

# Supporting Children's Reading at Home:

## BLENDING LETTERS, RECOGNIZING, AND READING WORDS

The strategies and supporting activities described below are taken primarily from [Supporting Your Child's Reading at Home](#), a resource developed by [REL Southeast](#) and informed by the [What Works Clearinghouse \(WWC\) Practice Guide](#) titled [Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten Through 3rd Grade](#). This resource is part of a series of instructional briefs designed to help families, afterschool providers, and other caregivers support their children's early reading instruction while learning at home or in a hybrid learning environment.

**Learning to recognize words and blend sounds helps children read and understand words with greater fluency and accuracy.**

Children learn how to read complex words by breaking the words into pronounceable word parts. Learning to recognize letter patterns and word parts help children read with greater fluency, accuracy, and comprehension.

### Alignment to 4 of the 10 Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy: Grades K to 3<sup>1</sup>

- Activities that build phonological awareness (Essential #4)
- Explicit instruction in letter-sound relationships (Essential #5)
- Research- and standards-aligned writing instruction (Essential #6)
- Collaboration with families in promoting literacy (Essential #10)



## 1 Blend sounds.



**Blending is the ability to put sounds together to read a word.** To read a word, children must know the sounds that the letters in the word represent and be able to blend those sounds to come up with the correct word. When children encounter unknown words, blending together the individual sounds of the letters can help them figure out how to pronounce the word.

- **Ask** children to read sounds from left to right. Begin with the first sound, then add the second and blend those. Next, add the third and blend all three. Continue through all sounds. This technique is called **chunking**.
- **Ask** children to say the sound of each letter or letter combination one by one until the end of the word, and then say them all together again quickly. This technique is called **sounding out**. This helps them remember and combine sounds to arrive at the correct word.
- **Use** letter tiles or magnetic letters to space out letters, and then move the tiles together as you read the word with your child.

### Blending hat by chunking and sounding out.

Chunking	Sounding Out
Parent: How does this word start? Student: /h/	Parent: How does this word start? Student: /h/
Parent: Then what's the next sound? Student: /a/	Parent: Then what's the next sound? Student: /a/
Parent: What sound do you get when you put those two together? Student: /ha/	Parent: And then what sound comes next? Student: /t/
Parent: And then what sound comes next? Student: /t/	Parent: What happens when you put them together? Student: /h/ /a/ /t/
Parent: What happens when you add /ha/ and /t/? Student: Hat!	Parent: What is the word? Student: Hat!

Source: Example 3.6 (page 27) from WWC practice guide titled Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten through 3rd Grade.

## 2 Introduce common sound-spelling patterns and word families.



Show children how letters are often combined to form unique sounds or sound-spelling patterns that appear in multiple words.<sup>2</sup>

- **Give** children a collection of letter tiles that includes all the letters and spelling patterns needed to create a set of words.
- **Ask** children to say a word that uses a given spelling pattern and pronunciation. For example, “What is a word that has the *-ing* syllable pattern?” If the child says a word at her reading level, ask her to write it.

- **Use** sound boxes to build words with specific sound-spelling patterns. Have children write the words in the boxes as you say them.



**Word families** are groups of words that share the same letter pattern.

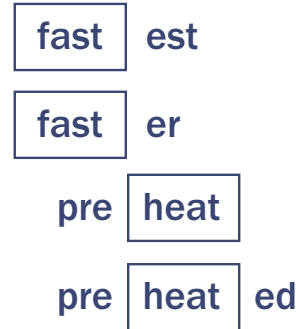
## 3 Recognize word parts.



Once children have learned a few common sound-spelling patterns, show them how to find meaningful word parts that share a similar meaning or use. Breaking down words into smaller, meaningful word parts helps young readers process more challenging words. Teach children about suffixes (for example, *-ing*), contractions (for example, *you're*), forms of prefixes (for example, *dis-*), and basic roots (for example, *uni*), and how to combine them to create words. Use the two strategies listed to help your child practice building and changing words.

**Practice building and modifying words by adding prefixes and suffixes to base words.**

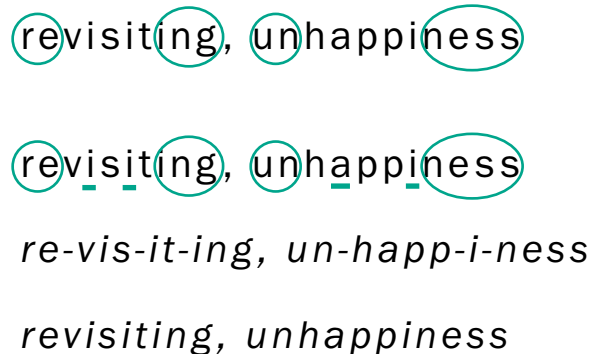
- **Select** a series of words that demonstrate a recently taught suffix or prefix.
- **Provide** students with a worksheet of roots to which students can add prefixes and suffixes.
- Have students **write** the words in and around the boxes as you say them.
- **Say** the words one at a time and have students create the words.



