

# Handout: Alphabetics Practice Activities

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## Phonics

### Word Toss

This is a good activity for discerning beginning and ending sounds. It is played like the name game and can be played with individuals or in teams.

#### Steps

1. Sit in a circle if individuals are playing. If playing in teams, line each team up (after a team member gives an answer, they will go to the back of the line)
2. Determine who will go first.
3. The first person (or team) says a word, such as *bird*
4. The second person or team must say a word that begins with the same sound as the end sound in *bird*. For example, *dog*
5. The next person or team must now say a word that begins with the same sound as the end sound in *dog*. For example, *garden*.
6. The teacher writes the words used on the board. Words may not be used twice.
7. When a person or a team is unable to come up with a word, they are eliminated and the game continues until one person or team is left.

### Phonics Bingo

This is a great way to review lots of phonics elements. There are lots of variations to the game, as you will see below.

#### Steps

1. Select the phonics sounds you want to work on.
2. On a piece of paper, draw a grid of five rows and five columns (like a bingo card).
3. Write a phonics sound in each of the spaces (you can use some more than once). Make the middle space a "Free" space.
4. Do the same on cards for the remaining students. You can use the same phonics sounds, just put them in different places.
5. Select words from the lessons that represent the sounds. Write these words on pieces of paper, underline the phonics sound, and put them face down in a pile.
6. Draw a word from the pile. Read it aloud and then give the sound the word represents.
7. Each student should cover the matching sound on his or her bingo card.
8. The person who first covers five sounds in a row wins.

#### Variations

1. You don't have to use the beginning sound of the word. You can have students listen for the end sound of the word and cover the letter or letters on their bingo cards.

2. Some sounds can be spelled many different ways. You can have multiple ways of spelling the sound on the bingo card. Instead of reading a word and giving the sound, just give the sound and have students cover all of the ways to spell that sound. For example, if the sound was /k/, students might cover *c*, *k*, *ck*, or *ch*.

## Word Find

This is a great way to use real world materials to reinforce phonics study.

### Steps

1. Pick an article from a newspaper or other piece of realia that students are interested in.
2. Read the article to the students.
3. Give students a sound, such as /b/. Ask students to find all of the words in the article (or paragraph, if the article is long) that have the sound in the beginning, middle, or end of the word.
4. Ask students to write the words they found, grouping them by where the target sound occurs.

## Same or Different

This activity helps students distinguish between sounds.

### Steps

1. Select two initial consonant sounds to practice. Write the letter for each sound along with a keyword. If students have created study flash cards, you can have students use those cards.
2. Review each sound and letter.
3. Say two words that begin with the same sound. Ask students if the words begin with the same sound or different sounds. Ask students what letter each word begins with.
4. Say two words that begin with the other sound. Ask students if the words begin with the same sound or different sounds. Ask students what letter each word begins with.
5. Say two words, each beginning with one of the sounds. Ask students if the words begin with the same sound or different sounds. Ask students what letter each word begins with.
6. Repeat the process with other words with the same or different beginning sounds until you are sure students can distinguish the sounds.

## Sound Boxes


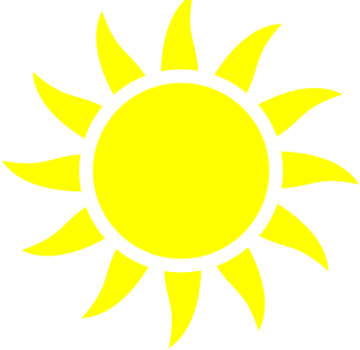
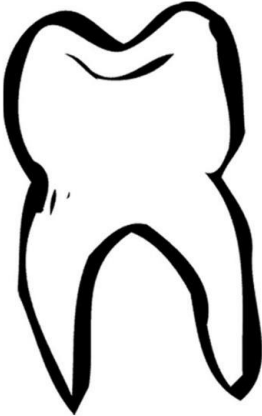
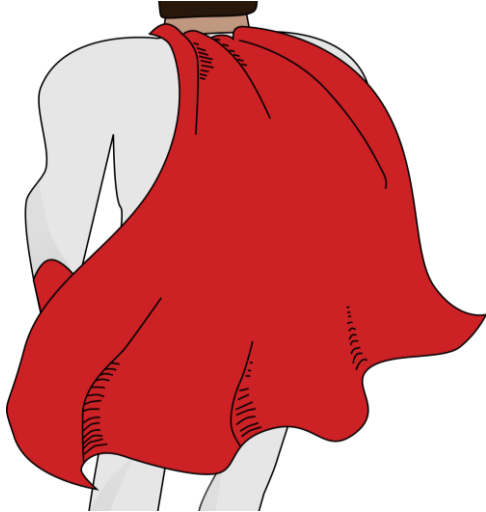
Sound boxes, also known as Elkonin boxes, are used to help students break words into individual sounds. They are good for spelling practice.

