

GLOBAL
EDITION



Words Their Way[®]

*Word Study for
Phonics, Vocabulary
and Spelling Instruction*

SEVENTH EDITION

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Word Study

practising it in the group, he gives each student a handout of pictures to be cut apart for individual sorting practice, as shown in Figure 5.2(A). The next day, Mr Perez observes how quickly and accurately they sort the pictures into columns. During seatwork time or centre time, the students draw and label pictures beginning with those sounds, paste and label the pictures and go on word hunts—all extend and follow-up routines described in Chapter 3.

Each day when Mr Perez meets with Cynthia's group, they read and reread chart stories, jingles and books with predictable text. To help the students in this group develop a sight vocabulary, Mr Perez has a collection of known words, a **word bank**, for each student. To create the word bank, he took the words students could quickly identify from their reading and wrote them on small cards. The students in this group add new words from their reading several times a week and review them regularly on their own and with partners.



































































Tony is part of a large group in the middle letter name–alphabetic stage who can spell the beginning and ending consonants of words but shows little accuracy when spelling digraphs and blends, as shown in Figure 5.1. He is *using but confusing* vowels in some words. Tony points to the words as he reads *Five Little Monkeys* and immediately self-corrects on the rare occasion he gets off track with words that have more than one syllable, such as *jumping* and *mama*.

In a small group, Tony and his group sort pictures of digraphs (*sh, ch, th* and *wh*) for several weeks and then begin the study of same-vowel word families such as *op, ot* and *og*. Mr Perez takes 10 to 15 minutes during group time to introduce new word families. The students then receive their own set of words, shown in Figure 5.2(B), to cut apart for sorting. They work alone and with partners to practise the sort, writing and illustrating the words, and then they play follow-up games. Students at this developmental level have typically learned to read more than 100 words automatically, and do not need a personalised word bank, like Cynthia.

Maria represents a third group of students in the late letter name–alphabetic stage who correctly spells single consonants, as well as many digraphs and blends, as shown in Figure 5.1. This group also uses some short vowels accurately. Maria reads many books independently and is quickly accumulating a large sight vocabulary, the result of lots of reading. With this group, Mr Perez reviews different-vowel word families for several weeks, making an effort to include words with digraphs and blends, but he soon discovers that the word family sorts are too easy and decides to move to the study of short vowels in non-rhyming words.

Each Monday, he introduces a collection of words that can be sorted by short vowels into three or four sets. This group also receives a sheet of words, as shown in Figure 5.2(C), to cut apart and use for sorting. Maria and her partners work in pairs for buddy sorts, writing sorts, word hunts and games on other days of the week.

FIGURE 5.2 Word Study Handouts for Letter Name–Alphabetic Spellers in Three Different Instructional Groups

A. Beginning Consonant Sort	B. Word Family Sort	C. Short Vowel Sort																																																
Bb  Mm  Rr  Ss                     	<table border="1"> <tr><td>pot</td><td>dog</td><td>cot</td><td>hop</td></tr> <tr><td>log</td><td>frog</td><td>top</td><td>jog</td></tr> <tr><td>mop</td><td>dot</td><td>hot</td><td>pop</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	pot	dog	cot	hop	log	frog	top	jog	mop	dot	hot	pop													<table border="1"> <tr><td>pig </td><td>cup </td><td>oddball</td></tr> <tr><td>zip</td><td>bit</td><td>but</td></tr> <tr><td>big</td><td>jug</td><td>pin</td></tr> <tr><td>tub</td><td>rip</td><td>will</td></tr> <tr><td>him</td><td>cut</td><td>rub</td></tr> <tr><td>hum</td><td>win</td><td>fun</td></tr> <tr><td>six</td><td>nut</td><td>run</td></tr> <tr><td>put</td><td>did</td><td>gum</td></tr> </table>	pig 	cup 	oddball	zip	bit	but	big	jug	pin	tub	rip	will	him	cut	rub	hum	win	fun	six	nut	run	put	did	gum
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Literacy Development of Students in the Letter Name–Alphabetic Stage

