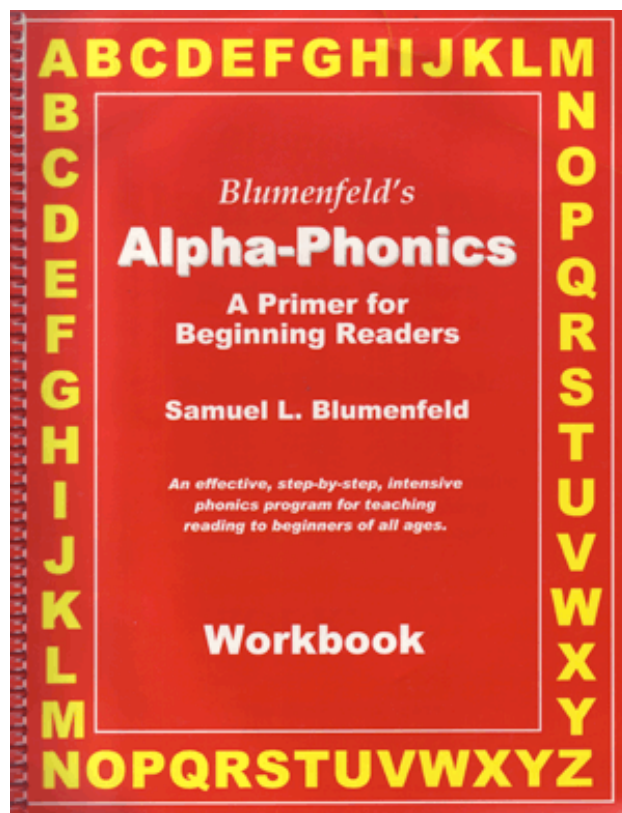


Comparative Study of  
*Alpha-Phonics* (1983) and  
*Blumenfeld's Alpha-Phonics* (1997, 2005)



Prepared by Donald L. Potter  
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## Foreword

Since 1994 I have used Dr. Samuel L. Blumenfeld's 1983 *Alpha-Phonics* in my public and private school classrooms and tutoring. I have found it highly effective when taught exactly as Dr. Blumenfeld directs in the "Instruction Manual."

In 1997 Dr. Blumenfeld revised *Alpha-Phonics* based on his years of experience teaching his program and feedback from teachers and parents. In 2005 he published the revised edition as *Blumenfeld's Alpha-Phonics*. His previous publishing company, Paradigm Publishing, maintained the copyright to the original 1983 edition as simply *Alpha-Phonics* whereas the new edition has the expanded title *Blumenfeld's Alpha-Phonics* to distinguish it from the original edition.

The purpose of this "Comparative Study" is simply to compare the two editions currently available. There is no intent here to make a value judgment on the superiority one edition over the other. They are both excellent intensive phonics programs.

**The 1983 edition** is available from Paradigm Publishing Company. Their website is: [www.howtotutor.com](http://www.howtotutor.com).

**The 2005 edition** is available from the Chalcedon Ross House Books, P. O. 158, Vallecito, CA 95251-9989. Price \$25.00 plus shipping and handling. 209-736-4365, ext. 12. By email: [chorders@goldrush.com](mailto:chorders@goldrush.com). [www.chalcedonstore.com](http://www.chalcedonstore.com).

**Lesson and page numbers** were at the top of the page in the 1983 edition, with the lesson numbers on the inside margin and the page numbers on the outside margins. The 1997/2005 editions put the Lesson numbers on the outside top margin and the page bottom outside margins. I recall students getting confused sometimes between the page and lesson numbers with the 1983 edition, but it wasn't much of a problem.

**Font Style:** The 1983 edition is large print calligraphy. The 1997/2005 editions use regular font. I think it is Times New Roman. There are advantages and disadvantages. The calligraphy uses fixed width letters, which allow the each letter of the phonogram to align perfectly. The font in the 1997/2005 editions uses variable width fonts, which does not allow for this precise alignment of each letter. I doubt that this is significant, but it is a difference that I noted.

