



25 Fun Phonics Plays for Beginning Readers

**Engaging, Reproducible Plays That Target and Teach
Key Phonics Skills—and Get Kids Eager to Read!**

Pamela Chanko

New York • Toronto • London • Auckland • Sydney
Mexico City • New Delhi • Hong Kong • Buenos Aires

Teaching
Resources

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Mackie Rhodes, who rescued Sir Drake,
and to Deborah Schecter, who gave Stan and Stella their starring roles.



Scholastic Inc. grants teachers permission to photocopy the reproducible pages from this book for classroom use.

No other part of this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part, or stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission of the publisher. For information regarding permission, write to Scholastic Inc., 557 Broadway, New York, NY 10012.

Edited by Immacula A. Rhodes

Cover design by Jason Robinson

Interior design by Sydney Wright

Interior illustrations by Abby Carter, Anne Kennedy, and Bari Weissman

ISBN-13: 978-0-545-10339-8

ISBN-10: 0-545-10339-8

Copyright © 2009 by Pamela Chanko

Illustrations © 2009 by Scholastic Inc.

All rights reserved.

Printed in the U.S.A.

Published by Scholastic Inc.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 40 15 14 13 12 11 10 09



Contents

Introduction	4
Connections to the Language Arts Standards	5
Using the Plays	6
Fun Phonics Activities	8

Phonics Plays

SHORT VOWELS

Sam and Cam's Snack (<i>short a</i>)	11
The Best Pet (<i>short e</i>)	13
Piggy's Picnic (<i>short i</i>)	15
The Hopping Frog Contest (<i>short o</i>)	18
Hush, Puppy! (<i>short u</i>)	20

LONG VOWELS

Blue Jay's Birthday (<i>long a</i>)	22
Flea's Tea Party (<i>long e</i>)	25
Mike Rides a Bike (<i>long i</i>)	27
Is It a Snow Day? (<i>long o</i>)	29
Hugo's Unicorn (<i>long u</i>)	31

OTHER VOWELS

Sue's Loose Tooth (<i>oo</i>)	33
The Grouchy Groundhog (<i>ou</i>)	35
Turtle's First Circus (<i>bossy r</i>)	37
Pete's Pancake House (<i>silent e</i>)	39

CONSONANT DIGRAPHS

Chocolate Chip Surprise (<i>ch</i>)	41
Shark's Wish (<i>sh</i>)	43
The Thunderstorm (<i>th</i>)	45
A Day at Whiz-Bang Park (<i>wh</i>)	47

CONSONANT BLENDS

Cliff's Closet (<i>cl</i>)	50
Sir Drake and the Dragon (<i>dr</i>)	52
In the Flower Garden (<i>fl</i>)	54
Snail Has the Sniffles (<i>sn</i>)	56
The Spiders Speak Up (<i>sp</i>)	58
Starring Stan and Stella (<i>st</i>)	60
Trash for Treasure (<i>tr</i>)	63



Introduction



Being a beginning reader is an exciting time in children's lives. The mysteries of the printed word are just beginning to reveal themselves, and children are getting a taste of the independence they crave: the ability to say, "I can read it all by myself." This stage of children's development is also a crucial one for teachers, because it is often at this time that a child's attitude towards reading begins to set. As early readers encounter a larger variety of words in the materials they use, their excitement about reading may be tempered with frustration. The picture clues, familiar sight words, and predictable text patterns that children once relied on are often replaced with more sophisticated text, making reading a greater challenge for them. So, will children come to view reading as a daunting chore or an exhilarating adventure?

