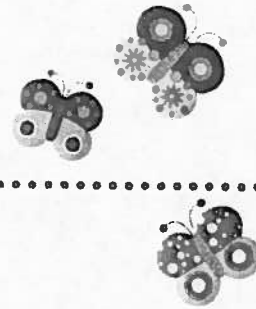


chapter 4



Making Words in Kindergarten

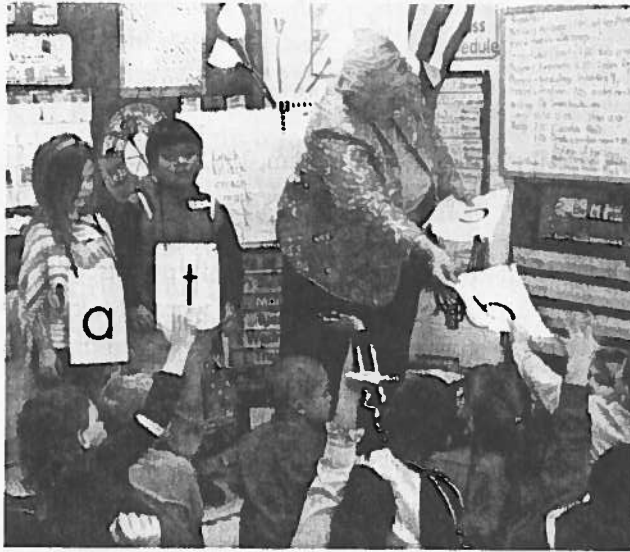
Making Words (Cunningham & Cunningham, 1992) is a multilevel phonics and spelling activity in which students are given a certain number of letters and guided to manipulate these letters to make some words. **Making Words** is an active, hands-on, manipulative activity in which children discover letter-sound relationships and learn how to look for patterns in words. **Making Words** was originally designed to help students in primary grades learn phonics and spelling. (Examples of primary grades lessons are included in Chapter 7.) Kindergarten teachers saw how effective **Making Words** was in helping children learn how to combine letters to read and spell words and wanted to apply the technique with their kindergartners. Because manipulating small letter cards was not developmentally appropriate for 4- and 5-year-olds, the **Making Words** strategy was adapted so that the children “wear” the letters and other children manipulate the “letter children” into words. Here is how **Making Words** kindergarten-style works.

Instead of individual children manipulating individual small letter cards, in kindergarten it is best to use a class set of large, “wearable” letter cards. The letter cards have capital letters on one side and lowercase letters on the other side with yarn attached to the top. Children wear these letter cards around their necks and become the letters as they make words using just one pattern or “word family.”

Because you want your fledgling readers to connect the **Making Words** activity to reading, begin each kindergarten **Making Words** lesson by rereading a book that contains examples of the rhyming pattern you are working on. As you read the book, stop each time you come to a word with that pattern and have the children say the word and identify the pattern. After reading the book, give the pattern cards to two or three children, who become the letter cards for your pattern. Next, distribute other letter cards that will make words with that pattern. All the letter children come to the front of the room. The children making the pattern hold hands. The other children stand to the side. To give

Making Letter Cards

On 9" × 12" white construction paper or tagboard, type or paste large cut-out black letters, capitals on one side and lowercase on the other side. Next, laminate these letter cards so you can reuse them. Finally, punch holes at the top on each side and then thread enough yarn through the holes to make it possible to put the letter cards comfortably around your students' necks. Make sure the letter cards have lowercase letters on one side and capital letters on the other side because you will need capital letters to make names. Make two of the most common letters (e, b, l, n, p, r, s, and t) because some words and patterns require these.



your students lots of practice decoding and spelling rhyming words, use two different activities in which the beginning letters combine with the pattern letters to create rhyming words. In the first activity, ask specific letter people to come join the pattern.

"I need letter person c to come stand next to a-t."

When the c is standing next to a-t, the whole class blends the beginning sound with the pattern to decode the word *cat*. You then call each of the other beginning letter people to join the pattern and the class blends the letters to decode the various words.

For the second activity, you say one of the words previously made. The children who are not letter people today point to the letter who needs to join the pattern to make the word. Here is an example lesson for the at pattern.