**Alphabet & Pre-Reading Exercises:** The 1997/2005 moved the "Alphabet and Pre-Reading Exercises" from the back to the front of the book. This is a logical move. The "Teacher's Manual" is still in the back. The new "Teacher's Manual" appears to be slightly more detailed than the original. It is also correlated with the *First Readers*, a set of 10 booklets with sentences, stories, and poems, which are designed to be used by students learning to read with *Blumefeld's Alpha-Phonics*. They are far and away best decodable texts that I have seen. Since Dr. Blumenfeld teaches irregular words with their spelling-families, he is able to create much more natural sentences and stories without having to resort to sight-word memorization.

This "Comparison" will use the 1983 edition as the basis of comparison. The books can be considered the same except where differences are noted.

Page 3/Lesson 1: Light colored arrows are added to show the left to right direction of sounding-out. The Letters taught in the lesson at the bottom of the page in light type.

Page 4/Lesson 2: Arrows continued. Hh at bottom of page.

Page 5/Lessons 3 & 4: Arrows continued. Ww at bottom of page.

Page 6/ Lesson 5: Basically the same. Original has Mm, Hh, Tt at the bottom.

Page 7/Lesson 6: '83 edition has 11 sentences, New edition has 10 and some sentences are different. No significant difference.

Page 8/Lesson 7: Arrows continued. Letter Aa not at bottom of page.

Page 9/Lesson 8: Arrows continued. (*Continued*) added to top of page.

Page10/Lesson 8 Continued: (*Continued*) added to top of page. Arrows continued. F and J columns switched. Jag, fax added.

Page 11/Lesson 9: Arrows continued. [Was] is placed in a box to show it is irregular. Columns for beginning t and r are switched. pan, Pat, vat, yak, zap added. Kk added to bottom of page.

Page 12/Lesson 10: ak spelling pattern added with single word *yak* so there is one more column to this page. Columns in alphabetical order. Before the orders was: ad, al, ag, ab; now ab, ad, ag, ak, al.

Page 13/Lesson 10 Continued: (*Continued*) added to top of page. com, gap, bass, lass, pass added.

Page 14/Lesson 10 Continued: (*Continued*) added to top of page.

Page 15/Lessons 11 & 12: Qq added to bottom of page.

Page 16/Lesson 13: No difference

Page 17/Lesson 14: Nonsense syllables. No difference.

Page 18/Lesson 14 Continued: (*Continued*) added to top of page.

Page 19/Lesson 14 Continued: (*Continued*) added to top of page.

Page 20/Lesson 14 Continued: (*Continued*) added to top of page. The quab column is deleted in the new edition. The '83 edition had: pab, quab, rab, sab; the new one has: pab, rab, sab, tab.

Page 21/Lesson 14 Continued: (*Continued*) added to top of page. '83 has: tab, vab, wab, yab, zab; new edition has: vab, wab, yab, zab. Wad, wan and wat are deleted in the new edition. I suppose because the w modifies the sound of the a in these words.

Page 22/Lesson 15: The breve in the '83 edition at the top of the vowel columns is deleted in the new edition. [I do now know why. I noticed that the breve and macron are both used on Page 81/Lesson 72 so they were clearly available to the printer of the second edition.] Otherwise the pages are the same except for the font.

Page 23/Lesson 16: The phonograms (eb, eck, Ed, eff, egg, ell) are added to the top of the columns. The original order was: Deb, beck, bell, Ed, egg, Jeff; the new edition has: eb, eck Ed, eff, egg, ell. [I personally like the phonograms because they help me teaching my Cursive Road to Reading and Spelling. I like teaching the strokes as written units of connected cursive.]

Page 24/Lesson 16 Continued: (*Continued*) added to the top of the page. The phonograms em, en, end, ep, es, et, ex are added to the columns. Only minor changes, mostly organizational.

Page 25/Lesson 17 Sentence Review: No changes except font.

Page 26/Lesson 18 Nonsense Syllables: There are now four columns on the page, heb being moved from the next page. A few nonsense syllables have been added to the columns.

Page 27/Lesson 18 Continued: (*Continued*) added to top of page. '83 has: heb, jeb, keb, leb; new edition: jeb, keb, leb, meb, neb.

Page 28/Lesson 18 Continued: (*Continued*) added to top of page. '83 has: meb, neb, peb, reb, seb; new edition: peb, queb, reb, seb, teb.