### Steps

1. This activity requires some computer skills – the ability to insert clipart or pictures into a document and the ability to make boxes.
2. Identify the words you want students to practice.
3. Find an image that represents the word. Insert the image into a document.
4. Underneath the image create a series of boxes, one box for each sound (not letter).

5. Explain to students that they are to identify the word, identify the individual sounds in the word, then spell the word in the boxes provided. Each box represents one sound.

**Examples**

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 <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>	 <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>

## Word Patterns

### Concentration Game

This game provides practice in both sounding out words using patterns and recognizing patterns in print.

#### Steps

1. Create matching pairs of word patterns and each word on a separate index card.  
Examples: *cat/mat*, *had/mad*, *love/glove*.
2. Determine how many pairs you will use for the board. A good size board is 8 pairs.
3. Turn the cards face down and shuffle them. Put them into a grid—for 16 cards the grid would be 4 x 4.
4. The first player turns over two cards. If they do not use the same word pattern, the player turns them back over and it is the second player's turn.
5. If they use the same word pattern, the player must read each word correctly to pick up the cards. It is then the second player's turn.
6. The second player turns over two cards. If they do not use the same word pattern, the player turns them back over and it is the first player's turn. If they use the same pattern, the player must read each word correctly to pick up the cards. It is now the first player's turn again.
7. Play repeats until all of the cards have been picked up. The player with the most cards wins.

### Word Slides

Word slides are a great hands-on learning tool for working with word patterns.

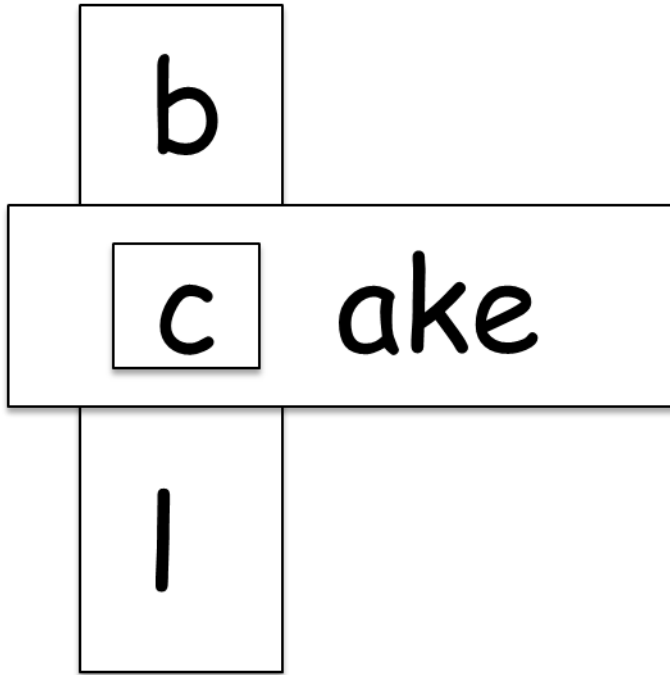
#### Steps

1. Select the word pattern or patterns to review.
2. Place students in pairs or small groups.
3. Give each set of students a word pattern. Have students brainstorm all of the words they can form using that word pattern.
4. Give each student two 4" x 6" index cards
5. Have students fold one index card in half lengthwise.
6. Have students print the word family on the right hand side of the card.
7. Have students cut a window for the missing initial sound, and then cut a slit in the fold of the index card.
8. Have students fold the second index card lengthwise.
9. Have students write the initial consonant sounds from the words they brainstormed onto the second index card.
10. Insert the second index card into the slot of the first index card.
11. As students pull the index card, the consonant sounds will appear in the window.  
Students can practice reading each word.

## Variations

1. Instead of cutting a window at the beginning of the word, you can cut a window in the middle of the word. Write the vowels on the pull strip and practice substituting them to create words.
2. Write one word pattern on the front of the strip and another on the back of the strip.

## Example



## Word Parts

### Teaching Syllables

Use this process for teaching students to divide words into syllables and apply three rules to help with pronunciation.

