

WRTR Mini-Lessons

For moms too tired to think up their own word examples.

Welcome!

The following 15 pages are meant to help you “teach” the preliminary skills and the spelling rules when your child needs more than the examples on the rule page, or those words are just too darn hard.

Preliminary Skills

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Segmenting and Counting

“Segmentation is the ability to break words down into individual sounds.” Starting with the right hand thumb, the student counts on their fingers as they segment. (Teachers facing the child use their left hand, so the image mirrors the child and moves in the correct direction for them. I just turn my back or sit beside so we match.)

Verbal pattern: “Zag”, z-a-g, 3 sounds, (point to fingers) z-a-g.

Practice segmenting and counting some of the following words with your child:

zag	rich	hog	then	mop	me	the	pill
sun	milk	stop	flee	legs	wish	flip	mush
yak	brisk	lunch	twist	crisp	blush	smell	chimp
grasp	still	yelp	spit	slush	trip	scruff	dress

Blending

Given a series of segmented sounds, the child should be able to put it back together. Try a few of these. For a younger child, holding up fingers as you say the sounds helps.

Verbal pattern: z-a-g, what is that? “Zag.” m-u-sh, what’s that? “mush.”

Orally give the child sound segments to blend:

me	do	and	can	brim	nip	snuff	frog
stop	stand	must	brand	clasp	lisp	shift	smith
he	they	she	drop	bless	nut	cry	crutch
hand	we	no	spot	bush	flint	boat	splash

Vowels

“Vowels are speech sounds made with an open vocal track.” They are LOUD! Try screaming “fish” without the l. Can’t do it. The child should be able to list the vowels easily. A, E, I, O, U. If not, make a card and put it in your daily review.

Write a few of these on the board and have the child ID the vowel(s):

cat	grip	clod	cut
cap	crest	fig	gum
silk	pulp	hop	cast
nut	sprint	stump	sift

Vowel phonograms contain a vowel sound. Once the above exercise is easy, have him underline the single and multi-letter vowel PHONOGRAM(S) in the following words:

bar	her	saw	pea
light	corn	day	eat
seem	play	fort	point
rain	count	vein	boat

Consonants

Consonants are speech sounds made by blocking sound or air with our lips, tongue, and teeth. They can be voiced or unvoiced.

Regardless, it's hard to scream one without adding a vowel. Try screaming MMMMMM.

Write some of these words on the board and have your child spot the consonants:

bug	tramp	crisp	slim
bust	big	wept	jump
bland	soft	grasp	plan

Consonant phonograms have NO VOWEL COMPONENT. Once the above exercise is easy, have him underline multi-letter consonant PHONOGRAMS in the following words:

bath	ship	batch	gnat
chin	such	parch	shift
knit	sign	wring	birth

Syllables

“A syllable is a unit of speech with one and only one vowel sound.”

“Let's practice counting syllables by putting the back of our hands under our chins. The number of times our jaws drop is the number of vowel sounds. Vowels are made with an open vocal tract. That's why we can feel it move.”

Verbal pattern: Try “catnip”. Cat-nip. Two drops means, two vowel sounds, two syllables.

Count the drops/vowel sounds/syllables in the following words:

hobnob	me	talcum	butterfly
moon	pancake	goat	skillet
understand	Chicago	coffee	fan
child's name	other names	objects in the room	

Some children will confuse this with segmenting and/or add “uh” to the ends of words, creating extra syllables. If it is a problem, make a card and put it in your “daily” file. Mine says “Syllable count: Objects in the room.”

Reading “for Spelling”

Break single syllable words into sounds, then blend “for spelling.” Over pronounce vowels. Sound out and say each word in this list for “spelling.” Once you are done, read the list again for normal speech, no sounding out.

was: “/w/ /ah/ /z/, /wahz/” (not /wuz/)

do: “/d/ /oo/, /doo/”

cat: /c/ /a/ /t/, /cat/

may: /m/ /A/, /mA/

ring: /r/ /i/ /ng/, /ring/ (not /reeng/)

Break longer words into syllables. But when you blend it back, preserve the double letters between syllables, short vowels, and keep the dumb-sounding short i. Follow the same procedure as the above list.

imitate: /im/ /i/ /tAt/, /im-i-tAt/ (not im -uh-tAt)

valley: /val/ /li/, /val-li/ (not /ee/)

doctor: /doc/ /tor/, /doc-tor/ (not /er/)

civil: /si/ /vil/, /si vil/ (not si-vul)

We are used to sounding out and then saying it in normal speech for reading. This is not how Spalding uses “sounding out.” It’s for spelling only. Reading is always whole word, in normal speech.

