

Targeting Decoding and Spelling Skills for a learner who basically reads and speaks

Q : I have a new student. He's the CEO of a big company who can speak on a decent level but his reading needs to improve, mostly the rules and vowel difficulties and his spelling is poor. I thought about skipping the letters and just doing the rules in order of Hickey lessons. Any suggestions would be appreciated.

A : If the problem is rules and vowels, then you can focus on the Hickey lessons for those things - rules and vowels.

- Teach those individual lessons; have him choose clue words; give him the [Long Vowel Table](#) to organize the various long vowel spelling patterns in his head.
- Do some of the [Short Vowel Practice](#) exercises from the website to help him differentiate the sounds and spellings of these.
- And because there are so many ways to spell the vowel sounds (and others), look at the list on the website [English Sounds and their Multiple Spellings, With Examples of Words Using Each Spelling](#) (bottom of Documents for Download page). You can take a particular spelling or sound each time to teach. Don't overwhelm him with the whole list at once.
- Have him make flashcards with the spelling on the front and common words that use it on the back (maybe words he uses in his work, or he knows).
- There are [English spelling rules cards](#) for adults - see the links from the main English Dept website to make these, following the [instructions](#).
- And of course as he learns these things explicitly, give him texts to read. Naturally these will contain the spellings and rules you are covering - point them out once he's learned them. Note what reading errors he makes ("miscue analysis") and then figure out what he needs in terms of word attack skills ([syllable division patterns](#) and [syllable types](#)? letter sounds?) to read them correctly. Teach him what he's missing.
- As far as his spelling goes, have him write something (related to his work, or about the texts he reads) and there too, when you find mistakes, take mental note of what information he's missing to spell the word correctly, and teach it to him explicitly - or point out which rules you've already learned that apply. Get him to start identifying which words are exceptions and which are regular (see below).
- Of course exception words just have to be learned by heart. For that you can show him how to use the accordion-folded paper method (fold a sheet of graph paper into a fan):
 - Write the English word in column 1 and the translation in column 2
 - Fold back the column 1 and from memory write the English word in column 3
 - When you finish the list compare column 1 & 3, correct errors and highlight the parts of the word he didn't know how to spell with a highlighter pen
 - Then fold under column 2 and repeat across the page.
 - By the last column there should be no more highlights - but if there are, turn the page over and continue!

Good luck!