

Preventing Failure
in the
Primary Grades

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Chapter 4
Reading for the Nonreader

READING WORDS

Pgs 101- 121



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find a little bitty *a*. . . . Tell me about it. . . . This *a* is little.”

Next, ask the children to “find a sound that is not *a*.” After a child finds an appropriate sound, ask, “Is this an *a*? . . . That’s right. It is not an *a*. Erase it.”

Introduce a fooler game after identifying the *a*’s and not-*a*’s: “I’m going to touch all the *a*’s. Tell me if I do it.” Touch two or three *a*’s before touching a letter that is not an *a*. If the children do not respond, act amused: “Oh boy! I fooled you. This is not an *a*, and nobody caught me.” If some of the children catch the mistake, praise them (or present a tangible reinforcer): “Good thinking. I couldn’t fool you, could I?”

After the fooler game, move on to another task, preferably a verbal task, and return to the identification at the end of the period. Write the letter *a* on the board and ask the children, “What sound is this?” If they do not remember, remind them, and then assign the task of writing *a*’s on a sheet of lined paper. As they write, ask each child questions from time to time: “What sound is that? Is that an *m*? Is it an *a*? . . . Good.” Remind them to talk to themselves: “Say the sound as you write it.”

Remind the children of the letter sound they are studying as they leave the reading study group. Saying the name of the letter sound should be the last thing the children do before leaving the instructional group: “And what sounds are these on your paper, John? . . . Good boy! Mary, what are these? . . .”

Continue to work on letter identification for two to four minutes a day until the children have learned to identify the letter sounds *a*, *i*, *o*, *m*, *r*, *f*, *s*, *ē*. Remember—don’t spend more than a total of about four minutes a day on letter sounds.

Reading Words Formed with Continuous Letters

1. Introduce word reading after the children have mastered the initial set of sounds and after they have mastered say-it-fast, say-it-slow, and rhyming tasks.

Draw an arrow on the board from left to right. Explain, “I’m going to make letter sounds. When I point to them, you say them. Watch me.” Make an *a* on the arrow shaft and produce the *a* sound: *aaa*. Point to the *a* and keep holding the sound, as one holds a note in music. While holding the *a* and pointing to it, make an *m* to the right

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of the *a*. Point to the *m* and—*without pausing*—start making the *m* sound: *mmm*. “What word is that? Say it fast: *am*. Now you do it. Let’s follow the arrow and say the sounds. Here we go: *aaaaammm*. Say it fast: *am*.”

2. Erase the word and introduce the next “word”: *ro* (as in *rot*). Before writing, remind the children, “When I point to it, you say it.” Write the letter *r* and point to it. “Come on, keep it going. . . .” Write the letter *o* but keep pointing to the letter *r* for a moment, so that the children can formulate the sound they will produce when you move your finger. Then move it, and immediately—*without pausing*—start to produce the sound for *o* (as in *on*): *rrrooo*. “What word is it? *Ro*. That’s a funny word. I don’t know what it means, but I can say it.”

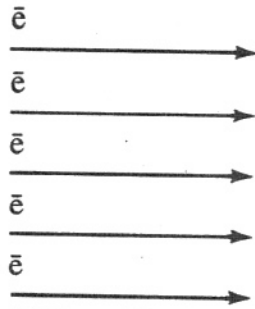
3. Erase *ro* and present *am* again, a letter at a time, pointing to the first letter and then the second. The children will probably need some training in holding the first sound until they produce the second. Do not stress the idea that you are following the arrow. Make it a game of following your finger, which always moves from left to right and always follows the arrow. This type of demonstration is more effective in inducing the appropriate behavior. The children must know how to proceed from left to right, not merely how to describe the operation in words.

4. After working on five or six two-sound “words” (*me*, *if*, *fa*, *sa*, for example), introduce a three-sound word. This should be introduced very early in the reading instruction so that the child learns that “reading” applies not only to two-letter combinations but to other combinations as well. Present the word *seem* a letter at a time on the arrow shaft, holding the children on a letter until the next has been on the board for about a second. Introduce such three-sound “words” as *ram*, *Sam*, *fōm*, *sōl*, *fēl*, *mēl*, *sēl*, *rēl*, *fil*, *rim*.

5. Review all the examples presented two or three times. Try to make the children aware, through demonstrations, that the point of the game is to translate the sounds on the board into sounds that are sequenced in time and can be telescoped to form a word. If the game is handled properly, the children should start to see the relation between the present exercise and those involving saying words fast.

6. Present alliteration series after the children have become firm on two-sound words.

Begin by making a column of *ē*’s on the board, with each *ē* on an arrow shaft:



Have the children identify the \bar{e} 's. Then return to the top line: "What sound is this? Keep it going. . . ."

Make an r after the \bar{e} , and after a moment's pause point to it. " $\bar{e}\bar{e}rr$. What word is this? Say it fast: *ear*. This is how we write the word *ear*."

Move to the second arrow. Point to the \bar{e} . What sound is this? Get it going. . . ." Add an f : " $\bar{e}\bar{e}ff$. What word is that? $\bar{e}f$. I don't know what it means, but I can say it: $\bar{e}f$." Point to the top example. "This word is $\bar{e}\bar{e}rr$, *ear*. And this word is $\bar{e}\bar{e}ff$, $\bar{e}f$."