Blending Multiple Syllables for SPELLING

For this exercise, say the syllables and have the child put it back together. Note: This skill is used mostly for SPELLING pronunciation, so the blending is unaccented and avoids using schwa. Use precise pronunciation of all vowels. It will feel weird.

Verbal pattern: (I lightly clap as I slowly say each syllable.) mi-cro-wave (Then I clap quickly as I blend it.) mi-cro-wave.

Have the child blend segments you give for the following words:

ton-sil vic-tim can-did mag-net

nap-kin wis-dom wom-bat pop-lin

sel-dom lit-mus bob-cat ham-let

con-so-nant un-der-line how-ev-er im-por-tant

child’s name other names objects in room

Syllable Division

There are 6 Spalding rules for syllable division. The child need not be able to divide lists of words on his own, but he does need to “get it” when you explain divisions and markings of his words.

Pattern 1: If it’s there, “Count back three and chop consonant-L-E”

stum ble	bat tle	bub ble
sim ple	snif fle	han dle
daz zle	bi ble	sta ble
bun dle	ca ble	fid dle

Go down your list and ask for each, “Why did we divide here?”

“Because we counted back 3 and chopped consonant-L-E”

Read through the list with him sounding and blending “for spelling,” preserving the short vowels and double consonants.

Pattern 2: If there is only a single consonant phonogram between two vowel phonograms, divide right after the first vowel phonogram. (If the first vowel is a single a, e, o, or u, it will say its name. r. 4)

o pen	ra ven	ze ro	lo cust
hu man	stu dent	o men	la bel
e vil	Ro man	ba sic	pu pil
au thor	chee tah	cou gar	ti ger

Go down your list and ask for each, “Why did we divide here?”

“Because o and e are vowel phonograms and p was alone between them.”

Practice reading the list “for spelling.” Keep the short vowels intact. “Lo cust, locust. Ra ven, raven.”

Pattern 3: Divide between compound words.

Write some of the following word with the spaces:

pig pen	dish pan	whip lash
sun fish	foot ball	rail road
cat nip	sweet meat	moon light
can not	spear mint	bath tub

Go down your list and ask for each, “Why did we divide here?”

“Because pig and pen are each a whole word.”

Notice that when you read compound words, we accent both. No one gets squished to a schwa.

Pattern 4: Multi-letter phonograms stay together, even when it negates other patterns.*

or chard	pan ther	dol phin
mush room	far ther	nick le*
au thor	leath er*	buck le*

Underline the multi-letter phonograms. Go down your list and ask for each, "Why did we divide here?" "Because ch stays together."

Read the lists "for spelling".

Pattern 5: If there are 2+ consonant phonograms (or none) between two vowel phonograms, share and share alike, keeping "blends with their friends," if you can.

but ton	les son	com plex
cap let	bob bin	rab bit
mup pet	vel lum	rib bon

Go down your list and ask for each, "Why did we divide here?"
"Because there were two t's."

Read the list for spelling, preserving the double letters and short vowel sounds. (But-ton, button. Bob-bin, bobbin.)

Pattern 6: The affix stands alone.

This is tricky. You have to actually know your prefixes and suffixes. Go over these definitions:

Base- the smallest unit of meaning that is still an English word.

Affix- a word part that we add to a base word to change its meaning.

Suffix- an affix that attaches to the end of a base word

Prefix- an affix that attaches to the beginning of a base word

Write some of the following on the board, with the spaces:

same ness	hope less	safe ly
bait ed	use ful	al read y
hate ful	bust ed	eas y
pave ment	help ing	bone less

Go down your list and ask for each, "Why did we divide here?"
"Because ness is a suffix and stands alone."

