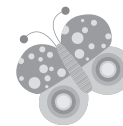


part three



Using Phonics and Spelling Patterns

Most of the words people read and write are one- and two-syllable *regular* words, which, because they are consistent with the rules of spelling and pronunciation, people can decode and spell even if they have not seen them before. Developing the ability to independently read and write most regular words is a complex process and takes time and practice with a variety of activities.

In English, the vowels are variant and unpredictable. The letter **a** commonly represents the sound in **and**, **made**, **agree**, **art**, **talk**, and **care**. Names have been given to some of these sounds. **And** has a short **a**; **made** has a long **a**; **agree** is a schwa; the **a** in **art** is **r** controlled. There are no names for the sound **a** represents in **talk** and **care**. Further complicating things are



the many words in which **a** doesn't do any of these six common things—**eat**, **coat**, **legal**—and the fact that even the consistent sounds can be spelled in many different ways. The long **a** sound is commonly spelled by the patterns in **made**, **maid**, and **may**. The sound **a** has in **talk** is spelled by an **aw** in **saw** and an **au** in **Paul**.

When one stops to think about all the possible sounds and spelling patterns for the vowels, it is a miracle that anyone becomes an accurate and fast decoder of English words. And yet that is exactly what happens! All good readers can quickly and accurately pronounce the made-up words **gand**, **hade**, **afuse**, **sart**, **malk**, **lare**, **jeat**, **foat**, **pregal**, **maw**, and **naul**.

In schools, teachers have traditionally taught students many rules and jargon: the **e** on the end makes the vowel long; vowels in unaccented syllables have a schwa sound; when a vowel is followed by **r**, it is **r** controlled. Children have been taught so many rules and jargon because it takes over 200 rules to account for the common spelling patterns in English. Although these rules do describe the English alphabetic system, it is doubtful that readers and writers use these rules to decode and spell words. So how do they do it?

As readers develop some fluency, they decode words by using spelling patterns from the words they know. **Made**, **fade**, **blade**, and **shade** all have the same spelling pattern, and the **a** is pronounced the same in all four. When you see the made-up word **hade**, your mind accesses that known spelling pattern and you give the made-up word the same pronunciation you have for other words with that spelling pattern. Spelling patterns are letters that are commonly seen together in a certain position in words. The **al** at the end of **legal**, **royal**, and the made-up word **pregal** is a spelling pattern. Sometimes a spelling pattern can be a single letter, as the **a** is in **agree**, **about**, **adopt**, and the made-up word **afuse**. Using words you know to decode unknown words is called *decoding by analogy*.

Spelling patterns are quite reliable indicators of pronunciation—with two exceptions. The first exception was explained in Chapter 7. The most frequently used words are often not pronounced or spelled like other words with that spelling pattern. **To** and **do** should rhyme with **go**, **so**, and **no**. **What** should rhyme with **at**, **cat**, and **bat**. **They** should be spelled like **way** and **stay**. **Said** should be spelled like **red** and **bed**. It is precisely because the most frequent words have the least predictable pronunciations and spellings that you need to provide daily practice with word-wall words so that all children learn to read and spell them.

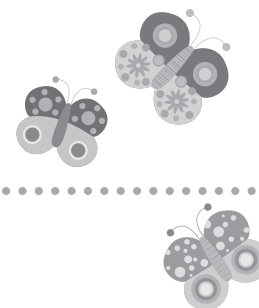
The second exception in spelling patterns is that some spelling patterns have two common sounds. The **ow** at the end of words occurs in **show**, **grow**, and **slow**, but also in **how**, **now**, and **cow**. The **ood** at the end of **good**, **hood**, and **stood** is also found at the end of **food**, **mood**, and **brood**.

Children who are constantly cross-checking meaning with the pronunciations will not be bothered by these differences, as long as the word they are reading is in their listening-meaning vocabulary.

