

Stephen Parker

Teaching a Preschooler to Read

Phonics for Parents and Other
Care-Givers

Teaching
a Preschooler
to Read

(2nd edition)

R-K

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Boston

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and Other Care-Givers

(Second Edition)

Stephen Parker

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Foreword

“Why Teach a Pre-schooler to Read?”

This question will no doubt provoke mixed reactions from parents and teachers alike. Some may argue that the direct teaching of reading, especially those skills associated with ‘phonics,’ is too early by far. Further, even if it were thought to be desirable, they may challenge the assumption that parents are capable of taking on such a demanding task - one which may risk setting young children up for failure. In other words, this crucial undertaking is best left to the professionals in the schools.

However, others may say that many if not most parents nowadays are tuned into the debate about early reading and already purposefully engage their pre-schoolers in decoding, sounding out and building words from the simple to the more complex. Moreover, up to and throughout the pre-school stage, we would do well to remember that establishing good attitudes and thus fostering the enjoyment of reading is also key to securing success.

All of which suggests that reliable guidance for parents is warranted. Stephen Parker argues the case for the engagement of parents convincingly and robustly: this book provides them with highly valuable guidance on the ‘what and how’ of the undertaking.

Jim Rose
January, 2020

Sir Jim Rose chaired the influential report <i>Independent Review of the Teaching of Early Reading</i> (also known as <i>The Rose Report</i>) in 2006. The report has, since that time, changed the teaching of reading in primary schools throughout England.

Introduction

I would not have written this book but for the plight of my first child, Kate. As she approached her second birthday, she chattered constantly; the trouble was, my wife and I couldn't understand most of what she said. When we realized that trying to learn *her* language was not helping the situation, and perhaps making it worse, we decided to get her some professional help. But after five months of weekly meetings with a local speech therapist, Kate showed little progress.

Frustrated that nothing seemed to be helping, I sat down with her and our collection of colorful plastic letters. She could already identify most of the letters, so I started to teach her something new: letters symbolize specific sounds. I kept it simple: S says "sss," N says "nnn," U says "uh." Once she mastered a half-dozen or so letter/sound relationships, I showed her how she could take a simple three-letter word like SUN, *blend* the sounds of the 3 letters together, and thus pronounce and recognize the word. Words she learned to read in this manner – words built from the ground up – she spoke flawlessly.

Much encouraged, the two of us kept at it. Each time she learned a new letter/sound relationship, I would show her that letter in some simple words and then help, as needed, with the blending of the word's sounds. I started to write individual words she could read (MOM, MESS, KISS, MAN, CAT) on index cards so we could daily review them. Within 6 months, her speech problems vanished and our collection of index cards grew into a stack a foot tall. By her third birthday, she could read any one-syllable word which had only short vowels. By the time we completed our letter/sound studies, she was in her mid-threes and she could read any age-appropriate book independently. She went on to read all of Mary Pope Osborne's *Magic Tree House* books, and most of Carolyn Keene's *Nancy Drew Mysteries*, before kindergarten.

Kate's younger twin brothers, Dan and Tom, didn't have any speech problems. Still, seeing what had been possible with Kate, I decided to teach them to read as well. Starting around the time of their 2nd birthday, I went through the process again, this time with two enthusiastic students – neither one shy about correcting his sibling's pronunciations. Both boys were reading children's books independently by their early threes.

That was more than a decade ago. Now, all three of them are in college. It seems to me that for a parent to take on a project as significant as teaching their own preschooler to read, the parent must come to 4 conclusions:

- My preschooler is capable of learning to read.
- It will benefit my child to do so.
- I have (or can make) the time to teach my preschooler.
- I have the necessary skills to perform this task.

I may have already convinced you (if you needed it) that preschoolers are capable of reading. See Chapter 1 for why early literacy is an enormous advantage for them. I assure you: as long as you're a reasonably competent reader yourself, you *do* have the necessary skill. All you need is a guide – precisely what this book provides.

If you don't make time for this project, your only alternative is to allow a local school, public or private, to do it for you. But there's a problem with that plan. Go to the web site www.nationsreportcard.gov and start looking through the data on the reading ability of United States 4th and 8th graders. You'll discover that for the past quarter-century of nationwide testing, only 1 in 3 students was classified as a "proficient" or "advanced" reader. All the rest of the students (2 out of 3!) were classified "basic" or "below basic." In other words, 1 in 3 students is being prepared for college and for the highly competitive job market; 2 out of 3 students are barely getting by, or they're illiterate.

By taking on this project and using this book as your guide, you'll be teaching your preschooler to read *phonetically*. The specific method you'll be using is called *Synthetic Phonics*. Synthetic Phonics is fully compatible with the "systematic phonics" that was endorsed by the US National Reading Panel, in its year 2000 Final Report. Congress convened this group of 14 scholars in 1997 "to assess the effectiveness of different approaches used to teach children to read." The Panel concluded: "Systematic Phonics makes a bigger contribution to children's growth in reading than alternative programs providing unsystematic or no phonics instruction."¹

Six years later, another national panel, this one across the pond in England and chaired by Sir Jim Rose, concluded that phonics, even if "systematic," was still not optimal for teaching reading. The specific type of systematic phonics endorsed by England's *Rose Report* was Synthetic Phonics.²

One reason schools are doing a poor job teaching children how to read is that most of them use a method other than Synthetic Phonics. One such method, popular in the

80s and 90s, was called *Whole Language*; another, popular now, is called *Balanced Literacy*. It's puzzling to me that educational leaders are so resistant to Synthetic Phonics. They avoid it despite the findings of the *National Reading Panel* and the *Rose Report*, despite the poor results of their own methods, and despite the fact that written English is based on an *alphabet* in which *every letter* symbolizes sound.

That alphabet is one of humankind's greatest achievements. Our version of it, the modern English alphabet, consists of 26 letters, each symbolizing one or more of the 44 elemental sounds of the English language. (See Table 1.) But any alphabet, from the Greek or Latin version up to our own, enables its users to perform two tasks which, upon reflection, are astonishing: drawing speech sounds on paper (writing) and absorbing language through the eyes (reading).

By simply rearranging the 26 letters of our alphabet in various ways, we can depict the million spoken words of English, easily and elegantly, as print. The alphabetic code (see Chapter 2) encompasses about 100 letter/sound relationships. While complex, this code is logical, and therefore teachable. To master it is to master two essential skills at once: encoding speech into text and decoding text back into speech. The Synthetic Phonics program in this book will guide you as you teach your child all the intricacies of this code, in an explicit and carefully sequenced manner.

You may be wondering about the time necessary to complete this ambitious and exciting project. Can your child already identify the 52 upper and lowercase letters of the alphabet? If "no," you'll need to start with Stage 0, and this program will take 18-24 months. If "yes," you can start with Stage 1 and it will take 12-18 months. In estimating these times, I assume you'll devote about an hour per day to the task: 30-45 minutes for explicit teaching, and another 20-30 minutes for reading children's literature to your child. I know this is a considerable time commitment, but by the end of this program, your child will be on par with the best readers in any third grade across the country. Reading is a complex skill, and like any other complex skill, mastering it takes time and effort.

You may also be wondering how early this reading program can begin. Here are *minimum* age guidelines: for Stage 0, focusing only on letter recognition, a child can be as young as two; for Stage 1, when reading begins, the child should be in her mid-twos. Any age older, of course, is fine.

You'll find no gimmicks in this program. There are no other workbooks to buy, no costly software, and no web sites where, for a monthly fee, you can log on. You'll need only this book, pencil and paper, blank index cards, and some magic markers. While I

wrote this book primarily for parents who wish to teach their preschool child to read, it can easily be adapted to teach older children, home-schooled children, or even adults. The method I use here, Synthetic Phonics, is the most effective way to teach *anyone* to read.

A word about pronouns and inclusive language. Every time I see “his or her,” “he or she,” or “s/he” when I am reading, it distracts me. In this book, I freely switch back and forth between masculine and feminine pronouns. I don’t know which pronoun I used more often, however I tried not to switch in the middle of a paragraph. By alternating pronouns, I hope to include everyone.

There are 3 preliminary chapters to read if you intend to use this phonics program with your child. In Chapter 1, I discuss multiple reasons for teaching your preschooler to read. In Chapter 2, I discuss the coded nature of both reading and spelling, along with the two skills you’ll need to acquire *before* beginning the program. In Chapter 3, I discuss, in some detail, the Synthetic Phonics program you’ll be using, and I contrast it with how reading is taught in many of our local schools.

To teach reading to a preschooler you need time, patience, humor, and a sound strategy. This book provides the strategy; the other items are up to you. After food, shelter, and love, I believe the gift of literacy is the most important gift you can give a child. Best wishes as you begin this rewarding project – you’ll never regret doing it!

Stephen Parker
January, 2020

Parent Note: If you are using the complimentary pdf edition of this book and you decide you would like a printed copy as well, they are available at Amazon.com.

I would appreciate any suggestions or feedback – positive or negative. You can contact me at stephenparker81451@gmail.com or on Twitter @ParkerPhonics.

A Note to Homeschoolers: This book can easily be used to teach children older than five. You'll simply need to adapt the book a bit, depending on what your older child already knows. You can skip Chapter 1 (not Stage 1) because that chapter is not relevant for you and your child.

Read Chapters 2 and 3 and then do as much of Stage 0 as is necessary. Then jump right into the program at Stage 1.

A Note to Volunteers: This book, with some common-sense adaptations, could easily be used to teach reading to an illiterate adult as well.

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1. <https://www.nichd.nih.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pubs/nrp/Documents/report.pdf>
 2. <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/5551/2/report.pdf>

Table 1
The 44 Sounds (Phonemes) of American English

20 Vowel Sounds

Name of the Sound	Notation for the Sound	Words Using the Sound
short A	/a/	ax, apple, cat
long A	/A/	acorn, labor, date
short E	/e/	end, bed, pet
long E	/E/	evil, begin, she
short I	/i/	in, kiss, with
long I	/I/	idea, hiker, mild
short O	/o/	ox, not, bother
long O	/O/	ocean, omit, go
short U	/u/	up, gum, mud
	/oo/	good, book, wool
	/ew/	new, stew, true
	/oy/	boy, toy, coin
	/ow/	cow, allow, south
	/aw/	law, hawk, fraud
r-controlled A	/ar/	arm, cart, shark
r-controlled E	/er/	perch, birch, church
r-controlled O	/or/	for, corn, sport
	/ear/	near, beer
	/air/	hair, care
	/oor/	poor, lure, sure

Depending on where you're from, there are 42-44 basic sounds in English.

24 Consonant Sounds

Name of the Sound	Notation for the Sound	Words Using the Sound
	/b/	bat, bird
	/d/	dad, deck
	/f/	fun, fast
	/g/	gift, girl
	/h/	hat, hope
	/j/	jet, jam
	/k/	kiss, keep
	/l/	lip, last
	/m/	mom, most
	/n/	nut, note
	/p/	pet, past
	/r/	rug, reach
	/s/	sun, surf
	/t/	top, time
	/v/	van, vine
	/w/	win, went
	/y/	yard, yellow
	/z/	zip, zest
	/ch/	chip, chase
unvoiced SH	/sh/	ship, sheep
voiced SH	/SH/	Asia, vision
	/ng/	king, song, bang
unvoiced TH	/th/	thin, thrift, path
voiced TH	/TH/	this, then, those

For a discussion of these sounds, see Chapters 2 and 3.

For a summary of the entire English code, see Appendices P and Q.

Chapter 1

Why Teach a Preschooler to Read?

I suspect many of us underestimate the intellectual capabilities of preschoolers. We're amazed at how quickly toddlers master their primary speaking language, and if offered, a second language as well. Yet most of us do not teach our children to read. Instead, we rely on our local schools to perform this vital task for us, starting in kindergarten or first grade. For many reasons, I believe this is a mistake.

First, *early reading instruction enhances the child's brain development*. By "early reading instruction," I mean teaching letter recognition during the child's twos, and starting actual reading instruction by the late twos or early threes. Brain development in early childhood defies belief. A baby is born with all the brain neurons she'll ever have: around 100 billion. Each one of those 100 billion neurons is capable of forming thousands of links (synapses) with other neurons, giving the brain the potential of over 100 trillion synaptic connections.¹

The synapses already present at birth govern the use of the five senses and such automatic processes as heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, sleeping, and digestion.² Most brain *development*, however, takes place after birth, through the creation, activation, and use of new synapses brought about by the child's environment and early experiences.³ A loving and intellectually stimulating environment leads to greater brain development; an abusive or neglectful environment results in less brain development. Biology need not be destiny. The child's early environmental experiences are literally "brain-shaping." Intelligence is not wholly fixed at birth by genetics; it "also depends on the environmental experiences the child is exposed to on a consistent basis."⁴

The first three years of life are especially important in this process of brain development. The brain nearly triples in size during the first year of life – and by age 3, it has 85 percent of its future adult weight. The increase in weight is not due to growth in brain cells, but to synaptic growth and to myelination.⁵ During this time, synaptic formation occurs at an astonishing rate: up to 10 billion connections per day.⁶ The 14-18 hours of sleep infants and small children need each day is required to preserve metabolic energy for this enormous task of brain development. "In these earliest years, the way information flows through the brain's structures, and gets processed, is largely established. These pathways and structures will be used and reused as learning continues throughout life."⁷

Synaptic density reaches a peak in the child's third year of life at around one quadrillion connections, *double* the number she'll have as an adult. After this critical

three-year period, the brain gradually begins to discard unneeded and unused synapses through a normal process called “pruning.” The synapses not pruned are those she strengthens through repeated use.⁸

This excess production of synapses during the first three years of life makes the brain particularly responsive to external stimuli. During this period, the child can learn more easily and more efficiently than she’ll be able to learn at any other time in her life. Her brain acts like a “black hole,” voraciously sucking in novel information and new experiences. This helps explain why young children can easily learn to speak a second language, while older children and adults often find this task disagreeable and difficult.

To be sure, it’s never too late for a parent to influence the wiring of a child’s brain – certainly not at age 3, and not even at age 13. “The brain has a remarkable, lifelong capacity to reorganize itself in response to the information it receives from its environment. Researchers call this *neural plasticity* and it takes place at all ages... A child of any age benefits from the ABC’s.”⁹ What is true, however, is the older one gets, the longer it takes the brain to “rewire” in response to what it experiences.

There is no make-or-break time for teaching a child to read. However, given the phenomenal way the brain develops in the preschool years, it seems to me a more appropriate title for this chapter might be: “Why *Not* Teach a Preschooler to Read?” Why would a parent *not* add reading instruction to all the other new experiences which are creating, activating, and strengthening synaptic connections in the child’s young brain?

Beyond enhanced brain development, what other reasons are there for teaching a preschooler to read? Let’s suppose it is indeed possible for parents to teach their 3, 4, or 5-year old how to read, and that doing so will take about a year. Alternatively, the parent can leave this task to the local school. Let’s assume that school will perform this task competently, and it will take the school’s teachers 3 years (grades K, 1, and 2) to get your child, by age 8, to the point of reading independently. My question is this: what benefits accrue to a child who has a 3 to 5-year head start in a skill as fundamental as reading? Well, once a child can read independently, he becomes capable of both self-entertainment and self-learning. Preschoolers who can read, quickly become passionate readers. They spend hours with children’s books, allowing those books to transport them to other real and fantasy worlds. Their brains are constantly stimulated by their reading, an activity *they* now control. Their knowledge, fluency, vocabulary, and self-confidence grow exponentially.

If you grant the gift of reading to your preschooler, you might suppose his peers will eventually catch up to him once he goes to school. This is not the case. Instead, a phenomenon, known variously as “Cumulative Advantage,” or “The Matthew Effect,” starts to unfold. The reference is to a verse in the Bible (Matthew 25:29) which has, over time, become a maxim: “the rich get richer while the poor get poorer.” The effect, studied in such diverse fields as science, economics, sociology, psychology, and education,¹⁰ can

occur when an advantage, conferred at the beginning of some process, becomes a resource that leads to skills and opportunities – skills and opportunities which in turn produce even further relative gains over time.

It's not difficult to see how the Matthew Effect would apply to an early reader. A child given such an advantage makes an early transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." His vocabulary explodes. His independent reading skill provides opportunities in other subjects as he begins amassing knowledge on his own. He spends little time and effort, relative to his peers, in word recognition, leaving more time and energy for comprehension and higher-level thinking. Due to his reading skill, he is regarded as being "smart," and consequently, he receives lots of praise and attention from meaningful adults. His self-confidence expands, and his teachers have lofty expectations for him – expectations that serve to propel him along even further and faster. To keep such positive feedback flowing, he is motivated to read even more, thus assuring an ever-accelerating cycle of effort and reward. If you decide to teach your preschooler how to read, the head start you give him will not only persist over time, it will grow, and it will have enormous implications in all his future academic pursuits. It is a gift that will last a lifetime.

A third reason for giving your child an early start in reading is this: if you don't do it, then by default, you'll be relying on your local school to perform this critical task for you. However, *there is serious risk with this strategy*. Many of the nation's schools, public and private, do a poor job teaching reading. You'll be playing a form of Reading Roulette, hoping your local school is not using the latest iteration of a teaching method that has repeatedly failed millions of children. That method, generically called Whole Word, has been around for close to a century. In the 1980s and 90s it was called "Whole Language," now it's known as "Balanced Literacy."

Consider the fact that nearly 50% of American adults are either illiterate or they are functionally illiterate.¹¹ That represents about 90 million Americans who can't read the Sunday newspaper or enjoy a good novel. Recently, the National Center for Education Statistics evaluated the reading level of 8th graders across the nation. It found that 34% were proficient (or better) at reading.¹² Stated differently, 66% of 8th graders (2 out of 3!) were *deficient* readers. What academic future does a child have if he is struggling with reading in 8th grade?

I just outlined three reasons for parents to make it a priority to teach their own child to read before sending them off to school. Maybe you're convinced, but you doubt you have the time. This is a real concern for many families, especially if both parents work, or if the household is run by a single parent. In such cases, your only choice may be to do what you can, in whatever time you *do* have. Perhaps more can be done on weekends

than on weeknights when everyone is tired. The pace is yours to set in this reading program. What does it matter if it takes 2, 3, or even 4 years? Your preschooler will still benefit if you choose to instruct her yourself.

If your child is not yet two years old, what can you do now, specifically, to help prepare him for this reading program? That's easy. Do what any responsible parent does for her child, whether she intends to teach reading or not:

- Spend lots of one-on-one time playing with him and cuddling him.
- Respond promptly and predictably to his needs.
- Speak to him, early and often.
- Sing to him.
- Read to him.

In short, *interact positively* with your child. All the above activities significantly contribute to synapse creation and to the wiring of a healthy brain. While these activities fall under the category of “common sense” for most parents, here are some useful facts you may *not* already know.

“The effect of language spoken to the child cannot be over-emphasized. There is a direct correlation between the number of words heard by a child during early development, and the cognitive abilities of the child even into the late preschool years. The more words a child hears, the faster she or he will learn language.”¹³ The time to start speaking to your baby is Day One. “From the very first moments of life, early brain structures begin to change, wiring up according to the language heard in each child’s particular environment.”¹⁴ Your newborn won’t verbally respond to your speech for most of her first year of life. Nonetheless, by speaking to her, you are literally *shaping her brain*, causing synapses to grow and to strengthen. Her brain processes every word you say, and the 44 sounds of the English language that you articulate, quickly become deeply rooted in her brain. (I’ve listed these sounds in Table 1 in the front of this book.)

At birth, a baby’s brain is genetically capable of discerning the unique sounds of *any* of the world’s languages. Each language has its own cadence, rhythms, stress patterns, and intonations. Collectively, these characteristics are called *prosody*. The prosodic pattern of English is termed “stress-time,” meaning certain syllables receive more stress, and are held for a longer time, than other syllables. In the first month of life, a newborn “is capable of discriminating different prosodic patterns and can recognize utterances in their native language from those in languages with different prosodic patterns... By 5 months, infants can discriminate their own language from others with the same prosodic patterns.”¹⁵ By 10-12 months of age, this amazing ability on the part of the infant brain, to discriminate the sounds of any language, has vanished – the unused synapses have been pruned away – leaving the child primed and ready for speech, in his particular native language.¹⁶

So, during your child's first months of life, speak frequently throughout the day. You are reinforcing the prosody and the sounds of English in her brain. It doesn't matter what you talk about – you can read Tolstoy aloud or you can simply narrate your day. Whenever the child is alert, interact with her, make eye contact, respond to her facial expressions and her sounds with your own. In her book, *Bright from the Start*, Dr. Jill Stamm devotes an entire chapter to the importance of speaking to a child, from birth, if a parent wishes to enhance the child's brain development. "The more words spoken in the home, the higher the IQ scores were at age three – regardless of socioeconomic status. By age 4, children in the language-richest homes had heard *thirty-two million more words* than those in the more language-impooverished homes. Kids who are exposed to more language, from birth, wind up, on average, smarter... Talk may be cheap, but for young children it is priceless."¹⁷

At around 4 months of age, you can start to supplement your speaking with a daily ritual of reading to your child as you hold her. She can now comfortably sit in your lap, and she has the visual acuity to see the pages clearly. Start with colorful cloth and cardboard books. Read expressively, adding your own story line and questions to the simple plot. Do lots of pointing to characters, colors, shapes, and objects. Read the same book multiple times; the repetition is beneficial at this age. Make the reading *interactive* as she grows older and becomes capable of it. In other words, get her involved as you read: have her point to the dog, the balloon, or to other objects on the page. As she grows older still, get her to speak as you read: "What color is that balloon?" "How many animals do you see on this page?" And when she is older still, encourage her to make conjectures and discuss emotions: "Why do you think the dog did that?" "What do you think will happen next?" "How does that make you feel?"

What follows are some useful guideposts¹⁸ as you speak and read to your child over his first two years of life. The times are only approximate.

- Age 4 months: Your baby starts responding to signals. A bottle or a breast becomes a signal to eat.
- 5-7 months: The infant begins to respond to high-frequency words like "mommy," "daddy," and "bye-bye."
- 9 months: Babies begin to imitate adult vocalizations and they begin to use gestures to communicate.
- 12 months: The child begins to speak. These first words show the beginnings of *symbolic* thought. A spoken word, "doggie" for instance, is a symbol for the actual dog. At this age, however, the dog must be present for the symbolism to work.
- 13-18 months: The child builds a large *receptive (or listening) vocabulary*. He understands many more words than he speaks.

- 18 months: The child is well on his way to full symbolic thought. Now he can produce and understand words like “doggie” even if the dog is not present. He is beginning to understand cause and effect.
- 19-24 months: Language acquisition explodes. The child starts using short sentences. *Expressive (or speaking) vocabulary* starts growing at a rapid pace. Overall vocabulary, receptive and expressive, grows at a rate of 7-12 words per day!
- 24 months: In 2 short years, the overall cognitive changes have been monumental. “The child has moved from sensorimotor intelligence to truly symbolic thought.”¹⁹ This symbolic intelligence now allows the child, through speech, to communicate with anyone else who shares the common language.

Symbolic thought, already in place for most children by age 2, is one of the main requirements for learning how to read. A symbol is something that “stands for,” or “represents,” something else. A two-year old fully understands that the *spoken* word, MAN, symbolizes a living, real man. What is to stop that same two-year old from understanding that, if the letter M symbolizes the sound “mmm,” the letter A symbolizes the sound “ahhh,” and the letter N symbolizes “nnn,” then the letter string M-A-N symbolizes the spoken word, MAN, as well as an actual man?

There are other requirements for learning how to read. The child must have the visual acuity to distinguish between small, similar-looking symbols like “b” and “d,” and a large enough receptive vocabulary to make learning to read worthwhile. (All those receptive vocabulary words will quickly become expressive in the course of learning to read.) The child must have the desire and the opportunity to learn to read. And finally, the child needs a willing, patient, and knowledgeable teacher.

If your child is not yet two, here are a few other suggestions for preparing him for the reading program in this book. Once the language explosion has begun, at 18 months, deliberately teach him 3 new vocabulary words per week. This simple step will provide him with 150 more known words than he would otherwise have by age 30 months. Once you’ve decided on the word, use it repeatedly throughout the day and review it the following day. Encourage your child to use it as well. Look through the early appendices in the back of this book for lots of suggestions.

Finally, sing to (and with) your child. It relaxes her, it’s pleasurable, and it gets endorphins flowing through her brain. It teaches her patterns, rhythms, and rhymes – and it reinforces the 44 sounds of English in a novel manner. Be sure to include in your repertoire the singing of the alphabet, which has many of the sounds your child will soon have to master. If you want to get a little head start on Stage 0, get (or make) a poster featuring the 26 uppercase letters. As you sing or recite the alphabet, point to the individual letters.

