

Talking and Thinking about Letters

Grade 1
Unit 1
PHONICS

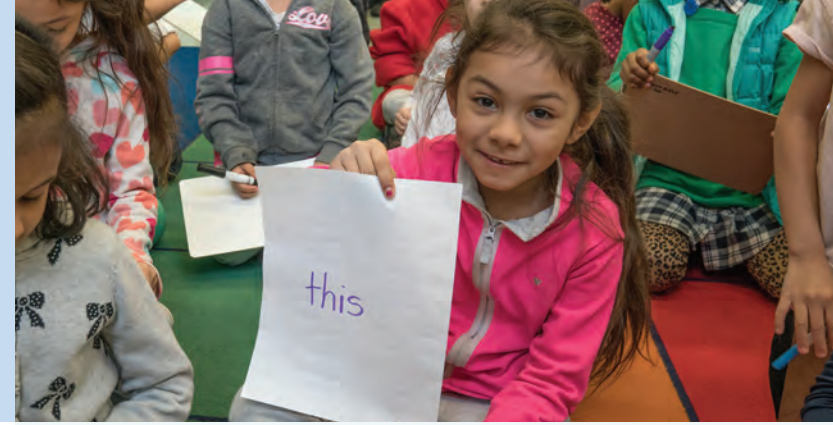


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Studying Blends and Digraphs in Names



IN THIS SESSION

TODAY YOU'LL teach students that it's important to pay attention to blends and digraphs. You will review blends and digraphs that students learned in kindergarten.

TODAY YOUR STUDENTS will study names that contain blends and digraphs and will replace missing blends and digraphs in names.

MINILESSON

CONNECTION

Create a drama around the idea that parts of many of the names on the word wall are missing. Set kids up to figure out which parts are missing (the blends and digraphs) and use this to champion the importance of those parts.

"Friends, come quickly to our meeting because I need your help with a *big* problem." The kids gathered. "Today, like always, I got to our room early and was straightening up the room—tables, chairs, our library—and I noticed a problem.

"Well, last night, someone devoured parts of the names on our word wall. Look at it!" The kids stared open-mouthed at the word wall, where, although they had yet to realize this, all the blends and digraphs had been covered and therefore appeared to be missing. "It's so hard to read the names now. Look at Rasheed's name!" I said, and pointed to the letters *R-a* (covered) . . . *e-e-d*. "Somebody has been taking big bites out of so many names!"

I looked at our lion, asking, "Were you extra hungry last night? Did you devour part of your name?"

GETTING READY

- ✓ Before class, cover blends and digraphs in the names on your word wall. Write the missing digraphs and blends from the word wall names on slips of paper the size of the letters that you have covered and place them into an envelope. You might also delete these from classroom labels, especially if you don't have many names that contain these features.
- ✓ Write a note, "It is NO FAIR to make such a fuss about short vowels and to ignore us. From: Your friends, Blends and Digraphs," and place the note in the envelope inside your book.
- ✓ Prepare Rasheed's scroll by adding the name your whole class will study today. We are using *Stella*. You can choose your own student's name—one that has blends or digraphs. Make sure Rasheed is holding this scroll.
- ✓ Display and add to the anchor chart, "Let's Study a Name!" ✨
- ✓ Distribute a whiteboard to one member of each rug club, and a name card to study today. This should contain a blend or digraph. If clubs have already studied every member's name or no one has a blend or digraph, draw from literature (*Frog* or *Brown Bear* work!)
- ✓ Kids need their writing folders and colorful revision pens.

PHONICS INSTRUCTION

Letter Knowledge

- Identify the letters in blends and digraphs.

Phonics

- Hear, say, and identify blends and digraphs in familiar names.

I put my ear right up to Rasheed’s mouth and listened for his whispered response, then told the class, “Rasheed is outraged. He is a lion and he says there is *no way* lions eat letters.

“We have a *big* problem. Who ate parts out of our names and . . . why those parts? Will you and the kids nearby you see if you can figure out what is missing from these names? What was the mystery eater gobbling up? Was he eating all our *S’s* like the *s* in *Rasheed*, or what? Turn and try to solve this mystery!”