Many components of the literacy diet described for the emergent stage continue to develop during the letter name–alphabetic stage. Vocabulary, oral language and concepts grow throughout all the stages described in this book, but phonological awareness and concept of word in text will reach maturity. At the beginning of this stage, students may only segment and spell the most prominent beginning and final consonant sounds, demonstrating only partial phonemic awareness. By the end of the stage, they have full phonemic awareness and are able to isolate the medial vowel and to pull apart the tightly meshed blends. As they learn to segment these sounds, they also learn the correct letter correspondences that represent them, including initial and final consonants, digraphs, blends and short vowels. A new component becomes critical during the letter name–alphabetic stage—acquiring a reading vocabulary of **sight words** that can be recognised automatically in any context. It is fast and ever-growing word recognition that fuels fluency and comprehension.

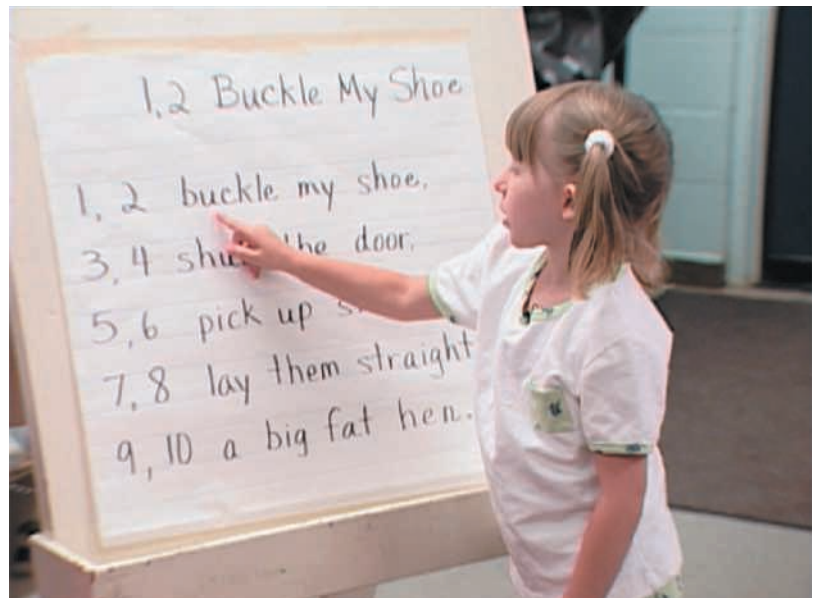
Reading

During the letter name–alphabetic stage, students transition from simple, **predictable** reading materials they read with support from shared reading and their memory for language, to less predictable beginning reading materials. With less predictable materials they must rely on their sight vocabularies and their abilities to figure out unfamiliar words using a variety of strategies, including decoding, analogy and prediction. This transition in reading material is accompanied by word study instruction that continues to develop letter–sound correspondences and other phonics features such as consonant digraphs and blends, and short vowels.

The literacy diet described in Chapter 4 is continued during this stage. Teachers should develop new concepts and vocabulary, point out concepts about print and encourage students to use their growing knowledge of phonics as they read. A key development in this stage happens as students acquire a firm concept of word in text described next.

CONCEPT OF WORD IN TEXT (COW-T). **Concept of word in text** is the ability to point to words in a memorised text. After students are past the developing level of concept of word in text in the emergent stage, there are two levels: rudimentary and firm COW-T (Blackwell-Bullock & Invernizzi, 2012; Flanigan, 2006, 2007; Morris, 1981; Morris, Bloodgood, Lomax & Perney, 2003).

