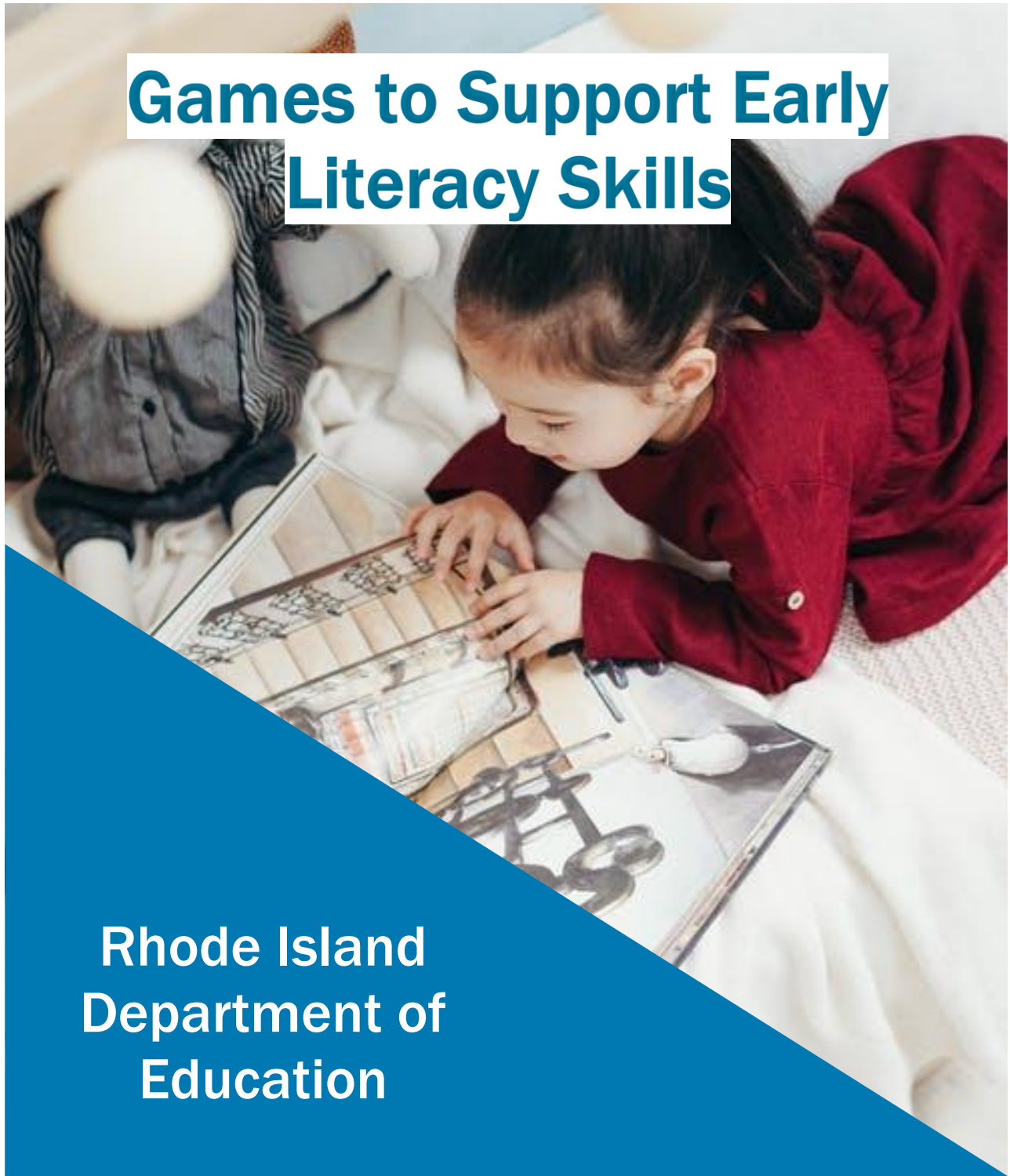


Games to Support Early Literacy Skills



Rhode Island
Department of
Education

Welcome to our guide to building early literacy skills while having lots of family fun!

A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) has assembled this resource of games and activities that can be played at home to help boost early reading skills. There are games for pre-readers, early readers, and older students to develop skills to improve reading and comprehension.

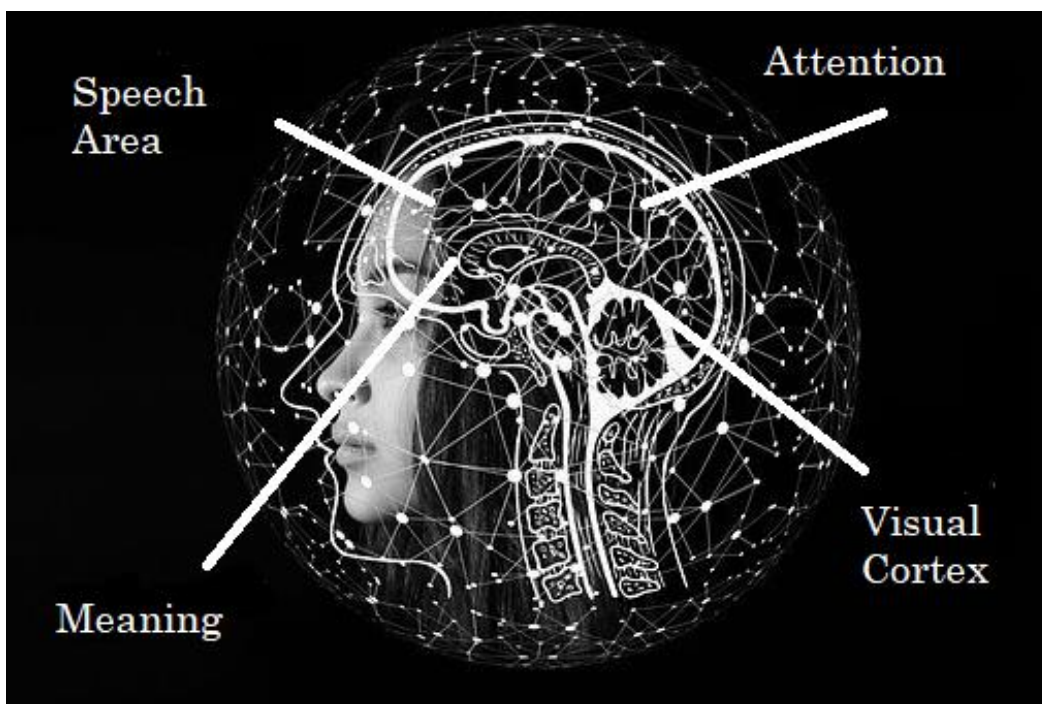
Many separate skills must be developed for a child to become a skilled reader. In this resource, you will find games to build each of these skills! These games can be adapted and changed as a child's ability grows. Be creative! Most importantly, have fun!

At the end of this resource, there is a section with word banks and optional resources for families who wish to learn more about reading.

Here's to spending time with family and friends while building important pre-reading and reading skills!

Reading to young children has many positive benefits including understanding text structure, and developing their vocabulary. However, reading to children alone is not enough for them to become skilled readers themselves.





HOW WE LEARN TO READ

Reading is not a natural process.

To read, we must build the new neural routes to connect areas of our brain used to see, speak, and understand the meaning of words.



The best way to build these
pathways
is to develop skills in:

Reading the words on the page

or

Decoding

Knowing what those words mean

or

Language Comprehension

*Children must develop skills in both of
these areas in order to become skilled readers
([Gough and Tunmer](#), 1986).*

In this resource, you will find games
and activities to do with your child that
will set them up for success in both
decoding and **language comprehension**.

READING THE WORDS ON THE PAGE

(DECODING)

Kids will love spending time playing these quick games, and you will be amazed to see the positive impact they will have on their early reading abilities.