Use the same procedure to complete the remaining "words": $\bar{e}s$, $\bar{e}m$, and $\bar{e}l$.

After the children have completed the series, play a game with them in which you supply the first sound and, when you point, they provide the second. Then they tell what "word" it is. "O.K., follow my point: $\bar{e}\bar{e}\bar{e}$ ——. Good, $\bar{e}m$. What about this one: $\bar{e}\bar{e}\bar{e}r$ ——. What word is that? $E\bar{e}\bar{e}rr$. . . *ear*." Spend about five minutes a day on similar exercises, using the vowels i , o , and a . The tasks in which the children complete the words are very important. They are similar to the verbal exercises in which you provide one part of a word and the children complete the word by adding another part, except that the added part is no longer given, as it was in the verbal exercise (page 93). Now the children must *identify the sound*, hold it constant, and add it to the sound that you assigned. *The paradox of reading instruction becomes apparent with this type of exercise.* The most difficult verbal exercises are those in which the child must work with individual sounds such as a and r . Yet the easiest type of *reading* task is that in which there are the fewest elements, which means that the easiest reading tasks involve the most difficult verbal skills. It would be much easier for the child to read if we could start by giving him units such as *hamburger* to work with, but unless he knows how the sounds in the word *hamburger* derive from the letter arrangement, he cannot work from such units. He must work from smaller units in

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which the verbal components of the task are more difficult. For this reason, many disadvantaged children fail to master early reading tasks. Skills in rhyming, alliterating, and saying words fast come into play in the simplest reading exercises.

7. Present consonant-first series as part of the work on alliteration.

Introduce at least one consonant-first series a day, using the consonants *m*, *r*, *f*, *s*:

m
—————→
m
—————→
m
—————→
m
—————→

Follow each *m* with one of the vowels—*a*, *e*, *i*, or *o* (but not always in that order). Have the children read each word as you point: “O.K., what word is this? Let’s go with the arrow and find out: *mmm*.” Point to *o*. “*Mmmoo*. Say it fast: *mo*.” (Pronounce as in *mop*.)

After the children have read all the words, play the rhyming game in which you say the first sound and they supply the second on signal and then identify the word (page 88).

Repeat the same basic procedure, starting with one of the other continuous-sound consonants. Don’t expect the low-performing children to become good at the convergent task immediately. They have a great deal to keep in mind at one time, and they will probably need considerable practice. The higher-performing nonreaders will probably move ahead with great speed, about as rapidly as the teacher can present new tasks.

8. Introduce a variation of the convergent game after the children have become reasonably solid on at least one consonant-first series and one vowel-first series. Have half the children in the group say the first sound: “O.K., John and Mary, you give this sound. Then, when I clap, Harold and Denise, you give the next sound. Here we go. . . .”

This game can be a great deal of fun and can be effective in changing the pace of the session. Make sure, however, that the children are reasonably familiar with the sounds that are presented. If they aren’t, the game may flop.





After the children have worked on the two-sound games for several days, present a finding task. After completing a series such as

mē, *mo*, *ma*, *mi*, *ash*, say, "Who can find the word *ma*?" (Pronounce as in *mat*.) "Before you start looking, say *ma* slowly, so you'll know what to look for. Everybody: *ma*. Say it slow. Yes, *mmm-aaa*. That's what the word has to say: *mmm-aaa*." If the children are having trouble, point to each of the words and ask, "Does this word say *mmm-aaa*? Read it. . . . No, this word says *mi*. Does this word say *ma*? . . ."

Present this task in connection with different series until all the children can say the word slowly and find on the board the word that has the same sounds.

9. After the children have played the two-sound games two or three times, present three-sound word games.


Present these two-letter "words" on the board:

la (as in *lap*)

la

la

la


Make the arrow function explicit: "I follow the arrow, so I start here [below the *l*] and I go this way [moving right]. O.K., let's see what word this is. I point; you give me the sound: *llaaa*. What is it? Say it fast: *la*. O.K., let's read the next word: *llllaaa*. And the next word. . . ."

After the children have read all the words, make sure that they can quickly identify each of the words (that is, identify them without sounding them out): "John, do you remember what word this is?" If the child doesn't remember, have him read it, a sound at a time, and blend the sounds. Then point to another word. "Who remembers what this word is? . . . Good. And this one?" Summarize: "Sure. Every word here goes *llaaa* . . . *la*." Point to each word, running your finger under the letters from left to right: "*la, la, la, la*."

Return to the first word and ask, "What's this word?" As the children say *la*, tell them to "keep it going." As they hold the *a* sound, add the letter *m* to the word. Separate *m* from the other letters with a space:

la m


Say both parts as you point to them: "*La-mmm*. What word? Say it fast: *lam*. See if you can do it. What's this part here?" (Point to *la*.)

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"Say it loud. Say it again. . . ." As soon as they have produced it solidly, point to the *m*. "La—mmm. What word? Lam."