The kids set to work. Soon a few partnerships had figured out that the blends and digraphs were the missing parts.

Reconvene the class and do some shared work so that all the kids come to the realization that the blends and digraphs were the parts the mystery eater had removed.

I reconvened the class. “Oh, my goodness, what did you figure out? Let’s all work on this name first: Let’s listen to the sounds in the start of the name. *Na . . . an!* What letter do we need here? Oh, it’s two letters! You think it’s *th*, is that right?” Nathan nodded. I added the *th* in a different color than the original name.

“It feels good to have the letters back. And what’s special about those letters—the *th* in *Nathan*, and what was missing from *Rasheed*? Oh, the *sh*. What parts of words did our hungry letter eater make off with?”

The class called out that the thief had taken the digraphs and blends. I nodded. “Yes, the thief took two-letter combinations. Blends that have two sounds so close together they stick, and digraphs with two letters that make one sound.

“Whew, I’m glad we figured that out. Now I am wondering what that hungry eater did with all those blends and digraphs? But let’s get on with our minilesson. Hmm, . . . where are my notes on today’s minilesson?”

I looked around and spotted my Units of Study in Phonics book under something. “Wait, what is in my book?” A brightly colored envelope was protruding from the pages of the book. I drew it out, saying, “I didn’t leave this here!” Mystified, I opened the envelope. All the missing blends and digraphs from the word wall spilled out. I looked into the envelope again and took out a folded note, which I opened, curious, and began to read:

It is NO FAIR to make such a fuss about short vowels and to ignore us.
From: Your friends, Blends and Digraphs.

I read the letter to the class, and then resignedly, said, “Okay, I know what we will study today—don’t you, class?” The kids called out “blends and digraphs.” I nodded energetically.



✿ Name the teaching point.

"Today I want to teach you that it would be nuts, it would be crazy, it would be *all wrong*, to study names and to not pay attention to the blends and digraphs in those names, because if they were eaten up (or otherwise taken away) the names would look very hard to read!"

TEACHING AND ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT/LINK

Set partners up to study the star name for the day, drawing on all the word study habits they have been practicing over the last few days, including paying attention to blends and digraphs.

Looking over at Rasheed, I noticed the lion was again holding a little scroll, presumably with the names we'd study today. I drew forth the name, read it, and then said, "I need a drumroll before I show you today's name!" and I got the class to beat on their knees. "Our name today is . . . *Stella*! Does it have a blend or a digraph? Yes!"

The class cheered. Stella beamed. I said, "Friends, you know how to study a name. Our chart can remind you." I touched the chart for how to study a name. "*But*, you cannot skip past noticing . . ." I added a bullet to our chart: "Notice blends and digraphs."

"Study everything you see in this name—and be sure you study the blends and digraphs."

ANCHOR CHART

Let's Study a Name!

- Read it.
- Clap the syllables, stomp them, snap them.
- Name the letters.
- Study it closely.
- Use the sounds.
- Notice the vowels.
 - Use short-vowel power!
- **Notice the blends and digraphs.**

Notice the blends and digraphs.



Then I said, "Think of other words with the blend that you see in the name we are studying, or think about how that name would be if we took out one blend and put in some others."

You'll treat today's name study lesson as a review of blends and digraphs that kids will be familiar with from kindergarten, but you'll also teach particular blends more explicitly in the next bend.



POSSIBLE COACHING MOVES

- ▶ Be on the lookout for two consonants together. Then say the name to help you decide if those letters are a digraph—do the two consonants make one sound or are they a blend, with two sounds close together?"
- ▶ "Digraphs and blends can show up in all parts of a name—beginning, middle, or end. Like in *Rasheed*, the *sh* digraph is in the middle of his name. Do you know of names that have blends or digraphs in other places?"
- ▶ "Friends, I love that you are thinking about the blend at the start of Stella's name. What other words start like that: /St/ . . . /St/ . . . /St/ . . . oh, *Stop!* Good choice. What else?"

Recruit the class to try taking out the blend at the start of Stella’s name and substituting other blends, just for fun.