Page 29/Lesson 18 Continued: (*Continued*) added to top of page. '83 has: teb, veb, web, yeb, zeb; new edition: veb, web, yeb, zeb.

Page 30/Lesson 19: '83: if, in, is, it, ill; new edition: ib, ick, id, if, ig. (Now in alphabetical order)

Page 31/Lesson 19 Continued: (*Continued*) added top of page. '83: ib, ick, ic, id, ig, im; new edition ill, im, in, ip, is.

Page 32/Lesson 19 Continued: (*Continued*) added to top of page. '83: ip, iss, ix, iz, quick, Phil; new edition it, ix,j iz, qick, Ph in box.

Page 33/Lesson 20: Review Sentences: Only minor rewording of a couple sentences.

Page 34/Lesson 21: Arrows added to show directionality. The words "thin" and "thick" in the new edition are grouped separately because they are the "th" is voiceless. A nice refinement.

Page 35/Lesson 22: Review Sentences: Last three sentences expanded, and one new sentences added.

Page 36/Lesson 23: job added to ob column. Tock added to ock column Tod now spelled Todd; job added to jog added to og column. A new column added: oll, doll, loll.

Page 17/Lesson 23 Continued. (*Continued*) added to top of page. pom deleted form om column; pop added to op column; cot, jot added to ot column; lox added to ox column. Oz column deleted (There was only the world oz there in the '83 edition).

Page 38/Lesson 24: Review Sentences: One new sentence.

Page 39/Lesson 25: Blending arrows added.

Page 40/Lesson 26: Review Sentences: One new sentence.

Page 41/Lesson 27: Added words: rub, dug, lug; yum deleted; duz deleted; buzz added.

Page 42/Lesson 28: Review Sentences: Same

Page 43/Lesson 29: phonograms ash, esh, ish, osh, ush deleted at the heading of the columns. I miss the phonograms because they are good for teaching the patterns when using cursive. A couple arrows added for blending. Shag, sham, shall added.

Page 44/Lessons 30 & 31: a few blending arrows added; whiff and whiz added. Whack added.

Page 45/ Lesson 32: Review Words: Consonant digraph words increased from 16 to 18.

Page 46/Lesson 33: Review Sentences: Sentences increased from 16 to 18.

Page 47/Lesson 34: Same

Page 48/Lesson 35: Practice Sentences: Same

Page 49/Lessons 37 & 37 Practice sentences: Two more sentences, more of a question answer format.

Page 50/Lesson 38: Compound words: Same

Page 51/Lesson 38 Continued: (*Continue*) added to top of page. Same compound words.

Page 52/Lesson 38 Continued: (*Continued*) added to top of page. Same words.

Page 53/Lesson 38 Continued: (*Continued*) added to top of page. Same words.

Page 54/Lesson 38 Continued: (*Continued*) added to top of page. Same words.

Page 55/Lesson 39: Practice Sentences:

Page 56/Lesson 40: pall and yall deleted. Practices sentences are exactly the same.

Page 57/Lesson 41: song and long removed from irregular word box. 2 new sentences added.

Page 58/Lesson 41 Continued: (*Continued*) added to top of page. –ing words increased from 26 to 40.

Page 59/Lesson 42: Review Sentences: From 12 to 17 sentences.

Page 60/Lesson 43: Short vowel phonograms: and, end, ond, und, ant, ent, pent, unt deleted. I miss them. –int words added: hint, lint, mint, tint. wind deleted; wend deleted

Page 61/Lesson 44: Sentence Review: 9 to 13 new sentences.

Page 62/Lesson 45: Same

Page 63/Lesson 46 & 47: A few words added and order changed a little. 7 to 9 sentences.

Page 64/Lesson 48: rift, sift, loft, soft, kept wept added. 9 to 10 sentences.

Page 65/Lesson 49: disk, risk, rusk, whisk added to sk column. rasp, cusp added to sp column; st column increased from 24 to 30 words; Sentences from 6 to 7.

Page 66/Lesson 50 & 51: lf add shelf; lk add slk; lp add kelp; lt add welt, wilt. Three words in irregular word box: halt, malt, salt.

