

**BLOCK SEGMENTATION TECHNIQUES:
A SPELLING APPROACH TO BEGINNING READING**

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What does the program do for children?

The segmenting activities are designed to increase children's sensitivity to the sounds in spoken words. There is a great deal of recent research suggesting that children who are aware of speech segments are better able to "map" the sounds in spoken words onto letters when they begin to read and write.

Is it a complete readiness or reading program?

No! It is a supplement to existing literacy programs. It works well in classrooms which are rich in language oriented materials, and where children are encouraged to listen to books and to write every day using invented spellings. It is also effective in traditional classrooms, or in skills-based programs for children with reading problems.

What does segmenting have to do with invented spelling?

Both segmenting and invented spelling involve listening to the sounds in words. Much of what we know about the development of young children's phonological awareness comes from looking at their invented spellings.

How does segmenting work?

(Teacher and student each need a set of blocks.)

Teacher: Listen carefully to this word. "Map". Now you say it.

Student: Map.

Teacher: Watch me. /m/ - /a/ - /p/ (moving a block into place for each sound).
Now you do it. "Map."

Student: Map. /m/ - /a/ - /p/. (moving a block into place for each sound).

Teacher: Good. Now say the word again. "Map." (moving the blocks again).

Student: Map. (moving the blocks).

What if a student can't segment words into sounds?

Be sure the student can do all the readiness activities before you work on segmenting. If the student seems ready but is making errors, keep modeling the task.

Student: /m/ - /ap/

Teacher: I hear three sounds in map. Watch me. /m/ - /a/ - /p/.

How much time does the program take?

20-40 minutes a week (5-15 minutes at a time). Limit instruction to short, easy, frequent lessons.

What size group is best for instruction?

Work one-to-one, or with up to about 6 children at a time. Be sure to provide extra turns for those who are weak in segmenting.

Is there a sequence of activities for different ages?

Kindergarten

1. Teach the sounds of the consonants, starting with those mentioned above. By the end of kindergarten, teach the short /a/ sound if the children seem ready.
2. Introduce a letter or two a week. Introduce the shape of the letter for writing, and the sound of the letter for spelling and reading.
3. Kindergarten children will most likely use these letter sounds in their spellings, while continuing to read a few words using context cues rather than letter cues. Phonetic spelling often precedes reading. Don't push children to use phonics knowledge in reading before they seem ready.
4. Provide guided experiences with invented spelling. Help children to hear and represent those sounds which are developmentally appropriate and which have been taught. Encourage them to read what they have written.
5. Once children can segment the initial and ending consonants in words, begin working with the blocks. This could be late in the kindergarten year. Limit yourself to the phonetically regular consonant-vowel-consonant (cvc) words on the next page. The vowel in a cvc word will have one of the following sounds:
 - /a/ as in apple
 - /e/ as in elephant
 - /i/ as in igloo
 - /o/ as in octopus
 - /u/ as in umbrella
6. Don't add letters to the blocks until a child can segment the vowel away from both the initial and final consonants.
7. Play games and read poems which encourage children to listen to rhyme and alliteration (same initial sounds).
8. Don't expect all children to be able to generate words. If asking, "Can you think of a word which starts with /m/?" doesn't work, use the puppet format. "Doug, the dog likes doughnuts. Does he like spaghetti? (no) Does he like dessert? (yes)."

Early First Grade

1. Review letter sounds, beginning with those which "say" their names, and with short /a/.
2. Work with blocks (or tiles or disks) for a few minutes two or three times a week. Coordinate the words you segment with the letters you are introducing.
3. Once children can segment cvc words, use lettered blocks (or tiles or disks).
4. Spend a week or two on each of the following sets of cvc words as letter sounds are reviewed (or introduced). Each new sound is underlined.
 - at, am, sat, Sam, mat, mad, sad.
 - Dad, lad, pad, pat, cat, gap, tag.
 - it, at, big, bag, fit, fat, sit, bat.
 - him, ham, had, Tim, jam, dig, tip, map.
 - jog, hog, log, hot, hop, hag, not, dot.
 - Mom, Tom, top, Jim, mop, pal, pop.
 - get, jet, vet, met, mat, kid, rob, rub.
 - leg, lag, beg, big, van, ran, tin.
 - fan, ran, run, ran, sun, rid, dip, hot.
 - up, cup, zip, fix, fax, fox, box, wax.
 - Batman, sunset, camp, suntan, upset.
 - picnic, zigzag, napkin, basket, bobcat.
5. Play deletion games with blocks when blends are introduced. (Change "clap" to

"lap." crust/rust, snap/nap, camp/cap, strap/trap/tap)

clap, clam, sled, flag, snap, plum
grab, frog, snug, slip, Fred, stop
milk, silk, list, help, desk, disk
dust, last, fist, lamp, camp, jump
crust, print, stamp, plant, crisp, spend
slept, crept, blast, spend, spent, grand, grant
strap, strip, scrap, split, script

6. Expect children to spell cvc words correctly when they write. Guide them to listen carefully to the sounds which you have taught directly.

Late First Grade/Second Grade

1. Use lettered tiles or disks.
2. Continue segmenting cvc and ccvc and cvcc words.
3. Introduce the idea that sometimes one sound (one disk or block) can be spelled with two letters. Use two letters on each block for the consonant digraphs in the following words.
with, math, path, bath, thin, thud
fish, wish, rash, mash, shop, ship, shut
chop, chin, much, rich, quit, quiz, when, whip
4. Listen for the difference between digraphs and blends.
chop/crop, chum/crum, ship/slip
5. Introduce long vowels. Here we hear three sounds but need four letters for spelling. You can put a slash mark through the "silent" or "magic" /e/ at the end of a long vowel word.
hop/hope, rip/ripe, hat/hate, Tim/time, cub/cube, bit/bite, rob/robe
blaze, broke, flame, globe, grape, prize, quake, snake, slide, smoke
6. Introduce vowel digraphs. "When two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking." Again, put two letters on one block. At this point words need to be memorized for vowel spellings.
eat, meat, seat, neat, east, speak, dream
oat, goat, boat, toast, roast