

# InitialLit-2

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Is InitialLit just a phonics program?

No, InitialLit is definitely not just a phonic program. It teaches the alphabetic code very thoroughly for reading and spelling, but it has an equally strong language and vocabulary focus through the storybook component. InitialLit F/1/2 addresses all five key components for effective instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

### How does the focus of InitialLit-2 change after InitialLit F/1?

InitialLit-2 is the third year of a whole-class three-year program to teach reading, spelling and related skills.

By Year 2 most children will be able to work out unfamiliar words independently provided they have had effective, code-based initial reading instruction. This allows the focus of InitialLit-2 to shift to reading comprehension, reading fluency and spelling. InitialLit-2 also has a grammar component and teaches new vocabulary and language comprehension through popular storybooks and novels.

By the end of InitialLit-2 the expectation is that all children will be reading independently and with understanding. They will also be utilising their knowledge of the alphabetic code to spell confidently. Of course, there will be a few children in every cohort who may have a learning difficulty impacting on their literacy. These children should still be given appropriate support as they move into Year 3.

### What are the benefits of using InitialLit-F, InitialLit-1 and InitialLit-2 together?

The first three years of schooling are critical when it comes to learning how to read and write. For this reason it is highly desirable to use a quality, evidence-based program that uses the same language and teaching methodology across all three years. This ensures that literacy content is carefully sequenced, integrating new content with revision.

When all three years are taught together, InitialLit represents a comprehensive, detailed literacy program to ensure that all children have the best possible start. The program also allows for careful, systematic monitoring of all students along the way, picking up those who are in need of extra support before the achievement gap widens.

In InitialLit-F and InitialLit-1, children are provided with all the foundational skills and understanding to get them started on their reading and writing journey. However, there is still work to be done before every student is a truly fluent and independent reader and speller.

With the focus on comprehension, fluency and spelling in InitialLit-2, children will be given a

number of excellent strategies to help them understand text and consolidate their understanding of the alphabetic code. Given the complexity of English spelling, it takes several years of instruction before children become confident spellers. Each year they gain a little more insight into how the writing system works. InitialLit-2 provides revision and consolidation of the phonic skills taught in Year 1, as well as adding to that knowledge. As reading and spelling skills are acquired cumulatively, it makes sense to continue with the same program to avoid gaps in knowledge.

InitialLit-2 ensures that children leave Year 2 ready to tackle the reading and writing demands of Year 3, transitioning from learning to read to reading to learn.

### Is InitialLit-2 research based?

There is unequivocal agreement amongst the scientific research community about how reading and spelling should best be taught. MultiLit has carefully applied this research to each element of the InitialLit program. The MultiLit Research Unit has also gathered and analysed data from trial schools using the program to ascertain program efficacy. Based on these trial results, the literacy skills of children receiving InitialLit-2 substantially improved over time. A fuller explanation of the trial results can be found on the website.



To find out more about how to teach reading successfully, visit [www.fivefromfive.org.au](http://www.fivefromfive.org.au). The Five from Five project provides educators, parents and other stakeholders with essential information about reading and spelling instruction.

### What is taught in InitialLit-2?

There are four main teaching components in InitialLit-2:

- ▶ Comprehension and fluency (two lessons a week)
- ▶ Spelling (three lessons a week)
- ▶ Grammar (32 lessons spread across the year, aligned to writing tasks)
- ▶ Vocabulary (with lessons based on 15 storybooks and 2 novel studies)

Over the course of the year, children will revise phonic spelling patterns that were introduced in Year 1, and learn several new patterns and rules. They will also learn how to apply seven useful comprehension strategies to text, focusing on text provided in the RAD (Read And Discuss) Reading Book accompanying the program. Key grammar concepts are explicitly taught in the Grammar component. A focused writing task is provided at the end of many grammar lessons to consolidate the concept taught. The Storybook component will provide children with the opportunity to learn new and interesting vocabulary. They will be encouraged to look at new words in depth and use the words in oral language, as well as in writing. There is a carefully constructed writing lesson for each storybook, where children are introduced to text structure and different types of text.

### Is there a complete scope and sequence across all three years?

Yes, a full scope and sequence for InitialLit F/1/2 can be found on the MultiLit website.