Don't yield to the temptation to sit her down with a TV, tablet, or computer screen. I encourage you to read the Policy Statement of the American Academy of Pediatrics on this issue.²⁰ Here are that Policy Statement's main points:

- Children younger than 18 months need hands-on exploration and social interaction with trusted caregivers to develop their cognitive, language, and social-emotional skills. No screen media is recommended other than video-chatting with a close relative.
- If parents want to introduce digital media to children 18-24 months old, the media should only be high-quality programming and/or apps. The parent should watch or use the digital media with the child and reteach the content of that media. No solo use, on the part of the child, is recommended at this early age.
- Children 2-5 years old can learn words from live video-chatting with a responsive adult or from an interactive touchscreen interface that tailors its response to what the child does. However, time should be limited to no more than 1 hour per day.
- Children 2-5 years old can also benefit from well-designed television programs like Sesame Street. Most programs found under the "education" category in app stores have no evidence of efficacy and they target only rote academic skills.
- Early use of media is a significant predictor of cognitive, language, and social-emotional delays.
- Parents' background use of television distracts from parent-child interactions and child play.
- Heavy parent use of smartphones is associated with fewer interactions between parents and children.

These are tough-to-follow guidelines. I am in full agreement, however, with the first one regarding children under 18 months of age. Such a child is trying to make sense of, what is for him, a brand-new world. What are its rules? How does such a young child distinguish between real and virtual worlds? How is he to understand a world where a scene can *instantaneously* change? Why should he pay attention to something that can simply disappear, without warning? All too quickly, an infant or a toddler can be over-stimulated by the sights and sounds of media. In the first two years of life, what he needs more than anything else is your voice and your personal, loving interaction with him. Nothing substitutes for this – and nothing better prepares him for reading.

1. Robert Owens, *Language Development: An Introduction* (Boston: Pearson Publishing, 2005), 125.
 2. Jill Stamm, *Bright from the Start* (New York: Penguin Group, 2007), 20.
 3. Owens, *Language Development*, 125.

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4. Stamm, *Bright from the Start*, 11-13.
 5. Myelin is a fatty substance that surrounds a brain cell's finger-like projections called axons. It facilitates the transmission of electric signals across synapses.
 6. John Medina, *Brain Rules for Baby: How to Raise a Smart and Happy Child from Zero to Five* (Seattle, Pear Press, 2010), 33.
 7. Stamm, *Bright from the Start*, 15.
 8. Stamm, *Bright from the Start*, 16-20.
 9. Stamm, *Bright from the Start*, 21-2.
 10. Daniel Rigney, *The Matthew Effect: How Advantage Begets Further Advantage* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2010), 25-81.
 11. "Adult Literacy in America," 3rd ed., National Center for Educational Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, April 2002, xvi – xviii. <<https://nces.ed.gov/pubs93/93275.pdf>> (Accessed 14 Feb 2017).
 12. "The Nation's Report Card," National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2015. <https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/reading_math_2015/#reading?grade=4> (Accessed 14 Feb 2017).
 13. Owens, *Language Development*, 130-31.
 14. Stamm, *Bright from the Start*, 208.
 15. Owens, *Language Development*, 138.
 16. Hence the importance, if the child is to be bilingual, of hearing that second language throughout the first year of life.
 17. Stamm, *Bright from the Start*, 218.
 18. Owens, *Language Development*, 140-41.
 19. Owens, *Language Development*, 141.
 20. "Media and Young Minds," American Academy of Pediatrics, October 2016. <<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/early/2016/10/19/peds.2016-2591>> (Accessed 14 Feb 2017).

Chapter 2

The Alphabetic Code

A marvelous code underlies all skilled reading and spelling. You and I are using this code now. I encoded some thoughts onto this page using various alphabetic characters; you're decoding those characters and reconstructing my thoughts. It's as though I were speaking to you directly. For mature writers and readers, this *encoding* and *decoding* is quick and effortless. Because most of us were quite young when we learned to read, we've probably forgotten the multi-year effort that was required to get us to this point. And because reading and writing are so easy for us now, we may take these skills for granted, failing to appreciate how extraordinary it is that we can draw sound on paper and absorb language with our eyes.

By itself, the alphabet is only part of the code. If its letters aren't explicitly linked to individual sounds, the alphabet is simply a group of 26 abstract, meaningless characters. What follows are the first two sentences of this paragraph repeated, using letters that don't symbolize sound for you. (I simply shifted my fingers one key to the right as I retyped these 2 sentences.)

Nu oydrag, yjr saqjsnry od pmaw qsty pg yjr vpfr. Og oyd aryyrtd strm'y
rcqaovoyau aomlrf yp omfobisa dpimfd, yjr saqjsnry od dozqau s htpiq pg 26
sndytsvy, zrsmomhardd vjstsvyrt.

This is how all text must have once appeared to you and me, before we learned the sound value of letters. It's how text appears to every beginning reader. It must be intimidating for a child, especially if her reading instructor *starts* with whole words. (While most reading programs in today's elementary schools do start instruction with whole words, this reading program does not.)

There are 26 letters in our alphabet and 44 elemental sounds (also called *phonemes*) in spoken English (see Table 1). The code is what specifies how these letters and sounds are connected: how each of the 26 letters symbolize one or more of these 44 elemental sounds, and how each of the 44 sounds can be spelled. Understanding the code is the key to learning *both* spelling and reading because these 2 skills are the opposite of one another. To spell (or write), one encodes sound onto paper using various alphabetic symbols. To read, one decodes those written symbols back into sound. Armed with the alphabet, and knowledge of the code that animates it, we can depict the million words of English on paper, using only 26 symbols.

Phonics is the study of this code for the express purpose of learning to read and spell. Without phonics, the alphabet is simply a collection of strange characters, but with it, the alphabet is a powerful tool for recording sound on paper – even the sound of our private thoughts. By teaching your child to read phonetically, you’ll make reading and spelling *logical* for her. Once she discovers this logic, it will fascinate and delight her. Seeing that reading and spelling are based on reason (rather than on rote memorization of “sight words”), she’ll be motivated to make the year-long effort required to master these two critical skills. By using this book’s 17-stage program to teach your child how to read and spell, you’ll be using phonics from start to finish – and your child will become a confident, skilled reader and a capable speller.

I *don’t* mean to imply you must master phonics (the full code) before you start teaching your child. On the contrary, unless you’re a linguist, I expect you’ll be learning (or re-learning) phonics along with your child as this program progresses. I’ll be guiding you through each step – so don’t be concerned that you don’t already know everything that will be necessary. You’ll learn (and then teach) as you go. A summary of the full code, from opposite perspectives, can be found in this book in appendices P and Q.

That said, there are two items you’ll need to learn before starting this program. The first is the definition of the word *phoneme* and the second is the notation I’ll be using to discuss those individual phonemes with you.

Phonemes are the unique sounds that constitute any given language. For modern European languages, the number of phonemes vary between 28 and 52. For English, the number is 44. All 44 English phonemes (20 vowel phonemes and 24 consonant phonemes) are listed for your convenience in Table 1. Every English word you’ve ever spoken consists in two or more of these phonemes blended seamlessly together (exception: the words ‘t’ and ‘a’ which consist of a single phoneme each).

Think of these 44 phonemes as the equivalent of the 118 chemical elements or atoms in the Periodic Table. Just as those atoms form the basis of all the matter in our physical world, the 44 sounds in Table 1 form the basis of all the words we’ll ever speak. (The analogy is not perfect because, under extraordinary conditions, atoms can be split; these 44 phonemes, however, are un-split-able!)

The second item you need to understand is the specialized notation for phonemes involving slash marks, / /, which you can find throughout Table 1 and throughout this book. I’ll make you two promises. First, it won’t take you long to get comfortable with this notation, and second, you won’t have to teach it to your child. The notation is only

to facilitate accurate communication between you and me. (I'll be discussing Table 1 for the remainder of this chapter, so you may want to bookmark it.)

So why do we need a special notation to deal with these 44 unique sounds? After all, when teaching them to your child you'll *always* speak them. So why the notation? Here's the problem. Suppose I want to discuss the short O sound with you. That's the first sound you can hear in the word OX or ODD. Since I'm not physically present to you, I can't speak it. I could try to spell the sound for you, OH perhaps, but OH is commonly viewed as the spelling for *long* O, as in "Uh-oh! I dropped your priceless vase!" or "Oh my! There's a fly in my tomato soup!" Maybe I could spell the short O sound using AH, as when a doctor says, "Open your mouth and say ah." But then how would I spell the short A sound (the first sound in the word APPLE)? Further, how would I spell the sound of a consonant like D: DEH? DAH? DUH?

I think you can see that spelling these phonemes would lead to confusion. On the other hand, the notation I use in Table 1 is precise. Right next to each phoneme are 2 or 3 words using the sound. When I refer to the phoneme /oo/, for example, later in this book – and if you've temporarily forgotten how it sounds – you can quickly look it up in Table 1 where you'll see it occurs in the words GOOD, BOOK, and WOOL. In most cases, the letter(s) between the slash marks will remind you how to pronounce the sound. For instance, /ew/ is pronounced like the word NEW, but without the N. (Throughout this entire 17-stage program, whenever you see something surrounded by slash marks, I strongly encourage you to *speak it aloud* rather than read it silently.)

Here are some examples to help you get accustomed to phonemes and their notation. As you examine Table 1, you'll probably notice I designate short vowels sounds with lowercase letters (/a/ /e/ /o/) and long vowel sounds with uppercase (/A/ /E/ /O/). With that in mind, look at these two statements:

HAT = /h/ + /a/ + /t/
HATE = /h/ + /A/ + /t/

On the left are the *spellings* of two common English words; on the right are the exact 3 *phonemes* you can hear in each of these words. Simply blend the 3 phonemes together, quickly and smoothly, and you'll inevitably produce the word. The E in HATE is only a spelling convention (covered in Stage 10 in this reading program) and, as such, it has no sound.

Here's another example:

WAG = /w/ + /a/ + /g/
 WAGE = /w/ + /A/ + /j/

Again, the spelling is on the left while the actual phonemes present in the word are on the right. The notation again makes clear these two words have different vowel sounds. In addition, it demonstrates that, although both words are spelled with a G, the second word ends in a J sound rather than a G sound. GE is a common spelling convention for the sound of J (see Stage 16).

English spelling can sometimes be confusing, partly because there are so many homophones (words that sound the same but have different spellings and meanings):

WAIST = WASTE = /w/ + /A/ + /s/ + /t/
 TO = TOO = TWO = /t/ + /ew/

And, of course, there are a few English spellings that make no sense whatsoever, given the actual sounds present in the word's pronunciation:

ONE = /w/ + /u/ + /n/
 OF = /u/ + /v/

Reading and spelling are necessarily complex in English for a simple reason: our language has more phonemes (44) than it has letters (26) to symbolize those phonemes. This results in a more complex code than is found in other alphabetic languages like Italian and German. In the above HAT/HATE example, you saw how the single letter A can symbolize 2 different phonemes: /a/ and /A/. The opposite is also true. A single phoneme can be spelled in more than one way:

ZOO = /z/ + /ew/
 NEW = /n/ + /ew/
 BLUE = /b/ + /l/ + /ew/
 FRUIT = /f/ + /r/ + /ew/ + /t/

This example shows the sound /ew/ can be spelled OO, EW, UE, and UI.

Though this final example is a little trickier, it shows a number of phonics topics that will be covered in the reading program later in this book. Let's take the two words, PHONICS and CITY, and using this new notation, again state the precise phonemes that can be heard in each of them. Try to do this yourself before reading any further. (Hint: there is no /c/ among the 44 phonemes of English.)

PHONICS = /f/ + /o/ + /n/ + /i/ + /k/ + /s/
 CITY = /s/ + /i/ + /t/ + /E/

Three important phonics topics are illustrated here. First, the phoneme /f/ is sometimes spelled PH rather than F. Second, the letter C always spells either the phoneme /k/ or /s/. Finally, the letter Y can act as a vowel. When it does, it usually spells the phoneme long E (/E/).

Note: If the notation across from CITY (above) looks like the word SITE to you, it's because you are confusing spelling with sound. The slash mark notation has nothing to do with spelling; it simply specifies sound. Here are 11 similar-sounding words that differ from each other *only* in their vowel sound(s):

SIT = /s/ + /i/ + /t/
 SITE = /s/ + /I/ + /t/
 SET = /s/ + /e/ + /t/
 SEAT = /s/ + /E/ + /t/
 SAT = /s/ + /a/ + /t/
 SATE = /s/ + /A/ + /t/
 SUIT = /s/ + /ew/ + /t/
 SOT = /s/ + /o/ + /t/
 SOOT = /s/ + /oo/ + /t/
 SOUGHT = /s/ + /aw/ + /t/
 CITY = /s/ + /i/ + /t/ + /E/

My only goal in providing the above examples was to get you more accustomed to this slash mark notation for phonemes. Everything else will be gradually presented to you (and thus to your child) during the course of this program's 17 stages.

One more thing: if you looked through Table 1 carefully, you may be wondering why /c/, /q/, /x/, and /U/ are missing. You may also be puzzling over those two *uppercase* versions of /th/ and /sh/. While these apparent omissions and additions will be fully explained in the program which follows, here's a quick preview:

- There is no unique sound /c/ because the *letter* C itself is unnecessary. CAT could be spelled KAT. CITY could be spelled SITY (as it is in UNIVERSITY). Since the sounds /k/ and /s/ are already listed in Table 1, including /c/ would add nothing new.

- I omit /q/ for the same reason. Every word spelled with QU could instead be spelled with KW (compare QUACK and KWACK). Since /k/ and /w/ are already on the list, /q/ is unnecessary.
- The same reasoning holds for /x/. Every word ending in X could instead be spelled with KS (compare BOX and BOKS). Since /k/ and /s/ are already on the list, we don't need the sound /x/.
- The sound /U/ (long U) can easily be produced by phonemes already on the list: /U/ = /y/ + /ew/.
- The /th/ sound (lowercase) is a phoneme made with *air only*. You can hear it in the words THIN, THICK, and MOTH. The /TH/ sound (uppercase) is a similar sound, but it's made with the *vocal cords*. You can hear it in the words THIS, THAT, and MOTHER. Try it yourself! While the phoneme /TH/ is voiced, /th/ is voiceless.
- Similarly, /sh/ is voiceless. You can hear it in SHIP, CASH, and MISSION. /SH/ is voiced. You can hear it in the words VISION, PLEASURE, and ASIA, even though these words are not spelled with the letters SH.

This voiced/voiceless distinction occurs for many letter pairs in English, as you can see (or hear) in this table:

Voiced	Unvoiced
/TH/	/th/
/SH/	/sh/
/b/	/p/
/d/	/t/
/g/	/k/
/j/	/ch/
/z/	/s/
/v/	/f/

Notice for each of these pairs, the mouth and tongue are in the same configuration in order to articulate the sound – the only difference is voicing versus air alone. Happily, in most cases, English uses a different letter for the voiced and unvoiced version of a sound. It is only in the case of TH and SH that English does not have a unique spelling for the voiced and voiceless counterparts.

Don't stress over this notation. Once you can look through the list of the 44 phonemes in Table 1, and out loud, correctly pronounce all (or most) of them, you are ready to move on to Chapter 3. Table 1 is always there for reference if you need it later on. When working with your child, the two of you will always speak these sounds; he'll never see this written, specialized notation. Nor will he ever need to know the definition of *phoneme*.

Parent Note: The above understanding of English phonemes and their notation is all you need to know to use this book successfully to teach your child how to read.

If, for one reason or another, you'd like to know more of the *theory* behind reading instruction, including the history of reading instruction, you can easily download my free book for teachers called *Reading Instruction and Phonics*, also available at www.ParkerPhonics.com.

Chapter 3

Synthetic Phonics

You should be aware that this book's method, Synthetic Phonics, is not the only method for teaching a child to read. Since 1920 or so, there has been another widely-used method for teaching reading. It's called 'Whole Word'. During the middle of the previous century, Whole Word was known as the *Look/Say* method. During the 80s and 90s, it was called *Whole Language*. Now it's known as *Balanced Literacy*. Synthetic Phonics and Whole Word are not compatible.

Using Synthetic Phonics, a teacher starts with individual phonemes and the letters that symbolize them, and then she carefully shows the child how to *blend* those individual phonemes into familiar words. Unknown written words are *decoded*, that is, they are "sounded out" by blending their individual sounds into a full pronunciation based on their constituent letters. Synthetic Phonics is a *bottom-up* approach to reading. The child is taught the entire alphabetic code in a carefully sequenced and explicit manner, *from the very start of instruction*.

Using the Whole Word method, a teacher starts, not with phonemes and the letters that represent them, but with, as the name suggests, whole words. Since these words can't be read by the beginner, they must be memorized visually as *sight words*. When a child encounters an unfamiliar word (a word not previously memorized as a sight word), she is encouraged to guess its meaning. The guessing is based on the word's context within the sentence, or on a picture accompanying the text, or on the word's first letter. Whole Word is a *top-down* approach to reading. The alphabetic code, if taught at all, is taught over a period of many years, using various "discovery" methods, *after* the child has mastered a large cache of sight words.

When I taught reading to my three preschool children nearly two decades ago, using Synthetic Phonics, I was unaware Whole Word methods were being used in most of the local schools. It was clear to me then – and it's clear to me now – that if we want to teach a child to read an *alphabetic* script (as opposed to Mandarin or Japanese), and if we want to respect that child's need to understand *why* words are spelled as they are, then we need to teach the code explicitly from the start of reading instruction.

What follows are the main characteristics of the Synthetic Phonics program you are about to use with your child.

Defining Characteristics

Synthetic Phonics is not a tool to help a student with word-guessing in a Whole Word reading program. Instead, it's a singularly effective *method* for teaching both reading and spelling. As you use the program in this book, you'll find Synthetic Phonics has *all* the following characteristics:

- The code is taught *explicitly* because most children can't discover how it works on their own and because "discovery" teaching methods simply take too long.
- The *entire* code is taught, not only parts of it.
- Instruction begins with individual letters and the sounds (phonemes) those letters symbolize. It does *not* start with whole words.
- The skill of *blending* individual phonemes into whole words is explicitly modeled and taught from the beginning of instruction.
- Instruction is *systematic*. The code is presented in a carefully sequenced and logical manner with each new topic building on what the child has already mastered.
- Memorization of sight words is kept to an absolute minimum. (In this program, you'll teach only 5 such words.)
- The child is taught to identify an unknown word by *decoding* it (sounding it out into a full pronunciation based on its constituent letters) rather than using context or pictures to guess what it might be.
- Spelling is taught as the *reverse* of decoding.
- The child is asked to read only *decodable* text, that is, text for which he already has the skills needed to succeed. This eliminates guessing.

Synthetic phonics programs can differ from each other, not in the above characteristics, but in some other, less essential areas. These include: the *order* in which the teacher presents the full code, how early blending (and therefore reading) is introduced, how and when *spelling* comes into play, how to handle irregular words, what notation to use, how many rules to feature, and whether to reserve significant daily time for reading *to* the child. How I handle these less essential areas is detailed below, and of course, in the following 17-stage reading program itself.

Rules

A primary goal in this program is to get your child to independent reading *as quickly as possible*. In pursuit of this goal, we'll keep the vocabulary, the rules, and the sight words your child must memorize to an absolute minimum. While your child will soon

need to know the meaning of *vowel* and *consonant*, she'll not need to learn the meaning of *phoneme* or the specialized notation for phonemes that you've already mastered.

This version of phonics gives special attention to 14 common letter combinations that are not phonetic, that is, their actual pronunciations are at odds with their spellings. I list them at the end of Appendix Q. Knowing them, however, makes thousands of additional words perfectly phonetic. You'll explore all 14 of these letter strings with your child at various stages in this reading program. Here is an example of one of them: both TION and SION are pronounced "SHIN." With this simple rule, ACTION, MISSION, TENSION, and hundreds of similar words become "phonetic."

Sight Words

A sight word is a word whose spelling, meaning, and sound (pronunciation) are recognized instantaneously by the reader. No decoding or "sounding out" is necessary. For a mature reader like yourself, most words are sight words. But how are sight words created for the *beginning* reader? There are two ways it can be done:

- Consciously. A child can be required to visually rote-memorize a word based on characteristics *other than* the sound value of its individual letters. So, for instance, a child might remember the word 'look' as having two "eyes" in the middle, 'yellow' as having two "sticks" in the middle, 'mother' as the long word that starts with an M. With additional effort, a child might memorize the *exact* sequence of letters for a given word. But this is difficult to do. It's similar to what we adults do when we memorize a sequence of meaningless symbols that act as a password.
- Unconsciously. In a Synthetic Phonics program like this one, sight words will be created easily, automatically, and unconsciously by your child as she makes explicit the connections between the letters she sees in a word's spelling and the sounds (phonemes) she hears in that word's pronunciation. Every time she decodes or "sounds out" a word into a full pronunciation based on the word's letters, her brain is making the connections necessary for that word to become a sight word. Astoundingly, only 2-5 correct decodings of a given word are enough for it to become a sight word for most new readers.

Irregular Words

English has more spelling irregularities than most other alphabetic languages. These irregularities complicate the task of teaching someone to read. I estimate, however, that 95% of the words a student will see and use through high school are perfectly regular, based on the phonics I present in this program. That still leaves quite a few irregular words. I studied various lists featuring the 500 most-used words in the English language (easy to find online) and picked out the words that might still be considered irregular, even after having mastered *all* the phonics in this program. I found 50 such words and listed them in Appendix S. If you look at that list, the Tricky 50, you'll see I also provide a spelling that would make these words regular.

When these 50 tricky words start showing up, in Stage 8 of this program, you'll simply call your child's attention to them. You'll focus, not on the word's irregularities, but on what is *regular* about them. For example, HAVE, ARE, WERE, and GIVE are perfectly regular if we simply drop the final E. Other tricky words are regular in both their first and last letter (COULD, WANT, FRIEND). You'll sometimes ask your child how the tricky word would be spelled if we lived in a perfectly phonetic world. For instance, SAID would be spelled SED in such a world.

The only thing you *won't* do is have your child memorize these 50 words as sight words – unless it's unavoidable. It becomes unavoidable when a word is spelled so wildly, given its sounds, there is no choice but to simply memorize it. I count only five such words on the Tricky 50 list: EYE, ONE, ONCE, EIGHT, and OF (I, WUN, WUNS, ATE, UV). (As promised, this phonics program will keep memorization of sight words to a minimum!)

What happens when a young reader comes across the occasional irregular word *not* included among the Tricky 50? Similarly, what happens when she meets a *homograph* like WIND – a word which has two correct pronunciations and two different meanings? (WIND can be the noun you experience in a storm or the verb you do to a clock). In such cases, she'll improvise. She'll make an educated guess based first on her phonics skills, and then on the context of the word. She'll learn from experience doing actual reading. Further, she is unlikely to encounter many such exceptions during her first year or two of independent reading, because her focus will be on material written primarily for younger children.

An Illusion

I've uniquely structured this phonics program in such a way that for the first 6 stages, you'll be able to teach reading as though English is a perfectly phonetic language: one without spelling irregularities or exceptions. You'll act as though each letter in the alphabet has a single sound, and each sound is symbolized only by a single letter. You'll be able to sustain this illusion until midway through Stage 6, when Q, X, and "silent" letters first appear.

I've done this because, in the earliest stages, I want your child to become firmly convinced reading is easy and logical – and therefore worth the effort. You won't present your child with any "complications" until well after he has concluded "Reading is fun," "Reading makes sense," and "By darn, I can do it!" Only when these critically important convictions are firmly entrenched in his mind will you *slowly* start to reveal the "anomalies" of English. By then, these anomalies will cause him little concern or confusion because he'll be confident in his reading ability and because he'll understand the overwhelming logic of the code.

Motivation

Some long-running complaints of Synthetic Phonics are that it's boring, that it involves tedious drill work, and that a child will lose interest in it long before he ever gets to read a simple poem or story. I suppose this *could* be true if reading was needlessly delayed, if the instruction was unimaginative and humorless, and if the teacher used all available instructional time for nothing but repetitive drill work. That will not be the case here. Powerful motivation in this phonics program will derive primarily from three factors:

- 1) Reading starts early. It's not delayed until the middle or end of the program, rather, it starts right at the beginning, in Stage 1. There, with only 8 (of the 44) phonemes mastered, your child, with your help, will start blending those phonemes into words like MOM, MAN, and SUN. And when I say "reading," I mean *decoding* the words, not memorizing them as sight words. Based on my experience teaching preschoolers, I can confirm that once authentic reading begins, motivation is not an issue. A child becomes proud and enthusiastic – perceiving herself as starting to master the skill all the significant adults in her life can do.

- 2) Your child begins to understand the *logic* that underlies the skill of reading. She starts to glimpse what linguists call the *Alphabetic Principle*: written words are distinguishable from one another, not by their overall shape or by their individual letters, but by the sounds those individual letters symbolize. She begins to appreciate print is simply coded sound, and that insight makes her eager to learn more about the code.

In this program, and in any phonics program worth mentioning, you'll spend time *each day* not only teaching phonics, but also reading classic children's literature *to* your child. You'll read to him daily, not that he might acquire a few sight words, but that he'll become enchanted by the stories you tell. You won't simply read, you'll facilitate a discussion: "Why do you think Jack did that?" "What do you think the giant will do next?" Listening to quality literature provides enormous motivation for any phonics student. He'll want to continue his phonics lessons because he wishes, one day soon, to read such stories on his own.

Time Frame

In the Introduction, I said the time needed to complete this 17-stage program would be (roughly) one to two years. The biggest variables are the time needed for letter recognition (Stage 0 in this program) and the individual child's aptitude, interest, and motivation. Children vary enormously in this regard.

My best advice is to not worry about time. Stick with each stage until it's clear to you that your child has mastered the material that's there. Some stages are more challenging than others, so don't expect to spend equal amounts of time per stage.

