

Cognitive Load Theory (Sweller)

1. Working memory has limited space (4-7 items)
2. To avoid students experiencing cognitive overload, teachers should limit content to that which is intrinsic to learning specific skills or knowledge being taught
3. Some extraneous learning is important in its own right but should not be included in the lesson

What does this mean for reading instruction?

Intrinsic to learning to decode:

1. Understanding the Alphabetic Principle
2. Sound/letter correspondences
3. Blending sounds into words
4. Segmenting sounds in words
5. Manipulating sounds in words
6. Understanding that sounds can be spelled in different ways
7. Understanding that spellings can represent different sounds

Extraneous to learning to decode:

1. **Rhyme** (important for literacy)
2. **Alliteration** (important for literacy)
3. **Syllables** (important later when children start to read longer words)
4. **Letter names** (useful later for dictionary skills and spelling)