## orton-gillingham

orton-gillingham is a highly effective instructional approach designed to assist individuals with dyslexia and other reading difficulties. Developed in the early 20th century, this method emphasizes multisensory learning, structured phonics, and individualized instruction. It has become a gold standard in literacy education for students who struggle with decoding, spelling, and reading fluency. This article explores the origins of the Orton-Gillingham approach, its core principles, the instructional strategies it employs, and its benefits in educational settings. Additionally, it will cover the training required for educators and how Orton-Gillingham compares to other reading interventions. Understanding this approach is essential for educators, parents, and specialists committed to supporting students with reading challenges.

- History and Development of Orton-Gillingham
- Core Principles of the Orton-Gillingham Approach
- Instructional Strategies Used in Orton-Gillingham
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- Training and Certification for Orton-Gillingham Educators
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## History and Development of Orton-Gillingham

The Orton-Gillingham approach originated from the collaborative work of Dr. Samuel T. Orton, a neuropsychiatrist and pathologist, and Anna Gillingham, an educator and psychologist. In the 1930s, they developed this method to address the needs of children with dyslexia, focusing on the neurological basis of reading difficulties. Dr. Orton's research emphasized the connection between language processing and brain function, while Gillingham contributed her expertise in structured phonics and multisensory teaching techniques. Over time, the Orton-Gillingham approach evolved into a comprehensive, explicit, and systematic method widely adopted in schools and therapy settings.

# Core Principles of the Orton-Gillingham Approach

The foundation of the Orton-Gillingham method rests on several key principles that guide instruction and intervention. These principles ensure that learners receive effective, accessible support tailored to their unique needs.

## **Multisensory Learning**

Orton-Gillingham integrates visual, auditory, and kinesthetic-tactile pathways simultaneously to enhance memory and learning of written language. This multisensory approach allows students to connect language concepts through multiple senses, improving retention and understanding.

### Structured, Sequential, and Cumulative Instruction

Lessons follow a carefully planned sequence that builds from simple to complex concepts. Each new skill is introduced only after mastering previous ones, ensuring cumulative knowledge development. This systematic progression helps prevent gaps and reinforces learning.

## **Explicit and Direct Teaching**

Instruction is clear, precise, and unambiguous. Concepts such as phonemes, graphemes, and syllable types are directly taught rather than inferred, allowing students to develop a solid understanding of language mechanics.

#### Individualized and Diagnostic Teaching

Orton-Gillingham emphasizes tailoring instruction to each learner's strengths and weaknesses. Continuous assessment and observation guide educators in modifying lessons to address specific challenges and track progress effectively.

## Instructional Strategies Used in Orton-

## **Gillingham**

The Orton-Gillingham approach employs a variety of instructional strategies designed to support learners in decoding, encoding, and comprehension skills.

#### Phonemic Awareness and Phonics

Explicit teaching of phonemic awareness is foundational, enabling students to identify and manipulate sounds in words. The approach then systematically connects these sounds to their corresponding letters or letter combinations (phonics), facilitating accurate decoding and spelling.

## **Multisensory Techniques**

Students engage in activities that combine sight, sound, touch, and movement. For example, they may trace letters while saying sounds aloud or use manipulatives to build words. These techniques reinforce neural pathways and make abstract concepts tangible.

## Syllable Division and Morphology

Orton-Gillingham instruction includes teaching the six syllable types and rules for dividing syllables, which aids in decoding multisyllabic words. Additionally, morphological instruction introduces roots, prefixes, and suffixes to enhance vocabulary and spelling proficiency.

## Repetition and Review

Consistent review and practice are integral to mastery. Lessons include frequent opportunities for repetition of skills to promote automaticity and fluency in reading and writing.

### Use of Direct Feedback

Educators provide immediate, specific feedback to correct errors and reinforce correct responses. This helps learners develop self-monitoring skills and build confidence.

## Benefits and Effectiveness of Orton-Gillingham

The Orton-Gillingham approach has been extensively recognized for its effectiveness in improving reading skills among individuals with dyslexia and other learning disabilities.

## Improvement in Reading Accuracy and Fluency

Students typically demonstrate enhanced decoding abilities and greater reading fluency after consistent Orton-Gillingham instruction, enabling more confident and independent reading.

## **Enhanced Spelling and Writing Skills**

Because the method emphasizes encoding alongside decoding, students improve their spelling accuracy and writing abilities, which are often challenging for those with dyslexia.

## Adaptability Across Age Groups

While originally designed for children, Orton-Gillingham strategies are effective for learners of all ages, including adults seeking to improve literacy skills.

## **Support for Diverse Learners**

The individualized nature of the approach allows it to be tailored for students with various learning profiles, including English language learners and those with attention difficulties.

# Training and Certification for Orton-Gillingham Educators

Effective implementation of the Orton-Gillingham approach requires specialized training and certification to ensure fidelity to the method's principles and techniques.

## **Training Programs**

Multiple organizations offer comprehensive training programs that cover the theoretical foundations, instructional strategies, and practical application of Orton-Gillingham. These programs typically include coursework, supervised practicum, and assessments.

#### **Certification Levels**

Certification may vary by provider but often includes levels such as Associate, Certified, and Fellow, reflecting increasing expertise and experience. Certified educators are qualified to deliver Orton-Gillingham instruction independently and can train others.

### **Continuing Education**

Maintaining certification often requires ongoing professional development to stay current with research, instructional innovations, and best practices related to literacy education.

## Comparison with Other Reading Interventions

Orton-Gillingham is one among several evidence-based reading interventions, but it is distinct in its approach and scope.