This program can logically be viewed as having two distinct parts. A *Basic Code*, comprising Stages 1 through 6, and an *Advanced Code*, encompassing Stages 7 through 17. The Basic Code is that initial part of this program that presents reading and spelling as *regular* and *exceptionless* – an illusion to be sure – but one that is important in helping to convince your child that the effort spent learning to read is worthwhile.

Here's a helpful rule of thumb: the Advanced Code will take about twice as long to teach (and learn) as the Basic Code.

Phonemic Awareness

Illiterate people, both children and adults, are usually unaware of the 44 phonemes of English I've listed in Table 1. That's because in speech, these individual sounds are **coarticulated**, that is, they seamlessly blend into one another. Neither the speaker, nor the listener, need be aware of them because the brain's language center handles these coarticulated sounds automatically and unconsciously.

However, for skilled *reading* and *spelling* to occur, these 44 phonemes must be brought into full, conscious awareness. The phonics program you are about to use does this explicitly and systematically. It *must* do so because Synthetic Phonics depends upon the reader's ability to match letters with the sounds they symbolize. Such matching can't occur until the reader becomes consciously aware of these 44 sounds. You'll start bringing these sounds to your child's attention in Stage 1 when you teach her "A says /a/." (Remember: when you see something surrounded by slash marks, speak it aloud rather than read it silently.)

The main point I want to make about phonemic awareness is that Synthetic Phonics *starts* with phonemes, and then teaches the new reader how to blend them into words. Your child can't possibly avoid becoming aware of phonemes. You'll be training her to hear them – and to match them with appropriate letters – throughout this entire program.

The hardest way to teach phonemic awareness is to start with whole words. Since phonemes are already coarticulated in whole words, they are notoriously difficult for a beginner to pick out. A one-syllable word like CHANCE, for instance, which can be spoken or heard in a fraction of a second, has 4 phonemes: /ch/ + /a/ + /n/ + /s/. All Whole Word methods must teach phonemic awareness by introducing phonemes *that are already in their coarticulated form*. This is precisely backwards – and it makes teaching phonemic awareness, reading, and spelling far more difficult than it needs to be.

Spelling

A competent speller is one who can hear the coarticulated phonemes in a spoken word and then match each of those phonemes with an appropriate letter (or letters). For a Synthetic Phonics student, hearing those phonemes is relatively easy. That's because each word he can read, he has previously built from the ground up. For him, each word begins as a collection of *individual* phonemes. He then blends them into a whole word.

Naturally, if he first assembles a word in this manner, he'll find it easier, upon hearing the word, to take it apart, sound by sound, match those sounds with appropriate letters, and thereby spell it.

[Note: Spelling begins in Stage 3 of this reading program. Throughout the program, you'll ask your child to spell *only those words he can already read*.]

Some Final Observations

In the 17-stage reading program that follows, you won't find a series of carefully scripted lesson plans. Rather, my purpose is to provide you with the *overall structure* and *logical sequence* of a program that uses Synthetic Phonics *as a method* to teach reading and spelling. That said, I do offer hundreds of suggestions for how to present the alphabetic code to your child. You can use my suggestions verbatim or you can modify them as you see fit.

I hope you'll take the time to read through the entire 17-stage program before starting to teach. Doing so will answer many questions you may now have, and it will provide you with a broad overview of what constitutes a genuine synthetic phonics program. At a minimum, read each individual stage completely before starting it with your child. I tend to combine discussion meant only for you, with suggestions for how to approach your child. Doing an initial read of the entire stage should help to clarify which is which. In all cases, anything surrounded with slash marks is meant to be spoken aloud, not read silently.

Where to Go From Here

If you're teaching a preschooler, you'll likely need to proceed now to Stage 0 where you'll have 2 options for teaching upper and lowercase letter recognition.

If you're teaching an older student (homeschooling) – or if you're teaching an adult – you'll likely skip Stage 0. You can now proceed directly to Stage 1.

A Synthetic Phonics Program

for

Reading and Spelling

Stage 0

Letter Recognition

Reading and spelling both depend on symbols for sound called *letters*. There are 26 of them in our Latin alphabet, and since each has an uppercase and a lowercase version, there are 52 symbols that need to be recognized by name. Add in the 10 symbols of our counting system (0 through 9) and you quickly arrive at 62 symbols, many of them quite similar, that need to be distinguished by the new reader.

If your child does not already know these 62 symbols you must teach them – but you still have a choice to make. Should you teach **all** of them as a *prerequisite* to starting the program at Stage 1, or, as an alternative, would it be better (easier) to teach only those symbols needed at each stage as you go through the following program?

Here's what I mean. Stage 1 uses only the letters A, E, I, O, U, S, M, N, and their lowercase counterparts. That's 16 symbols. And since S and s, O and o, U and u, M and m, and I and i are identical (or nearly so), there are really only 11 *different* symbols that your child needs to master before beginning Stage 1. And note: armed with just these 11 symbols and their corresponding sounds, your child can still be reading by the end of Stage 1.

This jump-starting of Stage 1 may be advisable because your goal is to get your child reading *as quickly as possible*. To wait until she masters all 62 symbols before beginning Stage 1 might require that reading, which is of course, the purpose of these symbols, be too-long delayed. Your child may lose interest in the task of letter identification before that task is complete. Actual reading, and understanding the logic behind this skill, is what motivates most children.

What may be preferable then, is that you explicitly teach only the eight needed letters before starting Stage 1, then four more letters before starting both Stage 2 (D, G, P, T) and Stage 3 (B, F, C, K), a single letter before Stage 4 (L) and Stage 5 (R), and the final 8 letters prior to starting Stage 6 (H, J, Q, V, W, X, Y, Z). Thus, letter recognition is spread out for your child over the first 6 stages of this program – and during this entire time, he'll be reading, spelling, and gradually learning the code.

Naturally, for some children, this spreading out the process of letter recognition over many stages will not be necessary. Your child may enjoy the task of learning letter

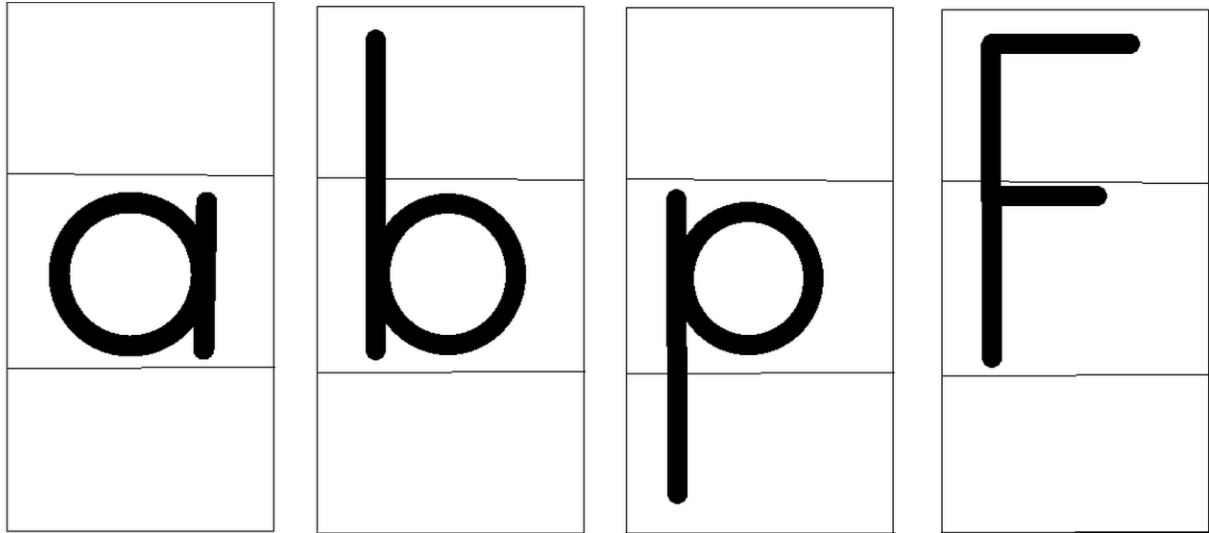
names for its own sake, may love singing the alphabet, and may excel in letter recognition and in matching lowercase and uppercase letters together – all without the external motivation of actually using those letters to read. You know your child best, so you must make this decision: letter recognition all at once (before beginning Stage 1) or letter recognition over the first 6 stages.

Whatever you decide, the remainder of Stage 0 has my suggestions for teaching letter recognition.

However you choose to do letter recognition with your child, teach both the upper and lowercase version of a given letter at the same time. Get him accustomed right away to the fact that all letters can be written “big” (B) or “little” (b). While many upper and lowercase letters look nearly identical (K and k), quite a few do not, for example, N and n, or D and d. I think it preferable not to use terminology like “uppercase” and “lowercase” with your child – just say “big A” and “little a” to keep things simple.

It will help your child’s learning if he can hold and manipulate the letters, and arrange them on the floor. The letters can be plastic, foam, or wood, and they can lay flat, stand on their own, or stick to a magnetic surface. They can be the classic wooden cubes that have a letter or a picture painted on each of the 6 sides. Whatever route you choose, get a set large enough so your child can lay out the entire alphabet at one time. Doing a search on Amazon, I found many possibilities from (among other companies) Uncle Goose, Imaginarium, Melissa & Doug, Alex Toys, Lakeshore, Schylling, Hape, We Sell Mats, Maxim, Roscoe, Magtimes, and Pixel Premium.

As an alternative to buying something, and especially if you’re doing letter recognition *gradually* over the first 6 stages, you can create your own letters. Get a stack of 4 x 6 index cards and some colorful, broad-tipped magic markers. Cut each card in three equal parts, resulting in a pile of 2 x 4 cards. Then, using a pencil, lightly divide each 2 x 4 card into three equal zones as illustrated. From top to bottom, I’ll call them zones 1, 2, and 3.



Now, using the magic markers, draw a letter on each card, using only zone 2 for lowercase letters without stems (a, c, e, m and so on). Those with stems can be drawn in zones 1 and 2 (b, d, k) or in zones 2 and 3 (p, q, g). All the uppercase letters can be drawn in zones 1 and 2. Alternate the colors if you like. Now you have a 52-card deck of both upper and lowercase letters your child can manipulate. You can also create a deck of number cards (0-10) as well. Conveniently, all these cards are easy to replace if one gets lost or damaged.

Now, when your child sings the alphabet, she can lay out the letters on the floor, surrounding herself as she places them in order – sometimes using uppercase, other times using lower.

Parent Note: For the fonts used in most books, lowercase A and G look like this:

a g

However, most children, at least initially, learn to recognize these letters when they are drawn this way:

a g

There's no way around this problem, so deal with it directly. Point it out and discuss it with your child. He needs to recognize both versions of these letters.

There are many other activities the two of you can do together to help him learn his letters. Get, or borrow, alphabet books for your daily reading sessions. Some particularly helpful ones are:

- *ABC* (Dr. Seuss)
- *Alphabet Under Construction* (Fleming)
- *Alpha Oops: The Day Z Went First* (Kontis)
- *The Alphabet Tree* (Lionni)
- *The Construction Alphabet Book* (Pallotta)
- *The Alphabet Book* (Eastman)
- *Eating the Alphabet* (Ehlert)
- *Numbers Colors Shapes* (Priddy)
- *ABC* (Carle)
- *Alphablock* (Franceschelli)
- *Alphabet Adventure* (Wood)
- *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* (Martin)
- *Best Word Book Ever* (Scarry)

As you read to him, start pointing out that sentences always start with a big letter and end with a period. In using these books, you are interested in letter recognition only; avoid encouraging him to memorize whole words.

If you are dealing with an older child whose motor skills allow it, encourage him to write the letters and numbers on paper. With a younger child, you can set the font of a word processor to the largest size available and let him try to type the letters, in order, on a screen. Comic Sans font works well for this activity because the letters look hand-drawn: **A a, B b, G g.**

There are some free (or at least inexpensive) worthwhile apps your child can use on a smartphone or tablet that can help with letter recognition. Do a search on “alphabet” or “alphabet tracing” and you’ll find hundreds of them. The most useful apps for this stage are those that have the child trace the letters and numbers on a touch screen. I rejected most of the 50 I tested because they committed one or more of the following offenses:

- Obtrusive full-screen pop-up ads that could not be eliminated.

- Tracing that is unforgiving (too picky) and is therefore likely to frustrate your child.
- Associating unhelpful words with letters, such as “chicken” with C, “ship” with S, and “orange” with O. These words may start with the correct letter, but they have a misleading initial sound.
- Associating unhelpful sounds with letters, such as “buh” for B. “Buh” is a helpful sound for B if you’re trying to read BUS; it’s unhelpful if you’re trying to read BIG, BAG, BED, or BOG.

In general, avoid apps whose primary focus is sound. The goal for now is letter recognition only. Here are 4 apps I found useful and well-structured: *Writing Wizard*, *Alive Alphabet Letter Tracing*, *ABC 123 Tracing for Toddlers*, and *Draw Letters and Numbers ABC*. If you choose to use some apps during this stage, keep in mind the guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics, discussed earlier in Chapter 1. According to those guidelines, up to an hour per day of supervised time with high-quality programming or apps, is appropriate for the 2-5 age group.

Purchase or make a large colorful alphabet/number poster for the wall, hung low enough so your child can reach it. Ask him to point to various letters or numbers you specify, and then reverse roles and allow him to quiz you. (Deliberately make some mistakes so he gets the pleasure of correcting you.)

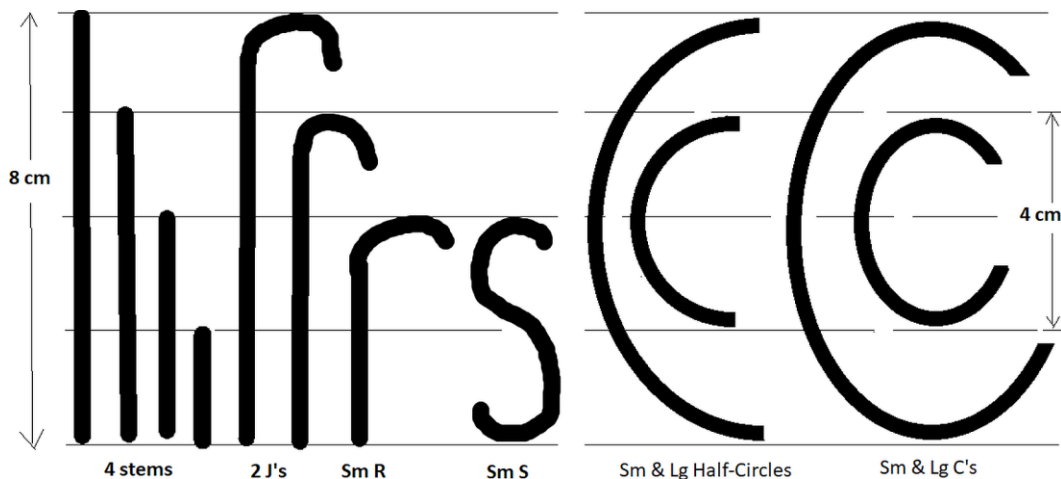
Count things with him wherever you go. Have him use his fingers to show he understands the meanings of the numbers 1 through 10. It won’t be long before he’s counting independently. If he is old enough to use a crayon or a pencil, have him draw 2 stars or 3 circles or 4 triangles or 6 rectangles and so on, teaching shapes as well as quantities. If he shows the slightest interest, show him what comes after 10. He can show his age on his fingers. You can show him your age by writing down all the numbers needed to count from 1 to whatever that figure might be.

When you go for a walk, encourage your child to “read” car license plates. These plates typically mix uppercase letters with numbers. Children love to recite these letters and numbers when walking or riding in a stroller. This activity can't be done at the start of Stage 0, but as your child starts to make progress, she’ll begin to enjoy this challenge. Also, if you’re doing shapes, point out the octagons (stop signs) on your walk and have her count the number of sides in this common shape. Do the same for signs shaped like rectangles, circles, or triangles.

With only 12 different shapes, your child can “build” each upper and lowercase letter side by side. For this more ambitious project, you’ll need some real or homemade clay. To find the real stuff, google “Sculpey Clay” or “Crayola Clay” on Amazon. The Sculpey clay needs oven-drying for your shapes to cure and harden; the Crayola version will air dry. For homemade versions of “clay,” google it and you’ll find multiple sites and recipes. Some use salt and flour, others use baking soda and cornstarch. For under 10 dollars, the real clay works better than the homemade (because it’s more durable) but both will do the job.

The 12 shapes and their sizes are shown below. You’ll need to make 3 of each stem and 2 of everything else (except for the small S – you need only one of that shape). Thus, the 12 pictured shapes become 27 individual pieces. For the 2 half-circles, start with stems 6 and 13 cm long and then curve them into the size indicated on the drawing. For the 2 J’s, start with stems 8 and 10 cm long; for the two C’s, 10 and 20 cm long. The small R starts out at 6 cm while the small S starts at 8 cm. Each piece should be about the width of a pencil.

I chose these quantities and shapes so an upper and lowercase version of any letter can be built *at the same time*. All uppercase letters will be 8 cm high. Lowercase letters without stems (a, e, u) will be 4 cm high; those with stems will be 6 or 8 cm high, depending on the length of the stem chosen. I suggest giving your child a blank piece of paper with a single line drawn on it so she can practice correct placement of the letters she builds. (Some letters must extend below the line.) There’s nothing like piecing something together in order to remember its shape forever!



If you don't immediately see how these shapes can be formed into any upper or lowercase letter, some clarifications might help. The small R shape in the above drawing, besides being used for small R, is also used in the construction of small H, M, N, and U. Large S can be made from 2 half-circles. The small C is used for small A, B, D, E, G, P, and Q as well. Either J can also be used as the stem for small G. If you prefer complete O's without piecing them together from the half-circles, use a piece of clay 24 cm long for the large O and 12 cm long for the small. For dotting the small I and the small J, use Cheerios.

You may have other ideas as well; use whatever works to help your child learn to identify his letters and numbers. You're done with Stage 0 when your child knows all the letter names and can match the upper and lowercase version of each letter. If you're doing letter recognition *gradually* with your child, you can move on as soon as she can identify the upper and lowercase version of the 8 letters needed for Stage 1.

Parent Note: Stage 0 is preliminary to this reading program. A beginner should be able to distinguish the letters before he can learn what sound each letter symbolizes. Stages 1-17 constitute the core program. You'll notice I don't include any guidelines for how much time to devote to each of the forthcoming stages. But keep this in mind: these 17 stages are going to take *roughly* a year. For some children, it may be only 9 months; for others, a year-and-a-half.

Let's assume a year. That's 52 weeks divided by 17 stages – or roughly 3 weeks per stage. But here's the problem with such a tidy calculation. The stages are not of equal length or difficulty. Some stages may go faster than 3 weeks; others will most certainly go slower. My advice is to not concern yourself with time. Stay with the topics in a given stage until you are convinced your child has mastered what is presented there.

Topics within stages are divided by horizontal lines. These lines simply signal the next topic. They do not mean all the material between horizontal lines should be done in a single lesson. They are simply logical breaks.

Stage 1

Sounds of A, E, I, O, U, M, N, S

Reading Begins

You're ready to get started with this reading program if your child can identify, minimally, the letters A, E, I, O, U, M, N, and S, as well as their lowercase counterparts. I recommend using terms like "big" and "little" rather than "uppercase" and "lowercase."

It's important to do all 17 stages *in order*. This Synthetic Phonics program is *carefully* sequenced; every stage builds on all the previous stages and no stage uses information or knowledge from a future stage. Stages 1 through 6 lay the foundation for everything that follows. In these initial stages, you'll teach individual letter sounds, as well as the critical skill of *blending*.

Parent Note: For this and the following stages, you'll need a large stack of blank 4 x 6 index cards (for making flash cards) and a few magic markers.

I would like to re-emphasize here what I said in Chapter 3. In these initial stages, you'll be presenting an *illusion* to your child: that English reading and spelling are regular. In other words, you'll be acting as though each letter in the alphabet symbolizes a single sound, and each sound (phoneme) is spelled by a single letter. You want the learner, especially if the learner is a young child, to conclude that reading is a logical, rational skill – like any skill worth pursuing. Only after he has started reading with some competence and confidence will you gradually start showing him that English has some spelling (and therefore reading) irregularities. In Stages 1 through 6, everything you teach him will be reasonable, logical, and without exception.

Another reminder: daily reading to your child is an important motivational part of this program. Whatever time you make available for reading lessons, I recommend you devote about half that time to teaching the phonics specified in this book, and the other half to reading high-quality children's literature to your child. Phonics can sometimes be challenging and it often requires significant concentration. On the other hand, the time your child spends listening to your stories is enjoyable and relaxing for him. Your story-telling is not for the purpose of teaching "sight words." Rather, it's to hook your child on the beauty of literature, to enhance her language skills and her vocabulary,

and to help engage both her mind and her emotions through discussions about the book's plot and characters.

First, let's deal with some preliminaries you, as the teacher, need to understand now, and your child will need to understand a little later. All the vowels – A, E, I, O, and U – symbolize two primary sounds: one “short” and the other “long.” (If necessary, review for yourself the list of all 44 phonemes in Table 1.) The other letters of the alphabet, called *consonants*, have a single primary sound. Of course, that's not entirely accurate. For example, G can have a J sound (GENIUS), C can have an S sound (CITY), and S can have a Z sound (HIS). But these are nuances you'll deal with later. For now, until midway through Stage 6, you'll be acting as though each of the 26 letters of the alphabet symbolizes a single sound. This means that for now, the five vowels will have *only their short sound*. Long vowel sounds will start appearing in Stage 10.

As the teacher, you need to be clear in your own mind precisely what these five short vowel sounds are before you can teach them to someone else. The consonant sounds are straightforward, but the short vowel sounds can be tricky to master, for you and for your child. (Don't refer to these sounds as “short” with your child. As far as he is concerned, all letters, including the vowels, have only one sound at this point in the program.) Let's look at these short vowel sounds first. You can hear them at the start of the following words:

Vowel	Word	Sound
A	at	/a/
E	end	/e/
I	in	/i/
O	ox	/o/
U	up	/u/

To firmly lock these five vowel sounds in your memory, practice saying them with a CK attached: ACK, ECK, ICK, OCK, UCK. Then begin saying them *without* the CK attached: /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, /u/.

These 5 individual vowel sounds are critically important in this and the next 6 stages. As you practice saying these vowel sounds to yourself, notice the shape of your mouth. You'll find the sounds /a/ and /o/ both require a fully-opened mouth. The sound /e/ requires a half-open mouth; both /i/ and /u/ require the mouth to be open only slightly. Once you have these 5 sounds mastered (can you do them backwards? in any order?),

you'll be ready to begin this stage with your child. As you do, remember that the specialized notation using slash marks is not for him – he need only produce the correct sound, verbally, when you ask for it.

In this stage, you'll initially teach your child the sound of 8 letters: A, E, I, O, U, M, N, and S. Why these 8 letters to start? The 5 vowel sounds must be learned at the outset because there is a vowel sound in every syllable of every word. I picked the consonants M, N, and S because their sounds, /m/, /n/, and /s/, are *sustainable*, just like the sounds of the 5 vowels. Your child can make the sounds of each of these 8 letters for as long as he pleases, until his breath gives out. This will make teaching the skill of blending much easier. As soon as your child has mastered these 8 sustainable sounds, you'll teach him how to blend those sounds into familiar words such as MOM, MAN, SUN, MESS, SAM, US, and IN. In other words, he'll start reading!

Blending non-sustainable sounds is a little trickier; you'll delay doing that until Stage 2. Examples of sounds that are not sustainable are the sounds of the letters B, D, G, J, K, P, and T.

OK, time to start working with your child. The first goal is to teach her the 5 vowel sounds you just taught yourself. How might you go about doing this? Initially, simply tell her:

“A says /a/”

Don't show her anything written – simply tell her what A says. You might try this: Dogs say “woof,” cats say “meow,” A says /a/. Now ask her:

“Do you know a fruit that is red and that starts with the sound /a/?”

If she comes up with the word, fine. If not, tell her:

“Apple begins with /a/” (exaggerate the A sound in apple.)

Ask her if she can hear that same A sound, /a/, at the beginning of these words: ALLIGATOR, ACT, ANT, ASK, AFTER, AX, ASHES, ATLAS, ATTIC, ANIMAL, ADD, ANTLERS, ACTION, AFRICA, ALLEY, AMBULANCE, ALPHABET, ASTEROID. You can come up with others if you like; maybe she can too. Stay away from words that do not have the correct short A sound even though they begin with A – words like AUTO, ALIEN, and AHEAD. Now ask: “What does A say?” and let her answer correctly: /a/.

Next, tell your child E says something *much* different from A. Ask if he knows what an ECHO is. See if he can say only the first sound in the word ECHO, namely, /e/. Ask him if he can hear that same sound, /e/, at the start of these words: ELEPHANT, ENTER, END, ED, ELBOW, EXIT, EXTRA, ESCAPE, ELK, EDGE, ENJOY, ENGINE, ELEVATOR, EMPTY, EVERY, EXERCISE. Once he's got it, review both letters covered so far: "What does A say? What does E say?"