“Readers, writers—I heard some of you taking out the /st/ at the start of Stella’s name and putting other blends there. Here are some blends and digraphs—try putting others in front of Stella’s name—see what cool odd names you can invent!”

The kids worked to replace the initial blend in *Stella* with other blends and digraphs. They came up with *Trella* and *Shella*, and had a good time trying to say the names they created.

RUG TIME CLUBS

Set kids up to study another club mate’s name and compare it with names already studied.

“Writers, readers, whenever you study a name, you can’t just pay attention to vowels, you also need to notice other features. Some names have blends like the /st/ in *Stella* or the /fr/ in *Frank*. Other names have digraphs like the /sh/ in *Sharon* or the /ch/ in *Chad*. Those are definitely things you are going to want to notice!” I pointed to the new bullets we’d added to the bottom of our anchor chart.

“I’m going to hand one person in each club a whiteboard and a name card. Remember, first of all, copy the name from the name card to your whiteboard and then mark the name up with the things you notice. Share the pen. Be sure to notice short vowels. And use your blend and digraph power to notice and also to do some rhyming. Take a name, or a part of a name, and see if you can make new ways that name (or that part of a name) could go.”

SHARE • Adding New Names to the Name Wall, Looking for Blends and Digraphs

Add the new names that the class has studied to the name wall, with a confetti cheer to accompany the addition. Then channel kids to reread their writing, looking for blends and digraphs they’ve used, or could add by editing.

“Let’s add these lovely names to the word wall,” I said, and once all the names were up on the word wall, I said, “How about a confetti cheer? Say these lovely names over and over as we throw some confetti over them!”

POSSIBLE COACHING MOVES

- ▶ “Use our ‘Let’s Study a Name!’ chart to help you remember things you can do.”
- ▶ “Use your professor talk to think about how two names are the same and different.”
- ▶ “This club tried changing one name by adding a different blend or digraph to it. Then they tried it with tons of different blends and digraphs, like we did with *Stella*, *brella*, *chella*. Give that one a try.”

"Awesome! Let's end today by giving you and your partner a chance to look through your writing folders, searching for words that have blends and digraphs. I'm also going to give you a colorful revision pen," I said, holding one such tool in the air. "If you find a word that you wrote with a blend or digraph in it, put a little star in the margin, not far from that word, and then give your partner a high-five.

"If you find a word that *sounds* like it should have a blend or a digraph and you didn't write that yet, use your colorful pen to add it in now." I circulated to support them with this work.

EXTENSION 1 • Filling In Missing Blends and Digraphs

GETTING READY

- Make copies of the story with missing blends and digraphs to distribute to students. ✨
- Display a list of the missing blends and digraphs for children to refer to as they work on filling in the story. These are the missing ones: *wh, fr, sl, bl, gr, sp, th, st, sm, ch, th*. ✨
- Children will need their writing folders with the last story they've been writing.

Explain that the mascot may have eaten more blends and digraphs and recruit the class to help you replace them.

"At lunch today, I started to worry that Rasheed might have eaten the blends or digraphs (or some other things) from *your* writing. So in a little bit, I'm going to ask you to pull out the last story you have been writing and to reread it, making *absolutely* sure that if your word has a blend or a digraph in it, you use all you know to spell that word just right.

"To practice, will you and your partner help me with my story? I've made a list of some of the word parts that Rasheed might have eaten from my story. If you can figure out which ones to put back, just add them right in!"

I distributed my story, and displayed a list that contained all the missing blends and digraphs, in no special order:

After children worked to return the blends and digraphs to this story, they pulled their own writing out and worked to make sure they'd spelled those words parts correctly when needed in their own stories.

"Can I make a cake?" I asked my mom. "Just me, with no help?"

My mom said yes. So I added two eggs and a ____unk of butter to the cake mix. With my ____oon, I ____irred and ____irred and ____irred. I put the batter into two cake pans. I turned the ____ove on and put the cakes into the ____ove.

It ____elled ____eat! Mmmmmmm!

