

35 Quick-and-Easy Phonics and Word Analysis Games

Many wonderful educational games and activities providing phonics practice are available from educational supply companies. But you can prepare countless simple and engaging activities yourself. Here are some of the easiest and best activities I have used, or collected, over the years.

1 Sound Bingo

Make copies of a 5-square by 5-square bingo game board. Use the letters that follow to fill in the cards: **Game 1:** *b, c, d, f, g, h, l, m, n, p, s, t*; **Game 2:** *l, t, s, k, n, g, sh, f, p*. Use each letter at least twice per game board (see illustration). Put the letters in a different order for each card. Also place picture cards in a bag. The picture names must contain the sounds that the letters represent. Sound Bingo is played just like regular bingo. Before the game begins, give each player a game board and ample space markers. The caller (teacher) draws one picture card from the bag and displays it. If a player's game board contains the letter that begins the picture's name, he or she places a marker over the space. The first player to get five markers in a row either vertically, horizontally, or diagonally, yells "Sound Bingo!" The player then states aloud the letter and sound it stands for as the caller checks it against the picture cards drawn from the bag. If these match, the player wins. Players then clear their boards, the picture cards go back in the bag, and a new game begins. (Game 2 is played in the same way but focuses on ending sounds.)



b	m	d	s	p
f	c	g	l	c
t	n	b	t	s
n	b	m	g	h
p	d	l	f	n





2 Living Words

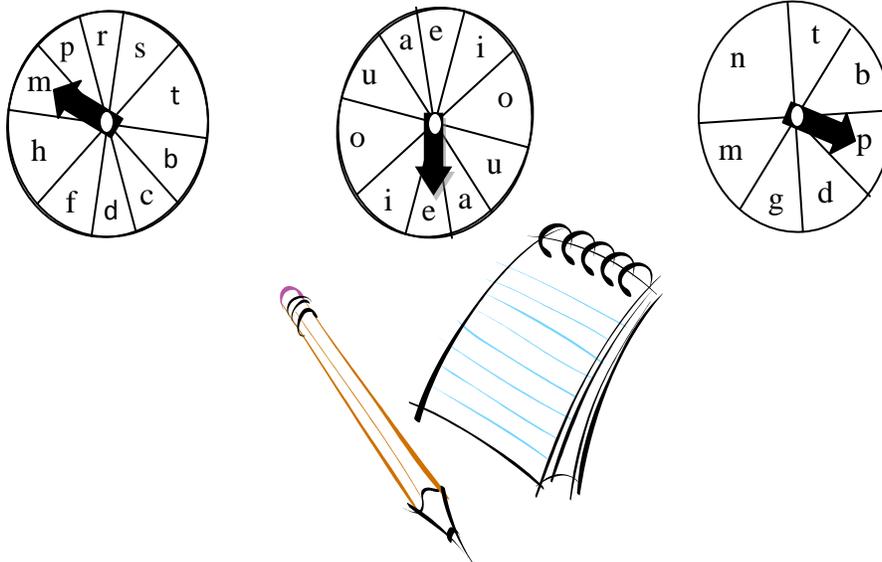
Write letters or spelling you want to review on large note cards. Distribute one card to each student. Then have three students stand in front of the class. Ask them to stand in a sequence that forms a word. Each group must determine its word. For example, you might call on the students with the *s*, *u*, and *n* cards. When the students have formed the word *sun*, ask a volunteer to read aloud the word. Show children how to blend the word. Continue by forming a new word or substituting letters in the existing word (for example, have the student with the *b* card replace the student with the *s* card and blend the new word formed).

3 Change-a-Letter

Write an incomplete sentence on the chalkboard, such as “I like to pet my _____.” Then write a word that is one letter away from being the correct answer, such as *cab*. Ask a volunteer to change one letter in the word to form a word that will complete the sentence. Have the student write the word on the blank. (*cat*) Continue with other incomplete sentences and change-a-letter words.