Research has shown that direct phonics instruction is an essential component in teaching literacy. As children encounter increasingly more difficult text, they must go beyond using context clues to figure out unfamiliar words and rely more on their ability to decode, or "sound out," the words. Building decoding skills requires readers to know common sound-spelling relationships—in other words, phonics. Given solid phonics instruction, children can develop the skills needed to sound out a large percentage of the words they encounter in their reading. With practice, their ability to recognize those words becomes better—and faster. The outcome? Increased comprehension. The less time children need to focus on decoding words, the more mental energy they can apply to the meaning of the text. Repeated practice with common sound-spelling relationships helps children develop automaticity in word recognition so that they become more fluent readers, which in turn contributes to minimizing their frustration and maximizing their enjoyment of reading.

So, we know that giving children direct phonics instruction is essential; but making it enjoyable is another ball game altogether! Rote practice in learning sound-spelling relationships is far from engaging, and studying lists of words is often unproductive. Without context, phonetic rules are unlikely to stick with children for long; and the context provided by leveled readers with controlled text is sometimes questionable. The language can seem stilted, and plot is often sacrificed in the service of word study. Another way to provide context is by taking advantage of "teachable moments" while children are engaged in non-instructional texts, pointing out specific sound-spelling patterns as they occur naturally. This is a helpful practice, but those teachable moments may not occur as frequently as needed to benefit young readers. One way to solve this problem? *25 Fun Phonics Plays for Beginning Readers*! Each engaging, plot- and character-driven drama in this book focuses on a particular sound, helping to immerse children in its sound-spelling relationships and giving them all the benefits of repeated exposure—without sacrificing the story!

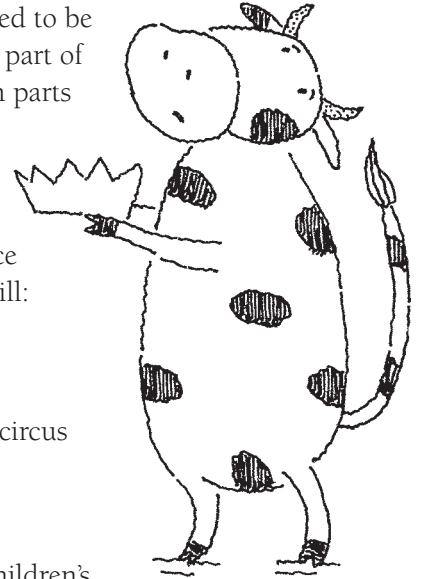


In addition, reading plays can boost children's fluency skills. Practice in reading aloud helps children build confidence, accuracy, and comprehension, while providing teachers with a welcome opportunity for spontaneous assessment. And read-aloud practice works better when there's a reason behind the activity. While round-robin read-alouds, in which each child reads a portion of a text, has some benefits, the genre may not be a natural fit and, often, children's assigned parts can seem random. In contrast, plays are designed to be read aloud, and each child is given a part that he or she can really own. Playing the part of a character gives reading a purpose that truly engages children. Plus, you can assign parts according to children's skill level, giving them just the challenge they need.

The plays in this book do not require backdrops, costumes, props, or any other elaborate setup. All you need is a copier, and you're ready to go! With these plays, children get the combined benefits of phonics instruction and fluency practice as they engage in rich, motivating read-aloud experiences. For example, children will:

- * learn the short-o sound while reading about a frog-hopping contest
- * practice long i as they discover how Mike learns to ride a bike
- * learn about the "bossy r" as they share Turtle and Squirrel's experiences at the circus
- * practice the consonant blend *sp* as they meet some very special spiders
- * and much more!

On the following pages, you'll find suggestions on how to make the most of children's play-reading experiences, in addition to hands-on phonics activities and games to reinforce the skills they're learning. So if you thought the words "fun" and "phonics" made an odd pair, think again: with *25 Fun Phonics Plays for Beginning Readers*, they go together like letters and sounds!



Connections to the Language Arts Standards

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL), a nationally recognized, nonprofit organization, has compiled and evaluated national and state standards, and proposed what teachers should provide for their students to grow proficient in language arts, among other curriculum areas. The activities in this book support these standards for grades K–2 in the following areas.