A Sample Making Words Kindergarten Lesson

After reading the rhyming book *The Cat in the Hat* and identifying the a-t words in this book, the teacher chooses two children to be the pattern letters today. These children put on the yarned letter cards and become the letters a and t.

Next, the teacher passes out other yarned letter cards (b, c, f, h, m, p, r, and s) to other children in the class. All these cards have consonants on them that will make words with the at pattern. The letters a and t join hands to show that they are the pattern and will stay together throughout the lesson. The teacher, along with the students, blend these two letter sounds together and say a/t, at.

The teacher asks the c to join a and t and then asks the children what word they have just made. The teacher and the class blend together the letter sounds c/a/t and say cat. Then the teacher uses the word cat in a sentence: "I once had a big, fat, gray cat."

Next, the teacher calls on another letter child (b) to stand in front of the letters a and t and asks, "Who can read the word I just made?" Together, the teacher and the class blend the three letter sounds to make the word b/a/t, bat. Again, the teacher uses the word in a sentence: "I hit the ball with a bat."

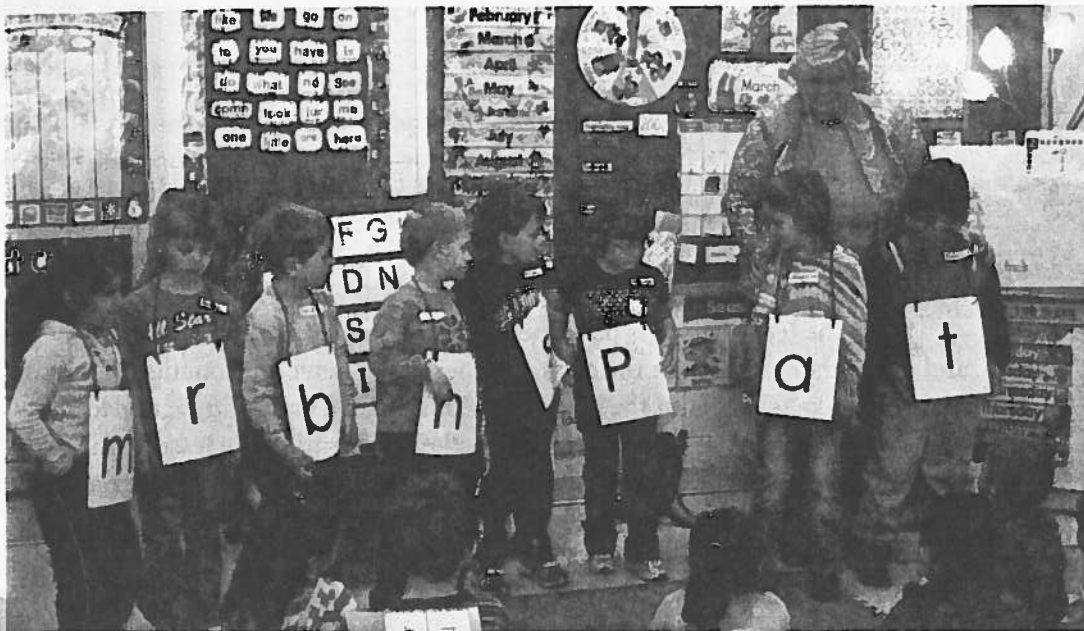
The teacher continues calling letters to join a-t, helping children to blend and pronounce the words and putting the words in sentences.

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| "f/a/t, fat | The vet put my dog on a diet because he was getting fat." |
| "h/a/t, hat | In winter, I wear a hat to keep my ears from freezing." |
| "r/a/t, rat | A rat is a big rodent." |
| "s/a/t, sat | We sat in the front row at the game." |
| "m/a/t, mat | After lunch, we each get out our mat for rest time." |

When the teacher calls for p to join a-t, she has p first show the lowercase side and then the capital side and reminds children that names are always spelled with capital letters.