In a similar manner, teach your child the sounds of I, O, and U. Tell her what these sounds are, and ask if she can hear the sound in some words. Here are suggestions:

- I: in, igloo, iguana, if, imp, itch, insect, inch, ignore, inside, invent, India, Italy, ink, icky, ill
- O: ox, octopus, October, otter, olive, odd, omelet, object, opposite, ostrich, oxygen, opera, obstacle
- U: up, umbrella, ugly, under, uncle, usher, us, udder, ulcer, ump, unfair, unless, ugh!

To review,

whenever you ask:

"What does A say?"

"What does E say?"

"What does I say?"

"What does O say?"

"What does U say?"

what you want to hear is:

the first sound in the word AT

the first sound in the word EBB

the first sound in the word IN

the first sound in the word OX

the first sound in the word UP

It doesn't matter if this process takes 2 days or 2 weeks. These 5 phonemes are crucial. Everything you'll do with your child through Stage 9 depends on his quick familiarity with these 5 short vowel sounds. Review them with your child throughout the day. Sometimes ask for these sounds one at a time; sometimes ask for them all at once: /a/ /e/ /i/ /o/ /u/. Don't always do them in the same order. Reverse roles and let your child ask you what these letters say. Give an occasional wrong answer and see if he corrects you. Sometimes, ask the question *in reverse*: "What letter says /e/?" and so on. Make it a game and keep it fun, but keep at it until your child knows these 5 sounds cold.

Next, tell your child she needs to learn what 3 more letters say – and then she's going to start reading. That should help keep her motivated! The 3 letters, mentioned earlier,

are M, N, and S. Try to keep a single, common word associated with each letter as an aid for your child to remember the correct sound. I suggest the following:

A – apple
 E – elephant
 I – igloo (or iguana)
 O – ox (or otter)
 U – umbrella (or underwear)
 M – man (or moose)
 N – nose
 S – snake

Point out to your child that the *name* of each of these 3 new letters (EM, EN, and ESS) suggests its sound:

EM says MMMMM (M says /m/)
 EN says NNNNN (N says /n/)
 ESS says SSSSS (S says /s/)

Here are some words that have the target sounds:

- S: sun, soup, Santa, sip, step, spin, see, slurp, stick, smile, snot
- M: me, my, mouse, man, map, mad, middle, munch, mist
- N: no, never, new, net, near, nickel, napkin, news, nest

You'll find your child masters these 3 new sounds quickly compared to the 5 vowel sounds. Once you are sure she knows all 8 sounds, it's time to start blending and reading!

At this point, not only does your child recognize the upper and lowercase versions of A, E, I, O, U, M, N, and S, he knows what these letters "say," and he knows a common word associated with each of them. Next, you're going to teach him how to *blend* the sounds of these 8 letters into one-syllable words. Initially, there are three questions I'd like to discuss with you:

- How many one-syllable "words" can be formed with only these 8 letters?
- How many of these "words" are actual words, and how many are only pseudo words?

- Is it worth blending sounds if the result is only a pseudo word?

Mathematically, it's easy to answer the first question. Let's assume a "word" will have this configuration: a consonant sound, followed by a vowel sound, followed by another consonant sound – CVC for short. For the first consonant sound, there are, currently, 4 possibilities: M, N, S, or a blank (no letter at all). For the vowel sound, there are 5 possibilities, and for the final consonant sound, 3 possibilities: M, N, or S. Therefore, the total number of CVC combinations, using these 8 letters, is $4 \times 5 \times 3$, or 60 one-syllable words. I've listed these 60 "words" in Appendix A.

If you look at this appendix, you'll notice about half are actual words (in boldface), and the other half are only pseudo words. However, all 60 are embedded in more complex words. For example, MUN, by itself, is not a real word, but it's part of larger words, such as MUNCH and MUNDANE. In addition, two of the pseudo words (UN and NON) are important prefixes and one (NESS) is an important suffix. So, my answer to the third question (above) is a qualified "yes." Your child will blend sounds into pseudo words here, in Stage 1, because one of your main goals right now is to give him "blending" practice with sustainable sounds. However, there'll be no need to keep blending sounds into pseudo words after this stage; there will be more than enough real words to keep both you and your child busy!

Appendix A is for you, not for your child. Important note: The actual word SON (the opposite of DAUGHTER) is not in boldface in the appendix. That's because SON is an irregular word. To be regular, it would have to be pronounced as it is in SONIC or SONNET – with the sound /o/. Instead, as a stand-alone English word, it's pronounced SUN. Since you are not dealing with exceptions right now, you want your child to pronounce S-O-N with a short O sound – so it rhymes with CON.

In Appendix A, I use a single final S for some of the "words" and a double final S for others. Here's my explanation: I always use a double S if it makes a pseudo word into an actual word – MESS and MASS for instance. I use a single S when that results in an actual word – US and SIS for instance. I use ISS instead of IS because the latter is an irregular word (due to the final Z sound). You'll cover the word IS in Stage 6.

I could have listed either AS or ASS because both are actual words. But the English word AS, like IS, is irregular due to the final Z sound. At this point in the program, you should write it with a double S and it should be pronounced like it is in the word PASS – where the S says /s/. Let's get back to instruction...

To start teaching the skill of **blending**, pick words from Appendix A that are already in your child's vocabulary, like MAN, MEN, MISS, SUN, SAM, AM, IN, US, AN, MESS. In fact, you can begin with everyone's all-time favorite word: MOM. (Outside the US, MUM is probably the better word to start.) Sitting at a table with your child, write the following on a blank piece of paper, with the letters spread out as indicated:

M O M

Now, ask your child to make the sound of a letter *for as long as you're pointing to it*. (This will be possible for her because all the letter sounds, so far, are sustainable.) When she's ready, point to the first M for about *two seconds*. When time is up, immediately point to the O for another 2 seconds, and then to the final M, for 2 seconds more. So far, so good. Now ask if she's ready to do it a little faster. This time point to each letter for about *one second*. Then ask if she's ready to go even faster. Do it a third time, pointing at each letter for about a *half-second* each. Now ask if she's ready to go *really* fast! When she's ready, sweep your finger smoothly across all the letters, taking only about a half-second for the entire sweep. As she says the word, does she recognize it? Does she hear that these 3 sounds, when blended together quickly and smoothly, form the word MOM? Congratulate her for reading (decoding) her very first word.

Write the word MOM again, 3 times, on the paper, but this time in the normal way, reviewing uppercase, lowercase, and mixed case. The paper now looks like this:

M O M
 MOM
 mom
 Mom

Make the point that this is the word MOM and it can be written in any of these three ways. Your child should now be eager to try a new word:

M A N

Repeat the entire MOM exercise, pointing just as you did above, but now with this new word. Once he sees what's going on, write the word in the normal way:

M A N
 MAN
 man
 Man

Get out your blank 4 x 6 index cards. On a single card, write “MOM” in uppercase on one side and “mom” in lowercase on the other. Use a magic marker for this, making it nice and large. Take a second card and do the same with MAN. Show both cards to your child and then place the cards to the side. Tell him that you’re going to collect all the words he can read on these cards. While only 2 words now, this stack will grow quickly as you progress through the early stages.

Do MESS next. Set it up on the sheet of paper this way:

M E SS

If your child asks about the two S’s, tell him sometimes words that end in the sound /s/ have one S, and sometimes they have two. If he persists in wanting to know *why*, tell him the double S means to hold the S sound a tiny bit longer. You don’t want to make a big deal or an exception of these double-S words! (In fact, the double S is only a spelling convention.) When you are done with the word MESS, pointing, just as you did above with MOM and MAN, make up your 3rd flash card.

Next, tell your child you’re going to take away the M from MAN and create a brand new word:

A N

Again, use the pointing procedure from above. Once she is comfortable with the word, write:

A N
AN
an
An

Make a 4th index card. You’ll use these index cards later as flash cards for the purpose of review. Use this word in some sentences for her. Don’t write these sentences; do it verbally:

“I would like to have AN apple.”
“AN alligator just ran through the kitchen.”
“She dropped AN egg on the floor.”

In general, if you’re not sure your child understands the meaning of a word, discuss it with her and use it in some (amusing) sentences. See if she can come up with her own

sentences. At this point you might also tell her that, with an additional N, the word AN becomes a common girl's name: ANN.

Next, do SAM in the usual way, and afterwards, eliminate the S for the word AM. Discuss these two words and use them in sentences as well. Now you have 6 flash cards (7 if you include ANN). Mix them up and see if your child knows all six. **Note:** your child is not memorizing these as sight words, he's reading them based on his knowledge of the sounds of the component letters. This is precisely what distinguishes Synthetic Phonics from all Whole Word methods.

Over the next period of time (it doesn't matter how long), go through all 60 "words" in Appendix A with your child. Do the words he knows first. Then do the words he probably doesn't know, like SIN, MASS, and NUN. (I sure knew these 3 words in Catholic grade school in the 50s!) This will give you the opportunity to teach him some new vocabulary. Define words that are new and use them in colorful sentences. Finally, do the pseudo words. If your child can read SEN now, in Stage 1, then reading SEND and SENT in Stage 2 will be trivial for him. Similarly, if he can read NUM now, he'll more easily read NUMBER and STERNUM later. When he reads something that is not an actual word, tell him a "big" word that *does* use that sound (see Appendix A for suggestions).

Parent Note: In no stage beyond this one will it be necessary for you to ask your child to read pseudo words. You're doing so here because there are only 60 "words" possible with her current 8-letter toolkit and because the primary skill you're trying to teach in this stage is **blending** individual phonemes. Practicing this skill is independent of whether the result is an actual word. Also, I have shown all 60 "words" are important parts of longer words your child will eventually need to read.

You're done with this stage when your child can read all 60 flash cards without struggling. This will take time. However, the blending skill learned here will be invaluable to what follows. I'll end this stage by trying to anticipate some questions you may have:

- For the time being, O *always* says /o/. Therefore, make sure your child pronounces SON so that it rhymes with CON. The letter O actually symbolizes many different sounds (see Appendix Q). You and your child will deal with all of them later in the program.

- You may find at some point, it becomes unnecessary to spread out the letters of a word on paper and point to the letters individually. If this happens, simply show your child the word on an index card, written normally, and let her sound out (decode) the word on her own. This is a good sign!
- Both AS and ASS are actual words in English. However, at this point in the program, S says only /s/, not /z/. You can share as many of the multiple meanings of ASS with your child as you see fit: a member of the horse family, a foolish person, slang for buttocks.
- You're purposely avoiding the English words IS and AS (for now) because the S in those 2 words has a Z sound. This is not only an undesirable complication, but it's also a sound you have not yet covered. (You'll do so in Stage 6).
- The two and three-syllable words in the appendix marked as examples are definitely not for your child to read. They are there only to convince *you* that even the pseudo words are worth decoding.
- In the US, the English word ON is actually pronounced /aw/ + /n/, not /o/ + /n/. However, your child has heard and has used this word many times; simply help with the correct pronunciation. You don't want to make this simple word an exception.
- EN and EM are actual words but they are rarely used. Their definitions involve units of measurement in type-setting. I suggest you treat these two words (and ESS) as words that are simply the *names* of the letters N, M, and S (just as SAM and ANN are the names of people).

Stage 2

Sounds of D, G, P, T

Consonant Blends

Your child now knows how to *spell* 8 of the 44 sounds of English. Alternately, you could say your child now knows how to *sound* 8 of the 26 letters in the alphabet. In addition, she knows how to blend these sounds into words she understands. This is already an enormous accomplishment. By any standard, she's beginning to read.

You'll be adding only 4 new letters and their sounds in this stage, but that will greatly expand the number of words she can decode. To see why this is so, consider the fact that the 60 "words" in Stage 1 had either the structure VC or CVC (where V stands for vowel sound and C for consonant sound). Now you'll be expanding her toolkit to 12 sounds: the 8 already mastered plus 4 new sounds: /d/, /g/, /p/, and /t/. With these 4 newcomers, however, words having *consonant blends* become possible for the first time: 4 beginning blends (SM, SN, ST, and SP), as well as 7 ending blends (ST, SP, MP, ND, NT, PT, and MPT). I have all the consonant blends listed in Appendix R.

So, besides the simple VC and CVC structures that you covered in the previous stage, you'll now help your child decode more complex structures like CCVC (STOP), CVCC (DAMP), and CCVCC (STAND). You might be wondering how many single-syllable "words" are possible now, with these 4 new letters. Let's do the math again. To begin the word, you can now choose from 7 single consonants, 4 beginning consonant blends, or a blank (total: 12). For the middle of the word, you still choose from among 5 vowels. For the end of the word, you can pick from 7 single consonants and 7 ending consonant blends (total: 14). Therefore, the total number of possible "words" expands to $12 \times 5 \times 14 = 840$ possibilities! This is a huge jump from the 60 possible words in Stage 1.

This math dictates that I not attempt to list all possible "words," including pseudo words, as I did in the previous stage. If you look at Appendix B, you'll see I list only that subset of these 840 possibilities that are actual words. There are about 160 of them. So, in this stage, you'll gradually be adding up to 160 new words to your child's stack of index cards. The reason I say "up to" 160 is that your child can master the new sounds and the new consonant blends in this stage without covering every single word in Appendix B. You may wish to eliminate some of the more obscure words like TAD, SOD, and SUMP. Doing so will not have any serious effect on the learning process. I hope, however, you'll use this opportunity to continue expanding your child's vocabulary.

You probably noticed none of these 4 new sounds are sustainable. Therefore, the method from the previous stage, of pointing to a letter for a second or two while your child makes its sound, won't work here. That's okay. It simply means you'll now start teaching the topic of blending in a different manner.

What exactly does a consonant like D say? Well, it symbolizes the first sound (phoneme) you can hear in each of the following words: DAN, DEN, DIP, DOT, DUG. What is that sound? Traditional phonics holds that "D says duh," but that's neither accurate nor helpful. "Duh" is the combination /d/ + /u/. To teach your child that D says "duh" is useful if the word he's trying to decode is DUCK. However, if the word is DAD, DECK, or DOUGHNUT, "duh" is unhelpful, even misleading.

Let's plan to deal with this problem directly. With non-sustainable sounds starting to appear, I suggest you now start teaching him that *to decide how to pronounce a consonant, he should always look at the vowel that follows it*. In other words, don't ask him "what does D say?" because D's sound can't be sustained and it's difficult to answer such a question accurately. Instead, ask "what are the 5 sounds of D?" The answer you want is /da/, /de/, /di/, /do/, and /du/ – the D sound blended with each of the 5 short vowel sounds he already knows so well. (I am using /da/ as shorthand for /d/ + /a/; /de/ as shorthand for /d/ + /e/, and so on.)

The idea here is that when he attempts to decode a word like DEN, he won't think "duh + eh + nnn" (trying to blend 3 sounds, one of which, "duh", is incorrect), but simply "/de/ + /n/." Since he already knows the 5 short vowel sounds, /a/ /e/ /i/ /o/ /u/, it's a simple *additional* step to ask him for those 5 sounds with the D attached to them: /da/ /de/ /di/ /do/ /du/. You'll see how easy this will make the blending he must do later on in this stage. Keep in mind, that at this point in the program, /do/ is not to be pronounced as in the sentence "DO your work," but as it is in the word DOT, with a short O sound. The word DO is irregular and it will be covered later.

Ok, let's get back to instruction. In this stage, your child first needs to understand the difference between a *vowel* and a *consonant*. After reviewing the 5 vowel sounds with her, tell her A, E, I, O, and U are the most important letters in the alphabet. Allow her to examine a book (or magazine or newspaper) and ask her to look at as many words as she pleases. Does she see why these 5 letters are so important? If not, help her out: (almost) every word she sees has at least one of these 5 letters. They are the most-used letters (and the most-used sounds) in our language. Tell her we call them **vowels**. Let her look again at the flash cards from Stage 1 to verify that all the words she can already read have a vowel.

Explain that all the other letters in the alphabet are called **consonants**. Remind her that she already knows the sounds of 5 vowels and 3 consonants. Then let her know what's coming next: the 4 new sounds of the consonants P, T, D, and G.

Parent Note: You might think that to teach a child the letters DO say /d/ + /o/, as in the word DOT, only to later teach her DO says /d/ + /ew/, as in DO YOUR WORK, will cause confusion. That has not been my experience. In any case, *many* letters have more than one sound. DO says /d/ + /o/ in many words such as DOCK, DON, DOT, DOLLAR, DOMINATE, DODGE, DOFF, and ADOPT. DO also commonly says /d/ + /O/ (long O) in words like DONOR, DONUT, DOMESTIC, DONATE, DOSE, AVOCADO, TORNADO, and TORPEDO. In fact, the *least* common way to pronounce DO is /d/ + /ew/ as in the common English word DO. The word DO is an exception that will be covered in Stage 8. The mismatch between the sounds and the letters in the word DO is serious enough that DO is on the Tricky 50 list in Appendix S.

Start your child off with the letter P. Tell him you'll say some words that start with the P sound and he should listen closely. As you speak these words, exaggerate the sound of P: PICKLE, POT, PENCIL, PAN, PINK, PRETZEL, PIZZA, PEE, PUZZLE. Next, tell him you have 5 words that start and end with P: PEP, POP, PEEP, PUMP, POOP. Now ask him: What do you think P says?

His response is likely to be a combination of the P sound and some vowel. If he says "peh," tell him that sounds like P with an E attached: /pe/. If he says "puh," tell him that sounds like P with a U attached: /pu/. It's difficult to isolate the P sound from the vowel sound that follows it. As the two of you try to do so, the sound of P becomes almost inaudible – like a puff of air. Discuss this fact with him, as well as the fact that the P sound, unlike the M, N, and S sounds, is not sustainable. (We can't hold on to it. It quickly disappears!)

Now, hold up one of your index cards with the 5 vowels spread out from left to right:

a e i o u

Reviewing, ask for all five sounds. He's an expert on these by now, so his verbal response is: /a/ /e/ /i/ /o/ /u/. Now hold up a second index card with the following written on it:

pa pe pi po pu

Ask: “What does P say with the vowels attached?” or “What are the 5 sounds of P?” What you want to hear, of course, is /pa/ /pe/ /pi/ /po/ /pu/. Help him get to the 5 correct sounds. He simply needs to attach that puff of air – the P sound – to the vowel sounds he already knows. Don’t let him say any of these sounds using 2 syllables, for instance, “puh, eh” instead of simply /pe/ for the second one. What you want to hear is PAT, PET, PIT, POT, PUTT – but without that final T sound. (Reminder: /a/ is the first sound in APPLE not the sound you hear in the word PASTA.)

Once your child is comfortable with the 5 sounds of P, prepare similar index cards for M, N, and S:

ma	me	mi	mo	mu
na	ne	ni	no	nu
sa	se	si	so	su

M, N, and S are the consonants you already did with him in Stage 1. Their sounds are sustainable. However, going forward, you want him to *habitually* notice the vowel following the consonant before he decides how to articulate it, even when the consonant is sustainable.

When you hold up the M card, ask him for *all* the sounds of M. What you want to hear is /ma/ /me/ /mi/ /mo/ /mu/ – MAD, MED, MID, MOD, MUD – but without the final /d/ sound. Coach him as much as necessary to get to this point. It shouldn’t take long. Note: ME, of course, is an English word, but that is *not* the pronunciation you want here. Here you want /m/ + /e/: the sound of the word MET but without the T. You’ll get to the word ME in Stage 7. Next, do the same with the N and S cards you prepared above. Stay with it until your child can respond with the correct sounds:

/na/ /ne/ /ni/ /no/ /nu/ and /sa/ /se/ /si/ /so/ /su/

Same word of caution here: NO and SO are English words. Nonetheless, the pronunciation you want here should use the short O sound – as in the words NOD and SOD – but without the D.

Next, what you did above with the letter P, you must do with the remaining 3 letters: D, G, and T (DEE, JEE, and TEE). For D and T, the *name* of the letter suggests its sound; for G, that’s not the case. Take all the time you need. Choose some good words that start with these letters in order to introduce your child to the new sounds. Here are some suggestions:

- G: girl, goose, gift, gum, get, gap, gas, grief, game, God, giggle, gust, gal (but not GEM or GYPSY or any other word where the G has a J sound! You won't cover that situation until Stage 16).
- D: dog, dad, dirt, danger, Dan, doughnut, dinosaur, dip, don't, damp, done, dead.
- T: Tom, tap, tender, tip, tree, turtle, toy, tent, trip, top, taste, tooth, tub, tiny, two.

Once you've introduced each of these new sounds, prepare index cards similar to the ones you did above:

ga	ge	gi	go	gu
da	de	di	do	du
ta	te	ti	to	tu

As you hold up each card, once again ask for the 5 sounds of the letter. Just as before, note that GO, TO, and DO are actual English words. For now, however, your child should pronounce all of them with a short O sound (as in GOT, TOT, and DOT). The English words GO, TO, and DO are exceptions and you'll deal with them later.

Your child shouldn't need these specially prepared 5-sound cards for long. It's easy, throughout the day, to simply ask her for all the sounds of any of the consonants already covered. Again, encourage her to quiz you as well. You're finished with the above when she knows the 5 sounds of each consonant covered so far: M, N, S, D, P, T, and G. Take all the time you need.

Now, look again at Appendix B. Initially, focus only on the CVC words with your child; you'll do the VC words and the consonant blends later. There are about 90 such CVC words. (Notice that words in Appendix B, like PASS and PUTT, are listed with the CVC group instead of the CVCC group. That's because SS and TT are not blends. They represent a single sound. All the words in the CVC category have exactly 3 sounds.) Eliminate some words if you wish, and then place the remaining words on index cards as before: lowercase on one side and upper on the other. Now you're ready to focus once again on blending, but in a manner different from what you did in Stage 1.

Pick one of the cards for your child – let's say it's the card with PET written on it – but hold it in such a way as to hide the T with your finger. He should say /pe/ as a single syllable, correctly blending /p/ and /e/. This is precisely what the two of you were doing earlier when you practiced the 5 sounds of P. Your job now is to make sure

he produces the correct single-syllable sound. Once he does, take your finger off the T and ask him to read the whole word. What does he do?

- Does he read the word PET and recognize it? If so, congratulate him and see if he can use the word in a sentence.
- Does he not recognize the word because he holds the PE sound too long before he adds the sound of the T, making it sound like a two-syllable word? (He can do this because the E sound is sustainable.) Tell him to speed it up!
- Does he say PET smoothly as a single pulse of sound, but still look confused? Define the word PET for him! Tell him he's done it!

Discuss with him what just happened: he correctly pronounced the P sound by looking at the vowel that followed the P. Then he simply added on the /t/ sound to read the whole word. Easy, right? Place the PET card off to the side where he can still see it and pick another card. Let's say it's the card with POT written on it. Once again, hide the T. Once he correctly pronounces /po/ as a single syllable, uncover the T and let him read the whole word. Place the POT card next to the PET card.

You could similarly do PIT, PAT, and PUTT. (You may need to define PUTT.) By the end of this session, you could have these 5 cards neatly lined up so that your child can see them all. Now let him read all 5 cards. Once he's done so successfully, rearrange the order of the cards and have him read them again. This forces him to look carefully at the vowel.

Next time, let's assume you pick the card with MUD written on it. Show it to your child with the D covered. Stay with her until she says /mu/ as a single syllable (/m/ + /u/). Then reveal the D and she should read the whole word: MUD.

Plan, at least initially, to go through all the CVC words from Appendix B in the above manner. I say "initially" because at some point, it may become clear that she no longer needs you to hide that last letter. She can simply read the whole word at once, the way you and I do. I suggest you start testing this theory after 20 words or so. Hold up the card with the next new word, but this time *without* the last letter hidden. Ask her if she can simply do all the blending silently, in her head, and then say the entire word as a single pulse of sound. If she has trouble with this, simply go back to hiding the last letter with your finger in order to help her out.

Each day, review the stack of Stage 1 and Stage 2 cards that she has already successfully decoded. Until she can read the whole CVC word as a single pulse of sound, the blending should always be CV + C: the first consonant and vowel as a single sound,

blended with the final letter. Define and discuss words as necessary, and have her use the word in a sentence to be sure she understands it. Take the time to build vocabulary.

When you finish with the CVC words in Appendix B, do the 10 or so VC words next. Three of them are high-frequency words: UP, AT, IT. These 3 words (plus DID) combined with US, AM, AN, IN, and ON from Stage 1, give your child 9 of the most frequent words in English. High-frequency words are always boxed in the appendices. In doing these short VC words, you don't have to hide the last letter. Since these words start with a vowel, she can hold that initial sound for as long as she wants. When she gets tired of holding it, she need only make the sound of the second letter. Tell her to speed it up and she'll be saying the word automatically!

Finally, you can focus on the consonant *blends* in Appendix B. Your child is ready to do these only if he has reached the point of being able to handle most of the CVC words in Appendices A and B *without* the help of you covering up the last letter. In other words, he can read these CVC words like you and I read them – not as fast certainly, and with some hesitancy no doubt – but he can read most of these words as a single, smooth sound.

If he is not yet at this point, delay moving on until he masters this skill. You have over 100 CVC (and VC) words on index cards from Appendices A and B. Keep reviewing these with him. Perhaps, more importantly, keep reviewing the 5 sounds of each of the consonants M, N, S, P, T, D, and G.