### Can my class do InitialLit-2 without doing InitialLit-1 and/or InitialLit-F?

Yes. However, your class needs to be able to read with accuracy and some fluency. If the preceding years of instruction have not had sufficient emphasis on phonic decoding and encoding, the teacher will need to fill in the gaps. The Screener administered at the start of the year will provide information about the children's current reading and spelling skills. If the score on the Screener is very low, the class would be better off focusing on earlier skills or the teacher will need to consider instructional grouping.

### What if InitialLit-1 was not completed in the previous year? Can we go on with InitialLit-2?

The Screener at the start of the year will ascertain which skills and concepts children have retained from InitialLit-1. If InitialLit-1 was not quite finished (perhaps the last 6-10 lessons were not completed) and the Screener results indicate that children are nevertheless able to decode satisfactorily, children are ready to proceed with Year 2. Any child who is clearly still struggling with the blending and segmenting of

regular words will need reading support.

If InitialLit-1 was only started halfway through the year, it is quite acceptable to simply extend the program into Year 2 and then continue with InitialLit-2 into Year 3.

As the program is embedded into the school, teachers will become more experienced at using the assessment data to make informed instructional decisions about their students' needs.

### Do we still need to use decodable readers in Year 2?

There are **no** InitialLit decodable readers written for Year 2, unlike InitialLit-F and InitialLit-1. Children in Year 2 have now been introduced to most of the advanced alphabetic code and should be able to read any age-appropriate and content-appropriate book.

Each classroom should have a range of readers and age-appropriate books to be used in reading groups and for home reading. Some books will be more challenging than others. Books read in a supportive context can be selected to be more challenging than books read independently.

However, children who are still struggling with phonic decoding (lifting words off the page) will still need access to decodable readers. InitialLit Readers can be used alongside other decodable reading schemes.

### What resources do we get with InitialLit-2?

The kit and resources in InitialLit-2 include the following:

- ▶ Manual
- ▶ Handbooks with detailed lessons to follow
- ▶ Assessment Presentation Book
- ▶ RAD (Read and Discuss) Reading Books
- ▶ (25 books plus one extra for teacher)
- ▶ Storybook Lessons Book
- ▶ Concept Posters
- ▶ 11 x A3 Comprehension Posters
- ▶ 3 x A2 Spelling Posters
- ▶ Downloadables including PowerPoint slides to accompany each lesson, Home Reading Diaries, worksheets, games and much more



## What are the similarities between InitialLit-F/1 and InitialLit-2?

All three programs have a Storybook component to teach vocabulary and work on listening comprehension, taught alongside a reading and spelling component. Each program follows a clear, detailed lesson structure, often in scripted format.

In Year 2, the program is taught in separate components: Spelling, Comprehension/Fluency, Grammar and Vocabulary. In Foundation and Year 1, there is one main lesson that integrates reading, spelling and some grammar (Year 1).

All InitialLit programs start with a whole-class lesson, followed by a time where children work on consolidating activities independently while the teacher works with reading groups on a rotational basis.

The format across the three programs will soon become very familiar.

## What is recommended in terms of staffing and training for InitialLit-2?

All class teachers using InitialLit in any grade should attend the two-day training course to give them an overview of the program. This will give them the confidence to get started.

If there are multiple Year 2 classes, it is recommended that at least one teacher appointed to Year 2 has previous experience in InitialLit to assist any new teachers who are using the program for the first time. This allows for experience to be shared across grades.

Ideally, Year 2 teachers should work closely together to share information and provide support for each other. Learning support should also be involved in any discussions to identify and support children who are struggling.

Classroom volunteers or teacher aides provide valuable assistance when running InitialLit. Thought should be given as to how extra adult help is used and it is recommended that teacher aides be given training in the program if possible. It should be noted that extra help is not a prerequisite to running the program.

## Does InitialLit-2 cover the necessary content for the Australian English curriculum?

The National Curriculum (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2016) sets out the understanding, knowledge and skills required to become proficient in reading and writing. InitialLit-2 meets the requirements of this framework and many of its sub-strands and threads have been integrated into the program content.

A detailed document showing how InitialLit-2 links to the different sub-strands of the National Curriculum and to the standards laid out by the New South Wales Education Standards Authority (NESA) is available on the MultiLit website. These will be useful when planning the program for each term.