Move to the second *la*. Use the procedure outlined above and complete the word with an *s*:

la s
—————→

"Lllaaasss. What word? Say it fast: las."

Complete the other words in the series with *j* and *n*.

If the children confuse a word such as *lan* with *land*, point out the difference. Exaggerate the pronunciation of *land*: "No, Henry, you're thinking of *land*. This word is *lan*. I don't know what that is, but I can write it."

After the children have gone through the words in the series twice, see if they can identify words that you point to: "Let's find the word *las*. Say it slowly: lllaaasss. Now look at the top word, here. Does it say *las*? . . . What about this word? . . ."

10. Introduce a series of three-letter word buildups, starting with these two-letter combinations: *fa*, *si*, *li*, *no*. For example:

fa
—————→
fa
—————→
fa
—————→
fa
—————→

Have the children identify each word. Call on individual children to read the series of words (pointing as they read).


Have the children read each word, holding the *a* sound: "Keep it going: fffaaaaa . . ." As they hold the sound, complete the word by adding a familiar consonant and pointing to it: "Fffaaaaamm. Let's read it again: fffaaamm. Say it fast: fam."

After the children have read the entire series of words twice, call on individual children to read a word. Point to any word in the series and call on a child to read it: "John, let's hear you read this word. . . . Good: fas."

Plan to spend five to eight minutes a session on three-sound tasks until the children have become proficient at attacking the words.

11. Introduce buildups, starting with one letter and then adding two or three more. This exercise can be initiated as soon as the children have played the two-letter consonant-first games several times (Step 7 above).

Write the letter *f* over the arrow and have the children identify it:

f


Add the letter *i* and point to it:

fi


Then add the letters *ll* and point to them:

fill


Ask, "What word is this?" If the children cannot identify it, return to the beginning of the word and point: "Let's go fast: *fffiilll*." Discourage the children from pausing between the letter sounds: "Listen to me: *fffiilll*. Your turn. . ."

Initially, build up three or four three-letter words a session. Don't be afraid to repeat words. After the procedure becomes easier for the children, increase the number of words to about ten.

Words containing stop sounds

Introduce stop-sound letters *at the end of words*, using the build-up procedure. As noted on page 99, stop sounds are introduced at the end of words because they do not present any particular problem there. The child will stop naturally at the end of a word. After stop sounds have been introduced as word endings, they can be taught as word beginnings.

1. First introduce the stop sound *t* as a final word sound. Present the word *fa* on the arrow. Have the children read it. Then add the letter *m* and point to it: "*Fffaaamm*. What word? Say it fast: *fam*." Erase the *m* and replace it with an *l*: "What word? *Fffaaalll* . . . *fal*. Say it fast: *fal*." (As in *fallacy*.) Erase the *l* and replace it with an *n*: "What word? *Fan*." Erase the *n* and replace it with an *s*: "What word? *Fas*." Erase the *s* and write a *t*.

Point to the *t* and ask, "What are we going to say when we get here? . . . Yes, *t*. Remember that. O.K., here we go. What's this first part? *Faaa*— Keep it going: *fffaaaa*—[point]*t*. Again: *fffaaat*. What word? Say it fast: *fat*."

2. Quickly change the first letter in the word *fat* from *f* to *m*. "Let's read it now. Careful. I point, you say: *mmaaaa*— Yes, *maaa*— Keep it going: *maaaaa*—*t*. Again: *mmaaat*. What word? *Mat*."

Quickly change the first letter in the word to *l*. "I point, you say it: *llllaaa*— Keep it going: *laaat*. Again: *lllaaat*. What word? *Lat*." In working on these words, summarize the first two letters for

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the children, placing the emphasis on the last sound: "Yes, *llaaaaa*—"

Change the beginning of the word to *n* and then to *s*, repeating the procedure outlined for the other letters. Move fast, so that the children can see what is constant about the words—the ending, which is always *at*.

3. After giving the children practice with *t* until they are firm, introduce other stop sounds in this order: *c* (unvoiced crackling sound), *g* (voiced guttural sound), *d* (voiced), and *p* (unvoiced). Use the procedure outlined for presenting *t*.

Do not introduce more than one new sound during a lesson period, and do not work on words containing that sound for more than about five minutes.

If the children are progressing reasonably well, you can introduce new letter sounds in words, without first presenting them in isolation. The value of this procedure is that it teaches children that they cannot read a word unless they know all the sounds. For example, present the word *rap*. Point to the *p*. "I can't read the word unless I know this sound. It's *p*. Let's all say that." Try to make the identification interesting: "Oh, that's hard to say: *p, p, p, p*. Like a little motorboat. Who can do that? . . . Sure. And every time you come to this sound with the line sticking way down, you're going to go like a little motorboat: *p*. Let's read the word *rrraap*. Say it fast: *rap*."

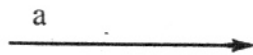
Demonstrate by changing the beginning sound of the word that the *p* sound is constant, that it is a functioning unit, and that it always retains its identity: "Now it says *mmaaap*. Say it fast. . . . Yes, that's how we spell *map*."

Review the letters that have been mastered every day until the children become solid. Move slowly.


