

Blending and Segmenting Games

Children who can segment and blend sounds easily are able to use this knowledge when reading and spelling. Segmenting and blending individual sounds can be difficult at the beginning.

When beginning readers sound out words, they slowly say each sound in a word (c-a-t), and then say the sounds quickly together to "read" the word (cat).

Developing a child's phonological awareness is an important part of developing a reader. Many research studies indicate that children who have weak phonological awareness also have weak reading skills.

The figure below shows how the teaching of segmenting and blending should progress, starting at the sentence level, moving to syllable, and finally to individual phonemes. Be sure to provide lots of practice at the easier level before moving on.

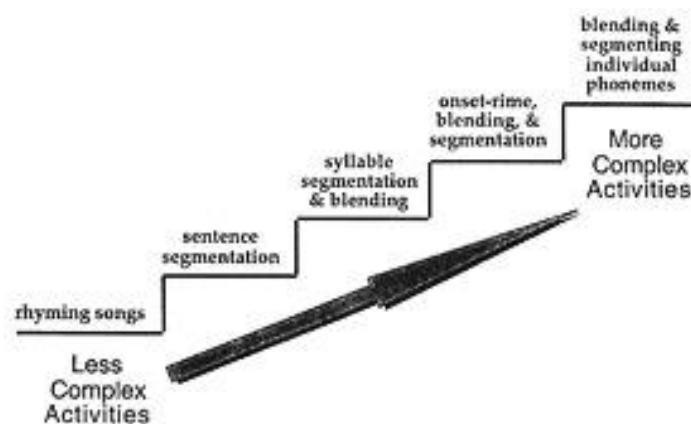


Figure 1. *A continuum of complexity of phonological awareness activities.*

Blending

Guess-the-word game

This activity is an example of how to teach students to blend and identify a word that is stretched out into its basic sound elements..

Materials needed: Picture cards of objects that students are likely to recognize such as: sun, bell, fan, flag, snake, tree, book, cup, clock, plane

Activity: Place a small number of picture cards in front of children. Tell them you are going to say a word using "Snail Talk" a slow way of saying words (e.g., /ffffffllllaaaag/). They have to look at the pictures and guess the word you are saying.

Robot talk

Talking in "Robot Talk," students hear segmented sounds and put them together (blend them) into words.

Sound blending using songs

. The following activity (see Yopp, M., 1992) is to the tune of "*If You're Happy and You Know It, Clap Your Hands.*"

If you think you know this word, shout it out!
If you think you know this word, shout it out!
If you think you know this word,
Then tell me what you've heard,
If you think you know this word, shout it out!

After singing, say a segmented word such as /k/ /a/ /t/ and students provide the blended word "cat."

Segmenting

1. Early in phonological awareness instruction, teach children to segment sentences into individual words. Identify familiar short poems such as "I scream you scream we all scream for ice cream!" Have children clap their hands with each word.
2. As children advance in their ability to manipulate oral language, teach them to segment words into syllables or onsets and rimes. For example, have children segment their names into syllables: e.g., Ra-chel, Al-ex-ander, and Rod-ney.

3. When children have learned to remove the first phoneme (sound) of a word, teach them to segment short words into individual phonemes: e.g., s-u-n, p-a-t, s-t-o-p.

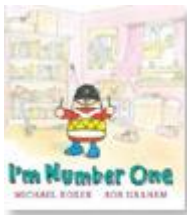
Children's books to use with this strategy



A Huge Hog is a Big Pig
by Francis McCall & Patricia Keeler (Greenwillow)

Concept book

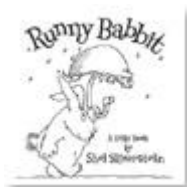
This rhyming words game is illustrated with crisp photographs and is sure to tickle the imagination as another rhyming description is sought. *Eight Ate: A Feast of Homonym Riddles* by Marvin Terban



I'm Number One
by Michael Rosen

Picture book

When the humans are away, a toy soldier named A-One becomes demanding, calling the other toys names. When they begin playing with the sounds and letters of the words, insults become silly to make everyone smile and reform.



Runny Babbit: A Billy Sook
by Shel Silverstein (HarperCollins)

Poetry

An entire collection of poems that play on Spoonerisms (mixed up first letters of 2 words); harder to read aloud than one would imagine but sure fun to play with!



Snow Music
by Lynne Rae Perkins

Picture book

Snow and the creatures out on this snow-filled day make musical sounds. Some of the sounds are simply that, sounds, suggesting that words and sounds are musical.

FAQs about phonics

My child won't sit still and read

It's quite normal for a young child not to want to sit still for very long. Make it more informal and fun, and read for shorter periods of time, say, five minutes.

Let your child run around in between periods of reading to let off steam. You might even try acting out the story.

Likewise, choose a time when your child is not too tired. If they have just started school, they're likely to be very tired at the end of the day. Make it a special time that you share together and don't apply too much pressure.



My child's book only contains six words - help!

Phonics readers frequently have very few words. This is especially true in the early stages, when learning the easiest letter sounds.

Remember your child is only just starting. Phonics readers are carefully designed to enable children to develop a set of secure skills in reading and to build their confidence.

If books are too hard or too long, children can get demoralised.

My child is at the end of their first term and they still haven't learned to read

Each child learns at their own rate. Some will learn to read quickly and others need more time. Make sure reading is seen as fun and an enjoyable pursuit not a battle of wills.

What are multi-sensory approaches?

Children learn synthetic phonics through developing speaking and listening as well as reading and writing skills. Children see, hear, say and write each letter sound.

Many phonics programmes ask children to look, listen and do activities to help them learn phonic knowledge and skills in a fun, multi-sensory environment.

What are 'tricky words'?

Tricky words contain letters that don't represent their normal sounds and these are taught separately. Children are encouraged to learn the tricky bit, then to sound out and blend the rest of the word.

Useful phonics websites to play games:

www.phonicsplay.co.uk

www.letters-and-sounds.com

www.ictgames.co.uk

www.crickweb.co.uk/ks1literacy.html#ww

www.starfall.com

www.kenttrustweb.org.uk/kentict/content/games/soundsea_v3.html

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/ks1/literacy/phonics/play/popup.shtml>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/laac/words/dgi.shtml>

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/clifford1/flash/phonics/index.htm>

www.mrthornedoesphonics.co.uk

To hear the phonemes:

www.mumsnet.com/learning/phonics/listen-to-the-44-phonics-sounds

www.phonicsinternational.com