I took the cakes out. I ____id one on top of the o____er. I added ____osting. I started to cut the cake.

"Huh?" "____at?" I was not able to cut it! I looked at bo____ parts of the cake. I saw some ____ing ____ue in the middle of the cake.

"Oh no!" I had left my oven mit the middle of the cake.

EXTENSION 2 • Highlighting Digraphs

GETTING READY

- Print a collection of pictures of things that begin with blends/digraphs. ✨
- Have some poems/songs available for children to search for blends/digraphs. ✨

Recruit the class to make charts and tools and songs to support digraphs.

“Class, I’ve been worried that Rasheed is right about us spending more time worrying about short vowels than about blends and digraphs. I know short vowels are tricky—but so are digraphs, and we don’t even have charts hanging up that remind us of digraphs. No wonder they feel left out!

“I’ve been thinking we should make some digraph stuff to put up in this class. Maybe we could even make some digraph stuff to give to the kindergarten classrooms, so everyone doesn’t keep on feeling that the vowels get all the attention and the digraphs get completely ignored. It isn’t nice to ignore anyone (even letters!).

“So are you game to help us make some digraph stuff for our classrooms?” The kids all agreed, and I set them up to do this work:

- Some kids went through collections of pictures, sorting out those that began with specific digraphs. They made bins to accompany each digraph. For example, the pictures that started with *ch* went in one container, the ones that start with *sh* in another.
- Some kids made a digraph power chart, listing the digraph and writing words for each.
- Some kids took “The Wheels on the Bus” and figured out how the song could go to practice digraphs—the wipers went *sh sh sh* and the money went *clink clink clink*.
- Another club took the song, “Open, Shut Them,” and decided how to teach it to the class as a way to practice digraphs.

This group first marked up the digraphs, then reread and marked the blends.



EXTENSION 3 • Play “Guess the Covered Word” for Blends

GETTING READY

- Write sentences on the board or on chart paper with some words covered, with most words containing a common blend (*bl, br, cr, cl, dr, fl, gr, pl, sc, sm, sn, sp, st, tr*).

“Readers, writers, let’s play ‘Guess the Covered Word’ with some of these sentences,” I said, pointing at a few sentences I’d placed under the document camera, with some words that were covered, with most of those words containing one of the common blends.

My favorite color is blue. Some people prefer green. I love bright colors and add them to my drawings. I put my name on the back of my drawings, in small letters.

Kids called out the words that were covered, and I uncovered the words they guessed correctly.

“Now work with your clubs to keep guessing the covered words in these sentences.”

I love the snow.

I love it when it is clean and white.

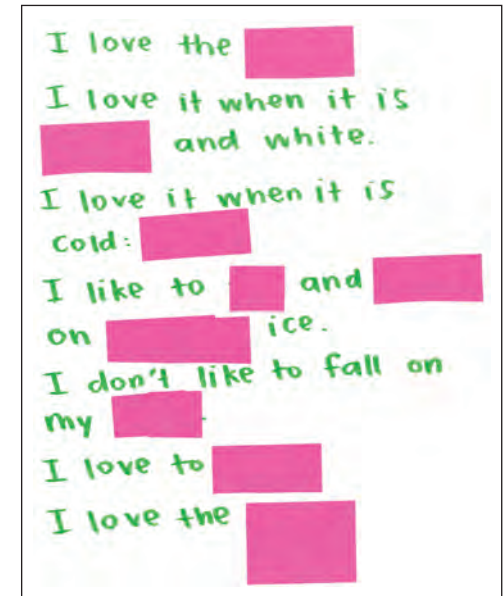
I love it when it is cold: brrrrr!

I like to slip and slide on the smooth ice.

I don’t like to fall on my back.

I love to sled.

I love the snow.





SESSION 7

Studying More Digraphs in Names

GETTING READY

- ✓ Have your magnetic letters ready.
- ✓ Display the chart, "Listen to the sound these letters make together . . ." ✨
- ✓ Have the letter and riddles from Rasheed ready to display. ✨

PHONICS INSTRUCTION

Phonemic Awareness Letter Knowledge

- Identify the letters in blends and digraphs.