- **Section 1:** Games to Understand that Words are Made of Sounds
- **Section 2:** Games to Attach Sounds to Letters

UNDERSTANDING THE WORDS BEING READ

(LANGUAGE COMPREHENSION)

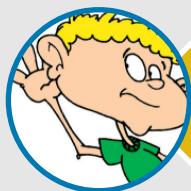
These games can be enjoyed by younger children as well as their older siblings. Even adult family members will love getting involved in the fun improvisation games!

- **Section 3:** Games to Build Vocabulary
- **Section 4:** Games to Build Background Knowledge

Here are some words that may be helpful to know:



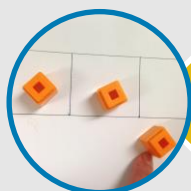
Decoding - The process of reading words on a page. Decoding develops best when a child practices breaking down words into single speech sounds, then practices attaching them to letters one letter-sound at a time.



Phoneme: One sound within a word. The word *teach* has three phonemes: /t/ /ē/ and /ch/.



Phonological Awareness: Being aware that words are made of sounds.



Phonemic Awareness: Under the “umbrella” of phonological awareness, phonemic awareness is being aware of the single sounds in words that blend together to create the word.



Phonics: Attaching single speech-sounds to letters or groups of letters that make one sound.



Phonogram: A letter or group of letters that together makes one sound unit. Ex: <a> is a phonogram that can say long /ā/ as in *acorn* or short /ă/ as in *cat*, <ai>, <ay> <ei> and <eigh> are all phonograms that can say long /ā/. See Resource H for more.

Levels:

On the bottom of each page is a shape. The shape indicates if the game is intended for the following levels of readers:



Please note that games intended for pre-readers will still be beneficial for children who are beginning to read, or who are not yet decoding grade level texts.

Additionally, pages with an oval on the bottom are games that can be tailored to readers of all ages, or are well-suited for readers of all ages.

Games to Understand that Words are Made of Sounds

A *very* important pre-reading skill is developing the awareness that words themselves are made of speech sounds. Children can then begin to break words down to hear and produce word parts including syllables and beginning and ending parts of words also called *onsets* and *rimes*.

After practicing these larger word parts, children should be guided to understand that words are made of single sounds that are put together to create a word. Playing games that develop an awareness of these individual sounds without the presence of letters is an essential building block to reading!



For this game, it is helpful to have a device such as a toy, computer, or smartphone that can play sounds.

How to Play:

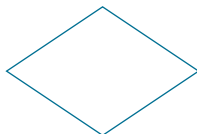
Play a sound for your child on the computer or phone. The sound can be anything from an animal sound like a pig going “oink,” to a crowd cheering, to the sound of an ice cream truck. Your child will have to guess what the sound is.

Examples of other sounds:

- Bell ringing
- Car horn
- Horse galloping
- Dog barking
-

Rationale: This game helps develop a connection between sounds and their connected meanings.

Source: [Sight Words](#)





Where is the sound?

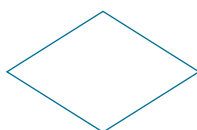
For this game, it is helpful to have objects that make noise (e.g., spoon and glass, coins in a plastic cup, a bell).

How to Play:

Use an object or a toy to play a sound. While the sound is being played, give your child a brief “thumbs up,” during one part of the sound, then put your hand down. After, ask your child if you held up your thumb during the beginning, middle, or end of the sound.

Rationale: This game helps students understand that like a word, many sounds have a beginning, middle, and end. This will help develop the terminology that you will be using when students are ready to move on to identifying specific speech sounds within a word.

Source: [Sight Word](#).





For this game, it is helpful to have sets of words that begin with the same letter and sets that begin with different letters

How to Play:

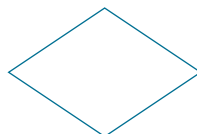
You will tell your child two words or show them two objects. If the two words start with the same sound, your child will put their thumb up. If the words do not start with the same sound, they will put their thumb down.

Examples:

Thumbs UP	Thumbs DOWN
T urtle and T op	T urtle and D og
B all and B ox	B all and P ail
C at and K itten	C at and M ouse
C hair and C hin	C hair and C ar
A pple and A lligator	A pple and A pe
T humb and T hirty	T humb and H and

Rationale: This helps your child develop the awareness of sounds within a word, an important pre-reading skill.

Source: Scholastic [Phonological Awareness Activities](#)





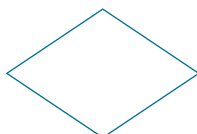
For this game, it is helpful to have objects around your house.

How to Play:

Player One asks Player Two to find something in the house that begins with a specific letter sound. For example, they can say "Find something in the house that begins with the sound /sh/," and player two may bring them a shoe.

Next, Player Two asks Player One to bring them an object that begins with the sound ____.

Rationale: This is a fun and active way to develop your child's understanding of beginning sounds in a word.





I Spy

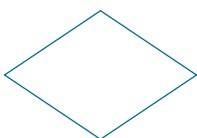
How to Play:

This game can be played in the house, in the car, while you are shopping, or anywhere!

Play the classic “I Spy” game with letter names or letter sounds. First, pick an object that you will have the player guess. Think of the beginning sound of that word. Next, say “I spy with my little eye, something that begins with a /_/ (insert the sound of the first letter). The player will then look around and guess until they discover the correct answer. Then, players will switch roles.

Once a child gets good with the beginning sound you can play “I Spy” with middle or ending sounds, or with rhyming words.

Rationale: This game helps children separate sounds within a word, an important precursor to phonics and reading.





Syllable Counting Treasure Chest

For this game, it is helpful to have a “Treasure Chest” (a box) with everyday household items or toys inside

How to Play:

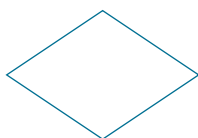
An adult fills a “treasure chest” full of household items or toys. They say to the child, “Inside this treasure chest are lots of things with names that you know. When it’s your turn, reach in and take something out. Then clap the syllables as you say the word.”

The child takes an object out and says the name of it while clapping each syllable. For example, if it is a toy dinosaur, they would say di (clap) no (clap) saur (clap).

Examples of other objects with multisyllabic names: balloon, sharpener, stapler, calculator, candlestick, eraser, napkin, lollipop, frisbee, tablecloth

Rationale: This game helps children separate syllables in words, an important pre-reading skill!

Source: [Speech to Print, 3rd Edition by Dr. Louisa Moats](#)





Rhyme Challenge

For this game, it is helpful to have a timer.

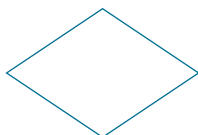
How to Play:

The first person says, “I challenge you to think of as many words that you can that rhyme with the word ____.” The other player has one minute to think of as many words. Once you tally the words that correctly rhyme with the word, it is now that other player's turn to pick a word to challenge.

Examples of words that are easy to rhyme: bag, ball, day, bat, fly, nose, bike, mop, cup, box, rake, pan, car, train, pink, goat, sit, pig, night, flash, and bee.

Rationale: Rhyming is an important way to understand onsets and rimes to hear similar vowel sounds in groups of words.

Source: [Scholastic Rhyme Game For Kids.](#)





Silly Caesar

How to Play:

An adult says words very slowly, syllable by syllable, and the child must listen closely to put the word together. The adult says “Silly Caesar speaks very slowly. What word is Silly Caesar saying?”

Example words to use:

Ta-ble

Hos-pit-al

Tan-ger-ine

Fire-truck

Play-ground

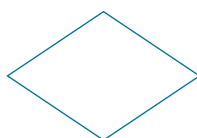
Wat-er-fall

Tel-e-vis-ion

Re-frig-er-a-tor

Rationale: This game asks children to attend to the sound of a word and blend sounds to create real words.

Source: [Speech to Print, 3rd Edition by Dr. Louisa Moats](#)





Blending Sounds...