4 Spin It!

Cut out three spinners and dials (see sample). On the outside edge of the first spinner write the letters *t, b, c, d, f, h, m, p, r,* and *s*. On the outside edge of the second spinner, write the letters *a, e, i, o,* and *u* two times. On the outside edge of the third spinner, write the letters *m, n, t, b, p, d,* and *g*. Paste the spinners in sequence on a piece of tagboard or the inside of a folder. Using a brass fastener, attach the dials to the spinners. Then have each student spin all three spinners. If a word can be formed, the student writes the word on a sheet of paper. Each word is worth one point. Students can continue until they've formed five words, or they can challenge each other to see who can form the most words. As the year progresses, replace the short-vowel spellings with long-vowel spellings, and the consonants with clusters and digraphs.

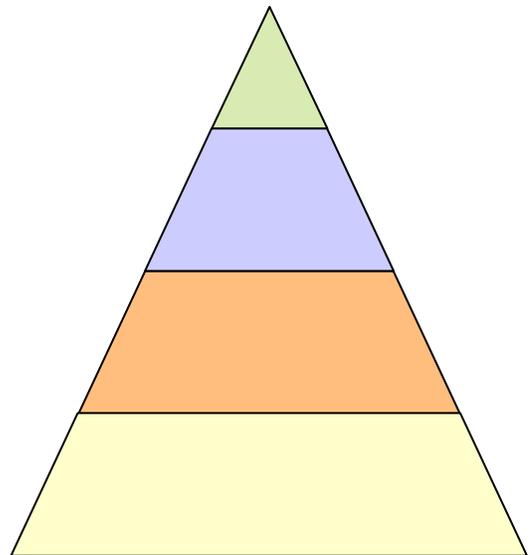


5 Phonogram Families

Distribute letter cards to each student. On each letter card write a consonant, cluster, or digraph. Then display a phonogram card. Each student who holds a card that, when combined with the phonogram card, can form a word comes to the front of the classroom. These are members of this phonogram's "family." Invite each student to place his or her card in front of the phonogram card and blend aloud the word formed.