Phonics

- Hear, say, and identify blends and digraphs in familiar names.

IN THIS SESSION

TODAY YOU'LL teach students that letters can work together to make new sounds, like when an *S* and an *H* come together in *shop*. Readers can look out for these letters and sounds to help them read and spell tough words.

TODAY YOUR STUDENTS will get to know more digraphs by finding them in riddles, first in a shared reading of a riddle and then by reading a riddle on their own.

MINILESSON

CONNECTION

Remind kids that when some letters are slid alongside each other, they transform as if by magic into digraphs, and make entirely new sounds.

"I was glad that Rasheed reminded us to spend time reviewing blends and digraphs. We will spend one more day reminding ourselves of all we learned by studying Stella and Josh and the rest of your names. Will you think, right now, if *you* were going to teach someone a class on blends and digraphs, what you would teach?"

I gave children a moment to think. "Can you and your partner compare notes: what would you teach about blends?" I let the kids talk. I voiced over, "What would you teach about digraphs?"

After a minute I said, "You remember that in a digraph, two and sometimes three letters come together to make a whole new sound. It's almost magic. Let's do some of that magic right now."

I used magnetic letters to show a *T* and an *H*, far apart, then slid them together, made my hands swirl around a bit in a hocus pocus rendition, all the while whispering "presto change-o." By then, the

two letters were side by side and I said, “A whole new sound: /th/.” I repeated this, sliding magnetic letters together to create a *ch* and a *sh* digraph.

For each combination, I waved my hand as if performing a magic trick and repeated “presto change-o,” then announced, “We have the sound . . . /shhhhhhh/ like in *shoe* or *shell*!”

✿ Name the teaching point.

“Today I want to remind you that letters can work together to make new sounds, like when an *S* and an *H* come together in *shop*. You can look out for these letters and sounds to help you read and spell tough words.”

TEACHING

Rally students to join you in a shared reading of a riddle featuring digraphs.

“Let’s use what we know about letters that work together to make new sounds. I was thinking we might add some pictures to this chart to help us remember the sounds that these digraphs make.” I clipped a chart listing the digraphs to the easel and invited the class to generate the sound made by each digraph and think about what picture we might add to that chart that could serve as a cue, reminding them of the sound.

We’d soon made our own variation of the “Listen to the sound these letters make together . . .” chart.

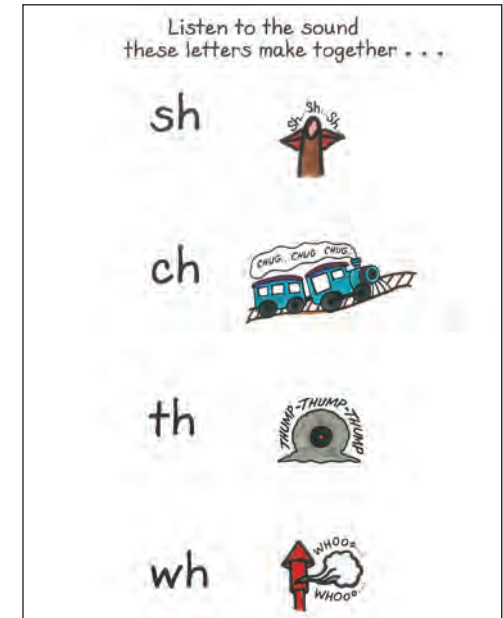
ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT/LINK

Rally kids to practice their digraphs by reading a riddle that their mascot wrote for them (or so you say).

“When I got to school this morning, Rasheed whispered, ‘I really want to play a game with the class today,’ and he handed me this riddle. I think he wants us to read and solve it! Are you up for it?”

I unfolded a piece of paper and placed it on the document camera. “Remember, that every time you read, it’s important to use *everything* you know about letters and sounds and snap words. Today, let’s *also* be on the lookout for blends and digraphs.” I pointed to several digraphs on the chart—each was underlined. “Will you read this to yourself and see if you can guess the answer to the riddle, then compare how you read it with your partner and see if you read the words similarly? Help each other word solve and riddle solve.