- | | |
|------------|--|
| "p/a/t pat | Sometimes I give you a pat on the back when you have done a very good job." |
| "P/a/t pat | With the capital letter, P/a/t spells the name Pat. Do you know anyone named Pat?" |

Next, the children do another round of Making Words using the letter cards, this time not only blending and segmenting sounds but also listening for




This class is ready for a Making Words Kindergarten lesson.

what letter they need to make or spell a word. For this second round, the teacher distributes the same letters to different children. Once again, the teacher has the letters *a* and *t* stand together and hold hands. The teacher and students blend these two letter sounds together again and pronounce *at*. The teacher then says a word that can be made by adding a letter to *at*, *fat*. The teacher asks all the children in the class to point to the letter that is needed in front of *at* to make the word *fat*. The children point to *f* and the teacher asks *f* to come and stand with *at* and leads the class to say *f/at*, *fat*. The letter *f* leaves (segmenting) and *at* is left standing alone. They continue to use this *at* pattern to spell other words. The teacher asks, "What letter do we need to spell *bat*? *cat*? *mat*? *rat*? *sat*? *Pat*? For each word, the class points to and names the letter that should stand next to *at* to spell the word. The children wearing the needed letter join the two children with *at*—holding their letter cards (*c*, *h*, *b*, *f*, *h*, *m*, *r*, *s*, or *p*) in front of *at* to spell or make each of the words. All the children blend and pronounce the word. If the letters make a name, the teacher talks about names and the letter children turn their letter cards around to the capital letter side.

At the end of the activity, the teacher gives the lesson more scope by having two children come up together and blend these two beginning letter sounds, and read and spell words that begin with two beginning letters, such as *brat* and *flat*.

When the children have made words with the *at* pattern and have read and spelled the words with the teacher, she or he then collects the letter cards by asking, "Will the person who has the *a* bring it to me? Will the person with the letter *t* bring it to me?" As each person hands the teacher the letter, the teacher asks the whole class to say the common sound made by that letter. The teacher

continues to call each letter and have everyone say the sound of that letter until all letters are collected. Collecting the letters in this way provides everyone some additional practice with letter names and sounds.



Rhyming Patterns for Making Words Kindergarten Lessons

Begin your Making Words lessons with easy two-letter patterns, such as **a-t** and **i-n**. Later in the year, do some lessons with three-letter patterns, such as **a-c-k** and **u-n-k**. At the end of the year, include some lessons with silent letters and vowel teams, such as **a-t-e** and **e-a-t**. Here is a list in alphabetical order of the patterns you might want to teach and some common words kindergartners might read and spell with those patterns. Uncommon words such as **vat** or **glut** are not included. If some of these words are not in the listening vocabulary of your students, do not include them in the lesson. It is important for kindergarten children that when they blend letters to make a word, they can match that word to a word in their oral language store.

- **ack** will help you read and spell **back, Jack, Mack, pack, rack, sack, tack, Zack, black, smack, and track**
- **ad** will help you read and spell **bad, Dad, had, lad, mad, pad, sad, Tad, glad, and Brad**
- **ake** will help you read and spell **bake, cake, fake, Jake, rake, lake, make, take, wake, Blake, flake, and brake**
- **all** will help you read and spell **ball, call, fall, hall, mall, tall, wall, small, and stall**
- **am** will help you read and spell **bam, jam, ham, Pam, ram, Sam, clam, and slam**
- **ame** will help you read and spell **came, fame, game, name, same, tame, blame, and flame**
- **an** will help you read and spell **can, Dan, fan, man, pan, ran, tan, van, plan, and scan**
- **and** will help you read and spell **band, hand, land, sand, brand, grand, and stand**
- **ank** will help you read and spell **blank, Hank, rank, sank, blank, and drank**
- **ap** will help you read and spell **cap, lap, map, nap, rap, sap, clap, snap, and slap**
- **ar** will help you read and spell **bar, car, far, jar, scar, and star**
- **at** will help you read and spell **bat, cat, fat, hat, mat, Nat, pat, Pat, rat, sat, brat, flat, and scat**

