

Teaching Beginning Reading Skills, Grade K

Blending

About the routine

Learning the sounds and their letters is only the first step in learning to read and write. The second step is learning to blend the sounds into words.

Blending is an important strategy for students to learn in order to figure out words they have never encountered in text. Initially, blending allows students to read words that are part of their speaking vocabulary. Later, they will use this strategy to read words that are unknown in terms of meaning as well. Initially, students will be blending sound-by-sound. Ultimately they will sound and blend only those words that they cannot read. Eventually, the blending process will become quick and comfortable for them.

Blending techniques

Initially, lines to be blended are written on the board or an overhead transparency *sound-by-sound* as students watch and participate. The lines and sentences should not be written out before class begins since sound-by-sound blending teaches the process of blending.

Blending words

In each lesson, blending is continued with systematically arranged words that you build at the board or on an overhead. By blending words with you sound-by-sound, students learn the blending process, which allows them to figure out the words they meet in their reading independently. It provides maximum teacher support. Blending is a critical strategy for reading unfamiliar words.

Sound-by-Sound Blending

- Write the letter(s)* for the first sound in the word.
- Have students say the sound.
- Write the letter(s) for the second sound.
- Have students say the sound.
- If the second sound is a vowel, blend through the vowel, making blending motion with your hand under the letters beginning with the first letter and moving to the right.
- Write the letter of the next sound.
- Have students say the sound.
- Continue as described above through the remaining letters in the word. After the students pronounce the final sound in the word, make the blending motion from left to right under the word.
- Have students blend the word.
- Have students reread the word naturally, as they would speak it.
- Have a student read the word again and use it in a sentence. Have that student or another student extend the sentence. Help the student by asking an appropriate question about the sentence. For example, "How did it happen? When did it happen? Where? Why?"
- Continue blending the words in this fashion.

- When all of the words have been blended, randomly point to words and have individual students read them. Review the words as directed in each lesson in the **Teacher's Edition**.

**When blending words with the long-vowel sounds using the VCe pattern, be sure to write the vowel, a blank, and then the final e, for example, a_e, so children see the vowel and the final e as a whole unit.*

Blending Multisyllable Words: Sound-by-Sound Blending

- Blend the first syllable sound-by-sound.
- Cover the first syllable and blend the second syllable, sound-by-sound.
- Blend any remaining syllables sound-by-sound.
- Uncover all the syllables and blend them together.
- Read the word naturally.

Blending sentences

Blending sentences, the logical extension of blending words, helps children move from word fluency to sentence fluency. The procedure varies greatly from early to later sentences as students' skills develop. Students participate in each sentence's development. In Kindergarten, sentences are built using the sound-by-sound blending procedure, except for high-frequency sight words. In first grade, students will be introduced to whole-word blending. Once they learn to blend whole words, they will blend sentences using the whole-word blending routine. Eventually (later in first grade and beyond) the children will be able to just read the blending words and sentences, stopping to blend only words that are problematic. No matter which routine they use, students should reread the sentences with intonation and discuss capitalization and punctuation.

1. Write the sentence on the board or on an overhead transparency, underlining any high-frequency sight words—words that students cannot decode either because they are irregular or because they contain sounds that the students have not yet learned. If students have not read these words before, write the words on the board and introduce them before writing the sentences. Sight words will not be blended but read as whole words.
2. Have students read the sentence using the sound-by-sound blending routine. Help them read high-frequency sight words if necessary.
3. Have students reread the sentence with normal intonation.
4. Proceed in this manner for all sentences.
5. After reading the sentences, discuss capitalization and punctuation as appropriate.
6. To review, call on students to read the sentences.

Helpful hints

- If a word has one syllable, have students blend each sound of the word. If the word has more than one syllable, have them blend each syllable sound-by-sound and then blend the syllables together.
- In cases in which a line of words introduces or reinforces a spelling pattern, blend all words, discuss the spelling pattern, and then have students use selected words in sentences. Eventually, students, rather than you, should point out the common spelling patterns.
- At the beginning of the year, blend with as much direction as is necessary for success. Reduce your verbal directions when all students are comfortable with the routine. You have made good progress when you no longer have to say "sound-sound-blend," because students automatically sound and blend as you write.
- For students who are having difficulty blending sounds and letters, you may want to preteach or reteach the word lines during Workshop. To support these students, write the vowels in red or orange to highlight the vowels, which may be problematic for them.

- Refer to the ***Alphabet Sound Cards*** if students are unsure of the sound of a letter. Students should use these cards to solve problems during blending.