Whereas spelling patterns work wonderfully well for pronouncing unfamiliar words, they don't work as well for spelling! There are often two or more spelling patterns with the same pronunciation. When trying to read the made-up word **nade**, you would simply compare its pronunciation to other words with that spelling pattern—**made**, **grade**, and **blade**. If, however, I didn't show you **nade**, but rather pronounced it and asked you to spell it, you might compare it to **maid**, **paid**, and **braid** and spell it **n-a-i-d**. Most words can be correctly pronounced by comparing them to known spelling patterns. To spell a word correctly, however, you must often choose between two or more possible spelling patterns.

Part Three contains activities that will help children use patterns to decode words. In Chapter 9, you will learn how Making Words can help all levels of children move forward in their decoding and spelling abilities. Chapter 10 focuses on rhyming patterns with a variety of activities you can use to teach children to decode and spell using patterns. Once children are decoding and spelling based on patterns, teachers help them develop their visual checking system and decide which pattern is the correct spelling. Chapter 11 presents you with strategies for teaching your students how to decode and spell big words. Chapter 12 has an explanation and examples of how you can use the Making Words lesson format with older students. Chapter 13 includes a variety of assessments to help you measure your students' progress in mastering our complex English phonics/spelling system. Chapter 13 also includes coaching suggestions and some interventions you can use with older struggling readers.

chapter 9



Making Words

Making Words (Cunningham & Cunningham, 1992) is a popular activity with both teachers and children. Children love manipulating letters to make words and figuring out the secret word that can be made with all the letters. While children are having fun making words, they are also learning important information about phonics and spelling. As children manipulate the letters to make the words, they learn how small changes, such as changing just one letter or moving the letters around, result in completely new words. Children learn to stretch out words and listen for the sounds they hear and the order of those sounds. When you change the first letter, you also change the sound you hear at the beginning of the word. Likewise, when you change the last letter, you change the sound you hear at the end of the word. These ideas seem commonplace and obvious to those of us who have been reading and writing for almost as long as we can remember. But they are a revelation to many beginners—a revelation that gives them tremendous independence in and power over the challenge of decoding and spelling words.

Making Words lessons are an example of a type of instruction called Guided Discovery. In order to truly learn and retain strategies, children must discover them. But some children do not seem to make discoveries about words very easily on their own. In a Making Words lesson, teachers guide children toward those discoveries by carefully sequencing the words they are to make and giving them explicit guidance about how much change is needed.

Making Words lessons have three parts. In the first part, the children make words. Begin with short, easy words, and move to longer, more complex words. The last word is always the secret word—a word that can be made with all the letters. As children arrange the letters, a child who has successfully made a word goes up to the pocket chart or chalk ledge and makes the word with big letters. Children who don't have the word made correctly quickly fix their word so that they're ready for the next word. The small changes between most words encourage even those children who have not made a word perfectly to fix it because they soon realize that having the current word correctly spelled increases their chances of spelling the next word correctly. Each lesson includes 9 to 15 words, including the secret word that can be made with all the letters. When it is time to make the secret word, children have one minute to try to come up with the word. After one minute, if no one has discovered the secret word, give them clues that allow them to figure it out.

In Part Two of a Making Words lesson, children sort the words into patterns. Many children discover patterns just through making the words in the carefully sequenced order, but some children need more explicit guidance. This guidance happens when all the words have been made and the teacher guides the children to sort them into patterns. Depending on the sophistication of the children and the words available in the lesson, words might be sorted according to their beginning letters—all the letters up to the vowel. Alternatively, to focus on just one sound–letter combination, the teacher might ask children to sort out all the words that start with **qu**, **br**, or **sh**. Once the words with these letters are sorted, the teacher and children pronounce the words and discover that most words that have the same letters also have the same sounds—an important discovery for all emerging readers and writers.

Another pattern children need to discover is that many words have the same root word. If they can pronounce and spell the root word and if they recognize root words with endings, prefixes, or suffixes added, they are able to decode and spell many additional words. To some children, every new word they meet is a new experience! They fail to recognize how new words are related to already known words and, thus, are in the difficult—if not impossible—position of starting from “scratch” and just trying to learn and remember every new word. To be fluent, fast, automatic decoders and spellers, children must learn that **play**, **playing**, **played**, **plays**, **player**, and **replay** have **play** as their root and use their knowledge of how to decode and spell **play** to quickly transfer to these related words. Whenever possible from the letters available, Making Words lessons include related words. We tell the children that people are related by blood and words are related by meaning. We ask the children to find any related words and sort them out, and then we create sentences to show how these words are related.