Assign the children writing tasks in which they are to make the new letters and identify them as they write: "Watch me make a *p* on the board. Then you make a bunch of them on your paper. Remember to say '*p*' as you write."

4. After the stop sounds *t, c, g* have been introduced as endings, present stop sounds as the beginnings of two-sound words. This set of exercises is critical, because it demonstrates to the child how to blend stop sounds.

Present a series of five *a*'s on the board with an arrow below each. Start each arrow one letter space to the left of the *a*.








Have the children identify each *a*. Return to the top *a*: "This says *aaa*." Make an *n* in front of it:

na


"Now it doesn't say *a*. It says *nnnaaa*." Move your finger in the direction of the arrow below the letters as they are sounded. Erase the *n*. "What does it say now? . . . *a*." Replace the *n*. "What does it say now?" Make the motion of your finger very strong. If you don't, they may try to read the words backward. "Going with the arrow, it says *nnnaaa*." Erase the *n*, ask what it says, and make an *f* in front of the *a*.

For series demonstrations of this sort, it is important to move very quickly or the children will miss the point. Slow down only in spots where they are likely to become confused. For example, pause as they try to read a newly created word, so that they can orient themselves to the idea that they are moving from left to right. As soon as they finish an example, however, replace it quickly with the next, so that they will be more likely to remember what they have just read—what sound they have produced.

Proceed to the next step in the demonstration: quickly put consonants in front of the *a*'s in the series. The last word should be *ta* (pronounced as in *tack*). Put continuous-sound consonants in front of all the other *a*'s:

na

 sa

 fa

 la

 ta


Have the children read the first four words as you point to the sounds. Then review the words by pointing to the last letter in each word and saying, "This is *a*, so the word is *na*. See? *Nnnaaa*." Move to the other words: "This is *a*, so the word is *sa*. . . . This is *a*, so the word is *fa*. . . . This is *a*, so the word is *la*." Go through this procedure two or three times if necessary. Then, when the children have demonstrated that they can handle the pattern, move to the last word in the list. Point to the *a*. "This is *a*, so the word is . . ." If the preceding demonstration has been adequate, the children will say "*ta*."

(NOTE: The approach outlined above is designed for the most

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severely confused nonreaders. You may be able to use an abbreviated version. However, before having the children attempt *ta* you should be sure that they have a firm understanding of the other "words.")

5. Repeat the same basic demonstration, using final vowels *i* and *o* and introducing the consonants *c* and *g* as beginnings.

Always precede the introduction of a new stop-sound consonant with at least two examples of continuous-sound beginnings. For example, in the series *fi*, *si*, *gi*, *ti*, point first to the *i* in *fi*: "This says *i*, so the word is *fi*. . . . Again, this says *i*, so the word is *fi*." Next word: "This says *i*, so the word is *si*." Next word: "This says *i*, so the word is *gi*." (Pronounce as in *gift*, not as in *ginger*.) The continuous-sound words help the child to hold on to the analogy and also make it easier for you to correct mistakes. If the child has forgotten how to blend a word, you are in a position to review the procedure on the first two words. If you start with the stop-sound word, however, you put yourself in the position of not being able to relate the word to the rules the child has already learned.

Throughout these exercises, make the left-right progression of reading obvious. Always underscore the words with hand motions that indicate the direction in which you are reading.

6. As soon as the children have begun to master the two-letter stop-sound buildups, introduce three-letter buildups.

Put a series of endings on the board:

an
—————→
an
—————→
an
—————→
an
—————→
an
—————→

Have the children read the endings. Point to each and ask, "What word is this?"

Return to the first *an* and again establish its identity: "What word is this? . . . O.K., remember that. When we get to it, you're going to say *an*. Now it says *an*." Put an *f* in front of *an*. "Now it says *ffn*—" Erase the *f* and again say, "Now it says *an*." Write the *f* again. "Now it says . . ."

Complete the series, leaving a slight space between the two parts of the words:

f an
 _____→
 l an
 _____→
 t an
 _____→
 p an
 _____→
 c an
 _____→

Point first to the end of each word, reminding the children of what it is: "This part says *an*." Then move to the first letter and indicate the direction in which they are to proceed: "So the word says *ffan*." Next word: "This part says *an*, so the word says *lan*." Next word: "This part says *an*, so the words says *tan*." And so forth.

7. Follow the demonstration with other words in which two-letter endings are held constant. For endings, use *an*, *in*, *at*, *ut*, *on*, and *ot*. Do not treat this exercise as a primary one. Work only two to three minutes a day on it, presenting one series a day.

8. Present stop-sound-first series as soon as the child has mastered the two-letter stop-sound exercises (see Steps 5 and 6 above). The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate to the child that the procedure for handling the initial stop sound is the same regardless of the vowel that follows it.

Write the words *ti*, *ta*, and *to* on the board, with arrows:

ti
 _____→
 ta
 _____→
 to
 _____→

Point to the *i* in the first word. "What sound is this? . . . So the word is . . ." Point first under the *t* and indicate the direction in which the children are to read. If they have trouble, show them how to read the word: "This is *i*, so the word is *ti*." (As in *tip*.)

