

Drill Bits

Drill Bits Phonics-oriented word lists for teachers

If you're helping someone learn to read, you're helping them unlock the connection between the printed word and the words we speak — the “sound/symbol” connection. This book is a compilation of lists of words which follow the predictable associations of letters, syllables and words to the sounds we use in speaking to each other.

This book does not attempt to be a reading program. Recognizing words and patterns in sound/symbol associations is just one part of reading, though a critical one. This book is designed to be used as a reference so that you can:

- Meet individual needs of students from a wide range of ages and backgrounds; VAT and TAX may be more appropriate examples of the short a sound for some students than CAT and FAN, which they may have memorized without learning the sounds associated with the letters.
- Teach students that exceptions are also predictable, and there are usually many examples of each kind of exception. These are called special categories or special patterns.

HOW THE LISTS ARE ORGANIZED

Word lists are presented in the order they are taught in many structured, multisensory language programs:

Syllable type 1: Closed syllables — short vowel sounds (TIN, EX, SPLAT)

Syllable type 2: Vowel consonant-e — long vowel sounds (BAKE, DRIVE, SCRAPE)

Syllable Type 3: Open syllables — long vowel sound (GO, TRI, CU)

Syllable Type 4: r-controlled syllables (HARD, PORCH, PERT)

Syllable Type 5: consonant-l-e words (CANDLE, TABLE, MUZZLE)

Syllable Type 6: Vowel pairs — unique sounds (OUT, PAW), long vowel sounds (MAIN, COACH)

Where syllables are broken down into different vowel sounds, easily confused vowels such as e and i are separated, so that the order of presentation is A-I-O-U-E-Y instead of the alphabetical A-E-I-O-U-Y.

For the first syllable types, there are lists which focus on specific problems students may have, such as syllables with blends or without beginning consonants. (Not every student needs the skills broken down into small steps.) As the sound patterns advance, the first lists are still those which do not require the student to have picked up common patterns which have not been taught.

More comprehensive lists follow, which include other syllable patterns and exceptional patterns such as -TION and -TURE. In this way, teachers can choose appropriate words to include in an individual student's program.

Separate lists address some of the common special categories. Instead of telling students that NATION is one of so many words which are exceptions because the t in NATION does not make the sound it makes

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in TIN, the student can learn there are thousands of words he or she can master by knowing that -TION often is pronounced SHUN. By learning that TI says SH in many other cases (-TIAL,- TIOUS), even more words can be unlocked.

This section has word lists for closed syllables. It's an edited, updated version of the PDF I already shared.

"short a"	3
"short l"	8
"short o"	10
"short u"	12
E	14
Y	16



Syllable type 1: Closed syllables

SHORT A — EASY WORDS Have the student read each word in the word progressions and discover the connection between changing a consonant and changing the sounds in the word.

An important and often overlooked part of this process is having the student figure out and explain in his or her own words what is happening when consonants change. The thought processes that he or she goes through to get beyond intuitively recognizing the effect of the change, to the point of being able to explain it, help lay the foundations for being able to transfer that knowledge successfully.

At first this may be laborious and its worth questionable, especially if the student is accurately reading. And, since at this stage of teaching you're trying to establish trust and successful habits, use your judgment if the talking-out task is frustrating. However, it's precisely the connections between action and language that unlock the reading code for many struggling readers. It's especially those bright kids with specific language problems (and especially the impulsively fast responders), who learn isolated skills easily but don't transfer that skill to reading in context, who most benefit from taking time to think and talk the process through. Use the second and third groups of words for the student to apply this knowledge and explain the changes to you. Encourage discovery and review of patterns (that SH makes one sound with two letters, for example), and discussions of meanings of words. Listen for troublesome consonants. Are blends much harder than single consonants? Are there some consonants — q, x or y especially — which are less securely known? If so, practice them! Never assume that a student is picking up on things — ask. Ask what's changing from word to word. Asking is better than telling, too — just try to ask the right question so your student tells you the right answer. If you tell the student an answer, be sure to ask that question again. SHORT I INCT is not as hard as it looks; ask the student what INC would sound like (and if there is still hesitation, show INK and then change the k to c), and then add the t at the end. It also rhymes with WINKED. The hard nonsense syllables may be too frustrating to introduce at first. There may be students who need a lot of practice with the two sounds of c and g, so a special list is included. Too often a student has mastered vowel pairs — but still pronounces CENT as KENT.