Page 67/Lessons 52 & 53: 11 -mp words to 16; 17 -tch words to 18; 6 to 7 sentences.

Page 68/Lessons 54 & 55: New phonogram –nge with 4 words; added; 12 to 14 -dge words; Better organization.

Page 69/Lesson 56: 48 to 54 ending consonant blend words.

Page 70/Lesson 57: Compound words: 17 to 18 sentences.

Page 71/Lesson 58: bl- 16 to 22 words; br- 15 to 20 words.

Page 72/Lesson 59: cl- 15 to 27; cr- 14 to 23 [I speculate that the new font gives Sam more room to add extra words.]

Page 73/Lesson 60 & 61: dr- 13 to 16 words; dw 1 to 2 words. fl- 18 to 26 words.

Page 74/Lesson 61 Continued: (*Continued*) added to top of page. fr- 11 to 15 words; Lesson 62: gl- 15 to 12 words; gr- 12 to 19 words.

Page 75/Lesson 63: pl- 9 to 12 words; pr- 10 to 13 words; Lesson 64: sl- 23 to 26 words;

Page 76/Lesson 65: shr- 6 to 8 words; sm- 6 to 7 words; sn- 3 to 9 words; Lesson 66: sp- 11 to 15 words; spl- 0 to 4 words; spr- 3 to 4 words, (spr centered over column)

Page 77/Lesson 67: st- 18 to 28 words; str now centered over column; Lesson 68: sw 8 to 11 with swan and swamp in box. [I noticed this change when teaching this year.], sc- 6 to 9; sk- 7 to 8; scr- 3 to 8.

Page 78/Lesson 69: tr- 16 to 18 words; tw- 7 to 8 words.

Page 79/Lesson 70: 9 more words.

Page 80/Lesson 71: 16 to 19 sentences.

Page 81/Lesson 72: Same

Page 82/Lesson 73: '83 column order: Abe, ace, age, ale, ape; New edition: Abe, ace, ade, safe, age. There are a few more words in the new edition – but I did not count the words.

Page 83/Lesson 73 Continued: (*Continued*) at top of page. '83 column order: ate, ade, ake, ame, ane (note phonograms); New edition: bake, ale, came, cane ape (note absence of phonograms).

Page 84/Lesson 73 Continued. (*Continued*) at top of page. '83 column order: bare, base, cave, daze (Note absence of phonograms in '83); New edition column order: bare, base, date, cave, daze – with many new words added (no count made).

Page 85/Lesson 74: Review Sentences: 17 to 18 sentences

Page 86/Lesson 75: 47 to 53 ai words.

Page 87/Lesson 76: Review Sentences: Exact same sentences.

Page 88/Lesson 77 & 78: (gay became spray). Same sentences

Page 89/Lesson 79: 12 to 14 words (height added in box); 7 to 9 sentences.

Page 90/Lesson 80 & 81: 52 to 55 long a words.

Page 91/Lesson 82: 16 to 18 compound long a words.

Page 92/Lesson 83: 41 to 48 words. Lesson 84 Review Sentences: 6 to 5 in new edition. (I think the added words in Lesson 83 took away the space need for the extras sentence in '83.

Page 93/Lesson 85: ar words 53 to 82 words. New edition add 11 ar-words in irregular word box. '83 edition had only one irregular box word (quart). This is a significant enhancement of this common orthographic structure.

Page 94/Lesson 86. ar-word review sentences: 17 go 18 sentences.

Page 95/Lesson 87: Newly organized columns. 80 to 101 words.

Page 96/Lesson 88: Both have 19 sentences, but some are different.

Page 97/Lesson 89: Irregular word boxes moved to top of page 98. 80 to 92 regular ea words.

Page 98/Lesson 89 Continued: (*Continued*) added to top of page. 16 to 21 words in irregular word boxes. Lesson 90, Review Sentences: 20 to 16 sentences. A slight reduction in sentences to make room for irregular ea word boxes at top of page.

Page 99/Lesson 91: 12 to 14 e-e words; 14 go 12 sentences. (One of the rare times when the '83 has more sentences than the '97/'05.

Page 100/Lesson 92: ie = long-e; 24 to 27 words; 11 to 10 sentences. Note: friend and receive are moved into separate boxes.

