	2 1 0 _____	Syllable
3	Say "face."	Now say it but don't say /f/.	ace	2 1 0 _____	First Sound
4	Say "beat."	Now say it but don't say /b/.	eat	2 1 0 _____	First Sound
5	Say "cape."	Now say it but don't say /k/.	ape	2 1 0 _____	First Sound
6	Say "same."	Now say it but don't say /m/.	say	2 1 0 _____	Last Sound
7	Say "bean."	Now say it but don't say /n/.	be	2 1 0 _____	Last Sound
8	Say "great."	Now say it but don't say /t/.	gray	2 1 0 _____	Last Sound
9	Say "clean."	Now say it but don't say /k/.	lean	2 1 0 _____	Beginning Cluster First Sound
10	Say "price."	Now say it but don't say /p/.	rice	2 1 0 _____	Beginning Cluster First Sound
11	Say "slick."	Now say it but don't say /s/.	lick	2 1 0 _____	Beginning Cluster First Sound
12	Say "clone."	Now say it but don't say /l/.	cone	2 1 0 _____	Beginning Cluster Second Sound
13	Say "preach."	Now say it but don't say /r/.	peach	2 1 0 _____	Beginning Cluster Second Sound
14	Say "snore."	Now say it but don't say /n/.	sore	2 1 0 _____	Beginning Cluster Second Sound
15	Say "felt."	Now say it but don't say /t/.	fell	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Last Sound
16	Say "paste."	Now say it but don't say /t/.	pace	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Last Sound
17	Say "lamp."	Now say it but don't say /p/.	lamb	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Last Sound
18	Say "nest."	Now say it but don't say /s/.	net	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Penultimate Sound
19	Say "limp."	Now say it but don't say /m/.	lip	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Penultimate Sound
20	Say "rind."	Now say it but don't say /n/.	ride	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Penultimate Sound

2 points = Automatic & Correct

1 point = Correct Only

0 points = Incorrect

There is no penalty if Spanish speakers pronounce items with a trilled r.

TOTAL

POINTS _____/40

PADDI-KA Checklist for Instruction

Teacher _____ Student _____

Date of PADDI-KA Administration _____ Form: A B C

Item #	Score	PA Concept & EFRS* Level	Interpreting Scores and Planning Instruction
1		Syllable D1 & D2	Example: Say “steamboat,” but don’t say “boat.” - All 2’s: learning completed 1’s & 2’s: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0’s: explicit instruction blending/segmenting syllables, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
2			
3		First Sound F1	Example: Say “seat,” but don’t say /s/. - All 2’s: learning completed 1’s & 2’s: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0’s: explicit instruction blending/segmenting three sounds, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
4			
5			
6		Last Sound I2	Example: Say “toad,” but don’t say /d/. - All 2’s: learning completed 1’s & 2’s: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0’s: explicit instruction blending/segmenting three sounds, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
7			
8			
9		Beginning Blends, First Sound H1	Example: Say “pride,” but don’t say /p/. - All 2’s: learning completed 1’s & 2’s: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0’s: explicit instruction blending/segmenting four-sound words with beginning blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
10			
11			
12		Beginning Blends, Second Sound K1	Example: Say “clone,” but don’t say /l/. - All 2’s: learning completed 1’s & 2’s: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0’s: explicit instruction blending/segmenting four-sound words with beginning blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
13			
14			
15		Ending Blends, Last Sound I1	Example: Say “felt,” but don’t say /t/. - All 2’s: learning completed 1’s & 2’s: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0’s: explicit instruction blending/segmenting four-sound words with ending blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
16			
17			
18		Ending Blends, Next-to-Last Sound M1	Example: Say “pond,” but don’t say /n/. - All 2’s: learning completed 1’s & 2’s: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0’s: explicit instruction blending/segmenting four-sound words with ending blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
19			
20			

***Note:** EFRS refers to Equipped for Reading Success (Kilpatrick, 2016).

Student Initials _____ Date _____

Circle Student's Information: K 1 2 3 4+
English Language Learner / Title I / Dyslexic

PADDI-KA Scoring Form C

Provide feedback only for the shaded items. Note all incorrect responses.

Stopping Rule: Stop after the student provides three incorrect responses in a row.

	Item	Instructions	Correct	Score / Response	Deletion Type
P	Say "outshine."	Now say it but don't say "shine."	out	Y N	Syllable
P	Say "roommate."	Now say it but don't say "room."	mate	Y N	Syllable
1	Say "skylight."	Now say it but don't say "sky."	light	2 1 0 _____	Syllable
2	Say "dollar."	Now say it but don't say "ar."	doll	2 1 0 _____	Syllable
3	Say "base."	Now say it but don't say /b/.	ace	2 1 0 _____	First Sound
4	Say "note."	Now say it but don't say /n/.	oat	2 1 0 _____	First Sound
5	Say "shape."	Now say it but don't say /sh/.	ape	2 1 0 _____	First Sound
6	Say "loaf."	Now say it but don't say /f/.	low	2 1 0 _____	Last Sound
7	Say "tune."	Now say it but don't say /n/.	to	2 1 0 _____	Last Sound
8	Say "price."	Now say it but don't say /s/.	pry	2 1 0 _____	Last Sound
9	Say "blown."	Now say it but don't say /b/.	loan	2 1 0 _____	Beginning Cluster First Sound
10	Say "slung."	Now say it but don't say /s/.	lung	2 1 0 _____	Beginning Cluster First Sound
11	Say "brace."	Now say it but don't say /b/.	race	2 1 0 _____	Beginning Cluster First Sound
12	Say "place."	Now say it but don't say /l/.	pace	2 1 0 _____	Beginning Cluster Second Sound
13	Say "crave."	Now say it but don't say /r/.	cave	2 1 0 _____	Beginning Cluster Second Sound
14	Say "snail."	Now say it but don't say /n/.	sail	2 1 0 _____	Beginning Cluster Second Sound
15	Say "halt."	Now say it but don't say /t/.	hall	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Last Sound
16	Say "limp."	Now say it but don't say /p/.	limb	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Last Sound
17	Say "guest."	Now say it but don't say /t/.	guess	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Last Sound
18	Say "rasp."	Now say it but don't say /s/.	rap	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Penultimate Sound
19	Say "weft."	Now say it but don't say /f/.	wet	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Penultimate Sound
20	Say "pond."	Now say it but don't say /n/.	pod	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Penultimate Sound

2 points = Automatic & Correct

1 point = Correct Only

0 points = Incorrect

There is no penalty if Spanish speakers pronounce items with a trilled r.