For this game, it is helpful to have a list of single-syllable words, and tokens, block, coins, or other objects to keep track of speech sounds.

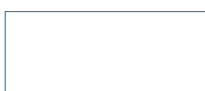
How to Play:

Begin with a closed-syllable word (Resource A). Give your child the three sounds in the word. Use a finger, block, small toy, chip, coin, or other such token to keep track of the sounds as you produce them one at a time. Have your child repeat the sounds and blend the sounds together until they hear the word it represents. As your child gets better at this, you may remove the tokens and allow them to blend the sounds on their own. You may also move on from closed-syllable words. No matter what the word, however, it is important to think in terms of sounds and not letters. For example, the word <knight> only has three sounds: /n/ /i/ /t/ despite it being spelled with six letters, and the word <box> has four sounds: /b/ /ɒ/ /k/ /s/ despite it being spelled with three letters.

Example: What word do you get when you put the following sounds together? /d/ (point to first block) /ɒ/ (point to second block) /g/ (point to third block). The child then repeats the sounds while pointing to the blocks and blends until they hear the word <dog>.

To see an example of this game being played, click [here](#).

Rationale: Being able to manipulate single sounds of words is an important building block for reading!





For this game, it is helpful to have a list of single- syllable words, tokens, block, coins, or other objects to keep track of speech sounds.

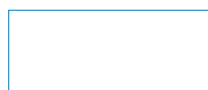
How to Play:

Begin with a closed-syllable word (Resource A). This process is the opposite of the blending sounds activity. For this activity, say the word aloud for your child and ask them to say each sound in a word one at a time while pointing to a block, chip, small toy, or other token. If you are in the car, the child can even use their fingers to keep track! At first, let them know how many sounds the word has so they can keep track. Just as with the blending activity, as the child progresses beyond closed-syllables words, continue to keep in mind that you are tracking *sounds* and not letters.

Example: What are the sounds in the word <dog>? Child points to the first token (or puts out first finger) and says /d/, child points to the second token and says /ŏ/, child points to the third token and says /g/.

To see an example of this game being played, click [here](#).

Rationale: Being able to manipulate single sounds of words is an important building block for reading!





Deleting Sounds...

For this game, it is helpful to have words in which you can take one sound out and it still remains a word your child will know. A sample list is in Appendix D.

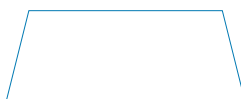
Before playing this game: Students should show an understanding of blending and segmenting sounds without the use of tokens or manipulatives before moving on to deleting sounds.

How to Play:

Use a list of words from Appendix D or a book of Phonemic Awareness activities. Say the word aloud, then have your child repeat the word. Then, ask them to repeat the word without the phoneme (single speech sound) listed in the directions. All of the choices provided within Appendix D are real words before and after the phoneme is deleted. Children can keep track of the sounds on their fingers if it is helpful, but they should not be looking at the letters or words. Example: Say *spoon*, now say *spoon*, but do not say /p/ (The answer is *soon*).

To see an example of this game being played, click [here](#).

Rationale: Being able to manipulate single sounds of words is an important building block for reading!





For this game, it is helpful to have a list of words in which you can change one sound and it still remains a word your child will know.

A sample list is in Appendix E.

Before playing this game: Students should show an understanding of blending, segmenting, and deleting sounds without tokens or manipulatives before moving on to substituting sounds.

How to Play:

Use a list of words from Appendix E or a book of Phonemic Awareness activities. Say the word aloud, then have your child repeat the word. Then, ask them to repeat the word, but instead of one of the phonemes (single speech sound) in the word, you will ask them to replace it with a different phoneme.

All of the choices provided within Appendix E are real words before and after the phoneme is changed. Children can keep track of the sounds on their fingers or with tokens, but they should not be looking at the letters or words. Example: Say *crib*, now say *crib*, but instead of /i/, say /ă/ (The answer is *crab*).

To see an example of this game being played, click [here](#).

Rationale: Phoneme (single-sound) substitution is a complicated process in which students must segment, isolate, delete, substitute, then re-blend words. Being able to manipulate sounds in such a complex manner is a *great* workout for those important reading routes in the brain!





Pig Latin

This game is for children who are able to successfully manipulate phonemes. Pig Latin can be a tricky (but fun!) skill to master.

How to Play:

First, practice single words by “translating” them into Pig Latin. To do so, take a word like “Hello” and remove the first consonant, H. Next, put the consonant at the end of the word and add the vowel <ay> afterwards. The result is ello-Hay. If the word does not begin with a consonant, you can simply add <ay> to the end of the word. After you practice with individual words, move on to challenging yourself to speak entire sentences of Pig Latin!

Examples of translated sentences:

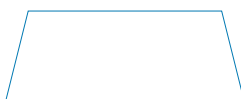
Hello, my name is Kareem.
ello-Hay, y-may ame-nay is-ay areem-Kay.

I am in third grade.
I-ay am-ay in-ay ird-thay ade-gray.

My favorite food is macaroni and cheese.
y-May avorite-fay ood-fay is-ay acaroni-may and-ay eese-chay.

Rationale: Being able to manipulate single sounds of words is an important building block for reading!

Source: [Speech to Print, 3rd Edition by Dr. Louisa Moats](#)



Games to Practice Attaching Sounds to Letters

Once children develop some understanding that words are made of sounds, it's time to practice attaching those sounds to letters! This skill is referred to as *phonics*, and is a very important steppingstone to reading. Children should start off with the simplest words that are spelled with a consonant-vowel-consonant pattern in which the vowel sound is short (Resource A), then move on to words with a silent <e> at the end that makes the vowel sound long (Resource B), then continue to more complicated sound-letter patterns including those where the vowel sound changes because it is followed by an <r> (Resource C). Students should practice reading words with these spelling patterns in controlled, [decodable texts](#).



Hopscotch

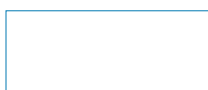
For this game, it is helpful to have sidewalk chalk.

How to Play:

Everyone loves to play hopscotch. Draw a Hopscotch board outside and choose one of the activities below!

- Instead of numbers, write letters in each square. As the child jumps, they should name the sound that each letter makes.
- Write words in each box. The child can read the word or tell you a rhyming word as they jump.

Rationale: Seeing visual boxes that represent that individual sounds or letters are separate units helps develop their phonemic awareness and letter-name knowledge. Using rhyming words helps develop children's phonological awareness.





Chaining...

For this game, it is helpful to have chalk and chalkboard, a dry-erase board, letter tiles, letter magnets, paint sample sheets, paper and pencil, letter blocks, or letter stickers.

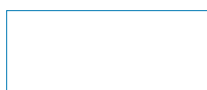
How to Play:

The adult begins by writing a closed syllable word (Resource A) on a piece of paper, dry erase board, or uses letter magnets, blocks, or stickers. The child then changes one letter at a time to create a new word until you cannot make a word any more. When your chain is complete, start a new one!

Example: dog -> dig -> big -> bit -> sit -> sat and on and on!

Additionally, you can do this activity without the presence of letters to practice phonemic (sound) awareness.

Rationale: This activity builds on phonemic awareness activities. Since children now know that words are made of sounds, they can see how they attach to letters, and how words can change by simply changing one letter in the word!





For this game, it is helpful to have an empty can or container, popsicle sticks, and a marker.

How to Play:

Write words that your child is able to decode on fifteen popsicle sticks.

On the remaining five sticks, write the word SPARKLE (you can replace the word sparkle for a simpler word such as bam or pop for early readers).

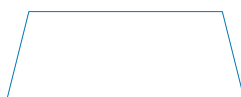
The first player picks a popsicle stick out of the can without looking.

The child then looks at the stick and reads the word.

If the player reads the word correctly, they keep the popsicle stick. If the player gets the word SPARKLE, all of the other players must put their popsicles sticks back in the can, or in a pile on the side for a shorter game.