## Does InitialLit-2 include an explicit writing program?

No, InitialLit-2 does not include an explicit writing program, although there are many opportunities for children to respond in writing during the activities used in InitialLit-2. These include short written responses to a text as well as developing extended written responses to themes and concepts introduced in either the Comprehension lessons or in Storybook lessons. The final Storybook session (Session 4) is a structured writing lesson and there are opportunities to apply concepts taught during the Grammar lesson to a guided writing task. By structuring writing activities into the time spent after the lesson, children will be given plenty of writing practice throughout the year.

## What about differentiation?

Applying the principles of Response to Intervention, children who are still reading below grade level will need learning support. MiniLit (available from MultiLit) or an equivalent program is recommended. Depending on the gap between the child and the class, it may be appropriate for the child to participate in the InitialLit-2 lesson and then do MiniLit (or an equivalent program) in the time after the lesson. Children who are still working at the CVC decoding level may be better served going to MiniLit (or an equivalent program) during the InitialLit-2 lesson.





Small booster groups should also be run by the class teacher or teacher aide where specific skills are targeted and more practice given. Lower reading groups should be seen more frequently by the teacher.

Children who are working significantly above their peers will need extension activities as would always be the case, regardless of the program used. Assign independent tasks at the appropriate level during the time of independent work after the lesson. This should include reading and responding to more challenging text. More complex writing tasks can also be assigned.

### Should we group children according to skill level?

Given that children acquire skills at different rates, instructional grouping is a very practical way to address the spread of skill in a year group. By now it will be evident that some children may require a slower, more scaffolded approach. Children who are finding reading and writing challenging should be allowed to go through the program more slowly, providing time to revisit skills and have more practice. After the Screener at the start of the year, it will become clear who these children are. Some children may even require revisiting InitialLit-1. There is no benefit in proceeding with more complex reading tasks without addressing decoding difficulties.

There will also be children who clearly are progressing very well. These are the children who rarely need to have a lesson repeated and who are reading independently at the start of Year 2. The content of InitialLit-2 encourages children to think about what they are reading, and teachers can extend students by asking more inferential questions, setting interesting writing tasks to respond to text and encouraging the reading of a variety of texts during reading groups.

Once teachers are familiar with the needs of their students and the complete InitialLit program, it may even be practical to group across years to ensure that children are working at the correct instructional level.

Storybook lessons can be delivered to the range of children as a whole class, however, children with oral language difficulties will need to be well supported and given opportunities to respond.

### What about composite classes?

InitialLit becomes more challenging to run if there are composite classes. Each school context will be a little different and it is best to contact MultiLit (email [multilit@multilit.com](mailto:multilit@multilit.com)) to discuss options before committing to the program. Much depends on whether the composite class is in the context of a larger school or whether it is a small, one-stream school. Because InitialLit comprises three distinct programs, each taking a chunk of instructional time, it is not possible to deliver two complete programs in one class without extra staff resourcing.

### How much preparation will be needed to set up the program and then how much ongoing preparation?

InitialLit has pre-prepared lessons aligned to the National Curriculum. This greatly reduces the time needed for termly programming. All the resources needed to run the lessons are included in the kit. This leaves teachers time to devote to preparing lessons in other curriculum areas as literacy preparation has largely been done. Of course, initially, teachers will need to spend time getting organised (reading through lessons, downloading resources, copying worksheets etc), but



once the program is embedded in the school, delivery will be easier each year.

Tasks such as downloading and copying resources can be done as needed or in half-termly blocks. The login provided with the program will allow access to all the downloadable resources.

Throughout the year, teachers will need to read through each lesson carefully before delivery. They will also need to select the activities that will be used to consolidate the concepts taught after the whole-class lesson and ensure that all the materials are available. This should be planned weekly, using the planning document provided.

### Are there any ongoing, compulsory costs when running InitialLit-2?

The reading diaries and the Spelling Workbook can be purchased if schools prefer a sturdier resource and if they want to save time on photocopying. However, they are available as a downloadable resource as well.

Note that schools will get the first 25 Spelling Workbooks with the purchase of the program. Thereafter, they will need to buy the books each year or download multiple copies from the website.

### How are children assessed in InitialLit-2?

Assessment is built into the program. Spelling will be formally assessed seven times over the course of the year and comprehension will be formally assessed three times. The Wheldall Assessment of Reading Passages (WARP), provided with the InitialLit-2 Kit, provides a measure of reading fluency and is particularly useful for monitoring the bottom 25%. There is a detailed assessment schedule provided. The Class Record spreadsheet (Excel) will help teachers keep track of their students.

**Find out more**

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