TOTAL

POINTS _____ /40

PADDI-KA Checklist for Instruction

Teacher _____ Student _____

Date of PADDI-KA Administration _____ Form: A B C

Item #	Score	PA Concept & EFRS* Level	Interpreting Scores and Planning Instruction
1		Syllable D1 & D2	Example: Say “steamboat,” but don’t say “boat.” - All 2’s: learning completed 1’s & 2’s: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0’s: explicit instruction blending/segmenting syllables, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
2			
3		First Sound F1	Example: Say “seat,” but don’t say /s/. - All 2’s: learning completed 1’s & 2’s: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0’s: explicit instruction blending/segmenting three sounds, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
4			
5			
6		Last Sound I2	Example: Say “toad,” but don’t say /d/. - All 2’s: learning completed 1’s & 2’s: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0’s: explicit instruction blending/segmenting three sounds, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
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9		Beginning Blends, First Sound H1	Example: Say “pride,” but don’t say /p/. - All 2’s: learning completed 1’s & 2’s: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0’s: explicit instruction blending/segmenting four-sound words with beginning blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
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11			
12		Beginning Blends, Second Sound K1	Example: Say “clone,” but don’t say /l/. - All 2’s: learning completed 1’s & 2’s: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0’s: explicit instruction blending/segmenting four-sound words with beginning blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
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14			
15		Ending Blends, Last Sound I1	Example: Say “felt,” but don’t say /t/. - All 2’s: learning completed 1’s & 2’s: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0’s: explicit instruction blending/segmenting four-sound words with ending blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
16			
17			
18		Ending Blends, Next-to-Last Sound M1	Example: Say “pond,” but don’t say /n/. - All 2’s: learning completed 1’s & 2’s: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0’s: explicit instruction blending/segmenting four-sound words with ending blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
19			
20			

***Note:** EFRS refers to Equipped for Reading Success (Kilpatrick, 2016).

Sample PADDI-KA Scoring Form

Student Initials Y.S Date 2/14/26

Circle Student's Information: K 1 2 3 4+
English Language Learner Title I Dyslexic

PADDI-KA Scoring Form A

Provide feedback only for the shaded items. Note all incorrect responses.

Stopping Rule: Stop after the student provides three incorrect responses in a row.

	Item	Instructions	Correct	Score / Response	Deletion Type
P	Say "daylight."	Now say it but don't say "light."	day	<u>Y</u> N	Syllable
P	Say "outside."	Now say it but don't say "out."	side	<u>Y</u> N	Syllable
1	Say "houseboat."	Now say it but don't say "boat."	house	<u>2</u> 1 0 _____	Syllable
2	Say "photo."	Now say it but don't say "toe."	pho	<u>2</u> 1 0 _____	Syllable
3	Say "meet."	Now say it but don't say /m/.	eat	<u>2</u> 1 0 _____	First Sound
4	Say "cone."	Now say it but don't say /k/.	own	<u>2</u> 1 0 _____	First Sound
5	Say "fade."	Now say it but don't say /f/.	aid	<u>2</u> 1 0 _____	First Sound
6	Say "tune."	Now say it but don't say /n/.	to	2 1 <u>0</u> <u>tool</u>	Last Sound
7	Say "toad."	Now say it but don't say /d/.	toe	<u>2</u> 1 0 _____	Last Sound
8	Say "bloom."	Now say it but don't say /m/.	blue	<u>2</u> 1 0 _____	Last Sound
9	Say "plane."	Now say it but don't say /p/.	lane	2 1 <u>0</u> <u>pain</u>	Beginning Cluster First Sound
10	Say "broom."	Now say it but don't say /b/.	room	2 1 <u>0</u> <u>boom</u>	Beginning Cluster First Sound
11	Say "smash."	Now say it but don't say /s/.	mash	2 1 <u>0</u> <u>ash</u>	Beginning Cluster First Sound
12	Say "blown."	Now say it but don't say /l/.	bone	2 1 0 _____	Beginning Cluster Second Sound
13	Say "grain."	Now say it but don't say /r/.	gain	2 1 0 _____	Beginning Cluster Second Sound
14	Say "smell."	Now say it but don't say /m/.	sell	2 1 0 _____	Beginning Cluster Second Sound
15	Say "bolt."	Now say it but don't say /t/.	bowl	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Last Sound
16	Say "bump."	Now say it but don't say /p/.	bum	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Last Sound
17	Say "meant."	Now say it but don't say /t/.	men	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Last Sound
18	Say "gasp."	Now say it but don't say /s/.	gap	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Penultimate Sound
19	Say "left."	Now say it but don't say /f/.	let	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Penultimate Sound
20	Say "hind."	Now say it but don't say /n/.	hide	2 1 0 _____	Ending Cluster Penultimate Sound

2 points = Automatic & Correct 1 point = Correct Only 0 points = Incorrect

There is no penalty if Spanish speakers pronounce items with a trilled r.