Each lesson contains several sets of rhyming words. Children need to recognize that words that have the same spelling pattern from the vowel to the end of the word usually rhyme. When they sort the words into rhyming words and notice that the words that rhyme have the same spelling pattern, children learn rhyming patterns and how to use words they know to decode and spell lots of other words.

The final part of a Making Words lesson is the Transfer step. All the working and playing with words you do while making words are worth nothing if children do not use what they know when they need to use it. Many children know letter sounds and patterns and do not apply these to decode an unknown word encountered during reading or to spell a word they need while writing. All teachers know that it is much easier to teach children phonics than it is to actually get them to use it. This is the reason that every Making Words lesson ends with a Transfer step. Once the words are sorted according to rhyme, you then help the children transfer their letter–sound knowledge to writing. To do this, you ask the children to pretend they are writing and need to spell a word:

“Pretend you’re writing and you need to spell the word **stray**. You stretch out **stray** and hear the beginning letters **str**. If you can think of the words we made today that rhyme with **stray**, you will have the correct spelling of the word.”

figure 9.1 Steps in Teaching a Making Words Lesson

1. Place the large letter cards needed in a pocket chart or on the smart board.
2. Have children pass out letters or pick up the letters needed.
3. Point to the letters on the large letter cards, and have the children hold up their matching small letter cards.
4. Write the number 2 (or 3 if no two-letter words are in this lesson) on the board. Tell them to take two letters and make the first word. Have them say the word after you stretch out the word to hear all the sounds.
5. Have a child who makes the first word correctly make the same word with the large letter cards in the pocket chart or on the smart board. Do not wait for everyone to make the word before sending a child to make it with the big letters. Encourage anyone who did not make the word correctly at first to fix the word when he or she sees it made correctly.
6. Continue to make words, giving students clues, such as “Change the first letter only” or “Move the same letters around and you can make a different word” or “Take all your letters out and make another word.” Send a child who has made the word correctly to make the word with the large letter cards. Cue students when they are to use more letters by erasing and changing the number on the board to indicate the number of letters needed.
7. Before telling students the last word, ask, “Has anyone figured out the secret word—the word we can make with all our letters?” If someone has, congratulate them and let them make it. If not, give them clues until someone figures out the secret word.
8. Once all the words have been made, display the words made, one at a time (in the same order that the children made them) on the smart board or in the pocket chart. Have the children say and spell the words with you as you do this. Have the children sort these words for patterns—including beginning letters, rhymes, and related words.
9. To encourage transfer to reading and writing, show students how rhyming words can help them decode and spell other words. Say some words that rhyme and have students spell these new words by deciding which words they rhyme with.

The children decide that **stray** rhymes with the **ay** words they made and that **stray** is spelled **s-t-r-a-y**. Finish the lesson by having them spell several more words by deciding which of the words they made it rhymes with.

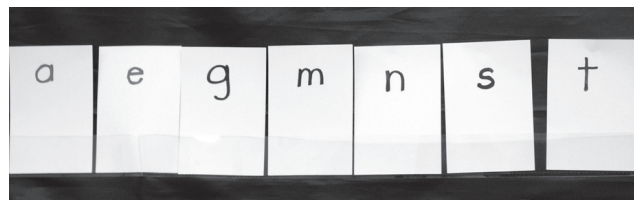
A Sample Making Words Lesson

As the teacher who is teaching the lesson, you are the only person who can decide exactly what to say to your students and how to cue them about the different words. Your children will relate better to example sentences you come up with that relate to their communities and their lives. With the caveat that you can do this much better for your children can than I—who have never seen your children—here is a sample that you can use to construct your own lesson cues. This sample lesson is taken from *Making Words First Grade* (Cunningham & Hall, 2008).