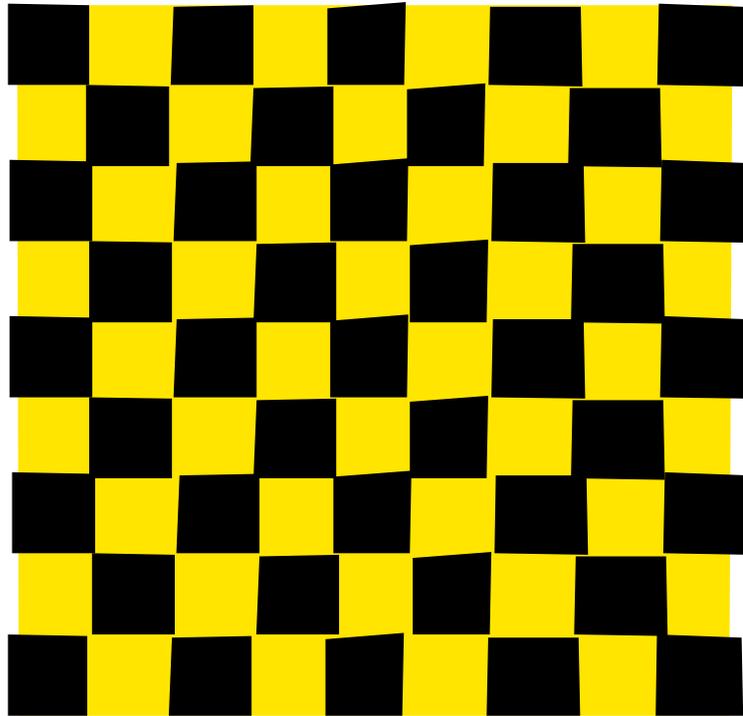
6 Build It

Draw a picture of a house or pyramid on a sheet of paper. Divide the house or pyramid into smaller segments, such as squares or rectangles. Make enough copies of the page for each student to have one. Then make several sets of word-building cards. On each card, write a consonant, cluster, digraph, vowel, or phonogram, depending on the phonics skills you are reviewing. Make enough cards for each so that many words can be formed. Now divide the class into small groups, distribute a pyramid page to each child, and place a set of cards facedown on the table or floor in front of each group. One at a time, each student in the group draws a set of five cards and builds as many words as possible. The student writes each word in one segment of the house or pyramid, or colors in one segment for each word. The student who builds (completes) the house or pyramid first wins.



7 Sound Checkers

Write a word on each square of an old checkerboard. Each word should contain a spelling that you want children to review. The game is played just like checkers, except the player must read the word on each space he or she lands on. If a player cannot read the word, he or she returns to the original space.



8 Sound Hunt

Assign each student a letter or spelling that you want to review. (You might want to have students work with partners or in small groups.) Then have children search for objects in the classroom whose names contain the sound represented by the letter or spelling. Provide time for students to share their findings.

Variation: Have students also search through books, magazines, and newspapers for words that contain the letter or spelling.



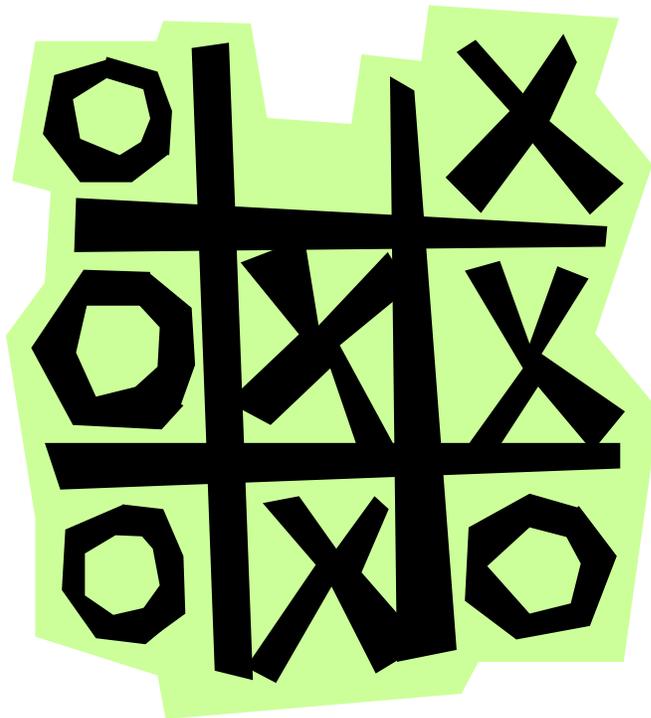
9 Environmental Print Boards

As you teach each sound and spelling, challenge children to find examples of the sound-spelling relationship in words on signs, cereal boxes, advertisements, junk mail, and other environmental print items. Have children bring these items to class (Suggest they take a photo or draw a picture if it's a large sign) and attach them to an environmental print bulletin board to refer to throughout the week.



10 Letter Tic-Tac-Toe

Make copies of tic-tac-toe game boards. On each game board write incomplete words. For example, you might write each word, leaving a blank for the first letter. Then place the game boards in a folder. Have pairs of children each select a game board. The game is similar to a standard game of tic-tac-toe. Each player chooses to be X or O. In turn, each player marks an X or O on one square of the grid. But in order to mark an X or O on a square, the player must complete the square's word by writing the missing letter and reading aloud the completed word. The player who gets three X's or three O's in a row horizontally, vertically, or diagonally first wins.



11 Graph It

Have children create graphs to combine language arts with math concepts. For example, students might search a passage for all the words with short *a*, *i*, and *u* and list them. Then, using their word list, they can create a bar graph showing the number of words found.

