Decoding English

Understanding the Structure of Language

http://neuhaus.org/videos/decoding-english/

What is Reading?

Reading is decoding (translating symbols on a page into words) and language comprehension (attaching meaning to the words.)

Decoding

To be able to decode the English language you have to know two things: the letters and the sounds. The English language is based on the alphabetic principle. The alphabetic principle is when written symbols called graphemes match sounds in spoken words that are called phonemes. Graphemes are letters or groups of letters that represent the sounds you hear in spoken words. Phonemes are the sounds in spoken language.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th># of letters</th>
<th># of phonemes</th>
<th># of graphemes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sat</td>
<td>3 – s, a, t</td>
<td>3 - /s/, /ɑ/, /t/</td>
<td>3 – s, a, t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>creek</td>
<td>5 – c, r, e, e, k</td>
<td>4 - /k/, /ɹ/, /e/, /k/</td>
<td>4 – c, r, ee, k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shop</td>
<td>4 – s, h, o, p</td>
<td>3 - /ʃ/, /ɔ/, /p/</td>
<td>3 – sh, o, p</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Putting the phonemes and graphemes together is called sound-symbol association. Repeated exposure to the sound-symbol patterns reinforces and secures this knowledge in your memory so you are able to recognize words instantly. When you read words you are not familiar with, your focus is at the decoding level instead of the comprehension level because you are not secure with the knowledge of how sounds and symbols match together.

http://neuhaus.org/glossary/#Decoding (case sensitive)
STRUCTURE OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

There are approximately 44 sounds in the English language, but only 26 letters to represent all 44 sounds. Fifteen letters represent only one sound while 11 letters represent two or more sounds. To represent all the sounds of English, groups of letters like **ch**, **sh**, **th**, **ng** and **ou** form entirely new sounds.

SIX SYLLABLE TYPES

A strategy in decoding unfamiliar words is understanding the patterns of the English language, specifically having knowledge of the six syllable types. A syllable is a word or part of word that has one vowel sound. Around 80-85% of English words represent six different syllable types or a composite of the six syllable types.

*She wiggles her nose and tail.*

A table showing examples of each syllable type:

- **Closed syllable**
  - and
  - mend
  - hip
  - got
  - mud
- **Open syllable**
  - she
  - go
  - hi
  - sky
- **Vowel consonant-e syllable**
  - nose
  - cake
  - theme
  - cube
- **Vowel-r syllable**
  - her
  - stir
  - fur
  - nor
- **Vowel pair syllable**
  - sea
  - cow
  - zoo
  - boy
- **Final Stable syllable**
  - ramble
  - uncle
  - candle
  - mention
  - package

http://neuhaus.org/glossary/#SyllableType (case sensitive)
SYLLABLE DIVISION

For longer words, a more efficient strategy to read an unfamiliar word is break it apart using syllable division and identify the vowel sound in each syllable. There are four main types of syllable division in English.

http://neuhaus.org/glossary/#SyllDivPat (case sensitive)

REGULAR, IRREGULAR, AND SIGHT WORDS

There are 15-20% of words that do not fit the regular patterns of the English language. These words must be memorized. Regular words are words that follow reliable patterns of the language and can be sounded out. When you know the patterns of the language, more words become regular.

Sight words are common everyday words that appear frequently in reading and writing. Sight words can be regular words like can, like, day, and or and be sounded out while other sight words are irregular like said, there, were, and was and must be memorized.

http://neuhaus.org/glossary/#RegularWords (case sensitive)

http://neuhaus.org/glossary/#IrregularWords (case sensitive)