TOTAL
POINTS 14 /40

Sample PADDI-KA Checklist for Instruction

PADDI-KA Checklist for Instruction

Teacher Jane Student Y.S

Date of PADDI-KA Administration 2/14/26 Form: A B C

Item #	Score	PA Concept & EFRS* Level	Interpreting Scores and Planning Instruction
1	2	Syllable D1 & D2	Example: Say "steamboat," but don't say "boat." - All 2's: learning completed 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting syllables, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
2	2		
3	2	First Sound F1	Example: Say "seat," but don't say /s/. - All 2's: learning completed 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting three sounds, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
4	2		
5	2		
6	0	Last Sound I2	Example: Say "toad," but don't say /d/. - All 2's: learning completed 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting three sounds, then explicit instruction in deletion at this level
7	2		
8	2		
9	0	Beginning Blends, First Sound H1	Example: Say "pride," but don't say /p/. - All 2's: learning completed 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting four-sound words with beginning blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
10	0		
11	0		
12		Beginning Blends, Second Sound K1	Example: Say "clone," but don't say /l/. - All 2's: learning completed 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting four-sound words with beginning blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
13			
14			
15		Ending Blends, Last Sound I1	Example: Say "felt," but don't say /t/. - All 2's: learning completed 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting four-sound words with ending blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
16			
17			
18		Ending Blends, Next-to-Last Sound M1	Example: Say "pond," but don't say /n/. - All 2's: learning completed 1's & 2's: fluency practice with deletion tasks - Any 0's: explicit instruction blending/segmenting four-sound words with ending blends, then explicit instruction in deletion
19			
20			

***Note:** EFRS refers to Equipped for Reading Success (Kilpatrick, 2016).

Interpreting Scores and Planning Instruction with the PADDI-KA

Obtaining interpretable scores. Educators who administer this diagnostic should familiarize themselves with the test forms and instructions prior to use. Realistically assess the student’s engagement during administration of the PADDI-KA. Do not interpret scores if the student was disengaged, distracted, sick, or did not understand the instructions; readminister an alternative form at a later date. PADDI items should be reserved for assessment purposes only.

The need for phonemic awareness (PA) instruction is not based on a student’s age or grade. It is dependent on the student’s level of reading and spelling skill development. When reading and spelling fall below expectations, data-based PA instruction can make a key contribution to reading and spelling growth. For instance, if a first-grader scores below the benchmark for PA on a universal screener, the teacher can administer the PADDI to find where to begin explicit instruction. If a fifth-grader scores below the benchmark for oral reading fluency, the teacher can administer the PADDI to discover which PA skills are mastered and where to begin explicit PA instruction if needed. In combination, PA and prescriptive phonics instruction will support continued reading growth throughout high school and into adulthood. For more information about PA instruction, get ready for the latest *Teaching Phonemic Awareness: An Educator’s Guide*, which will be available soon.

Using the PADDI-KA to capture PA skill progression. The PADDI-KA items assess simple phonological concepts in the early items and more complex phonological concepts in the later items (see Table 1). This sequence of PA levels parallels empirically supported learning progressions for phonological awareness (e.g., Anthony et al., 2002). Note that the learning progression is more complex than Table 1 suggests. For example, kindergarteners may begin instruction and practice with two-sound words (e.g., /it/ or /she/) before working with three-sound words (e.g., /sit/ or /fight/). Table 2 presents an approximate timeline for PA skill development in typical readers.

Table 1. *The Phonological Sequence of PA Concepts in the PADDI-KA*

PADDI-KA Items	PA Concept Level	Number of Phonemes in Practice Words
1–2	1. Syllable	*
3–5	2. First sound	2 or 3
6–8	3. Last sound	2 or 3
9–11	4. First sound in beginning blends	4
12–14	5. Second sound in beginning blends	4
15–17	6. Last sound in final blends	4
18–20	7. Next-to-last sound in final blends	4

Table 2. *Phonological Awareness Development: Goals for Typical Learners*

Phonological Awareness Skills	Age/Grade Expectations
Blending syllables	3–4 years of age
Segmenting syllables	3–4 years of age
Blending first sounds—rest of the word	4 years of age
Blending sounds in single-syllable words	4–5 years of age
Segmenting first sounds in words	December of Kindergarten
Segmenting sounds in CVC words	April of Kindergarten*
Segmenting sounds in CCVC or CVCC words	Grade 1

*CVC word segmenting is a foundational skill for decoding and spelling simple words.
Adapted from O’Connor (2014).

Using the PADDI–KA for instructional planning. High-quality instruction requires a plan that will lead students on a journey from the edge of their present knowledge to understanding a new concept to applying that new concept independently. Many decisions are involved in helping students along this progression from novice to master. This section describes one flow of these decisions according to best practices for effective teaching.

After completing the PADDI–KA, transfer the information from the Scoring Form onto the Checklist for Instruction, which can be copied on the back of each Scoring Form. A sample completed Checklist appears on page 13 for your convenience. Use Table 3 to interpret the Checklist for your student.

Table 3. *Interpreting Performance at a given PA Level and Planning Instruction*

Scores	Performance Description	Instructional Criteria
All 2's	Accurate, efficient, and confident responses	Learning is complete for this PA level.
1's & 2's	Accurate but hesitant responses	Plan practice activities for this PA level.
Any 0's	Incorrect responses	Explicit instruction required for this PA level.

The highest PA level for which a student scores all 2's is the edge of their present PA knowledge. A score of all 2's indicates that the student is accurate, confident, and efficient enough with this PA concept to support decoding, spelling, and orthographic mapping (word recognition).

