

Teachers College Reading and Writing Project  
 Reading User's Guide, Second Grade, 2017-2018  
 Unit 2 – Growing Word Solving Muscles

## Unit 2 – Growing Word Solving Muscles

October/Early November  
 Level 3 Benchmark I/J/K

### Welcome to the Unit

This new second grade unit is meant to follow Unit 1, *Second Grade Reading Growth Spurt* and precede Unit 2, *Becoming Experts: Reading Nonfiction*. We are imagining it will be short (perhaps around 10-12 days in length).

As students move into second grade and into levels J/K/L, they will be entering into early chapter books. At these higher levels, the books become longer, the characters and storylines become more complex, and some of the vocabulary becomes less familiar. As we've worked with second grade classes across the country, we've noticed that second graders sometimes have holes in their word solving skills, which impacts their comprehension of these texts. Often, even at these levels of reading, students are still learning how to orchestrate the sources of information to word solve with more efficiency and confidence. To address this, we've designed this unit to help second graders shore up their word solving muscles early in the year, so they're able to move through the reading process smoothly and can focus on the trickier comprehension work that is expected of them at these levels. All of this work requires students to be able to fix up at the point of error quickly.

This mini-unit leans heavily on the teaching from the first two bends of *Readers Have Big Jobs to Do* (First Grade Book 3) with two main goals in mind: first, to remind readers to monitor for accuracy, noticing trouble and drawing on known word-solving strategies to fix up their reading; and second, to help students become more flexible, efficient readers, building a repertoire of strategies for solving hard words.

### Overview

**Essential Question:** *How can I be the kind of reader who remembers to check my reading, stop when there is trouble, and fix it up using everything I know to solve words?*

- **Bend I:** Roll Up Your Sleeves to Get the Job Done  
*How can I be the kind of reader who notices trouble and rolls up my sleeves to fix it up?*
- **Bend II:** Grow Muscles by Using Everything You Know to Solve Tricky Words  
*How can I be the kind of reader who is flexible with my word solving strategies, trying one, and then another, until I figure out the word?*

You'll launch the first bend with a session on envisioning, reminding readers to make mind movies as they read to keep track of what's happening. Once readers have their mind movies on play, you'll teach them that the next big job they have is to notice when something isn't quite right, often when their movie breaks down, and stop to fix up their reading. You'll want to teach lessons that touch on



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each aspect of the reading process—monitoring, searching, and self-correcting—to reinforce how readers continually cycle through this process. You'll remind students that readers keep track of what is happening in the text, especially when there is less picture support, so that they can cross-check meaning when problem-solving a word.

In the second bend, we recommend you teach lessons that target very specific word solving strategies, just as you did in the second bend of *Reading Growth Spurt*. Many of these strategies will activate readers' syntax and visual reading muscles. This will help them search and cross-check multiple sources of information. As part of this, you'll show readers how to rely not only on what is happening in the text (meaning), but also on what they know about how sentences sound (syntax) and the parts of a word (visual). Readers will also become more efficient and flexible as they learn to recognize and use known word parts.

## Getting Ready

### **Assessment**

To determine what skills your students particularly need support with during this unit, we recommend you study their most recent running records. Plan to reassess any students you have not met with since the start of Unit 1, as well as any readers who are below benchmark. It will be crucial to track your struggling readers and make plans to accelerate their progress. As you study this data, pay particular attention to the reading processes your students use. Which strategic actions are readers doing consistently? Which do they need more support with? For example, do you see evidence that students are monitoring? Pausing, rereading, stopping, and even looking up at you are all indicators that a reader is paying attention to his reading. You'll want to also look for evidence that readers are searching and self-correcting. Look for any patterns. For example, does a child tend to search one source of information over others, using mainly letter sounds or word parts to solve hard words? Or substituting the word with another that makes sense or sounds right but neglecting to cross-check the word itself?

We've outlined one possible way this unit could go, but you'll want to make decisions about your whole-class, small-group, and one-on-one instruction based on the needs of your students. If your assessment results reveal that your students primarily draw on visual information, you might decide to replace one of the teaching points designed to strengthen students' ability to search word parts with one that's designed to help readers draw on meaning. Also, when planning mini lessons and shared reading, this information will help you make decisions about which words to work on in your demonstrations. You will want to choose words in these texts that are similar to the words that children are reading incorrectly in the running records and also be ready to prompt for the sources of information they are not yet using consistently.