ABOUT THOSE EXCEPTIONS

- Consider CHR as in CHRIS as a category to be taught as its own mini-lesson and incorporated into drill and review with the other letter/sound associations. CH is /k/ in many words of Greek derivation. The longer and more scientific the word, the more likely CH will represent the /k/ sound. CHR is always pronounced /kr/, as in CHRIS, CHRISTINE, CHRISTMAS, CHRYSANTHEMUM and PULCHRITUDE.
- Especially with younger students, it can help to give letters “personalities.” “Bossy Ls that change the vowels” can be easier to remember than “the consonant which tends to change the vowel sound right before it.”
- SHORT O There are several groups of o syllables that end in consonants, but have a long vowel sound (-OST, -OLD). These would be considered special categories. For the reasons stated above, they shouldn't be introduced at the same time the student is learning closed syllables with short o sounds. O is also pronounced differently in different areas of the country. Students may confuse COM with CALM. If so, point out that CALM starts with the sounds of the word CALL,



then adds an m at the end. Stretch out the l part of CALM (CAL-L-L-L-LM DOWN) and have the student discover the different feeling of the word.

- A similar confusion may occur between COW and CAL, which can be addressed in the same way. If the student is a sports fan, he or she may appreciate that Cal Ripken should not be confused with Cow Ripken. SHORT U The -UL combination is very easily confused with the o sound. The “Bossy L” personification can help here.
- CALLUS is the word for the things that show up on your hands from doing hard work; CALLOUS is the adjective to describe people with “calluses on their heart.”
SHORT E Note that the /j/ sound in -JECT is always spelled with a j, while in the syllable -GEST it is always spelled with a g (not the word, but again, don’t teach that simultaneously to avoid confusion.)
Y AS A VOWEL Since words with y as a vowel have the same sound as short i, and are also easily confused with short e, it’s tempting to give these short shrift. Don’t! You may want to choose useful words and learn the closed syllables with y in the context of those words. If your students play hangman, the words where y is a vowel may prove very popular for the word givers.



Word progressions

at	at	ash
cat	sat	hash
sat	spat	mash
sad	splat	trash
had	splash	track
lad	flash	tract
glad	flask	act
lad	ask	fact
lack	mask	fast
quack	mast	fat
sack	last	flat
slack	past	that
stack	pat	splat
smack	at	splash
smash	ax	trash
mash	tax	thrash
ash		
at		



Basic short a syllables

Ab

fash	glam	alt*	atch
quap	shrap	mag	ack
nax	jab	gand	lask
grat	scrab	ag	flam
fract	val	prac	quag
grav	asm	wax	plat
			yak

Syllables with blends

flam	clam	swag	blab
grat	fraz	graph	brack
sprat	plast	cras	spratch
scram	shrag	smank	glant
thrax	splam	prax	
strag	drast	wrath	
blan	bran	glash	

Without beginning consonant

ag	ant	az	ax
apt	ac	al*	atch
ank	ad	ab	alt*
ash	am	asm	aph
ap	amp	af	act
			alp*

- *As in 'altitude', not alternative



Especially Challenging Syllables

phland	quank	thrant	shrap	slank	stratch
pram	blap	swaft	cath	whamp	stract
clasm	rapt				

Vocabulary Enrichment

brash	rant	spasm	grasp	shank	drab
chap	sham	shag	clash	bland	cram
prank	malt	clad	daft	flank	graft
chasm	thrash	slab	cran	dram	asp
hasp	yak	flax	span	clan	ban
dank	swank	yak	shad		

Words with different 'a' sound – pay attention to the patterns ☺

call	balt	thank	swap
stall	phalt	rang	stalk
squall	twad	sang	scald
fall	halt	sprang	chalk
mall	thank	bang	walk
stall	flank	clang	bald
small	stank	squat	quaff
swall	swank	swat	calm
salt	crank	swab	balm
malt			



CLOSED SYLLABLES: SHORT I

Short I word progression

it	quit	lip	quip	quit
fit	sit	slip	quiz	risk
hit	sip	yip	quick	frisk

Basic syllables

lix	kip	vid	sprit
inct	dif	gid	kish
lib	ipt	yit	itch
twis	shrim	gist	shriv
pict	ism	zil	fric
im	chig	tric	plish
inch	quib	splin	twid
jim			