### Steps

1. Select a group of words to practice. These words can come from the reading or can be part of students' known vocabulary.
2. Explain to students that a syllable is a word or word part that has only one vowel sound.
3. Give examples: *bat* (1), *paper* (2), *little* (2), *employment* (3), *example* (3)
4. Read the first word. Ask students how many vowel sounds they hear. Ask students to identify the vowel sounds. Continue with the remaining words.
5. If students have difficulty with step 4, continue to practice that skill. When students can accurately identify vowel sounds, move on to step 6.
6. Explain that students can use three rules about syllables to help them decode and pronounce new words. Explain that we will learn the rules and then see how they apply to the words in the list.

7. Write each rule at the top of an index card. Leave room at the bottom for students to write examples.

### Rule 1: The two-consonant rule

If there are two consonants between the vowel sounds, divide the word between the consonants. Do not divide blends or digraphs.

1. Ask students to write the following words below the rule: *into, lesson, traffic, fender, bashful, emblem.*
2. Ask students to put a dot under each vowel.
3. Ask students to put an x under any final e's.
4. Ask students to underline digraphs and consonant blends.
5. Ask students to divide the words according to rule 1.
6. Ask students to pronounce each word according to rule 1.

in/to	les/son	traf/fic	fen/der	bash/ful	em/blem
• •	• •	• •	• •	• — •	• — •

### Rule 2: The one-consonant rule

If the word has only one consonant sound between two vowel sounds, divide the word before the consonant. If the vowel is at the end of a syllable, it will usually have a long sound. The letter y in the middle or at the end of the word acts as a vowel.

1. Ask students to write the following words below the rule: *bacon, female, syphon, lady.*
2. Ask students to put a dot under each vowel.
3. Ask students to put an x under any final e's.
4. Ask students to underline digraphs and consonant blends.
5. Ask students to divide the words according to rule 2.
6. Ask students to pronounce each word according to rule 2.

ba/con	fe/male	sy/phon	la/dy
• •	• •x	• — •	• / •

### Rule 3: The one-consonant oops rule

Sometimes the one consonant rule doesn't work. If the word doesn't sound like a word you recognize, divide the word after the consonant. The vowel will have a short sound.

1. Ask students to write the following words below the rule: *lemon, visit, second, travel.*
2. Ask students to put a dot under each vowel.
3. Ask students to put an x under any final e's.
4. Ask students to underline digraphs and consonant blends.
5. Ask students to divide the words according to rule 2.
6. Ask students to pronounce each word according to rule 2.
7. Ask students if the way they pronounced the words sounded like words they recognized.
8. Ask students to write the words again under the rule, putting dots under each vowel, x's under final e's, and underlining digraphs and consonant blends.
9. Now ask students to divide the words according to rule 3.

10. Ask students to pronounce the words according to rule 3. Do students recognize the words now?

lem/on • •	vis/it • •	sec/ond • • —	trav/el — • •
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8. Now give students the first word from your list.
9. Ask students to put a dot under each vowel.
10. Ask students to put an x under any final e's.
11. Ask students to underline digraphs and consonant blends.
12. Ask students which rule applies to the word.
13. Ask students to divide the word according to the rules.
14. Ask students to pronounce the word according to the rules.
15. Give students another word.

## Word Maps

Word maps can help students identify prefixes, suffixes, and word roots to decode words; to recognize words with similar roots; and to use prefixes and suffixes to build new words.

### Steps

1. Begin with a word students have discovered in their reading. It may have been new to them or they may have had trouble decoding it. We'll use the word *predict* as an example.
2. Explain that the word is actually made up of a word root, *-dict*, and a prefix *pre-*. Write the root *dict* in the middle of a piece of paper. Write the word *predict* to the side and draw a line connecting *predict* to the root *dict*.
3. Ask students if they can think of any words that might be made by adding prefixes and suffixes to the word *predict*. If students have difficulty identifying words, give them an example like *prediction*, *predictable*, or *unpredictable*. As students come up with words, write them off of the word *predict* (if they are related to *predict*). If students generate words related to the root *dict*, but different from *predict*, write them to a different side of *dict* and connect them to the root.
4. After you write the words related to *predict*, point out the common word root and prefix in each one. Explain that looking for elements you already know in longer words can help students decode words.
5. Returning to the word root, ask students if they can think of any other words that contain that root. If students have trouble thinking of words, give them a list of prefixes and suffixes. Encourage them to try adding prefixes and suffixes until they come up with words they recognize. When they think of another word, follow steps 3 and 4 with these words as well.
6. Continue to do steps 3–5 until you have developed a word map. Review each word, asking students to identify the prefix, suffix, and root for each word, then read it.