Page 101/Lesson 93: long-e as y. 94 to 96 words.

Page 102/Lesson 94: Review Sentences: 20 to 21 sentences

Page 103/Lesson 95 & 96: Same

Page 104/Lesson 97: Review Sentences: 17 to 20 sentences. I remember one of my recent immigrants from Mexico reading the last sentence (It is easy to read this page.) and looking up at me with a big smile and saying, "Yes, it is!" That is the power of Alpha-Phonics to teach bilingual children to read English in just a few months.

Page 105/Lesson 98: 19 to 27. (uy in buy added). Note whole new set of sentences for this pattern (I, y-long-i, uy). 8 sentences in all. There were no sentences for this pattern in '83. The i-v-e pattern at the bottom of the page have been moved to the next page in the new edition to make way for the new sentences on this page. [Note: things get a bit complicated here because Sam split Lesson 98 at this point.)

Page 106/Lesson 99: The i-consonant-e pattern words are all on Page 106/Lesson 99 now. The phonograms have been deleted at the top of the columns.

Page 107/Lesson 99 Continued: (*Continued*) added to top of page. In '83 this was Lesson 100 igh pattern with igh sentences. Now it is i-consonant-e sentences. 14 to 17 sentences.

Page 107/Lesson 100 = Page 108/Lesson 100 in new edition. The contents are the same.

Page 108/Lessons 101 & 102 = Page 109/Lessons 101 & 102: Basically the same. For some reason f as gh was changed to gh as f going from the sound to the letter rather than the letter to the sound. I haven't a clue why the change was made.

Page 109/Lesson 103 = Page 110/Lesson 103: Phonograms deleted at top of columns. I miss the phonograms because I used them to introduce the cursive spelling-pattern. This not serious because the write the pattern in the word-families anyway. The columns were reorganized slightly. 89 to 100 words.

Page 110/Lesson 104 = Page 111/Lesson 104: Review Sentences: 23 to 24 sentences.



Page 111/Lesson 105 = Page 112/Lesson 105: 30 to 36 words. Several new words in irregular word boxes. Same practice sentences.

Page 112/Lesson 106 = Page 113/Lesson 106: 2- to 27 ow/ou words. 4 in irregular word boxes. 13 to 15 sentences.

Page 113/Lesson 106 = Page 114/Lesson 106: Words “boss, loss, moss, toss” in irregular word box are removed from lesson. Words Only, Joe, doe, scold are added to page. 13 to 15 Review sentences.

Page 114/Lesson 107 = Page 115/Lesson 107: There are three groups of boxes in both editions: '83 has [too] [do to two who you youth] [young]; the new groups the words differently: [to too two] [do who you youth] [young]. 12 to 13 sentences.

Page 115/Lesson 109 = Page 116/Lesson 109:  $\overline{oo}$  54 words to 59 words. [soup group] are added in irregular box;  $\overline{oo}$  20 words to 19 (“spook” is the deleted word). [boor poor moor] are now in a box. [flood blood] are added to page.

Page 116/Lesson 110 = Page 117/Lesson 110: Review Sentences: Sentences are almost the same.

Page 117/Lesson 111 = Page 118/Lesson 111: Same words and almost the same sentences

Page 118/Lesson 112 = Page 119/Lesson 112: ow=/ou/: ow 29 to 37; ou 51 to 60. Some changes to organization of spelling-patterns – better organization.

Page 119/Lesson 113 = Page 120/Lesson 113: Review Sentences: Same sentences, only one or two words different.

Page 120/Lesson 114 = Page 121/Lesson 114: ou/oi: “voice” added; 8 to 10 sentences.

Page 121/Lesson 115 = Page 122/Lesson 115: improved organization, columns subdivided; 40 to 41 words; 14 to 13 sentences.

Page 122/Lesson 116 = Page 123/Lesson 116: 15 to 19 words. Sentences the same.

Page 123/Lesson 117 = Page 124/Lesson 117: 22 to 24 words. [though] in box. 12 to 13 sentences.

Page 124/Lesson 118 = Page 125/Lesson 118: 45 to 58 words. More logical organization.

