

“MOVE AND SAY” TO BUILD FOUNDATIONAL READING SKILLS

In the introduction for this month’s Teacher’s Corner, we defined phonemic awareness as a student’s ability to understand that words are made up of sounds. Phonics was described as understanding the relationship between sounds in a word and the letters used to spell it. This week in the Teacher’s Corner, we will present an easy daily activity that can help beginners develop skills in both of these foundational areas of early literacy.

One important distinction to make is that phonemic awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate sounds in words. Activities that support phonemic awareness do not require that students see the words. Most phonemic awareness activities are done by simply listening and speaking. On the other hand, phonics requires that students associate letter sounds with the written form of a letter. The phonics component of this activity is added at the end under *Extensions*.

MOVE AND SAY

Time: 5-10 minutes daily

Goals:

- To help students identify, count, and manipulate sounds in words.
- To help students segment words into sounds and blend sounds into words.

Materials:

- Small re-sealable plastic bags
- Tokens for students: small objects such as pebbles, paper clips, cotton balls, beans, or coins
- Tokens for the teacher: magnets or paper squares taped to the board for modeling
- Phonemic awareness word lists (there are many free lists that can be found online)
- If students need visual support in segmenting sounds, a printed grid for each student (Appendix A), masking tape, or another way of creating a grid (see Step 3 in Preparation)

Preparation:

1. Read through the procedure to understand the activity and to identify what materials you will want to use.

2. It is helpful for students to practice phonemic awareness activities daily, so consider making students a small kit that can be stored in individual desks or in a specific place in the classroom. Each student will need a plastic bag with 5 tokens. Tokens can be any small object such as cotton balls, pebbles, beans, coins, etc. As students progress to learning words with more than 5 sounds or phonemes, you can add more tokens to each bag.
3. If visual support is helpful to students, you can print copies of Appendix A or use masking tape to create a grid on each student's table or desk. Grids can also be drawn on individual white boards or chalkboards. This activity can also be completed without using a grid at all.
4. Be sure you have a list of words (printed or easily accessible on the computer) that are ready to call out to students. Only the teacher needs a copy, not the students.
5. Arrange your teacher tokens (magnets or paper squares with tape) in a group on the board.

Procedure:

1. Ensure that each student has a set of tokens and (if desired) a visual grid for the activity.
2. Tell students that they are going to work on hearing the sounds in words and that you will show them what to do. If it is helpful, you can draw a grid on the board as a model. Place your tokens above the grid in a cluster.
3. Say "The word I am going to start with is *bat*. I hear three sounds, /b/ /a/ /t/, in that word. I am going to move one token for each sound I hear."
4. Using your tokens on the board, model by saying the sound /b/ and moving one token down into the first box of the grid. Say /a/ and move another token down into the second square. Say /t/ and move a token into the third square.
5. Tap your finger under each token and repeat the individual sounds, /b/ /a/ /t/. Then, sweep your finger across the bottom of the grid from left to right and blend the sounds together to say the word *bat*.
6. Tell students they will now do the same thing with you using a new word. Again, students can have a grid for the activity, but it is not necessary. They can also simply move their tokens on their desks or tables.
7. Say the word *map*. Tell students "Now, move one token on your table for each sound you hear. Let's try it together." Model moving tokens on the board as you and the students say /m/ /a/ /p/.
8. Tap your finger below each token and say the individual sounds again. Have students do this with you. Then, have students sweep their fingers across the bottom of their grids from left to right and blend the sounds together to say *map*.

9. Answer any questions students have. Repeat this activity with new words from the list, monitoring students and stopping to clarify as needed.
10. Once students have mastered the procedure, the class should be able to do the following:
 - a. Teacher calls out a word from the list.
 - b. Students repeat the word.
 - c. Students segment the word into individual sounds and move a token for each sound.
 - d. Students tap fingers under each token and repeat the sounds.
 - e. Students sweep finger below the tokens, left to right, and blend the sounds to say the word.
11. Complete this activity in class for about 5 minutes using words from the list you have chosen. It is OK to repeat some words, but don't use the same words every time because you want students to make progress. As students become more comfortable with the activity, use more complicated skills and words (see Variations below).

Variations/Extensions:

1. Once students understand the procedures for this activity, you can introduce more complicated words with a greater number of sounds. Add more tokens to students' kits and more boxes to their grids.
2. Sound manipulation: When students are comfortable using the objects to segment words into sounds, you can add an additional activity: sound manipulation. Manipulating sounds in words is also an important early literacy skill. Follow the procedure outlined above in Step 10. After students slide their finger under the objects to blend the sounds into a word, have them pause and change a sound. For instance, if the first word was *bat*, you might say "Now change *bat* to *bag*." Students then have to listen for the sound that has changed; in this case, /t/ has changed to /g/. Have students physically remove the token for the /t/ sound and replace it with a new token for /g/. Then, students repeat Steps 10.d and 10.e for the new sounds and word. This variation can be completed for any sound within the word. For example, starting with *bat*, you could ask students to change it to *bag*, *big*, *rig*, *rag*, *rat*, etc. Many of the free word lists online offer sound manipulation activities as well.
3. Phonics extension: Using Appendix B, have students complete the procedures above using the first grid on top. Say a word, have students repeat it, and then segment the sounds using tokens in the grid. Then, have students tap each token, say the sound, and write the corresponding letter in the grid on the bottom to practice spelling words. The grid can be laminated or placed in a

sheet protector so students can write on it with a dry erase marker and use it many times. This will help students develop phonics skills.

4. Reading and spelling extension: After completing this activity many times, students should begin to transfer this procedure to their own reading and writing. When reading, a student should begin to segment unknown words into sounds and then try to blend the sounds together to read. When writing, a student should be able to segment a word they want to write into sounds and then write the letter(s) for each sound they hear. It is helpful if you model doing this in your own reading and writing when teaching students.

Becoming literate depends on two very basic foundational skills. First, it requires the ability to hear and identify sounds in words. Second, students need to understand that certain letters correspond to specific sounds when a word is written.

There are many great resources online for helping students begin to associate sounds with letters and letter combinations in English. Displaying a set of phonics cards with picture cues in the classroom, and frequently using these cards, is a great way to build phonic and phonemic awareness. Letter sounds should be introduced and practiced gradually using word lists, sorting activities, and spelling games. A daily drill of sounds that students have learned is also very helpful. For free, printable, research-based activities, check out the [Florida Center for Reading Research Student Center Activities](#).

The activity shared this week will help build students' awareness of sounds, how to manipulate them, and how those sounds correspond to written letters. Next week, we'll take a look at how to help students build sight word recognition.

Appendix A: Single Grid for Move and Say

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