

Supporting Children’s Reading at Home:

LINKING SOUNDS TO LETTERS

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.

Helping children recognize sounds in spoken words and link those sounds to letters will prepare them to read and understand words. Being aware of sounds in words is very important to reading. This awareness allows children to break apart words orally and use sounds to learn to read and write words.

Alignment to 3 of the 10 Essential Instructional Practices in Early Literacy: Grades K to 3¹



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

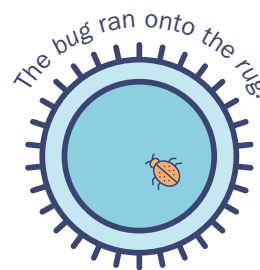
1 Identify syllables, rhymes, and individual sounds.



Begin by introducing children to words, which are larger, familiar segments of speech. Then, introduce them to smaller and smaller sound segments, first syllables and then individual sounds. This will prepare them to learn about the individual sounds that letters represent, and then recognize those sounds and letters as they are used in words.

- **Show** children that they can break down sentences into words. For example, **ask** the child to count the number of words in the sentence, “The boy ate two slices of pizza,” and correct any mistakes.
- **Talk** about how to combine two words to form another word and about how some words can be broken into smaller words. For example, say, “Sometimes you can put two words together to form another word. If I put straw and berry together, I get strawberry. What do you get if you put book and shelf together?”

- **Break words into syllables** and have the child practice identifying syllables in familiar words. Show the child how to place one hand under their chin and notice the number of times their chin moves down as they say each word slowly.
- Once children can break words into syllables, **use rhyming words** to help them to recognize even smaller sounds within a syllable. For example, ask the child to put a thumb up each time he or she hears a rhyme.

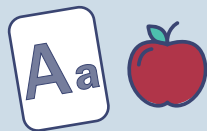


A **syllable** is a segment of a word that contains one vowel sound. The vowel sound may be represented by one or more letters with or without surrounding consonants. For example, the word “bicycle” has three syllables:

bi • cy • cle

1

2 Match letter names to letter sounds.

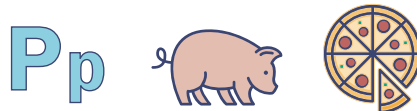


Once children have learned to identify sounds in spoken words, teach them to recognize and name letters and the sounds that letters represent. Letter-sound knowledge is demonstrated when a child can look at a letter in print and tell you the sound it represents.

- **Circle** or underline letters in print and then **ask** your child to name the letter and the sound the letter makes. Use printed materials, such as newspapers, magazines, or junk mail.
- **Point** out letters on signs while in the car and **ask** the child to name the letter. To make it more challenging, follow up by asking the child to name a different word using the same letter.

- **Use** or create flashcards that contain each letter of the alphabet with a corresponding picture and short story to help children remember the letter sound when they see it in print.

The letter P is for Pig, who is very pleasant when asking for pizza. Pig says, “P-p-please, may I have some pizza?”



3 Build words.








Word-building activities help children become better spellers and readers. Word-building activities include adding or removing letters to create or change a word.

- **Provide** children with letter tiles f, a, t, c, and n. You can use game pieces, scraps of paper, or anything else you have around the house. Have them make the word “can,” and then ask them to make other words by adding, moving, or replacing one letter tile at a time. Incorporate more advanced words over time, as you introduce additional letters. For example, using the consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) word, “can,” add a silent e to make “cane.” You can also create a blend at the beginning of a word (“fat” becomes “flat” when “l” is added) or at the end of a word (“cat” becomes “cast” when “s” is added.)

- **Ask** children to say each sound as they write words. Remind them they can make new words by changing one letter at a time. Begin by asking them to change the first letter of a word. As they gain confidence, encourage them to change the middle or last letter.

First Word	New Word
cat	hat

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

Videos 	Printables 
Identify Syllables, Rhymes, and Individual Sounds	
Mom helps child Say and Slide Individual Sounds in Words .	Rhyme Time (2.1 MB ) – Play a game with children to match rhyming picture cards.
Match Letter Names to Letter Sounds	
Mom supports child in Step Up to Spelling Words when they mix up two letters, b and d.	Letter-Name and Letter-Sound Practice (622 KB ) – Create a letter arc to practice matching letters to sounds.
Build Words	
Caretaker breaks down and builds words with child in Change a Letter, Change the Word .	Change a Letter, Change the Word (195 KB ) – Use the activity to change one letter to spell new words.