* Beginning the Lesson

The children all have the letters: **a e g m n s t**.

These same letters—big enough for all to see—are displayed in a pocket chart or on a smart board. The letter cards have lowercase letters on one side and capital letters on the other side. The vowels are in a different color.



The words the children are going to make are written on index cards or on cards for the smart board. These words will be used for the Sort and Transfer steps of the lesson.

The teacher begins the lesson by having the children hold up and name each letter as the teacher points to the big letters.

“Hold up and name your letter as I point to each letter. Let’s start with your vowels. Show me your **a** and your **e**. Now show me your **g, m, n,**

s, and t. Today you have seven letters. In a few minutes, we will see if anyone can figure out the secret word that uses all seven letters.”

* Part One: Making Words

“Use three letters to spell the word **eat**. We **eat** at 11:25.”

(Find someone with **eat** spelled correctly and send that child to spell **eat** with the big letters.)

“Use three letters to spell **net**. In tennis, you try to hit the ball over the **net**.”

“Change the first letter in **net** to spell **met**. I **met** my cousin at the mall.”

“Change the first letter again to spell **set**. It is my job to **set** the table.”

“Add a letter you can’t hear to **set** to spell **seat**. Please stay in your **seat**.”

(Quickly send someone with the correct spelling to make the word with the big letters. Keep the pace brisk. Do not wait until everyone has **seat** spelled with their little letters. It is fine if some children are making **seat** as **seat** is being spelled with the big letters.)

“Change the first letter in **seat** to spell **neat**. On Fridays, we leave our classroom clean and **neat**.”

“Change the first letter again to spell **meat**. Vegetarians don’t eat **meat**.”

“Use the same letters in **meat** but move them around so they spell **team**. Do you have a favorite football **team**?”

“Use four letters to spell **east**. The sun rises in the **east**.”

“Clear your holders and start over to spell another four-letter word: **stem**. Most plants have a root, leaves, and a **stem**.”

“Use a letter you can’t hear to turn **stem** into **steam**. When you heat water, it turns into **steam**.”

“I have just one word left. It is the secret word you can make with all your letters. See if you can figure it out.”

(Give the children one minute to figure out the secret word. Then give clues if needed.) Let someone who figures it out go to the big letters and spell the secret word: **magnets**.



*** Part Two: Sorting the Words into Patterns**

Place the word cards in the pocket chart or display them on the smart board as the children pronounce and chorally spell each. Give them a quick reminder of how they made these words:

“First we spelled a three-letter word, **eat**, **e-a-t.**”

“We spelled another three-letter word, **net**, **n-e-t.**”

“We changed the first letter to spell **met**, **m-e-t.**”

“We changed the first letter again to spell **set**, **s-e-t.**”

“We added the **a** you don’t hear to change set to **seat**, **s-e-a-t.**”

“We changed the first letter to spell **neat**, **n-e-a-t.**”

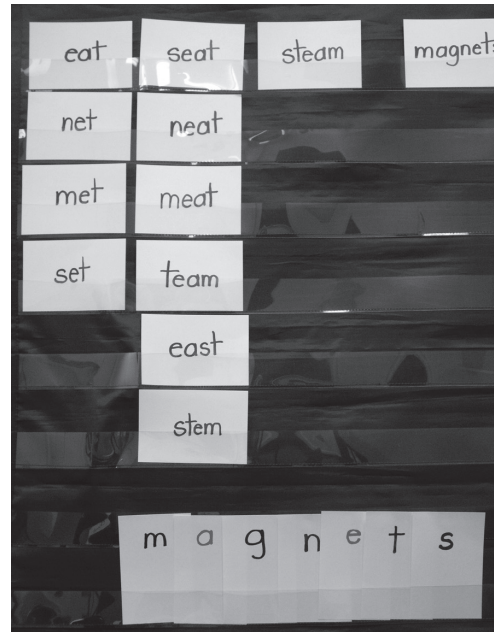
“We changed the first letter again to spell **meat**, **m-e-a-t.**”

“We used four letters to spell **east**, **e-a-s-t.**”

“We spelled one more four-letter word, **stem**, **s-t-e-m.**”

