



*Barbara L. Ludlow, Ed.D., West Virginia University &
John D. Foshay, Ed.D., Central Connecticut State University*

Lexia Reading SOS. (Strategies for Older Students)

**Guest Reviewer: Javette Giannelli-Artemie,
Goodwin High School, New Britain, CT.**

Lexia Learning Systems has produced reading skill development software designed for students of all ages: Lexia Early Reading (ages 4-6), Lexia Phonics-based Reading (ages 5-8) and Lexia SOS. (Strategies for Older Students). This review will focus solely on Reading SOS, an interactive program for learners ages nine through adult who have not yet achieved fluency in reading. The five-level program is designed to promote acquisition and improve basic reading skills, with activities to develop and reinforce automaticity in recognizing phonic elements and sound/symbol relationships. It can be used in an integrated language arts program or as a stand-alone teaching tool.

Level one presents word attack strategies necessary for recognition of short vowels in one-syllable words containing consonants, consonant digraphs and consonant blends. The first activity focuses on sound/symbol correspondence for short vowels using key words and pictures. Learners click on the vowel and hear it pronounced and associated with a word containing the sound with an image of the word. The second activity addresses sound/symbol correspondence for consonants, consonant digraphs and consonant blends. The learner is asked to discriminate the initial and final consonant sounds in CVC, CCVC and CVCC combinations as words or detached syllables. The learner is presented with partially completed word and list of five initial blends and must click on the initial blend to complete each word presented orally. The third activity requires auditory and visual discrimination of easily confused and reversible letters like p, b and d. The fourth activity focuses on sound symbol correspondence for short vowels and develops sound segmenting skills in both timed and untimed activities. The learner uses the mouse to make connections between words and pictures presented on the screen.

The second level's goal is to reinforce word attack strategies crucial for recognition of short vowel sounds in words with blend and digraphs and long vowel sounds in words with one and two syllables. Sound segmentation skills are integrated through drill and practice routines that include vowels in initial, medial and final positions within words and sentences. The first activity addresses short vowel, long vowel, and silent e words; for example, learners are asked to change "crust" to "crest" by viewing crust in three segments, "cr" "u" and "st," then clicking on a letter "e" elsewhere on screen, and clicking on the "u" in the segmented "crust." The

second activity addresses the silent e for long vowel sounds. As each word is presented, the learner clicks on the appropriate button (a closed button and a silent e button); for example, "tune" and "pale" require the silent e button response, while "rat" and "win" require the closed button response. The third activity develops recognition of basic sight words at the first and second grade level, while the fourth activity provides practice in reading two syllable words containing short vowels and long vowels. The final activity focuses on reading comprehension through drill and practice routines in word attack strategies applied to reading in context. Learners read words presented three at a time in a list, they read a sentence (with supporting picture) with a word missing, then they click on one of the words in the list to complete the sentence.

Level three activities present word attack strategies necessary for recognition of one and two syllable words containing vowel combinations and vowel-r controlled words. The first activity involves constructing and recognizing words in isolation and reading words in context, with learners clicking on parts of a word to fill in missing sounds. The second activity emphasizes sound/symbol correspondence for vowel-r combinations such as or, ur, ar ir, er. In this activity, learners choose a store in a mall, enter the store, and listen to vowel combinations, then click on the correct word from a table of options. The third activity reinforces reading and spelling of common suffixes through visual scanning for suffixes, recognizing isolated words containing the suffixes, and spelling the suffix at the end of the base word. Learners are required to focus on the endings of sixteen words, then sort them into three boxes of "s," "es," or "ing". The fourth activity provides practice in constructing two syllable words containing the concepts presented in previous levels one, with learners asked to match syllables in compound words; for example, they must put "com" and "pute" together to form "compute". The final activity fosters reading comprehension through reinforcing the skills learned in levels one and two.

Level four reinforces word attack strategies necessary for automatic recognition of one, two and three syllable words containing open and constant-le syllables, hard and soft c and g, and words contained in levels one, two and three. The first activity's focus is reading two syllable words containing six syllable types: open, closed, silent e, vowel combination, vowel-r and consonant-le. In this activity, 22 syllables are pronounced one at a time and learners must click on the syllable to sort it into open or closed categories, sorting detached syllables by syllable type, sorting from dictation, and constructing and typing two syllable words. The third activity



incorporates four tasks related to reading words containing hard and soft c and g found in one and two syllable words by choosing the correct word from dictation and using the keyboard to complete words. The fourth activity addressing reading of three-syllable words containing syllable types presented in the previous levels. The final activity is designed to improve reading comprehension by reinforcing the application of word attack strategies learned in all previous levels.

Level five has five activities that address word attack strategies necessary for automatic recognition of multi-syllabic words containing prefixes, roots and suffixes. The first activity focuses only on Anglo-Saxon affixes. Learners click on prefixes as each word is presented; for example "overtake" appears on screen followed by a blank line presented before "take", with students expected to click on "over" then type in "o-v-e-r". The second activity works with Latin prefixes and suffixes in two-to-four syllable words, including spelling affixes to dictation, separation of words into prefix, root and suffix, placement of accents, and changing prefixes; for example, a list of prefixes like "com," "con," "cop," and "cot" are presented and the learner must find all of the equivalent prefixes. The third activity promotes recognition of multi-syllable words containing special accent patterns. The fourth activity develops vocabulary and word recognition through constructing and reading words related to number and negation, emphasizing the meanings of roots and prefixes in logical orders like "uni", "bi", "tri", "quad", and "quin." The final activity is designed to improve vocabulary and word recognition through constructing and reading words containing common Greek forms with emphasis on the meaning of words when forms are forms.

The Reading SOS program is easy for teachers or parents to use. Learners can begin on any of the five levels and teachers can specify the starting unit for an individual student or an entire class. The program has an auto branching option

that can be selected or deselected by the teacher or learner; this feature analyzes performance as responses are entered and allows the learner to move on to the next level as soon as all content has been mastered. Other teacher options include data collection and processing of Individual reports, Achievement reports, and Class reports. Reports are configured instantly and the manual outlines simple step-by-step directions for preparing them in easily readable formats that can be viewed on screen, or copied to disk.

The computer program is visually stimulating, with well-organized screens and minimal graphics, utilizing color and sound for attention and reinforcement. The auditory component is computerized and provides accurate representation of the sound/symbol relationship, eliminating human error in reproducing sounds. The program also is easy to navigate, with four self-directing icons that allow all users to access a specific level, activity, class or learner. This program can be used for direct instruction or for drill and practice in the classroom or at home. Once a learner becomes accustomed to the expectations of the program and initial teaching has taken place, s/he can begin to work independently. Reading SOS originally was intended for students with dyslexia; however, individuals with other learning disabilities and low achievers should also experience success. With accommodations such as alternate input mechanisms, any student with the intellectual capacity to learn sound/syllable relationships can use this program.

Lexia Learning Systems, Inc.,

Lincoln, MA 01773; <http://www.lexialearning.com>

Available for Macintosh OS 7.5.3 or higher or Windows 95 or higher; requires at least 12 MB of RAM and 4X CDROM drive; \$500.00 schools (includes Teacher's Guide); \$159 families (discount pricing for multiple products; free demo available).

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