Move to the second word, again pointing first to the vowel. "This is *a*, so the word is . . ." Point to the first letter and indicate the direction in which the children are to read. "*Ta*." (As in *tap*.)

Move to the third word, pointing first to the vowel. "This is *o*." (As in *on*.) "So the word is . . ."

Repeat the exercise, using *c*, *g*, *p*, and *d* as the first letter of each word in the series. Introduce one series a day, such as *ca*, *co*, *ci*, and work on it for no more than two minutes. Repeat series that prove to

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be difficult. If the children have trouble with a series, introduce similar series with continuous-sound consonants and then, after they have become more firm in their operations, return to the stop-sound series. Be careful to indicate the direction in which the words are to be read. *Always begin pointing before they start reading.*

Double-consonant endings

This set of exercises is designed to help children handle words, such as *sand*, that have two consonant sounds at the end.

1. Write the letter *f* on the board, with an arrow below. "Now it says *fff . . .*" Add the letter *o*:

fo
—————→

"Now it says *fffooo . . . fo.*" Add the letter *n*:

fon
—————→

"Now it says *fffoonnn.* What does it say?" Have the children read the word several times. "Remember that. It says *fon.* It says what?"

Add the letter *d*:

fond
—————→

"And now it says *fon-*" Point to the *d.* "Yes, *fond.*"

2. Demonstrate the reverse procedure: "It says *fond.* What does it say?" Erase the *d.* "Does it say *fond* now?" Answer quickly, "No, it says *foon.* It says *fon,* not *fond.* It says *fon.* Say it." Erase the *n.* "Does it say *fon* now? . . . No, it says . . ." Erase the *o.* "Does it say *fo* now? . . . No, it says *fff.*" Erase the *f.* "Does it say *f* now? . . . No, it says—nothing. No word."

3. Introduce variations with such four-sound words as *land, sand, cant, mint, milk, silt, film, fond, pond.* All these words have two-consonant endings, which disadvantaged children often have trouble hearing and handling. The reverse breakdown nicely demonstrates how the two-consonant endings are formed, both in speech and with letters. The children may have some trouble saying such endings as *nd* (as in *sand*). If they do, change the first letter of the word (*fand, gand, mand, land*). Also change the vowel (*lond, gond*). Most of the words presented should have continuous-sound beginnings.

Double-consonant beginnings

Start work on this task as soon as the children have mastered a few two-consonant endings. Plan to work on double-consonant beginnings over a long period of time, devoting not more than two or three

minutes a day to them. Start with relatively easy two-consonant beginnings and work up to combinations that give the children a great deal of difficulty, such as *spl*, *shr*, *spl*, *str*.

1. Write a *p* above the arrow:

p
—————→

Have the children identify the sound. "Now it says *p*, and now . . ."

Write an *a* in front of the *p*:

ap
—————→

"Now it says . . ." Write an *l* in front of *ap*:

lap
—————→

"Now it says . . ." If the children tend to read backward, say the sound of the letter you are writing and then indicate by pointing that they are to produce the remaining sounds. "Now it is *llll* . . ." This method makes the task easier, because you have indicated the ordering of the sound elements. As the children become more familiar with this kind of buildup, you can systematically phase out this cue, so that the children are following only your pointing, not your vocalization.

Write *c* in front of *lap*:

clap
—————→

"Now it says *lap*, and now . . ." The children will probably say "*cap*." If they do, tell them, "You forgot the *l*." Cover the *c* and demonstrate. "Now it says *lap*, and now it says *clllap*. Say it: *clap*. Look at it: *cllaaap* . . . *clap*." The better rehearsed the children have been on saying words fast and saying them slowly, the better they will do on this task, although perfect performance on the verbal exercises will not assure perfect performance on the present task.

Break the word down a letter at a time: "Now it says *clap*." Erase the *c*. "And now it says . . . Now it says *lap*." Erase the *l*. "And now it says *ap*." Erase the *a*. "Now it says *p*." Erase the *p*. "And now it says nothing."

2. On the following day, present the word *lap* and have the children sound it out. "Yes, this word is *lap*. Now it says . . . what? *Lap*."

Write the letter *s* in front of the word. "And now it says—not *sap*. We still have to say *lap* . . . *lap*. Say it. . . . And this tells us to start out with *sss*. I'll say *sss*, and you say *lap*. Here we go: *sss-lap* . . . *slap*. What does this word say? *Slap*." Erase the *s*. "What does it say now? *Lap*. Remember this part says *lap*. When

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you get to it, you're going to say *lap*."

Write a *c* in front of the word. "I'll say this (*c*); you say this (*lap*) . . . *c-lap*. Again: *c-lap* . . . *clap*. What does it say? *Clap*." Erase the *c*. "Now it says *lap*." Put an *f* in front of the word. "Now it says *fff-*" Change the word from *lap* to *clap*, to *lap* to *slap*, to *lap* to *flap*.

