

---

# PROLEXIA **UltraPhonics Tutor**

*The Performance and Value Leader  
in Orton-Gillingham Tutoring Software*

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is UltraPhonics Tutor?**

**UltraPhonics Tutor** is a program designed to do for a student exactly what an expert reading tutor does, using the same concepts, methods, and common sense that the best tutors use, insofar as the technology allows.

For example, we rely exclusively on hand-written user input, because that's what a tutor relies on. Why? *Because that works best for students with difficulties learning to read or write.*

*UltraPhonics Tutor* teaches students to read and write at up to an early fifth-grade level.

Compared to other programs, **UltraPhonics Tutor is unique:**

- *UltraPhonics Tutor* is designed by tutor trainers to instruct, monitor, and remediate exactly as an expert Orton-Gillingham tutor would.
- *UltraPhonics Tutor* strongly emphasizes teaching, evaluating, and remediating handwriting, both proper content *and* proper form – proper letter formation is considered critical by expert tutors to preclude letter and letter-sound confusions.
- This in addition to a very strong, structured, sequential, and phonetic basic reading skill curriculum, teaching, evaluating, and remediating 116 linguistic concepts.

### **Who should use UltraPhonics Tutor?**

***In a nutshell: anyone who needs to learn basic reading skills, and especially anyone who has difficulty doing so.***

**UltraPhonics Tutor** doesn't require a specific age range, and doesn't cater only to children. It's not a game or "edutainment." Rather, it automatically and self-adaptively focuses on previously known or currently demonstrated skill deficiencies in students reading and writing beneath a 5<sup>th</sup> grade level. Children 5-years-old and up and adults should have little difficulty with the software.

### **Why bother with handwriting – isn't typing just as effective?**

**No. Nearly all Orton-Gillingham dyslexia experts consider integrated, orthographic handwriting either essential or very important.** There are several compelling reasons for this.

Most importantly, *UltraPhonics Tutor's* emphasis on proper letter formation helps guarantee that a student knows the letters' shapes and their associated sounds, for purposes of formation and recognition in both analyzing and synthesizing written language.

Second, without handwriting, the approach is substantially less multisensory.

Third, handwriting is in itself still a very important skill, and will be for the foreseeable future.

### ***Isn't the mouse hard to write with?***

**Generally, no.** *Kids* typically adapt to the mouse very quickly; with *adults*, it typically takes a little longer. The light pen (\$349) is a more intuitive input device for most students, but the vast majority of users find the mouse acceptable.

Most students do well with the mouse, simply because it's fairly easy and they're so familiar with it.

In fact, the mouse has *one direct advantage* over the light pen: ***UltraPhonics Tutor*** allows adjustment of the mouse-handwriting kinesthesia, so that students may, if you wish, be required to write larger and therefore more kinesthetically profound letters. On the other hand, if students have no trouble at all writing, you can allow them to write smaller letters, making tasks quicker for expert handwriters.

**The light pen's big advantage is simply that it's a pen**, and so is directly similar to writing with a regular pen or pencil. It requires the student to write directly on the screen, especially handy for tracing letters, filling in the blank, completing words, etc.

*In those cases where a student cannot properly use the mouse, the light pen becomes not only desirable but essential.*

### ***Why does UltraPhonics Tutor insist that the letters not only look right, but also that the process of forming them is right?***

**Because proper letter formation helps students with difficulties learn to read, write, and spell successfully.**

Proper letter formation isn't *merely* a matter of making the letters look right. Very often, letters that look fine but have been drawn improperly (e.g., needlessly using two strokes instead of one; having "b", "d", "p", and "q" *feel* like mirror images of each other; etc.) **cause serious troubles for students with dyslexia.** As an expert tutor, *UltraPhonics Tutor* first demonstrates and then requires proper letter formation. If later-on a student has difficulty forming the letter properly, *UltraPhonics Tutor* will re-teach proper formation.

Take an example: "b" and "d". For students with no reading or writing difficulties, frankly, letter formation doesn't much matter so long as the end result is visually acceptable. *This isn't the case for most students with dyslexia.* Such students need the additional help that a truly multisensory approach offers, the kinesthetic "muscle memory" reinforcing sound/letter (phoneme/grapheme) connections, and helping to distinguish letters that *look* like mirror images. *Proper letter formation helps avoid reversals and confusions that result with dyslexic students when relying on visual cues alone.*

As experts recommend, *UltraPhonics Tutor* relies on three kinesthetic goals when determining how letters should be formed:

- (1) **Simplicity**, eliminating needless breaks and complexity, so that (e.g.) the letters should have only one stroke when possible.
- (2) **Consistency**, so that the student will draw the letters the same way each time, thereby reinforcing the proper formation and the link with the associated sound.
- (3) **Uniqueness**, so that often-confused letters that *look* very similar (e.g., "b" and "d") won't *feel* very similar.