Syllable Division Summary

1. When you look at a word, chop off C-LE, and affixes.
2. If there's only one consonant phonogram between two vowel phonograms, divide after the first vowel phonogram. fi-nal
3. Divide between compound words.
4. Multi-letter consonant phonograms stay together, even when it negates other rules.
5. If there's more than one consonant phonogram between two vowel phonograms, share and share alike, keeping "blends with their friends" if you can.
6. The affix stands alone.

Exceptions

Pattern #2 notes: We used cat words for years to teach syllable division. Bob-cat, li-on, ti-ger. Well, words that broke rule 2 were called CAMELS. Camel words are those that divide after the consonant without a good reason. Cam-el words are weirdos. Having one consonant in there and dividing after it, making the vowel short, is not typical.

The only good reason to divide there is that they CAN'T double. Here's our saying: **H**appy **J**umbo **K**itten**S** **W**earing **Y**ogurt **V**ests. The letters H, J, K, W, Y, V, and S saying /z/ do not double.

"Cover" isn't a camel word. There's no such thing as "cover." It's not disobeying. Camel could really be "cammel" right? Denim could really be "dennim."

THE RULES

Rule 1: U always follows q and is not a vowel.

quit	quest	queen	quip
quench	squeal	quaint	squib
quiz	quid		

Write some of these on the board. Underline multi-letter phonograms. Ask for each word, “Why did I underline qu?” “Because U is not a vowel here. It’s following Q.” Read through for spelling and then reading.

Rule 2: C says /s/ before e, i, and y.

cent	pen cil	cinch
ul cer	cen ter	cin der
cit rus	ran cid	ceil ing

Write some of these on the board. Underline multi-letter phonograms. Ask for each, “Why is c saying /s/ here?” “Because it’s followed by e.” Read through for spelling and then reading.

Rule 3: G may say /j/ before e, i, and y.

gem	mag ic	gin ger
mar gin	germ	gen der
gym	con gest	gen er ous

Write some of these on the board. Underline multi-letter phonograms. Ask for each word, “Why is g saying /g/?” “Because it is followed by i.” Read through for spelling and then reading.

Rule 4: At the end of a syllable, a, e, o, and u are long.

bo nus	de mon	cro cus
stu pid	lo tus	ho tel
po tent	be gan	be long

Write some of these on the board. Underline multi-letter phonograms. Write “r. 4” after each. Ask for each, “Why is the u long?” “Because it’s at the end of a syllable.” Read through for spelling and then reading.

Rule 5: I and y usually say /i/, but may say /I/.

si lent	ty rant	cy ber
qui et	i dol	I rish
i ris	by way	gi ant

Write some of these on the board. Mark multi-letter phonograms and long vowels. Write “r. 5” after each. Read the list for spelling.

Rule 6: English words don't end in i, please use y.

my	fly	dry
dan dy	bel fry	shy
plen ty	flim sy	gyp sy

Write some of these on the board. Underline multi-letter phonograms and long vowels. Write "r. 5, 6" after each word with a final /eye/. Write "r. 6" after the rest.

Read list for spelling. Keep those multi-syllable final y's as short i's. "Gypsy" is /jip-si/. Then read the list in normal speech. It's nuts, but I promise it pays off once you hit the long words in the later grades.

Rule 7: There are five kinds of silent e.

Job 1, jump 1	rode	joke	tune	safe
V u, job 2	hue	give	groove	sue
C g, job 3	quince	prince	grunge	hinge
Job 4, more	bun dle	can dle	sim ple	hum ble
Handyman E	house	horse	freeze	cheese

Write some of these on the board. Mark according to the book. Ask for each, "What is e's job here?"

I like point out that Job 5 silent e is not entirely shiftless. He keeps us from thinking words are plural that aren't. Horse would be hors, a plural of "hor." Cheese would be chees, a plural of "chee."

*If your child is fluent in cursive, now is the time to review by doing Rule page 1. If you like, here are some WORD versions to mark.

Rule 8: There are 5 kinds of /er/. W makes "or" say /er/.

fern	jerk	perk	verb
bird	skir mish	swirl	squirm
burn	slur	church	burst
worm	world	worst	word
earn	earl	learn	earth

Write some on the board. Mark the multi-letter phonograms. Read for spelling. Segment single syllable words: /j-er-k/, jerk. Just do syllables for multi-syllable words: /sker-mish/, skirmish.

