

different instructional settings. Ideally, teachers and students will explore each word-solving principle in a variety of ways. In the following section, we list and define several different kinds of activities that we have found effective in helping children learn to solve words. Each is active and promotes inquiry and discovery on the part of the child. Many are multilevel; children can go beyond the particular activity to discover more.

Word Making

Word making can be accomplished with magnetic letters or with letter cards. Sometimes children record the words they make in a notebook. Children can build words in a variety of categories, such as:

- Names (first and last).
- Names that begin with the same letter or letter clusters (*Stan* and *Stevie*).
- Words in special categories (color words, animal words, number words, theme words).
- Words that rhyme (*mail*, *pail*).
- Words with two, three, four letters (*am*, *ant*, *make*).
- Words from a particular set of letters (making words from a set like *c*, *a*, *h*, *s*, *l*, *r*, *t*).
- Words from word parts (such as *ack*, *ame*, *tr*, *cr*, *sh*, *pl*).

- Words with one, two, three syllables.
- Words that start with a consonant or vowel (*dog*, *door*; *apple*, *ant*).
- Words that end the same (*track*, *duck*).
- Words that have the same vowel sound (*feet*, *meat*, *receive*).
- Words with a particular vowel (*cat*, *make*, *sail*, *board*).
- Words with silent letters (*lamb*, *comb*, *meat*, *knight*).
- Contractions (*I'm*, *wasn't*, *don't*, *didn't*).
- Compound words (*everywhere*, *something*).
- Words with prefixes or suffixes (*unfasten*, *removable*).
- Homophones (*aisle*, *I'll*).
- Words from the same root (*medical*, *medicine*).

Word Sorting

As children become more knowledgeable about letters, sounds, and words, a good activity for the word study center is word sorting (see Figure 13-5).

In this activity, children compare, contrast, and sort words according to specific features (Henderson 1990; Templeton and Bear 1992; Zutell 1996). Word sorting will enable students to form hypotheses, concepts, and generalizations about the properties of written words, and it will help them link new words to the familiar ones they can

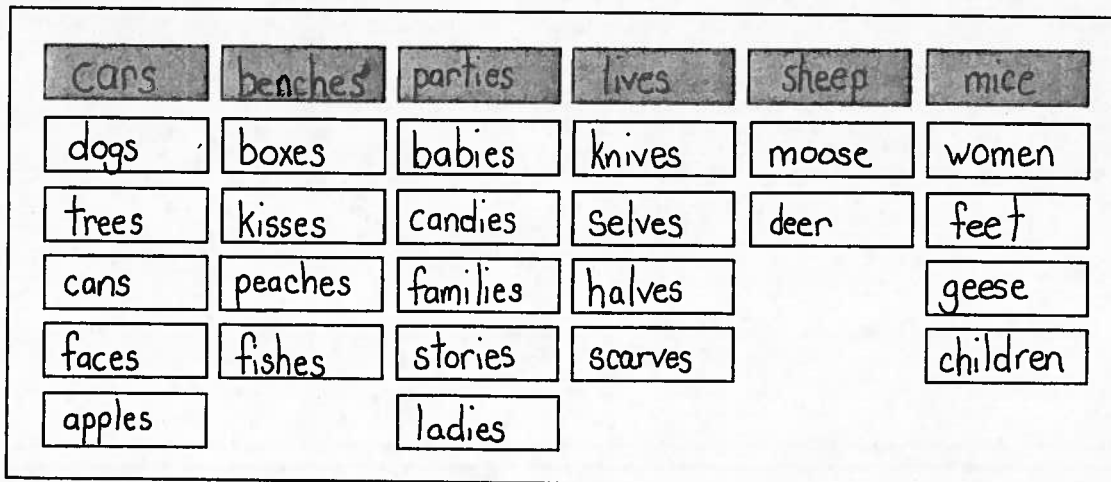


FIGURE 13-5 Word Sort: Plurals

already spell. There are two basic types of word sort activities:

1. In *closed sorts*, students are asked to find a specified feature in a group of words. For example, students can find words that have a silent *e* (*make, pile, cute*) or any other sound. In closed sorts, children are being asked to engage in deductive thinking.
2. In *open sorts*, students classify words according to shared features that they themselves discover. For example, students can find words that have an *ed* and learn that some of those words have a consonant that is doubled before the *ed*. In open sorts, children are being asked to engage in inductive thinking.

For children at all levels, it is important to talk about the words as they sort them because the dialogue promotes understanding and the internalization of principles. Here are some basic guidelines for sorting words:

■ Words can be sorted by how they sound. Word sorts for early readers would focus on using their knowledge of consonant and vowel patterns. Children can sort by initial consonants and move to ending and medial sounds. When asking children to sort words by vowel patterns or phonograms, use words that are highly regular phonetically and patterns that are common and reliable.

■ Words can be sorted by how they look. Start with simple patterns. Later, add more complex sorts—ones that do not sound entirely as they look. Use words with letter patterns that are more complex.

■ Words can be sorted by connections between meaning units. Word sorts can be constructed to help children discover word components and how they add to or change the meaning of words. Sorts can revolve around roots, inflected endings, prefixes, suffixes, contractions, compound words, and so on. Later, words can be sorted in much more complex categories such as homophones, homographs, synonyms,

antonyms. Word derivations and etymology can also be explored through word sorting, so it is an activity that can be used throughout the elementary grades as children work with words to uncover important linguistic understandings.

