

ore

Here are seven other Changing a Hen to a Fox lessons.

pig	bug	dig	cat	fox	bug	cat
rig	dug	big	bat	box	hug	hat
rid	dig	wig	hat	bop	dug	rat
rib	pig	win	rat	top	dig	rag
rob	pin	tin	pat	mop	big	bag
Bob	pen	fit	pet	map	bag	big
box	ten	fat	pen	mat	bat	dig
fox	en	cat	hen	cat	cat	pig



"Can you change **pet** to **pit**?" (The teacher helps them stretch out **pit** and decide it is the vowel they need to change and this vowel has the same sound as insect.)

"Now change **pit** to **sit**."

"Next change **sit** to **six**."

"Then change **six** to **fix**."

"Finally, change **fix** to **fox**."

Children love changing the letters and the animals, and they are using what they are learning about letters and sounds to spell lots of other words. In addition, children develop crucial phonemic awareness skills as they listen to the words and decide what part of the word is being changed. (Many teachers initiate this activity by reading Mem Fox's *Hattie and the Fox* to the children.)

Guess the Covered Word

Most short words are made up of two patterns, the beginning letters and the vowel and letters that follow it. The beginning letters (also called *onsets*, which include *single consonants*, *digraphs*, and *blends*) are all the letters up to the vowel. Children need to learn the sounds for these letters—which are quite consistent and reliable. Unfortunately, although many children “learn” these sounds—they can circle pictures that begin with them and tell you what letter makes a particular sound if you ask them—they don't use them when they read and write. When writing and trying to figure out the spelling of a word such as **smelly**, they might begin it just with an **s** or an **sl** instead of an **sm**. Faced with an unfamiliar word in their reading, they often guess a word that makes sense but does not begin with the right letters

or guess a word with only the correct first letter, ignoring the other letters. All of the activities in this chapter stress learning and using all the beginning letters. Guess the Covered Word lessons teach these beginning letter sounds systematically and teach them in the context of reading. Children learn that guessing just based on beginning letters—or just based on making sense—is not a very good strategy. But when they use all the beginning letters and the sense of the sentence and consider the length of the word, they can make very good guesses at new words.

Guess the Covered Word lessons help students learn to cross-check—to simultaneously think about what would make sense and about letters and sounds. To prepare for a Guess the Covered Word activity, write five to seven sentences and cover one word in each sentence. Use sticky notes to cover the words and cover them in such a way that, after three or four guesses are made with no letters showing, you can uncover all the letters up to the vowel. (If you have a smart board, you can create the lessons for it using black rectangles to cover the words.) For your first lessons, include in your covered words only words that begin with a single initial consonant and that are the last words in the sentence.

Kevin wants a pet **hamster**.

Mike wants a pet **turtle**.

Paola wants a pet **goldfish**.

Tracy wants a pet **pony**.

Jasmine wants a pet **kitten**.

Begin the activity by having students read the first sentence and asking students to guess the covered word. Write three or four guesses next to the sentence. Pointing out to the children that “it sure can be a lot of words when you can’t see any letters,” uncover all the letters up to the vowel (which in these first lessons is only one). Erase guesses that don’t begin with that letter. Have students suggest possible words that make sense and begin with the correct letter and write these responses. When all the guesses that begin correctly and make sense are written, uncover the whole word and go on to the next sentence.

You can use Guess the Covered Word activities to teach and review all the

beginning sounds. As the children begin to understand the strategy they need to use, include some covered words that are not the last word in the sentence. Have them read the whole sentence, skipping the covered word and then coming back to it to make guesses. Use

Ashley likes to [] at home.
 Tyler has a new [] in his closet.
 Maddy, will you go [] with me?
 Jose found a [] in the forest.
 Tristan heard the [] ring.

This chart is ready for a Guess the Covered Word Lesson.

the common single consonants—**b c d f g h j k l m n p r s t v w y z**—in your first lessons.