Uses the general skills and strategies of the reading process:

- Uses basic elements of phonetic analysis (such as common letter/sound relationships, beginning and ending consonants, vowel sounds, blends, and word patterns) to decode unknown words
- Uses basic elements of structural analysis (such as syllables and spelling patterns) to decode unknown words

- Understands level-appropriate sight words and vocabulary
- Reads aloud familiar stories and passages with fluency and expression

Uses reading skills and strategies to understand and interpret a variety of literary texts:

- Uses reading skills and strategies to understand a variety of familiar literary passages and texts
- Knows the basic characteristics of familiar genres
- Knows setting, main characters, main events, sequence, and problems in stories

Uses listening and speaking strategies for different purposes:

- Uses different voice level, phrasing, and intonation for different situations
- Recites and responds to familiar stories

Source: Kendall, J. S. and Marzano, R. J. (2004). *Content knowledge: A compendium of standards and benchmarks for K-12 education*. Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning. Online database: <http://www.mcrel.org/standards-benchmarks/>



Using the Plays...



Use the following tips and ideas to get the most out of using the plays in your classroom.

Before Reading

- * Make copies of the play for each child who will be reading a part, whether the participants are reading in small groups or as a whole class. The plays range in number of parts from two to enough for the entire class.
- * You might copy the play onto a transparency for use on an overhead projector, or write the text on chart paper. This way, you can track the print when you first read the text with the group. (You can also use the text on the chart in a phonics mini-lesson with the class.)
- * Before reading the play, introduce the targeted phonics skill to children. Say the sound aloud and point out (or write) its spelling or spellings. Tell children the sound will appear many times as you read the play, so they should get ready for it!
- * Assign parts to children according to their skill level. You will find that some roles require a bit more reading than others. You will also find that many of the roles in the plays are flexible: you can have individuals read them, or you might assign a group of children to each role and have them read the part chorally. For instance, in *Blue Jay's Birthday Surprise* (page 22), individual children can read the roles of Snake, Ape, and Snail or small groups might read the parts for the animals.
- * Once children have their assigned roles, provide them with highlighter pens so they can mark their lines. This will make it easier for children to find their character's parts as the group reads the play.

During Reading

- * When introducing the play, you may want to read all of the text aloud to children, as you would any other story. This will familiarize children with the language, characters, and plot. First, read the play straight through for enjoyment. On the second reading, you can focus on the phonics element by inviting children to signal when they hear the target sound (for instance, by raising their hand). You can also pause to point out different spellings of the phonetic element, if appropriate.
- * You can follow any format you'd like to have children read the plays. You might conduct an informal reading, in which every child has a script and reads his or her part in turn. Or, a small group might sit in a corner of the room to read the play in a literature circle. A cast of characters could stand up before the class and read the





play aloud in a reader's theater performance. The class audience might simply watch the performance, or they might follow along using their own copies of the play.

- * Another option is to break the class up into small reading groups. Assign each group a play (or a phonetic element). Have the groups practice their plays simultaneously. Then, when everyone is ready, the class can put on a "recital," with one group reading after another. For a fun extra challenge, members of the class audience can try to count how many times the target sound occurs in each group's performance!
- * There may be some members of your group who are self-conscious or feel uncomfortable when performing in front of others. Using simple stick puppets and a makeshift stage might help ease the performance anxieties of these children and add to the fun for everyone. Simply cover a table with a long tablecloth for children to kneel behind as they use their puppets to act out the roles of their characters. This will help children feel more secure—and less exposed—as they perform the play.