The player with the most popsicle sticks at the end wins.

For more advanced readers, a child can respond with a rhyming word.





Sand Tray

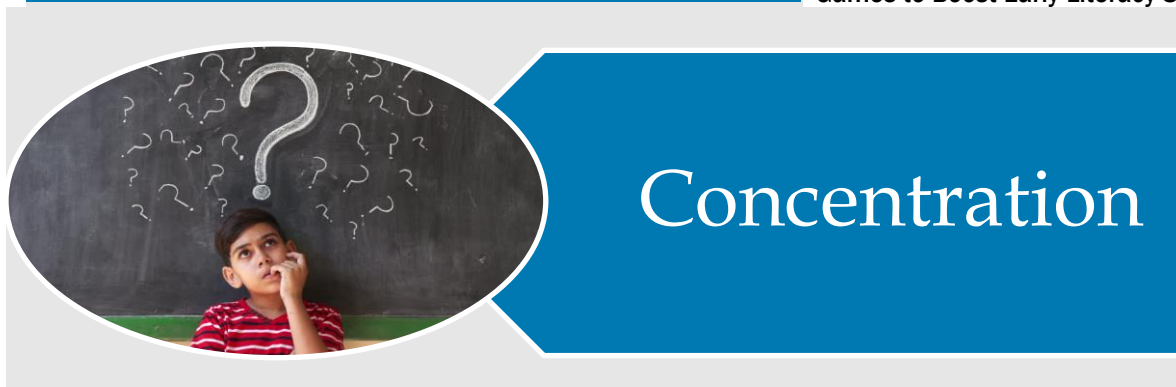
For this game, it is helpful to have index cards and a tray of sand, shaving cream, or whipped cream.

How to Play:

Write a letter or group of letters that a child has recently learned on a flash card. (Consider using this [checklist](#) to keep track of learned sound-spelling patterns to keep track of your child's progress). The child writes the phonogram in the tray of sand, or in shaving cream, whipped cream, or on sand paper. While the child is writing each letter with their finger, they should say the sound the letter(s) make at the same time.

Rationale: Types of exercises in which students use many senses at once are called multisensory. Using multiple senses to learn letter names and sounds is great for developing reading routes in the brain! In this activity, they are using touch while simultaneously speaking and hearing the sound.





For this game, it is helpful to have index cards, a pen, and a list of words.

How to Play:

First, create two piles of 10 index cards with closed syllable words (Resource A) written on them. They should be the same 10 words in each pile. Next, shuffle the decks together and place them face down on the table into two rows.

One person at a time flips over two cards. The player reads the words. If the two index cards have the same word, it's a match! The player keeps the cards and gets another turn. If the player turns over two cards that do not match, they read the words and then turn them back over and it is the next person's turn.

The person with the most cards wins!

When a student masters the closed-syllable deck, they can move on to more challenging words found in Resources B and C.

Rationale: This game asks students to read the word, while also holding the location of the word in their mind. Doing multiple processes while reading helps build executive functioning skills.





For this game, it is helpful to have the game of Twister, tape, and index cards.

How to Play:

To play, write words at the child's independent reading level on index cards and tape them to each color circle on the mat. Then, spin the arrow. When the player spins a color, they must spell and read the word. Begin with closed-syllable words, then progress forward to more challenging VCe and R-controlled words.

Variation: For beginning readers, attach a letter card to each circle. Ask students to read the letter name, or provide the letter's sound. For more advanced students, you can attach a more challenging sound-symbol association found in Resource J.

Rationale: This is a great way to stay active while reading and is particularly beneficial for high-energy kids who may struggle to sit and read for longer periods of time.

Source and Picture: momto2poshlildivas.blogspot.com





Race to the top

For this game, it is helpful to have a game template (Resource F), a die and two different colored pencils, pens, markers, or crayons.

How to Play:

First, print out the “Race to the Top” game board from Resource F, or create a similar board on a piece of paper. On the bottom row, write the six words that you want your child to practice decoding.

Player 1 rolls the die. Player one then reads the word in the column that corresponds with the number rolled.

In the empty row above, Player 1 writes the word they dictated in the same column. Ask the child to say the sounds of each letter as they write the word.

Player 2 rolls and repeats the process.

The person with the most words on the top row is the winner.

Rationale: This game not only is a fun way for students to decode and spell words of your choosing, but it also is a great way to practice counting and turn-taking.





For this game, it is helpful to have magnetic letters, a magnetic board (refrigerators and cookie trays work well too!), and index cards.

How to Play:

An adult writes several words on index cards or pieces of paper. The child then uses the magnetic letters to spell the words. As the child is spelling the word, have them say the sounds of the letters they are using to build the words.

Words can be real, or you can be silly by making up new words! If the word is a closed syllable word, be sure they are saying a short vowel sound. If the vowel is at the end of the word, be sure the student is reading it as a long vowel. You can follow these and other rules by reading the Resources section at the end of this document.

Rationale: By including nonsense-words, you are ensuring that your child knows the rules of decoding and is not memorizing words by sight. Knowing and applying rules of the six syllable types helps children become proficient readers!





For this game, it is helpful to have three different-colored pens, markers, or pencils and lined paper.

How to Play:

An adult dictates a word for the child to spell. The child starts off by writing the words you choose in pencil. While they are writing the letters, they should say the letter sounds.

The child then writes over the words that they wrote in pencil with three different color pencils. Each time they are tracing over the letters they are saying the letter sounds as they write.

Rationale: Incorporating color and art is a great way to engage children to apply their phonics skills! This is also another example of using multiple modalities (writing and speaking) to reinforce phonics skills in a multisensory way!





For this game, it is helpful to have papers or index cards with letters or advanced phonograms that your child knows (Resource G) written on them, tape, and a toy gun with foam pellets (Nerf® or similar).

How to Play:

First, write letters that your child knows the sounds for on squares of paper or index cards. Next, assemble the papers on the wall and affix them with tape.

Children aim and hit the phonograms with a pellet and say the sound of the letter or phonogram that the pellet lands on.

Rationale: Sound walls are a powerful resource that have been most often used by speech and language pathologists. Many teachers are now incorporating them into their classrooms so students can strengthen their phonics *and* spelling skills! For more information on sound walls, please visit [Pam Kastner's Sound Wall Padlet](#).





Snakes and Ladders

For this game, it is helpful to have a printable game template (Resource G) and a die.

How to Play:

First, print out a copy of the board template and write words that you would like your child to practice reading in each of the boxes.

This game is played just like the game board version except you are adding words! Player one rolls the die and moves that many spaces. The player reads the word that they land on. Then it is the next player's turn.

If the player lands on a ladder, they move their piece up to the top of the ladder. If they land on a slide, the player moves their piece to the bottom of the slide.

The first one that gets to the last spot first wins!

Rationale: This is an educational twist on a classic game. Parents can control the words on the board. This may be a good time to introduce high frequency words with irregular spelling patterns such as *the*, *of*, *said*, and *love*. Be sure to teach students to look at the sound-letter patterns they do know, and do not guide them to recognize letters by sight. Really Great Reading's [Heart Word](#) approach is an excellent way to teach these words.



Games to Build Vocabulary

Research shows that the depth of students' vocabulary knowledge is an important indicator of their future reading success. It's fun to learn and practice new words with family and friends, and the benefits of learning new words will pay off exponentially as students learn to read! The best way to learn vocabulary is reading to your children, or allowing them access to audiobooks where they see and hear the text simultaneously, but you can supplement this with the following games to practice words you've learned!





What's in the bag?

For this game, it is helpful to have a bag and objects around the house.