For the consonant blends in Appendix B, you'll be hiding letters with your finger again – but in a *different* manner than above. Place these words on flash cards as usual. Keep the double blends (CCVCC) for last. Explain to your child that she has not yet blended two *consonants* together – and that she must learn this because it happens a lot! Two consonants that flow together easily are S and T. Can she figure out how ST might sound?

Ask if she wants to try reading a 4-sound word. (Every word up to this point has had only 2 or 3 phonemes.) Have a word ready to go from the beginning ST group in the appendix (there is an ending ST group there as well). Let's say you pick the word STEP. Show her the word, but with the S covered by your finger. So for her, it's simply another run-of-the-mill CVC word. At this point, she should be good at these, so she reads TEP. Now reveal the S and ask her to read the entire word smoothly and quickly: STEP. If she doesn't recognize the word, it's because she's holding the S sound too long.

Next, have her do the same with the word STOP. Have her first read the CVC word TOP. Once she does, reveal the S: STOP. Does she see how easily S and T blend together? Tell her most consonants do not blend nicely at all. Have some fun with her trying to blend MN or DG – it can't be done without inserting a vowel. Now finish up the ST group with her. Do the other groups of *beginning* blends (SM-, SN-, and SP-) in the same manner. As you go through these 4 groups of words, start probing to see if she really needs you to hide that initial S in order for her to read the word. She should not need that help for too long. There are some amusing words in these 4 groups that should make her laugh: SPIT, SPAT, SNIT, SNOT.

For the various groups of *final* blends in Appendix B, do the *opposite* of the above. Let's say you pick the word SEND from the -ND group. Now, cover the *final* letter, D, so your child can again focus, just as above, on the simple CVC sound, SEN. (This is one of the pseudo words from Stage 1.) Once he reads SEN, uncover the last letter: SEND. Help by covering letters with your finger only if he needs this aid. Discuss unfamiliar words and use them in sentences to help build vocabulary. Cycle through all the ending blends in the same manner. Over time, you'll notice your child starting to get good at this.

Finally, tell him there can be consonant blends at *both* ends of a word! Such words have 5 separate sounds. He should find this exciting! There are 7 such words in the appendix. Take one of them, STAMP for instance, and hide *both* the S and the P with your fingers. Have him read the CVC pseudo word: TAM. Show the S and he reads STAM – now show the P: STAMP. Do it the other way as well. After he reads TAM, show the P: TAMP. Then show the S: STAMP. It works either way. Enjoy the other six! For that single example of a three-letter consonant blend, TEMPT, start by showing the first 3 letters, then add P, then add the final T.

Since you'll continue using this stage's methodology through Stage 7, let's take the time to sum it up here:

- Using the flash cards you've been creating, spend the first 5-10 minutes of each day's lesson reviewing words your child already knows how to decode.
- Introduce all the new consonant sounds by saying words beginning with those sounds, as you did with the letter P above.
- Make sure your child can express all the *new* consonant sounds properly with each of the 5 short vowels, as you did earlier with P: /pa/ /pe/ /pi/ /po/ /pu/.
- Then go to the appropriate appendix and begin with the CVC words, transferring each of them to their own flash cards. If your child has trouble with a CVC word, hide the *last* letter with your finger and help him read the CV part of the word as a single syllable. Thus, the vowel always informs how the beginning consonant is articulated. Once he does that, reveal the last letter and he should be able to read the entire word.
- Do the VC words. You don't need to hide letters for these short words.
- Do the consonant blends: CCVC, CVCC, or CCVCC. If your child is having trouble with these words, allow her to see only the CVC part of the word. Once she reads that properly, show the other letter(s).
- Hide letters only if she is having trouble. The goal is to have her read without help; do whatever you can to move her toward this goal as soon as possible.

Stage 3

Sounds of B, F, C/K

Spelling Begins

During this stage, you'll be adding 4 new letters and 3 new sounds to your child's phonics toolkit. In addition, you'll start asking her to spell simple words she can already read. Let's discuss the spelling first. It's possible to teach a child to read without ever once asking her to spell something. To do so, however, would be to waste a wonderful opportunity to provide her with an additional important skill. Spelling also has the advantage of reinforcing the "connections" between phonemes and letters needed to automatically create sight words (See Chapter 3.) I strongly recommend you now start to include daily spelling practice.

The Spelling Corner: Since you're teaching your child to read phonetically, teaching him to spell is an easy and valuable add-on to this program. Reading and spelling are *reverse processes*. As your child spells, he encodes sound into text; as he reads, he decodes text back into sound.

The spelling can be done orally or by having your child write the words on paper. When you ask him to spell a word like PET for instance, speak it normally, and then if you think it necessary, exaggerate the two sounds (/pe/ + /t/) as you repeat the word. You can even ask him to spell the sound /pe/ first. Once he gets it (PE), ask for the spelling of the full word, PET. As you start out, keep to the simplest VC and CVC words in your stack of flash cards. Then, as your child begins to get better, start including the CCVC and CVCC words. If necessary, help him with the blends in a step-by-step manner: "Can you spell TAM? Now can you spell TAMP? Now can you spell STAMP?" When you ask him to spell a word like PASS, does he include the second S?

Ask your child to spell *only the words he's already decoded*. Here in Stage 3 then, you'll ask him to spell words only from Stages 1 and 2. Going forward, the words you use for spelling practice should always lag one stage behind the new words and sounds that are currently being studied. While working through Stage 4, you'll ask him to spell Stage 3 words, and so on.

Before you present the new letters and sounds of this stage to your child, let's discuss the letters C and K because these 2 letters have an unusual relationship. They

often have the same sound, /k/, when they start a word: CAB, KEG, KID, COB, CUB. Note that when the vowel is E or I, the letter K is used to start the word, not C. In English, when C is followed by E or I, the C has an S sound, as in CITY or CENTER. If you were to spell KID with a C you would have to pronounce it SID as in the words LUCID and PLACID. This is a complication you'll handle later (Stage 16). For now, you still wish to sustain the illusion that English is 100% regular. Note that when the sound /k/ comes at the end of a word, C and K are used *together* to symbolize it: BACK, DUCK, NECK, KICK.

Ok, let's get back to reading instruction. Explain to your child the letters C and K have the same sound. She may want to know "why?" At this point, you can say that you don't know, or you'll explain later, or you can tell her the truth: the few people who could read and write in the past, pretty much spelled words any way they pleased. Then, in 1806, Noah Webster published his first dictionary. In it, he attempted to reform and standardize English spelling. Some of his suggestions were accepted (CENTER instead of CENTRE, PLOW instead of PLOUGH), and some were not (TUNG instead of TONGUE, WIMMEN instead of WOMEN). One of the innovations that was accepted was the manner in which C and K now interact. Whatever you say, leave the fact that C can sometimes symbolize /s/ for Stage 16.

The name of the letter K (KAY = /k/ + /A/) suggests the sound of both C and K. Here are some words you can use to introduce the new C/K sound: CAT, KETTLE, KIT, CORN, COB, CUT, CRAB, CREEPY, KEEP, COIN, KID. Here are some words that have the same C/K sound at the end: DUCK, BACK, QUICK, LICK, NECK, CLOCK.

Once your child is happily making K sounds, ask her to state the 5 sounds of K when a vowel is attached. The answer you want, of course, is /ka/ /ke/ /ki/ /ko/ /ku/. Then ask for the 5 sounds of C as well. The answer you want is again /ka/ /ke/ /ki/ /ko/ /ku/. Remind her that the sound of a consonant is influenced by the vowel that follows it. This may be an appropriate time to review the 5 sounds of the earlier consonants from Stages 1 and 2.

Now do the same for the letters F (EFF = /e/ + /f/) and B (BEE = /b/ + /E/). Again, the *names* of these two letters suggest the *sound* of the letters. Here are some words for introducing the sounds to your child:

- F: fix, fat, fun, frog, friend, farm, fart, feet, fog, fire, stuff, puff, cliff, life, laugh
- B: boy, box, bed, bean, bite, bug, bag, bone, brown, job, rib, gab

Once your child knows the 5 sounds of C/K, F, and B, ask him which of these new sounds is sustainable. (Only F's sound is sustainable.) Take some time now to review all the consonant sounds to date. This is important because the new words in Appendix C mix all those consonant sounds together. Before asking him to start reading those words, make sure he is confident about the 5 sounds of each of these consonants: M, N, S, D, G, P, T, F, B, and C/K.

Approach the new words in Appendix C much as you did in the last stage. (See the summary in the box at the end of Stage 2). Take special note of the following:

- A few words have an exclamation point. I call them “excitement marks” with my students and tell them it means they should read the word with emotion.
- Point out that words starting with the sound /k/ sometimes use C and sometimes use K – but a word ending in the sound /k/ is always spelled CK.
- CK is not a blend; it spells a single sound: /k/. In that sense, it's similar to SS.
- Once you finish Appendix C with your child, she'll already be able to read over 300 words!
- Final F sounds in a word are usually spelled FF, just as final S sounds were spelled SS in Stage 1.
- Upon finishing Stage 3, take the 300 or so index cards you've made from the words in appendices A, B, and C and review them with your child. If you notice any problems, go back and spend time with that issue.
- The only new consonant blends in this stage are the beginning blends SK- and SC-, and the ending blends, -SK, -CT, and -FT.
- I placed CANT, without an apostrophe, in the appendix. You'll cover contractions (with proper apostrophes) in Stage 16. Until that time, I see no harm here; it's a word children use all the time, and it's perfectly phonetic.

Stage 4

Sound of L

You'll be adding only a single letter and sound in this stage. That's because the letter L adds 13 new consonant blends: 7 beginning blends (BL, CL, FL, GL, PL, SL, SPL) and 6 ending blends (LT, LF, LM, LP, LD, LK). If you examine Appendix D, you'll see this single sound, /l/, adds 150 more words your child, with a little practice, will easily read.

The Spelling Corner: Spelling during this stage should focus on words from Stage 3. Remind your child that words ending in the sound /f/ are spelled FF, words ending in the sound /s/ are usually spelled SS, and words ending in /k/ are spelled CK. Expect spelling mistakes on words beginning with the sound /k/: should they be spelled with a C or a K? At this point, you could accept either spelling or, preferably in my view, you could share this simple rule with your child: use K when the following vowel is E or I.

Let's get started. The name of the consonant L (ELL = /e/ + /l/) suggests its sound. Introduce it by asking your child to listen to some L words: LOVE, LAUGH, LACE, LICORICE, LIKE, LIP, LAP, LATER, LITTLE, SPILL, FILL, BALL. Once he is accurately producing this phoneme, ask if he can explain where the tongue must be in order to correctly make the sound. (The tip of the tongue must be touching the upper front teeth.) Ask if the sound is sustainable. Now see if he can produce the 5 sounds of L when a vowel is attached: /la/ /le/ /li/ /lo/ /lu/. (LACK, LECK, LICK, LOCK, LUCK without the final K sound.)

Once he can accurately produce the 5 sounds of L, transfer the CVC words in Appendix D to flash cards. Can he read most of them without the help of you covering the last letter with your finger? Point out that words ending in the L sound, /l/, are usually spelled LL (similar to SS and FF).

There are a lot of consonant blends in Appendix D. Weed out the more obscure words if you like, and then use the template at the end of Stage 2, to see how he does. Point out how easily the L sound blends with other consonants. Only if necessary should you use your fingers to hide letters on the flash cards. SPLINT is an unusual word with a CCCVCC structure. Use your fingers to hide letters, showing only the CVC part of the

word: LIN. Then reveal the other 3 letters, one at a time. You'll likely need to define the word SPLINT.

Parent Note: At some point, perhaps as early as this stage, but certainly in one of the following stages, it's going to become clear to you that it's no longer necessary to transfer *every single word* in the appendix to its own individual flash card. Flash cards are useful and desirable only for as long as your child needs the support of you covering some letters with your fingers.

Once your child no longer needs that help, it might be more efficient to transfer whole groups of related words to a single sheet of paper for decoding. For instance, in this stage, you might transfer all the BL blends in Appendix D to a single sheet of paper, and then have your child decode the whole group at once. You need to make this call.

Parent Note: Word Walls are commonplace in reading classrooms. You may wish to consider having a dedicated space in your home for a Word Wall where you will post "noteworthy" words for your child. From a Synthetic Phonics viewpoint, there is no reason for any word that is regular (and therefore decodable) to be on a Word Wall – and that includes every word your child has seen so far. Walls should feature words that are in some way "tricky" or irregular. Going forward, I'll mention the words I believe merit the special attention of placement on a Word Wall.

Stage 5

Sound of R

Just as you did in Stage 4, you'll be adding only a single letter and sound in this stage. That's because R, like L, blends with so many other consonants. In this case, there are a total of 26(!) such blends: 10 beginning blends (BR, CR, DR, FR, GR, TR, PR, SCR, SPR, STR) and 16 ending blends (RB, RD, RF, RG, RK, RL, RM, RN, RP, RT, RST, RCH, RSH, RTH, RVE, and RSE).

For now however, you'll only do the 10 beginning blends with your child. That's because when R follows a vowel, it *automatically* changes the sound of the vowel. You can hear this for yourself if you compare the vowel sound in each of the following pairs of words:

cat	car
hen	her
sit	sir
not	nor
fun	fur

For the first word in each of the above pairs, the vowel has the short sound that you and your child have been working on since Stage 1. However, for the second word in each pair, not a single vowel has its short sound. When R follows a vowel, you get some new vowel sounds that are neither short nor long. These new sounds, /ar/, /or/, and /er/, are among the 44 unique phonemes of English listed in Table 1 and in Appendix P. You'll cover these new sounds, and the above *ending* blends, in Stage 12. So why aren't /ir/ and /ur/ included on the list of the 44 English phonemes? They're not unique. You can verify this fact for yourself by noting that HER, SIR, and FUR all rhyme. The sounds, /ir/ and /ur/, are indistinguishable from /er/.

The Spelling Corner: Spelling should now focus on the L words from Stage 4. Remind your child that most words ending in the sound /l/ are spelled LL. Also, the blended sound /k/ + /l/ is always spelled CL (CLASS, CLAP), not KL. As usual, if she has trouble spelling a blend (like PLANT), ask her to spell only the CVC part of the word (LAN). Then ask her to spell PLAN, and finally, PLANT.

Look at Appendix E. There aren't a lot of CVC words, but there are 120 words that begin with new R blends or end with blends your child has already seen. To introduce this new sound, have him listen for it in words like RUN, RIP, RED, RUG, ROCK, RAILROAD, READ, REACH, ROPE, RAIN, RAKE, RIDE. Once he is pronouncing /r/ correctly, ask if the sound of R is sustainable. Get him to describe how the lips must be puckered to produce this sound. Then ask for the 5 sounds of R: /ra/ /re/ /ri/ /ro/ /ru/. Once he can accurately articulate these 5 sounds, he should be able to read the 20 or so CVC words in the appendix without too much difficulty. Just help with new vocabulary.

The consonant blends are going to take some time. If you find your child is struggling with these words, you have no choice but to move slowly, covering letters with your finger in order to isolate the CVC sound existing in every one of them. There's no rush. The goal is to have your child achieve mastery.

Parent Note: Here's something you may find interesting. For each of the 5 pairs of words at the beginning of this stage, the initial consonant is the same, but the vowel sound following that consonant is different. Now, note the shape of your mouth and lips as you prepare to say the word HEN. Do the same for the word HER. Note that even though both words start with the same phoneme, /h/, your mouth and lips are in a radically different configuration for these 2 words, even before you make a single sound. Rather amazing, no? The same is true for each of these 5 pairs of words.

This phenomenon is not due to the presence of the R (compare HIM and HOT and you'll notice it as well). Instead, it's a tribute to the speed and power of the human brain. For skilled readers, the brain registers every letter in a word at once, matches the letters with appropriate sounds, and then, on an unconscious level, gets our mouth, lips, and tongue ready to *coarticulate* the 3 phonemes into a single pulse of sound: HOT.

This is one of the main reasons you've been training your child to look at the vowel following a consonant before deciding how to pronounce that consonant. You're training him to do *consciously*, something that will soon become utterly *automatic* for him. This is a good example of the power of phonics!

Stage 6

Sounds of H, J, Qu, V, W, X, Y, Z

Only one sound in each of the prior two stages and now 8 letters and their sounds in a single stage! As you probably recognize, these are among the less frequent consonant sounds in the English language. Some of these letters are restricted to only the beginning or end of a word: English words don't end in J, Q or V, and only a few obscure words start with X. While many words end in Y, you'll postpone looking at them until Stages 12 and 13 because, for those words, Y acts as a vowel, not as a consonant: BOY, DAY, EARLY. Similarly, in Stage 12, you'll see that a final W also acts as a vowel: LAW, FEW, COW, SNOW. H is an important and frequent letter, but this is due to its combined sound with S (SHIP), with C (CHIP), and with T (THINK). These two-letter combinations (SH, CH, and TH), called *digraphs*, will be covered shortly, in Stage 7.

By postponing all the above complications until later stages, you'll be able to sustain the illusion that English spelling is regular through most of this stage. The topics you'll teach here include:

- Words that begin with H, J, V, W, Y, and Qu
- Words that begin or end with Z
- Words that end in X
- Some new beginning consonant blends: SW, TW, DW, SQU
- Words that start with WR, WH, or KN (these are not blends)
- Four high-frequency words in which a final S has a Z sound

The Spelling Corner: During this stage, you can focus spelling practice on words from Stage 5. Remind your child these will all be R words – so she can expect lots of beginning R blends. Consider doing related words together: have her spell RUM, followed by RUMP, GRUMP, and TRUMP. Follow the spelling of RAN with RANT and GRANT. Tell her you're going to have her spell three words that differ only in the vowel: TRICK, TRACK, TRUCK and RAMP, ROMP, RUMP. By doing such spelling exercises, you're teaching her to listen closely to individual sounds, and you're increasing her phonemic awareness.

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, X does not have a unique sound; it's simply shorthand for the *ending* consonant blend KS (SIX = SIKS, FOX = FOKS). Also, the letter Q, always accompanied by U, is simply an alternate way of spelling the *beginning* consonant blend KW (QUIZ = KWIZ, QUEST = KWEST).

The consonant combinations WR, WH, and KN are not blends because each of them spells only a single sound:

- For WR, the W is silent. WR says /r/ (WRIST = /r/ + /i/ + /s/ + /t/).
 - For WH, the H is silent. WH says /w/ (WHEN = /w/ + /e/ + /n/).
 - For KN, the K is silent. KN says /n/ (KNOB = /n/ + /o/ + /b/).
-

Let's discuss how you might approach the above topics with your child. Ignoring Q and X for the time being, you can start this stage by introducing him to the sounds of 6 new letters: H, J, V, W, Y, and Z. Here are some suggested words to help in that process:

- H: hat, hot, hello, happy, hen, hippopotamus, hope, hug, hip
- J: jelly, juice, jet, jar, jam, Jack, Jill, job, jug, jazz, jerk
- V: van, vest, very, vine, visit, vanilla, voice, volcano
- W: wet, win, worm, wing, walnut, wipe, wise, wall, week, west, William
- Y: yard, yellow, yes, yell, year, yawn, yuck, yodel, yum
- Z: zoo, zebra, zipper, zero, zest, zap, zone, buzz, fizz, snooze, sneeze, jazz

As is true in the case of most letter names, the names V (VEE), J (JAY), and Z (ZEE) suggest the sound of the letter. (The names of the other 3 letters are no help whatsoever!) As usual, make sure he can give you the 5 sounds for each of these 6 new consonants:

/ha/ /he/ /hi/ /ho/ /hu/
 /ja/ /je/ /ji/ /jo/ /ju/ ...and so on.

When you're sure he knows these sounds thoroughly, do the CVC words from Appendix F with him, followed by the consonant blends. I think you know the drill by now. Once he can read all the words on the first page of the appendix, continue with what is below.

With the Z sound fresh in his mind, you're now going to introduce 4 key words that have a slightly different spelling than he might imagine. Write the following on some paper:

ISS HISS ASS HASS

ASS and ISS are from Stage 1, HISS is the sound of a snake, and HASS, though a pseudo word, should now be readable. Once he can read all these words, tell him you're going

to drop an S from each of them and form 4 new (and really important!) words. Your paper now looks like this:

ISS	HISS	ASS	HASS
IS	HIS	AS	HAS

Explain that for these important words, the final (single) S has a Z sound. Knowing this odd fact (or so it must seem to your child!), get him to identify these 4 words. Help him use each of these new words in a sentence. You might also discuss how odd it is that these 4 new words are not spelled IZZ, HIZZ, AZZ, and HAZZ – as JAZZ and BUZZ were just spelled earlier in this stage. Further, for the earlier important word, US, in Stage 1, the S says exactly what we would expect: /s/. Explain that sometimes, English spelling is a little tricky. These are high-frequency words that show up everywhere; make sure your child knows them well. (These 4 key words are the first words that I would place on a Word Wall.)

The only topics remaining in this stage are grouped together in the box marked “Some Anomalies” in Appendix F. You’ve finally reached the point where you can no longer sustain the illusion that English is a regular language, with a simple one-to-one correspondence between letters and sounds. Just above, you showed your child that S can have a Z sound. Next, you’re going to show him other oddities in the code: not only “silent” letters, but also a Q that sounds like the blend KW, and an X that sounds like the blend KS. Reading is about to become more interesting and more challenging!

But look how far you’ve brought him with this carefully constructed illusion. He can read over a thousand words, and better yet, he’s convinced reading makes sense and is rational, and better still, he’s sure he can do it and it’s fun! He’s becoming adept at blending sounds. Looking at some complications and anomalies now will barely slow him down. It’s time to start showing him all the complexities of the English language.

Let’s continue with the box marked “Some Anomalies” in Appendix F. Ask your child for the names of the only 2 letters in the alphabet that have not yet been discussed: X and Q. To help her master the sound of X, write the following word on some paper:

FOK

She should be able to read this simple CVC construction. Now write it again with an S and let her read it:

FOK
FOKS

Does she recognize the word? After agreeing with her that it's a small, furry animal, tell her the little critter *could* be spelled this way – perhaps *should* be spelled this way – but, in fact, it's incorrect. It's spelled FOX. Write it as well:

FOK
FOKS
FOX

Explain that in English, X is often used to take the place of the KS blend. In other words, for reading purposes, X = KS. You might take a moment here to help her *spell* the name of the letter X: EKS. Doing so, she can see the name of the letter (EKS) suggests the letter's sound (/k/ + /s/). Help her pronounce KS correctly. It's a little tricky to get that sound isolated.

Now do the above FOX exercise again, but with MIK, MIKS, MIX and with SIK, SIKS, SIX. Then place all the X words from the appendix on index cards (or on a single sheet of paper) and see if she can read them without the above help. You may have to define some of these words for her. For the words, NEXT and TEXT, it might be helpful if you initially hide the final T with your finger.

If she asks *why* English replaces KS with X, congratulate her for asking such an excellent question, and then do one of 4 things:

- Admit you don't know.
- Tell her it's time for lunch.
- State that English is sometimes unfathomable. We must learn to live with these charming oddities!
- Tell the truth. Many Greek words end with a /k/ sound. Often, these words have an S added in order to form the past tense. The Greeks invented X to take the place of, what was for them, a common ending sound: /k/ + /s/.

It's important for your child to know X does not *always* replace KS. Write this word on the board:

STIX

Given what she has just done, she'll probably read it correctly and say STICKS. Now give her the bad news: the correct spelling is STICKS, not STIX. In this word, we do not replace the KS with X.

STIX
STICKS

She may now ask the obvious question: When can X replace KS, and when can it not do so? The simplest answer is that we can't use X to form the *plural* of something. (You'll need to define "plural" here as "more than one"). Tell her English uses S, not X, to form the plural and give her some examples: POT/POTS, HAT/HATS, LIP/LIPS, and STICK/STICKS – not STIX!

Now ask her: which is correct? ROX or ROCKS? Discuss why the second is correct: since ROCKS is plural, meaning "more than 1 rock," X can't be used. Other examples you can use are CLOX, FLOX, and FIKS. (All 3, of course, are spelled incorrectly.) If she still seems a little confused, admit that this entire X situation is... (let her read it):

COM-PLEX

Next, move on to the last letter: Q. To help your child master the sound of Q, show him this word on some paper: WIT. He should be able to read this simple CVC construction. Now write the word again, but with a K at the beginning and let him read it:

WIT
KWIT

Does he recognize this common word? Now give him the surprising news: no word in English starts with the spelling KW (or CW). If an English word starts with the blended sound, /k/ + /w/, the correct spelling is QU. Write it with the other 2 spellings:

WIT
KWIT
QUIT

Acknowledge this is a perplexing situation in English – but we're stuck with it. Point out that Q is always attached to its buddy, U, and that QU is the correct spelling of the sound /kw/. In other words, for reading purposes, QU = KW.

Do another example with him. Write WACK on some paper and let him read it. Then write it again, but with a beginning K: KWACK. Does he recognize the word? When he does, see if you can get the correct spelling from him:

WACK
KWACK
QUACK

To combine the last two lessons, show him the following on some paper:

DUX KWACK
DUX QUACK
DUCKS KWACK
DUCKS QUACK

After agreeing that all 4 phrases say the same thing, discuss which one is correct and why. (The last one is correct because no English word starts with KW and because X can't be used to form the plural of DUCK. (Boston Red Sox fans will undoubtedly disagree!))