You can also use the Guess the Covered Word lesson format to teach the digraphs **sh**, **ch**, **th**, and **wh**. Follow the same procedure of getting three or four guesses with no letters showing and then uncovering all the letters up to the vowel. Here are some example sentences you might use when you are focusing on the digraphs **sh**, **ch**, and **th**. Be sure to include some words that begin with just **s**, **c**, and **t**.

Corinda likes to eat **chicken**.

Michaela likes **turkey** burgers.

Latoya ate **thirteen** waffles.

Sean likes orange **sherbet**.

Bob likes strawberry **shortcake**.

Chris bakes pies for **Thanksgiving**.

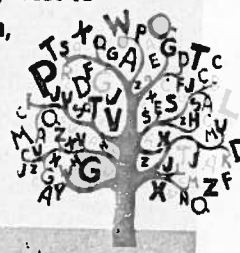
Carol likes carrot **cake**.

Chelsea likes **chocolate** cake.

For English Language Learners

Learning to read as you are learning a new language is difficult for students of any age. Learning how to decode and spell words is more difficult for English language learners because English has many sounds that do not exist in other languages. In Spanish and some other languages, the five vowels have one and only one sound, and this sound is often different from the sound represented by these letters in English words. When you are reading Spanish, the vowel **a** has the sound it has in **father**. The vowel **e** is similar to what we call a long **a** sound and is similar to the sound **e** has in **egg**. The vowel **i** has the sound **i** has in **police**—which we would call a long **e** sound. **O** has a sound that is like the long **o** sound in **vote**. The sound for **u** is like the **u** sound in **tutor**. Many vowel sounds we hear in English words, including all five short vowel sounds, and sounds for **ou**, **ow**, **au**, **aw**, **oo**, **ar**, **er**, and **or** do not exist in Spanish. Not as serious but still creating roadblocks for beginning readers are the differences in sounds for the consonants. In Spanish, the **h** is always silent and the **j** has the sound English gives to the **h**. In Spanish (and Japanese and Korean), **b** and **v** have the same sound. The combination **qu** in Spanish always has the **k** sound. The sounds for **w**, **z**, **sh**, **th**, and **wh** do not occur in Spanish.

When teaching phonics to children whose first language is Spanish, it is probably best to start with the letters that have the same sounds. The consonant letters **p**, **b**, **t**, **k**, **m**, **n**, **f**, **s**, **w**, and **y** have almost the same sound in both languages and would be a good place to begin. As children develop some confidence in their decoding ability, the sounds that don't exist in Spanish and letters that have different sounds in Spanish and English can be introduced.



When children have learned the common consonant and digraph sounds, you can use the Guess the Covered Word format to teach the common blends **bl, br, cl, cr, dr, fl, fr, gl, gr, pl, pr, sc, scr, sk, sl, sm, sn, sp, spr, st, str, sw, and tr**. Remember to include some words with single consonants so that your students continue to pay attention to all the letters up to the vowel.

We all love it when it **snows**.

Some people go **skiing**.

People ride in **snowmobiles**.

The **snowplow** is fun to ride on, too!

You can go down a hill fast in a **sled**.

Walking back up is hard if the snow is **slippery**.

The snow melts when the **sun** comes out.

Guess the Covered Word is a very versatile strategy. You can use it with a big book and cover a word or two on each page. Another possibility is to write paragraphs summarizing what the children have learned during a science or social studies unit and cover words in it.

Through Guess the Covered Word activities, children learn that just guessing words is not a good decoding strategy, but when they guess something that makes sense in the sentence, has all the right letters up to the vowel (not just the first letter), and is the right length, they can figure out many new words. They also learn to use the letter sounds they know to decode unfamiliar words with phonics patterns they have not yet learned.



Summary

Children from literate homes already know many words, letters, and sounds when they come to school. They can usually read their names and the names of their relatives and friends and other important-to-them words. They also know many letter names and sounds. By beginning the school year with activities such as those described in this chapter, you will level the playing field for children whose home environments did not or could not provide them with opportunities to develop the word and letter knowledge essential for success in beginning reading.



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Phonics They Use

Words for Reading and Writing

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