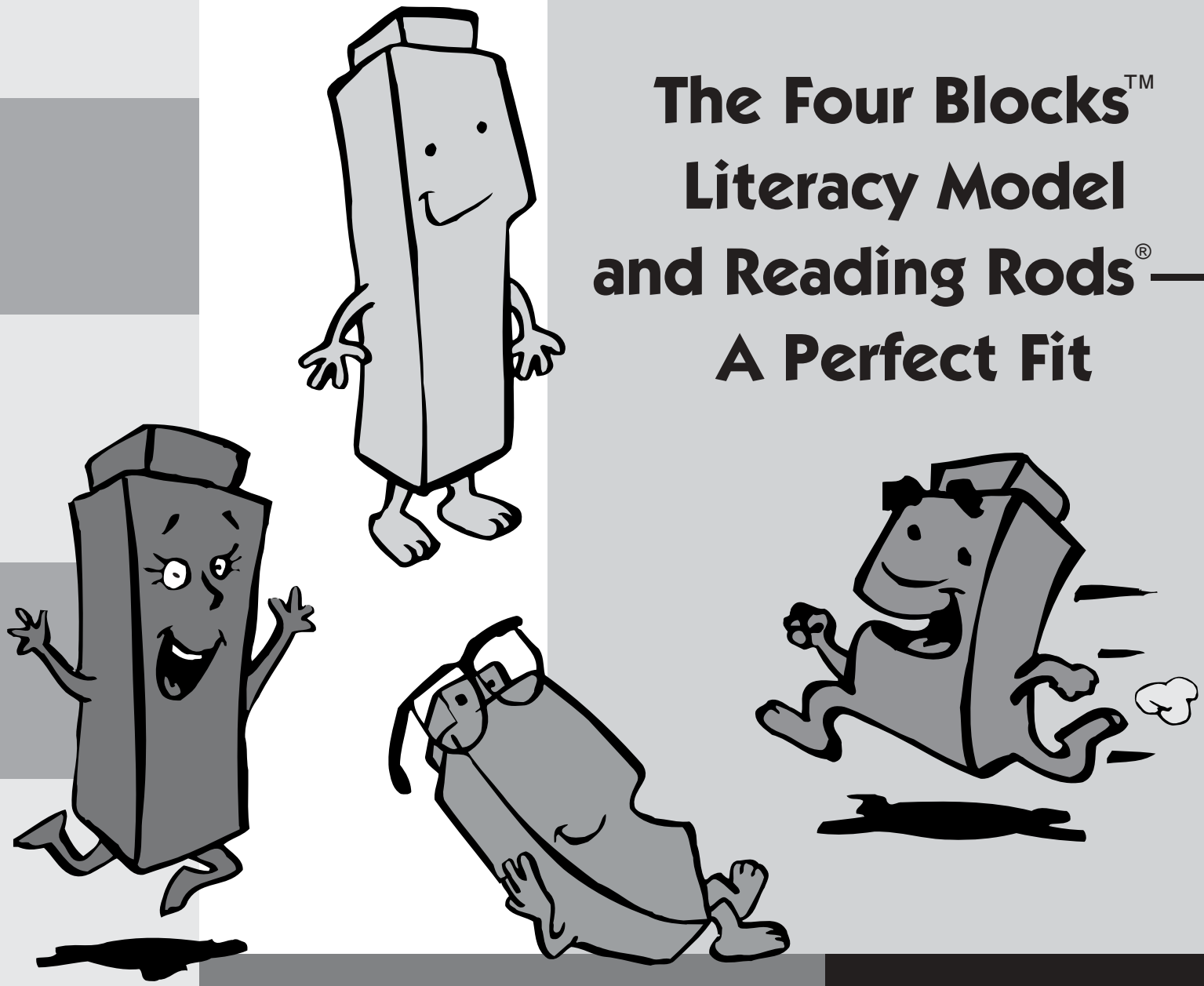
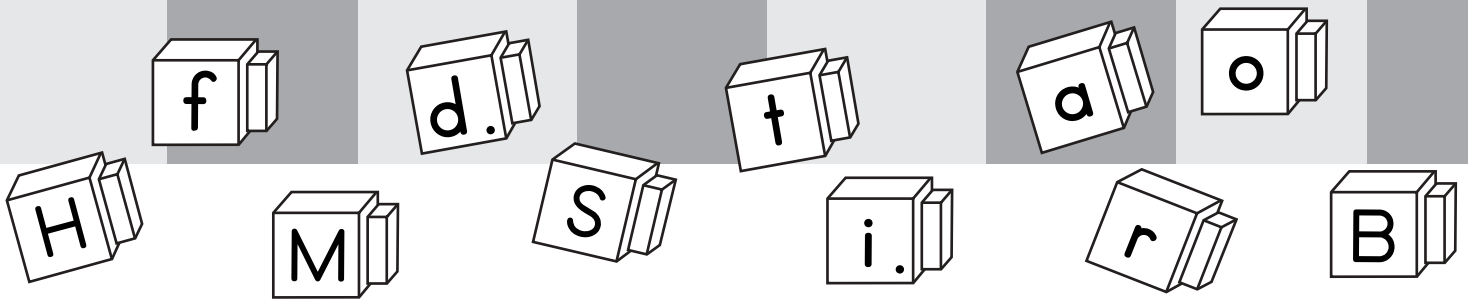