After Reading

- * You might consider recording children as they read the plays and then put the recording in the listening center, along with a copy of the play. Children will thrill to hearing their own voices as they follow along with the text!
- * Have children use highlighter pens to mark all the words with the target sound on their copies of the play. When finished, invite them to read the play again. During this reading, ask children to emphasize each highlighted word as they come to it. You might also highlight words with the target sound on a transparency of the play. Display the transparency on an overhead projector and use it to help children identify the spelling of the target sound in each highlighted word.
- * Make copies of the plays for children to take home and read with family members. You can even include a letter inviting families to do a quick related activity with their child. For instance, if you send home a copy of *The Thunderstorm* (page 45), you might invite them to write down the number of words starting with *th* that they hear on a half-hour television program.
- * Why not put on a production at school and invite family and friends? There's no need for Broadway-caliber sets and costumes; a few simple props will do. For example, a small blanket and throw pillow for snuggling, plus a pot and a spoon to stir up some pretend snow-pea soup, are all you need to perform *Snail Has the Sniffles* (page 56). And some play food and dishes are more than enough to put on a full-scale production of *Flea's Tea Party* (page 25). Children will have their own ideas as well, so let their creativity blossom. Then send out flyers and show families how much fun phonics can be!

Fun Phonics Activities

Use these fun, hands-on activities and games to get kids excited about phonics and make target sound-spellings stick!



Follow That Sound!

Scavenger hunts are great fun—in print or in the classroom.

- ✱ To reinforce the spellings of targeted sounds, set up a learning center with a stack of old magazines, scissors, glue, and sheets of large construction paper. Invite children to look through the magazines for words that begin with the spelling (or spellings) for a particular sound. Have them cut out the words and glue them to construction paper to make a colorful collage.
- ✱ For a more kinesthetic activity, children can search the classroom or school building to find objects that contain their assigned sound. For instance, if children are learning the *cl* blend, they might find a *clock*, *closet*, *clip*, *clothespin*, and, of course, *classmates*! Have children write the names of their findings on index cards and post them on a phonics word wall.

Silly Sentences

Studying initial sounds is perfect for tongue-twister fun!

- ✱ Encourage children to look and listen for examples of alliteration as they read the plays. Then take advantage of learning words with common sounds by challenging children to make up their own silly alliterative sentences—in other words, tongue twisters!
- ✱ Write words that begin with your target consonant, blend, or digraph (for example, *pr*) on separate index cards. Then place the index cards on a table and have children work together to arrange them into a sentence, adding words as needed for sense. For example: *Pretty princesses proudly practice prancing with pretzels on the prairie!*

Swat-a-Sound

This game, which lets you use your regular classroom word wall, requires fast reflexes plus sound-spelling recognition!

1. Divide the class into two teams and have the teams line up a short distance from your word wall.
2. Give the first child in each line a fly swatter and have that child step up to the wall. Then call out a sound to swat. That's it! The instruction can be as simple or as detailed as you like, depending on the target skills you're teaching. Here are some examples:



Swat a short a word; Swat a word that ends with the sound /ch/; Swat a word that has the sound /st/ in the middle.

3. The first child to swat a correct word (there may be more than one) earns a point for his or her team. You can play until each child has had a turn, or as time permits.

What's My Sound?



This mix 'n' mingle party game is sure to keep children guessing!

1. Write target sounds on sticky notes, one for each child. Use a different sound-spelling on each card, for instance, *dr*, *g*, *oo*, *th*, and so on. Then place a sticky note on each child's back, making sure children cannot see their own sounds.
2. Let children mill about the classroom, asking one another questions to try to figure out what sound-spelling is on their back! The one rule is that children may only ask yes or no questions. For example, a child might ask: *Does my sound help you say balloon?* or *Is it the first letter in gorilla?* But children may not ask questions such as: *What words can you say with my sound?*
3. Encourage children to keep playing even after they have guessed their own sound. They can remain in the game to provide other children with clues.

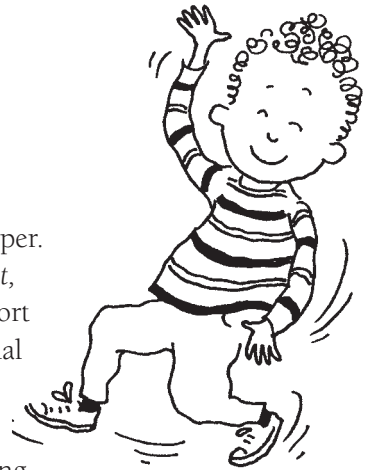


Make-a-Word



With this game, children practice initial consonants, digraphs, and blends, long and short vowels, and word-building skills!