Note: Page 124 in the 1983 edition had er/ir/ur/our sentences at the bottom of page. These sentences now have been increased from 8 to 18 in the 2005 edition and put on a separate page – page 126 in the new edition. The top of the page adds (*continued*). This gives more practice for this important pattern.

Page 125/Lesson 119 = Page 127/Lesson 119: Same number of words. Same sentences.

Page 126/Lesson 120 = Page 128/Lesson 120: 22 to 23 words. Slightly different organization.  
Lesson 121: This lesson is reorganized the same material into categories with new heading.  
Previously there were no practice sentences for these advanced spelling-patterns. Sentences are now provided. There are 13 sentences. 41 words to 48 words. Here are the categories for the new organization: sh as ti; sh as ssi, ci, and ce; sh as ci, sci, and xi; sh as su and ssu; zh as si and su; ch as tu and ti.

Page 127/Lessons 122, 123, 124 = Page 130/Lessons 122, 123, 124: Lesson 122: n as kn, 17 to 20; Lesson 123: m as mb, 17 to 18 words; t as bt, doubt added/debt was the only other word; Lesson 124: silent h, 8 to 11 (rh added).

Page 128/Lesson 125, 126, 127 = Page 131/Lessons 125, 126, 127.

Lesson 125: r as wr 23 to 24; Lesson 126: st as s: 10 to 14; f as ft 3 to 4;

Lesson 127: k as ch: 12 to 16; s as ps: same. Note in this lesson the sound/symbol is reversed: wr as r becomes r as wr; st as s becomes st as s; ft as f becomes f as ft; ch as k becomes k as k; ps as s becomes s as ps.) I suppose this reversal of direction reflects a phonemic approach to the sound-to-symbol relationships. [That is the old edition has symbol-to-sound whereas the new edition has sound-to-symbol. I can only speculate. This is an independent analysis. I can only speculate concerning some of these things. I have not consulted the author.]

Page 129/Lesson 128 = Page 131/Lesson 128: 30 to 33. (nymph deleted)

## Note from Internet Publisher: Donald L. Potter

January 17, 2010

I received a review copy of the 1997/2005 editions from Dr. Blumenfeld on January 2, 2005. I started to do a comparison at that time. I didn't actually finish the comparison until exactly a year later. I did not type up the study until January 2010.

In many ways Dr. Sam Blumenfeld's *Alpha-Phonics* has been something of the flagship the phonics movement. Many parents and teachers cut their phonics teeth teaching *Alpha-Phonics*. I count myself fortunate to have discovered *Alpha-Phonics* early in my teaching career (1994). It enabled me to become immediately successful with all children. I shudder to think what my years teaching might have been without the success my students were able to experience with Sam's intensive phonics methods.

I did several phonics workshops for teachers of the Ector County Independent School District in Odessa, Texas featuring *Alpha-Phonics*. Several teachers continue to use *Alpha-Phonics* in their classrooms to assure success with all their students.

This study is a tribute to Dr. Blumenfeld's brilliant work in showing the dangers of the whole-word/whole-language methods and to his practical turn of mind in producing such a splendid solution to illiteracy.

I teach Dr. Blumenfeld's program using cursive handwriting. I write the words on the board for the students to copy on handwriting paper or in their handwriting notebooks. I make absolutely sure they are holding their pencils correctly and forming the letters with the correct letter size, slant, and with good legibility. I do not accept any illegible work. They are not allowed to use erasers during the copy work because erasures slow down the transcription process. I want them to know their letters so well that they can copy whole words at a single glance. This is very important. *Alpha-Phonics* is excellent because it teaches the repetitive spelling patterns so the students internalize the motor movements for rapid recall in composition. Irregular words are introduced in their spelling-families so there is no need to introduce sight-words to be memorized as configurational wholes. I call my method of teaching *Blumenfeld's Alpha-Phonics*, "The Cursive Road to Reading and Spelling."

I have published several of Dr. Blumenfeld's essays on my website: [www.donpotter.net](http://www.donpotter.net).

I always teach my students Mr Potter's Secret of Reading, "Look at all the letters the right way, and no guessing."

This document last corrected January 22, 2010 and further corrected on December 9, 2010.