



The Kindergarten Chronicles

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Decoding Strategies

It's Time to S-T-R-E-T-C-H !!

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For kindergarten, one of our third trimester benchmarks is to take our students from letter/sound identification to decoding words in text, using letter/sound relationships. This can be a very big leap for our young learners, even those who have a solid grasp of letter/sound relationships. While identifying the sound of a letter involves simple recall, decoding a word requires that our students easily recall several sounds, then apply one or more strategies to read the word. Taking our students from recalling sounds in isolation to decoding several sounds within a word can be a bit of a challenge. Fortunately, there are some great strategies for teaching decoding.

Picture Clues: Emergent and early readers love the pictures on the pages of books they read. Teach your students to use these pictures to help read unknown words. By having our students take a "picture walk" through the text, we are helping them to make predictions about the meaning of the text. This will also help them predict some of the words that might be in the book.

Initial Sound: When young readers encounter an unknown word, have them "frame" the word by putting one finger in front of the word and one finger at the end of the word. Now have them identify the initial letter and sound of the word. By using picture clues and the initial sound, many words can be discovered.

S-T-R-E-T-C-H: Teach your students to "stretch" words—that is to say the word sound by sound, then blend the sounds together to make a word. You can use a rubber band to demonstrate this concept. As you say



each sound, stretch the rubber band a little bit more. When you blend the sounds, allow the rubber band to return to its original size.

Onset-Rime: Taking the initial sound and word stretching concepts one step further, teach your students to break one syllable words into two parts: the initial sound (onset) and the rest of the word (rime). For example, *ring* would be *r-* *ing*. This will pave the way for our next strategy.

Chunk It: There are 38 common rimes that, with initial sounds or blends, can account for 654 different one syllable words. These chunks, in rank order are: -ay, -ill, -ip, -ap, -at, -am, -ag, -ack, -ank, -ick, -ell, -ot, -ing, -unk, -ail, -ain, -eed, -y, -out, -ug, -op, -in, -an, -est, -ink, -ow, -ew, -ore, -ed, -ab, -ob,

-ock, -ake, -ine, -ight, -im, -uck, -um. If you teach your learners to recognize these chunks in words, decoding will become more automatic. Children find patterns in everything, so if we introduce them to these common rimes, they will see these patterns in words. When teaching these patterns, write the letters that make up the chunk in one color and the initial sound in a different color

so the children easily see the pattern. **Clap it Out:** As you decode a one-syllable word, clap out the individual sounds as you isolate them. When you blend them to say the word, clap just one time. This will demonstrate phoneme segmentation and blending in one activity.



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It's Not All Fun and Games!

It's time for fun with meaning! As you teach your students the strategies outlined above, incorporate games into your literacy work stations (centers) to help solidify these strategies for reading unknown words.

Picture Sorts: Make cards with pictures of one syllable words. Your students will sort the cards by initial sound. Or you can specify a letter and have your students find only the pictures that begin with the sound of that letter.

Chunk Hunt: There are many resources for chunk words found in context. Find books that have words with specific chunks or poems that focus on a word family. Have your students "hunt" for words in context, writing them down in a notebook as they find them. To make this extra fun, have toy magnifying glasses for them to use on their hunt.

The Wonderful Web: There are some great games that teach decoding strategies to be found on the Web. Here are a few of the URLs that will lead to learning fun for your students:



<http://www.readwritethink.org/materials/construct/>: Students build words using chunks.

<http://www.starfall.com/n/skills/chunking/load.htm?f>: For your more advanced decoders, this shows students how more complex words can be chunked. (Starfall.com has many great games for students who are learning to read.) These are just two of the many games that can be found by doing a simple search!

Scrabble: Using magnetic letters or scrabble pieces, form a word with, for example, the "ack" pattern. Ask the student to change the first letter of the word

p	st
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s	a	c	k
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 to make a new word. For example, change the *s* in *sack* to form the word *pack*. You should be sure to provide a limited number of letters (two or three at first) for the child to choose from.

Sound Bingo: Make bingo cards with consonants and blends. Use typical bingo rules. As the game leader says a word, students may put a marker on the initial letter or blend for the word that was called.