Source: Example 3.5 (page 27) from WWC practice guide titled Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten through 3rd Grade.

**Help students decode more complex words by teaching a word-analysis strategy.**

- **Circle** recognizable word parts. Look for prefixes at the beginning, suffixes at the end, and other familiar word parts.
- **Underline** the other vowels.
- **Say** the different parts of the word.
- **Say** them again fast to make it a real word.
- **Make** sure the word makes sense in the sentence.



Source: Example 3.6 (page 27) from WWC practice guide titled Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten through 3rd Grade.

## 4 Practice reading decodable words.



Provide opportunities for children to practice reading decodable words in isolation and in text.

- **Give** children a word list or text passage that has words with a particular letter combination or sound-spelling pattern, and ask them to underline the letter combination in each word on the list or in the passage.

**Decodable words** are words with sound-spelling patterns that children are familiar with and are easy for them to sound out.

- **Encourage** your child to point to the words while reading. If your child needs help reading an unfamiliar word, encourage him or her to say sounds in the word and then blend them together to read the word. If it is a longer word, encourage your child to read parts of the word separately and then put the parts together to read the whole word.

## 5 Recognize high-frequency words.



**It is important that children learn to read high-frequency words automatically.** When a child does not hesitate in reading a word and pronounces it correctly, then he or she knows the word automatically. To become good readers, children must be able to read high-frequency words automatically.

- **Use** flash cards and word lists to practice high-frequency words. Have the child say the word, **write** the word, and then say the word again.
- **Time** the child as he or she reads a stack of words on flash cards. You can place words that were challenging for the child in a separate pile, so you know which words need more practice. The goal is to read more words correctly in less time each time you engage in the activity.

- **Create** a word wall of high-frequency words (see example below) in a room the child is frequently in (bedroom, living room, kitchen). Refer to the wall often and ask the child to point out a word on the wall when she speaks or hears the word.

**High-frequency words** are words that appear frequently in books (for example, *again, every, know, could*). These are sometimes called sight words.

### High-frequency words

Irregular words (words that do not follow common sound-spelling patterns)		Regular words	
<i>the</i>	<i>there</i>	<i>in</i>	<i>did</i>
<i>was</i>	<i>want</i>	<i>and</i>	<i>then</i>
<i>from</i>	<i>said</i>	<i>had</i>	<i>with</i>
<i>have</i>	<i>friend</i>	<i>that</i>	<i>down</i>
<i>of</i>		<i>him</i>	

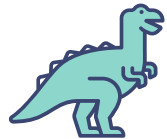
Source: Example 3.8 (page 29) from WWC practice guide titled Foundational Skills to Support Reading for Understanding in Kindergarten through 3rd Grade.

## 6 Learn challenging and important words.



Sometimes children want to read books that have words that are challenging to read but are important for understanding what they read. For example, a book about dinosaurs likely contains many challenging words that are important for understanding the book. Words may be challenging if they have unfamiliar or irregular sound-spelling patterns

- Before reading a book with your child, **select** three challenging or important words that appear most frequently in the book and introduce the words to your child.



dinosaur

herbivore

predator

- **Point** to each word in the book and tell your child how to pronounce it and what it means. Limit the number of these words introduced at one time.

For additional videos and activities, check out [Supporting Your Child's Reading at Home](#).

Videos



Printables




### Blend Words & Introduce Common Sound-Spelling Patterns and Word Families

- Child learns how to [Map A Word](#) by spelling and reading words with different letter-sound combinations.

- [Word Family Fun](#) (340 KB ) – Help your child build and read words using word families.


### Recognize Word Parts

- Mom teaches child how to identify [Silent Letters](#) in words, and to read and write words with silent letters.

- [Base Words and Inflectional Endings](#) (178 KB ) – Help your child break words into base words and endings.


### Practice Reading Decodable Words

- When her son has difficulty with a word, Mom points to the sound-spelling, reminds him what it says, asks him to read the word, and then reads the whole sentence in [Let's Read Words and Sentences](#).

- [Let's Read](#) (43 KB ) – Help your child read words in a list and then read text that contains these words.


### Recognize High-Frequency Words

- Dad teaches child how to [Read and Spell High-Frequency Words](#) by completing a pre-reading activity.

- [Memory Using High-Frequency Words](#) (208 KB ) – Help your child practice high-frequency words (for example, again, know, some) while playing a memory game.

### Learn Challenging and Important Words

- Mom reviews the meaning of [Challenging and Important Words \(Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type\)](#) before reading the book.

- [Challenging and Important Words Bookmark](#) (88 KB ) – Follow the steps on this bookmark to discuss challenging and important words with your child as you read books together.