The type of PA activities in your lessons will depend on how a student scores at that PA level. If the student scores mostly 1's for a PA level, this indicates that they are accurate, but not efficient enough for this PA concept to support orthographic mapping, word recognition, and spelling. The student understands the task but needs more guided and independent practice with deletion at this level to gain confidence and efficiency. Begin your instruction by reviewing deletion examples with the PA concept, modeling how to use blank tokens as a memory scaffold if needed. Provide some guided practice to check for accuracy with the deletion task. When the student is confident with the tokens, begin to fade the scaffold by having the student use tokens on only the first half of the items. When accuracy with last sound deletion without any scaffolding reaches 90%, transition the student to fully oral practice to build confidence and ease. When they reach 95% accuracy, the next instructional goal becomes segmenting and blending the first sound in beginning consonant clusters.

If a student scores any 0's for a PA level, this indicates that they are not accurate with deletion at this level. The PA concept may need to be taught from scratch, beginning with the easier task of blending or segmenting. Provide explicit instruction blending and/or segmenting spoken words at this level. Students who segment and blend at this PA level with 90% accuracy can then practice a unified routine, where they repeat the word, segment it, then blend its sounds together. Students who practice blending and segmenting in the same instructional activity are more likely to transfer their PA skills to decoding (Davidson & Jenkins, 1994). Once students can confidently segment and blend words with three sounds, then the instructional goal becomes deletion of the first sound in three-sound words. Next, students move to deleting the last sound in three-sound words. Students who can accurately and confidently delete these single consonant sounds can move to the next level of learning to segment and blend four-sound words with initial consonant clusters (e.g., /slam/).

Scores indicate the PA task for instruction. A student's scores indicate whether instruction should focus on fundamental blending and segmenting tasks or whether instruction should focus on deletion tasks. The instructional task sequence for each PA concept level is blending, segmenting, then deletion.

The PADDI–KA assesses deletion skill, which requires the automatic manipulation of speech sounds. Performance on deletion tasks is supported by performance on blending and segmenting tasks. Confident and efficient deletion skills rest on a foundation of proficient blending and segmenting skills. In other words, a student who scores all 2's at one PA level can usually blend and segment sounds at

that level. Conversely, inaccurate deletion skills usually indicate incomplete segmenting and/or blending skills at that level. A student who scores a 0 at a PA level will need instruction to strengthen segmenting and/or blending at that level. If a student can confidently blend several items at this PA level, then begin teaching the segmentation task. Once blending and segmenting are proficient (95%) for this PA level, then the instructional goal becomes deletion at this level. Once deletion at this level is proficient, then the instructional goal becomes segmenting and/or blending at the next PA level where scores are lower than 2's.

Finding words for PA instruction. Teachers who are knowledgeable about the phonological structure of words can use many sources to find words for teaching and practicing the PA skills identified by the PADDI–KA. For example, PA tasks within 95 Percent Group, Heggerty, and/or Lindamood Phoneme Sequencing® Program for Reading, Spelling, and Speech (LiPS®) can be used if teachers are careful about aligning the chosen words to the student’s proficiency level on the PADDI. Table 1 supports the alignment of PA activities with student proficiency on the PADDI–KA.

Teachers who prefer a single source for PA items may consult Equipped for Reading Success (EFRS; Kilpatrick, 2016), which supplies an extensive list of spoken words for teaching PA. EFRS offers “One Minute Activities” at each level of phonological/phonemic awareness. Table 4 aligns the PADDI–KA items, PA Concept Levels, and the EFRS Level that provides appropriate instructional items. These words can be used in numerous ways for instruction and practice with one student or a small group.

Table 4. *Alignment of the PADDI–KA and Equipped for Reading Success*

PADDI–KA Items	PA Concept Level	EFRS Level
1–2	Syllable	D1 and D2
3–5	First sound	F1
6–8	Last sound	I2
9–11	Beginning blends, first sound	H1
12–14	Beginning blends, second sound	K1
15–17	Ending blends, last sound	I1
18–20	Ending blends, next-to-last sound	M1

Planning lesson activities: The case of Ava. Ava is reading well below benchmark in Grade 2. If she earned a score of 2 on Items 3–8, then no instruction would be required for syllable, first sound, and last sounds (see Table 3). Scoring a 0 on Item 9, 10, or 11 would indicate that her instructional goal for PA is deleting the first sound in words with beginning consonant clusters. As seen in the Checklist, initial instruction would focus on segmenting and blending words with beginning clusters. For example, she could move blank tokens to *build*, then segment four-sound words (/mash/ to /smash/), using words from EFRS level H1. After the blending and segmenting practice, Ava could write the words to practice spelling by sound.

When Ava can segment and blend four-sound words with beginning blends without prompting or scaffolds at 95% accuracy, then she is ready to practice deleting the first sound in these words. Scaffolds like blank tokens can support guided practice with deleting the first sound in beginning blends. This instruction would continue until she reached 90% accuracy without scaffolding. Once she reached that goal, then Ava would practice independently until she attains at least 95% accuracy. Once she reached that goal, then the next instructional goal would be to delete the second sound in words with beginning blends. To reach this goal, her teacher would plan guided practice using words from EFRS level K1.

Guidelines for Delivering PA Instruction

- Focus on one PA concept at a time.
- Daily lessons should be 3–5 minutes in duration.
- Group students by PA skill. Students with 0's will be in a different group than students with 1's.
- Small-group instruction should only proceed as fast as the slowest student.
- Pronounce the word as it is normally spoken.
- The student should echo the word before beginning each item.
- Do not correct errors due to dialect variation.
- Correct errors by repeating the word first.
- Cue students by saying, **Feel what your mouth is doing when you repeat the word.**
- Teach each concept/task to mastery.
- Remove scaffolds like Elkonin boxes and tokens later in guided practice.
- Provide independent practice.
- Immediately after PA practice, kindergarten teachers can model how to spell the CVC items.