Your assessment will also help you determine what kind of word study support your students will need across this unit.

### **Texts**

You'll want to gather engaging texts for both read aloud and shared reading lessons for this two week mini-unit. You might choose to read *Those Darn Squirrels Go South*, by Adam Rubin, the sequel to *Those Darn Squirrels*, which you used as the class read aloud during the first unit. This story will



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offer lots of opportunities for students to practice envisioning and keeping track of what's happening. You'll probably engage students in acting out scenes as a means of supporting this envisioning work during the read aloud.

We also suggest *Frog and Toad All Year*, by Arnold Lobel. You can easily use this text for both read aloud and shared reading, returning to a chapter to help readers practice the work of monitoring, searching and cross-checking to solve words, as well as reading with greater fluency.

### **Charts and Materials**

You'll see we've suggested one way you might structure your class anchor chart for this unit is to use strategies from both the *Second Grade Reading Growth Spurt* anchor chart and from *Readers Have Big Jobs To Do*, Grade 1. For example, you might decide to teach the "Use a word you know" strategy from first grade. A similar strategy from second grade Unit 1 teaches kids to look for a little word inside a longer word. If readers are still having difficulty recognizing and using various word parts efficiently, then you might replace the "Look for a word inside a word" strategy Post-it from second grade with the broader word analogy strategy from first grade that focuses mostly on familiar word families.

## Bend I: Roll Up Your Sleeves to Get the Job Done

We highly recommend launching this unit with a focus on using meaning to problem-solve, specifically by envisioning. Envisioning matters at levels I/J/K because there is reduced picture support in books at these levels. This means that readers need to create mental pictures in order to track what is happening across the story—in order to hold onto meaning—so as to problem-solve. If the picture in the reader's mind is not clear, it will be difficult to monitor and problem-solve words with the level of efficiency they need at this point. You might want to draw from Session 13 in *Readers Have Big Jobs to Do*, "Readers Make Mind Movies to Picture What's Happening," for the launch of this unit, as a way of balancing the importance of working hard to understand what you're reading, with the work of reading the words accurately.

**"Today I want to teach you that readers not only work hard to solve words; they also work hard to understand what they're reading. Readers pay attention to what's happening and imagine more than just what's in the pictures. They use their imagination to turn the pictures into a movie in their mind."**

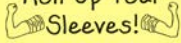


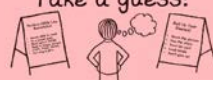


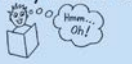



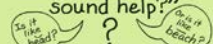
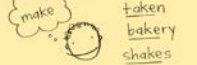



To lift the level of this envisioning work for your second graders, you'll want to demonstrate how readers create a clear image in their mind by thinking about all parts of the scene— both the characters AND the setting. Readers can ask themselves, "Who is in this scene? Where are they? When is this happening? What are they doing? How are they doing it? How are they feeling?"

You might find it helpful at this point to begin a reorganization of your word solving chart from Bend 2 of *Reading Growth Spurt* in order to help children more effectively find and use strategies they need. You'll probably want to have the strategies that children already know on the chart from the start, organized by reading process—monitoring, searching meaning, structure, and visual, and checking—as you see in the example below. Then, add new Post-its as additional lessons are taught.



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**Reorganized final anchor chart using strategies from 1st and 2nd Grade**

<p>When Words Are Tricky, Roll Up Your Sleeves!</p> 		
<p>Make a movie to picture what's happening.</p>  <p>(1st)</p>		
<p>STOP at the first sign of trouble.</p>  <p>(1st)</p>	<p>Don't give up! Try something! Take a guess!</p> 	
<p>Check the picture and think, "What would make sense?"</p> 	<p>Use what's happening in the story.</p> 	<p>Don't just SAY the words, figure out what they MEAN too!</p> 
<p>Think what kind of word would fit.</p>  <p>(1st)</p>		
<p>Look through the WHOLE word, part-by-part.</p> 	<p>Look for a word inside a word.</p> 	<p>Use vowel teams, and ask, "Would a different sound help?"</p> 
<p>Use a word you know.</p>  <p>(1st)</p>	<p>TRY it many ways.</p>  <p>(1st)</p>	<p>Check if it's a snap word.</p>  <p>(1st)</p>
<p>4. Check it. Do a triple-check!</p>  <p>(1st)</p>		