3. Introduce other double-consonant beginnings. Work on the words *stop*, *stif*, *grand*, *grip*, *cram*, *plop*, *plan*, *spit*, *spot*, *slit*. Concentrate on the last two moves of the buildups. "Now it says *pot*. . . Now it says *sss* . . . Say it: *spot*."

pot
—————→
spot
—————→

After the children have mastered these, introduce the particularly troublesome words *string* and *street*. The critical part of the demonstration begins with the second consonant in the word. In the word *slit*, for example, the critical part begins with the word *lit*. The children will probably say "*sit*" when the *s* is added. It is probably a good idea to demonstrate the buildup; return to the word *lit* and then hold the children responsible for the production of the word *slit*.

Writing Words

Writing words gives the children needed practice in applying the word rules they have learned. If a child understands how to build words, he will understand how sounds work in words.

1. Lead into writing by introducing a word-completion task.

Write the word *fa* on the board. Have the children read it. "Yes, *fa*." Then introduce the construction problem: "I want to change *fa* into *fan*. How do I do that?" The children may not see the point. If they don't, remind them to say the word *fan* slowly, to see what sounds must be in it: "*Fffaaannn*. Now look at this word. Does it say *ffaann*?" Point to each of the letters as you repeat the sounds for the word *fan*: "*fffaaa-*" Now point to the space after the *a*. "*Nnnnn*. There's no *n* here. I need a *nnnn*." Write it in.

Erase the *n* and repeat the same procedure: "What's this word? . . . Yes, *fa*. I want to change it into the word *fat*. Say it slow. . . Let's see what I'd have to do. It has to say *fffaaa-t*." Have the children repeat the "spelling" of *fat* several times. Then point to the letters in the word as you repeat the sequence: "*Fffaaa-*" Point to the space next to the *a*. "What do we need here?" Write *t*.

Erase the entire word and replace it with *mi*. Have the children read it and go through the same general procedure: "I want to change this word into *mis*. Say it slowly. . . . O.K., let's see what we need." Point to the letters *mmiii*-. Point to the space and ask the children what is missing. . . . Write *s*.

Erase the letter *s* and present other examples, following the same format and changing the word *mi* into *mit*, *mig*, *mic*, *mif*.

2. Give the children sheets of paper with words to complete according to your instructions.

On the first sheet, present four examples of the "word" *ma* with arrows:

ma


Allow plenty of space between the words.

Have the children read all the words on the page. Then refer to the first word and say, "I want this word to say *mat* . . . *mat*. Say it slowly with me." After they have said the word several times, have them point to the letters in the first word as you sound out *mat*: "You point; I'll spell *mat*. See what we have to do: *mmm-aaa-ttt*. What do we need? . . . Put it in." After they have written in the letter, have them read the word. "Yes, now it says *mat*."

Use the same procedure for writing the remaining words—*map*, *mas*, and *man*. You spell and the children point, identifying which letter is missing and then supplying it.

On subsequent sheets, make the children increasingly responsible for handling the steps in the operation. Have them say the word slowly; then instruct them to point to the word on the sheet while spelling the word they want: "Give the sounds for *fat*, and see what you need." If the children have trouble, go back to the procedure outlined for the first sheet.

Present these words on subsequent sheets: *sa* (changed to *sap*, *sad*, *sal*, *sam*); *fi* (changed to *fit*, *fil*, *fin*); *li* (changed to *lip*, *lit*, *lid*); *si* (changed to *sip*, *sit*, *sin*); *co* (changed to *cop*, *con*, *cod*); *no* (changed to *not*, *nod*, *non*); *fa* (changed to *fat*, *fan*, *fab*); *ca* (changed to *cap*, *cat*, *can*); *ga* (changed to *gas*, *gap*, *gal*).

After the first two sheets, introduce two different root words on the same sheet, perhaps *li* and *ca*. Repeat the examples that give the children trouble.

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3. After the children have completed the set of words above, present a variation of the task in which they are responsible for spelling more of the word. Repeat the series presented in Step 2 above, this time requiring the children to write two of the three letters in the words.

The first sheet should contain four *m*'s on arrows. Read the letters. Then refer to the top *m* and explain the tasks: "This is tough. I want to say *man*. What do I want it to say? . . . Say it slow. . . . O.K., now point and see if this says *man*: *mmmmm-aaa-nn*. Again: *mmm-aa-nn*. Look, we need *aaa-nnn*. Let's write it." After they have finished, have them read the word. Ask, "Does it say *man* now? . . . Yes, *mm-aa-nn*."

Complete the words *mat*, *mas*, *map* in the same manner. If the children have difficulty, have them point while you spell the word. Then have them spell with you and point. Finally, have them write the missing letters.

Introduce similar sheets with the letters *f*, *l*, *s*, *c*, *n*, *g*, and have the children supply the two letters necessary to complete the words you specify (*fan*, *fat*, *fac*, etc.).

4. Go through the series again after the children have completed the tasks in Step 3 above, this time having them spell and write the entire word.

Give them blank sheets on which four arrows appear. Refer to the top arrow and say, "I want it to say *map* on this arrow . . . *map*. Spell it with me. . . . O.K., now point on the arrow—starting here—and spell *map*. What sound comes first? *Mmm*. So we have a *mmm* here. Spell *map*: *mmm-aaa* [moving the children's fingers to the next space] . . . Spell *map* again and point to where the sounds go: *mmm-aa-p*. Again . . ." After the children have caught on to pointing to a spot for each sound (which is not an easily learned notion), have them write the word.