1. Get two empty tissue boxes, cube-shaped, and cover them in plain construction paper. On one cube, write target initial consonants, digraphs, and blends, such as *s*, *p*, *b*, *st*, *ch*, *tr*. On the other cube, write common word endings, featuring both long and short vowels. Include endings that will form several words when combined with the initial sounds you chose, for example: *eat*, *ain*, *oke*, *it*, *un*, *ack*.
2. Gather children in a circle to play the game. Each player takes a turn tossing the cubes like dice. If the player can form a word with the initial sound and word ending that the two cubes land on, the player gets one point. If not, but another player can form a word, that player earns the point. (Players may also challenge the legitimacy of a word; children should have a dictionary nearby.)
3. Children continue until a specified number of points is reached, or as time permits.

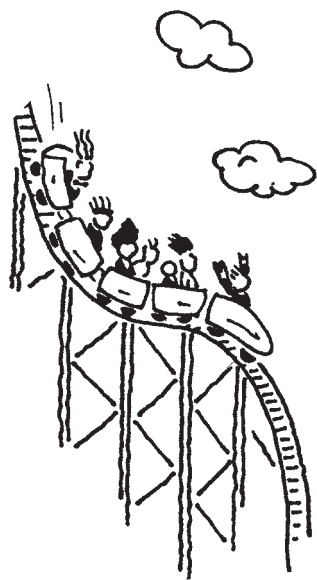


Dropcloth Phonics



Use an old sheet or a shower curtain for lots of phonics fun!

- * Use a permanent marker to draw rows of large circles on your cloth. Inside each circle, write the spelling for a target sound. Repeat some of the same sounds that are spelled different ways. For instance, you might use *ai*, *ay*, and *a_e* for the long *a* sound; *ee*, *e_e*, and *ea* for long *e*; and *y*, *igh*, and *i_e* for long *i*. You can



also include consonants, blends, and digraphs. Place the cloth on the floor in an open area, and you have a giant game board to play two different phonics games!

- * For the first game, children will need a beanbag. Tape a line on the floor a short distance away from the game board (use masking tape). Then have children stand behind the line and take turns tossing the beanbag onto the cloth. When their beanbag lands on a spelling, ask children to say the sound. Depending on their skill level, you can then have children name a word that contains that sound and uses that spelling for an extra point. Play as long as time permits.
- * For the second game, be prepared for lots of laughter! Use the multiple vowel spellings for a phonics version of Twister™! Call out instructions such as *Right hand on long a!* *Left foot on long i!* *Right foot on long e!* Children must place the appropriate body part on any spelling that makes the named sound. Doubtless, some children will collapse in giggles. The last child on the mat who has both hands and feet on spellings of called-out sounds should be very proud—both physically and phonetically!

We Go Together



Play this game when you need children to form groups—or anytime!

1. On separate index cards, write words that have common target sounds. Choose words that spell the sound differently or have the sound in a different position. For instance, if your target sound is long *a*, you might create a group of five cards with the words *cake*, *hay*, *tape*, *pain*, and *they*. If your target sound is /*ch*/, you might create cards with the words *chip*, *beach*, *munch*, *chunk*, and *chew*. Create enough cards for each child to have one, making sure each child will be part of a group. To create a checking system, color-code each set of words by placing sticker dots on the back of the cards.
2. Punch two holes in the top of each card and string with yarn to make a necklace. Then give each child a necklace to wear, words facing out.
3. Let children walk around looking at one another's words, searching for others with whom they have a sound in common. Remind children that in order to form a group, all members must have words that contain the same target sound.
4. Once children have gathered into their groups, have them turn their cards over to see if their stickers match!