## Variation

1. For vocabulary instruction, give students a list of common prefixes and suffixes and their meanings after you have created the word map.
2. Give students the meaning of the word root. In the example above, *dict* means to tell.
3. Point out that the prefix *pre-* means before, so *predict* means to tell before. Ask students what *predict* actually means. Answers should be similar to “to tell what you think will happen before it happens.” Ask students if “to tell before” makes sense based on their definition.
4. Continue with other forms of the word, using prefixes and suffixes to show how these word parts can help students understand a word’s meaning.
5. If students don’t know what a word means, have them make a guess based on the meaning of the root and prefixes and suffixes. Use a simple dictionary to look up the meaning and compare the actual definition to their guess.

## Sight Words

### Sight Word Flashcard Practice

Flashcards are one of the best and easiest ways to practice recognizing words by sight. It’s also useful that many other literacy practice activities involve writing words on flashcards, so they are often readily available for practice.

### Steps

1. Choose six to ten words the student wants to learn. They may already exist on flashcards. If not, have the student write each word on an index card.
2. Shuffle the stack of index cards. Flip the top one over and ask the student to read it. If the student reads it correctly, put it to the right.
3. If the student misses the word, put it to the left. If a student has trouble, read the word aloud and ask him or her to use it in a sentence. Put the card to the left.
4. Once a student has gone through the stack once, pick up the cards on the left that the student missed. Shuffle these cards and review them again following the same procedures. Continue this until the student reads all of the words correctly.
5. Shuffle the entire deck and review all the words again. Continue until the student is able to read the entire deck, or until you sense that the student is becoming frustrated.

### Variations

1. Once the student is able to read the entire stack correctly, focus on reading the word quickly and accurately. Using a stopwatch, begin timing as you flip over the first card. Work your way through the deck. Record the time and any misses. Repeat the process 2–3 more times, recording the time and number of misses. Discuss any improvement the data shows.



## Context Clues

### Create a Cloze Activity

Cloze activities are a great way to practice using context clues to decode words.

#### Steps

1. Select a passage from a lesson.
2. Leave the first sentence intact, and then delete words in the subsequent sentences. Select words for which there are context clues. Example *There were four eggs in the bird's \_\_\_\_\_, not There were \_\_\_\_\_ eggs in the bird's nest.*
3. Provide a word list. Review the words with the students.
4. Ask students to fill in the missing words. Students may work individually, in pairs, or in small groups.
5. For beginning students, you can
  - provide a choice of two words for each blank;
  - provide the first letter of the word in the blank space;
  - provide the exact number of spaces for the deleted word.

## Strategic Decoding

### Teaching Students to Decode Strategically

In strategic decoding, students combine decoding skills with a consistent problem solving process to help them decode difficult words. The steps below describe the process and explain how you can introduce it to students.

#### Steps

1. As a student reads a passage, listen for places where he or she struggles to decode a word. If the student is unable to decode the word, encourage him or her to say “blank” and keep reading. You will return to that part of the passage later.
2. After the student has finished reading the passage, return to the sentence with the difficult word. (Depending on the sentence, you may want to start with the previous sentence to provide context.)
3. Ask the student to read the sentence(s) again, saying blank for the difficult word. Ask, “Based on the meaning of the sentence, is there a word you think makes sense here?” Depending on the student’s response, ask if there are visual clues (initial letter, shape of word) that confirm the guess.
4. If the student is unable to think of a word that makes sense in context, isolate the word. Encourage the student to try to sound it out using phonics, word patterns, and word parts skills. Does the student recognize the word? Does the word make sense in the sentence? Reread the sentence to find out.
5. If the student is unable to use decoding skills to identify a word that makes sense, suggest using different vowel sounds. This may be a word that does not follow a common phonics pattern. Does the student recognize the word? Does the word make sense in the sentence? Reread the sentence to find out.

6. Encourage the student to think of a word that makes sense in the sentence and read the sentence using that word.
7. Read the word the student was unable to decode and demonstrate which decoding skills could have been used to decode it. If the word is new to the student, explain what it means.
8. Ask the student to reflect back on the process they just used. Point out that the student
  - a. used context and visual clues to decode the word;
  - b. tried to sound out the word;
  - c. tried different vowel sounds;
  - d. thought of a word that made sense and used that word.
9. Explain that any time the student encounters a word they are unable to decode while reading, they can use this process to try to figure out the word.

# Handout: Teaching Phonics Activity

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I, L



p, P



# Handout: Fluency Activities

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Below are several activities you can use with students to improve their reading fluency.

## Echo Reading

Echo reading provides support to students because they hear fluent reading modeled before attempting to do it themselves.