How to Play:

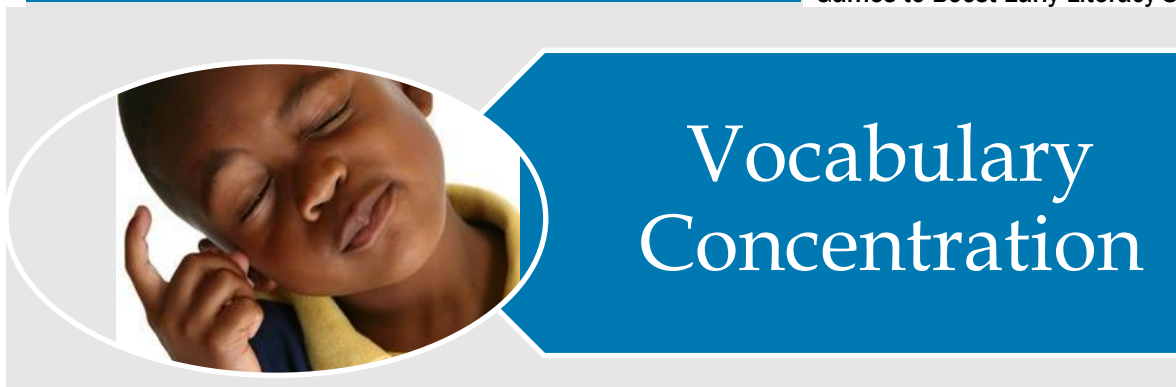
First, a player places a mystery object inside a bag and stands in front of the other players. They give the other players three hints to guess what is inside the bag. For example, if there is an orange inside the bag they may say, “It is a fruit, it grows on a tree, and you have to peel it to eat it.”

The other players try to guess the contents of the bag. Other clues may be given as needed.

The first person to guess what is inside the bag gets a turn to put a mystery object inside the bag and give clues!

To see an example of how this game is played, click [here](#).





For this game, it is helpful to have Index cards and something to write with.

How to Play:

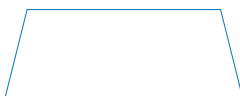
On one index card, write a vocabulary word. On a separate index card, have the child draw a picture (or tell you what to draw if they are too young for this) of what the word represents.

Next, shuffle the cards and in neat rows, set up your cards with the pictures and words face down.

When it is your turn, turn two cards over. If the two cards you get are a match (one card has the vocabulary word and the other card has the picture of the meaning), put the match in a pile and allow the other player to go. If they are not a match, turn them back over, and the other player takes a turn. The person that has the most cards at the end is the winner.

To see an example of this game being played, click [here](#).

Variation: Instead of a picture, players can also write a sentence in which the vocabulary word is missing. For example, if the word was *curious*, you could write: The _____ boy could not help but sneak an early peek at his birthday present.





Synonym or Antonym Concentration

For this game, it is helpful to have index cards and a list of synonyms or antonyms.

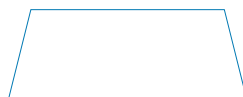
How to Play:

First, write a pair of synonyms (words that mean the same) or antonyms (words that are the opposite) on index cards. The level of difficulty of vocabulary can vary with age.

Next, shuffle the cards and place them upside down in two piles.

Finally, when it is your turn, turn two cards over. If the two cards you get are a match, put the matched pair in a pile and allow the other player to go. If they are not a match, turn them back over and the other player takes a turn. The person that has the most cards at the end is the winner.

Example Synonym Pairs	Example Antonym Pairs
Big / Large	Large / Small
Scared / Frightened	Scared / Brave
Small / Tiny	Miniscule / Gigantic
Cold / Frigid	Cold / Hot
Happy / Cheerful	Happy / Sad
Fast / Speedy	Fast / Slow
Short / Miniscule	Tall / Short
Hungry / Ravenous	Hungry / Full
Mad / Angry	Up / Down





Around the table

For this game, it is helpful to have a list of vocabulary words you want your child working on and chairs around the house.

How to Play:

First, set up five to six different chairs in your house. They could be all in one room or you can have your child move to different chairs in the house.

Next, tell your child a word. You can ask your child to either tell you the definition of the word, antonym, or synonym.

If your child is correct, they should move onto the next chair. If they are not, they stay in that chair.

Your child's goal is to make it to the last chair with the fewest errors.

You can play this game with one child or a few to make it a competition!





Hink Pinks

For this game, it is helpful to have a list of Hink Pinks. Some can be found in Resource H. Many other Hink Pinks can be found online!

How to Play:

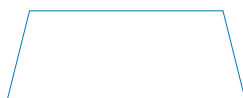
This fun word puzzle game can be challenging even for the grown-ups in the house! One player has a list of the “Hink Pinks,” or phrases that can be expressed using synonyms that rhyme.

For example, one person would give the clue: “A clean road”

The participant(s) then challenge themselves to come up with a synonym for clean and a synonym for road that rhyme with one another. For this Hink Pink, the answer is “neat street.” The first player to come up with the answer gets a point!

This is a great way to challenge any word-loving kids, and an excellent way to develop vocabulary and practice with synonyms!

List of Hink Pinks available in Resource H.





For this game, it is helpful to have several morpheme matrices, paper, and a pen

How to Play:

The English Language is morpho-phonemic, meaning words are made up of sounds, but also smaller units of words that carry meaning. These words are called morphemes. A *great* way to develop your child’s vocabulary is by studying these morphemes and seeing how they can be put together to create words.

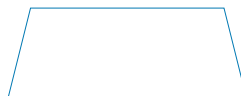
In a morpheme matrix, the base word is in the middle column, prefixes are listed in the first column, and suffixes are listed in the final column. Players should each receive a copy of the word matrix and compete to see how many real words they can make from the matrix!

For example, in the matrix to the right, players can create many words including: abruptly, bankrupted, corrupt, disruption, erupting, erupts, interrupted, and irruption.

bank		
ab	rupt (to break)	ed
cor		ible
dis		ing
e		ion
inter		ly
ir		s

Examples of matrices available in Resource K.

More word matrices can be found on [Pinterest](#), or make your own with the [Mini-Matrix Maker](#).



Games to Build Background Knowledge

The BEST way to build background knowledge is to read non-fiction books and magazines that cover topics including science, history, current events, and biographies. Read books or magazines on a topic together or listen to audiobooks or podcasts to develop content-area knowledge. Once you know about a subject, you can tailor these games to the topic of your choice.



The ABC Game

For this game it, is helpful to have knowledge in a particular topic such as animals, countries, or foods.

How to Play:

During a car ride, dinner table conversation, or another period of down-time, challenge your family to come up with as many examples of a given topic as they can. The catch is, they must go in alphabetical order. For example, if the topic were animals, players may say: Ape, Boar, Chimp, Dog, and so on.

Variations: You can also play this game with names of countries, historical figures, foods, or other topics to build students' background knowledge.





For this game, it is helpful to have background knowledge in a subject.

How to Play:

After you read about a subject as a group, play a game that tests your skill.

First, the questioner should have a person, place, or thing in their mind that they must get the participants to guess. For example, if you have just read about several presidents, you could give clues such as “I’m thinking of a president who gave the Gettysburg Address,” or “I’m thinking of a state that is known as The Ocean State.”

The first person to guess correctly wins!





Yes, and...

For this game, it is helpful to have a creative imagination!

How to Play:

In this classic improv game, children create a story by building off of each other's ideas.

One person begins the story that could include historical figures and/or other factual content that you have learned about. The next player takes a turn that **MUST** begin with "Yes, and _____" in order to continue the idea that the person before them presented.

Participants can NOT say "No" or "But" to someone's ideas, only "Yes, and..."

Be silly and have fun!

To see an example of this game being played, please click [here](#).

Rationale: This game also has social-emotional benefits as it will help children create a frame of mind to help listen to one another's ideas and collaborate to create a story!





Zip, Zap, Zop

For this game, it is helpful to have at least four players.