Variation: Have students examine the length of words (start with the length of their names) to create a graph. For example, how many students' names contain four letters? five letters? Display the graphs throughout the room.

12 Word Baseball

Word baseball can be played much like the original game. Divide the class into two teams. One at a time, each player is up at bat. Show the child a word card. If the player reads the word card, he or she goes to first base. If the player is unable to read the word, the team receives an out. The team at bat continues until it receives three outs. The winning team is the one that earns more points after nine innings. (You might want to limit the game to fewer innings.)

Variation: To make the game more exciting, make some words cards worth a base hit, others worth a double or triple, and a few worth the treasured home run. You might also ask the player at bat to read the word, then state a word that rhymes with it or that contains the same vowel sound.



13 Sound Hopscotch

Using chalk, create several large hopscotch grids on a paved area of your playground (or use masking tape on the floor of your classroom). In each section of the boards, write a sound-spelling (EXAMPLE: ay) you want to review. Then read aloud a word or call out a sound. Students hop to the space on the hopscotch board that contains the spelling called out. If you are calling out a word, designate the position (initial, medial, final) in which the sound occurs in the word.



14 Concentration

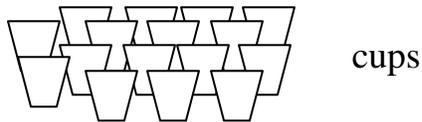
This classic game can be played by two to three students to review almost any skill. Make a set of 12 to 20 playing cards. On each card write a word. For example, if you are reviewing compound words, you will write words that, when combined, can form compound words. Place the cards facedown on the table or floor. Each player chooses two cards. If the cards form a compound word, the player keeps them. The player with the most cards at the end of the game wins. When reviewing vowel sounds, make a set of cards in which rhyming word pairs can be found

15 Word Wall

As each sound-spelling is introduced, place a large card showing it on the wall and add words to the card that contain the sound-spelling. These words can be revisited throughout the week by having the class chorally read them, and they can be referred to by students while reading or writing. In addition to grouping words by common sound-spellings, add cards to the Word Wall containing high-frequency words.

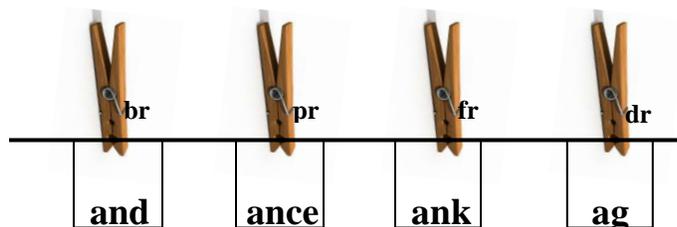
16 Word Toss

Tape several plastic foam or paper cups to the floor close together. This should resemble the set-up commonly seen at carnivals with the goldfish bowls and Ping-Pong balls. Inside each cup, write a letter or spelling. Have each child toss a button into the mass of cups. The child then states a word that contains the sound that the letter or spelling in the cup with the button stands for. Continue until each child has had multiple turns.



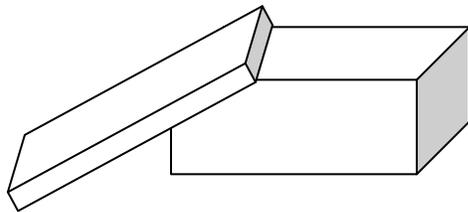
17 Pin It

String a long clothesline across one section of your classroom. Place clothespins along the clothesline at various intervals. On each clothespin write the beginning part of a word, such as a consonant, cluster, or digraph. On note cards, write the ending part of a word (phonogram). Have children form words by pinning each note card to a clothespin.