- **ate** will help you read and spell **date, gate, hate, Kate, late, mate, Nate, rate, plate, and skate**
- **ay** will help you read and spell **day, hay, Jay, lay, may, Ray, say, way, play, clay, and stay (stray, spray)**
- **eat** will help you read and spell **beat, heat, meat, neat, seat, and treat**
- **ed** will help you read and spell **bed, fed, led, Ned, red, Ted, bled, Fred, and sled**
- **eep** will help you read and spell **beep, deep, keep, peep, weep, steep, and sweep**
- **ell** will help you read and spell **bell, fell, sell, well, yell, smell, and spell**
- **en** will help you read and spell **Ben, den, hen, Jen, men, pen, ten, and Glen**
- **end** will help you read and spell **bend, lend, mend, send, blend, and spend**
- **ent** will help you read and spell **bent, dent, tent, rent, sent, vent, went, Brent, spent, and Trent**
- **est** will help you read and spell **best, nest, pest, rest, test, west, vest, and Crest (toothpaste)**
- **et** will help you read and spell **bet, get, jet, met, net, pet, set, vet, wet, and yet**
- **ick** will help you read and spell **Dick, kick, lick, Nick, pick, Rick, sick, tick, trick, and stick**
- **ide** will help you read and spell **hide, ride, side, tide, wide, bride, glide, and slide**
- **ill** will help you read and spell **Bill, dill, fill, hill, kill, mill, pill, will, still, and spill**
- **in** will help you read and spell **bin, fin, kin, pin, sin, tin, win, twin, and spin**
- **ine** will help you read and spell **dine, fine, line, mine, nine, pine, spine, and twine**
- **ing** will help you read and spell **Bing, ding, king, ring, sing, wing, bring, sting, and swing (string, spring)**
- **ink** will help you read and spell **pink, link, mink, rink, sink, wink, blink, stink, and drink**
- **ip** will help you read and spell **dip, hip, lip, rip, sip, tip, zip, skip, slip, trip, and drip (strip)**
- **it** will help you read and spell **bit, fit, hit, kit, pit, sit, spit, slit, and skit**
- **ock** will help you read and spell **dock, lock, rock, sock, block, clock, and stock**
- **og** will help you read and spell **dog, fog, hog, jog, log, frog, and smog**
- **ook** will help you read and spell **cook, book, hook, look, took, brook, and crook**

- **op** will help you read and spell *op, hop, top, pop, top, drop, trap,* and *stop.*
- **ox** will help you read and spell *ox, fox, box, box, box, box, box, box, box,* and *pix.*
- **ub** will help you read and spell *ub, cub, cub, cub, cub, cub,* and *ub.*

Steps in a *Using Words in Kindergarten* Lesson

1. Choose a book that contains the rhyming pattern you want to work on. Read the book at least once to your students and enjoy and talk about the book. Without attention focusing on the pattern, flip through the pages of the book that contain your chosen pattern and have your students say and identify the rhyming words that have that pattern. Don't skip this step. Children need to see that the phonics patterns they are manipulating are real words that come from real books. Phonics is useful if students use it only during phonics time and don't make the transfer to reading and writing.
2. Choose children to be the pattern letter people. Have these children come to the front of the room, put on their letter cards, and join hands. Have everyone in the class blend the pattern letters to read the rhyming pattern.
3. Distribute the consonant cards that are needed to make words to other children and have them stand in a line alongside the pattern children.
4. Name a letter and ask that letter to come and stand right next to the pattern children. Have everyone in the class blend the letters and read the word. Use the word in a sentence after it is made. Continue to call letters and have letter people come and join the pattern and have everyone blend and read the name until all words are made. When a name is made, talk about how capital letters are needed and make sure the letter card is turned to its capital side. In this step, children are blending and sounding out letters to read words.
5. After the children have read words, have them use the letters to spell words. Use the same letter cards and the same words, but instead of asking a letter to come and join the pattern, say a word and let the class point to the letter that is needed to spell that word. (You may want to choose children who were not letter people for the first activity to be the letter people for the second activity so that more children have a chance to be the letters.)
6. To make the lesson more multilevel, include some words in the mix that your students can spell by blending two beginning letters with the pattern (*bl, br, cl, cr, dr, fl, fr, gr, pl, pr, sc, sk, sl, sm, sn, sp, st, sw, tr, and tw*). If you like, include a word with a three-letter blend (*spr, str*).
7. Collect the letter cards by calling for the letters and having everyone say the sound for that letter. This provides a quick review of letter names and sounds for children who still need this practice.