How to Play:

In the classic game of Zip-Zap-Zop, players stand in a circle. One player begins the game by clapping, pointing to someone around the circle, and saying “Zip.” The player who was pointed to must immediately clap, point to someone new, and say “Zap,” and the player pointed to claps, points to a new person, and says “Zop.” The game continues as players Zip, Zap, and Zop as quickly as possible until one person hesitates.

This game can be amended to be used for letter names, letter sounds, or to solidify background knowledge. For example, the first person can name a state and the next person must name a capital, or players can rapidly name continents, states of matter, phases of the moon in order, or, parts of the water cycle in order. Have fun putting your own creative twists on this game!





Guess who is coming to Dinner?

For this game, it is helpful to have at least four players.

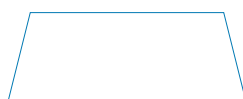
How to Play:

In this game, there is a “host” of a party who welcomes guests into their “party” one at a time.

Before the game begins, each character is assigned an historical figure to be at the party.

The guests enter one at a time. Each of the guests must try to strike up a conversation with the host in which they do not say their name, but they give clues to allow the host to guess who they are! When the host figures it out, they guess by saying “Welcome to the party, _____.” The player lets them know if they are correct or not.

The host wins when they are able to guess all three guests. Silliness and creativity are welcome!





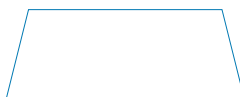
For this game, it is helpful to have at least four players.

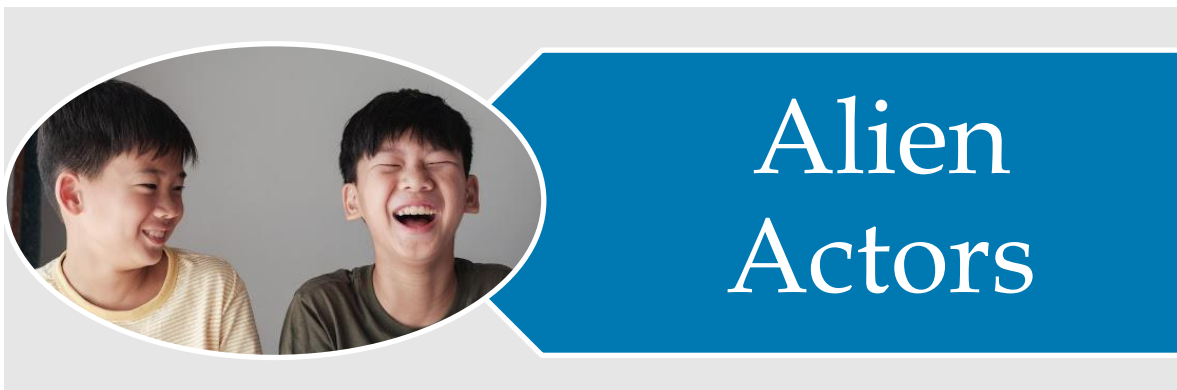
How to Play:

Two groups of at least three players research a person, historical event, scientific concept, or other non-fiction subject. They then generate a fact for each person to present (they can come up with several sets of three for multiple rounds). Two of the facts are true, and one is false.

Players come back to the group and put on their presentation of “facts.” The other group listens in and decides who is telling the truth and who is “Professor Know-it-All” trying to trick them!

The team with the most correct guesses wins.





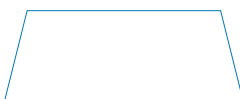
For this game, it is helpful to have a group of at least two players and an audience.

How to Play:

After you have learned about a subject, choose one person to be the alien news anchor, and another to be an interpreter.

The alien will speak gibberish and act out a story that relates to the content you've just learned about, and the news anchor has to interpret the story!

This is even more fun with a group of friends. There can be two actors doing the scene and an interpreter for each actor.





Silly Sentences

For this game, it is helpful to have small pieces of paper and a pen.

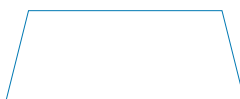
How to Play:

Before the game begins, on small pieces of paper, write several “person” or “thing” nouns with the article “The” before to create the subject of the silly sentence (e.g., The horse, The child, The banana, The foot, The car, The worm, The teacher, The teapot, The kangaroo, The duck). Place these in Pile 1. Next, write several past tense “action” verbs on small pieces of paper. (e.g., ran, carried, tripped, slept, drove, skipped, jumped, danced, sang, sneezed) and place these in a pile. Create a third pile of papers with prepositions written on them (e.g., around, on, above, under, in). Finally, create a fourth pile of papers that have the article “a” written in front of another noun, and explain that these will be the object of the sentence (e.g., a boat, a bathtub, a bed, a swimming pool, a rubber duck, a tree).

Ready to play! Player One takes one piece of paper from each pile to create a silly sentence. They read the sentence to themselves and act the sentence out! As they bring these silly sentences to life, player two gets three chances to guess the sentence. This game can be played with two people, or in teams.

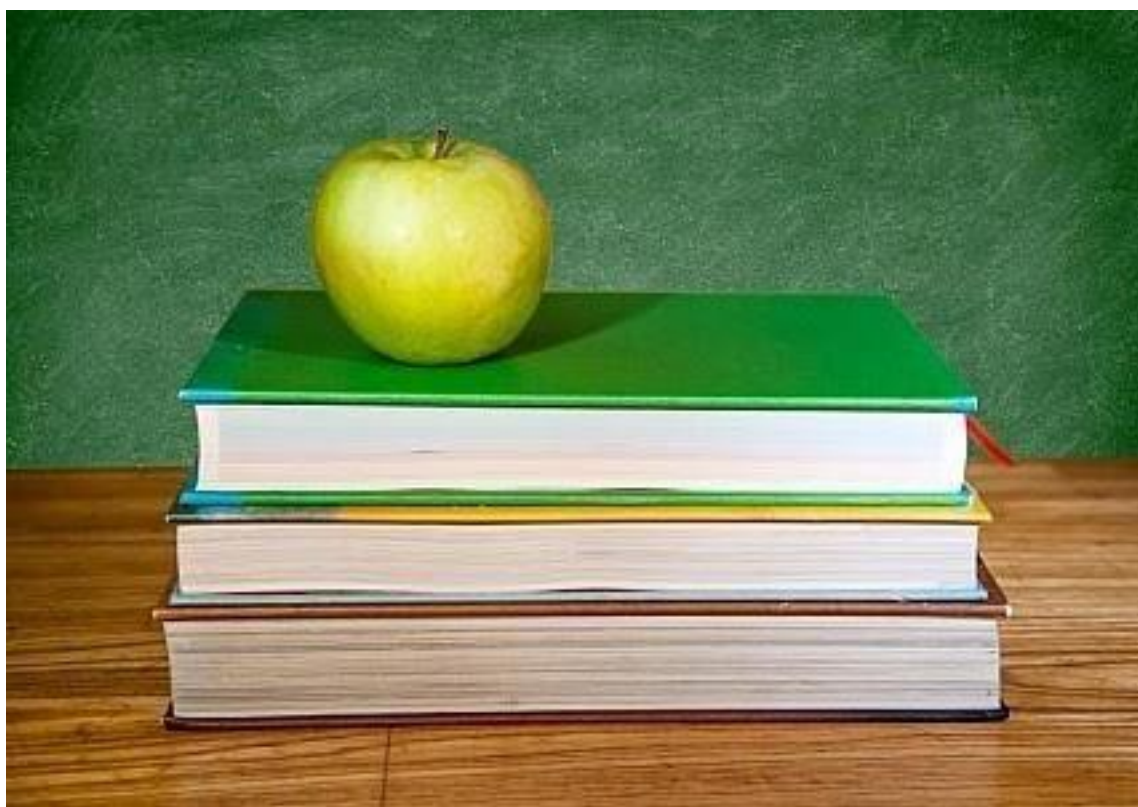
Challenge: Add adverbs to show how they act out the verb (e.g., slowly, bravely, cheerfully, elegantly, angrily, awkwardly), and adjectives to describe the noun of player one’s choice (e.g., silly, smelly, shy, delicious) to make the sentence extra silly!

