

# help your child to read

By Mary Ashby-Green\*



We all want to make it fun for our children to learn with us at home, and one of the best ways is to turn your teaching into games.

Games are also important because when your child can hold, touch, move and manipulate physical materials, they are using the kinesthetic learning style to learn the concepts you want to teach them. Using this physical learning style helps your child be completely involved in the learning process. It makes it easier for them to concentrate and maintain their attentiveness.

The most effective games are when you are clear about their purpose and when you know exactly what it is you want your child to

learn. In the last issue, we looked at using games to learn short vowels. This time, we are going to focus on developing listening abilities, and give you ways to incorporate this into teaching consonant blends.

Home is the ideal place to play listening games. You have the satisfaction of knowing that you are developing their auditory learning skills, and your child will love the individual attention that interactive games provide.

## Game 1

### Close your eyes and listen

Take time out to ask your child to close their eyes and listen for one minute. At the end, ask them what they heard. You may be surprised to find how many children will say they heard nothing! Do this one minute listening exercise with your child and tune them into listening and differentiating all the sounds around them.

### Two common errors

Children often don't hear the second sound in the blend, so they don't write it. (e.g. stop can be written as sop.) Faced with reading a consonant blend, children can mispronounce it. (e.g. *bl* is pronounced *bil*, *gr* is pronounced *ger*)

*The trick is to 'snap' it together to read it and 'unlock' it to write it.*

## Game 2

### Blend the sounds cards

If your child needs help to blend the sounds together, then start with this. Use magnetic letters or make individual letter cards with large letters (divide an A4 page into quarters).

#### Make lots of letter combinations for your child to practice

- a) snapping the sounds together
- b) unlocking them and identifying the individual sounds

## WORD BOX

### Consonant blends

The 21 letters that are not vowels (a, e, i, o, u) are called consonants. We use them on their own in words and we also blend two or three of them together. Consonant blends can be at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of words. Each letter in the consonant blend makes its usual sound, and your child needs to listen carefully to hear all the sounds.

There are four instances where the two consonants together make a new sound – ch, sh, th, wh - where you can no longer hear the individual sounds. These are called consonant digraphs and it's best to teach these separately to avoid confusion.

### Initial blends

Add extra words to make lists of other words beginning with these sounds.

**sc/sk/sl/sm/sn/sp/st/sw**  
**tr/tw, cl/cr, fl/fr, bl/br**  
**gl/gr, pl/pr, dr/dw**

score	skip	slug	smell
snap	spoon	step	swim
trot	twig	clap	cream
fly	from	blind	bring
glad	grapes	please	prince
dry	dwelt		

**Lists of words to use:** notice how many of them have **l** or **r** as the second sound. It's not always easy to hear the second sound being pronounced.

### Final blends

**-st -nd -ng -nk -lk**  
**-mp -pt -lf -nt -lt**

lost pond left help fact  
 ring sink milk jump kept  
 self went melt

### 3 Letter Consonant Blends

**scr, spl, str, spr, squ**

scream splash straight  
 spring squeak

## ages and stages

### Under-5s

Play games where you and your child just listen to the sounds around you for a moment, then say what you can hear. Gradually extend the length of time you can sit and listen. Learn the alphabet SOUNDS, rather than the letter names.

### 5- to 8-years

Play 'Blending the sounds' and 'Speaking and spelling the blends' until your child can read and write these automatically.

### 9- to 12-years

Check that your child can identify these sounds in the middle as well as the beginning and end of words, and also in two and three syllable words.

\* Mary Ashby-Green specialises in teaching children with reading difficulties and is passionate about sharing effective teaching strategies. She's trained over 2500 teachers in New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Dubai and Namibia on how to improve literacy levels in the classroom.

Do you want to learn more about how you can help your child at home? Mary runs Breakthroughs for the Struggling Readers' seminars for parents in Auckland. It's a practical course designed to give you a system and strategies, plus you receive a free CD full of activities for you to print out and use immediately.

Go to [www.seminarsolutions.co.nz](http://www.seminarsolutions.co.nz) to find out more.