

THE LEAP FROM LETTERS TO WORDS

SUPPORTING FAMILIES & GROWING READERS



The transition from learning letters to reading and writing words can be a big leap for children. This resource discusses what children need to know and be able to do, and provides activities that caregivers can use to help with this transition.

Letter Name and Sound Knowledge

Research shows that alphabet knowledge is one of the six skills most predictive of later reading ability (NELP, 2008; NRP, 2000). Children who recognize letters and know the sounds that letters represent can use that knowledge when learning to read and spell.

HELPING LETTERS STICK







To recognize words, our brains need to reorganize and create new pathways. This process takes lots of practice connecting what we see and hear. For example, students need to be able to hear the individual sounds in the word *sat*, /s/ /a/ /t/ and know that **s** represents /s/, **a** represents /a/, and **t** represents /t/.

Where traditionally we might use flashcards and practice letters individually with children, the most powerful way to make letters and their sounds *sticky*, is to *practice letters as part of words*. This can be done as soon as your child knows a few letters and sounds.

When children work with letters as part of words, it activates and connects important areas of the brain used to read and spell. These connections make it easier to recall the letter, sound, and even the word!

WORD PRACTICE ACTIVITIES

The Word Practice Activities included in this resource can support your child to:

- 1  Hear individual sounds in words
- 2   Connect sounds to letters
- 3  Blend sounds to read whole words



Activities include a chance to write (print) the letters within words to create an even stronger connection to memory.



1 WORD CHAINS

Materials

Paper and pencil (something to write with)
Optional: Letters to move during activity

Activity

Children learn to change a letter or letters in a word to make a new word.



- 1 Tell your child to make (or spell on paper) the first word in a practice set. **"Make the word cat."**

cat
↓
rat

- 2 Tell your child to change the word. **"Now, make the word rat. Only change the letters that need to be changed."** (For example, remove only the c and replace it with r to make rat.)

- 3 Prompt the child to, **"Read the word."**
(Repeat cycle)

PRACTICE WORDS

- Set 1 (a,t,s,p,n): at → sat → pat → nat
Set 2 (i,t,s,p,n): it → sit → pit → pin
Set 3 (i,n,t,p,s): in → tin → tip → sip
Set 4 (a,n,r,c,p): an → ran → can → cap
Set 5 (h,e,n,t,p): hen → ten → pen → pet
Set 6 (k,e,n,m,a,p): Ken → men → man → map
Set 7 (u,p,p,c,a): up → pup → cup → cap
Set 8 (h,o,t,p,i,l): hot → hop → hip → lip
Set 9 (b,i,n,g,t,f): bin → big → bit → fit
Set 10 (j,e,t,v,w,y): jet → vet → wet → yet
Set 11 (t,a,x,w,m,i): tax → wax → Max → mix
Set 12 (z,i,g,w,n,t): zig → wig → win → wit
Set 13 (b,a,c,k,p,u,d): back → pack → puck → duck
Set 14 (m,i,s,s,e,t,l): miss → mess → Tess → tell
Set 15 (b,u,z,z,s,g,a): buzz → bus → bugs → bags

2 MAPPING LETTERS TO SOUNDS

Materials

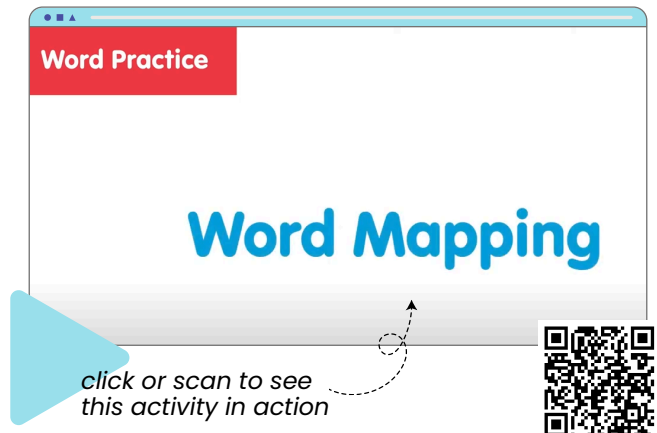
Small objects to place in the circles (buttons, dried beans, coins)

A copy of the activity sheet (see next page)

Paper and pencil (something to write with)

Activity

Children learn to write the letters that make each sound in the word using the Activity Sheet on the next page.



1 Say, "Watch and listen, and then repeat after me." "pat."

2 Say, "Now listen and watch me as I say the sounds in the word: /p/ /a/ /t/." Hold up a finger for each sound.



3 Write the word on a piece of paper. Say, "Now listen and watch me as I say the sounds in pat."

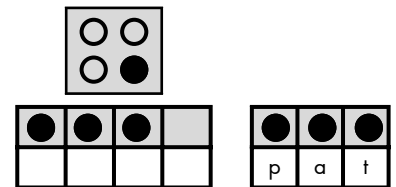
Say the sounds in the word again, pointing to each letter or letters that make each sound. "/p/ /a/ /t/, pat."



4 Cover the word on the paper "Now, move a chip on the activity sheet into the grey boxes for each sound you hear in pat."

"Now, spell pat by writing the letters that make the sounds in each box."

"Read the word."



5 Uncover the word and have the child compare what they wrote to what is written on the paper. "Let's check our spelling!"

PRACTICE WORDS each underline represents one box

Set 1: a t, i t, a n, t i n

Set 2: p a t, s i t, t a p, p i n

Set 3: p a n, s a t, t a n, p i t

Set 4: a m, m a n, f e d, r a p

Set 5: d i d, r i p, l a p, h e n

Set 6: h e m, r a t, k i d, c a n

Set 7: k i d, s a d, m a t, b e g.

Set 8: b u g, c o t, l a d, g e t

Set 9: p i g, h o p, l o g, n u t

Set 10: R e x, y e s, b o x, j e t

Set 11: f o x, j u g, y e t, v a n

Set 12: f i x, y a m, z i p, j a m

WORD MAPPING ACTIVITY SHEET