Rationale: Understanding sentence structure is directly related to being able to understand what you are reading. It is important for older students to be able to speak and write in full sentences so when they come across more complicated sentence structures when they read, it will make sense to them!



Resources

Word Lists and Game Boards



Resource A:

List of closed syllable words:

Bat	Fib	Jab	Rat
Bit	Fin	Kin	Rib
Bun	Fun	Lit	Sob
Bop	Gas	Mat	Sat
Cat	Gum	Met	Sun
Cup	Hip	Nut	Tap
Cut	Hop	Net	Vet
Dot	Hat	Pup	Wat
Dim	Hex	Pod	Yes
Dad	Hut	Rat	Zip

Pro Tip:

These words are often called “closed syllables” as there is a vowel, followed by a consonant that “closes” off the vowel sound. In these words, the vowel sound is short. Students will need to know the short vowel sounds first: /ă/ as in cat, /ĕ/ as in bed, /ĭ/ as in kid, /ŏ/ as in dog, and /ŭ/ as in cut.

Error correction:

If students try to read the words with long vowels, ask them to read it with the short vowel sound instead without giving them the answer yourself. If they know this language, it will help them understand that there are two sounds for each vowel, and will help them apply this knowledge as decoding gets trickier.

Resource B:

List of Vowel-Consonant-e (VCe) words:

Bike	Hide	Nose	Tile
Base	Home	Prize	Tribe
Bake	Joke	Pete	Throne
Chase	June	Rose	Tune
Code	Kite	Race	Vane
Cute	Lone	Rule	Vase
Duke	Mile	Shine	Vote
Drive	Mope	Sole	Wipe
Froze	Mule	Spoke	Wade
Gape	Nice	Tune	Woke

Pro Tip:

In Vowel-Consonant-e words, the silent <e> at the end of the word makes the vowel long. Many resources call this a magic e, in that it makes the vowel say its name.

Error correction:

It is important for students to be able to see the silent <e> at the end of the word, and know that its job is to make the vowel say its name. Call attention to the <e>, make up stories about the importance of its job, talk about the long vowel sounds it makes. Instead of reading the misread word for them, ask students to correct the vowel sound and re-read the word themselves to make sure they are practicing the rules of VCe words themselves!

Resource C:

List of r-controlled syllable words:

Barn	Farm	Sharp	Verb
Birth	Fern	Shark	Worn
Born	Fork	Shirt	Yard
Burn	Germ	Skirt	Yarn
Car	Hard	Sport	
Corn	Herd	Storm	
Curl	Horn	Thorn	
Corn	Hurt	Tarp	
Dark	Nerve	Turn	
Dirt	Pork	Torn	
Dorm	Park	Third	

Pro Tip:

R-controlled syllables contain a “Bossy R.” When this R is AFTER the vowel, it makes the vowel say a new sound. Most commonly, <ar> says /ar/ as in car, <or> says /or/ as in horn, and <er> <ir> and <ur> say /er/ as in her, bird, and burn. If choosing words that are not this list, be sure they follow these regular patterns.

Error Correction:

It may be helpful to have phonogram cards available for your child to refer to. There could be one card for the sound /or/ with the spelling, sound, and a key word, one for the sound /ar/, and one for the sound /er/ that shows all three spellings of that sound with a key word for each. That way, your child can have this as a reference if they have not yet automatized each of their sounds.

Resource D:

Words for phoneme (sound) deletion:

Say *spoon*, now say *spoon* without the /p/

Say *clap*, now say *clap* without the /l/

Say *trip*, now say *trip* without the /r/

Say *sting*, now say *sting* without the /t/

Say *plan*, now say *plan* without the /l/

Say *frog*, now say *frog* without the /r/

Say *stunk*, now say *stunk* without the /t/

Now say *stunk* without the /n/

Say *went*, now say *went* without the /n/

Say *chimp*, now say *chimp* without the /m/

Say *best*, now say *best* without the /s/

Say *rung*, now say *rung* without the /n/

For more deletion activities:

- [Heggerty \(K-2\) English and Spanish](#)
- David Kilpatrick "[Equipped for Reading Success](#)" (2nd grade and up)
- Sounds and Letters for Readers and Spellers: PA Drills (Book)
- Literacy Leaders 10 Minute Drills (Book)
- Free Resources from [Florida Center for Reading](#) (FCRR)
- Road to the Code (Book)
- [The Intensive Phonological Awareness Program](#)

Resource E:

Words for phoneme (sound) substitution:

Initial (first) sounds:

Say *sat*, now say *bat*, but instead of /s/ say /b/

Say *car*, now say *far*, but instead of /c/ say /f/

Say *bank*, now say *tank*, but instead of /b/ say /t/

Say *song*, now say *long*, but instead of /s/ say /l/

Say *try*, now say *cry*, but instead of /t/ say /c/

Medial (middle) sounds:

Say *bat*, now say *bat*, but instead of /ă/ say /ĩ/

Say *red*, now say *red*, but instead of /ě/ say /ö/

Say *trick*, now say *trick*, but instead of /ĩ/ say /ů/

Say *slip*, now say *slip*, but instead of /l/ say /k/

Say *score*, now say *score*, but instead of /c/ say /n/

Final sounds:

Say *cat*, now say *bat*, but instead of /t/ say /b/

Say *map*, now say *map*, but instead of /p/ say /t/

Say *heat*, now say *heat*, but instead of /t/ say /l/

Say *harp*, now say *harp*, but instead of /p/ say /d/

Say *bark*, now say *bark*, but instead of /k/ say /n/

For more deletion activities:

- [Heggerty \(K-2\) English and Spanish](#)
- David Kilpatrick "[Equipped for Reading Success](#)" (2nd grade and up)
- Sounds and Letters for Readers and Spellers: PA Drills (Book)
- Literacy Leaders 10 Minute Drills (Book)
- Free Resources from [Florida Center for Reading](#) (FCRR)
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Resource F

