

Word Families/Letter Combinations

Wisconsin State Standards

Reading:
Foundational Skills
– Phonics & Word
Recognition

Grade Level
K-5

Purpose

Use with students to support phonics and word recognition: explicitly teach word families/letter combinations to facilitate decoding

When to Use

Before Reading
During Reading
After Reading

Grouping

Whole Group
Small Group
Partners
Individuals

ABOUT THE STRATEGY

Teaching phonics through WORD FAMILIES/LETTER COMBINATIONS is one way to help students apply decoding skills to unknown words. To use this strategy, students are taught word families, spelling patterns, and onsets and rimes of words. Students practice reading these word families/letter combinations both in isolation and in context. Students should be taught these word families/letter combinations through direct and explicit instruction and they should also be embedded into the text that they read and into spelling instruction. Educational games can also be used to help students practice decoding unknown words and to reinforce the application of previously taught word families/letter combinations. For additional information about Reading: Foundational Skills, see Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts Appendix A, pages 17-22 (http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_A.pdf).

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY

- Select the word families/letter combinations to specifically teach.
- Tell students that they are going to learn to read common word families/letter combinations that appear in several words.
- Review the word families/letter combinations that you are going to teach. Model how they are pronounced.
- Model how to read the word families/letter combinations in isolation and in words. For example, “The –at combination says /at/. Words that have –at in them include cat, hat, bat, sat. What other words have the –at combination in them?”
- Repeat the tasks until students can decode the target word families/letter combinations with accuracy.
- Once students understand the concept, create a more game-like situation to practice reading word families/letter combinations.

MEASURING PROGRESS

- Teacher observation
- Conferencing
- Informal decoding/word families assessment

RESEARCH

Bursuck, W. D., & Damer, M. (2011). *Teaching reading to students who are at risk or have disabilities: A multi-tier approach* (2nd Ed). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Gaskins, I. W., Downer, M. A., Anderson, R. C., Cunningham, P. M., Gaskins, R. W., & Schommer, M. (1988). A metacognitive approach to phonics: Using what you know to decode what you don't know. *Remedial and Special Education*, 9, 36-41.

Vaughn, S., & Linan-Thompson, S. (2004). *Research-based methods of reading instruction: Grades K-3*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Word Families/Letter Combinations

List of common word families/letter combinations with example words to directly teach.

ack attack back black	add bad clad glad	ail fail hail pail	ain brain chain explain	ake awake bake flake	ale bale male scale
all ball fall install	am dram exam slam	ame game name shame	an fan man span	ank bank drank prank	ap lap rap scrap
ar far guitar scar	ash flash mash thrash	at gnat pat that	ate crate debate plate	aw claw jaw straw	ay away display play
eat beat meat wheat	eel feel kneel wheel	eep keep sheep sweep	eet feet sheet sweet	ell dwell sell smell	en hen open when
ent event scent vent	est best quest west	ice dice slice twice	ick brick quick slick	ide bride slide wide	ife knife life strife
ight bright knight slight	ile mile smile while	ill dill mill thrill	in chin pin spin	ine fine shrine twine	ing bring spring thing
ink drink mink stink	ip chip hip strip	it knit quit split	oat boat goat throat	ock crock knock smock	og log frog smog
oil broil foil spoil	oke bloke poke stroke	oo (rhymes with too) boo too zoo	ood (rhymes with hood) good hood wood	ood (rhymes with food) brood food mood	oof (rhymes with proof) proof roof spoo
oof (rhymes with hoof) hoof woof	ook book crook took	oom bloom gloom room	ool cool spool tool	oon moon noon spoon	oop droop loop snoop
oot (long oo) boot scoot shoot	oot (short oo) foot soot	op chop drop shop	ore chore more swore	orn adorn corn thorn	ot forgot knot spot
ought bought sought wrought	ould could should would	ouse house mouse spouse	out about scout trout	ow (rhymes with cow) chow plow vow	ow (rhymes with low) blow show throw

own crown frown gown	uck duck pluck truck	ug bug mug smug	ump dump plump thump	un fun shun sun	unk dunk plunk trunk
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Wylie, R. E., & Durrell, D. D. (1970). *Teaching vowels through phonograms*. *Elementary English*, 47, 787-791.