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Informal Decoding Inventory

What is the Informal Decoding Inventory?

The Informal Decoding Inventory is an individually administered assessment developed by Steven Stahl that evaluates how students apply phonics knowledge to read unfamiliar words. It provides insight into the strategies students use while decoding and helps identify patterns of strengths and areas for growth.

The inventory is administered when tutors need additional information about a student's word-reading skills.

What does it measure?

The assessment examines:

- Decoding accuracy
- Application of phonics knowledge
- Recognition of common spelling patterns
- Word attack strategies
- Reading of unfamiliar words
- Patterns of decoding errors

Why do we use it?

Decoding is essential for fluent reading. This inventory helps tutors determine whether reading difficulties stem from gaps in phonics knowledge, inefficient decoding strategies, or other factors.

How do the results inform instruction?

Tutors use the results to:

- Select appropriate decoding strategies.
- Target specific word-reading skills.
- Increase reading accuracy and automaticity.
- Build stronger word recognition.

Why it matters

Every reader encounters unfamiliar words. This assessment helps tutors understand how students approach those words so instruction can build efficient, confident decoding skills.