PADDI–Foundations (PADDI–F)

Directions for Administration

Prompt (as needed to gain attention at the start of each item): **Listen carefully . . .**

Feedback: Provide corrective feedback on the modeling and practice items only. If the responses for practice items are incorrect, provide feedback to make sure the student understands the task, repeat the practice item, then continue with the rest of the items. If the student responses are not correct at the initial sound level, do not administer the phoneme level.

Stopping Rule: Attempt all items within each task. If a student is not successful in completing the syllable level tasks, attempt the first sound level tasks. When a student is not successful completing any of the initial sound level tasks, discontinue the assessment and do not administer the CVC level tasks.

Directions for Scoring: Award 1 point for each correctly blended or segmented word. If the response is incorrect, mark a 0 and note the student’s response.

Blending

Step 1: Directions for Blending Tasks at the Syllable Level

Note: Say a silent “1–2” count between each part of the word (denoted by —). Silently counting 1–2 between each part helps to keep your delivery clear and standard. The following examples are from Form A. Follow the same directions with the words for Form B and Form C.

Practice item: Say to the student, **Let’s play a guessing game. I will say a word slowly in parts. Listen carefully and guess my word: “ba — by.”** The student should say “baby.”

- Correct response: Say, **Yes, you put the parts together and said “baby.” Let’s try another one. Guess this word: “coo — kie.”** The student should say “cookie.” Continue with the other items in this level.
- Incorrect response: Say, **Let’s try that again. Listen to me put the parts together. Ba — by is baby. Now you try: “ba — by.”** If the response is still inaccurate, try the second practice item *cookie*. If the response is still inaccurate, skip the remaining blending items and move to the segmenting tasks.

Step 2: Directions for Blending Tasks at the First Sound Level

Practice item: Say to the student, **Now I will say a word in smaller parts. Listen carefully and guess my word: “s — oap.”** The student should say “soap.”

- Correct response: Say, **Yes, you put the parts together and said “soap.” Let’s do some more.** Continue with the second practice item *cake* followed by the other items in this level.
- Incorrect response: Say: **Listen to me put the parts together. S — oap is soap. Now you try: “s — oap.”** The student should say “soap.” If the response is correct, continue with the second practice item *cake* following the same procedure. If the response is still inaccurate, skip the remaining blending items and move to the segmenting tasks.

Step 3: Directions for Blending Tasks at the Phoneme Level

Practice item: Say to the student, **Now I will say a word in all the small parts. Listen carefully and guess my word: “s — o — ck.”** The student should say “sock.”

- Correct response: Say, **Yes, you put all the parts together and said “sock.” Let’s try another one.** Continue with the second practice item *cat* followed by the rest of the items at this level.
- Incorrect response: Say, **Listen to me put the parts together. S — o — ck is sock. Now you try: “s — o — ck.”** The student should say “sock.” If the response is correct, continue with the second practice item *cat* followed by the remaining items. If the response is still inaccurate, skip the remaining blending items and move to the segmenting tasks.

Segmenting

Step 1: Directions for Segmenting Tasks at the Syllable Level

Note: Shorter pauses are acceptable as long as the student claps the appropriate number of parts.

For the word *happy*, the student who provides one clap for each syllable is correct.

Practice item: Say to the student, **Let’s play another sound game. This time I will say the word, and I want you to say it. Then, I want you to say AND clap the parts. Listen to me try one. My word is “happy.” I will say it and clap each part: “happy, ha (clap) — ppy (clap).” Now do it with me: “ha (clap) — ppy (clap).”** The student should repeat the word and then segment it while clapping for each syllable.

- Correct response: Say, **That’s right, you said the parts of “happy.” Let’s try some more.** Continue with the second practice item *pocket* following the same procedure and continue with the remaining items at this level.
- Incorrect response: Say, **Listen carefully. I will say it and then say and clap each part: “happy, ha (clap) — ppy (clap).” Now you do it.** If the response is correct, continue with the second practice item *pocket* and the remaining test items in this level. If the response is still incorrect, discontinue the test.

Step 2: Directions for Segmenting Tasks at the First Sound Level

Practice item: Say to the student, **Now let’s clap smaller parts of the words. Listen to me try one. My word is “dot.” I will say it and then say and clap the parts. “Dot, /d/ (clap) — /ot/ (clap).” That makes /d/ (clap) — /ot/ (clap). Now do it with me: “Dot, /d/ (clap) — /ot/ (clap).”** The student should repeat the word, then segment it while clapping the first sound and the rest of the word.

Practice item: Say to the student, **Now it’s your turn. Listen carefully: “Dot.”**

- Correct response: Say, **That’s right, you said the parts of “dot.” Let’s try some more.** Continue with the second practice item *side* following the same procedure and continue with the remaining items.
- Incorrect response: Say, **Listen carefully: “Dot, /d/ (clap) — /ot/ (clap).” Now you do it.** If the response is correct, continue with the second practice item *side* followed by the remaining test items. If the response is still incorrect, discontinue the test.

Step 3: Directions for Segmenting Tasks at the Phoneme Level

Note: If a student asks to tap or chop the sounds instead of clapping them, encourage them to use the motions they know and provide full credit.

Practice item: Say to the student, **Now let's clap even more parts of the words. Listen to me. My word is "moose." I will say it and then say and clap each sound: "Moose, /m/ (clap) — /oo/ (clap) — /se/ (clap)." Now do it with me: "Moose, /m/ (clap) — /oo/ (clap) — /se/ (clap)." The student should repeat the word and then segment it while clapping each phoneme.**

- Correct response: Say, **That's right, you said the parts of "moose." Let's try some more.** Continue with the second practice item *sit* following the same procedure and continue with the test items.
- Incorrect response: Say, **Listen carefully: "Moose, /m/ (clap) — /oo/ (clap) — /se/ (clap)." Now you do it.** If the response is correct, continue with the second practice item *sit* and remaining test items. If the response is still incorrect, discontinue the test.