Rudimentary COW-T. Students with a rudimentary concept of word can point to and track the words of a memorised text left to right using their knowledge of consonants as clues to word boundaries. However, they may get off track with two-syllable words (see Figure 4.10), and when they are asked to find words in what they read, they are slow and hesitant. They may **voice point** by returning to the beginning of the sentence or line to get a running start with memory as a support to read and locate the requested word. Students like Tony, who have a rudimentary concept of word, are able to remember a few words from familiar stories and short dictations that they have reread several times. They begin



Rosa points to the words in her dictated sentence after a language experience.



Mrs Smith's students reread familiar text and practise fingerprinting

to understand how the letters at the beginning and ends of words match to sounds and this knowledge helps them store these words in memory as sight words. However, sight words grow slowly and it is common to “know” a word one day, but not the next.

Firm COW-T. Students with a firm concept of word can fingertip-read accurately, and if they get off track, they can quickly correct themselves without voice pointing or starting over. When asked to find words in the text, students can find them quickly using their knowledge of letters and sounds. They remember many words after several rereadings of familiar text, and these

words are becoming recognised “at first sight”. With increasing word knowledge, words begin to stick more readily.

SIGHT WORD LEARNING. Sight words are **known words** students can recognise automatically and consistently in text and in isolation. A large store of sight words makes it possible to read fluently and to devote attention to comprehension rather than to figuring out unknown words. Sight words also provide a spring board from which students make generalisations about phonics principles and how the spelling system works. However, sight word development among beginning readers depends on their knowledge of letters and sounds.

Partial Alphabetic Readers. Early on in this stage, students may be **partial alphabetic readers** (Ehri, 2000) because what they remember about words may be incomplete. Typically, they know something about consonants, but they lack the vowel knowledge needed to sound out words completely or store them in memory. For example, as they read, early letter name–alphabetic spellers may substitute *lion* for *leopard* in a story about big cats at the zoo. Or, in a familiar rhyming book, like *Five Little Monkeys Jumping on the Bed* by Eileen Christelow, students might identify the word *monkeys* by virtue of several letters in the word (*m-k* or *m-y* perhaps) but in another context, these partial phonetic cues alone will not suffice. *Monkeys* might be confused with other words, like *Mike* or *many*.

Full Alphabetic Readers. Later in this stage, students advance to **full alphabetic readers** (Ehri, 2006) who know vowel and consonant sounds and can fully connect spelling to pronunciation and meaning in memory. It is this “orthographic mapping” between spellings and pronunciations that facilitate the development of sight words (Ehri, 2013).

Common Misunderstandings about Sight Words. The term *sight words* is often confused with **high-frequency words**. High-frequency words are the most commonly occurring words in print like *was*, *the*, *to*, *was*, *can* and *these*, and they account for almost 50 percent of connected text for beginners. A list of Fry's top 300 high-frequency words can be found in Appendix F. Even though a reader's store of sight words will include many high-frequency words, students' sight words are not limited to high-frequency words; any word can be a sight word if it recognised “at first sight”.

Another common misunderstanding about sight words is that they are phonetically irregular words students cannot sound out and therefore must be learned as unanalysed wholes or “by sight”. Although there are some high-frequency words that lack dependable letter–sound correspondences (of = /uv/ and was = /wuz/), most high-frequency words are more regular than not, especially in the consonant features that are most likely to be partially understood. The question in instruction often becomes how to teach students to read these words.

There is no evidence that readers learn these words in a different way. Repeated exposure to words and the word study described here is what students need to improve their sight-word vocabularies.

READING FLUENCY. All beginning readers read slowly, except when they are reading well-memorised texts. They are often described as word-by-word readers because they do not have enough sight words to read fluently and their reading rates may be painfully slow (Bear, 1989, 1991b). For example, a beginning reader may read as slowly as 30 words per minute, depending on the familiarity, difficulty and genre of the text (Invernizzi & Tortorelli, 2013). Although fluency is an important goal of learning to read, a focus on getting beginning readers to “read fast” is misplaced. Beginning readers are “glued to the print” (Chall, 1983/1996) and need to pay careful attention to the words on the page if they are going to store words fully in memory to build their sight vocabularies.