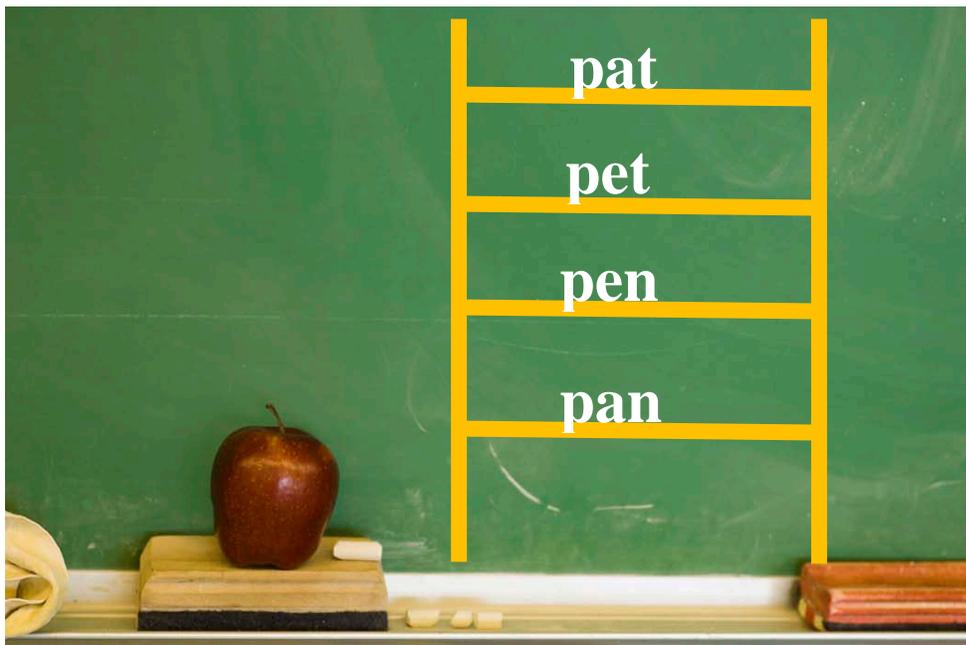
18 High-Frequency Box

Place a set of high-frequency word cards in a shoebox. Throughout the day, ask volunteers to select a card, spell aloud the word, read it, and use it in a sentence. The rest of the class must write the word on a sheet of paper as they say each letter aloud. Then display it in a pocket chart. At the end of the day, collect the students' papers and have the class read the word cards in the pocket chart chorally. By the end of the week, this small set of words will have been reviewed many times.