Race to the Top

		cat			
1 dog	2 pig	3 cat	4 red	5 fox	6 cut

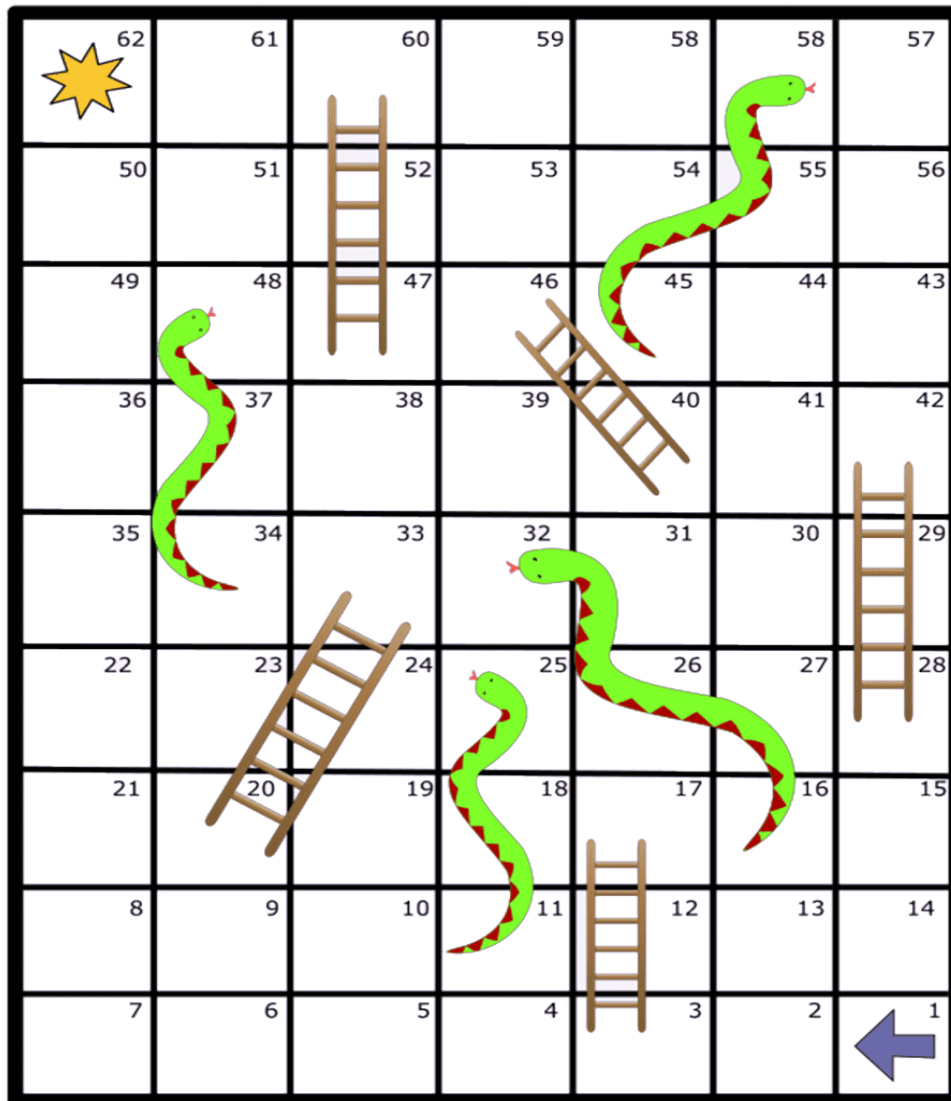
Example: Label columns 1-6 and puts in words that are decodable for the child. The child rolled a “3,” so they went to column three, read the word, then spelled it in the column above sound by sound. If they roll another “3,” they will write cat again. If they roll a 5, they will write “fox” in the box above the bottom row.

Resource G:

Source: [Snakes and Ladders Board Game: Free and Printable Worksheet](#)

Snakes and Ladders

If you land on the bottom of a ladder, you climb up.
But if you land on the head of a snake, you slide down!



Resource H

Hink Pinks

Hink Pink Description	Answer
Move, Female Deer	Go, doe
24 hours with toys	Day play
50% giggle	Half laugh
A cap that got sat on	Flat hat
A sleeping device made out of toast	Bread bed
A sport with fire	Flame game
A washed legume	Clean bean
Rodent home	Mouse house
What the frozen water costs	Ice price
A library thief	Book crook
A run for the money	Cash dash
A flying fear	Flight fright
Footwear adhesive	Shoe glue
Happy father	Glad dad
Final explosion	Last blast
Goofy flower	Silly Lily
Household hair tool	Home comb
Impoverished shop	Poor store
Pastel red kitchen basin	Pink sink
Just-purchased loafers	New shoe
How come tears?	Why cry?
Colorless escargot	Pail snail
Professional enemy	Pro foe

Optional Additional Resources

The next section contains information to further understand the structure of the English language. This is optional for parents wanting to learn more about prompting their early readers when they come across more complex words.



Resource I

There are six *Syllable Types* that words are composed of. You may be interested in using this resource to understand when vowel sounds will be long, short, or controlled by another letter. It is beneficial to teach students to read one syllable-type at a time.

Decoding tools used by students with dyslexia:

The Six Syllable types

Open

Syllable ends in a vowel,
vowel sound is long

nō

Closed

Syllable ends in a consonant,
vowel sound is short

nŏt

Vowel-Consonant-e (VCe)

Syllable ends in a silent e
which makes the vowel sound long.

nōte

R-Controlled

The r 'controls' the vowel and
forces it to make a different sound.

north

(ar, or, er, ir, ur)

Vowel Team (VT)

Two vowels work together to make one sound.
The sound is usually long and often the sound of
the first letter in the vowel team, but there are
exceptions (steak, thief) which are taught explicitly.

need

(ai, ay, ea, oa, etc)

Consonant-le (Cle)

The unaccented final syllable has a consonant followed by an /e/.
It sounds like the e is a schwa /ə/ between the consonant and the /.

noble

Rule Breakers (+)

There are many exceptions to these syllable types including 'Wild Old Kind Ghost' words.



Resource J

This is a list of advanced phonograms (a letter or group of letters that represent one sound) that represent the long vowel sounds. When students come across a word containing them while reading and are unsure how to decode the word, it may be helpful to know these. When they get to a word containing <igh>, for example, they should be able to answer your eliciting question “What does <igh> say?” The answer would be long /ī/.

[RIDE has a checklist of these phonograms that can be accessed by clicking here.](#)

Vowels

“Talkers”

Phonograms that say /ā/ a, a-e, ai (at the beginning or middle of a word), ay (at the end of a word, ea, eigh, ei, ey (at the end of a few single syllable words)

Phonograms that say /ē/ e, e-e, ee, ea, ie (when these two vowels go walking the first one does NOT do the talking!), ei (after a soft c and some exception words), y (at the end of a word), ey (only after about 40 nouns that must be memorized)

Phonograms that say /ī/ i, i-e, igh, y (at the end of some single syllable words), y-e (words that are Greek in origin)

Phonograms that say /ō/ o, o-e, oa, oe (at the end of a word - very rare, must memorize), ow (at the end of a word)

Phonograms that say /ū/ u, u-e, eu (at the beginning or middle of a word), ew (at the end of a word)

Phonograms that say /oo/ u, u-e, ou, ue (usually at the end of a word)

Part II -“Whiners”

Phonograms that say /oy/ oi (at the beginning or middle of a word), oy (at the end of a word)

Phonograms that say /au/ au (at the beginning or middle of a word), aw (at the end of a word or before n, l or k)

Phonograms that say /ow/ ou (at the beginning or middle of a word), ow (at the end of a word or before l, el, er, n or d)

Others:

Phonograms that say /ĕ/ e, ea

Phonograms that say /er/ er, ir, ur, or (at the end of a word or after a w), ar (at the end of a word, often after an l)

Consonants:

Phonograms that say /k/ k, c

Phonograms that say /f/ f, ph (these words are Greek in origin)

Phonograms that say /j/ j, g (before e, i or y), _ge (at the end of a word), _dge (at the end of a word before a short vowel)

Phonograms that say /s/ s, c (before e, i or y)

Phonograms that say /z/ z, s (only when between two vowels or sometimes when used as a suffix)

Resource K:

Morpheme Matrices:

en over	joy "a happy feeling"	able	
		ed	ing
		ful	ly
		ous	ness

de in re	act L. actus, agere: to do	ed	
		ing	s
		ion	s
		or	
	ive	ate	ed
		ity	ing
			s
			es
		ly	

con in oc re	cur "run"	ed	
		ing	s
		ent	ly
		ic	ule
			ar
			um

ad e inter o per sub trans	mit "send"	able	
		al	ed
		s	
		ance	es
non	com	ee	s
sub		ent	ly
un	re	ing	

un	hope "to wish, to desire"	ed	
		ing	s
		ful	ly
		less	ness

circum in pre pro tran	in	de	scribe "To write or something written"	able	
				ed	ing
	over	sub		er	s
	un				

Additional Games from Other Sources:

[Dog on a Log Books](#)

[Florida Center for Reading Research](#)

[National Center on Improving Literacy](#)

[Regional Educational Laboratory at Florida State University](#)

Resources to Learn More about the Science of Reading and Structured Literacy:

[RIDE – Structured Literacy](#)

[International Dyslexia Association – Structured Literacy](#)

[Reading Rockets -The Science of Reading](#)

[IDA Ontario – The Simple View of Reading and Scarborough’s Rope](#)

[Nancy Young’s Ladder of Reading](#)

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