Most beginning readers point to words when they read, and they read aloud to themselves. The pointing and reading aloud gives them time to hold the word in memory, read the next word and fit the words together into a phrase. This helps them to keep their place and buys them processing time. While they hold the words they have just read in memory, they read the next word, giving them time to fit the words together into a phrase. If you visit a Year 1 classroom during independent reading, you are likely to hear a steady hum of voices. Finger-pointing, dysfluency and reading aloud to oneself are natural reading behaviours to expect among beginning readers.

Beginning Writing and Spelling

There is a similar pattern of dysfluency in beginning writing because students often write words slowly, sound-by-sound (Bear, 1991a), which limits the length of their compositions. Unlike emergent writers, students in the letter name–alphabetic stage can usually read what they write depending on how completely they spell, and their writing is often readable to anyone who understands the logic of their letter-name strategy.

A Year 1 student shares her thoughts about winter in the example shown in Figure 5.3. Ellie spells most beginning and ending single consonants, as in her spelling of LK for *like* and WR for *wear*, but the SN blend in *snow*, spelled SO, is incomplete. Many vowels are missing, although she does include some long vowels that “say their name” as in MAK for *make* and SO for *snow*. She substitutes *a* for short *i* in *mitten*s and *i* for short *o* in *hot*. Notice how she uses the letter *h* to represent the *ch* digraph in *chocolate* (spelled HIKLT) because the name of the letter (*aitch*) has the sound she is trying to represent. Correctly spelled words like *Mum* and *the* are probably sight words for Ellie. See more detailed information about spelling development under “Orthographic Development in the Letter Name–Alphabetic Stage” beginning on page 175.

Vocabulary

Students’ vocabularies continue to grow rapidly throughout this stage, but the quality and quantity of this growth depends on the richness and frequency of verbal interactions with peers and adults. Talking about the meanings of words or doing lots of reading helps but is not enough to enhance the vocabulary learning of those students who need it the most (Beck, McKeown & Kucan, 2013). It is very important for you to be mindful and systematic about teaching students new words in the early childhood years, as a way to close the tremendous oral vocabulary gap that exists between students

FIGURE 5.3 Ellie Writes about Winter

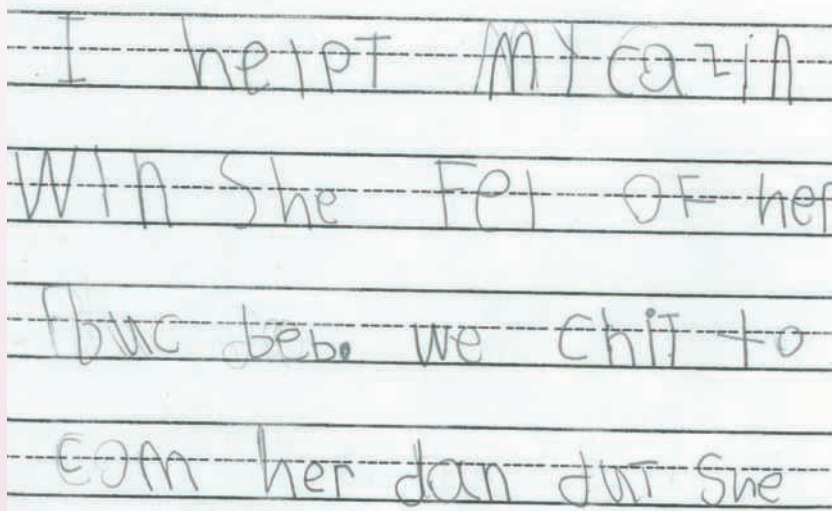


who come from literate homes and those who do not (Avineri, Johnson, Brice-Heath, McCarty, Ochs, et, al., 2015; Biemiller, 2005; Kuchirko, 2017). Observations of Kindergarten and Year 1 classrooms reveal that the current focus on teaching phonics in high-risk settings has resulted in measurable progress in decoding skills, but without attention to vocabulary these students are still at risk in later year levels when knowing word meanings is critical for comprehension (Juel, Biancarosa, Coker & Deffes, 2003).