“Let’s read this together.” We started to read the first line together. I paused before the word *sharp*. “Hmm, . . . thumbs up if you’re noticing the start of this word.” I gestured toward the digraphs chart as kids raised up thumbs, some calling out, “S-H!”



Teachers, it would be most fun if you can make a version of this chart in front of the kids, drawing on their own ideas for illustrations and using the ones we suggest only if needed. But you can, of course, alter the wording of this and produce a ready-made chart that you could claim to have produced just for the class the night before!

"Yes! I see the letters *S* and *H* at the beginning of this word. Hmm, . . . so does this word start with . . . /sssss/ /h/h/h/h/?" I produced each sound separately as kids shook their heads to disagree. "What sound do those letters make when they combine?"

"/sh/," the class called back.

I pointed to the anchor picture on the chart. "Yes, /sh/ like in when you say 'Shhhhh, let the baby sleep.' Let's use that to help us solve this word. Let's start at the beginning and read through the whole word. 'I have *sh-shar* . . .'"

"*Sharp! Sharp!*" kids shouted out.

"Let's check it. Does *sharp* look right?" I slid my finger under the word from left to right. "Yes, all the parts look right. Let's read on and make sure it makes sense and sounds right here."

We read the whole sentence together. Some children pointed out the *th* at the end of the word *teeth*. I quickly acknowledged the final digraph to offer some quick exposure to digraphs at the ends of words. "Yes! Sometimes you'll find these parts at the ends of words, too. Let's say the word and listen for that sound. *Teeth* . . . What sound do you hear at the end?"

"/th/," kids responded.

"Wow! How cool! You can look out for these letters and sounds at the beginning *and* at the end of words you need to read or write. Let's keep going . . ."

We continued on. I paused at words featuring an initial digraph to give students repeated opportunities to recognize familiar letter combinations, before prompting them to produce the first sound of each word.

When we reached the end of the riddle, I prompted partners to share their guesses. "Don't shout it out . . . whisper your guesses to a partner first." After just a few seconds, I called the class back together. "So, what is the answer to Rasheed's riddle? What lives in the ocean and has sharp teeth and is smaller than a whale?"

"*Shark!*" kids announced.

"Wait a minute. What sound do you hear at the beginning of *shark*? Say the word slowly and listen carefully."

"/shhhhhhh/," kids responded.

"Let's write the answer to this riddle on a Post-it so we can give it back to Rasheed. What letters do we need to write the first part of *shark*? Will you use your magic pens (fingers) and write the answer on the rug?"

This is a printable resource; however, you might write this on chart paper if you do not have a document camera.

Rasheed's Digraph Riddle

I have sharp teeth.
I use them to *chomp* and *chew*.
I swim in the *ocean*.
I am bigger than a goldfish
but I am smaller than a whale.

What am I?



I gave students a moment to form the letters as I scanned the meeting area to assess students very quickly. Then, I recorded the letters onto the end of the riddle. “S and H make /sh/ like in *sheep*,” I said, pointing back at the chart. “And in *shark*, too!” Then, I quickly recorded the rest of the word and stuck the Post-it to the end of the riddle.

Restate the teaching point to reinforce the principle and help children transfer this to their abilities to read the name wall.

“So always remember that sometimes when you put two letters together, you can make a whole new sound. That will especially happen when you want to make these sounds: /ch/, /sh/, /th/.

“With that in mind, will you and your partner read over all our names? And as we read these, if you see a blend or a digraph in the name, let’s give that name a fist pump.”



POSSIBLE COACHING MOVES

- ▶ “Check the beginning. Are there two letters before the vowel that work together to make a new sound? Use the chart to help you.”
- ▶ “Now reread the word quickly, beginning to end.”
- ▶ “Reread that line. Look and listen for sounds like /sh/, /ch/, /th/, and /wh/.”
- ▶ “Take a closer look at this part of the word. What sound does this part make?”
- ▶ “I see a vowel in that word. What sound does short / make? Put /ch/ together with /i/ to help you solve the word.”