“We added the silent **a** to change stem to **steam**, **s-t-e-a-m.**”

“Finally, we spelled the secret word using all our letters, **magnets**, **m-a-g-n-e-t-s.**”

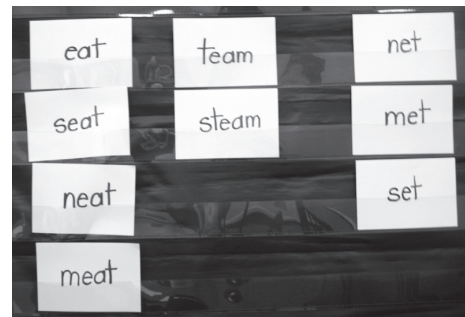


Next have the children sort the rhyming words. Take one of each set of rhyming words and place them in the pocket chart or in three columns on the smart board.

net seat team

Ask three children to find the other words that rhyme and place them under the ones you placed there.

eat team net
 seat steam met
 neat set
 meat



Have the children chorally pronounce the sets of rhyming words.

*** Part Three: Transfer**

Tell the children to pretend it is writing time and they need to spell some words that rhyme with some of the words they made today. Have the children use whiteboards or half-sheets of paper to write the words. Say sentences that children might want to write that include a rhyming word. Work together to decide which words the target word rhymes with and to decide how to spell it.

“Boys and girls, let’s pretend it is writing time. Terry is writing about going fishing and he is trying to spell the word **stream**. Let’s all say **stream** and stretch out the beginning letters. What three letters do you hear at the beginning of **stream**?”

Have the children stretch out **stream** and listen for the beginning letters. When they tell you that **stream** begins with **str**, write **str** on a card and have the children write **str** on their papers or whiteboards.

Take the card with **str** on it to the pocket chart or smart board and move it under each column of words as you lead the children to chorally pronounce the words and decide if **stream** rhymes with them:

“Net, met, set, stream.” Children should show you “thumbs down.”

“Seat, neat, meat, eat, stream.” Children should again show you “thumbs down.”

“Team, steam, stream.” Children should show you “thumbs up.”

Finish writing **stream** on your card by adding **eam** to **str** and place **stream** under **team** and **steam**. Have the children write **eam** next to **str**.

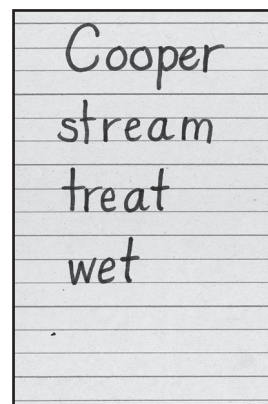
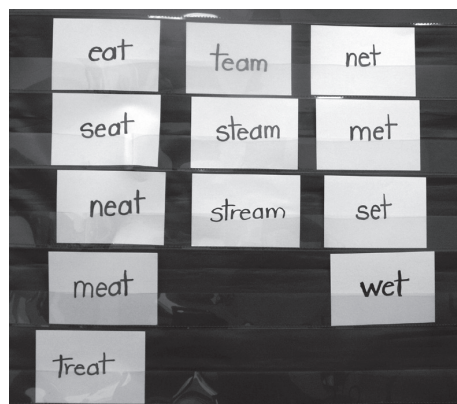
“Now let’s pretend Carla is writing and telling you that she and her family went out for pizza last night as a special **treat**. Carla is trying to spell **treat**. Let’s stretch out **treat** and listen for the two letters we hear at the beginning of **treat**.”

Write **tr** on the card and have the students write **tr**.

Hold the card under each column of words as you lead the children to chorally pronounce the words and decide if **treat** rhymes with them:

“Net, met, set, treat.” Children should show you “thumbs down.”

“Seat, neat, meat, eat, treat.” Children should show you “thumbs up.”



Finish writing **treat** on your card by adding **eat** to **tr** and place **treat** under **seat**, **neat**, **meat**, and **eat**. Have the children write **eat** next to **tr** to complete their word.

Follow the same procedure to lead the children to use the rhyming word to spell **wet**.

