

Sample Games

Games are a fun way for children to practice specific reading, writing and spelling skills. They can spark interest, increase confidence in young readers and writers, and change the pace of a tutoring session.

Some things to keep in mind when selecting or creating games: words for the games should come from the books the child is reading, or has read recently.

Games should be chosen or designed to promote the child's sense of competence and success. If necessary, you should "rig" the game so nobody loses, or the child wins.

Mix Up, Fix Up

A popular activity with many emergent readers, this builds individual word awareness and recognition as well as understanding of sentence order. Using a familiar sentence or refrain from a dictated story or book, print the sentence on a large card. Then prepare the individual cards for each word. At first, start with only three or four word sentences or phrases. When the child is comfortably mastering this, you can add more words, up to about six.

First, read the sentence or phrase with the child, and lay out the cards in order. Ask the child to read the sentence with you pointing to individual words. Then mix up the cards and ask the child to reorder them. The child may use the master card as a prompt, or may prefer to try it alone and then check.

Notice the child's strategies. Does he say words aloud as he arranges them, or does he do it silently in his head? Does he reread the sequence of the words as he builds the sentence, using the cadence and the context? Does he build sequentially or at random? What other cues does s/he use?

"Oh lovely mud," said the pig.

"Oh
 mud," the
 said
 pig. lovely

What you'll need: Two cards or wide strips of paper, scissors, pen/pencil/marker. Print each strip with the same sentence from a familiar book or story. Leave one strip in-tact and cut the other strip up into individual words. Be sure the write the text clearly in print (not script) letters.

From: Reading Games for Tutors, Claudia Grose.

Concentration or Memory Game

To Make

Select 5 – 10 words from a book (or books) the child is reading. Print each word clearly and boldly on separate 3×5 inch index cards, making pairs of each word. (The child may be able to help you by copying the words you write.)

To Play

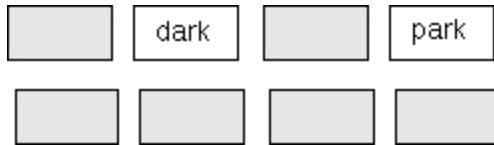
Shuffle the cards and place them face down in neat rows. Take turns turning up two cards at a time and reading the words aloud. If the two cards match, the player keeps them and takes a second turn. If they do not match, the cards are replaced face down and the next player takes a turn. Play until all the cards are matched. The player with the most pairs wins. If the child has trouble recognizing a word, say the word – do not ask the child to "sound out" the word. The purpose of this game is to build automatic recognition of whole words.



You can control the difficulty of the game by the choice and number of words used: for very beginning readers, choose meaningful words that are visually distinctive: “ghost”, “dark”, “sister”, and keep the number of words low. For a more challenging game, include some words that are less distinctive: “when”, “what”, “this”, “that”, but be careful not to overwhelm the child.

Variation 1

Instead of matching pairs, you can use rhyming pairs: look, book; dark, park.



Variation 2

This game can also be used to build letter recognition and letter/sound association. Paste or draw simple pictures on one set of cards; and on the other set, print initial consonants to go with the pictures. For example, paste the picture of a dog on one card, and write the letter “D” on a matching card.

NOTE: This game can be adapted to use with older children, or more advanced readers: variations can include vocabulary practice such as using homonyms, (words that sound alike but are spelled differently and have different meanings: cent/scent; dear/deer, etc.) or contractions, (can’t; cannot, etc.).

Go Fish (Good for Early Fluent to Fluent readers)

To Make

Select 10 – 20 words from a book (or books) the child is reading. Print them clearly and boldly on separate 3×5 inch index cards, making pairs of each word. (Children may help by copying the words you write.) Two to four players can play comfortably.

To Play

Shuffle and deal 3 – 5 cards to each player. Place the rest of the deck face down. Players take turns asking each other for a card to match one held in his or her hand. If the opponent has a matching card, it is given over, and the first player takes another turn. If the opponent does not have a match, he or she says “Go Fish” and the player draws from the remaining deck of cards, and the next player takes a turn. Each time a player has a match, he or she reads the words, and puts down the pair, face up. Continue the game until the cards are all used up.



Instead of matching words, rhyming words can be used. In this case, players ask for “a word that sounds like ‘night’...” At the end, the child can earn extra points by dictating or writing additional words that rhyme with the base words, or creating “silly” sentences using the rhymes.

NOTE: This game can be adapted to use with older children, or more advanced readers: variations can include vocabulary practice such as using homonyms (words that sound alike but are spelled differently and have different meanings: cent/scent; dear/deer, etc.), or contractions (can't; cannot, etc.).

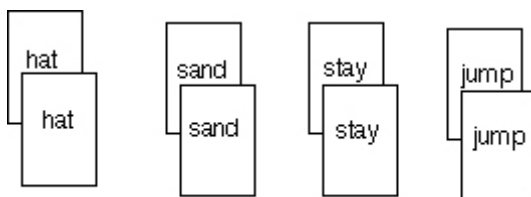
Old Maid (all levels)

To Make

Select three words per player from a book (or books) being read. Print them clearly and boldly on separate 3x5 inch index cards, making pairs of words. Choose one more word without a match that will be the winning card.

