



# Kindergarten Transition Guide

## From *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* to *Saxon Reading Foundations*

### Introduction

The [\*Saxon Reading Foundations\*](#) Grade K update introduces key structural and organizational enhancements to *Saxon Phonics and Spelling*. These changes align the program more closely with Science of Reading research, with a stronger emphasis on explicit phonemic awareness, earlier instruction in spelling and vowel rules, and increased use of connected text—helping build student confidence and reduce frustration.

This guide is designed to help you seamlessly transition to the new *Saxon Reading Foundations*. It examines the key updates and notes the elements that remain the same. The Bridging Guide provides a comparison of the key areas of *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* and *Saxon Reading Foundations* and highlights the important changes.

Although the program looks different, the ultimate goal remains the same—that is, developing confident, fluent readers. You'll find that the new pacing honors the Saxon approach while giving your students earlier opportunities to apply their learning.

### Key Shifts in *Saxon Reading Foundations*

1. **Scope & Sequence:** The Grade K Scope & Sequence is condensed to 120 lessons (from 140), accelerating progress to key decoding milestones while preserving time for cumulative review and authentic reading/writing.
2. **Lesson Re-Organization:** Lessons run in three-week cycles of twelve (with built-in review and a written/oral assessment), creating predictable retrieval practice and frequent checkpoints to adjust instruction quickly.
3. **Updated Lesson Pacing (Earlier Decoding):** Instruction moves to one lesson per letter, with the short-vowel rule and coding at the start; students meet decodable sentences by Lesson 9 and the first Decodable Reader by Lesson 13, enabling real word reading early and ensuring all letters/common sounds by mid-year.
4. **Earlier Code Coverage (VCe Mid-Year):** Long-vowel/VCe patterns appear earlier and are practiced across later lessons, expanding the decodable word bank and strengthening orthographic mapping.



5. **Earlier Multisyllabic Decoding:** VCICV syllable division is taught well before year's end, building capacity to read longer words in kindergarten and preventing a late-year plateau heading into Grade 1.
6. **Warm-Up PA + Mapping Built In:** Every Lesson Warm-Up includes phonological/phonemic awareness and phoneme–grapheme mapping (e.g., Elkonin boxes), tightening speech-to-print links for accuracy and automaticity—especially supportive for multilingual learners.
7. **Dedicated Reader & Fluency Lessons (Earlier & Ongoing):** Decodable and Fluency Readers now have their own lessons and begin earlier (first decodable in Lesson 13) with guidance for daily fluency, protecting connected-text practice that builds rate, accuracy, and prosody while reinforcing new patterns.
8. **Streamlined Assessments with Actionable Checkpoints:** Standalone assessment lessons—including a mid-year checkpoint with teacher response pages and student summaries—keep instruction responsive, targeting re-teach and home practice when it's most effective.
9. **Targeted End-of-Year Review:** Starting with the lessons from the late 90s and onward, cycles feature focused review of high-leverage skills (e.g., digraphs, multisyllable words, VCe) to secure mastery before Grade 1.

## What Hasn't Changed

- **Incremental, Spiraled Instruction:** Skills still build in small, explicit steps with frequent return to prior learning; lessons continue to culminate in applying both new and previously taught skills—supporting mastery and transfer.
- **Daily Practice & Review Routines:** Daily Letter/Sound Reviews and Spelling-Sound Reviews with the Review Decks remain the backbone, giving high-frequency retrieval and immediate formative checks (worksheets continue to provide daily practice and insight).
- **Consistent Multisensory Toolkit:** The same hands-on tools are core—Letter/Picture/Spelling Cards, letter tiles, tracing/skywriting, and Elkonin boxes—to strengthen sound-to-print mapping and make errors visible for quick correction.
- **Stable Coding Conventions & Rule Supports:** Breves, macrons, crossing off silent e, and posted vowel/spelling rule wall cards are unchanged, giving students a familiar visual system for analyzing and spelling words.
- **Differentiation Options Built into Lessons:** Targeted support, reinforcement, and extension continue to appear within lessons, often using multisensory routines to meet diverse learner needs.
- **Connected Text for Application: Decodable and Fluency Readers** remain integral, ensuring students apply the exact patterns they're learning in connected text to build accuracy, confidence, and fluency.
- **High-Frequency Word Work Integrated with Phonics:** Students still practice a concise set of high-utility words alongside the code they're learning, reinforcing transfer into reading and writing.
- **Ongoing Phonological/Phonemic Awareness:** Daily PA work (blend, segment, manipulate) continues as an essential on-ramp to decoding and encoding; in SRF it's simply more explicitly embedded in the warm-up.



