

From InitialLit–Foundation to InitialLit–1

Frequently Asked Questions



whole-class initial instruction in literacy

What is InitialLit–1?

InitialLit–1 is the second year of a whole-class three-year program to teach reading, spelling and related skills. InitialLit–1 builds on the skills taught in Foundation with a focus on the advanced alphabetic code. Vocabulary and listening comprehension is addressed through Shared Storybook Reading using quality children’s literature.

What are the benefits of continuing with InitialLit–1 after InitialLit–F?

The first three years of schooling are critical when it comes to learning how to read and write and determines academic outcomes as they progress through school.

In InitialLit–F, children were provided with the skills and understanding to get them started on their reading and writing journey. By the end of Foundation, children will be applying their decoding skills to regular CVC, CCVC and CVCC words, as well as words with some common digraphs. InitialLit powerfully demonstrates that print is not random. Although many children will still need to sound out words as they read, some will be starting to read with some automaticity. Children will be able to break words into component sounds for spelling and correctly assign a phoneme to those sounds. Their handwriting and spelling will be coming along nicely. They will have learned a bank of tricky words to help them access connected text and they will be able to read decodable readers with comprehension. Some children will be able to read text that is less restricted. “What next?” you may ask.

InitialLit–1 extends and consolidates children’s skills and knowledge. They will be given the tools and strategies to read longer and more complex text. Using the same approach taken in Foundation, children will learn new graphemes and apply their knowledge to reading and spelling of words in isolation and in context. Because the format of the lesson is so similar to Foundation, children and teachers will enjoy consistency of language and activities across grades. This will help cement important concepts. As in Foundation, the InitialLit–1 sequence has been carefully considered and trialled to ensure that all the key graphemes and related concepts are covered. The content is constructed with both Foundation and Year 1 in mind. As reading and spelling skills are acquired cumulatively, it makes sense to continue with the same program to avoid gaps in knowledge.

There is a similar system for progress monitoring and assessment, allowing for rigorous tracking of individual children. This enables suitable intervention to be put in place.

Teachers can be confident that children will have the necessary knowledge to successfully tackle a range of text by the end of Year 1, moving onto a comprehension focus in Year 2.

Is InitialLit–1 research based?

InitialLit–1 is based on the same body of scientific research into the teaching of reading and spelling as InitialLit–F. Children are explicitly and systematically taught the relationship between sounds and letters and how to apply this knowledge to reading and spelling with developing fluency. Children will learn new vocabulary and develop oral language through the Storybook component of the program, which has been shown to benefit reading comprehension.

What is taught in InitialLit–1?

As in InitialLit–F, there are two components to InitialLit–1:

- ▶ Lessons to teach the advanced alphabetic code
- ▶ Lessons to develop vocabulary and comprehension through the use of quality children’s literature, followed by a writing lesson in response to the storybook

Over the course of the year, children will complete the advanced alphabetic code, focusing on grapheme-phoneme correspondences that they are likely to encounter in reading and spelling. They will learn the more common spellings for long vowel sounds as well as basic spelling conventions. They will also learn some common morphemes such as the suffixes ‘s’, ‘ing’, ‘ed’, ‘ly’ and the prefix ‘un’. Grammatical concepts such as nouns, verbs and adjectives will be introduced.

There will be a growing focus on reading fluency and comprehension as children’s decoding becomes more confident. They will learn 80 tricky words for both reading and spelling.

The Storybook component will provide children with the opportunity to learn new and interesting vocabulary. They will be encouraged to look at new words at 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 types of text.



What if InitialLit–F was not completed in the previous year? Can we go on?

There is a screener at the start of the year to ascertain what children have retained from the Foundation year. This will provide teachers with vital information regarding children’s skill level. If children did not quite finish InitialLit–F, it is recommended that the program is completed before starting the new content in InitialLit–1. Liaise with the Foundation teachers and consult the data from Foundation to make an informed decision. If the class is clearly still struggling with the blending and segmenting of CVC words, teachers should provide targeted practise in that skill before moving on.

It is anticipated that the 18 revision lessons at the start of InitialLit–1 will benefit the whole class, getting children back into the InitialLit routine. Children who need more intensive support should be identified. It is recommended that MiniLit or similar groups be set up for those who are still struggling at a CVC level. New content is taught from Lesson 19.

Do we still need to use decodable readers in Year 1?

The InitialLit Readers Levels 10-16 provide children with practise using the graphemes taught in the InitialLit–1 sequence. Each class should have a classroom set of these readers to use in reading groups. These books will need to be purchased alongside the program. However, a growing number of children will be able to tackle different types of readers, in addition to these decodables to reflect their developing reading skills and knowledge of the code. Accuracy, fluency and comprehension should be carefully monitored.

Children who are progressing more slowly with their reading will need access to InitialLit Readers Levels 1-9 or other decodable readers which provide a lot of practice at the more basic level. It is not recommended that these children be given readers that require them to guess words from context or pictures. Children who are able to read independently with confidence should be given a variety of challenging text to suit their interest.



What resources do we get with InitialLit–1?