# READING RODS<sup>®</sup>

Patent Pending

## The Four Blocks<sup>™</sup> Literacy Model and Reading Rods<sup>®</sup> — A Perfect Fit





**The Four-Blocks™ Literacy Model**, developed by Patricia Cunningham and Dorothy Hall, acknowledges that not all children learn to read in the same way. By incorporating different approaches to reading instruction on a daily basis (Self-Selected Reading, Writing, Working with Words, and Guided Reading) this model aims to reach all types and levels of readers.

Innovative Reading Rods® from ETA/Cuisenaire are a perfect match for the Making Words Block. In this block, students are engaged in **hands-on, manipulative-based** activities. Through Making Words activities, children discover letter-sound relationships and learn how to look for patterns in words. They also learn that changing just one letter or even just the sequence of the letters changes the whole word (Cunningham & Cunningham, 1992).

A Making Words activity starts with each child being given some letters—often on small, easily misplaced pieces of paper prepared by the teacher. The Reading Rods **Making Words Kit** is a durable and colorful substitute. During the fifteen-minute activity, children make approximately fifteen words, beginning with two-letter words and continuing with three-, four-, five-letter and bigger words until the final word is made. The final word (a six-, seven-, or eight-letter word) always includes all the letters they have learned or reviewed that day.

Reading Rods easily fits into Making Words activities for another reason: vowels are always found on red rods. The Four-Blocks model suggests that vowels consistently be written in red.

### Making Words are multilevel developmental activities

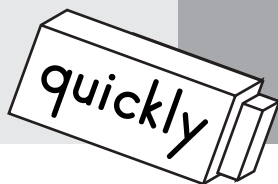
A huge draw of Making Words is that they are “multilevel” developmental activities. Therefore, by beginning every Making Words activity with some short, easy words and ending with a big word that uses all the letters, the lessons provide a wide range of opportunities for readers at different levels. While the slowest learners may still be

struggling with making two- and three-letter words, those that are ahead will be challenged to make a longer word using all of the letters they are given. Children who lack phonemic awareness develop that awareness as they listen for the sounds in words in order to **make** them. Children who possess phonemic awareness learn letter-sound correspondences and spelling patterns. Most importantly, children learn that there are patterns to be found in the way words are pronounced and spelled (Cunningham & Hall, 1994).

Research by Treiman (1985) suggests that both children and adults find it much easier to divide words and syllables into their onsets (all the letters before a vowel) and rimes (the vowel and what follows) than into any other units. Thus, *Pat* is more easily divided into *P-at* than into *Pa-t* or *P-a-t*. It is easier and quicker for people to change *Pat* to *bat* and *fat* than it is to change *Pat* to *Pam* and *pod*. This is part of the research supporting both the Reading Rods **Short Vowel Words Families Kit**, as well as the **Phonics Word-Building Kit**.

Wylie and Durrell (1970) listed a mere thirty-seven rimes that are used to form almost five hundred primary grade words. These high-frequency rimes are: **ack, ail, ain, ake, ale, ame, an, ank, ap, ash, at, ate, aw, ay, eat, ell, est, ice, ick, ide, ight, ill, in, ine, ing, ink, ip, it, ock, oke, op, ore, ot, uck, ug, ump, unk.**

- The Reading Rods **Short Vowel Word Families Kit** includes all but one of the two-letter short vowel rimes in this list plus nine others. (*-ip* was omitted because it is partnered more with blends, such as in the word *trip*, than with single consonants, which make up this kit).
- The Reading Rods **Phonics Word-Building Kit** includes all of the listed word families with the exception of *-uck*. Also note that in the Reading Rods **Phonics Word-Building Kit**, *-aw*, *-ay* and others are found on violet Rods, classifying them as vowel combinations instead of yellow word families. (All Reading Rods Kits are color-coded.)