Word sorting is actually a mind-stretching and enjoyable activity. As teachers, it reminds us of the features of words and of what we know about the linguistic system. We encourage you to use the word lists in Appendixes 4 to 33 to create specific sorts that meet the needs of your students.

Figure 13-6 shows an example of a double word sort. This collection was sorted by how the ending sounds (*ed* as /d/ and *ed* as /t/), and then it was sorted by the way the word looks (whether a letter is doubled). Children have the opportunity to discover two kinds of rules within one set of words. Figure 13-7 on page 158 contains some other suggestions for constructing word sorts.

The categories are endless. Making lists in categories helps children attend to sound and letter patterns and move beyond regular, simple letter-sound correspondence. Children will learn how to identify complex patterns.

Word sorting may be accomplished in whole-class, small-group, or independent center work settings. It is important to demonstrate the process many times with children so they understand the task.

Word Searches

Word searches involve words arranged in a grid. Students search for particular words or any words that can be detected in the array of letters. There are many commercially produced word searches, but students will also enjoy making their own word searches to share with each other. They can include any words or specific categories of words, such as contractions or compound words. Using graph paper or the grid paper provided in Appendix 39, teach the students how to make a word search. Figure 13-8 on page 159 shows an example of a word search made by a second grade student. Children write their

Sort by Sound

spelled	missed	treated
loved	rushed	melted
cleaned	hoped	ended
planned	jumped	sifted

Sort by Pattern

cracked	hoped	planned	cried
walked	cared	tripped	hurried
dressed	traded	grinned	fried
landed	baked	dropped	carried

FIGURE 13-6 Two Word Sorts

words across, down, and diagonally, filling in as many spaces with whole words as possible. When the words are all written, they write any letters in the remaining spaces.

Crossword Puzzles

Crossword puzzles represent another way for children to attend to the spelling patterns and meaning of words. They will enjoy making their own puzzles, as shown in Figure 13-9 on page 160. Also, children can use letter tiles to plan crossword puzzles or word searches (see Appendix 40).

Have a Try

“Have a try” is a common study method. The writer writes a word, notices that it doesn’t look quite right, and then tries it two or three different ways to decide which construction looks right. The technique is useful

because it requires writers to make attempts and check on themselves. You’ll want to demonstrate this activity so that the children will attend to ways they can think about the task. The activity can be done on a sheet of paper folded in columns or on a blank form (see Appendix 37).

When children have written stories and are proofreading, they can circle some words they may have misspelled and try the word another way. This simple step fosters more self-correction behavior.

Words Around the Room

Using a clipboard, pencil, and a sheet of paper, pairs of children find words in specified categories (for example, words that begin with consonant clusters, compound words, words with similar endings, three-letter words, words with a particular sound, and so

Categories for Word Sorts

Categories related to sound or letter pattern

- Words that begin/end with particular consonants (*mom, mix, or, path, with*)
- Words that start/end with consonant clusters (*spring, clap, soft*)
- Words with double consonants (*zipper, mitten*)
- Words with two consonants that make one sound (*shoe, chimney*)
- Words with a vowel sound as in *apple* (*cat, map*)
- Words with a vowel sound as in *egg* (*pet, then*)
- Words with a vowel sound as in *igloo* (*sit, lip*)
- Words with a vowel sound as in *octopus* (*hot, top*)
- Words with a vowel sound as in *umbrella* (*under, up*)
- Words with a vowel sound as in *cake* (*late, cape*)
- Words with a vowel sound as in *feet* (*meat, keep*)
- Words with a vowel sound as in *kite* (*sign, fight*)
- Words with a vowel sound as in *goat* (*rope, soap*)
- Words with a vowel sound as in *mule* (*cute, use*)
- Words beginning with a vowel (*under, over*)
- Words ending with a vowel (*tuba, solo*)
- Words with the same vowel sound (*play, mail, take*)
- Words with vowel combinations (*cream, boat, soil*)
- Words with a vowel and r (*corn, first*)
- Words that rhyme (*mail, sail*)
- Words with a letter that makes a particular sound (the s sound in *see* and *bus*, or *was* and *treasure*)
- Words with silent letters (*make, seat*)
- Words that can be paired with another word that sounds the same but means something different (*to, two; sail, sale*)
- Words with one, two, or three syllables (*dog, rab-bit, to-ma-to*)
- Words with an open syllable (*mo-tel, to-ken*)
- Words with a closed syllable (*rob-in, cab-in*)

Categories related to structure or meaning

- Words that have prefixes (*redo, unfasten*)
- Words with endings (*smartest, looking, carried*)
- Words with the same base (*write, rewrite, rewriting*)
- Words that name people (*brother, friend*)
- Words that name places (*home, yard*)
- Words that are short or long (*to, remainder*)
- Words in a category (*carrot, orange*)
- Words that describe (*lovely, green*)
- Words that mean the same (*fight, argument*)
- Words that mean the opposite (*hot, cold*)
- Words that can be pronounced two different ways (*live, live*)
- Words that sound the same but are spelled different ways (*to, two*)
- Words that are contractions (*haven't, wasn't*)
- Words that are compounds (*someday, cannot*)
- Words that have the same part (*fat, fatter, fattest*)
- Word forms that are singular or plural (*calf, calves*)

FIGURE 13-7 Categories for Word Sorts

WORD MATTERS

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in the Reading/Writing Classroom*

Gay Su Pinnell and Irene C. Fountas

with a chapter by
Mary Ellen Giacobbe

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