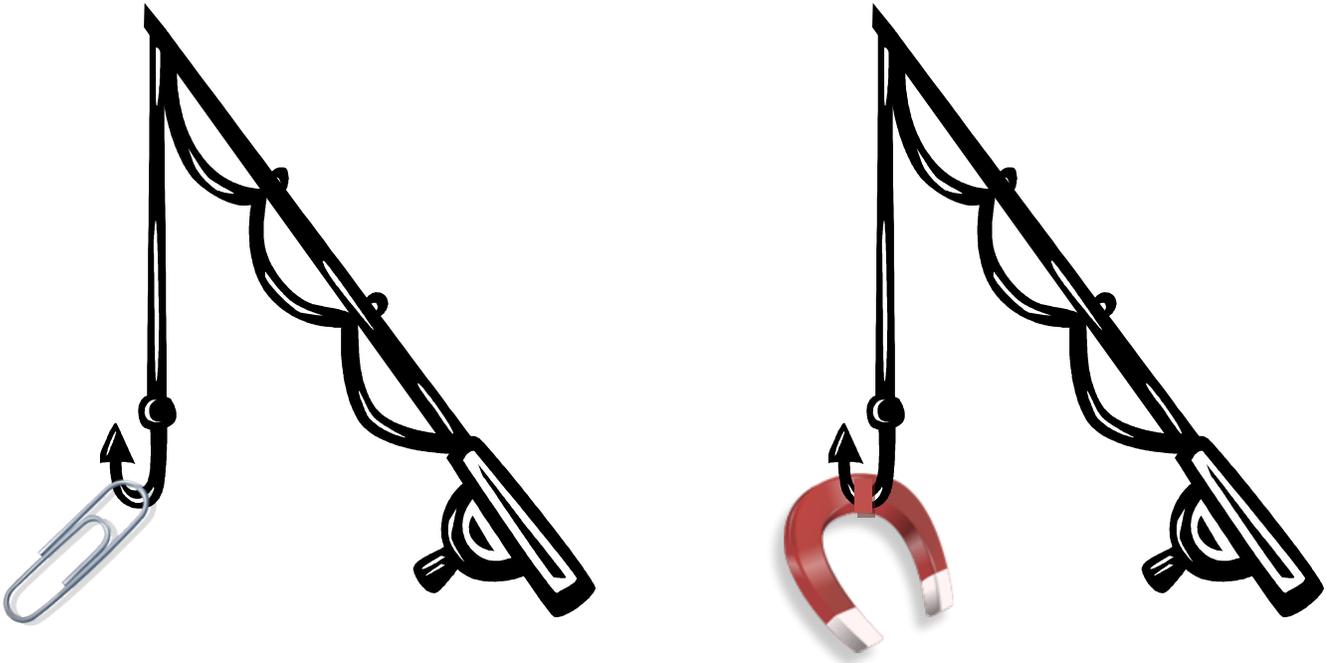
19 Word Ladders

Draw a ladder on the chalkboard. On the first step, write a word. Then ask a volunteer to change one letter in the word to form a new word. Write the new word on the second step. Continue until the ladder is completed.



20 Fish for It

Make words cards using decodable words or high-frequency words you want to review. Glue a small bar magnet on the back of each card, or attach a paper clip. Then make a fishing pole, with a paper clip or magnet for a hook. Divide the class into teams. Place the word cards in a bag. One student from each team must “fish” for a word card. When the card is drawn, the student spells the word aloud, then blends it. The rest of the class determines whether the word is correct. If it is correct, the team earns one point. Play until one team earns ten

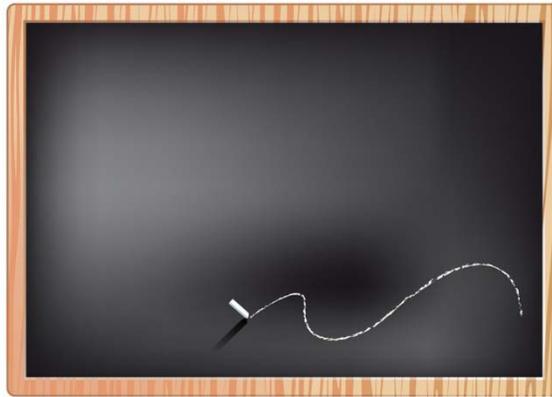


21 Sound Play

Throughout the year, help children create letter cards. For each sound-spelling relationship you teach, distribute an index card to each student. Have students write the spelling on the card and add the card to their growing set. Several times a week, provide time for students to play with the cards by combining them to form words. Circulate around the room and help children blend the words they have formed.

22 What Am I?

Select a classroom object and provide clues to help children guess its identity. For example, you might say, “The name of this object begins with /ch/.” Then write students’ guesses on the chalkboard. Continue with other clues. After you give each new clue, allow the students to modify their guesses. When the class agrees on the item, confirm its identity.



23 Password

Provide a set of word cards, each containing a decodable word. One student of a pair selects a card, then provides clues for his or her partner to figure out the word. For example, if a student draws the word card “sun,” he or she might say, “My word begins with the letter s. It has three letters and describes something very bright.” The student provides clues until the partner figures out the word. Then partners change roles.