*This material is expanded on Rule Page 2, if your child is ready to write it.

Rule 9: To add a vowel-beginning suffix to a 1-syllable word with 1-vowel and 1 final consonant, double the consonant.

run ning	pop ped	big gest	mad der
stun ning	dip ped	fat test	pop per
fib bing	trim ped	thin nest	hug ger

Syllable division Pattern 6 says the “suffix stands alone”, but vowel suffixes are naughty! If there’s a short vowel, vowel suffixes pretend they were born there, not added on, and therefore have a perfect right to Pattern 2 syllable division, giving them the consonant and triggering r. 4 for that first little defenseless vowel. Rude! We double to protect him.

Mark multi-letter phonograms. For each word ask, “Why did we double the n here?” “Because the base word ‘run’ has 1 syllable, 1 vowel, 1 consonant and the suffix ‘ing’ starts with a vowel.”

Rule 10: To add a vowel-beginning suffix to a 2-syllable word with 1-vowel and 1 final consonant, (and the accent is on the 2nd syllable) double the consonant.

ex cel ling	un zipped	ab hor ring
oc cur red	in terred	ex tol ling
un wrap ped	re cut ting	un fit ting
re but table	trans mit table	met al lic

Write some on the board. Mark multi-letter phonograms. Write r. 10 after each. Some also have other rules. It couldn’t be avoided on this one. Pop in your r. 4, 20, 28, and 29’s, if you like. But, more importantly, ask for each, “Why is the ‘l’ doubled?” “Because ‘ing’ begins with a vowel and the accent is on ‘cel’, which has one short ‘e’ and one final ‘l’.” (And vowel-beginning suffixes are RUDE.)

Rule 11: To add a vowel-beginning suffix to a silent e word, drop the e.

blam ing	clos ing	lik ing	cut est
driv er	fin er	bak er	whit ish
loved	ad mired	us ed	fat ed

I point out that “magic e’s” do their work, even when “invisible.” Fancy! They glue that consonant to the vowel and make the suffix stand alone, as he should. (Pattern 6) Good times.

Write some on the board. Mark multi-letter phonograms. Write r. 11 after each. Ask, “What is the base word?” Also ask, “Where did the ‘e’ in ‘blame’ go?” “It was dropped because the suffix starts with ‘i’.” “So how is that ‘a’ still long?” “Because magic ‘e’ works even when he’s invisible.”

Rule 12: I before e, except after c, or sounded like /ay/.

wield	priest	pier
pix ie	brie	zom bie
shield	die sel	chief
de ceive	re ceipt	ceil ing
con ceit	per ceive	con ceive
vein	rein	skein
reign	heir	beige
veil	feign	sur veil

Write r. 12 after each. Mark multi-letter phonograms. Ask for each, “Why do we use ‘ei’?” “Because it’s following ‘c’.” For the third set ask, “Why do we use ‘ei’?” “Because it’s saying /ay/.”

Notice this isn’t the usual rhyme. “Neighbor” and “weigh” use “eigh” which is its own separate thing.

Rule 13: In a base word, “sh” at the beginning or the end of a syllable, or the suffix “ship.” Sh doesn’t start other syllables.

fish	shrimp	bash	shoe
shelf	blush	fresh	shin
lord ship	queen ship	lea der ship	ow ner ship

Write some. Mark multi-letter phonograms. You may write r. 13 after these, but it’s used inconsistently in the spelling lists. I haven’t figured it out. Ask for each, “Why is /sh/ “sh” here?” “Because it ends the base word ‘fish’.” Or, “It’s the suffix ‘ship’.” And so on...

Rule 14: Ti, si, ci, are used to say /sh/ to begin syllables after the first one.

ques tion	men tion	ac tion
ses sion	func tion	sec tion
fa cial	spe cial	con di tion
mi li tia	an cient	na tion

Ti is the most common, especially when we’re talking “shun’s” (tion). Mark multi-letter phonograms, write r. 14 after all, and ask for each, “Why did we use ‘ti’ here?” “Because it’s starting the second syllable.”