We hope this sample lesson has helped you see how a Making Words lesson works and how Making Words lessons help children develop phonemic awareness, phonics, and spelling skills. Most important, we hope you see that in every lesson children will practice applying the patterns they are learning to reading and spelling new words.



Making Words Homework

Because students like to manipulate the letters and come up with their own words, a Making Words Take-Home Sheet is a popular activity. The sheet has the letters across the top and blocks for writing words. Students write capital letters on the back and then cut the letters apart. They manipulate the letters to make words and then write them in the blocks. When writing the letters at the top, write them in alphabetical order—vowels and then consonants—so as not to give away the secret word. Before children take the sheet home, have them turn it over and write the capital letters on the back. Children love being the “smart” ones who “know the secret word” and watching parents and other relatives try to figure it out.



Additional Making Words Lessons

Here are some lessons to get you started. More lessons can be found in the Making Words books referenced at the end of this book.

* One-Vowel Lessons

One-vowel lessons are a great way to start the year. Be sure to have your children stretch out the words and listen for all the letters before making them.

tech tip

Would you like to know our secret to planning a good Making Words lesson? Go to wordplays.com and click on Words in a Word. Enter the word you have chosen for the secret word, and like magic, all the words that can be made from the letters of the secret word appear. Choose the words that will give you lots of sorting possibilities. Don't tell your students about this site. It's our secret!



blast	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make: al as at sat bat tab stab/bats last blast (Words separated by / can be made with the same letters.) 2. Sort beginning letters Sort rhymes: at, sat, bat; tab, stab; last, blast 3. Transfer: past, fat; cab, fast
string	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make: is in it sit rig ring/grin sing sting string 2. Sort beginning letters Sort rhymes: it, sit; in, grin; sing, sting, string 3. Transfer: swing, fit; spin, win
trunks	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make: us sun run rut nut nuts/stun rust trunk trunks 2. Sort beginning letters Sort rhymes: sun, run, stun; rut, nut 3. Transfer: stun, hut; cut, spun
spent	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make: pen ten/net pet pest/pets nets/nest/sent spent 2. Sort beginning letters Sort rhymes: pen, ten; net, pet; pest, nest; pets, nets; sent, spent 3. Transfer: test, tent; jets, west
ponds	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make: so no/on Don/nod pod pods nods pond ponds 2. Sort beginning letters Sort rhymes: so, no; on, Don; nod, pod; pods, nods 3. Transfer: rod, rods; Ron, Bo

*** Theme/Holiday Lessons**

valentines	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make: an van vet vent vest nest sent vine base valentines 2. Sort v words: van, vet, vent, vest, vine, valentines Sort rhymes: an, van; sent, vent; nest, vest 3. Transfer: bent, chest; spent, west
elephants	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make: pet pest past last east least sheep sleep asleep please elephants 2. Sort related words: sleep, asleep Sort rhymes: past, last; sleep, sheep, asleep; east, least 3. Transfer: beast, blast; steep, feast
football	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make: to too all fall ball tall tool fool foot football 2. Sort related words: foot, ball, football Sort rhymes: all, fall, ball, tall; tool, fool 3. Transfer: school, stall; mall, stool
dancers	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make: an can car cars/scar care dare dance scare scared dancers 2. Sort related words: scare, scared; dance, dancers Sort rhymes: an, can; car, scar, dare, care, scare 3. Transfer: plan, stare; scan, par
teacher	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Make: at cat eat ear hear heat each reach teach/cheat there teacher/cheater 2. Sort related words: teach, teacher; cheat, cheater Sort rhymes: at, cat; eat, heat, cheat; reach, each, teach; ear, hear 3. Transfer: spear, peach; beach, treat

