

Short Vowel Sounds: Listening and Blending

We are learning to hear and blend sounds to read simple words with short vowels.

Learning intentions

We are learning to recognize short vowel sounds in words ([Outcome](#)).

We are learning to blend sounds together to read new words ([Skills](#)).

Success criteria

I can hear the short vowel sound in a word.

I can say the sounds in order: first sound, middle sound, last sound.

I can blend the sounds together to read the word.

I can read simple words like cat, sit, and dog.

Curriculum alignment

Students recognize and analyze letters and sounds in words ([Outcome](#)).

Identify short vowel sounds in words and identify the letters that represent them ([Skills](#)).

Blend sounds in words with speed and accuracy to decode unfamiliar words ([Skills](#)).

Materials

Picture cards with simple three-sound words: cat, dog, sit, run, mat, pig, bus, cup, hat, bed.

Letter cards: c, a, t, d, o, g, s, i, r, u, n (large enough for children to see).

Whiteboard or chart paper and marker.

Word list written large: cat, dog, sit, run, mat, pig, bus, cup, hat, bed.

Lesson sequence

Stage 1: Hook (5 minutes)

Sit with children on the carpet. Hold up the picture card of a cat.

Say: "This is a cat. Listen to the sounds in the word cat. Watch my mouth."

Say the word slowly, stretching each sound: "caaattt."

Ask: "What sound do you hear at the start? Say it with me: /k/."

Ask: "What sound do you hear in the middle? Say it with me: /a/."

Ask: "What sound do you hear at the end? Say it with me: /t/."

Say: "When we put those sounds together, we get cat. Let's say it fast: cat."

Repeat with the word dog. Stretch the sounds. Have children say each sound with you, then blend.

Stage 2: Direct instruction (10 minutes)

Write the word cat on the board. Point to each letter as you say it.

Say: "The letter c makes the /k/ sound. The letter a makes the /a/ sound. The letter t makes the /t/ sound."

Point and say: "/k/ /a/ /t/. Now let's blend: caaattt. Cat."

Write the word sit on the board. Do the same: point to s, say /s/. Point to i, say /i/. Point to t, say /t/. Blend: /s/ /i/ /t/. Sit.

Write the word run on the board. Point to r, say /r/. Point to u, say /u/. Point to n, say /n/. Blend: /r/ /u/ /n/. Run.

Say: "We use three sounds to make these words. First sound, middle sound, last sound. Then we blend them together fast."

Stage 3: Guided practice (12 minutes)

Show the picture card of a pig.

Say: "Let's sound out this word together."

Point to the letter p. Ask: "What sound does p make?" Children answer: /p/.

Point to the letter i. Ask: "What sound does i make?" Children answer: /i/.

Point to the letter g. Ask: "What sound does g make?" Children answer: /g/.

Say: "Now blend the sounds with me: /p/ /i/ /g/. Pig."

Repeat with the words mat, bus, and hat. Each time, have children say the three sounds in order, then blend.

After each word, ask: "Can you show me a picture of a [word]?" or "Have you ever seen a [word]?" to check understanding.

Stage 4: Independent practice (10 minutes)

Give each child a small whiteboard or paper.

Call out a word from the list: cat, dog, sit, run, mat, pig, bus, cup, hat, bed.

Say: "Write the word I say. Then point to each letter and say the sound. Then blend the sounds and read the word."

Start with cat. Children write it. You watch as they point and sound out.

Repeat with sit and run. Circulate and listen. If a child struggles, sit beside them and model the three sounds again.

Call out two more words: mat and pig. Children write, sound out, and blend.

Stage 5: Consolidation (3 minutes)

Gather children back on the carpet.

Say: "Today we learned how to read words by saying the sounds in order and blending them together."

Ask: "Who can tell me the three sounds in the word dog?" Children answer: /d/ /o/ /g/.

Ask: "Now blend those sounds. What word do we get?" Children answer: dog.

Say: "Great! You are learning to read. Keep listening for the sounds in words."

Differentiation

Extension

Give children a list of four-sound words: stop, slip, clap, flag.

Ask them to identify the first three sounds, blend, and then add the last sound.

Invite them to write their own simple three-sound word using letter cards and then read it aloud.

Support

Work with one or two children at a time during independent practice.

Use only the words cat, dog, and sit for the first week.

Model the blending process again, exaggerating each sound.

Use picture cards alongside the written words so children can check their answer by looking at the picture.

If a child cannot identify a letter sound, teach that sound separately before blending.

Assessment

Formative check during Stage 4 (independent practice)

Listen as each child sounds out and blends one word.

Look for:

Does the child point to each letter in order?

Does the child say the correct sound for each letter?

Does the child blend the sounds together (even if slowly)?

If a child hesitates on a letter sound, note which letters need more practice and plan a short review before the next lesson.

If a child blends successfully, move to a new word from the list.