Prolexia believes this capability is sufficiently critical that we have invested many years of effort into making patented, high-quality ***orthographic handwriting recognition™*** a reality. *UltraPhonics Tutor* is the only product in the world with this capability, and will remain so until patents expire.

### ***What about cursive handwriting?***

*UltraPhonics Tutor* doesn't yet support cursive script, but we're working on it, and it will. Version 1.5 supports both ordinary and kinesthetically enhanced block manuscript and, and Version 2 adds a slanted manuscript form similar to "D'Nealian".

### ***What do you mean by an "intelligent, adaptive curriculum"?***

***UltraPhonics Tutor* was designed with the help of leading tutor-trainers, and the software makes many curriculum-based decisions the same way tutors do.**

Now no *software* is truly as smart as an expert *human* tutor, obviously. But our "software tutor" is the smartest *software* around, making quantities and quality of tutoring available to more students than was ever possible before, except for those for whom cost was no object.

For example, when a student makes a mistake, rather than simply having the student try again until she gets it right, *UltraPhonics Tutor* tries hard to determine just exactly what concept the student misunderstood and offer specific remediation. Similarly, when a student is having serious troubles with a given linguistic concept (e.g., "n"), *UltraPhonics Tutor* will skip similar or related concepts (e.g., "m") until the prior foundation is understood.

*UltraPhonics Tutor* automatically tracks each student's progress, noting for its own planning and on behalf of those supervising just how the student is doing on each of 117 linguistic concepts. In areas of difficulty, *UltraPhonics Tutor* offers additional review; in areas of success, the repetition and instruction are slight. In the most difficult cases, *UltraPhonics Reports* gives notice that human intervention is required.

Now no *software* is truly as smart as an expert *human* tutor, obviously. But our "software tutor" is the smartest *software* around, making quantities and quality of tutoring available to more students than was ever possible before, except for those for whom cost was no object.

*UltraPhonics Tutor* frees tutors, teachers, and parents to focus on the toughest problems (as automatically indicated in *UltraPhonics Reports*), multiplying many-fold their effectiveness. And it helps parents overcome cost, convenience, and availability obstacles that far too often keep students from getting the help they desperately need.

### ***Does it work?***

**Yes.**

We know this for both theoretical reasons (the program is designed to do as much as possible of what the best tutors) and for practical reasons, since so many parents and schools have let us know of their success!

If in your particular case it doesn't, we want you to return it. We offer a 30-day money back guarantee in which time we don't even charge your account.

### ***Does it work on the Mac?***

**Sort of.**

It works on Apple computers that support Windows emulation (through products such as SoftWindows).

### ***How do I take it for a test drive?***

Simply order the product via telephone or from our web site (Prolexia.com); we do not charge your credit card or cash your check for more than 30 days after you receive the product.

If you decide it's just not right for you, just send it back to us, and you'll never be charged a penny.

### ***How much does it cost?***

Version 1.5 of *UltraPhonics Tutor* is priced at 199.00 for four users – what we call our Family Edition.

Version 2 of *UltraPhonics Tutor* will be free (for the same quantity of students) for all Version 1.0 and Version 1.5 owners, and allow will optionally allow far more than 4 users per system.

Pricing is still to be determined for new Version 2 customers, but here are basic guidelines:

For small quantities of users, the pricing would start at about \$100 per student, and come down to about \$50 as more students are added – even in small quantities, very inexpensive for unlimited expert tutoring.

For site and district licenses, pricing is dramatically lower.

How much lower? We need to make money on our software if we're to keep our employees and investors motivated, supportive, and happy. That said, we also desperately want to get this software into the hands of as many students – children and adults – as possible. Our site licenses allow schools and districts to use the software for every student who can benefit: those with reading difficulties, and those simply reading at less than a fifth grade level.

This offers powerful benefits to schools and students: by allowing every student to use *UltraPhonics Tutor*, schools not only ensure effective and automatically customized and paced reading instruction for each student, but *UltraPhonics Tutor* automatically detects which students need special assistance and then automatically provides it. *UltraPhonics Tutor* even determines which students continue to have difficulty and passes that information on to teachers, allowing schools and districts to most efficiently, directly, and effectively utilize their most prized and expensive assets: teachers and specialists.

### ***When will Version 2 be available?***

We were incorrect in our earlier optimism that it would be out in 2000. We continue to make substantial progress on the software, but estimate it will be the fourth quarter of 2001 until *UltraPhonics Tutor* Version 2 is generally available.

### ***What about technical support?***

Should you ever run into a technical problem – most users don't – simply call our tech support line at (480) 614 8547, or e-mail us at [support@prolexia.com](mailto:support@prolexia.com).