

Organizing Your Early Reading Program: Games & Activities You Need

Randall Klein

SOUNDS

I. **Preparing the child to understand the alphabetic principle & learn the alphabet**

- A. Materials to model *beginning sound isolation* (BSI)
 - 1. *Beginning Sound Bingo* game
 - 2. A collection of animal figurines
- B. Materials for independent practice of *beginning sound isolation*
 - 1. *Beginning Sound Bingo*
 - 2. *Beginning Sound Matching* game
 - 3. Other phonemic awareness activities that require *beginning sound isolation*.

LETTERS

II. **Helping the child learn the sounds of the letters A-Z by applying the alphabetic principle**

- A. Materials to introduce the alphabetic principle and verify that a student: understands the alphabetic principle; can apply the alphabetic principle.
 - 1. *StandUp Alphabet Cards*
 - 2. Other materials that include both a printed letter and a key picture that indicates the sound of that letter.
- B. A minimum of three or four activities that will allow the child to *independently* match letter symbols to objects or picture cards for each of a multiple of letter clusters
 - 1. Letter cluster #1: **a, g, h, m, s**
 - 1. *StandUp Alphabet Cards*¹
 - 2. *Letter & Picture Sorting* with the *StandUp Alphabet Cards* (pictures facing up)
 - 3. *Letter & picture sorting* with the *StandUp Alphabet Cards* (pictures facing down)
 - 4. *Beginning Sounds & Letters*
 - 5. Matching moveable alphabet letters to pictures with proper placement
 - 6. *Alphabet Mastery Game* (3rd period knowledge)
 - 7. *Letter cards or lists* without picture clues (3rd period knowledge)
 - 8. *Touch & Write papers* (as appropriate)

¹ The teacher should work with the student with cluster #1 *StandUp Alphabet cards* until 2nd period mastery is achieved. Then the child will be able to work independently with the sound-symbol matching activities that follow. Once the student has achieved some measure of fluency and success with cluster #1 activities, he or she will be able to work independently with all subsequent alphabet cluster activities.

2. Letter cluster #2: **c, d, l, o, t**
 1. See activities above.
 2. Activities that combine clusters 1 & 2.
3. Letter cluster #3: **f, i, p, r, u**
 1. See activities above.
 2. Activities that combine any two or more clusters.
4. Letter cluster #4: **e, j, k, n, w**
 1. See activities above.
 2. Activities that combine any two or more clusters.
5. Letter cluster #5: **b, v, y, z, qu, x**
 1. See activities above.
 2. Activities that combine any two or more clusters.

WORDS

III. Preparing the child to understand & apply the alphabetic principle at the word level

- C. Materials to model *phoneme segmentation* (3 sounds)
 1. The Blending Game
- D. Materials to practice phoneme segmentation *independently*
 1. The Blending Game (student plays the role of teacher)
 2. The Faye Game
 3. Point & Slide

IV. Short Vowel Encoding & Decoding—independent application of the alphabetic principle at the word level.

- E. Materials for encoding 3-letter short vowel words²
 1. Word building with *Word Pockets*
 2. Word building with a *Moveable Alphabet*
- F. Materials for decoding 3-Letter short vowel words
 1. Decoding Mastery Game (initial introduction to decoding)
 2. Pictures & Labels
 3. Word Choice
 4. Word Puzzles
 5. Word Cards without Picture Clues
 1. Action Labels
 2. Environment Labels

² “Spelling is reading instruction at the word level.” –Marilyn J. Adams

Encoding words with moveable letters or letter tiles is a kind of spelling activity that teaches the child the structure of words and is direct preparation for the decoding of those words. We begin with the encoding of 3-letter short vowel words and move to short vowel word groupings that require greater phonemic awareness (4-letter and 5-&6-letter short vowel words) and then to words that are grouped by new orthographic features (e.g. the silent E) and multi-letter phonograms (e.g. *ai, sh, oa, etc.*)

3. Other Word Labels (adjectives, adverbs, etc.)
4. Word Lists
6. Word writing slips (as appropriate)
7. Ending Sounds & Letters
8. Middle Vowel Sorting Game
- G. Materials to model/teach *phoneme segmentation* (4 sounds)
 1. The Blending Game
- H. Materials to practice phoneme segmentation *independently*
 1. The Blending Game
 2. The Faye Game
 3. Point & Slide
- I. Materials for encoding & decoding 4-Letter short vowel words
 1. See activities above.
 2. Blended Sounds & Letters
- J. Begin working with high frequency words (Dolch Words).³ See section V.
- K. Materials for encoding & decoding 5 & 6-Letter short vowel words
 1. See activities above.
- L. Materials for encoding & decoding Silent E words
 1. See activities above.
- M. Materials for encoding & decoding phonograms⁴
 1. See activities above.

Sentences (Connected Text & Books)

V. High Frequency Words (Dolch Words)

- N. Materials to teach some high frequency words so the child can begin to read:
 1. Short vowel phrases
 2. Short vowel sentences
 3. Yes. No. Maybe So! (short vowel version)
- O. Dolch Noun Word Cards
- P. High frequency words so the child can begin to read short vowel decodable readers
 1. Example: Primary Phonics Set 1
- Q. Yes. No. Maybe So! (Dolch word version)
- R. Short vowel decodable readers

³ It is very important that early readers develop a strong decoding or *word attack* skills. When a student is showing fluency and success decoding and identifying 3- and 4-letter short vowel words, it is time for him or her to begin working with high frequency words and then to start reading short vowel phrases and sentences.

⁴ At this point the student is a reader and is very comfortable figuring out new words. Phonograms may therefore be presented in organized groupings of encoding and decoding activities.

Assessment

1. Can you see that the student understands (i.e. recognizes) what the activity is?
2. Does he/she need too much help?
3. Is he/she independent?
4. Is he/she guessing?
5. Are his/her answers correct most of the time?
6. Is he/she starting to show some speed in completing an activity?
7. Is he/she beginning to show some automaticity in recognizing letter-sounds?
8. Is he/she starting to “call out” words without sounding them out?