

## The Blending Game

Phonemic awareness is the understanding that spoken language is made up of a series of discrete sounds or *phonemes*. A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in spoken language. It is the /b/ sound in *ball*; the /sh/ sound in *ship*. Phonemic awareness is the strongest most consistent predictor of first grade reading achievement.

BLENDING is an important phonemic awareness skill your child will need when he begins to decode words.

**Set 1** has pictures consisting of 3 sounds. **Set 2** has pictures with 4 sounds and is thus harder.

### How to Play the Blending Game

1. Give the name for each picture in the set to be sure your child is familiar with the vocabulary.
2. Go through the set again and present the pictures like this: "This is a /B/.../U/.../G/ - **BUG**. This is a /D/.../O/.../G/ - **DOG**." Use phoneme sounds, not letter names.
3. Place two cards face up in front of your child and ask him to guess which picture you're thinking of. "Please give me the /C/.../A/.../T/." Remember to use phoneme sounds, not letter names.
4. Your child will blend the sounds together in his mind, choose the correct picture and give it to you. Replace that picture with another one and continue.
5. Keep the 3 sounds close enough together so that your child can easily guess the picture. You may lay out 3 or more pictures to make this initial game more challenging.
6. **Blending Mastery Game.** Place a card face down in front of your child and say, *Listen to the sounds and guess what the picture is.* /D/.../O/.../G/. When he guesses correctly, the picture goes into his pile.
7. Gradually stretch the sounds further and further apart as a challenge. Ex: /D/...../O/...../G/.

*The Blending Game* teaches your child to blend the sounds you give him into a recognizable word. But he is also learning how words can be broken down into their individual sound parts. This is called **SEGMENTATION**. Segmentation is the phonemic awareness skill that most consistently predicts future reading achievement. Your child will eventually be able to segment words after playing *The Blending Game* many times.

Don't ask your child to segment a picture unless you are relatively sure he is ready to do so. If he tries to segment and can't, go back to playing the blending game. If is able to segment the pictures,

then *The Blending Game* is reversed. He is the teacher and you are the "student." This is your ultimate goal.

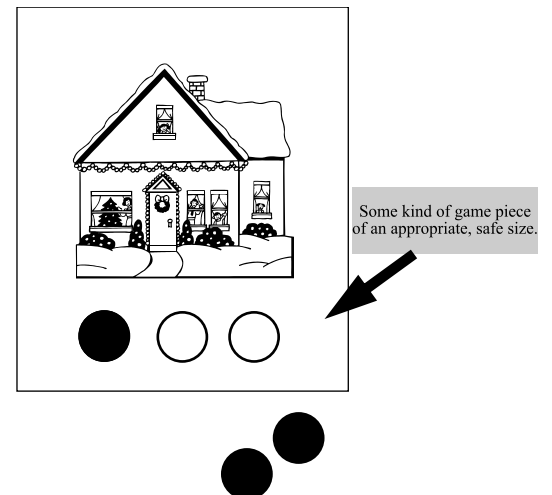
## The Segmentation Game

**Game 1.** Ask your child to be the teacher and hide a picture. He will give you 3 sounds to blend and you'll figure out the "mystery" picture. When he can do this, he has mastered SEGMENTATION which is the most *crucial* phonemic awareness skill for the beginning reader.

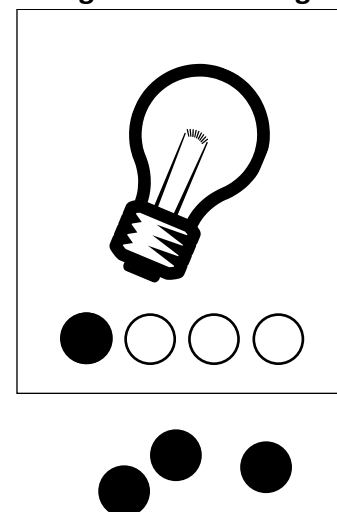
**Game 2.** The student moves game pieces (not included) or pennies or bingo chips into the circles below the picture as he segments the spoken word represented by the picture. See diagrams below.

Remember, *segmentation* is the most crucial skill for beginning readers. Segmentation allows children to understand how spoken language maps onto written language.

### Example of Segmentation using Blending Set 1



### Example of Segmentation using Blending Set 2



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