The kit and resources in InitialLit–1 are similar to Foundation including the following:

- ▶ Manual
- ▶ Eight Handbooks containing 131 scripted lessons
- ▶ Assessment Presentation Book
- ▶ Sounds and Words Books (6x Book A, 6x Book B)
- ▶ Storybook Lessons Book
- ▶ Picture Cards, Sound Prompt Cards, Flashcards, Tricky Word Cards
- ▶ Concept Cards and Posters
- ▶ 1x A3 Sounds and Letters Poster
- ▶ 6x A2 Spelling Posters
- ▶ 1x A1 Helpful House of Words Poster
- ▶ Downloadables including PowerPoint slides to accompany each lesson, Home Reading Diaries, worksheets, games

What are the similarities between Foundation and Year 1?

The structure of InitialLit–1 is very similar to InitialLit–F. In both programs, there are scripted lessons followed by independent and teacher-led work. Both programs have a Shared Storybook component and a phonic reading and spelling component.

What is the timing of each component in InitialLit–1?

- ▶ 25-30 minutes: Scripted lesson for reading and spelling (spelling completed at desks)
- ▶ 30-40 minutes: Teacher-led and independent work to consolidate skill
- ▶ 15-20 minutes: Storybook component (one book studied over two weeks, not necessarily every day)

What is recommended in terms of staffing and training for InitialLit–1?

If there are multiple Year 1 classes, it is recommended that a teacher is appointed to Year 1 who has already taught InitialLit–F to assist any new teachers who are using the program for the first time. This allows for experience to be shared across grades.

Ideally, all class teachers using InitialLit in any grade should be trained. Teachers who have not already attended the two-day PD Workshop should attend the combined Foundation and Year 1 course. Those who have already been trained in Foundation can register for the bridging webinar series.

Ideally, Foundation and Year 1 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 children who are struggling.



Does InitialLit–1 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–1 meets the requirements of this framework and many of its sub-strands and threads have been integrated into the program content.

At the end of InitialLit–1 children will have been exposed to a range of text types and will be reading with developing fluency. They will be using their knowledge of sound-symbol relationships, high-frequency words, punctuation and directionality to access age-appropriate text with comprehension. They will be able to make personal connections to text and talk about characters, settings and events in literature. They will be able to form upper- and lower- case letters correctly and use correct pencil grip. They will be able to convey simple ideas in writing, using accurate spelling of high-frequency words and words with regular spelling patterns. They will understand the function of basic punctuation and apply this to their writing. During the Shared Storybook component, they will have learned new vocabulary and how to make predictions about a story as well as how to retell a story, identifying key events. In this component, there are multiple opportunities to address aspects of the Responding to Literature sub-strand.

It should be noted that InitialLit–1 does not meet all the writing, digital and visual literacy outcomes set out in ACARA.

A detailed document showing how InitialLit–1 links to the different sub-strands of the National Curriculum will be available on the MultiLit website, along with a document showing links to the standards laid out by the New South Wales Education Standards Authority (NESA). These will be useful when planning the program for each term.

Does InitialLit–1 include a writing program?

Although there are opportunities for writing in InitialLit–1, it does not provide a detailed, explicit writing program. The Storybook component does provide a detailed writing task for each book which can be integrated into your writing program. These writing tasks address types of text. Additional time will need to be timetabled to allow for the writing program to be taught in addition to InitialLit.

Will we still need to do a spelling and grammar program?

InitialLit–1 teaches both reading and spelling. There is no need to add another spelling program as this aspect of the curriculum is well covered.

Although there is an introduction to a number of grammatical concepts, e.g., nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, the concepts should be further developed and applied during the teaching of writing.

What about differentiation?

Applying the principles of Response to Intervention, very low children who are still working at a Foundation level will need support. MiniLit or an equivalent program is recommended. In some cases, it may be appropriate for the child to participate in the InitialLit–1 lesson and then do MiniLit in the time after the lesson. If the gap between the InitialLit–1 content and the children's skill level is too large for the children to gain anything from the InitialLit–1 lesson, they can do MiniLit at this time.

The approach taken by the support staff should support the approach taken in the lesson. This means that children should be taught the code explicitly and sequentially at the appropriate pace. They should not be taught to guess from pictures or context or drilled primarily on tricky words. Small booster groups can also be run by the class teacher or class teacher aide where specific skills are targeted and more practice given.

Some children will need extending. Assign independent tasks at the appropriate level to be undertaken during the time of independent work. This should include reading and responding to more challenging text.

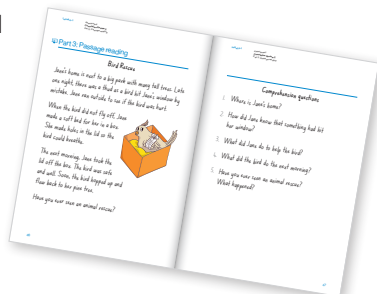
Can we group children according to skill level for the whole-class lesson on the mat?

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 have reading and writing difficulties requiring a slower, more scaffolded approach. Children who are finding reading and writing more challenging should be allowed to go through the program more slowly allowing 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.

There are also children who clearly are progressing very well. They are the children who rarely need to have a lesson repeated and who are reading with some fluency at the start of Year 1. Although the program will still provide some degree of challenge for them, especially around spelling and terminology, pace of delivery can be faster and the choices of words to read and spell can be more challenging. These children can be grouped together.

In some cases, once teachers are familiar with the needs of their students, it may even be practical to group across Foundation and Year 1 to ensure that children are working at the correct instructional level.

Storybook lessons can be delivered to the whole class, ensuring that children with oral language difficulties are well supported and are given opportunities to respond.



Find out more

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