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You'll want to remind students to always be checking their reading, making sure to stop at the first sign of trouble, noticing specifically when their reading begins to slow down or stagger, or when their mind movie begins to grow unclear. You'll probably want to draw on both Session 1, "You Be the Boss! Readers Say, 'I Can Do This!'" and Session 2, "Readers Use Everything they Know to Solve a Word" of *Readers Have Big Jobs to Do* to plan how this lesson might go. While students learned to do this work in first grade, it is very important that they now do it with automaticity, especially as they move into reading levels where their conscious energy needs to go to meaning making, not just word-solving.

**"Today I want to remind you that when readers are the boss of their reading, one of their jobs is to stop at the first sign of trouble, noticing when their reading starts to slow down or their mind movie begins to get fuzzy. Then they say, 'I can solve this! I can try something, using all that I know, and if that doesn't work I can try something else!'"**

As you teach this first week, you'll want to use conferences to assess how readers are cycling through the entire reading process as they work to solve and check hard words. You'll remind them that they need to make sure they are right by doing a triple check, cross-checking all three sources of information, asking, "Does it make sense? Sound right? Look right?"

You'll want to lift the level of this work by choosing words in your demonstration text that you anticipate would be a challenge for many of your readers. Choose at least one word you'll read incorrectly and one you'll read correctly in order to model how readers always check, even when they think they've got the word right!

You may decide to lead some goal-setting work with your readers using the class anchor chart. Specifically, you'll show students how to study the strategies they've learned and think, "Which strategies do I use the MOST? Which strategies can I use MORE often?" Another way students could self-assess their reading work is to think not only about the strategies they are using to solve tricky words but about their entire reading process. They can consider whether they remember to stop at trouble, try something to solve the word, triple check their reading, and then reread before reading on. They can decide on a goal for themselves, jotting it on a Post-it for their reading baggie, and tallying each time they remember to practice that work while reading.

Consider the supports reading partners may need. Your students may be using their partner time to talk about their books, but you can also remind them that they can use this time to work through tricky parts in their books together. If students encounter trouble during independent reading time, teach them to roll up their sleeves and try some of the strategies on the chart, but if they need a little help from a partner, they can also mark the tricky word or page with a Post-it note and ask for help during partner time.

To culminate the work of this first bend, you'll want to lead a session that rallies readers to use everything they know to get the job done quickly! This means you'll coach readers to not only solve a word with greater efficiency, but to also notice and self-correct reading mistakes at the point of error or right at the word. Readers will have a hard time making meaning in more complex texts if they read longer sentences with an uncorrected word inside that sentence. Once an error has been corrected, rereading that sentence can help kids patch up meaning and give them a second chance to turn that tricky word into a sight word. During this mini lesson, you may decide to use a bit of





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shared reading to help kids orchestrate their work, covering up a word or two to give students an opportunity to practice stopping to quickly solve and check hard words.

## Bend II: Grow Muscles By Using Everything You Know to Solve Tricky Words

In Bend II, you'll remind readers of the repertoire of ways they've learned to solve tricky words. You'll want to teach a series of sessions aimed at helping your students practice and integrate strategies for searching and cross-checking meaning, syntax, and visual sources of information to solve and check words. In this final week of the unit, your focus will center on the support your I/J/K readers need to problem-solve tricky words with greater efficiency and independence.

You may decide to begin with a reminder to your readers to draw on meaning to solve words, using not just the picture, but their mental movie, to consider what word would make sense. You will most likely want to model using a page in a text which requires readers to rely on more than the picture alone. You can prompt, "Use what's happening in the story. Check the picture and make your own moving picture in your mind. Think about what would make sense."

Along with searching meaning, help students draw on their knowledge of language structure to anticipate what word, or kind of word, might fit next in a given sentence by thinking, "What word would sound right here?" For example, if you were to read, "Then the dog..." you might anticipate the next word could be ran or barked. When children make guesses like this, they use what they know about oral language structures to help them. Then, of course they can cross-check with the story to check meaning and the parts in the word to make sure the word looks right.