The present, beta version of this informal diagnostic is not yet fully validated. Pilots of the PADDI forms affirm item selection choices, item gradients, and teacher perceptions of usability.

PADDI-F Scoring Form A

Student Name _____ Date _____ Grade _____

Provide feedback on the modeling and practice items only. These appear in the shaded rows. If the student responses are not correct at the initial sound level, do not administer the phoneme level. Score 1 point for each correct response. A response is correct if it has the correct placement of claps. If the response is incorrect, mark a 0 and note the student's response.

	Item	Correct	Score	Item Type
Blending				
Practice	ba — by	baby		Syllable
Practice	coo — kie	cookie		Syllable
1	pu — zzle	puzzle	1 0 _____	Syllable
2	mon — key	monkey	1 0 _____	Syllable
3	e — le — phant	elephant	1 0 _____	Syllable
Practice	s — oap	soap		First Sound
Practice	c — ake	cake		First Sound
4	s — eed	seed	1 0 _____	First Sound
5	b — ike	bike	1 0 _____	First Sound
6	c — up	cup	1 0 _____	First Sound
Practice	s — o — ck	sock		Phonemes
Practice	c — a — t	cat		Phonemes
7	f — ee — t	feet	1 0 _____	Phonemes
8	c — o — mb	comb	1 0 _____	Phonemes
9	p — i — g	pig	1 0 _____	Phonemes
Segmenting				
Practice	happy	ha — ppy		Syllable
Practice	pocket	po — cket		Syllable
10	pizza	pi — zza	1 0 _____	Syllable
11	yellow	ye — llow	1 0 _____	Syllable
12	dinosaur	di — no — saur	1 0 _____	Syllable
Practice	dot	d — ot		First Sound
Practice	side	s — ide		First Sound
13	boot	b — oot	1 0 _____	First Sound
14	keep	k — eep	1 0 _____	First Sound
15	mess	m — ess	1 0 _____	First Sound
Practice	moose	m — oo — se		Phonemes
Practice	sit	s — i — t		Phonemes
16	food	f — oo — d	1 0 _____	Phonemes
17	hot	h — o — t	1 0 _____	Phonemes
18	bus	b — u — s	1 0 _____	Phonemes
TOTALS				
Blending		Syllables /3	First Sound /3	Phonemes /3
Segmenting		Syllables /3	First Sound /3	Phonemes /3

PADDI-F Scoring Form B

Student Name _____ Date _____ Grade _____

Provide feedback on the modeling and practice items only. These appear in the shaded rows. If the student responses are not correct at the initial sound level, do not administer the phoneme level. Score 1 point for each correct response. A response is correct if it has the correct placement of claps. If the response is incorrect, mark a 0 and note the student's response.

	Item	Correct	Score	Item Type
Blending				
Practice	ha — ppy	happy		Syllable
Practice	peo — ple	people		Syllable
1	bu — bble	bubble	1 0 _____	Syllable
2	pur — ple	purple	1 0 _____	Syllable
3	kan — ga — roo	kangaroo	1 0 _____	Syllable
Practice	n — ose	nose		First Sound
Practice	k — ite	kite		First Sound
4	m — ake	make	1 0 _____	First Sound
5	d — og	dog	1 0 _____	First Sound
6	ch — eese	cheese	1 0 _____	First Sound
Practice	m — ee — t	meet		Phonemes
Practice	b — oo — k	book		Phonemes
7	kn — o — ck	knock	1 0 _____	Phonemes
8	g — oo — se	goose	1 0 _____	Phonemes
9	h — ea — d	head	1 0 _____	Phonemes
Segmenting				
Practice	candy	can — dy		Syllable
Practice	paper	pa — per		Syllable
10	table	ta — ble	1 0 _____	Syllable
11	money	mo — ney	1 0 _____	Syllable
12	blueberry	blue — be — rry	1 0 _____	Syllable
Practice	bed	b — ed		First Sound
Practice	sun	s — un		First Sound
13	coat	c — oat	1 0 _____	First Sound
14	sign	s — ign	1 0 _____	First Sound
15	peek	p — eek	1 0 _____	First Sound
Practice	boat	b — oa — t		Phonemes
Practice	fan	f — a — n		Phonemes
16	game	g — a — me	1 0 _____	Phonemes
17	bug	b — u — g	1 0 _____	Phonemes
18	cheek	ch — ee — k	1 0 _____	Phonemes
TOTALS				
		Syllables	First Sound	Phonemes
Blending		/3	/3	/3
Segmenting		/3	/3	/3

PADDI-F Scoring Form C

Student Name _____ Date _____ Grade _____

Provide feedback on the modeling and practice items only. These appear in the shaded rows. If the student responses are not correct at the initial sound level, do not administer the phoneme level. Score 1 point for each correct response. A response is correct if it has the correct placement of claps. If the response is incorrect, mark a 0 and note the student's response.