## Structured Literacy vs. Balanced Literacy

Orton-Gillingham falls under the umbrella of structured literacy, which emphasizes explicit, systematic instruction in phonology, morphology, and syntax. Balanced literacy, by contrast, often integrates whole language techniques and may not provide the same level of explicit phonics instruction.

## **Multisensory Approach Distinction**

While many reading programs teach phonics, Orton-Gillingham uniquely incorporates multisensory strategies that engage multiple learning pathways simultaneously, enhancing retention for struggling readers.

## Customization and Diagnostic Teaching

Compared to generic reading programs, Orton-Gillingham's focus on individualized, diagnostic instruction allows educators to tailor lessons precisely to student needs, which can lead to better outcomes for those with dyslexia.

### **Implementation Intensity**

Orton-Gillingham often involves intensive, one-on-one or small group instruction, which may be more resource-intensive than some other programs but yields significant benefits for learners requiring targeted support.

## **Key Components of Effective Orton-Gillingham**Instruction

Successful Orton-Gillingham teaching integrates several critical components that work together to support literacy development.

- Explicit Phoneme-Grapheme Correspondence: Direct teaching of soundletter relationships.
- **Systematic Skill Progression:** Gradual building of reading and spelling skills in a logical order.
- Multisensory Engagement: Use of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic activities to reinforce learning.
- Continuous Assessment: Regular monitoring of student progress to inform instruction.
- Repetitive Practice: Frequent review to solidify mastery and promote automaticity.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is the Orton-Gillingham approach?

The Orton-Gillingham approach is a structured, multisensory method used to

teach reading, writing, and spelling, primarily designed for individuals with dyslexia.

### Who developed the Orton-Gillingham method?

The Orton-Gillingham method was developed by Dr. Samuel Orton, a neuropsychiatrist and pathologist, and Anna Gillingham, an educator and psychologist, in the early 20th century.

## How does Orton-Gillingham help students with dyslexia?

Orton-Gillingham helps students with dyslexia by using multisensory techniques that engage visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learning pathways to improve phonemic awareness, decoding, and spelling skills.

## Is Orton-Gillingham only for children with dyslexia?

While Orton-Gillingham is primarily used to support children with dyslexia, it can also benefit any struggling readers or individuals who have difficulty with language processing and literacy skills.

## What are the key components of Orton-Gillingham instruction?

Key components of Orton-Gillingham instruction include explicit, systematic, and sequential teaching of phonics, multisensory engagement, individualized pacing, and continual review and practice.

### Can Orton-Gillingham be used in classroom settings?

Yes, Orton-Gillingham can be adapted for classroom use, though it is often delivered in small group or one-on-one settings to provide individualized instruction tailored to a student's needs.

# Are there certifications available for Orton-Gillingham teachers?

Yes, there are certification programs for educators and tutors who want to become certified in the Orton-Gillingham approach, ensuring they are trained to deliver the method effectively.

# How long does it take to see progress with Orton-Gillingham?

Progress with Orton-Gillingham varies depending on the individual, but many students begin to see improvements in reading and spelling within a few

## What age groups can benefit from Orton-Gillingham instruction?

Orton-Gillingham instruction can benefit learners of all ages, from young children just beginning to read to adults seeking to improve their literacy skills.

### **Additional Resources**

- 1. Orton-Gillingham Approach: A Comprehensive Guide for Educators
  This book offers an in-depth overview of the Orton-Gillingham approach,
  detailing its history, principles, and practical applications. It is designed
  for educators and therapists working with students who have dyslexia and
  other reading difficulties. The guide includes lesson plans, activities, and
  assessment tools to implement the method effectively in classroom and one-onone settings.
- 2. The Orton-Gillingham Manual: Step-by-Step Instruction for Reading Success A practical manual that breaks down the Orton-Gillingham methodology into clear, manageable steps. It provides systematic phonics instruction tailored to individual learning needs. The book also emphasizes multisensory techniques to help learners connect sounds and letters through visual, auditory, and kinesthetic activities.
- 3. Multisensory Teaching of Basic Language Skills
  This classic resource explains the multisensory teaching techniques
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- 6. Teaching Reading to Struggling Learners: An Orton-Gillingham Perspective A resource aimed at educators working with students who struggle with reading

comprehension and decoding. The book integrates Orton-Gillingham techniques with other evidence-based strategies to address diverse learning needs. It emphasizes individualized instruction and progress monitoring to ensure student success.

7. Orton-Gillingham Language Lessons: A Program for Reading, Spelling, and Penmanship

This comprehensive program book provides structured lessons designed to build language skills systematically. The lessons focus on phonemic awareness, decoding, spelling patterns, and handwriting. It is suitable for tutors and specialists seeking a ready-to-use curriculum aligned with Orton-Gillingham principles.

- 8. Understanding Dyslexia: The Orton-Gillingham Way
  This accessible book demystifies dyslexia and explains how the OrtonGillingham approach addresses its challenges. It offers practical tips for parents and educators to support children's literacy development. The narrative includes success stories and expert advice to inspire confidence in using multisensory methods.
- 9. The Orton-Gillingham Tutor's Handbook
  A practical handbook for tutors trained or training in the Orton-Gillingham approach. It outlines lesson planning, instructional techniques, and assessment strategies to tailor tutoring sessions effectively. The book also discusses building rapport with students and fostering motivation to enhance learning outcomes.

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Katz, Norma McHugh, 2018-03 The Orton-Gillingham Educators' Guide is a resource tool for those who have been trained in the Orton-Gillingham Approach. The Orton-Gillingham Educators' Guide also provides overviews of the Orton-Gillingham approach and of the structure of the English language for those looking to pursue Orton-Gillingham training or for those wishing to add more tools to their teaching toolbox. This guide is not meant to replace Orton-Gillingham training; instead, it is designed to enhance and supplement it.

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