Chapter 2: Sounds Together

Suggested Time Schedule: 38 Sessions/Classes

Sound Blending

Sound blending is the ability to build words from individual sounds by blending the sounds together in sequence. For example, the sounds *m*, *a*, *t* form the word *mat*.

Sound blending is essential in reading. This skill helps children in acquiring and raising phonological awareness which in turn supports the acquisition of literacy skills.

Children must know the sounds for each of the letters and then blend these sounds together to form the word(s).

The objective for the children is to

1. listen to the sounds in a word, presented orally with each sound said slowly,
2. blend the sounds together in sequence,
3. determine the target word,
4. indicate the word by saying it out loud.

In the beginning, sound out the word and see if a child can hear it. Give the answer if necessary. Some children take longer than others to hear. The sounds must be said clearly. It is easier if the first sound is said slightly louder. Words like b-u-s, t-o-p, c-a-t and h-e-n are good to begin with.

Word families

Word families are groups of words that have a common feature or pattern i.e. they have some of the same combinations of letters in them and a similar sound. For example at, cat, hat, and fat are a family of words with the "at"

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sound and letter combination in common. Many nursery rhymes contain common word families. These rhymes can be used to teach these letter combinations.

There are many families in English: ack, ain, ake, ale, all, ame, an, ank, ap, ash, at, ate, aw, ay, eat, ell, est, ice, ick, ide, ight, ill, in, ine, ing, ink, ip, it, ock, oke, op, ore, ot, uck ,ug, ump, unk.

Digraphs

Digraphs are sounds represented by two letters, such as sh (/ʃ/). Children should sound out the digraph, not the individual letters (s-h). With practice they will be able to produce the digraph as one sound in a word. *Sh* is a consonant digraph. In a word like *rain, ai* (/eɪ/) is a vowel digraph. This is difficult to begin with and takes practice.

It is essential to be able to distinguish between a blend (such as *st* in *star*) and a digraph (such as *sh* in *shoot*). In a blend the two sounds, s and t can each be heard but in a digraph this is not so. In the word *mishap* both the *s* and *h* are sounded and in *friendship* the single consonant *sh* is sounded. When sounding out a blend, encourage children to say the two sounds as one unit, so fl-a-t not f-l-a-t. This will lead to greater fluency while reading.

Tricky words

Some English words have irregular spelling and cannot be read by blending, such as *said*, *was* and *one*. The only way these words can be read and spelt correctly is by learning them and having plenty of practice. These are called tricky words.

The first section of Unit 2 introduces blending and word families through a sequence of vowel sounds. Some short and long vowels have been included to begin with viz. /æ/, /e/, /ɪ/, /ɒ/, /ʌ/, /ɑː/, iː/, /ɔː/, /ʊ/, /uː/. It is helpful to start with the rime in each word family, for instance, *at* (/æt/) and then introduce

the one-letter onset *b* (/b/) to form the word *bat*.

Similarly, other one-letter onsets like *c* (/k/), *f* (/f/), *m* (/m/) can be introduced to form words like *cat*, *fat*, *mat* respectively. After the children have learnt the pattern of a word family as dealt with above, onsets having digraphs and blends can be introduced to form words like *chat* (/tʃæt/), *brat* (/bræt/).

The vowel sounds are included in the same families. The rest of the word families should be taught so that the children get sufficient chance to drill and memorize the pattern of blending sounds. It is helpful to begin with the target sound in the initial position (like ab, ad, am, ag, an, ap, at) and then prefixing a consonant sound to form three-sound words (like cab, dad, dam, bag, can, cap, hat) concentrating on blending the sounds rather than looking for meaningful words only. The three-sound words (not necessarily meaningful English words) should be formed in order to teach the way sounds are further combined to form words. The children can begin with three-letter words with the vowel sounds in the medial position and then the final position, wherever applicable.

Cat and Bat (the short vowel /æ/)

ab	/æb/	ap	/æp/
cab	/kæb/	cap	/kæp/
lab	/læb/	lap	/læp/
tab	/tæb/	map	/mæp/

Digraphs, blends and tricky words can be introduced later on, for instance chap (/tʃæp/), chat (/tʃæt/), trap (/træp/), drag (/dræg/), rule (/ru:l/), mule (/mju:l/).

The above pattern can be followed in the rest of the vowel sounds that follow in the chapter.

Egg and Leg (the short vowel /e/)

ed	/ed/	et	/et/		
bed	/bed/	met	/met/		
fed	/fed/	net	/net/		
red	/red/	pet	/pet/		
trek	/trek/	set	/set/	bread/bred/	breath/breθ/

Kid and Lid (the short vowel /ɪ/)

ib	/ɪb/	ig	/ɪg/		
bib	/bɪb/	fig	/fɪg/		
nib	/nɪb/	dig	/dɪg/		
jib	/dʒɪb/	lig	/lɪg/		
trip	/trɪp/	drip	/drɪp/	Chris/krɪs/	thrill/θrɪl/

Dog and Log (the short vowel /ɒ/)

od	/ɒd/	og	/ɒg/		
cod	/kɒd/	dog	/dɒg/		
god	/gɒd/	fog	/fɒg/		
nod	/nɒd/	jog	/dʒɒg/		
frog	/frɒg/	trot	/trɒt/	knot/nɒt/	drop/drɒp/

Cub and Tub (the short vowel /ʌ/)

ub	/ʌb/	ug	/ʌg/		
cub	/kʌb/	bug	/bʌg/		
rub	/rʌb/	lug	/lʌg/		
tub	/tʌb/	jug	/dʒʌg/		
truck	/trʌk/	drug	/drʌg/	suck /sʌk/	tough /tʌf/

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Ark and Park (the short vowel /ɑː/)

ask	/ɑːsk/	ast	/ɑːst/		
arm	/ɑːm/	cast	/kɑːst/		
art	/ɑːt/	last	/lɑːst/		
ark	/ɑːk/	fast	/fɑːst/		
aunt	/ɑːnt/	heart	/hɑːt/	bar /bɑː/	star /stɑː/

Eel and Heal (the long vowel /Iː/)

eel	/ iːl/	eat	/iːt/		
heel	/hiːl/	beat	/biːt/		
feel	/fiːl/	seat	/siːt/		
peel	/piːl/	meat	/miːt/		
feet	/fiːt/	feat	/fiːt/	thief /θiːf/	niece /niːs/

Book and Cook (the short vowel /ʊ/)

book	/bʊk/	full	/fʊl/	good	/gʊd/
wood	/wʊd/	would	/wʊd/	should	/ʃud/
hook	/hʊk/	bull	/bʊl/	wood	/wʊd/
cook	/kʊk/	wool	/wʊl/	foot	/fʊt/
look	/lʊk/			put	/pʊt/

Room and Broom (the long vowel /uː/)

boon	/buːn/	cool	/kuːl/	boot	/buːt/		
moon	/muːn/	fool	/fuːl/	root	/ruːt/		
noon	/nuːn/	tool	/tuːl/	soot	/suːt/		
toon	/tuːn/	rule	/ruːl/	loot	/luːt/		
rule	/ruːl/	school	/skuːl/	shoot	/ʃuːt/	fruit /fruːt/	suit /sjuːt/
mule	/mjuːl/						