	Item	Correct	Score	Item Type
Blending				
Practice	cir — cle	circle		Syllable
Practice	bu — tton	button		Syllable
1	noo — dle	noodle	1 0 _____	Syllable
2	fin — ger	finger	1 0 _____	Syllable
3	oc — to — pus	octopus	1 0 _____	Syllable
Practice	f — ace	face		First Sound
Practice	b — eat	beat		First Sound
4	s — oup	soup	1 0 _____	First Sound
5	t — ub	tub	1 0 _____	First Sound
6	b — one	bone	1 0 _____	First Sound
Practice	g — ue — ss	guess		Phonemes
Practice	c — oa — t	coat		Phonemes
7	d — o — g	dog	1 0 _____	Phonemes
8	m — a — t	mat	1 0 _____	Phonemes
9	b — ea — d	bead	1 0 _____	Phonemes
Segmenting				
Practice	muffin	mu — ffin		Syllable
Practice	teacher	tea — cher		Syllable
10	pumpkin	pump — kin	1 0 _____	Syllable
11	kitchen	ki — tchen	1 0 _____	Syllable
12	tomato	to — ma — to	1 0 _____	Syllable
Practice	duck	d — uck		First Sound
Practice	seat	s — eat		First Sound
13	hop	h — op	1 0 _____	First Sound
14	chin	ch — in	1 0 _____	First Sound
15	phone	ph — one	1 0 _____	First Sound
Practice	boss	b — o — ss		Phonemes
Practice	cat	c — a — t		Phonemes
16	feed	f — ee — d	1 0 _____	Phonemes
17	neck	n — e — ck	1 0 _____	Phonemes
18	pot	p — o — t	1 0 _____	Phonemes
TOTALS				
Blending		Syllables /3	First Sound /3	Phonemes /3
Segmenting		Syllables /3	First Sound /3	Phonemes /3

Interpreting Results and Planning Instruction for PADDI–Foundations

The PADDI–F identifies early phonological and phonemic awareness skill development for children in preschool and early kindergarten. The results of this assessment help to guide instruction. Ensure that the results are as reliable as possible by maintaining the child’s attention and engagement when giving the PADDI–F. If the child was distracted, uncooperative, or did not seem to understand the instructions, readminister an alternative form to acquire results with their best participation.

General Recommendations

Phonological awareness instruction at the early preschool level should focus on exposure to word play. More intentional and direct instruction is recommended for ages 4–6 to teach the PA skills that support learning to decode and spell words.

Here are some tips:

- The lesson length should be short, lasting between 5 and 10 minutes.
- Make PA instruction fun and playful.
- Begin by modeling the task. Then do several new words together with the group. Then students can try some words individually with support as needed.
- Use gestures when segmenting word parts. Movement increases engagement and adds a layer of sensory learning and connection. Clap or tap your arm for syllables and use outstretched fingers to show phonemes in words.
- For younger students, familiar words are typically easier to play with than unfamiliar words because they are less taxing on phonological memory.
- Many activities can include both blending and segmenting skills.
- Make sure to pronounce phonemes in their purest form without including a schwa sound. For example, when segmenting the sounds in the word *pot*, say “/p/ /o/ /t/” and not *puh–ah–tuh*.
- When students have learned some letters, oral PA practice should be immediately followed by teachers modeling how to write the simple two- and three-letter words.

Developmental Sequence and Age/Grade Expectations

A substantial, long-standing body of research has identified general age/grade expectations for the sequence of phonological awareness skill development. Young children typically follow this sequence as they learn to play with the structures of words; however, the order is not absolute. For example, some children may learn to identify first sounds in words and not have a strong understanding of how to segment syllables in words. The sequence is a guide for instruction knowing that awareness of phonemes is critical for learning to read and spell words. Table 5 outlines this progression and expectations (adapted from O’Connor, 2014; Anthony et al., 2002).

Table 5. *Phonological Awareness Skill Development Progression in Young Children*

Phonological Awareness Skills	Age/Grade Expectations
Blending syllables	3–4 years of age
Segmenting syllables	3–4 years of age
Blending first sounds—rest of the word	4 years of age
Blending sounds in single-syllable words	4–5 years of age
Segmenting first sounds in words	December of Kindergarten*
Segmenting sounds in CVC words	April of Kindergarten**
Segmenting sounds in CCVC or CVCC words	Grade 1

*Identifying first sounds at the pre-K to K transition predicts literacy achievement in grade 2.

**CVC word segmenting is a foundation skill for decoding and spelling simple words.

Planning Instruction

After determining and recording the number of correct responses on the scoring protocol, use Table 6 to decide where to begin targeted instruction.

Here are some overall guidelines to plan instruction.

- Students responding correctly to all items on a skill level have demonstrated proficiency of that skill. Instruction should focus on the next skill along the phonological awareness skill progression and continued review and practice of age and grade-level skills.
- Students who respond correctly to two of three items within a task are developing that skill. Instruction should focus on providing more guided practice with that skill to reach mastery and then on the next skill in the phonological awareness developmental sequence for the student's age and grade level.
- Students who respond correctly to only one item within a task are still learning that skill. Instruction should focus on the earliest phonological awareness skill in the progression that has not yet been mastered and then move to the next skill.
- Students who are not meeting expectations may need a more intensive level of intervention to help them build the foundations necessary for the next steps in their literacy learning.

