

Sanskrit Instruction Goes Blended

Unit Overview—Traditional

Learners

The target audience for this instruction is students who are 7 to 12 years old and enrolled in a program of study in the Vedic sciences, including Sanskrit, art, and math-based astrology.

Learning Goal

After [12 one-hour sessions of classroom instruction](#), learners should be able to sing the Sanskrit alphabet song with correct pronunciation.

Unit Overview—Blended

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Learning Goal

After [12 sessions of classroom instruction and corresponding online instruction and practice](#), learners should be able to sing the Sanskrit alphabet song with correct pronunciation. [Implementation is flexible; the whole-class portion of each lesson can be condensed into a 30-minute instructional period, expanded for a 90-minute period incorporating optional extension activities, or adapted to fill any time slot in between.](#)

Unit Overview—Traditional

Rationale

In order for a student to be properly introduced to the Vedas, a basic working knowledge of oral Sanskrit is required. As Sanskrit is first and foremost a spoken language, the first instructional step is to teach children the speech sounds, or phonemes, of the language. As with learning the basics of the English language, learning the Sanskrit “alphabet song” is a good place to start. The difference is that the English alphabet song verbalizes letter names, while the Sanskrit song verbalizes speech sounds, or phonemes.

The Sanskrit speech sounds will be introduced in relation to students’ background in English, and the main instructional strategy will be [practicing the speech sounds in a whole group environment with the teacher’s guidance](#).

English has 26 letters and approximately 44 sounds (phonemes)—25 consonant sounds and 19 vowel sounds (Paulson & Moats, 2010, p. 21). Sanskrit has 48 unique sounds. Students will learn the vowels sounds first, followed by the consonants. Sounds will be taught according to the position of the mouth and tongue when speaking the sound (guttural, palatal, cerebral, dental, or labial). Each group of letters constitutes a verse of the Sanskrit alphabet song.

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The Sanskrit speech sounds will be introduced in relation to students’ background in English, and the main instructional strategy will be [practicing the speech sounds—both with the teacher \(i.e., call and response\) and at home via a learning management system \(LMS\) with a dedicated location for this course unit \(i.e., watching videos of the teacher saying the speech sounds, listening to recordings of the CDs that accompany the textbook, self-recording your own pronunciation and sharing those recordings with peers/teacher in an online forum\)](#).

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Unit Overview—Traditional

Rationale (continued)

In the oral tradition of Sanskrit, there is a great deal of focus on pronunciation. Each sound in the language is associated with a specific formation of the mouth. The spectrum of speech sounds travels with the tongue from the back of the throat to the roof of the mouth to the teeth and lips. Sounds are experienced as soft or hard, aspirated or unaspirated, and short or long (light or strong), depending on whether they are vowels or consonants. The associated sound symbols are brought in as a way to distinguish and classify phonemes, but the core learning is the muscle movements of the mouth.

The goal of correctly pronouncing the Sanskrit alphabet song will be reached over the course of 12 days through [daily whole-class instruction and subsequent independent review of CDs that accompany the textbook outside of class](#). The speech sounds will be practiced in parts, with each lesson (starting with Lesson 3) ending in the recitation of a segment of the alphabet song. Each “verse” learned will be practiced at the beginning and end of subsequent lessons, and the culmination of the module will be putting all of the parts together to sing the whole alphabet song.

Reference

Paulson, L. H., & Moats, L. C. (2010). *LETRS for early childhood educators*. Boston, Mass: Cambium Learning.

Unit Overview—Blended

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In the oral tradition of Sanskrit, there is a great deal of focus on pronunciation. Each sound in the language is associated with a specific formation of the mouth. The spectrum of speech sounds travels with the tongue from the back of the throat to the roof of the mouth to the teeth and lips. Sounds are experienced as soft or hard, aspirated or unaspirated, and short or long (light or strong), depending on whether they are vowels or consonants. The associated sound symbols are brought in as a way to distinguish and classify phonemes, but the core learning is the muscle movements of the mouth. [This will be facilitated by animated diagrams and teacher videos to be studied outside of class.](#)

The goal of correctly pronouncing the Sanskrit alphabet song will be reached over the course of 12 days through [daily whole-class instruction and learning and practice done individually outside of class, with opportunity for teacher feedback](#). The speech sounds will be practiced in parts, with each lesson (starting with Lesson 3) ending in the recitation of a segment of the alphabet song. Each “verse” learned will be practiced at the beginning and end of subsequent lessons, and the culmination of the module will be putting all of the parts together to sing the whole alphabet song.

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Unit Objectives—Traditional

8 Key Learning Objectives

There are 8 learning objectives related to the learning goal:

1. Given [diagrams](#) of the five mouth positions, identify all five points of resonance in the mouth and throat associated with the Sanskrit speech sounds.
2. After listening to and watching the teacher pronounce each speech sound [and listening to CDs that accompany the textbook](#), accurately repeat all of the speech sounds, one at a time.
3. After hearing the teacher explain how to form diphthongs from simple vowels [and listening to CDs that accompany the textbook](#), identify which vowels combine to create each sound.
4. After listening to the teacher sing each verse of the alphabet song (i.e., each group of speech sounds per Lesson Slides) in progression [and listening to CDs that accompany the textbook](#), accurately repeat the verse.
5. Given an explanation of short/long or light/strong (guṇa/vṛddhi), distinguish between the two when speaking each vowel sound using techniques of breath on hand or fingers on neck.
6. Given an explanation of unaspirated/aspirated, distinguish between the two when speaking each consonant sound using the techniques of fingers in ears or fingers on neck.
7. Given an explanation of hard/soft and unvoiced/voiced, distinguish between the two when speaking each consonant sound using the technique of breath on hand.
8. After listening to the teacher sing/chant the Sanskrit alphabet song [and listening to CDs that accompany the textbook](#), [repeat](#) the entire song with accurate pronunciation of each letter.

Unit Objectives—Blended

8 Key Learning Objectives

There are 8 learning objectives related to the learning goal:

1. Given [animated diagrams](#) of the five mouth positions, identify all five points of resonance in the mouth and throat associated with the Sanskrit speech sounds.
2. After listening to and watching the teacher pronounce each speech sound [and listening to/watching demonstrations independently](#), accurately repeat all of the speech sounds, one at a time.
3. After hearing the teacher explain how to form diphthongs from simple vowels [and listening to/watching demonstrations independently](#), identify which vowels combine to create each sound.
4. After listening to the teacher sing each verse of the alphabet song (i.e., each group of speech sounds per Lesson Slides) in progression [and listening to/watching recordings independently](#), accurately repeat the verse.
5. Given an explanation of short/long or light/strong (guṇa/vṛddhi), distinguish between the two when speaking each vowel sound using techniques of breath on hand or fingers on neck.
6. Given an explanation of unaspirated/aspirated, distinguish between the two when speaking each consonant sound using the techniques of fingers in ears or fingers on neck.
7. Given an explanation of hard/soft and unvoiced/voiced, distinguish between the two when speaking each consonant sound using the technique of breath on hand.
8. After listening to the teacher sing/chant the Sanskrit alphabet song [and listening to/watching demonstrations independently](#), [repeat and record](#) the entire song with accurate pronunciation of each letter.