Psychological theory suggests that the brain functions as a pattern detector when confronted with longer words. In order to successfully decode a word, the brain works to find familiar letter patterns within the word, and “chunks” the word not based on rules but on its bank of known interletter frequencies. Once big words are chunked, readers use patterns from known big words to decode the unfamiliar word. In order to use patterns from known words, readers must have a store of multisyllabic words that they can read and spell. Using the Reading Rods **Prefixes, Suffixes, and Root Words Kit** also enhances students’ abilities to decode words in this manner, and builds a foundation of meaning (vocabulary), not just decoding.

### Reading Rods also make a great fit for Guided Reading activities.

During Guided Reading time, small groups of children gather together with the teacher to talk about a book; relate it to the children’s own experiences; explore unfamiliar vocabulary, sentence structure, or syntax; and finally read the book aloud or independently and focus on one or two main points for discussion. When the teacher gets ready for reading, he or she introduces any new vocabulary, and discusses how to spell these new words. Depending on the reading level, teachers can use any Reading Rods Reading Group Kit to introduce these new words in a fun, hands-on format.

For example, suppose a reading group is reading *Arrow to the Sun*. The teacher reads through the book and finds words that might be difficult to sound out, or may need some explanation of their meaning—such as the word *maiden*. Knowing that this word will be new to the group, the teacher asks the students to find the Reading Rods with the letters *m*, *a*, *i*, *d*, *e*, and *n*. After asking them to build *maid* and noting how the red *a* and *i* together make a long *a* sound, the teacher asks them to add the letters *e* and *n* to the end of the word and read the word. The teacher then writes the word on a piece of chart paper and asks if anyone knows what the word means [an unmarried girl

or woman]. They then discuss the meaning of the word and move on to another unfamiliar word and repeat the process.

Other activities in which Reading Rods can be used include sight word study using the **Sentence-Construction Kit**, which is full of high-frequency sight vocabulary from the Dolch list and other authoritative sources. Spelling words can be practiced using any of the Reading Rods Kits rather than just writing the words over and over again on a piece of paper. The uses are endless—exercise the imagination!

#### References

- Cunningham, Patricia and Dorothy Hall. *Making Words*. Torrance, CA: Frank Schaffer Publications, Inc., 1994.
- Cunningham, Patricia and Dorothy Hall. *Making Big Words*. Torrance, CA: Frank Schaffer Publications, Inc., 1994.
- Cunningham, P.M. and J.W. Cunningham. “Making Words: Enhancing the Invented Spelling-Decoding Connection.” *The Reading Teacher*, 46, 106-115, 1992.
- Treiman, R. “Onsets and Rimes as Units of Spoken Syllables: Evidence from Children.” *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 39, 161-181, 1985.
- Wylie, R.E. and D.D. Durrell. “Teaching Vowels Through Phonograms.” *Elementary English*, 47, 787-791, 1970.

#### Websites to visit:

- The complete source for Reading Rods: [www.readingrods.com](http://www.readingrods.com)
- The Four Blocks Census: Who Does Four Blocks, Where, How and Why?: [www.wfu.edu/~cunningh/fourblocks/the2000four-blockcensus.doc](http://www.wfu.edu/~cunningh/fourblocks/the2000four-blockcensus.doc)
- Connection to Four Blocks Teachers Everywhere: [www.teachers.net/4blocks/](http://www.teachers.net/4blocks/)
- International Reading Association: [www.ira.org](http://www.ira.org)
- Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement: [www.ciera.org](http://www.ciera.org)

The following products are available from ETA/Cuisenaire.  
 For more information, visit our website at [www.etacuisenaire.com](http://www.etacuisenaire.com)  
 or at [www.readingrods.com](http://www.readingrods.com) or call Customer Service at 800-445-5985.