Table 6. *Score Interpretation and Lesson Planning*

PADDI-F Items	Score	Word Choice Suggestions	Activities
Syllable Blending 1, 2, 3	0 on any of these items	Help students develop a better understanding that words have structures that can be blended to create meaningful words. Select familiar two-syllable words followed by three-syllable words.	In a guessing game format, segment words into syllables with one-second pauses for students to blend together by saying the word as a whole (e.g., they hear <i>ca — mel</i> and say “camel”; they hear <i>ba — na — na</i> and say “banana”). Display the object or picture after they blend to verify the word.
Syllable Segmenting 10, 11, 12	0 on any of these items	Help students develop a better understanding that words have structures which can be segmented into syllable parts. Select familiar two-syllable words followed by three-syllable words.	Using objects or pictures, have students select an item and segment words into syllables while clapping, tapping, or stomping each word part (e.g., they select <i>camel</i> and say “ca — mel”; they select <i>banana</i> and say “ba — na — na”). Then have students blend the word together again.
First Sound Blending 4, 5, 6	0 on any of these items	Help students blend the initial sound and the rest of the word together to identify words. Select familiar single-syllable words that begin with continuant sounds (/s/, /f/, /m/) followed by words that begin with a variety of sounds.	In a guessing game format, segment the first sound from the rest of the word with a one-second pause and have students blend the parts by saying the word as a whole (e.g., they hear /s/ — <i>ad</i> and say “sad”; they hear /ch/ — <i>ick</i> and say “chick”). Display the object or picture after they blend to verify the word.
First Sound Segmenting 13, 14, 15	0 on any of these items	Help students identify and segment the first sound in words. Select familiar CVC words that begin with continuant sounds (/s/, /f/, /sh/) followed by words that begin with a variety of sounds.	Using objects or pictures, have students select an item, say its name, and identify the first sound. Then have students progress to saying the first sound and the rest of the word (e.g., they select and say “sad /s/” followed by “/s/ — ad”; they select and say “chick /ch/” followed by “/ch/ — ick”). Then have students blend the word together again.
Phoneme Blending 7, 8, 9	0 on any of these items	Help students blend sounds together to identify words. Select familiar, single-syllable CVC words that begin with continuant sounds (/s/, /f/, /sh/) followed by words that begin with a variety of sounds.	In a guessing game format, segment the sounds of CVC words with one-second pauses and have students blend the sounds together by saying the word as a whole (e.g., they hear /s/ /a/ /d/ and say “sad”; they hear /ch/ /i/ /k/ and say “chick”). Display the object or picture after they blend to verify the word.
Phoneme Segmenting 16, 17, 18	0 on any of these items	Help students identify and segment sounds in one-syllable words. Select familiar CVC words that begin with continuant sounds (/s/, /f/, /sh/) followed by words that begin with a variety of sounds.	Using objects or pictures, have students select an item and say its name. Then have them identify each sound in the word (e.g., they select and say “sad,” then say “/s/ /a/ /d/”; they select and say “chick,” then say “/ch/ /i/ /k/”). Then have students blend the word together again.

Additional Information About the Development of the PADDI

The PADDI-KA was developed by a team of educators who bring expertise in reading development, reading disorders, assessment, school psychology, speech and language, structured literacy, and professional learning. We are indebted to the previous PA work that supported the creation of this diagnostic for instruction. The PADDI-KA builds on time-tested phonemic awareness assessments such as the Test of Auditory Analysis Skills (TAAS; Rosner, 1975) and the Phonological Awareness Screening Test (PAST; Kilpatrick, 2016; 2024).

Dr. Lucy Hart Paulson designed the PADDI-F to measure basic phonological awareness skills that typically develop during the preschool and beginning kindergarten years. Tasks include blending and segmenting words at the syllable level, first sounds in words, and simple CVC words. This tool may be used for students in preschool and for older students who respond inaccurately on the practice items of the PADDI-KA.

New Features of the PADDI Tool for Teachers

The PADDI-KA departs from previous phonological awareness assessments in several ways.

First, the item sequence now includes the deletion of external and internal sounds in final consonant clusters. We credit Martin (2024) for being the first to implement this more complete sequence. Including more complex items makes the PADDI more sensitive to more subtle PA challenges that may impede reading and spelling development. Second, the scoring system is fairly intuitive. Students earn 2 points if a response is correct and fast (within two seconds), 1 point if a response is correct but slow, and 0 points if the response is incorrect. Third, the PADDI-KA does not contain any three-syllable words. Eliminating three-syllable words from the PADDI-KA allows PA assessment and instruction to proceed to the phoneme level expeditiously.

Most importantly, the PADDI-KA was developed to reduce linguistic bias in PA assessment by prioritizing items with phonological features that are common among language variations. Every effort was made to choose words sensitive to linguistic differences in Spanish, African American English (AAE), and General American English (GAE). This resulted in a “phonologically friendly” tool in which most of the items are aligned with sounds that are familiar to these speakers. We aspired to phonological friendliness whenever possible to improve the accuracy of this diagnostic with diverse student populations.

Selecting many items composed of phonemes that are present in Spanish as well as English provides Spanish-speaking students with the opportunity to demonstrate their phonemic awareness skills with familiar speech sounds. In some cases, PADDI items have consonant phonemes in positions that do not occur in Spanish. For example, the last item at each level contains more sounds that are not aligned with Spanish phonology. This provides an indication of how PA skills specific to English are developing. The items at the most sophisticated levels of the PADDI-KA are not as “friendly,” given that Spanish words do not usually end in final consonant clusters (Honig et al., 2018) and AAE speakers often drop the end consonant in a final cluster (Stubbe Kester, 2014).

We selected the items for the PADDI-KA from a variety of resources. After reviewing the phonological features of Spanish and AAE (Honig et al., 2018; Stubbe Kester, 2014), Dr. Jill Lang created a list of possible items that produced real words after specific deletion tasks by using Blockcolsky et al. (1987). From these, we selected words to parallel the TAAS structure (Rosner, 1975), which has been a trusted PA diagnostic for over 50 years. In this way, we preserved the structure of a tried-and-true diagnostic while prioritizing the phonological friendliness of the individual items for Spanish and AAE speakers. For syllable tasks, two-syllable words were chosen using English-Spanish cognates (Colorín Colorado, n.d.). Words with complex linguistic features, such as phonological features and morphological endings, were omitted. The final items list was confirmed using the *Translinguistic Tool for Teachers of English Learners* (*T³EL*) (Antunez-Gámon & Florez, 2026).

The depth of effort to create a measure that is phonologically friendly to GAE, AAE, and Spanish speakers highlights the need for educators to understand the language features of English and how these may compare to other languages and language variations (Honig et al., 2018; Moats & Foorman, 2003; Stubbe Kester, 2014). This knowledge is key to understanding why certain tasks may be more difficult for students with linguistically diverse backgrounds. We encourage educators to learn about the linguistic features of a student's primary language to better discriminate between errors and pronunciation differences that are based on linguistic variation (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, n.d.). Teachers may find the T³EL transfer sheets useful for understanding the phonological overlap and differences between English and Spanish.

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