Now place the dozen or so QU words from the appendix on index cards (spelled correctly) and see if your child can read them without the above help. You'll likely need to define some of these words for him. If he has trouble with any of these words, SQUID for instance, replace the QU with KW on the card: SKWID. Then cover the SK with your finger and let him read the CVC word WID. Uncover the K: KWID. Uncover the S: SKWID. Define the word (if needed) and remind him that in English, QU always replaces KW.

Note: If he asks *why* English replaces KW with QU, this time the truthful answer is more complicated. Basically, it's the fault of the Romans. In Latin, U is a semi-vowel, meaning, that at the start of a word, U acts as a consonant rather than a vowel. In this situation, it's sound value is /w/. For the /k/ sound, Latin uses Q if it comes before the sound /w/, and C otherwise. Thus, for Romans, /k/ + /w/ was spelled QU.

Next, you're going to introduce your child to "silent" letters. This is a large topic. As you likely already know, a silent E at the end of a word often changes that word's pronunciation and meaning. (Your child will see this in Stage 10). What you're after here is the less frequent situation of silent letters at the *beginning* of a word. Start by showing your child the word WRIST. It's likely she won't be able to read it. Discuss with her the fact that WR can't be a consonant blend because there's no way to blend /w/ + /r/

smoothly without adding a vowel. Have her try to do so if you need some comic relief. Now, hide the W with your finger and ask her to read the word: RIST. Let her show you her WRIST.

Acknowledge that the spelling *should* be RIST, but, in fact, it's WRIST. The W is "silent." You might appreciate how odd this must seem to a beginning reader. If a letter is silent, why use it in the first place? Worse yet, RIB, like WRIST, is another body part that starts with an R sound. Why isn't it spelled WRIB? (If she asks this question, I can't help you!) Happily, there are only a few words that start with the sound /r/ yet begin with W. Discuss the other 3 examples (for now) that are in the appendix and then sum it up: for reading purposes, WR = R.

Do KN as you did WR. KN can't be a blend because the sounds of these two letters don't flow together unless a vowel is placed between them. Show your child the word KNOB and tell him, once again, the first letter is silent. If necessary, hide the K with your hand. Once he reads it, see if you can get him to use the word in a spoken sentence, for example, "To open a door, turn its knob." So, for reading purposes, KN = N. Have him read the other 4 examples in the appendix. Let him know there are only a few words that have a silent K. (KNIFE, KNAVE, and other such words will show up when you cover long vowel sounds in Stage 10.) Compare the two words NOT and KNOT with him, making sure he understands the 2 different meanings. Point out that two of the 5 words in the appendix (KNOB and KNOCK) involve doors.

The third and final example, WH, is a little more common than the other two – and in this case, it's the *second* letter, not the first, that is silent. Place the following words on some paper and have your child try to read them:

WHEN WHIP WHIM

W and H can't be blended. To be consistent with what just happened above, he is likely to assume the first letter again must be the silent one. If he does, he will read HEN, HIP, and HIM. If this happens, congratulate him on his clever decoding skills, but remind him he already knows (from earlier in this stage) how to spell HEN, HIP, and HIM. Explain that, in the case of WH, it's the *second* letter that is silent. Now ask him to try again. Hide the H if necessary and help with the meaning of WHIM. Then have him read the rest of the WH words in the appendix. You might point out that for some reason, many of these WH words are great sound effects: WHAM! WHACK! WHOMP! WHUMP! WHAP! So, for reading purposes, WH = W.

You've arrived at the point where your child knows a sound for every letter in the alphabet. Not only that, she can blend these sounds into hundreds of words – words she fully comprehends. Look at that stack of flash cards! To finish this stage, sum up all the anomalies. You might prepare 5 index cards as follows:

SIX QUIT WRIST WHEN KNOCK

On the back of each of these cards, write the incorrect, but phonetic spelling:

SIKS KWIT RIST WEN NOCK

Let your child see the back of the card only if she needs help to pronounce the word. You might also consider placing these 5 words on your Word Wall to remind her of these 5 special situations. I would spell the word correctly, but with the phonetic pronunciation right next to it on the word wall: SIX (SIKS), and so on.

As a final exercise before moving to Stage 7, pick 3-5 words from each of the 5 groups listed as “anomalies” in the appendix, write them on index cards, shuffle them, and then use them to conduct fast-paced drills. Stay with this topic until it is clear that your child knows these 5 not-so-logical pronunciations.

Stage 7

Sounds of CH, SH, TH

Forming the Plural

Let's take stock. You and your child have now studied all 26 letters of the alphabet. Those letters have provided a spelling for 23 of the 44 phonemes listed in Table 1. (As you've seen, the letters C, Q, and X only provide alternate spellings: C is an alternate spelling for /k/ or /s/, QU is an alternate for /k/ + /w/, and X for /k/ + /s/.) That leaves 21 phonemes still to be studied, but no remaining *single* letters for symbolizing those sounds. So now, you and your child are going to begin a new phase in your study of phonics. Since there are more sounds (44) in English than there are letters (26) to spell them, the remaining sounds will have to be symbolized by *pairs of letters* called digraphs. A *digraph* is simply a two-letter representation (spelling) of a *single* phoneme. As such, a digraph is much different from a *blend*.

Let's look at an example. In the word STOP, ST is a consonant blend. Both sounds in the blend, /s/ and /t/, can clearly be heard when you say the word aloud. Now compare this word to SHOP. In the word SHOP, the SH is a consonant digraph. When you say this word, neither /s/ nor /h/ can be heard. Instead, you hear a new, single sound: /sh/. The sound /sh/ is one of the 44 phonemes listed in Table 1. To spell this phoneme, the digraph SH is used. Note that while STOP and SHOP both have 4 letters, SHOP has only 3 phonemes:

STOP = /s/ + /t/ + /o/ + /p/	(ST is a blend)
SHOP = /sh/ + /o/ + /p/	(SH is a digraph)

You certainly won't need to get this detailed with your child. In fact, I suggest you not use the word "digraph" with him at all. In its place, I recommend you use the more colorful term "**two-fer**," as in "two letters fer one sound." The main point you'll need to emphasize with your child is that two-fers are something new – they're not blends. Instead, they must be read as a two-letter unit that symbolizes a *single* sound.

In this stage, you and your child will encounter 3 important two-fers: SH, CH, and TH. None of these two-fers are blends of the 2 letters that compose them. Rather, they spell 3 brand-new sounds: /sh/, /ch/, and /th/. These phonemes are among the 44 unique, indivisible sounds of the English language.

The Spelling Corner: Spelling practice can now focus on all those new sounds represented by the letters H, J, V, W, Y, Qu, X and Z from Stage 6. Do the easy CVC words and consonant blends first. Stay with those words if your child finds the spelling challenging. For those who find spelling easier, include the words in the box labeled “Anomalies” in Appendix F. In this case, caution your child that you’re going to ask for spellings of words with “silent” letters. Be sure your child can spell the 4 high-frequency words IS, HIS, AS, and HAS.

Start your child with the two-fer SH. Ask him if he wants to learn a new sound. When he enthusiastically responds that he does, place your finger up to your lips and tell him SHHH! Explain that /sh/ is precisely the new sound you want to cover. Have him listen for that sound in some words: SHIP, SHOP, SHOE, SHELF, SHOUT, SHORT, SHEET, SHARK, SHIVER, SHUT, BUSH, FISH, TRASH. Then ask him to produce the sound himself. Once he can accurately do so, ask him if he thinks it’s sustainable. (This one is.)

Present him with this dilemma: “How can we spell this new sound if there are no letters left?” (Remind him he has already studied the sound of every letter in the alphabet.) If he suggests S, tell him that’s the sound of a snake: SSSSS. Verbally contrast the two sounds /sh/ and /s/ – they are clearly different: SIP, SHIP.

Discuss with him that one of the problems with English (there are many!) is that it has more sounds (44) than letters (26). So now he must start placing 2 letters together, as a unit, to spell a single sound. Repeat the sound, informing him that it is spelled SH, and then write it on some paper. Explain that SH is not a blend because the two sounds, /s/ and /h/, can’t be blended. (Let him try to blend S and H; it won’t work!) Here is where you can tell him that since SH is not a blend, you’re going to call it a **two-fer** because it’s “two letters fer one sound.”

Have him review the 5 sounds of S and the 5 sounds of H. Then ask if he can say the 5 sounds of the new two-fer, SH. What you want to hear is /sha/ /she/ (as in SHED) /shi/ /sho/ /shu/. Write these 5 sounds on paper:

SHA SHE SHI SHO SHU

Now have him read the 5 sounds of SH from the paper. When you’re convinced he knows these 5 sounds, add some letters to make them into full words:

SHACK SHED SHIP SHOP SHUT

Ask him to read each word. Help if necessary by covering the last sound of these 5 CVC words with your fingers. In the case of SHACK, this means covering CK. Note that I'm still referring to these 5 words as CVC. Each of them consists of a single consonant sound, followed by a vowel sound, followed by another single consonant sound (CVC). You may also wish to discuss with your child the following 3 words which clearly show the difference between the sounds of S, H, and SH: SIP, HIP, and SHIP.

Once he knows the 5 sounds of SH and can read the above 5 words, it's time to look at the 50 SH words in Appendix G. There you'll find a mix of simple CVC words, and words which include the various blends your child has already encountered. (I'm no longer separating simple CVC words from consonant blends in the appendices.) I would transfer most of these words to flash cards. Two-fers are new for your child and you may have to hide letters a lot, at least for awhile, in order to help him with the decoding. Don't be in a hurry. This is an important new topic and more two-fers are on the way.

Parent Note: Here's an example of *faulty* instruction. You child is having trouble reading the word SHACK, so you hide the S and your child reads the CVC word HACK. You then reveal the S. The mistake? HACK has a clear H sound; SHACK has no H sound whatsoever. You separated a digraph. Digraphs (two-fers) like SH have a single sound. They can never be separated. Had the word been BLACK, separating the B from the L would be no problem. BL is a blend; SH is a digraph.

SQUISH is a difficult word. If necessary, replace the QU with KW (SKWISH) and hide the leading SK. Once your child reads the CVC blend, WISH, uncover the K (KWISH), the S (SKWISH), and then rewrite the word as SQUISH, reminding him, that in English, the KW blend is always spelled QU.

Next, focus attention on the digraph CH. This time, simply write CH on some paper and tell your child it's another example of a two-fer. Let her try to blend the sounds /k/ and /h/ – it won't work. Tell her CH spells another new sound and she should listen for it at the beginning of these words: CHIN, CHEST, potato CHIP, CHEW, CHILD, CHEAP, CHASE. This sound is also at the end of the words ITCH, SCRATCH, MUNCH, and RICH. It's at both ends of the word CHURCH. Ask her to state the 5 sounds of CH: /cha/ /che/ /chi/ /cho/ (as in CHOP) /chu/ (as in CHUMP). Write them out on paper:

CHA

CHE

CHI

CHO

CHU

Now have her read the 5 sounds of CH right from the paper as you point to each one in random order. When you're convinced she knows these 5 sounds, add some letters to make full words:

CHAP CHECK CHILL CHOP CHUG

Have her read each word. You might also add the words CAT, HAT, and CHAT to the paper – words which clearly show the difference between the sounds of C, H, and CH. Also, compare and contrast word pairs like CHIN/SHIN, CHOP/SHOP, and CHIP/SHIP so that she hears and sees the difference between these 2 new sounds and their spellings.

There are 4 different groupings involving CH in the appendix. Again, be careful not to separate the C from the H when doing these with your child. If she is having trouble with the CVC word CHICK, for example, hide the CK with your finger, thus revealing only the CV part of the word. If she is having trouble with CHAMP, hide the P and show just the CVC word CHAM – then reveal the P.

Two of the groups in the appendix involve new consonant blends: -TCH and -NCH. If she is having trouble decoding a word in these groups, DRENCH for instance, go back to basics. Progressively show her RE (CV), REN (CVC), RENCH (CVCC), and finally DRENCH (CCVCC). In addition, be aware of this GLITCH in English spelling: SUCH, MUCH, DUTCH, and HUTCH all rhyme. Yet a T occurs in some of the spellings but not in others. Can you hear the phoneme /t/, separate from the phoneme /ch/, in any of these words?

Now, compare the two words WHICH and WITCH with your child, defining both, and acknowledging they have identical sounds but different spellings and meanings (thus they are homophones). Also point out that WHICH, like WHEN, is a question word, an **interrogative** – and both have a silent H. Post these two question words together on your Word Wall where she'll see them often. You'll be adding about 6 more interrogatives as this reading program continues. All the interrogatives are important words.

The two-fer TH is trickier than either SH or CH. If necessary, go back to Chapter 2 and review (for yourself) the fact that TH spells 2 different sounds: one voiceless, /th/, and the other voiced, /TH/. You'll explicitly teach your child the voiceless sound, although *the appendix has both*. Should you make this voiced/voiceless distinction explicit with your beginning reader? I've never done so. Young children pronounce the words THINK (voiceless TH) and THEM (voiced TH) without any trouble. Simply help

with the correct pronunciation as they decode each TH word in the appendix. Even if a child pronounces the word THEM with the voiceless TH, he would still be quite close to the correct pronunciation – and he would probably recognize the word in context.

If you *do* wish to deal with this issue explicitly, I would first have your child compare /s/, which is voiceless, to /z/, its voiced counterpart. This would allow you to make the point that some sounds need voicing while others do not. Then demonstrate for her how the two-fer TH can go either way: voiced (as in THIS) or unvoiced (as in THIN). Once she understands that TH can be spoken in 2 different ways, it will make sense to her, when she decodes a word like THIS, if you tell her “Give the TH a little voicing.” Just be aware that for about 75% of the TH words that she’ll see when reading, the TH will be voiceless.

Back to instruction: tell your child you have one more two-fer. Write it out and show it to her: TH. Here are some words to introduce the (voiceless) sound: THIN, THICK, THUD, THINK, THING, THAW, THREE, THRILL, BATH, BOTH, WITH, EARTH, TOOTH. Once you’re sure she can accurately produce the 5 sounds of TH, /tha/ /the/ (as in THEFT) /thi/ /tho/ /thu/, compare and contrast the words TUG, HUG, and THUG. You might also use THIN/CHIN/SHIN to compare and contrast the 3 new sounds of this stage. Then do the TH words in Appendix G. THRIFT is a tricky word (6 letters, 5 sounds). You can progressively do: RI (CV), RIF (CVC), RIFT, THRIFT if she has trouble. I have many words boxed as high-frequency words in the TH group. Note that most of these have the *voiced* TH sound.

Parent Note: If a word ends in TH, the TH is usually *voiceless*. A word that ends in THE, on the other hand, is usually *voiced*. Compare: BATHE and BATH, TEETHE and TEETH, SOOTHE and SOOTH, BREATHE and BREATH, CLOTHE and CLOTH. Your child is not yet ready for this distinction due to the fact that many of these words have long vowels. These will be covered in Stage 10.

Next: In Appendix G, you’ll find two groups of rhyming words: the E/EE group and the ALL group. The E/EE group has over a dozen one-syllable words that end in either one or two E's. They all rhyme and they all have the long E sound: /E/. This sound is new for your child. What you’ve taught him up until now is “E says /e/.” You may wonder why I want to deal with this group now, rather than wait until Stage 10 when I cover all the long vowel sounds. My reason is that in Stage 8, you’ll have your child read lots of complete sentences. The E/EE group has numerous high-frequency words that will make the task of constructing decodable full sentences much easier. In addition, this group is a stand-alone group in English. For most words ending in E, the E is silent.

So this group can logically be covered almost any time. Finally, even the youngest child already knows the meaning of most of these words.

Don't present these words to your child in the normal way, on flash cards. Since they rhyme and have the same structure (CV or CCV), present them *as a group*. Simply write them out on paper and show all of them to your child at once. These are the first words he's seeing (so far) that *end* in a vowel. Tell him, for short words ending in E or double E, E does not say /e/, rather, E *says its own name*. Discuss this with him a little. This is his first hint that a single letter, in this case the letter E, can spell 2 different sounds: /e/ or /E/.

Read the first word for him: BE. Contrast it with BED. Can he hear the different sound of E in these two words? Use the word in a few spoken sentences: "Would you rather BE inside or outside today?" "BE quiet!" "Will you BE my friend?" Now, have him read the second word (HE), reminding him that the whole group rhymes. Can he use the word in a sentence?

As you continue down the list, talk about what it means for words to rhyme (same ending sound, but different beginning sound). Define any word he doesn't know and discuss the difference (in meaning) between BE and BEE. It should go quickly once he catches on. Tell him that if he forgets, and says these words with the wrong E sound, /e/, none of them are actual words! (Try it with him! Have him read the whole list with the sound /e/ instead of /E/.) So, it's easy to remember this little group.

Let's talk about that tricky last word in the group: THE. It could be pronounced like all the rest of them, with a long E sound, but that's not the way most people pronounce this word in the US. Most people pronounce it as /TH/ + /u/ (*voiced* TH plus short U). Your child has already used this word a million times; now he sees how to spell it. Simply acknowledge the slight sound difference. You might also speak a few phrases where the word THE is pronounced *both* ways, depending on the word that follows:

- THE eye of THE tiger ← first THE has long E; second one has short
- THE apple on THE floor
- THE umbrella in THE corner

Next, a BIG step for your child: Write the following sentences on paper and ask your child to do the reading. These sentences highlight the E/EE group and they should be decodable for her. Nonetheless, take your time here. This reading of full sentences is new for her and it foreshadows what's coming next in Stage 8.

- THE bag is on THE desk.
- Mom [or Mum] is on THE bed.
- Help ME with this job.
- Did HE help his dad?
- Will SHE sit with ME?
- WE SEE THE dog PEE on THE TREE.
- HE fell on his KNEE.

I would also present the ALL words from Appendix G as a group. I didn't include these words back in Stage 4 when you and your child studied the L sound, because in this group, A spells /aw/, not /a/. Think how the word BALL rhymes with CRAWL and is a homophone with BAWL. Discuss with your child the fact that the A does indeed sound a little different in this group from what he's used to. Tell him what the first two words in the group say and allow him to read the rest of the group on his own, using the fact that all the words rhyme. (You may want to consider placing the E/EE and ALL groups on your Word Wall.)

Last, show him what happens when we add an S to a word. We add an S for two reasons: first, to change a noun from singular to plural (BELL, BELLS) and second, to make a verb agree with its subject (I TELL, HE TELLS). The only complication is whether that final S is voiced, /z/, or unvoiced, /s/. A handy rule is that if the original word ends in P, T, K, or F, an added S keeps the sound /s/: (CAPS, ANTS, ROCKS, SURFS). In all other cases, an added S has the sound /z/: (BAGS, HOGS, NODS, BALLS, CANS, HAMS, JARS, COWS, PLAYS). Surprisingly, a final S says /z/ more often than it says /s/.

I don't think it's helpful to share this rule with your child. Most children will pronounce the final S correctly without ever knowing the rule. If your child has trouble with this, simply correct her pronunciation and tell her that sometimes, it just sounds better if a final S says /z/. In Appendix G, I have two groups of words ending in S: one group has the S sound, the other has the Z sound. Do them separately with your child, make flash cards, and then mix the cards together and see how she does.

There's one complication I should mention here. If the original word ends in S, X, Z, CH or SH, you can't simply add an S. Instead, you must add ES, and the resulting new word has *two* syllables (KISSES, BOXES, FIZZES, PEACHES, DISHES). You'll cover this

complication in Stage 9, after you introduce two-syllable words. For now, let's keep it simple as possible.

Stage 8

Reading Sentences (Part I)

During this stage, your child will begin reading full, grammatically correct sentences. Don't worry about spelling practice; you can resume spelling again in Stage 9. Your goal here is to provide sentences that are within your child's ability to decode. In doing so, you'll be providing him with the opportunity to review all the sounds in the previous stages, and just as important, you'll be increasing his motivation and self-confidence.

At this point, you've introduced him to 27 of the 44 sounds of English. These include the 5 short vowel sounds and 22 consonant sounds: /b/ /d/ /f/ /g/ /h/ /j/ /k/ /l/ /m/ /n/ /p/ /r/ /s/ /t/ /v/ /w/ /y/ /z/ /sh/ /ch/ /th/ and /TH/. Therefore, we must be careful about the sentences you ask him to read. The words in those sentences should have only the 27 sounds he has already learned. There can be no two-syllable words or long vowel sounds for the simple reason that you have not yet formally taught those concepts. There can be no vowel two-fers (EA, OI, OU, and so on) for the same reason. In short, the sentences must be *decodable*. I spoke of decodable text in Chapter 3, but I'll define it again here: text is decodable for a child if he has already been taught the letter-sound relationships necessary for him to fully **decode** the text without guessing.

It's not easy to construct full decodable sentences with only 27 (of 44) sounds at one's disposal. To make the task easier, I need you to teach your child 12 of the 50 irregular words I first spoke of in Chapter 3. Being able to use these 12 irregular, high-frequency words will make the task of constructing decodable text much easier – both for me, and for you (should you decide to construct additional sentences). You'll teach the other 38 irregular words in Stages 11 and 14. Once your child masters these 12 words, he'll be ready to read the sentences later in this stage.

Tricky Words (12)					
you	do	her	they	my	to
who	our	their	your	have	from

Let me be specific about the criteria I used in writing the decodable sentences you'll find below. This list will be helpful if you choose to make up some decodable sentences on your own.

- All words should be one syllable.
 - All vowels should have their short sound (exception: the E/EE group and the ALL group from Appendix G).
 - Any word from the above Tricky Words (12) group is allowed.
 - Interrogatives: when, which, who.
 - Conjunctions: but, and.
 - Any subject pronoun: I, you, he, she, it, we, they.
 - Any object pronoun: me, you, him, her, us, them.
 - Possessives: my, your, yours, his, her, hers, our, ours, their, theirs.
 - Prepositions: to, in, with, on, at, from, off, up.
 - The 4 special words from Stage 6: is, his, as, has.
 - Numbers: three, six, ten.
 - Any word from Appendix A through Appendix G.
 - Any word from these appendices with an S added to form the plural, or to have a verb agree with the subject.
-

Before having your child tackle the decodable sentences that follow, she must learn the above 12 tricky words – plus the words “I” and “a”. I’m not counting the words “I” and “a” among the tricky words because they’re too trivial. Let’s dispense with these familiar words right away.

Ask her if she can name the two shortest words in our language. Whether she can name them or not, write them down and tell her how to say them. “I” says its own name and is always uppercase. It’s the word we use when we speak about ourselves. Most children are already quite familiar with this word! In the word “a,” the A does not say its own name; instead, it has the short U sound she already knows: /u/. That sound is also present in the word THE. In fact, if pronounced as most people speak in the US, the word “a” rhymes with “the.” How weird is that? Tell her that's why it's tricky!

Next, point out that “a” or “an” usually come before a **noun**: a person, a place, or a thing – usually something we can touch. Write these examples on paper and allow her to read them:

a bag	a flag	an egg	a cat	a dog	a ball
an ox	a brick	a duck	a tree	an ant	a stick

These nouns are all from earlier stages. Ask if she sees why “an” is used sometimes instead of “a.” If she needs help, tell her “an” is used if the following noun starts with a vowel. It just sounds better.

Now, let her know that “I” is usually followed by a **verb**: an action word. Write these examples:

I swim	I fall	I yell	I run	I help	I see
I hug	I ask	I pee	I call	I slept	I jog

Again, allow her to read each one, helping as necessary. Tell her that by placing the word “I” in front of these verbs, we know exactly who is doing the action. Now have her read each of the following as you write them:

I swim	he swims
she swims	we swim
I yell	he yells
she yells	we yell

Emphasize that in each case, we know exactly who’s doing the swimming and the yelling. Easy, right? Emphasize that a verb following SHE or HE usually has an S to make it sound better.

With the simple words “I” and “a” out of the way, focus next on the above 12 tricky words. This will take some time – likely a few days. I would certainly feature these 12 “Tricky Words” on your Word Wall. Explain to your child why you are calling these words “tricky”: the spelling and the sound don’t quite match. Yet all 12 are common words that children use all the time when they speak.

Focus first on the word HAVE. Cover the E with your finger and ask your child to read it. It has a silent E – no big deal. Now write a few sentences on paper that use the word HAVE and let him do the reading:

- We HAVE a cat.
- I HAVE a ball.
- I HAVE a rash on this leg.

You don't want him to blindly memorize these tricky words as sight words. Instead, you want him to use all the phonetic hints these words do possess. The word HAVE is on the tricky list simply because of the silent E. Tell him it ought to be spelled HAV, but for some reason, no English words end in V!

Focus next on the word HER. Does she recognize it? Write HIM next to it and tell her one word is for boys and the other is for girls. You can also point out that the H and the R sound like they should, but the E does not have the normal E sound: /e/. Nor does E say its own name (like in SHE). As above, write some sentences and let her read them:

- This is HER desk.
- HER name is Jan.
- I see HER red hat.
- HIS cat ran up the tree. (contrast HIS and HER as opposites)

Next: the word FROM. It's almost perfectly phonetic. Only the vowel is a little off. Give your child some sentences to read and she may get it without help:

- This gift is FROM mom.
- That ball is FROM Dan.
- We ran FROM that big dog!