- **Frequent, Actionable Assessment Checks:** Quick oral checks and clear mastery expectations persist, guiding pacing, regrouping, and targeted practice without interrupting core instruction.
- **School–Home Reinforcement:** Take-home pages/readers and family notes remain, keeping practice consistent across settings and boosting cumulative exposure.

## Bridging Guide

Phonological/Phonemic Awareness	
<b><i>Saxon Phonics and Spelling</i></b>	<b><i>Saxon Reading Foundations</i></b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lacked incremental organization</li> <li>• Varied activities, not structured routines</li> <li>• Used as a support for students who need more practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gradual release structure</li> <li>• Incremental progression based on Science of Reading research</li> <li>• Include six different instructional routines for ease of implementation</li> <li>• Limited to a five-minute activity</li> <li>• New Phonological Awareness Deck with pictures to support various activities</li> </ul>
Worksheets	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited variety of activities</li> <li>• Heavy focus on Sound-Spelling Review (up to 12 items), matching, and decoding</li> <li>• Limited encoding practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Spelling-Sound Review reduced to a maximum of 5 items</li> <li>• Handwriting lines added for integrated handwriting practice</li> <li>• Encoding practice added</li> <li>• Connected text added</li> <li>• Formats varied across lesson types: letter or sound-spelling pattern, review, assessment, readers</li> </ul>
Handwriting	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction appeared in the Handwriting Instruction Guide</li> <li>• Handwriting practice was optional</li> <li>• Handwriting Masters were distributed as copies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction integrated into each letter lesson</li> <li>• Handwriting practice included on Lesson Worksheets</li> <li>• Handwriting Practice Pages integrated into Student Workbooks at point of use</li> </ul>
Decodable and Fluency Readers	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readers appear at end of letter/concept lessons</li> <li>• Worksheets follow same format as letter lessons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Readers have dedicated lessons</li> <li>• Warm-Ups in these lessons are reduced from 3 activities to 1 Phonological/Phonemic Awareness activity</li> <li>• Words to Know section introduces and reviews sight words and high-frequency words included in the texts</li> <li>• New Worksheet content that requires application of learned skills to decode, encode, and comprehend connected text</li> </ul>
Assessments	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginning in L12, given every 4 lessons to assess acquisition of target letter</li> <li>• Oral assessment only</li> <li>• 26 total assessments, plus Beginning of Year, Middle of Year, and End of Year Phonics Assessments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Given every 12 lessons</li> <li>• Oral and Written Portions</li> <li>• 11 total assessments, including the Beginning of Year, Middle of Year, and End of Year Phonics Assessment have been integrated into the Scope and Sequence and Student Workbooks</li> <li>• New Teacher Response Pages to guide assessment and provide a convenient record of each student’s performance</li> </ul>
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## Big Picture

- ***Saxon Phonics and Spelling (140 lessons):***
  - Slow pace (3–4 lessons per letter)
  - Spends most of the year teaching the alphabet
  - Long vowels, digraphs, and r-controlled vowels saved for end of year
  - Daily practice with connected text begins in spring
- ***Saxon Reading Foundations (120 lessons):***
  - Accelerated, integrated approach.
  - Entire alphabet taught by mid-year (Lesson 57)
  - Letters, phonics rules, high-frequency words, and connected text included in the first lesson cycle
  - End of year dedicated to review, application, and fluency—not new content

*Saxon Phonics and Spelling* has built strong, confident readers for decades: *Saxon Reading Foundations* preserves that legacy while aligning with current research. The pacing accelerates, but the spiraling structure allows for ample practice of concepts and skills. You can rely on the same teaching instincts and routines you already know, while enjoying the benefits of earlier reading, systematic phonemic awareness, and end-of-year review of the most challenging content.

## FAQ

### 1. ***Why does Saxon Reading Foundations move so much faster through the letters?***

**Answer:**

The accelerated pace gives students earlier access to more letters, spelling patterns, and rules, allowing for earlier application of decoding and encoding skills. Saxon’s signature spiraled review means students will revisit these letters and sounds daily, ensuring mastery through repeated practice rather than extended time on one letter.

### 2. ***Why did you change the pacing of the program from a letter-a-week to a letter-a-day?***



**Answer:**

The pacing was updated to better align with current *Science of Reading* research and to support more effective foundational skills instruction. Teaching a letter-a-day helps students access the full alphabetic code early in the year, allowing them to begin blending, decoding, and writing words within the first few weeks of kindergarten. This faster pace increases engagement, builds confidence, and gives students repeated exposure to every letter throughout the year—key ingredients for developing automaticity and fluency.