RUG TIME CLUBS

Distribute copies of a second riddle to rug clubs and channel them to read it, using digraphs to solve and check their reading.

“Are you ready for one last riddle from Rasheed? Awesome! With your club, read the riddle. Here’s a tip: There are lots of words that start with these magical letters, like *C* and *H* in *chomp* and *W* and *H* in *whale*. Stop when you see these parts at the start of the word—remember you might even see them at the end of a word. You can use the chart to help you remember the sound they make together. Then work with your club to read and check the whole word!”

SHARE • Noticing the Way Words Are Spelled Everywhere: Syllables, Vowels, Blends, and Digraphs

Reinforce with students that it’s important to notice the way words are spelled—on street signs, on shops, and in their books.

“Readers, remember how I told you that experts see a dog (or a Pokémon) and they don’t just say, ‘There’s a dog’ and ‘There’s a Pokémon.’ They notice so much more because they know a lot about dogs, and a lot about Pokémon.

“What Am I?” Riddle

This is a game you can play.

I am black and white.

I have a king and queen.

When you win, shout, “Checkmate!”

What am I? [Chess]

Remember early on, I asked you if you noticed words on your way home from school? Well back then, if you'd seen words like these, you might have just thought, 'That's a coffee shop' or 'Go there to get Mexican food.' But now, if you were walking or riding home and some of these words passed you by, my hunch is you'd see *so* much more. Let's try it. I'll walk some signs past you—and will you and your friends count across your fingers, all the things you notice in these signs? You won't have long to notice, so look alert!"

I walked a *McDonald's* sign past the kids, followed by a *Taco Bell* and a *Dunkin' Donuts*, letting them talk. We didn't collect our observations, because I'd made my point.

"The whole point of all this work—with syllables, with vowels, with blends and digraphs—is that you see these everywhere. Let's reread a bit of our shared reading book from yesterday, and this time, when you see something in the way words are spelled, will you make a little fist pump, to signal, 'I see you'?"

We did that, and I congratulated them, suggesting that they were showing that they were ready to graduate to new work, and tomorrow we'd end this portion of the unit.

EXTENSION 1 • A Quick Inventory to Check Blends and Digraphs

Rally students to try some spellings and then check their work with club mates.

"Readers, writers, this whole week has been one huge review of kindergarten. Now is a good time to check yourself and to notice what parts of phonics you've got, and what parts are still hard for you, because then you know exactly what to work on!

"The best thing about phonics is that you can always test yourself by trying some spellings. Right now, I'm going to say a few words. Spell them the very best you can. Then afterward, you and your club mates can see what you can check off as done, and what is on your 'still to do' list.

"I'm giving you each a whiteboard and a pen. You ready to spell?" I read aloud these words and sentences.

1. *Slip*. I *slip* and fall.
2. *Dig*. I *dig* a hole.
3. *Flop*. I *flop* down on the grass.
4. *Drag*. I *drag* the heavy sack.
5. *Flash*. There is a *flash* of light.
6. *Thunder*. *Thunder* roars.



“Now will you share and check over your work with your rug club? Talk over the spellings you tried. Which looks right? Not right? Most of them have a blend or a digraph. Did you get that part of the word right?”

I then showed the class the correct spelling and asked each child to make a list of the blends or digraphs to still work on. “Will you also notice the short vowels that were hard for you?” I said. “Later we’ll have small groups to give you extra help if you could use a leg up.”

EXTENSION 2 • Sing “The Blend Song”

Invite students to sing a song using blends, then to write their own verses using other blends.

“Now that you’ve listened for blends, I think you are ready to learn ‘The Blend Song’! I’ll sing it first to the tune of ‘Happy Birthday,’ and then we can sing it together. Once you learn the first few verses, you can write your own verses using other blends. Maybe we can do that on another day after we learn the song and practice it a few times.”

Snappy, sneezing, s-n,
 Snappy, sneezing, s-n,
 Snappy, sneezing, s-n,
 You know the blends are all there!

Smarty, smiling, s-m,
 Smarty, smiling, s-m,
 Smarty, smiling, s-m,
 You know the blends are all there!

