

Rime Magic for Word Solving

WHAT

Written language includes individual words that comprise sound/letter relationships. Some students are able to figure out how this relationship works simply by reading and writing themselves, initially using invented spelling where they work hard to “stretch the word out like a rubber band” and line up letters to go with the sounds they hear. However, other students may need more support with word solving. Sharon Zinke, a 40-year veteran reading specialist, has discovered that the most meaningful way to provide that scaffolding is through Rime Magic, a system she developed as she worked with thousands of struggling readers across the state.

The rime is the key part of a word that makes it easy to see the word’s structure (for example, the /ip/ in slippery or the /at/ in splattered). Students quickly learn how to add onsets (i.e., beginnings) and endings to the rimes to combine those parts into words and analyze those words—like magic! They learn to see the natural segmentation patterns of the written word—and “crack the code”—using their ability to hear onsets and rimes to make letter-sound correspondences.

WHY

Rime Magic is a system that focuses on the onset rime patterns that make words comprehensible to students with processing issues. It is not a rule-based approach that leaves challenged decoders scratching their heads at word difficulties trying to recall a rule and apply it. Rather, it’s an immersion system that helps students focus on the rime in the middle of the word and build out from there. Students begin to see words as a series of predictable patterns rather than a string of random letters and sounds.



HOW

Intervention and Prevention. The aim is to give kids a quick, targeted strategy for word solving and then move on immediately to fluent, meaningful independent reading. Teachers use rime magic for both prevention, particularly with brand new readers, and for intervention, for kids who got off to a bad start with traditional phonics instruction, which focuses on rules that, given the idiosyncrasies of the English language, often don't work.

To see research about the effectiveness of Rime Magic with older striving students, you can access "Rime Magic: A Breakthrough for Struggling Readers" at [Scholastic.com/ThriveResources](https://www.scholastic.com/thrive/resources).

By Sharon Zinke, Reading Intervention Specialist.



To learn more:

- Moustafa, M. (2007). *Beyond Traditional Phonics: Research Discoveries and Reading Instruction*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Zinke, S. (2013). *The Decoding Solution: Rime Magic and Fast Success for Struggling Readers*. New York: Scholastic.