Syllables with Blends

brit	writ	ilt	thrill	scrib
stim	smin	tinct	chrit	ing
fris	swiv	ipt	blimp	rift
squin	lisk	crin	ink	slim
strict	ism	prish	sprin	dwin

Syllables without a beginning consonant

ism	ilt	in	inch	ic
im	ipt	inct	itch	
inc	ink		inge	
it	ing		ill	



isp	ist
id	ilk
ig	il
ish	ind
idge	

Vocabulary Enrichment

sprint	grim	script	glib	grid
shrill	strict	brink	shrift	grist
jig	kilt	vim	rift	brisk
skill	writ	glitch	squid	twinge
skimp	spilt	strict	miff	shtick
shrimp	chrism	nix	brig	
thrift	flit			

a, i multisyllable nonsense review --Includes special category syllables

salpig	blapstag	shigman	stanting	trimplast
laprag	mistflad	thrapism	biftril	radvil
imcash	twiljam	implist	dalnaft	stalgram
rifsam	danquim	valdip	safdis	haspic
frintap				

a, l basic syllables review

chisp	ist	hap	grat	chris*
frag	strad	link	imp	ast
ad	sist		twim	quib
in	inct		sprat	squill



anch

ish

gic

shat

asm

cig

ang

mand

glam

brash

isk

rift

ab

squip

fash

rav

im

glatch

dras

phic

ic

shrap

apt

ipt

amp

ict

act id

ad

ish



Closed Syllables: Short O

Word Progressions

PROGRESSION 1

top	log	pot	rod	stock
stop	lob	plot	cod	sock
slop	slob	plod	shod	mock
flop	slot	prod	shop	mom
flog	lot	pod	shock	mob

PROGRESSION 2

mob	throb	shod	fob	mob
glob	shop	log	gob	sob
slop	clop	bob	hob	sock
slob	clod	blob	job	frock
rob	trod	cob	lob	shock

PROGRESSION 3

shock	lock	dog	botch	scoff
smock	flock	frog	notch	doff
stock	flog	bog	scotch	toff



Basic Syllables – omit “chron” if student hasn’t learned the ‘chr’ special category.

ob	ston	ox	bod	gond
vom	com	bot	rost	tox
yonk	coc	chron*	holl	osk
quon	cos	hom	lob	strom
bol	fol	trop	pont	

Vocabulary Enrichment

frond	bloc	doff	splotch	chock
throb	blob	fob	cog	broth
opt	clod	bond	posh	smock
clot	grog	Bronx	romp	phlox
blot	prod	throng	lob	

a, l, o basic syllables review

*skip chron and chris if student hasn’t learned the “chr” pattern yet.

clom	im	bom	sprill	cim
writ	ad	drif	dwin	cint
snag	shriv	wint	vom	kom
oct	scot	inc	quip	mast
om	chris*	apt	quon	drab
ism	chron*	drom	squin	hom
asm	wrath	twip	ash	stinct
osm	strad	thrax		



Two and three syllable words with a, i, and o

consist	tonsil	zigzag	tinsmith
contact	jonquil	Finland	tactic
astonish	agnostic	candid	impact
admonish	contrast	kidnap	intact
district	abscond	frantic	aspic
cosmic	insist	tranquil	
combat	inflict	bandit	WORDS
napkin	instinct	transfix	WITH
ostrich	distinct	disband	DOUBLE
contract	indistinct	miscast	LETTERS
caltrop	district	pilgrim	gossip
transpond	kingpin	brandish	shopping
constrict	victim	windbag	commit
optic	misprint	mantis	bobbin
quondam	pigskin	baptism	soffit
oblong	anthrax	drastic	rabbit
codfish	lambast	fantastic	tannic
bombastic	flatfish	plastic	
discomfit	napkin	sandwich	
tomtom	dishpan	mishap	
mascot	dishrag	baptist	



SHORT U

Word Progressions

up	shrub	clump	rust	shrug
cup	scrub	rump	rut	drug
cut	stub	trump	hut	drum
cub	stump	truck	hug	plum
rub	slump	trust	rug	plump