Tell her this word wouldn't be tricky at all if it were spelled FRUM. Acknowledge that strange spellings sometimes happen in English – and when they do, we've got to learn the word anyway!

Next, focus on 4 tricky words together: TO, DO, YOU, and WHO. Tell your child these 4 words rhyme, just like the words HE, ME, BE, and SHE rhymed in Stage 7. Does she recognize them? Let her know that the word starting with W is a question word (like WHEN and WHICH) and then have her attempt these sentences:

- WHO is that kid? That kid is Jack.
- WHO is tall? I am tall.
- WHO is small? Pam is small.
- WHO slept in this bed? Chuck slept in that bed.

Compare the word WHO with the other 2 interrogatives she already knows:

- WHO is that kid? That kid is Rick.
- WHICH hat is his? The black hat is his.
- WHEN did she HAVE HER nap? She had HER nap at three.

Point out that the H is silent in WHICH and WHEN, but in the tricky word WHO, the W is silent! In fact, WHO is tricky for 2 reasons: The W is silent and the O has an /ew/ sound, like in MOOSE. Now remind her that the other 3 words rhyme with WHO. So, they must also have an /ew/ sound. Can she decode them now, based on their first letter? Use each in a simple sentence for her to read:

- Pass the cup TO me.
- Hand the stick TO Fred.
- Can YOU see me? I can see YOU.
- I can DO that job!
- DO YOU HAVE a dog? Yes, I DO.

Five tricky words to go.

To introduce THEY to your child, do what you were doing earlier, but this time with *all* the subject pronouns: I, you, he, she, it, we, they. Write this:

I swim.	You swim.	We swim.
He swims.	She swims.	They swim.

Can your child figure out the word THEY in this context? If not, just tell him what the word is, and point out that the TH is perfectly phonetic (regular) but the EY is wacky. It's the EY that makes this a tricky word. Define it for them: WE means a group that includes me; THEY means a group that does not include me. These 6 important words tell us *who does the action*. Do the above exercise with as many verbs as necessary (JOG, HUG, HELP, CALL, SEE, ASK) until he is comfortable with all 6 subject pronouns.

The 4 remaining tricky words are all possessives. These 4 words, along with HIS and HER, tell us *who the thing (noun) belongs to*. Write this for your child:

his ball	her ball
my ball	your ball
our ball	their ball

These last 4 words are difficult, yet your child must master them. Point out that YOUR is pronounced like YOU, but with the R sound, /r/, at the end. For the word MY, at least the M sound is what he should expect. For THEIR, the TH and the R sounds are fine; in fact, this word is pronounced like THEY, but with /r/ attached. The only phonetic sound in the word OUR is the final R. (OUR will turn out to be perfectly phonetic once your child studies the OU two-fer in Stage 12.) Repeat the above exercise with lots of nouns until he's comfortable with all 6 possessives. Other nouns you might use are: DOG, HAT, FROG, BUG, TUB, SNACK, GIFT, and many more.

Parent Note: You're taking two ever-so-slight liberties here. The word YOUR is not really pronounced as YOU + /r/. In reality, YOUR has a new phoneme in it: YOUR = /y/ + /oor/ (see Table 1). There are only 5 other common one-syllable words that have this new phoneme and they will all be covered in Stage 14: SURE, CURE, PURE, LURE, and POOR. Same thing for the word THEIR. It's not really pronounced as THEY + /r/. It, too, uses a new phoneme: THEIR = /TH/ + /air/. I will say more about the phoneme /air/ in Stage 10.

Don't let your child attempt to read the sentences below until he knows these 12 tricky words thoroughly. He must simply recognize them, using all the phonetic hints these words do possess. Here's the final test of proficiency: place these 15 words on flash cards (the 12 tricky words plus "the," "I," and "a") and see if he can quickly recognize the words. He should be able to read all 15 words, in any order, in under a minute.

Assuming your child has mastered the above 12 tricky words, it's time for her to read some more sentences. This is a significant step. The sentences are grammatically correct and each expresses a complete thought. She should be able to decode them AND understand their meaning. As she works through these sentences over the next days (or weeks), use this opportunity to teach her some of the basic "mechanics" of sentences:

- Sentences always start with an uppercase letter.
- Sentences express a complete thought.
- Sentences end with a period, a question mark (?) or excitement mark (!).
- Sentences use commas wherever there is a pause in the flow of speech.

- All sentences have a verb (an action word).
- Words in sentences are separated from each other by spaces.
- We always read from top to bottom and from left to right.
- The names of people start with an uppercase letter.

Parent Note: It would be helpful if your child were given a copy of the 90 decodable sentences below. That way, she could check off the sentences as she successfully decodes and understands each one.

The sentences are printed in a large font and spread out a bit. Maybe you can simply print them for your child.

Here are some additional suggestions for dealing with the decodable sentences that follow:

- Be *slow* to help your child with the decoding. If he struggles with a particular word, write it separately on paper and cover up parts of the word with your hand, as needed, in order to isolate the CV or CVC part of the word in question.
- Once the sentence is correctly decoded, discuss it. Point out the “tricky” words. When a word ends in S does the S say /s/ or /z/?
- Make sure he understands the *meaning* of each word.
- Change the sentence slightly, keeping the criteria I listed at the start of this chapter in mind. Then ask him to read it again. For example, the first sentence below could be changed to “I will run with my dad” or “I will swim with her cat.”
- Don’t expect your child to race through these sentences. As a beginner, he must take time to “sound out” (decode) the words based on his phonics skills from Stages 1-7. Don’t let him skip words and *never allow guessing*.
- Each day, start by having him review the sentences he has already successfully decoded.
- Take as much time as you need with these sentences; you need not adhere to anyone’s schedule but your own. Mastery – not speed – is the key.

When you finish this stage, your child will be a novice reader by *any* standards. And this will be true even though he knows only 27 of the 44 sounds in the English language. He’s not yet fluent, but each day he will become more so. Sensing the magnitude of his own accomplishment and hearing your well-deserved praise, how can he not want to learn the rest of the code?

Decodable Sentences

I will sit with my mom.

We will swim in the pond.

You can sit with me.

They can sit in the grass.

He sits on the rug.

She stands on the wall!

I run with my small dog.

We ran up the hill to catch Jill.

You cant run with a cat! (proper contractions come in Stage 16)

They can run with us.

He went up the steps.

She jumps on the rug.

An egg is on my dish.

Is that an egg on your dish?

Their dog smells bad!

Our cat naps in the sun a lot!

Her glass has a crack in it!

His dog is a Pug. (get a picture of one from the Internet)

Who is that lass? That lass is Jill. She is three.

Who is that lad? That lad is Sam. He is six.

Who is that tall man? He is my dad.

Which plant is his? The plant on the desk is his.

Which hat is hers? The hat in the red box is hers.

When will we have lunch? We will have lunch at three o'clock.
(help with o'clock as needed.)

When will she have her nap? She will have her nap at ten o'clock.

This is my pet frog. I call him Fred. He has bumps on his skin!

This is my cat. I call her Fluff. She sits on my lap.

Is this your glass of milk? Yes, you bet! That's my glass of milk!
(proper contractions come in Stage 16)

We can smell the trash in the bin. It smells bad!

I had lunch with mom and dad at 11 o'clock.

Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch their dog.

Did you have a snack? Yep, I had a snack with Kim.

Did you have a hot dog with your lunch? Yes. In fact, I had 2 hot dogs – with ketchup!
(help with 'ketchup' as needed.)

My dog lifts his leg and then he pees on trees!

That frog jumps from the log into the pond.

I see you, but you cant see me!

Do you have my ball? Your ball is in the hall.

She sits on the rug. I will sit next to her.

We sat on a brick wall. Dan fell off and cut his leg!

That dog just bit me! I am sad and mad!

She has her red dress on and she fell in the mud!
 Is her dress a mess?

The ants ran from the tree to their nest in the wall.

Who is that next to him? Thats his dad.

I will toss the ball to you. Hit it with your bat and then run fast!

A duck, on its back, will quack up!
Is that a jest? You quack me up!

A rich man has lots of cash to stash!

Will you help me lift this bench? I am glad to help you!

Thats a bug on your rug!

I wish I had a fish on my dish.

That duck is stuck in the muck, Chuck!

When I gulp my milk, Mom tells me to sip it.

You can jog with me, and then you can swim with them.

Help me get that cup. Its up on the top shelf.

He will be as tall as his dad.

Ed slept on a cot, but we slept in our bed. Our bed has a quilt on it.

If you grab a crab, it will pinch your hand!

You have a rash on your leg. It must itch a lot. Do you scratch it?

When I see my mom, I will kiss her! Then she will be glad.

Ben, when did your hen get free from its pen?

Do you see that lass who sits in the grass? She is my pal.
Sam spits in the grass. Yuck!

He yells when he gets mad.

When I pass gas, it smells bad!

Mom calls me to have lunch with her. Then she hugs me.

Its fun to sit on a branch in an elm tree!

A small hen is a chick.

A small dog is a pup.

A small bed is a crib.

A small lunch is a snack.

A big cup is a mug.

She went to the vet to pick up her sick dog.

Who is in the bath tub? Sam is in the bath tub. He is a mess! He
fell in a ditch!

I splash in the bath with my red duck.

We went on a trip with my mom. We had such a blast!

Can you pick me up? Yes, I can – and I will not drop you.

Spell sad. Ok. S – A – D.

Spell mad. M – A – D.

Spell bad. B – A – D.

I am glad that you can spell this well!

A hen clucks. A duck quacks. A kid yells, and trash smells.

That big dish fell off the shelf by itself! I did not do it!

If you tell fibs, I cant trust you.

I help my mom: I dust the shelf and I mop the deck!

They went to the shop to get milk and snacks.

Fred and Ted fled on their red sled.

When will she call me? She will call you at ten o'clock.

Which kid hid my squid? Sid did. Sid hid your squid in that can with the lid.

Get your cup and I will fill it to the rim with pop.

Did she swim at camp? Yes, and then she slept in her tent!

It is rash to stash cash in the trash!

We will cuss and fuss if we miss that bus, Gus!

Which tree has a nest in it? That big elm tree on top of Moss Hill.
The nest has three robins in it!

Stage 9

Sounds of NG, NK

Multi-Syllable Words

The next new sound you'll introduce to your child is spelled by another consonant two-fer: NG. But unlike the sounds of SH, CH, and TH, it's difficult to pronounce this new sound /ng/ in isolation from other sounds. Your child has heard /ng/ hundreds of times because it occurs in such familiar words as SING, BANG, LONG and STUNG. However, if you try to pronounce the exact sound these 4 words have in common, you'll find it's an elusive sound.

You can avoid this difficulty with your child by attaching short vowel sounds to /ng/ right from the beginning. While /ng/, alone, may be difficult to hear and pronounce, /i/ + /ng/ = ING is easy. Therefore, you'll practice this sound with words having the spellings: ING, ANG, ENG, ONG, and UNG.

The Spelling Corner – As a reminder: throughout this stage, you should practice spelling with words from Stage 7 (and Appendix G). These are the words with the digraphs SH, CH, and TH. Do the simple CVC words first, and whenever you can, build on the simpler word. For example, after she spells LUSH, ask about FLUSH and BLUSH; after ASH, ask her to spell SMASH, CRASH, and TRASH. Don't forget to include some words from the E/EE and the ALL groups.

Start with the ING sound – one of the more common word endings in the English language. Ask your child to say the word SING but without the initial S sound (don't write it yet). Help out if necessary. This isolated ING sound, /i/ + /ng/, is what you want him to hear and to say. Now let him see how to spell this sound. Write ING on some paper. Point out that the I sound, /i/, can easily be heard, but the sounds, /n/ and /g/, can't be distinguished. That's because those two sounds are not there! NG (like SH, TH, and CH) is a two-fer. Just as SH is not a blend of /s/ + /h/, NG is not a blend of /n/ + /g/. NG spells a new sound.

Once he's comfortable with the ING sound, write an S in front of the ING on the paper. Let him read it. Write RING and WING below SING and have him read those as well:

SING
RING
WING

Now add a T to SING, a B to RING and an S to WING:

SING → STING
RING → BRING
WING → SWING

Can he read these as well? If not, place STING on an index card and cover the ST. He should read ING. Then uncover the T: TING, and finally the S: STING. In Appendix H, you'll find more ING words, and at the end of that list, a review of important subject pronouns and possessives. Do these with your child in any way you see fit.

Parent Note: The /ng/ sound is one of three nasal sounds in English. Take a moment to go back and look at the 44 sounds in Table 1. Note that you can pronounce any of these sounds perfectly well with your nose pinched shut – except for /m/, /n/, and /ng/. These 3 sounds require air to exit the nose. You and your child can have some fun trying to say various NG words in this stage with your noses pinched shut.

Next day, review ING and then write ANG on some paper. Can she pronounce it correctly? Give her a hint: she need only take the sound of ING and replace the initial /i/ with /a/. If necessary, have her say the word BANG but without the B sound. Point alternately to ING and ANG and have her read and compare both sounds. When she seems comfortable with ANG, have her read the 9 ANG words you'll find in the appendix. It would also be helpful to mix the ING and ANG words together on flash cards, and see how she does.

With ING and ANG fresh in her mind, write UNG and ask if she can pronounce it. She need only take the pronunciation of either ING or ANG and change the initial sound to /u/. There are 8 UNG words in the appendix.

Similarly, do ONG and ENG with her. There are no English words of consequence that end in ENG. For the two words, LENGTH and STRENGTH, I suggest you write ENG on some paper, get the correct sound, and then add the two-fer TH at the end: ENGTH. Once she has that pronunciation correct, you can add the letters necessary for LENGTH and STRENGTH. These two words are phonetic but they are difficult at first. Once you

finish the NG groups, have her review the 5 sounds of NG: ANG, ENG, ING, ONG, UNG. You could also give her some new sentences to read:

- Our KING is a STRONG man.
- I SANG a SONG with my mom.
- That bee STUNG my leg!
- Who RANG that bell?
- If you step in DUNG, you will be sad.

Of course, you can make up your own sentences whenever you wish. Just be sure to stick to the criteria listed in Stage 8 plus any new words and sounds you are working on here in Stage 9. You don't want to confuse your child with text that is not yet decodable for her.

The NK groups in Appendix H are next. Before you discuss this topic with your child, note that NK is something of an anomaly in English. It does not spell a unique phoneme so it is not a two-fer. But neither is it a normal blend. Most blends simply combine the sounds of their component letters. For example, SP = /s/ + /p/. But NK is not a combination of /n/ + /k/. Instead, NK = /ng/ + /k/. Consider the word THINK. You don't say THIN and add a K sound; you say THING and add the K sound. In other words, THINK = THING + /k/. Using our notation:

THING = /th/ + /i/ + /ng/ while THINK = /th/ + /i/ + /ng/ + /k/

Here are other examples:

RANK = RANG + /k/	KINK = KING + /k/
DUNK = DUNG + /k/	CLINK = CLING + /k/

The question is, how should you present all this to your child? I suggest you write the word STINK and ask him to read it. He'll probably have some difficulty because NK is not a reasonable consonant blend in English. The sounds /n/ and /k/ do not easily flow together. After discussing this with him, write the following under the word STINK:

STINK
STINK = STING + K

If necessary, explain the meaning of the symbols = and +. Now ask him to pronounce this new mystery word by saying STING and immediately adding the K sound: /k/. Does he get it? Here are other word pairs you can do with him. Have him read the first word, and then repeat it with an added K sound, to read the second. Help with the meaning of the words as needed.

WING/WINK	SING/SINK
BRING/BRINK	BANG/BANK
SANG/SANK	FLUNG/FLUNK

Your child will probably find this pretty interesting. You want him to learn that when reading, he should always handle NK in the following manner (show this to him):

ANK = ANG + K
 INK = ING + K
 ONK = ONG + K
 UNK = UNG + K

Have him compare the 5 sounds of NG (ANG, ENG, ING, ONG, UNG) with the 5 sounds of NK (ANK, ENK, INK, ONK, UNK). There are about 50 NK words in Appendix H. You can make up individual flash cards or you can place these words in groups on some paper and have your child read them in that manner. When you finish the NK groups, mix up some NG and NK flash cards and make sure he can read them competently.

Before moving on to Stage 10, there are a few more topics to address. Your child needs to understand that not all words are short, one-syllable words. To that end, you'll need to define *syllable* in a way she can understand. Then you can give her some practice in decoding two-syllable words on her own.

The number of syllables is different from the number of sounds (phonemes). The word CAT has 3 phonemes but it's a single syllable – a single pulse of sound. The word CHILLY has 6 letters, 4 phonemes (/ch/, /i/, /l/, /E/) and 2 syllables (CHIL, LY). The problem here, is how to explain **syllable** to your child. My Merriam-Webster dictionary defines syllable as “a unit of pronunciation having one vowel sound, with or without surrounding consonants, forming the whole or a part of a word.” I like this definition – but not for children.

I suggest a different approach. Point out to your child that most of the words she's looked at so far (the words in Appendices A through G) have only 2 to 5 letters each. They're "small" words. Tell her it's now time to start looking at some BIG words – words that have two parts. That should get her attention! Note: For the following you'll need to prepare a flash card or paper in advance. On it, write the following word with the letters spread out a bit:

P U M P K I N

Don't let your child see this card ahead of time. When you're ready, use a blank index card (you've got lots of those!) to cover KIN. Now ask her to read what she can see: PUMP. Tell her: "PUMP is only the first part of this word – now here is the second part." Slide the index card over to cover PUMP and ask her to read what she now sees. She should say KIN. Now take the card away and ask her to read the whole word. This word is likely in her vocabulary and she should now recognize it: PUMPKIN. Emphasize that this word has 7 letters and two "parts" and point out that each "part" has its own vowel. These "parts" are called "syllables." So, define "syllable" for her in one (or both) of these ways:

- Syllable - The number of "parts" in a word (with each part having a vowel)
- Syllable - The number of grunts you hear if you say the word with your mouth closed, as though you are humming. Try it! Your child will enjoy it!

She should be eager to do this again. Continue the game with the following words from Appendix H, covering one part and then the other. Each time she gets the complete word, point out how each syllable (or part) has its own vowel. (Don't use the slash mark with your child. That's just my way of saying how I would separate one part from the other.)

V A N / I S H
B A S / K E T
C O N / T E S T
C H I C / K E N
I N / S E C T

Ask her if she would like to try some *three*-part words: (Who could say no?)

F A N / T A S / T I C
P U N / I S H / M E N T
D I F / F I / C U L T

E X / P E C / T E D
A S / T O N / I S H

The multi-syllable words in Appendix H use only the 28 sounds your child already knows. Most are words she should recognize once she decodes them.

You shouldn't need to present every multi-syllable word in Appendix H as you did above, covering parts of each word with an index card. Once your child catches on to this new idea of words having more than a single syllable, test how she does simply reading the entire word, written normally, on a flash card. Nor is it necessary to do *all* the multi-syllable words in Appendix H. You're already at the point where your child can read far more words than you can list. (Think about how amazing that fact is!) Simply pick 20-30 words from Appendix H that are likely in her spoken vocabulary and put those words on flash cards. Help as needed and teach some new vocabulary. Note: future word lists will now routinely have some multi-syllable words included.

Now that your child is familiar with two-syllable words, you can finish up what you began in Stage 7. Back then, I said that if a word ends in S, X, Z, CH, or SH, forming the plural can't be done by simply adding an S. Instead, we must add ES. This creates a second syllable where the final S always has a Z sound. There is a group of such words in Appendix H. I don't think it will require much time to do these with your child.

Your child can add her newly-learned suffix, ING, to many of the words in Appendices A through G. There is a simple rule governing the spelling:

- If a *single* consonant follows the vowel, double it and add ING (WIN, WINNING).
- If 2 consonants follow the vowel, just add ING (MELT, MELTING; SING, SINGING).

There are some groups in Appendix H that show both of these situations. You and your child can examine these words together.

Stage 10

Long Vowel Sounds

Now it's time to focus on the 5 *long* vowel sounds. Learning which spellings can symbolize these new sounds will enable your child to read thousands of additional words. Recall from Chapter 2 that only 4 of the 5 long vowel sounds are unique. Long U is simply a blend of 2 phonemes already listed in Table 1: /y/ + /ew/.

The Spelling Corner – The words you spell with your child during this stage should now come from Stage 9. Start with the simplest one-syllable NG and NK words. If those get easy for him, move on to some two-syllable words. Remind him: each syllable must have a vowel. Start with the easier ones (EXIT, SUNSET, SICKNESS, CONTEST) and then move to the words having double consonants in the middle (HAPPEN, MUFFIN, SWIMMING). Remind him that when adding ING to a word having only a single consonant after the vowel, he must double the consonant.

As you begin this stage, review with your child what the vowels are, and why they are the most important letters: every word and every syllable must have one. Point out that all the two and three-syllable words recently studied in Stage 9 had a vowel in each syllable. Now let him know there is *another* reason vowels are so important: each vowel can spell a second sound! This complicates things a little. Up until this moment, you have given him the impression that each vowel makes a single sound, so this new revelation may cause some confusion for a while. Briefly review the short vowel sounds he already knows: /a/ /e/ /i/ /o/ /u/.

So, what is the *other* sound a vowel can make? Tell him that each of the 5 vowels can sometimes *say their own name*: /A/, /E/, /I/, /O/, /y/ + /ew/. You might remind him that he has already seen this occur in the E/EE group back in Stage 7: ME, BE, SHE, TREE, and so on. What's new in this stage is that *all* the vowels can do what E did in Stage 7.

Start with an example like this one: Say the word TAP and have him spell it. Write the spelling on some paper. Now tell him you want to spell the word TAPE. He knows what TAPE is; he's probably used it in arts and crafts many times. Ask them what letter the word TAPE should start with, given its initial sound. He'll probably agree that the answer is T. Write a second T under the T of the word TAP on your paper. Now ask what letter the word TAPE should end with, given its final sound. He should agree the answer

is P. Write a second P under the P of the word TAP. Now ask him what vowel he can clearly hear in the middle of the word TAPE: A. Write that letter as well. Your paper now looks like this:

T A P
T A P

Does he see the problem? How can we have the same spelling for the words TAP and TAPE? Emphasize that for one of these two words (the top one), the A says what it has always said up until now: /a/. But in the second word, A says its own name: /A/. The problem is, how can we tell them apart? If A can make 2 different sounds, how do we know when A says /a/ and when A says /A/? Having set up this dilemma, you can now show him the solution. Write an E at the end of the second word:

T A P
T A P E

Problem solved! The E makes no sound but it lets us know that the earlier (preceding) vowel says its own name. The silent E is a signal to us; it tells us A says its own name, /A/, rather than /a/.

Beginners are likely to find this confusing for a while, so you can do another example, this time ending up with:

P I N
P I N E

Tell your child that the sounds /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/, and /u/ are called **short** vowel sounds, while /A/, /E/, /I/, /O/, and /y/+/ew/ are called **long** vowel sounds.

Parent Note: I am using the correct notation with you. It's not for your children. When dealing with them, simply say what the long and short vowels sounds are.

The long sound of a vowel is precisely the name of that vowel. Explain that the words “short” and “long” have nothing to do with duration of the sound – they are simply traditional terms, used by teachers since just after the Big Bang.

Now ask him: What *two* sounds does A make? The verbal answer you want, of course, is /a/ and /A/. Ask him for the 2 sounds of O, and so on, cycling through all 5 vowels.

Once he has it, make your questions a little trickier: Ask him for just the long (or just the short) sound of any of the 5 vowels.

When you're sure he knows the long and short sound of all 5 vowels, write the following on paper.

MAD	MADE
PET	PETE
FIN	FINE
NOT	NOTE
CUB	CUBE

See if he can read all 10 words. As he does so, keep asking if the vowel is short or long. If long, ask him how he knows. You want him to see how the silent E (an unpronounced E) changes both the sound and the meaning of the word, like magic! Point out how easy the long vowel sound is: the vowel simply says its own name. Make sure he understands the meanings of all 10 words.

Over the next few days, test his understanding of this important new concept, by writing out the following words in a single column on paper:

win	hat	man	glob	van	scrap	mop
rip	cod	grim	cut	rod	cop	slop
Jan	bit	kit	spit	shin	mad	glad
fat	mat	pan	hid	dim	spin	fad
quit	Tim	gal	strip	snack	back	lick

Now, one at a time, go back up to the top of your column, and across from the word WIN, write WINE. Ask him to read both WIN and WINE, defining words as necessary. Continue down the column, writing the same word, but now attaching an E. Each time, let him read both words. The paper will look like this:

win	wine	
hat	hate	
man	mane	
glob	globe	(and so on...)

Emphasize how easy short and long vowels really are. You might also discuss with him that this is not his first example of a “silent” letter: in WHEN, the H is silent; in WRIST, the W is silent. Even though the final E is silent, it plays a key role: it’s a signal to the reader that the earlier vowel should say its long sound instead of its short sound. Note: for the final 3 words in the box above, drop the C when you add the E.

Now take a look at Appendix J. There, I have grouped words by long vowel, and within each group, I have rhyming subgroups. Once your child has caught on to the fact that a silent E makes the earlier vowel “long,” he may be able to read these new words quite rapidly. You may need to spend more time here on the *meaning* of words rather than on their *decoding*.