Win My casin FeL OFF her Bed

Writing with agency. Writing about what you know and have experienced increases agency and motivation. Over three days, Alyssa wrote about her cousin's accident with detail and power. The Tell a Story activity (Activity 5.6) encourages extended storytelling as a basis for writing.

See what you think of her development as you read her story. Does her writing help you determine her spelling stage? What word study would you assign? Try using the Qualitative Spelling Checklist in Appendix A to answer these questions.



Alyssa read back what she had written: When my cousin fell off her bed. I helped my cousin when she fell out of her bunk bed. We tried to calm her down but she / wouldn't calm down. I screamed for my Aunt Jackie she said. She ran upstairs. I was sad. Then we took Anabelle to the hospital. She said can I go home. No said me and Maddie. / And we went home and rest. Anabelle got her cast off on Nov. 14th.

Orthographic Development in the Letter Name–Alphabetic Stage

Students in the letter name–alphabetic stage provide a wonderful example of how learners construct knowledge in an attempt to make sense of the world of print. Without prior knowledge of how to spell words, students carefully analyse the sound system and make surprisingly fine distinctions about the ways sounds and words are formed in the mouth. They match the phonemes they can segment to the letter names of the alphabet in ways that may seem curious and random to the uninformed adult, but the important point is that they are on their way to acquiring the **alphabetic principle**, the insight that individual speech sounds can be represented by letters of the alphabet.

Letter Names

Letters have both sounds and names, and students in the letter name–alphabetic stage use their knowledge of names of the letters in the alphabet to access sound as they spell phonetically or alphabetically. For example, students in the early part of this stage are likely to spell the word *jeep* as GP, selecting *g* as the first letter because of its name (“gee”). The letter name “gee” contains the phoneme /j/ in the first part of the pronounced name. According to letter name logic, there is no need to add the vowel because it is already part of the letter name for *g*. Sometimes early letter name–alphabetic spellers do include vowels, especially when they spell long vowels that “say their name”, as Ellie did when she spelled *snow* as SO. This phenomenon accounts for the reason the stage is called *letter name–alphabetic*. Spellers in this group operate in the first layer of English—the alphabetic layer.

A few letter names do not cue students to the sounds they represent. For example, the letter name for *w* is “double u” and the name for *b* is “aitch” (although sometimes it is called “haitch”). Neither offers a clue to the sound it represents. However, when you say the name of the letter *y* you can feel your lips moving to make the shape of the /w/ sound and the name for *b* does end with the /ch/ sound. Consequently, early letter name–alphabetic spellers may spell *witch* as YH. Read through the letter names in Table 5.1 to see what they offer students in terms of sound matches. Most consonants offer a clue to the sound they represent either at the beginning (“bee”) or the end (“ef”) of the letter name.

Letter Sounds

Learning the letter-sound correspondences or grapho-phonics relationships constitutes a major achievement in this stage. Students appear to learn the letter sounds for letters that include the sound in their names (*b, d, f*) more easily than letters whose names have no relationship to their sound (*w, y, h*). Letters that are associated with more than one sound (*c, g* and all the vowels)

TABLE 5.1 Names of the Letters of the Alphabet

A	ay	H	aitch	O	oh	V	vee
B	bee	I	ie	P	pee	W	doubleyoo
C	see	J	jay	Q	kyoo	X	ecks
D	dee	K	kay	R	are	Y	wie
E	ee	L	el	S	es	Z	zed
F	ef	M	em	T	tee		
G	gee	N	en	U	yoo		