Basic Syllables

mus	sub	yup	scut	sus
tux	lug	punct	mum	suc
tub	hud	rud	sput	sum
rupt	junct	jum	nun	mund
sug	sud	hum	pum	flus

Basic Blends

blust	guv	shrug	spud	crump
rupt	struct	funct	splud	bund
trum	fluct	truc	runk	lunt
clut	ump	drun	flut	stut
frug	flust	glud	grub	scrub

Without Beginning Consonant

un	ust	umb	ux
up	ump	und	ub
ug	ud	us	uct
unc	unct	uck	upt
ush	ut	unk	



UL words and syllables

full	bull	hulk	bulb	dul
dull	cul	bulk	culc	ulk
mull	cult	sulk	ult	ul
cull	dult	mult	vul	
gull	sult			

Multi-syllable words with a, l, o, u

(*pronounce adult as “ad - ult” with short a, not ‘uh-dult’)

fungus	disrupt	induct	campus	pulpit
tiptop	unzip	unsnap	abduct	fulcrum
disgust	adjunct	obstruct	sunlamp	insult
mistrust	pundit	cuspit	album	consult
construct	uncommon	updraft	brushland	sultan
instruct	influx	submit	WITH UL	bashful
conduct	drumlin	subsist	adult *	handful
adjust	callus	mustang	Istanbul	cupful
			culprit	wilful



SHORT E

WORD PROGRESSIOSN

ed	bet	fret	west	step
red	jet	set	quest	strep
fred	pet	sent	quench	stretch
bred	wet	bent	bench	fetch
bed	whet	went	stench	fed

Basic Syllables

fess	rel	trem	cept	reft
zed	wren	rel	phren	ef
dren	vent	cred	ex	met
vex	lect	cem	em	esc
ject	vest	cess	empt	
elt	gest	gel		

Syllables with blends

fret	clem	feld	squelch	gresh
ench	brell	temp	plent	sprent
rept	shelt	flex	splen	blen
trem	dren	stress	tress	venge
cred	elk	shred	fled	esh
est				

c/g practice

cent	cell	ence	gest	gen
cest	cept	edge	gent	gem
cem	cess	enge	gel	gex



Syllables without a beginning consonant

ex	est	ed	en	esh
eb	elm	empt	ect	eld
ent	ef	em	el	elf
et	elk	esk	ev	end

Vocabulary enrichment – single syllable

left	heft	deft	crest	flex
press	end	wren	smelt	yen
fleck	flesh	mesh	quench	dwell
mess	shred	elk	cleft	vet
squelch	clench	drench		

Multisyllable words

convent	suggest	tendrill	entrap	consent
magnet	ingest	suspect	impel	connect
contest	congest	extend	insect	comment
pummel	absent	advent	shrapnel	happen
descant	enchantment	spectrum	convex	
selfish	dispel	subject	inspect	
contest	splendid	inject	impending	
conquest	compel	falcon	contend	



Y as a Vowel

Real Words:

Lynn	rhythm	lymph	lynx	hymn
gym	crypt	gyp	lynch	myth

Y following c or g

gypt	cyg	cyl
cym	gyn	cyst

Syllables

sys	bysm	lyt	cyl	phyll
cym	clysm	rysm	phyx	myst
cyg	tyl	syl	phys	gypt
dys	nym	lypt	sym	chrys
mys	cryl	cryph	sympt	nyx
hys	thyst	cyp	sync	synth
crys	lys	glyph	byt	
byss	lyst	typ	byz	



Multisyllable words with y as closed syllable vowel - includes all syllable types & some categories. It's a cool list 😊

synthetic	cynic	polygamy
mystical	encyclical	myth
cylinder	cyclical	hieroglyphic
syncopate	gypsum	syndrome
chrysanthemum	paralysis	chlorophyll
lymph	cryptic	acrylic
cygnet	acronym	cystic
physical	physicist	dysfunction
gym	physics	dyslexic
analytic	syllable	gypsy
apocalyptic	rhythm	paralytic
anonymity	idyll	anonymous
aneurysm	crystal	amethyst
anaphylactic	cyst	cynical
synthesis	typical	Egypt
mystery	misogynist	Phyllis
pygmy	gymnasium	Yvonne
synchronize	analysis	
crypt	onyx	
lymphatic	catalyst	