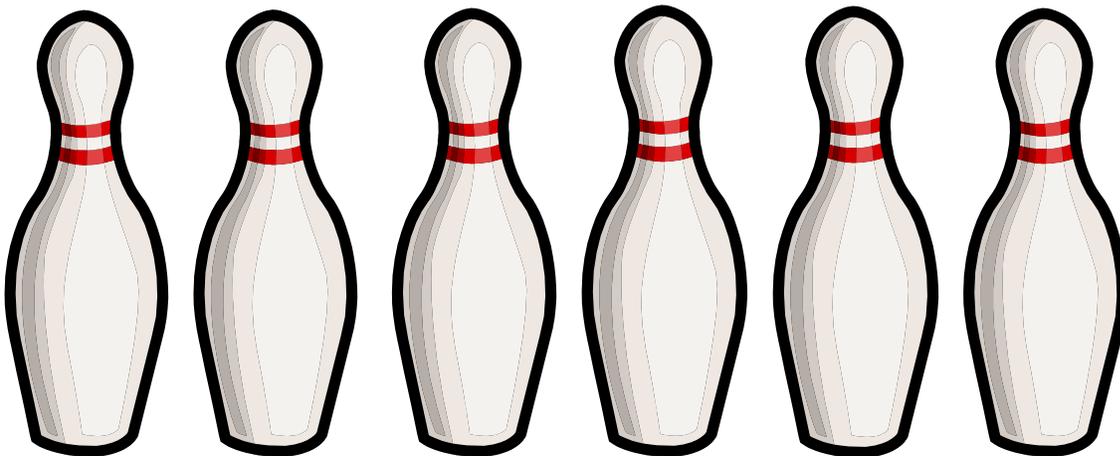
24 What's Missing?

Display a picture of an animal or object and, leaving out one letter, write its name on the chalkboard. For example, display a picture of a cat and write *c_t* on the chalkboard. Then have a volunteer fill in the missing letter. Continue with other pictures representing spellings you want to review.

25 Bowling for Words

Making a bowling score sheet for each student (see sample). Then make a set of large tagboard or construction paper bowling pins. On each pin, write a word and a number from 1 to 10. Make the words with the highest numbers the most difficult. Divide the class into small teams. Place the bowling pins in a bag or box so students can't see them. One player from each team reaches in and selects a pin. If the player can correctly read the word, he records the score on his or her score sheet. If the player can't read the word, he or she receives a "gutter ball," or a score of 0. The game ends when all ten frames of the bowling game have been played and the scores tallied. You might want to have teams use calculators to tally their scores.

BOWLING FOR WORDS											
										Total	
MAX	6	0	7	8	1	0	3	9	0	2	36



26 Word Sort

Provide students with sets of word cards. Have them sort the word cards first in any way they choose, such as by common sounds or word length. Then suggest a way for the students to sort the words. Be sure that the words you provide can be sorted in more than one way. For example, use words containing the long *a* sound spelled *a_e*, *ai*, and *ay*. To make the word sorts more engaging, have the children sort cleverly-shaped word cards into appropriate containers. For example, have them sort egg-shaped word cards into egg cartons labeled according to specific spellings.

27 Missing Words

Write a brief story or paragraph on a chart. Place self-sticking notes over every fifth or tenth word. Or select words with target sounds you want to review and cover those up. Another option is to write the story or paragraph, leaving blanks for each word you want students to figure out. When you get to a “missing” word, have students guess it. Before telling children whether they are correct, write the correct spelling for the first sound in the word and let children modify their guesses. (For example, you would write *sh* for the first sound in the word *shop*.) Continue this way until the whole word is spelled.

28 Silent Riddles

Write a set of words, each containing a silent letter, on the chalkboard. Then read a clue, such as “I am something you use to fix your hair. What am I?” Have a volunteer circle the word on the chalkboard that answers the riddle. (*comb*) Then have another volunteer draw a line through the silent letter. Continue until all the words have been used.