Note: We aren’t yet contrasting WHICH one, just that it’s not “sh”. Also, the rule page handles “ci”, but it doesn’t appear in the rules.

Rule 15: “Si” says /sh/ when the syllable before it ends in s.

com mis sion	di gres sion	dis cus sion
pas sion	mis sion	Prus sian
sup pres sion	ag gres sion	ces sion

When you hear a short vowel followed by “shun,” it’s often “ssion.” When it’s the “root” that ended in “S” (tense), you might not get the double. (tension)

Write some on the board. Mark multi-letter phonograms. Write r. 14, 15 after each. Ask for each, “Why is ‘si’ saying /sh/ here?” Because the syllable before starts with an ‘s’.” Go through each and read for spelling. Lots of repeating the double consonants and weird stuff: “com-miss-shun.”

Rule 16: Si may say /zh/ as in vision

Hoo sier	Per sia	ver sion
vi sion	am ne sia	col li sion
cor ro sion	de ci sion	di vi sion
ero sion	ex plo sion	in clu sion

If the base or root does not end in “s”, “si” usually says /zh/. If you hear /zhun/ in a word, it’s almost always “sion.” /Zhah/ at the end is almost always “sia.”

Mark multi-letter phonograms; write r. 16 after each. A couple also need r. 4. Read each for spelling.

Rule 17: We often double final l, s, and f after a single, short vowel.

off	buff	whiff	fluff
moss	bass	kiss	mass
bill	hill	tell	quill

Write some on the board. Underline the multi-letter phonograms. Write r. 17 after each. “Why are there 2 f’s here?” “Because it’s following a single short vowel.” Read for spelling and for reading.

Rule 18: Use ay for /A/ at the end of a word.

may	pray	gray	pay
stray	sway	hay	bray
ray	bay	say	clay

Write some on the board. Mark the multi-letter phonograms. Write r. 18 after each. Ask for each, “Why do we use ay here?” “Because we hear a final /A/.” Read for spelling and for reading.

Rule 19: i and o may say /I/ and /O/ before 2 consonants.

child	mild	wild
old	bold	gold
bind	wind	kind
bolt	jolt	colt
most	post	host

Write some on the board. Mark multi-letter phonograms. (We don't underline the long i's and o's.) Write r. 19 after each. Ask, "Why does i say /I/ here?" "Because it's followed by L and D."

Rule 20: Letter s never follows x. X already has one, /ks/.

ex ceed	ex tra	ex ist
ex cise	ex cite	ex it
ex cess	com plex	ex act

Write some on the board. Mark multi-letter phonograms. Write r. 20 after each. (This rule is only marked on multi-syllable words. I don't know why.)

Rule 21: All, written alone has 2- l's but as a prefix only one l is written

al ready	al right	al though
al so	al most	

I like to explain this by saying, "Base words are flossy (r. 17). Affixes are not."

Write some on the board. Mark multi-letter phonograms and r. 4. Write r. 21 after all. Read for spelling, preserving those short vowels.

Rule 22 till and full written alone has 2-l's but when written with another syllable only one l is written

health ful	un til	ful fill
art ful	len til	pis til

I like to explain this by saying, "Base words are flossy (r. 17). Affixes are not."

Write some on the board. Mark multi-letter phonograms and r. 4 and r. 19 instances. Write r. 22 after all. Read for spelling, preserving those short vowels.

Rule 23. “dge” is only used after a single vowel that says it’s short sound.

ledge	edge	fudge	trudge
smudge	lodge	badge	wedge
dredge	hedge	judge	dodge
bridge	pledge	ridge	nudge

I like to point out that English words don’t end in j. Your choices are ge or dge. If you don’t have a short vowel, it’s ge. (huge, change)

Write some of these on the board. Mark the multi-letter phonograms. Write r. 23 after each. For each ask, “Why did we use dge?” “Because it follows /e/.”

Rule 24. when adding an ending to a word that ends with a consonant + y, use i instead of y unless the ending is ing.

cried	de nied	var ied	tries
cop ies	en vy ing	stud y ing	lob by ist
vy ing	bur ies	fly ing	re plied

Write some on the board. Mark multi-letter phonograms. Add r. 4 and r. 5 where needed. Add r. 24 to all. Ask for each, “What is the base word?” Then ask for each, “Why did we use an ‘i’ here?” “Because with suffix ‘ed’, y changes to i.” Or “Why did we use ‘y’ here?” “Because the suffix ‘ist’ begins with an ‘i’.”