Have them then write the words *mas*, *man*, *mad* in the remaining spaces.

On subsequent sheets, have them work on words beginning with *f*, *l*, *s*, *c*, *n*, *g*.

(NOTE: Don't be picayune over mechanical mistakes in the children's writing. The writing tasks are introduced so that the children can use the rules of spelling they have learned. The primary emphasis should be on the rules of construction, not on penmanship. A child

may be put off completely if the teacher does not make it clear—through her behavior—what the point of writing is all about. To write a word is to solve a problem, and in solving a problem the problem-solving steps are of primary importance, not the style with which these steps are executed.)

Plan to spend no more than eight minutes a day on writing. Some of the introductory lessons may take more time than this, but the others should generally take far less if you work on no more than two new things at once. If you find yourself presenting tasks that involve a great deal of new learning (if the child is expected to work on more than two new modules at once), the demands are too great.

Spell three to five words a day on the chalkboard. Stress words containing new letter sounds. For example: "I want to write the word *egg*." Touch the two spots on the chalkboard as you sound out the word: "*Eg*." Refer to the first touch mark. "So what do I have to put here? . . . *E* . . . Do you know how to write that sound? Watch . . ."

If the children have trouble isolating a sound such as the *e* sound in *egg*, demonstrate that the sound occurs in a number of words with which they are familiar: "Let's spell *mess*. Your mother says, 'This is a *mess*.' *Mess*." Touch the board, leaving a little finger mark for each sound that is to be written: *mmm-eee-sss*. Write the first letter and then point to the next mark: "What goes here?" The children may say *a*, since the distinction between *e* and *a* is difficult, especially for the nonreader. "It's not *mass*, it's *mess*. So what goes here? *E*. How do I write the sound *e*? Like this . . ." Write the *e* and continue with the third letter.

Present a series of similar words that contain the *e* sound, either at the beginning or in the second-letter position: *let, pet, det, met, net, pen, men, den, leg, end, sell, tell, fell, sent, dent, lent*.

Difficult Sounds

1. Work on *h* words. The *h* sound is difficult because, although it is continuous, the quality of the sound produced is determined by the vowel that follows the *h*. The variations in the *h*'s that are produced can be demonstrated by producing the first unvoiced sound in the words *hit* and *hut*. The *h* sound in *hit* is very high; the *h* sound in *hut* is very low. Since *h* has this characteristic, it is best treated as a stop sound.

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Present the word *hat* on the board. Point to the *a*: "This sound is . . . Yes, *aaa*. So it goes *ha*. Keep it going: *haaa* . . . *hat*." Point to the *t*. Introduce various three-letter and four-letter examples: *hip*, *hop*, *ham*, *hit*, *hand*, *help*, *hot*, and so on. On every word, point first to the vowel and have the children identify it. Then return to the *h*, producing the combination consonant-vowel sound *ha*, *he*, *hi*, or *ho*.

2. Work on words beginning with *r*. The *r* sound sometimes gives trouble because the children want to pronounce it *ur*, which is natural, but which causes confusion in reading. When introducing the sound, insist that the children begin with a clean *rrrrr*, allowing no vowel sound to precede it: "Be like a robot: *rrr*. Your turn." Present a variety of *r* words: *rat*, *ran*, *rack*, *run*, *rut*, *rip*, and so on.

3. Program words so that the children do not confuse *b* and *d*.

Present a great many words with *ad*, *id*, and *ed* endings. Repeat words such as *mad*, *sad*, and *dad* until the children recognize them as sight words.

Introduce the *b* in the word *bad*. Present it as the fourth word in an *ad* series: *sad*, *mad*, *dad*, *bad*. The word *dad* appears right above the word *bad* in anticipation of the mistake the children may make in identifying *b* as *d*. "No, it's not a *d*. Look at *dad*. This sound is *d*." Point to *b*. "This sound is not *d*; it's facing the wrong way. It's facing this way . . . it's facing the way we move when we read." Additional mnemonics sometimes help, such as "It's got a belly sticking out this way . . ." Repeat the series until the child can discriminate between *bad* and *dad*.

Program a variety of words that begin with *b*. Do not present words that have *b* as an ending sound, but continue to introduce words that have *ad*, *ed*, and *id* endings. During this period the children will learn that *d* is principally an ending sound and *b* a beginning sound. Repeat words so that they learn to identify the *d* ending words automatically.

Next, introduce a series of paired words. For example:

ban	big	bug
dan	dig	dug

Do not labor over the identification of *b* and *d*. Program the endings, correct mistakes that arise, and be patient. The children will learn them about as quickly with an occasional reminder as they will if they receive extensive daily drill. Extended drill simply reinforces mistake patterns that can be avoided through proper programing.

Long and Short Vowel Discriminations

After the children have been introduced to the short-sound variations of the vowels (*a, e, i, o, and u*) and the long-sound variations (*ā, ē, ī, ō*), introduce discrimination exercises.