### Steps

1. Select something to read that is short and at the student's instructional reading level. Read the first sentence aloud, modeling proper pace and phrasing.
2. Ask the student to read the same sentence aloud after you.
3. Continue this pattern through to the end of the passage.
4. When you've finished the passage, go back to the beginning and follow the same pattern again. As the student improves, expand the amount of text you read before the student "echos" you. For instance, increase to two sentences and then to a paragraph.

### Variations

- For higher-level students, you can begin by reading a few sentences or even a paragraph before asking the students to read.
- To adapt this activity to a classroom environment, you might read through the passage once with the entire class echoing in unison, then go back through the passage using the same technique and calling on individual students to read. Remember to read the sentence aloud before each student reads to model proper pace and phrasing.

## Modeled Reading

Modeled reading provides the student an opportunity to hear reading done with good expression and good phrasing. It also provides a change of pace in instruction and allows students to practice listening skills.

### Steps

1. Choose fiction materials that are of interest to students. Since students are not reading aloud, the text may be a reading level above the students' instructional reading level.
2. Provide students with a copy of the passage.
3. Ask the students to relax and listen to the reading as they follow along in the text.
4. Read aloud and model expressive and fluent reading for the students.
5. The reading need only be about 5 minutes in length.

### Variations

- The model does not have to be the teacher. It can be a recording or another student.

## Dyad/Choral Reading

Dyad reading involves a teacher and one student; choral reading is a teacher and a group of students. For both activities, the students and you read the same passage aloud together. Both provide an opportunity for students to read fluently and independently, knowing that support is available from the teacher or other classmates if needed.

### Steps

1. Begin by selecting something to read that is short and at an independent reading level for the students. As in echo reading, your role is to model proper pace, phrasing, and emphasis.
2. If the students are reading comfortably, you will simply stop and allow them to continue on their own.
3. If students encounter a word they do not know, provide it quickly so the pace is not disrupted.
4. If students start to struggle with the selection, begin reading again to provide a model.
5. At the end of the selection, ask one or two factual comprehension questions.
6. Repeat the process until students are able to read the passage aloud independently, with proper pace and phrasing.
7. Ask comprehension questions about the passage each time the students read to emphasize that as they reread a passage with better fluency, their comprehension improves as well.

### Variations

- This is a good activity for students to practice at home with a recording of the passage.

## Duet Reading/Neurological Impress

Duet reading or neurological impress helps students improve fluency by developing “automaticity” in reading—the ability and confidence to recognize words automatically rather than spending a lot of time and energy decoding, which can hinder fluency.

### Steps

1. Select an article to read that is at the high end of the students’ instructional level.
2. Explain to the students that you are going to read the article out loud and you want the students to read aloud with you. Explain that the article was selected because it will be difficult for them and that you expect that there will be places where the students will not be able to keep up. This is OK. Explain also that students will not be asked questions about what they are reading. This is not a comprehension activity and comprehension will not be tested.

## Say It Like You Mean It

This activity helps students understand how changing the emphasis on words in a sentence can change the meaning.

### Steps

1. Write a sentence down, or have a student select one from the reading passage. Here is an example:

I never said you hit my car.

2. Ask the student to read the sentence aloud, emphasizing the first word of the sentence. Ask the student what the sentence means. In the example, *I never said you hit my car*, the author or the person speaking might be saying they were not the person who said you hit my car, implying that someone else might have said it.
3. Continue to ask a student to read the sentence aloud, emphasizing the second word of the sentence, then the third word, etc. After each time, ask the student what they think the sentence means. Here is what students might say for the example above:

I **never** said you hit my car. – The speaker is denying the statement completely.

I never **said** you hit my car. – The speaker is contesting that they “said” you hit my car. Implying they may have conveyed such a statement in other ways.

I never said **you** hit my car. – The speaker confirms making the statement, but it was about someone else.

I never said you **hit** my car. – The speaker is implying the person did something else to their car.

I never said you hit **my** car. – The speaker is saying the person hit someone else’s car.

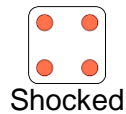
I never said you hit my **car**. – The speaker is saying the person hit something that belonged to the speaker, but it wasn’t the car.

## Roll It!

This activity helps students understand how different emotions can be conveyed with the same sentence.

### Steps

1. Select six sentences from the reading or generate six sentences of your own. Number the sentences 1–6.
2. Roll the die. This tells you which sentence you will read.
3. Roll the die again. This tells you how you will read the sentence. Use the chart below:



4. Take turns with the student reading sentences with different emotions.

## **Video Resource**

These videos from Read Santa Clara show one-to-one tutoring sessions.

<https://www.youtube.com/@readsantaclara4739/playlists>