A letter-a-day model also provides more opportunities for cumulative review and distributed practice, which research shows strengthens long-term memory and reading development. In contrast, teaching one letter per week delays decoding and limits practice opportunities, especially for students who enter kindergarten already familiar with some letters.

**3. Are my students really ready to learn rules like  $v\check{c}$  and  $v\bar{\rightarrow}$  so early?****Answer:**

Yes! Research shows that introducing rules early and revisiting them frequently helps students become successful readers sooner. In *Saxon Reading Foundations*, rules are introduced early and reviewed daily, allowing students to spell and read connected text within the first three weeks of instruction.

**4. What if my students aren't ready for a Decodable Reader by Lesson 13?****Answer:**

Students will have already seen enough letters, sounds, and high-frequency words to access the text. *Saxon Reading Foundations* scaffolds these readers carefully, so students are set up for success. Even if some students struggle at first, the consistent review and repeated practice help them catch on quickly. The goal is for students to feel like “real readers” early in the year.

**5. Does the faster pace mean less depth of instruction?****Answer:**

No. The content is not reduced: it is reorganized. *Saxon Reading Foundations* condenses 140 lessons into 120 by weaving phonics, phonemic awareness, sight words, and connected text together more efficiently. This creates more meaningful practice without losing depth of instruction.

**6. Do I still use the same multisensory routines (tracing, skywriting, manipulatives)?****Answer:**

Yes! The core Saxon DNA hasn't changed. Many of same routines from *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* are embedded in *Saxon Reading Foundations* and more have been added. You'll continue to see options for support, reinforcement, and extension and multisensory activities in every lesson.

**7. What happens to concepts that used to appear at the end of *Saxon Phonics and Spelling* (like digraphs, r-controlled vowels, and syllable division)?**

**Answer:**

They now appear earlier in the year. For example, long vowels are taught in Lesson 5 in *Saxon Reading Foundations* instead of Lesson 105 in *Saxon Phonics and Spelling*. As a result of this shift, students have more time to practice and apply these skills and review them in targeted lessons as the year ends.

**8. How will my students master complex skills that are introduced earlier?**

**Answer:**

Mastery comes from Saxon’s incremental spiral. Concepts aren’t taught once and left behind: they are revisited in daily reviews, worksheet activities, and readers. The faster introduction means more, not fewer, opportunities to revisit and apply skills over time.

**9. How can I reassure parents who are used to the old pacing?**

**Answer:**

Let caregivers know that the purpose hasn’t changed—students are still building strong phonics skills. In *Saxon Reading Foundations*, students are able to read and spell sooner, which builds confidence and motivation. Explain that the change is aligned with the most recent Science of Reading research, and that instructional updates are based on what has been proven to help students read more effectively.

**10. Can you provide me with a list of all the Science of Reading changes that have been made to the program?**

**Answer:**

Absolutely. Here is a list of the Science of Reading changes from the previous program to the current one.

- **Condensed scope to 120 lessons** to increase tempo while preserving cumulative review and authentic application.
- **Three-week instructional cycles** with a built-in review lesson and a dedicated written/oral assessment to strengthen distributed practice and frequent feedback.
- **Letter-a-day pacing** with the **short-vowel rule and coding** launched at the start of the year so students begin decoding within the first weeks.
- **All letters and common sounds reached by mid-year**, accelerating access to blending, word reading, and writing.
- **Decodable sentences by Lesson 9** and the **first Decodable Reader by Lesson 13**; readers continue at regular intervals the rest of the year.
- **Decodable and Fluency Readers given their own lessons**, protecting connected-text time and clarifying instructional purpose.
- **Coding conventions used from day one** (breves/macrons, silent-e cross-off) to make sound–spelling analysis explicit in daily routines.
- **Long-vowel/VCe patterns moved earlier (mid-year)** to expand the decodable word set sooner.
- **Multisyllabic decoding introduced earlier** (VCICV and related patterns) so kinders tackle longer words before year’s end.

- **Phonological/phonemic awareness embedded in every warm-up**, with systematic **phoneme manipulation** (add/delete/substitute) tied to print.
- **Phoneme–grapheme mapping (e.g., Elkonin boxes) elevated to core**, not just differentiation, for consistent sound-to-print work.
- **Stronger decode-encode reciprocity**: word building, dictation, and spelling-sound mapping are tightly paired with reading practice.
- **Fluency instruction starts earlier** with explicit guidance for daily practice to build accuracy, rate, and prosody alongside new code.
- **Assessments separated into standalone lessons**, including a **mid-year checkpoint**, with teacher response pages and student summaries for actionable regrouping and re-teach.
- **Targeted end-of-year review** focused on high-leverage skills (digraphs, VCe, multisyllabic words) to secure mastery before Grade 1.