29 Unscramble It

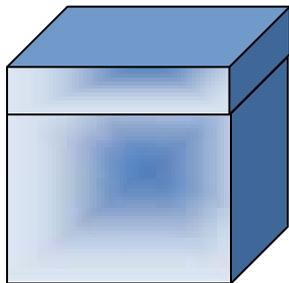
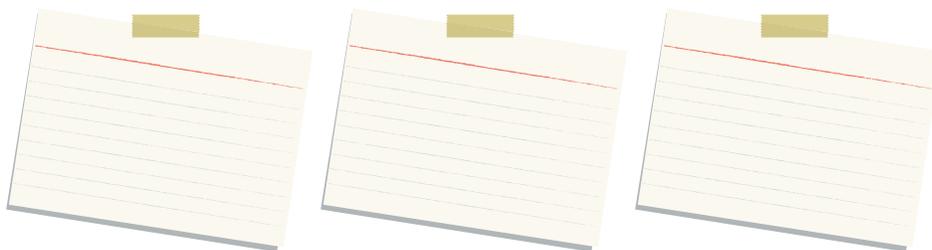
Divide the class into teams of three to four. Provide each team with a list of ten scrambled words. Allow each team five minutes to unscramble as many words as possible. You can vary this activity by providing each team with scrambled sentences.

30 Make a Match

Write word parts on note cards. Make enough cards so that each student can receive one and be sure that every card can be combined with at least one other to form a word. Distribute one card to each student. Play music while students search for their match—the student with another word part that can be combined with their card to form a word. When all students find their match, provide time for them to share their words with the class. Continue with other word part cards, or challenge students to find another match.

31 Word Card File

At the beginning of the year, have each student bring in a card file box and blank index cards. Every week, provide time for students to write a word they are having trouble reading or spelling on one of the index cards. Suggest that they add a sentence or picture clue to the card to help them remember the word. Have them keep their cards in alphabetical order and periodically review them. Point out opportunities for them to use their file cards.



32 Book Chat

Divide the class into groups of four or five. Have each student tell the group a little—just a few sentences—about a book he or she has recently read. Students might also enjoy reading aloud a favorite paragraph or page. Remind children not to give away the ending if the book is fiction. Encourage students in each group to read one of the books they heard about from their classmates. These book chats honor students' accomplishments and remind them of the purpose of learning sound–spelling relationships—to read great books

33 Syllable Race

Create a game board such as the one shown. Then make word cards, each containing a one-, two-, or three-syllable word. Each player draws one card and reads aloud the word. If the player reads the word correctly, he or she moves the same number of spaces on the game board as there are syllables in the word. You might want to write this number under the word on each card for students to refer to. The game continues until one player reaches the end.



pan
1

water
2

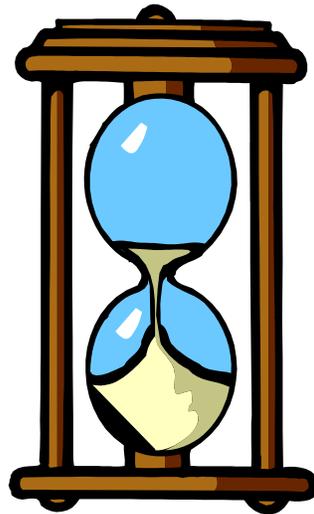
flower
4

Thanksgiving
3

34 Time It

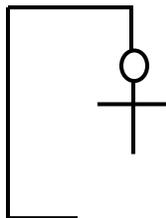
Make enough sets of word cards for each of several small teams. The cards in each set should contain the same mix of base words and prefixes and suffixes.

Distribute a set to each group. Timed by a three-minute egg timer, each team uses its cards to form words. One player records the words on a sheet of paper. Teams earn one point for each word. At the end of the game, each team reads aloud the words they formed.



35 Other Children's Games

Many popular children's games are excellent for developing students' awareness of sound-spelling relationships. These include Scrabble, Hangman, crossword puzzles, and search-and-finds. Stock your learning centers with these and other games.



For additional games and learning centers, see *Quick-and-Easy Learning Games: Phonics* by W. Blevins and *Quick-and-Easy Learning Centers: Phonics* by M. B. Spann.