To Play

Shuffle and deal 3 – 6 cards to each player. Players take turns drawing a card from a player to their left. If a player draws a card that matches one in his or her hand, he/she reads the two matching words in order to keep the pair. Play continues until all the cards are matched, except for the one odd card. The player who holds that card at the end wins the game.



NOTE: This game can be adapted to use with older children, or more advanced readers: variations can include vocabulary practice such as using homonyms (words that sound alike but are spelled differently and have different meanings: cent/scent; dear/deer, etc.), or contractions (can't; cannot, etc.).

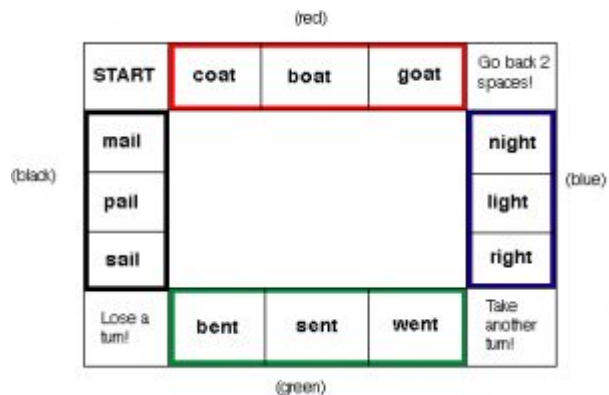
Monopoly, or Read & Spell Around

A great game to help teach word family patterns and spelling patterns. This should be used with children who write fairly comfortably, usually second grade or older.

To Make

Create a game board with 4 or 5 squares on each side. Prepare word cards with families of words that emerge from the child's reading or dictating: night, light, tight; went, bent, sent; hat, cat, bat. (For beginning readers or younger children, make sure the patterns are not too similar: mat, sat, rat; man, can, ran; met, set, bet.) Color code each word family, and each side of the game board.

Place the words face up around the board in sets. To add to the element of chance, have other game directions on the board, such as "take another turn", "go back 3 paces", etc. Prepare score sheets for each player with color-coded headings for each word family.



To Play

Role dice or use a spinner to move around the board. Wherever a player lands he reads the word, then writes it in the appropriate "word family" category on the score sheet. Extra points can be earned by dictating or writing sentences with the rhyming words.

Score Sheet	
Red	Blue
_____	night _____
_____	_____
_____	_____
Green	Black
sent _____	_____
bent _____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

For older children variations can be developed to include other spelling patterns, not necessarily rhyming: vowel diphthongs (goat, toast, road) or tricky consonant blend words that may cause trouble: (stick, stuff, stop; slip, slap, slop) or many more.

Activities to Practice Word Families (Rhyming Patterns)

For example, words in the same family as: black

Introduce a poem or rhyming story such as *Miss Mary Mack*:

“Miss Mary Mack, Mack, Mack
all dressed in black, black, black
with silver buttons up and down her back, back, back...”

Encourage the child to point out words in a text that have similar spelling patterns.

Help the child think of other words that have this pattern.

You may have to write a few words for him or her:

sack
pack
stack

and then have the child read the whole word and underline the repeated part of the word: “ack.”

Using magnetic letters or scrabble pieces form a word with the “ack” pattern. Ask the student to change the first letter of the word (for example: ‘s’ in sack) to make a new word such as: “pack.” You should be sure to provide a limited number of letters (two or three at first) for the child to choose from.



Remember to choose a word pattern that is useful and important to the student and that relates to something that he or she has read or will read. If possible, start with a word he or she already knows in the word family. After reading a book about being sad, start with the word “cry” and then followed with “fry”, “try” and “wry”.

Remember to review the word families you’ve chosen to work on periodically through other games such as Go Fish (using word families) or Read Around.

Be sure to give the student a chance to go back to a book, poem, or other texts where he or she can apply this new reading skill. Poems, nursery rhymes and jump rope jingles are a great resource for early readers.

Fishing for Sounds (for Emergent readers and writers)

To Make

Find and cut out small pictures of familiar objects from magazines, old workbooks, catalogs. Collect several pictures with words that start with the same letter, such as book, bed, basket, boy; snake, sun, skate, slide...etc. You can do this activity with your child; it is an effective way to develop their vocabulary as they name different

Create fish shapes. Paste a picture on each fish. Make at least 5 fish shapes for each letter you plan to work on. You should make at least two different letter sets to begin. You can add more each time you play the game. Make index cards for each letter set with the picture and corresponding letter.

To Play

Begin with 2 letter sets.



Mix the fish shape letter sets together. Place all fish shapes face down on the table. Next take turns “going fishing”. Take a fish shape card say the name and place it in appropriate pile under/picture.