### Reading Rods® Materials

<i>Item #</i>	<i>Description</i>
<b>Reading Rods Alphabet and Phonemic Awareness</b>	
RA-60001	Individual Student Kit
RA-69002	Reading Group Kit
RA-60001OH	Overhead Tiles
RA-60030	Pocket Chart Cards
<b>Reading Rods Short Vowel Word Families</b>	
RA-60003	Individual Student Kit
RA-69004	Reading Group Kit
RA-60003OH	Overhead Tiles
RA-60031	Pocket Chart Cards
<b>Reading Rods Making Words</b>	
RA-60009	Individual Student Kit
RA-60009-10	Individual Student Kit (Set of 10)
RA-60009OH	Overhead Tiles
RA-60033	Pocket Chart Cards
<b>Reading Rods Phonics Word-Building</b>	
RA-60005	Individual Student Kit
RA-69006	Reading Group Kit
RA-60005OH	Overhead Tiles
RA-60032	Pocket Chart Cards
<b>Reading Rods Prefixes, Suffixes, and Root Words</b>	
RA-60007	Individual Student Kit
RA-69008	Reading Group Kit
RA-60007OH	Overhead Tiles
RA-60034	Pocket Chart Cards
<b>Reading Rods Sentence-Construction</b>	
RA-60016	Individual Student Kit
RA-69017	Reading Group Kit
RA-60016OH	Overhead Tiles
RA-60036	Pocket Chart Cards
<b>Reading Rods Phonics Program</b>	
RA-60100	Grade K
RA-60101	Grade 1
RA-60102	Grade 2
RA-60103	Grade 3
<b>Making Words with Reading Rods Kits</b>	
RA-62212	Grade 1
RA-62213	Grade 2
RA-62214	Grade 3
RA-62215	Grade 4

### Four-Blocks™ Materials

<i>Item #</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Item #</i>	<i>Description</i>
RA-61093	<i>Making Words</i>	RA-62266	<i>Word Cards for Systematic Sequential Phonics</i>
RA-61094	<i>Making More Words</i>	RA-62185	<i>Word Wall Word Cards for Systematic Sequential Phonics</i>
RA-61095	<i>Making Big Words</i>	RA-62057	<i>Tongue Twisters to Teach Phonemic Awareness and Phonics—Grades K–2</i>
RA-61096	<i>Making More Big Words</i>	RA-62113	<i>Tongue Twisters to Teach Phonemic Awareness and Phonics—Grades 1–3</i>
RA-62015	<i>Making and Writing Words</i>	RA-61679	<i>Predictable Charts: Shared Writing for Kindergarten and First Grade</i>
RA-61813	<i>The Teacher's Guide to the Four-Blocks</i>	RA-61736	<i>Guided Reading the Four-Blocks Way</i>
RA-61737	<i>The Teacher's Guide to Building Blocks</i>	RA-61814	<i>Guided Reading in Grade 1 Video</i>
RA-61731	<i>Implementing the 4-Blocks Literacy Model</i>	RA-61815	<i>Guided Reading in Grades 2–3 Video</i>
RA-61678	<i>Modifying the Four-Blocks for Upper Grades</i>	RA-62165	<i>Guided Reading in Upper Grades Video</i>
RA-61738	<i>Four-Blocks Plan Book "Plus"</i>	RA-62110	<i>Guided Reading Grade 1 Book and Video</i>
RA-62234	<i>Building Blocks Plan Book "Plus"</i>	RA-62111	<i>Guided Reading Grades 2–3 Book and Video</i>
RA-62164	<i>Upper-Grades Plan Book for Modifying the Four Blocks</i>	RA-62684	<i>Guided Reading in Upper Grades Book and Video</i>
RA-61680	<i>True Stories from Four-Blocks Classrooms</i>	RA-62114	<i>Teaching Guided Reading Strategies with Transparencies</i>
RA-61525	<i>The Four-Blocks Literacy Model: How and Why It Really Works Video</i>	RA-61524	<i>Guided Reading Beach Balls</i>
RA-61721	<i>Guess the Covered Word for First Grade</i>	RA-62037	<i>Word Wall "Plus" for First Grade</i>
RA-61817	<i>Guess the Covered Word for Second Grade</i>	RA-62038	<i>Word Wall "Plus" for Second Grade</i>
RA-61818	<i>Guess the Covered Word for Third Grade</i>	RA-62039	<i>Word Wall "Plus" for Third Grade</i>
RA-61819	<i>Guess the Covered Word for Fourth Grade</i>	RA-62040	<i>Word Wall "Plus" for Upper Grades</i>
RA-61820	<i>Guess the Covered Word for Fifth Grade</i>	RA-62597	<i>Word Wall Words Quick Check Reference Pad</i>
RA-61732	<i>Month-by-Month Reading and Writing for Kindergarten</i>	RA-62035	<i>Portable Word Walls for Grades 1–3</i>
RA-61733	<i>Month-by-Month Phonics for First Grade</i>	RA-62036	<i>Portable Word Walls for Grades 3–5</i>
RA-61734	<i>Month-by-Month Phonics for Second Grade</i>	RA-62264	<i>Graphic Organizers</i>
RA-61735	<i>Month-by-Month Phonics for Third Grade</i>	RA-62265	<i>Comprehension Frames</i>
RA-61812	<i>Month-by-Month Phonics for Upper Grades</i>		
RA-61816	<i>Systematic Sequential Phonics They Use</i>		