1. Present the following words on the board:

met bet set pet

Have the children read each word. Then refer to the word *met*. Point to the *e* and have the children indicate the sound it makes. "Watch this trick." Draw a line over the *e*:

mēt

"Now it doesn't say *met*; it says *meet*. Say that with me. . . . This line over *met* turns it into *meet*. Let's read. . . ." Erase the diacritical mark and say, "Now it says *met*, and now"—replace the mark—"it says *meet*."

Repeat the demonstration several times before moving to the second word: *bet*. Have the children read it. Put a diacritical mark over the *e*, reminding them of the sound it makes. Have them read the word *beet*; then erase the mark and summarize: "Now it says *bet* and now"—replace the mark—"it says *beet*."

Handle the other words in the same way, always summarizing to show how the diacritical mark has changed the word—from *met* to *meet*, from *bet* to *beet*, and so on. Repeat the series (presenting the words in different sequences) until the children become adept at changing the vowel sound.

Introduce a variation of the task in which the words are presented with diacritical marks, which are then erased:

bēt mēt rēd sēd

2. In connection with the chalkboard drill, introduce long-*ē* words in sentences that the children are to read. Concentrate on the words *he, me, we, and be*. For example:

wē have fun.
give mē a hamburger.
wē pet a cat.
hē is not a bēt.
hē will bē a man.

3. Concentrate on the long-*ō* sound next. Use a procedure similar to the one for *e* and *ē*. Start with simple words having an *ot* ending:

not got rot cot bot

Have the children read the words, reminding them of the sound the *o*

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makes without the diacritical mark; then add the mark to the word *not* and say, "It doesn't say *not*; now it says *note*." Erase the diacritical mark and replace it, each time asking the children what the word is.

Add diacritical marks to the remaining words. Then go through all the words, first indicating what the word is without the mark and then asking the children to read it with the mark: "Now it is *not*, and now . . . it is *note*." Run through the pattern very quickly so that the children can learn to hear the difference between the *o* and the *ō* sound.

Present similar series of such words as *sod*, *nod*, *lod*.

Present the words *no*, *go*, *so*, *ho*, *or*, *for* in sentences for the children to read:

sō the man laft. hō, hō, hō.

hē went.

hē will gō fōr mōr.

give mē that ōr dad will get mad.

4. After the children have mastered *e* and *o*, present the discriminations for the vowels *a* and *i*.

Present these words:

mat bat fat hat rat

Introduce the long *ā* sound (as in *āte*) with the diacritical mark, and have the children read the resulting words:

māt bāt fāt hāt rāt

Also begin to use the expression "make it long": "These marks make the *a* long: *aaa* turns into *āāā*." Demonstrate what this means by erasing the diacritical marks and then saying about each word, "Now it says *mat* and now"—add the diacritical mark—"it says *mate*." Work on the pattern until the children have mastered it. Also introduce *ad* words: *mad*, *lad*, *fad*, and so on.

5. For long- and short-*i* discrimination, begin with these words:

bit sit mit lit fit

"Now it says *lit*"—put in the diacritical mark—"and now it says *light*. Now it says *fit* . . . and now it says *fight*."

6. After the children have been introduced to the long sounds for *e*, *o*, *a*, and *i*, play a verbal game with them. This game is relatively difficult and is best handled in very small doses.

Take the pattern of long sounds that is the most familiar to the children, long *ē*. Present words in the short-vowel form and see if the children can "make them long": "Here's the game. Listen to this

word: *et*. Say it slow. . . . O.K., now make the *eee* long: *eat*. Here's another one: *met*. Say it slow. What comes after the *mmm*? . . . Yes, *eee*. O.K., make the *eee* long: *meeeeet*."

Play the game for about a minute a day—no more—until the children have mastered the long sounds verbally. Do not introduce long *u* either with the diacritical mark or verbally. The examples of long *u* are few and can easily be avoided in beginning reading material. Devote most of the time to working with long *e*, long *o*, and long *a*.

7. After the children have mastered the verbal game with long *e* and long *o* and after they are familiar with such words as *go* and *he*, drop the diacritical marks from the written exercises:

he will go if we go.

The children may read the words *he* and *go* without any prompting. If they require prompting, tell the children to make the *e* (as in *egg*) long, or make the *o* (as in *on*) long. This cue will probably work (if the children have learned the verbal patterns in Step 6). If the cue fails, however, draw an imaginary line over the *e* with your finger, repeating the instruction "Make it long." If this cue also fails, make the long mark with chalk and repeat the instruction "Make it long." Then erase the word and tell the children, "This is a funny word. It looks like *he* (as in *help*), but we say *hee*."

Reading Statements

Statement reading should become a part of the daily session as soon as the children have learned to identify at least fifteen letters. Remember that you are limited in composing statements to words with regular sounds.

Spell words phonetically. However, if a word ends in an *e* (*give*, *have*, *save*), spell the word as it is normally spelled, making the final *e* very small:

give

have

As the children become familiar with these words, make the final *e* larger. The children will continue to read the words correctly.

Introduce the words *a* and *is* early in the statement-reading instruction. Both of these words are exceptions. We don't say "iss"