**"Today I want to remind you of another strategy readers use to get the job done. They listen carefully as they read to consider what word might come next. They think, 'What word would sound right? What kind of word would fit here?'"**

Prepare for this minilesson by masking a word in your demonstration text. We recommend the word "melting" on page 34 in *Frog and Toad All Year*. Read, "More and more of the ice cream was \_\_\_\_." Pause at the masked word and show students how you can make a guess. Kids may guess "dripping" or "falling" or "melting." Celebrate all of these suggestions because they fit the syntax. You might say, "All of these do sound right. And they make sense as well. Let's take off the Post-it to check which one looks right." After you reveal the Post-it, you and your students can celebrate, "Yes! It's 'melting.' That sounds right, looks right, and makes sense!"

As kids read beginning chapter books at levels I/J/K, they will encounter multisyllabic words, and the work of looking across a whole word to solve it is more demanding. You can make the job easier by suggesting they break the word up into parts. Consider using magnetic letters in your demonstration to make it very clear how words can be built part by part. You can start by making a simple word like "look" and asking children to read it out loud. Then add the inflectional -ing and ask, "What is our new word?" Using a familiar word like this will help kids focus their attention on the concept you are trying to teach rather than authentically decoding a hard word. Then, move to a demonstration text to help children apply the strategy in context. Specifically, you might ask children to take a close look at the word "splattered" on page 34 of *Frog and Toad All Year*.



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Suggest that readers search left to right across a word for parts they know, using known word wall words or patterns from their word study work. You can draw on Session 9 in *Readers Have Big Jobs to Do*.

**“Today I want to remind you that you can use words you know to read words you don’t know. When you are stuck on a word, you can think, ‘Do I know how to read or write a word that looks like this one?’”**

Notice that this session begins with children trying out the strategy in isolation before applying their learning to a text. They read a known word like “will” and then try a new word like “thrilling,” using the known word to get to the unknown word. You could use the word “mail” to get to “pail,” and then “paint,” and then “painting.” Remember, your aim is not just to get kids to read the words on the index cards, but to coach them to make connections between known words and unknown words and to move away from letter-by-letter decoding when solving words in their books.

Consider the work students have been doing during word study and teach in ways that support them in transferring that knowledge to solving words and reading with greater efficiency and accuracy. You might decide to teach a lesson or two focused on helping children use their knowledge of vowel teams or blends and digraphs to be flexible word-solvers. Remind kids that they have learned that letters and groups of letters can make different sounds and teach them to try sounds a few different ways to listen for a word that would sound right and make sense. You will probably want to address specific word study needs during small group work, helping a particular group of students, for instance, distinguish between long and short vowels. Remind students to turn to any accessible word study charts and tools to support them as readers (and writers).

You’ll want to wrap up this unit with a reminder to readers to use everything they know about solving words that are tough. Often, when learning something new, kids will overuse strategies. In this case, you might find that students are stopping to solve words they already know! You will want to say something like this, “Readers, you can use the tools on our “Roll-Up-Your-Sleeves” chart to help you when you get to a tricky word. But, guess what! You don’t need to use these strategies for EVERY word in your books. No way! There are plenty of words in your books that you know quick, snap, and in a hurry. Many of them are words on the word wall. When you get to those word wall words, make sure you read them quickly and smoothly.”

**“Today I want to remind you that readers only slow down to read a word when they have to. Most of the time they read the words in their books in a snap and keep on going, making their reading as smooth as it can be.”**

Prepare a passage from *Frog and Toad All Year*, perhaps the first story, “Down the Hill,” and invite students to read along with you like a shared reading session. You can stop to problem-solve a few words, helping children orchestrate known strategies to search and check sources of information, but all the while, you’ll want to reinforce students’ fluency with prompts like, “Make it smooth!” or “Make sure you only slow down for words you don’t know,” or “Remember you know so many of these words already!” Alternatively, you can invite students to read these few pages from the story with their partners, reading and rereading to make it sound smooth and only stopping to problem-solve the tougher words.



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This final minilesson can also serve as an informal assessment of your students. You can move around the meeting area, listening to students read the text with partners and notice which strategies kids are using with independence. You can also assess which readers may still need practice recognizing and reading high frequency words with automaticity. These readers may benefit from warming up with a ring of high frequency words at the start of independent reading time. Take these few minutes to marvel at your children's new level of independence and to record some of the next steps you'll carry into the upcoming unit.