- **ug** will help you read and spell **bug, dug, hug, jug, mug, rug, tug, slug, snug,** and **plug**
- **ump** will help you read and spell **bump, dump, hump, jump, lump, pump, plump, slump,** and **stump**
- **un** will help you read and spell **bun, fun, gun, run, sun, spun,** and **stun**
- **unk** will help you read and spell **bunk, dunk, hunk, junk, sunk, skunk,** **stunk,** and **trunk**
- **ut** will help you read and spell **but, cut, gut, hut, nut,** and **rut**

The sample lesson previously described comes from *Making Words Kindergarten: 50 Interactive Lessons That Build Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Spelling Skills* (Hall & Cunningham, 2009). Several other lessons are shown here.

Sample Lessons for Early, Middle, and Late Year

* Pattern: **ent** (early in the year)

Letters needed: **e, n, t, b, d, p, r, s, v,** and **w**

1. Books to read

- *My Grandpa and I* by P. K. Hallinan (Candy Cane Press, 2002), ISBN 0-82494-219-1. Read the book; reread the page with the **ent** pattern and talk about the **ent** pattern in **tent** and **went**.
- *The Night before Summer Vacation* by Natasha Wing (Grosset & Dunlap, 2002), ISBN 0-448-42830-X. Read the book; reread the pages with the **ent** pattern and talk about the **ent** pattern in **went** and **tent**.
- *Hop on Pop* by Dr. Seuss (Random House, 1963, renewed 1991), ISBN: 0-394-80029-X. Read the book; reread page 53 and listen for the **ent** pattern in **went, sent,** and **tent**.

2. Making Words: Blend and segment to read words

First, make the pattern **ent** with the letter card children. Lead the children to say the letter sounds and pattern **e/n/t, ent**. Then make and read a word using one of the other letter cards (**w**) and ask, "Who can read this word?" Together with the class, blend the letter sounds and say **w/e/n/t, went**. Use the word in a sentence: "I went to the store with my friend." Continue this way with the other letters to make and read **b/e/n/t, bent; d/e/n/t, dent; t/e/n/t, tent; r/e/n/t, rent; s/e/n/t, sent;** and **v/e/n/t, vent**. Use two letter sounds together with the pattern to make and read the words **Brent, spent,** and **Trent**. Remember to use and talk about the capital letter used for names.

2. **Making Words: Blend and segment to spell words**

After making and reading words, use the same letter cards and lead the class to spell words. Ask the class to point to the letter to put in front of ay to make the word bent. Continue to make and spell **bent, dent, tent,** and **rent, rent, Brent, spent,** and **Trent.**

3. **Collect the letter cards**

Call for each letter to review the letter names.

* **Pattern: ay (middle of the year)**

Letters: a, o, e, d, a, y, b, c, d, f, h, l, k, m, p, r, s, t, and w

1. **Books to read**

Word Family: ay by Teri Komai (Scholastic, 1987), ISBN 0-590-42844-6. Read the book; reread pages 8 and 9 and talk about the ay pattern in **play** and **away**. On page 18 talk about the ay pattern in **away** and **birthday**.

Way Spoken: Ten Ways by David Kirk (Scholastic, 1994), ISBN 0-590-47774-2. Read the book; reread page 4 and talk about the ay pattern in the words **May, day, stay,** and **away.**

The Fish in the Hat by Dr. Seuss (Random House, 1957, renewed 1985), ISBN 0-194-50881-X. Read the book; reread pages 1, 37, and 60 and point to the ay pattern in **play** and **day.**

2. **Making Words: Blend and segment to read words**

First, make the pattern ay with the letter card children. Explain that you will use the y sound; you can hear only the letter **a** when you say its name. Then, the children say the ay sound with you. Then, make and read words using one of the other letter cards (**d**) and ask, "Who can make this word?" Together with the class, blend the letter sounds and read **day, day.** Use the word in a sentence: "What a nice (rainy) **day.**"

Work in this way with the other letters to make and read **h/ay, hay; F/ay, fay; P/ay, fay; k/ay, Kay; l/ay, lay; m/ay, may; R/ay, Ray; s/ay, say; w/ay, way.** Remember to use and talk about the capital letters for names. Use the two letter sounds together with the pattern to make and read the words **clay, play,** and **stay.**

3. **Making Words: Blend and segment to spell words**

After making and reading words, use the same letter cards and lead the class to spell words. Ask the class to point to the letter to put in front of ay to make the word **day.** Continue to make and spell **hay, Fay, Jay, Kay,** **lay, may, Ray, say, way, clay, play,** and **stay.**

4. **Collect the letter cards**

Call for each letter to review the letter names.