figure 9.2 Steps in Planning a Making Words Lesson

1. Choose your *secret word*, a word that can be made with all the letters. In choosing this word, consider child interest, the curriculum tie-ins you can make, and the letter–sound patterns to which you can draw children’s attention through the sorting at the end.
2. Make a list of other words that can be made from these letters. (wordplays.com will allow you to do this quickly!)
3. From all the words you could make, pick 12 to 15 words using these criteria:
 - Words that you can sort for the pattern you want to emphasize
 - Little words and big words to create a multilevel lesson. (Making little words helps your struggling students; making big words challenges your highest-achieving students.)
 - Words that can be made with the same letters in different places (barn/bran) so children are reminded that ordering letters is crucial when spelling words
 - A proper name or two to remind the children that we use capital letters
 - Words that most students have in their listening vocabularies
4. Write all the words on index cards or create cards for your smart board and order them from shortest to longest.
5. Once you have the two-letter words together, the three-letter words together, and so on, order them so you can emphasize letter patterns and how changing the position of the letters or changing/adding just one letter results in a different word.
6. Choose some letters or patterns to sort for.
7. Choose some transfer words—uncommon words you can read or spell based on the rhyming words.
8. Store the cards in an envelope. Write the words in order on the envelope, the patterns you will sort for, and the transfer words.

*** Lessons with Children's Names**

<p>Alexander</p>	<p>1. Make: Ed Ned Rex and land Alan Alex lead/deal real relax leader/dealer relaxed Alexander</p> <p>2. Sort related words: lead, leader; deal, dealer; relax, relaxed Sort rhymes: and, land; deal, real</p> <p>3. Transfer: squeal, stand; steal, grand</p>
<p>Barney</p>	<p>1. Make: ear Ray bay ban ran bran/barn yarn year near earn yearn Barney</p> <p>2. Sort beginning letters Sort rhymes: Ray, bay; ban, ran, bran; barn, yarn; ear, year, near; earn, yearn</p> <p>3. Transfer: learn, clear; stray; clan</p>
<p>Clifford</p>	<p>1. Make: of off for old oil coil foil Lori cold fold Ford cord Cliff Clifford</p> <p>2. Sort beginning letters Sort rhymes: old, cold, fold; Ford, cord; oil, coil, foil</p> <p>3. Transfer: told, boil; broil, scold</p>
<p>Dorothy</p>	<p>1. Make: hot rot Rod Roy try dry toy hood hoot root Troy door/odor Dorothy</p> <p>2. Sort beginning letters Sort rhymes: hot, rot; Roy, Troy; hoot, root; try, dry</p> <p>3. Transfer: boot, sky; shoot, shot</p>
<p>Frederick</p>	<p>1. Make: kid rid Eric Fred Rick Dick fire fired/fried cried/cider rider Derrick Frederick</p> <p>2. Sort related words: fire, fired Sort rhymes: kid, rid; fired, cried; rider, cider</p> <p>3. Transfer: tried, spider; slid, spied</p>
<p>Brianna</p>	<p>1. Make: in an Ian ran ban Nan Anna rain barn/bran brain/Brian Brianna</p> <p>2. Sort br words: bran, brain, Brian, Brianna Sort rhymes: an, ran, ban, bran, Nan; rain, brain</p> <p>3. Transfer: Spain, span; clan, chain</p>

For English Language Learners

When planning Making Words lessons, try not to include words your students do not have in their listening vocabularies. If you have English language learners in your classroom, you may not want to include some of the less common words in these lessons. Before the children make each word, have them pronounce the word. This is important for all children because they need to hear their voice making the sounds that form the word. This “pronouncing the word” step is crucial for your English language learners who might not be as quick to access the word from their oral vocabularies. As students are making each word, give them a sentence containing that word. If you have English language learners, you may want to give them a richer sentence that contains more information about the word being made.



Summary

Making Words is a favorite activity of many children. You can choose the secret word to go with a unit you are studying, a story you have read, a phonics skill you want to emphasize, or an interesting-to-your-children name. Each lesson includes 10 to 15 words that will make a multilevel lesson with short, easy words at the beginning and more complex words at the end. Be sure to include some rhyming words for the Sort and Transfer steps. If there are several words that begin with particular letter combinations you want to emphasize, include them so that you can sort them and notice the beginning letters and sounds. When related words occur, include them and sort for these to help children begin to realize how you decode and spell longer words by recognizing the root word and endings.