Read for spelling. Don’t let your i’s and y’s go /ee/. Keep them short. It really does help avoid spelling errors. Then go back through and read it for normal speech.

Rule 25: Use ck for /k/ after a short, single, accented vowel.

sick	block	back	pick
black	track	pock et	tick et
check	chick en	knock	struck

Write some on the board. Mark multi-letter phonograms. Write r. 25 after each. Ask for each, “Why is /k/ ck?” “Because it’s following /i/.” Read for spelling and then for reading.

When I teach this rule, I say that k is afraid of short single vowels sneaking up on him. Otherwise, it’s just a k. But, he can only stand it at all in the first syllable. For the end of a multi-syllable word, c goes it alone. (Tarmac, magic)

*Up front, use c, unless it’s right before e, i, or y. In the caboose, use k, unless a short vowel is sneaking up on him.

Rule 26: Capitalize proper nouns.

Kan sas	Ne bras ka	Ben
New York	Pat rick	Eas ter
Ger man	Mem phis	Zach

I have yet to need to really teach this rule, but there you go.

Rule 27: S says /z/ in other places, but up front it's always z.

zip	zest	zoom
zag	zoo	zeal

Write some on the board. Mark multi-letter phonograms. Write r. 27 after each. Ask "Why is /z/ a z?" "Because it's up front." Read for spelling and then for reading.

Rule 28: Ed says /t/ after unvoiced sounds, /d/ after voiced sounds, and /ed/ after /d/ and /t/.

Voiced	cleaned	maimed	bowled	peeled
Unvoiced	rushed	stumped	pinched	asked
/d/ /t/	land ed	hunt ed	sift ed	crust ed

Voiced sounds use our voice boxes. They hum. Feel your throat and say "mmmm, nnnnn, /d/, /g/." Now try "shhhh, /ch/, /p/." There's no hum. Ed changes to match. /rusht/ /cleend/

For adding ed to final /d/ or /t/ sounds, we need a spacer. Can't say /bud-d/ for budded or /bat-t/ for batted. And since the spacer is a vowel, which is voiced, the d says /d/.

Write some on the board. Mark multi-letter phonograms. Write r. 28 after each. Ask, "Why does ed say /d/?" "Because it follows /n/." Read for spelling and then for reading.

Rule 29: For spelling, say both consonants in a middle double.

pos sum	mut ton	let ter
muf fin	lad der	ban ner
bet ter	rub ber	ten nis
shud der	fos sil	sup per

Write some on the board. Mark multi-letter phonograms. Write r. 29 after each. Read for spelling, keeping the double letters between consonants and avoiding schwa. Ask for each, "Why did I say /poS/ /Sum/?" "Because for spelling, we say both consonants between syllables."

Caswell Family Rule Additions

We have found the following two rules very handy and if you use any of my keys, you will see these pop up.

Rule 30: Glued Sounds. Multi-letter phonograms may drop a letter when a similar sound follows. (“ng” is the most common)

Only “ng” says /ng/, but when followed by /k/ or /g/ the “g” melts into glue.

- “Bank” isn’t /b/-/a/-/n/-/k/, it’s /b/-/a/-/ng/-/k/
- “Ban-gle” isn’t /ban/-/gle/, it’s /bang/-/gle/. The “ng” didn’t divide. There’s a genuine “g” sound following it, so the first “g” melted into glue.
- “Van-quist” isn’t /van/-/kwish/, it’s /vang/-/kwish/ “Qu” has s /k/ sound in there so the “g” melted again.

This comes up rarely with other phonograms, but can still be helpful.

“Budg-et” in syllables is budge + et, but the first “e” melted.

Rule 31: “A” may say it’s third sound if preceded by /w/ or followed by // (accented syllables), or if it’s hanging out on the end all alone.

- Squash: /s/ /kw/ /o/ /sh/.
- Call: /k/ /o/ //
- Ex-tra: /eks/-/tro/ (Even if you accent it, it’s not /a/ or /ay/.