* **Pattern: ate (late in the year)**

Letters needed: a, e, t, d, h, l, k, m, k, p, r, and s

1. **Books to read**

- *The Wedding* by Eve Bunting (Charlesbridge, 2005), ISBN 1-58089-040-7. Read the book; reread page 8 and talk about the ate pattern in **gate**, **date**, and **late**.
- *The Library* by Sarah Stewart (Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1999), ISBN 0-37444-394-7. Read the book; reread the pages with the ate pattern and talk about the ate pattern in **skate**, **rate**, **date**, and **late**.
- *Counting Is for the Birds* by Frank Mazzola Jr. (Charlesbridge, 1997), ISBN 0-88106-950-7. Read the book; reread the page with the ate pattern and talk about the pattern in **mate** and **rate**.

2. **Making Words: Blend and segment letter sounds to read words**

Using the letter card children, make **ate**. Explain that you can't hear the e sound; you can hear only the a when you say its name and t in this pattern. We call this a silent e. (Have the letter card child with the e put his or her hand over his or her mouth.) Have the children say the ate sound with you. Put the child with the letter card **d** in front of the three children wearing **ate**. Ask the children to read this word. Lead the class to say **d/ate**, **date**. Use the word in a sentence: "Today's **date** is the fifth of March." Then make and read some other words: **g/ate**, **gate**; **h/ate**, **hate**; **m/ate**, **mate**; **l/ate**, **late**; and **K/ate**, **Kate**. Remember the capital letter needed for **Kate**. Use two letter sounds together with the pattern to make and read the words **plate** and **skate**.

3. **Making Words: Blend and segment letter sounds to spell words**

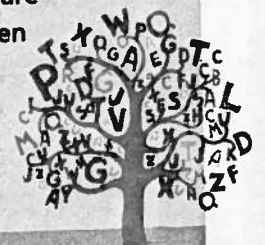
Using the three letter cards **ate**, ask the children to point to the letter needed to make the word **date**. When they point to the letter child **d**, have them say **d/ate**, **date**. Then follow the same procedure to make and spell **gate**, **hate**, **Kate**, **mate**, **late**, **plate**, and **skate**.

4. **Collect the letter cards**

Call for each letter to review the letter names.

For English Language Learners

Your English language learners will enjoy being the letters and creating the words but they may need meaning support for some of the words. Fortunately, the meaning of many of the words being made—**cat**, **hat**, **car**, **jar**, **van**, **pan**—can be supported by pictures. Other words are action words—**ran**, **sat**, **clap**, **snap**, **slide**—that you can demonstrate and invite children to do with you. If you have English language learners in your classroom, consider which words in your Making Words lesson can be supported through pictures or actions. Clip art is readily available on many Internet sites and you can locate them through an image search on Google and other search engines.





Summary

The manipulation of letters and sounds to make new words is an important part of learning to read, and making words is a wonderful way to introduce your kindergarten class to how beginning letters are combined with rhyming patterns to read and spell words. Young children are concrete learners who learn best when they can see and do an activity. Wearing the letters and making words is an excellent way for young children to practice the phonemic awareness skills of rhyming, blending, and segmenting. Simultaneous with the development of these phonemic awareness skills, children are learning letter names and sounds and the most common rhyming patterns. In every lesson, the teacher leads the children through two activities. In the first activity, they blend beginning letters and rhyming patterns to read words. In the second activity, they decide which letters are needed to make a word and are thus learning to use letter sounds to spell words.

sixth edition



Phonics They Use

Words for Reading and Writing

Patricia M. Cunningham

Wake Forest University



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