Parent Note: I’ve structured this stage so that you’ll be teaching 4 new phonemes *explicitly* and 2 *implicitly*. The 4 explicit ones are /A/, /E/, /I/, and /O/. The 2 phonemes covered implicitly in this stage are /air/ and /ear/. (See Table 1.)

My thinking is this: There’s only an ever-so-slight difference (in sound) between the phoneme /air/ and the phoneme *blend* /A/ + /r/. HAIR or HARE, for example, can reasonably be coded as /h/ + /air/ (2 phonemes) or as /h/ + /A/ + /r/ (3 phonemes). Your child, and indeed many literate adults, can’t hear the difference between /air/ and /A/ + /r/.

Accordingly, I think it easier to have beginners decode a word like SHARE just as they would approach words like SHAME, SHAKE, and SHADE: the silent E at the end of the word makes the preceding vowel long. While a professional linguist would not agree that the phoneme /air/ is equivalent to /A/ + /r/ (the linguist is right), you’re not training a professional linguist. Treating /air/ as equivalent to /A/ + /r/ simplifies things for you and your child.

If you’re thinking that /air/ may actually be equivalent to /A/ + /er/, I don’t think that’s the case either. LAIR = /l/ + /air/ (1 syllable), while LAYER = /l/ + /A/ + /er/ (2 syllables).

I can (but I won’t) make the exact same argument for treating the phoneme /ear/ as functionally equivalent to /E/ + /r/. In short, just do this stage as outlined and have your child decode the words that end in an R sound just as they would decode *any other word* in appendices J and K. The sound /r/ always complicates things!

Parent Note: A word about flash cards. You might judge it unnecessary here to make any flash cards at all. Your child might be able to simply look at the rhyming subgroups and read all the words at once. Use your judgment going forward and use flash cards only when you think they will help. If you do use them, you can't hide the final E with your finger. Your child needs to see that letter right from the start.

The long E group has fewer words than the others. That's because long E is usually spelled in a different manner, something you'll teach your child a little further below. Also, let's discuss the long U sound. Sometimes, like the other long vowels, U says its own name: /y/ + /ew/:

CUBE = /k/ + /y/ + /ew/ + /b/
 MUTE = /m/ + /y/ + /ew/ + /t/

At other times, however, that subtle /y/ sound is missing:

TUBE = /t/ + /ew/ + /b/
 FLUTE = /f/ + /l/ + /ew/ + /t/

You'll cover the latter case in Stage 12 when you look at the various spellings of the sound /ew/. Either way, however, long U is not a unique sound in English. It's always equivalent to /y/ + /ew/ or to /ew/ alone. (This discussion of long U is only for you; you need not bring it to your child's attention.)

The word USE in the long U group merits some special attention. It can be pronounced with the S symbolizing either /s/ or /z/. It makes a difference with the word's meaning. You can USE the following sentences to demonstrate the difference to your child. Just speak these sentences; they are not yet decodable:

- We USE a brush to clean our teeth. (/y/ + /ew/ + /z/)
- What's the USE of talking to that dog? He never listens! (/y/ + /ew/ + /s/)

A good test of Appendix J mastery is to take 2 words from each rhyming subgroup and put them on flash cards. Mix up the cards and see if your child can read them competently. You don't want to be in the position where he needs rhyming in order to read well.

Next, you and your child will investigate another way English spells long vowels. So far, she has not encountered any *vowel* two-fers, that is, two consecutive vowels making a single sound. Yet there are 4 vowel two-fers that rather reliably spell a long vowel sound:

- AI spells /A/ (example: TRAIL)
- EA and EE both spell /E/ (examples: CHEAT, STREET)
- OA spells /O/ (example: BOAT)

Parent Note: When discussing these new vowel digraphs with your child, keep using the term “two-fer” rather than “digraph,” just as you did in Stage 7 with the consonant digraphs SH, CH, and TH. The essence of a two-fer is two letters fer one sound.

When the above vowel two-fers occur, the first vowel is long and the second is silent. There are many examples of this in Appendix K. You can describe this situation to your child as follows: “When two vowels go walking, the first does the talking.” This traditional rule is useful because she will likely remember it, due to the rhyme. In Appendix K, you can see how many common and important words have “two vowels walking.” The danger with this rule is that she may try to apply it to other vowel digraphs, where it doesn’t work at all: OO, OI, AU, OU for instance. More about this later.

As you have her decode the words in Appendix K, do them in the order indicated: long O words first, then long E, and finally, long A. I say this because the word OATMEAL, for instance, in the long E group presupposes the word OAT from the long O group.

Have her pay close attention to the 16 words in the appendix that I have marked as “EA exceptions.” Most of them are familiar words and they clearly do not obey the “two vowels walking” rule. It’s safe to say that nearly every rule one might think of has exceptions when pronouncing or spelling English words. Nevertheless, some are worth mentioning, like the “two vowels go walking” rule, because they can help beginners decode a lot of new words despite the inevitable exceptions. In the material ahead, I’ll mention some other rules as well. In each case, I’ll list the most common exceptions.

The test for mastery here is the same as above: place 7-10 words from each of the four groups (OA, EA, EE, and AI) on flash cards and mix them up. Can she read the words competently when they are mixed?

I also recommend you place the 16 EA exceptions from the appendix on flash cards and practice them as well. Note that for eight of these exceptions, the correct way to pronounce the word is to let the *second* vowel “do the talking.” The other eight are pronounced as if the A were not present.

To finish this stage, you and your child can practice adding S (or ES) and ING to some of these new long vowel words. There is a small section for each of these tasks in Appendix K. The only new wrinkle is this: if a word ends in a silent E, drop the E before adding ING.

Stage 11

Reading Sentences (Part II)

Let's return to reading full sentences. These decodable sentences will be more complex than those your child read in Stage 8 because they now include all the material from Stages 10 and 11, as well as some new tricky words. Here are the criteria I used for constructing them:

- All the previous criteria from Stage 8, *plus* the following:
- Two syllable words are now okay.
- All the words on the Tricky Words (31) list below.
- The /ng/ sound and the NK blend from Stage 9.
- All the long vowel sounds and their spellings from Stage 10.
- Present, past, and future conjugations of the irregular but common verbs: to be, to do, to say, to go, to come, to have, to give. Also, the perfect and progressive forms of these verbs.
- New interrogatives: what, where.
- New numbers: one, five, seven, nine, eleven, twelve, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, nineteen, one hundred.
- New preposition: of.
- New conjunction: because.
- Suffixes: S, ES, ING, FUL, MENT, LESS, NESS.

This is a lot of new material for sentence construction! As you can see, the following Tricky Word list repeats the 12 words from Stage 8, so there are “only” 19 new words here. They’re all important for fluent reading.

Tricky Words (31)					
you	do	her	they	my	to
who	our	their	your	have	from
are	was	were	say	says	said
go	goes	come	give	what	where
one	of	been	does	gone	because
done					

Your first goal in this stage is to help your child learn the above 19 new tricky words. (This could take awhile.) I recommend you place all 19 of them on your Word Wall the day before you intend to introduce them. Have your child look at all 19 at once. Let him know that these words are “tricky,” just like those 12 words back in Stage 8. (Those 12 words should already be on your Word Wall.) Also tell him that, except for the 2 words that start with O (OF and ONE), the *first* letter in each word is perfectly regular, meaning, it provides the correct first sound for the word. Finally, let him know these are all common words – words he uses every day. Does he recognize any of them?

Write the words GIVE, DONE, GONE, COME, ARE, and WERE on index cards. For each one, cover the final E with your finger and see if he can identify some of them now. Remind him that normally, the silent E would make the prior vowel long. But these are tricky words – so *none* of these vowels have their long sound. Next, write some sentences for him to decode, and it’s likely he will start to figure out what these 6 words are in context:

- GIVE me a drink.
- Will you GIVE me a hand with this job?
- Have you DONE your job yet?
- Is she DONE with her bath?
- They have all GONE to the game.
- The cake is GONE! Who ate it?
- COME here you rascal!
- Will you COME home with me?
- The kids ARE running in the grass. (action occurring now)
- The kids WERE running in the grass. (action already occurred)

Parent Note: You might try having your child initially read all the above sentences *exactly* as they are spelled. So, for instance, the first sentence, “Give me a drink,” would be read having GIVE rhyme with FIVE. If you do this, your child may well recognize the word GIVE and then pronounce it accurately: /g/ + /i/ + /v/.

Make the following points with your child as he reads the above sentences:

- GIVE should rhyme with FIVE and DIVE, but it doesn’t. Given its actual pronunciation, it ought to be spelled GIV, but it isn’t. That’s why it’s on the Tricky Word list.

- DONE should rhyme with BONE and CONE. Given the way we pronounce it, ask him how DONE should be spelled: DUN.
- Given their spelling, DONE and GONE should rhyme, but they don't. Don't ask how GONE should be spelled – you haven't yet discussed its middle phoneme: GONE = /g/ + /aw/ + /n/.
- COME should rhyme with HOME or it should be spelled CUM. Because it does neither, it's a tricky word.
- ARE is pronounced the same as the *name* of the letter R.
- WERE rhymes with an earlier tricky word: HER.

There! Six tricky words already introduced. Keep each one on an index card for review purposes later on. Thirteen more to go.

Next, without telling your child what the words say, write DOES, WAS, and BECAUSE on paper. Make the point that these words should not rhyme, but, despite their weird spellings, they do. That's because they're tricky. Use the first 5 sentences below to help her decode DOES. Help her correct the third sentence. Once she knows how to pronounce DOES, ask how it ought to be spelled: DUZ.

Now, remind her that the other two words rhyme with DOES. Using that information, can she figure out the final 4 sentences? Help as needed. How should these words be spelled? (WUZ and BECUZ.)

- I do my job.
- We do our job.
- She do her job. → She DOES her job.
- You have a big dog. DOES he bite?
- DOES a chicken have lips? DOES a snake have hips? I think not!
- Mom WAS glad to see me. She gave me a big hug and kiss.
- I WAS not home when you came to see me.
- I need a bath BECAUSE I stink!
- He feels hot BECAUSE he is sitting in the sun.

Next, tell your child that among the 10 tricky words remaining, there are 2 more question words that belong with the 3 he already knows (WHEN, WHICH, and WHO). Write WHAT and WHERE on some paper or index cards. Can he figure out what these two words are in the context of some sentences?

- WHAT is your name? My name is Kate.
- WHAT time is it? Its five o'clock.
- WHERE is my dog? I need to feed that mutt!
- WHERE is my hat? Its beginning to rain.

Discuss how these new question words would be spelled if they were better behaved: WUT and WARE (or WAIR).

BEEN would be perfectly phonetic if the reader were British, but in the US, most people pronounce this word in a slightly different manner: BIN. See if your child can recognize this word in the following sentences:

- WHERE have you BEEN? I need your help.
- You rascal! Have you BEEN hiding from me?
- It has BEEN quite hot! WHERE is my fan?

Do the words ONE and OF together. These are two (of the three) most outrageous, non-phonetic, yet common words in the English language. (You'll cover EYE later.) Make fun of how these 2 words are spelled and your child will remember them forever. Despite the ridiculous spellings, let her try these sentences:

- ONE of my socks is missing!
- ONE cupcake plus ONE cupcake makes 2 cupcakes!
- Do you think OF me when I am GONE?
- I think OF you all the time BECAUSE I like you!
- ONE OF my best pals is Dave.

Discuss how these wacky words should be spelled: WUN and UV.

Since GO and GOES both involve motion, do these together. Tell your child that unfortunately, GO does not rhyme with TO, DO, and WHO from the tricky word list in Stage 8. You can simply tell him: the O is long in this case.

- I GO home.
- You GO home.
- She GO home. → She GOES home.
- They GOES home. → They GO home.
- WHERE did she GO? I need to speak with her.
- I hope I can GO with you!

- He GOES to sleep at ten o'clock.
- She GOES shopping when she needs bread.

How should GOES be spelled in order for it to be phonetic? GOZE.

The last 3 words you need to introduce are certainly related. Write SAY, SAYS, and SAID on paper and tell your child that all 3 words involve someone speaking. Try these sentences:

- I SAY: go to bed!
- You SAY: go to bed!
- She SAY: go to bed! → She SAYS: go to bed!
- WHAT did you just SAY? I SAID I do not need a nap!
- Can you GO with me? Yes, my dad SAYS that I can GO with you!
- She SAID I broke the glass, but Mike did it, not me!
- Dad SAYS he will GO with me.
- Mom SAYS I can have an extra chunk OF cake to take along with me.

SAY is spelled exactly as it should be spelled, and it will become perfectly phonetic in Stage 13. SAYS and SAID, on the other hand, should be spelled SEZ and SED.

Before proceeding to the new decodable sentences below, take whatever time is necessary to make sure your child has mastered all 31 of the above tricky words. They are among the most frequently-used words in the English language. Shuffle the index cards containing these words, and practice with your child until she knows them thoroughly. If she has trouble with a given word, point out all the phonetic hints that might help her. When you are sure she's ready, continue on to the following sentences.

Use the same procedure you used in Stage 8. There is one new feature in these sentences that was not present in the earlier ones: quotation marks. Simply explain the use of these marks to your child as they occur. Again, no guessing or skipping over words. Make sure she understands whatever she reads. Have fun!

Decodable Sentences**to be**

I am in the kitchen.

We are in the kitchen.

You are at the bus stop.

They were on the train.

He is from Spain.

She is from Canada.

I was brushing my hair.

We were at the picnic.

She was on a hike.

He was with his mom at the fair.

Where have you been? I have been riding my bike.

to go

I go to the dentist.

We go to the ball game.

She goes to sleep at nine o'clock.

He goes to the store when he needs a treat!

They went up the stairs.

She went to get a bath.

Are you going to eat lunch with me?

Where have they gone? They have gone fishing at the lake.

to give

Can you give me a hand? Yes, I am glad to help you.

Did you give a dime to Ted? I gave Ted five dimes!

Will you give me a ride home?

Rain gives me a chill!

That bug gives me the creeps!

He is giving his mom help cleaning the kitchen.

Has she given you a reason for being this late?

to come

They come from the state of Texas. She comes from Alabama.

He came into the kitchen to eat salad and roast beef.

Where did you come from? I just came from the basement.

He comes home on his bike.

She is coming home with her skates.

to say

I say you are cheating! Well, I say you are quite wrong to think such a thing!

What did they say? They said they are going to the beach.

He says he is feeling ill.

She says its time to eat lunch.

He says he will not go with me.

Ann said: "I think I will have a cup of tea, toast, and three eggs."

Mike said: "I need help cleaning these dishes!"

to do

Who do you think you are Mac?

Does a fish ride a bike? Does a hen take a hike?

Do you dream when you sleep? Do you moan when you weep?

Did the boat float, or did it sink to the bottom of the lake?

What have you done? I have made a cake!

Gail, you look pale. Did you see a whale?

What is your name? My name is Steve.

Will you teach me to read? That's what I am doing pal!

Thank you! You are welcome!

I have been in the kitchen baking bread with mom.

One thing I like to do is eat a fine meal.

Do you mean mac and cheese?

Yes! That meal can't be beat!

I must be getting sick. I keep sneezing and snot keeps dripping from my nose! Yuck!

I just got a drink at the kitchen sink.

Where is our dog? I have a big bone to give him!

If you mix red paint with white paint, you will get pink paint.

That junk in the trunk stinks. What is all that stuff?

I went home because it was late.

The boat sank because it hit a rock. The rock made a hole in the bottom of the boat.

Does the rain in Spain fall on the plain, Jane?

The sailboat at the dock was rocking in the breeze as the tide came in.

“What is she drinking?” said Ted.

“She is drinking tea with lemon,” said Linda.

“Mom! The mailman is here. He says he needs to speak with you.”

I hear the train as it glides along the railroad track.

Does he wish to go swimming with us?

Yes, he does. He likes to swim.

I smile when I am glad. I yell when I am mad. I hide when I am bad.
I sob when I am sad.

The king and the queen, sitting on their thrones, drank wine and ate roast chicken at their wedding feast.

I must clean the kitchen. Can you give me a hand?
Yes, I will help you.

Where have you been?
I have been shopping. I have cake, bananas, and pretzels to share with you. Yum!

Are you done with your cake? If you are, I will finish eating it. I hate to see it go to waste!

“Eat your ham and egg sandwich and drink that milk,” said mom.
“Then you will get big and strong.”

Where is my jump rope? Did you take it?
Not me, pal!

What are you wearing on your head?
These are earmuffs!

What do you like to eat?
I like pancakes and milk when I wake up – and mac and cheese with a hot dog at lunch time!

Stop all that groaning and moaning! You made that mess! Cleaning it up will not take you long at all!

We saw a cricket, a frog, a rabbit, and a snake in the grass!

What reason do you have for yelling? Are you in pain?

A cut-up peach on top of hot oatmeal, with cream, is a great breakfast!

Stop tipping that chair back! You will fall on your head and crack your skull!

“Gimme more cake!” said James.

“Did you mean to say, Can I have more cake, please?” said mom.

Can I please taste your wine, dad?

Yes, in sixteen years you can taste my wine!

Brush your teeth before you go to bed, ok?

All of them mom?

Yes dear, please brush *all* of them.

“The chain came off my bike while I was riding! Will you help me fix it?” said Meg.

“We will fix it in no time at all,” said dad.

I like pears, apples, and bananas – but not grapes!

Where is Kim?

She is sitting in the shade near that pine tree.

“Dad, where do children come from?” said Sam.

“It beats me,” said Dad. “Go ask your mom. Perhaps she can explain it to you.”

Keep that gate shut! If you do not, my dog will escape.

When I inhale, I fill my lungs with fresh air!

A bee stung me three times on my knee!
That's bad luck!

Toss the ball to me again! This time I will catch it!

"Time to get a bath," said mom. "You are not going to bed until you are clean."

"A bath! You must be joking!" said Melvin. "I just had one last week! Must I use soap? Can it wait until next month?"

"Up the steps!" said mom.

Some optional math follows. The word MINUS has a long I.

This is math:

If you add three dimes to six dimes, you will have nine dimes.

Three plus six is nine ($3 + 6 = 9$)

Nine minus three is six ($9 - 3 = 6$)

Nine minus six is three ($9 - 6 = 3$)

One plus six is seven ($1 + 6 = 7$)

Seven minus one is six ($7 - 1 = 6$)

Seven minus six is one ($7 - 6 = 1$)

Three plus seven is ten ($3 + 7 = 10$)

Ten minus three is seven ($10 - 3 = 7$)

Eleven minus five is six ($11 - 5 = 6$)

Five plus six is eleven ($5 + 6 = 11$)

Ten plus six is sixteen ($10 + 6 = 16$)

One plus three plus five plus six is fifteen
($1 + 3 + 5 + 6 = 15$)

+ means “plus” or “add”

– means “minus” or “subtract”

= means “is”

Gosh! I think I like this math stuff!

Stage 12

More Vowel Sounds

So far, you and your child have covered 34 of the 44 phonemes in the English language. In this stage, you'll teach 8 more to your child, all of them vowel sounds and all of them spelled with various two-fers. This stage, then, is a lengthy one. You can hear these 8 new sounds in the following words:

/ew/	stew, moon, glue
/oo/	good, took, could
/oy/	toy, coin
/ow/	cow, out
/aw/	law, fraud
/ar/	car, park, are
/er/	her, bird, turn
/or/	store, north

Note that all these sounds are different from both short vowel and long vowel sounds. They're unique phonemes, and all of them are listed in Table 1. The above list also shows there are multiple spellings for each of these phonemes.

The Spelling Corner – Now you can start picking words from Stage 10 to spell with your child. Ask for the spelling of words from Appendix J for a few days. These are words where the vowel is long, due to a silent E at the end of the word. Then switch to words from Appendix K where vowels are long due to “two vowels walking.” As your child grows in confidence, alternate between the two appendices.

Be on the look-out for “good” mistakes. For example, you ask him to spell the word CAME and he answers K-A-I-M. This is a good mistake because, phonetically, he's correct. AIM and MAIM are both spelled similarly. It shows great understanding, but in practice, it's still wrong. He chose the wrong alternative for spelling both /A/ and /k/. Congratulate him for his ingenuity, but correct his spelling.

Look at Appendix L where I have words categorized according to these 8 vowel sounds. Note first that I've listed 4 different spellings for the sound /ew/: OO, EW, UE,

and U-E. Examples using these spellings are ZOO, CHEW, BLUE, and JUNE. Your child has already seen multiple spellings for a single sound, particularly for some of the long vowel sounds. Long A, for instance, can be spelled by attaching a silent E to a word (GAME) or by combining A with I (RAIN). The sound /ew/, however, is in a class by itself. Take a moment and look it up in Appendix P. There you'll find a total of *ten* spellings for this one phoneme!

A judgment call is needed here between two competing values: being complete, but avoiding needless complexity for the beginner. Here's what I've done in this case. I cover the four most important spellings of /ew/ in Appendix L. Your child already saw the O spelling (TO, DO, WHO) and the OU spelling (YOU) in the Tricky Word list back in Stage 8. No other common words have the O spelling, and the only other common words with the OU spelling are GROUP, SOUP, and YOUTH. Only five common words have the UI spelling: FRUIT, JUICE, BRUISE, CRUISE, and SUIT. (You can mention FRUIT to your child in this stage; you'll cover JUICE in Stage 16 when you teach how C can have an S sound.) The OE spelling (SHOE) and the OUGH spelling (THROUGH) are covered as exceptions or as "tricky" words in upcoming stages.

When you get a chance, look at Appendices P and Q together. They have the same information, but from opposite perspectives. Appendix P looks at the code from an encoding (spelling) perspective: hearing sounds, how might they be symbolized by letters? Appendix Q looks at the code from a decoding (reading) perspective: seeing letters, how might they be replaced by sounds? More succinctly: Appendix P is "How to Spell a Sound"; Appendix Q is "How to Sound a Spelling." Much can be learned about the code and its complexities by studying these two appendices. They are only for you, not for your child. You'll continue presenting the code to him as you've been doing, in a gradual, systematic, and logical manner throughout these 17 stages.

Time to get her started with the /ew/ sound: ZOO without the Z. Tell her the two of you will spell the word MOON together. Ask her what sound she can hear at the beginning of the word. When she answers /m/, the two of you can agree the first letter should be M. Write M on some paper. Now ask her about the sound at the end of the word. When she tells you /n/, write the N, leaving space for the spelling of the vowel sound that must be in the middle:

M N

Now ask her: what's the vowel sound in between the M sound and the N sound? (Remind her: all words have vowels.) Help her to isolate the /ew/ sound. Once she can

make the sound correctly, have a discussion: it must be a new vowel sound! Trouble is, we're out of vowels to spell the sound! In fact, the 5 vowels are already over-worked: they each make both a short and a long sound.

So how is she to spell this new sound? Tell her, fortunately, the problem has already been solved: this new vowel sound, /ew/, is spelled with a double O. Now add the OO in the space between the M and the N and let her see it: MOON. Emphasize these points: double O spells this new single sound, just as CH and SH spelled a single sound back in Stage 7. So, OO is another *two-fer*: two letters fer one sound – in this case, /ew/. CH and SH are *consonant* two-fers; OO is a *vowel* two-fer. Below where you have written MOON, write some similar words and get her to decode each one:

MOON
SOON
SPOON
BALLOON
TOOTH
BOOTH
GOOF
ROOF

This new sound undoubtedly fascinates your child, so over the next few days, help her decode the OO words at the start of Appendix L using any method you choose. She can now see how the word YOU ought to be spelled: YOO. That's why YOU is tricky! Give special attention to TOO in this group, and compare it to the word TO (covered in Stage 8). These words sound the same, but they are spelled differently. Discuss the 2 meanings with your child. Also, once she decodes the word COOL in the appendix, write SCOOOL and have her read that as well. Tell her that SCHOOL is an irregular word (it has a silent H) and then write it correctly below SCOOOL:

SCOOOL
SCHOOL

Once you've completed the OO group with your child, remind him that long A has two different spellings: A-E (MADE) and AI (RAIN). Long E has three: EE (SEEK), EA (MEAT), and E-E (STEVE). Well, /ew/ has *four* different spellings! He has seen the first one: OO. Now he must learn the other three! Write the following 2 sentences and have him do the reading:

- Her NOO bike just came from the bike shop.
- His BLOO hat was on a chair in the kitchen.

Once he decodes these sentences, congratulate him, and then tell them /ew/ is indeed spelled OO if that sound is in the *middle* of a word, for example, BROOM. But if the sound /ew/ comes at the *end* of a word, as it does in these 2 sentences, it is spelled EW or UE. (The words TOO and ZOO are obvious exceptions to this generalization.) Rewrite the 2 above sentences correctly and then add 2 more:

- Her NEW bike just came from the bike shop.
- His BLUE hat was on a chair in the kitchen.
- The witch FLEW on her BROOM stick in the land of Oz.
- SUE ate her lunch with a SPOON.

So, OO, EW, and UE are all two-fers for the same sound, /ew/. Let him ponder these sentences for awhile and then get to work on the EW and UE word groups in Appendix L. If he notices that LEWD and CRUEL ought to be spelled LOOD and CROOL (given the above rule), he is perceptive indeed!

Comment on the fact that the two boxed words in the appendix, NEW and KNEW, are pronounced the same way. Discuss their different meanings and then remind him: he's seen silent K before (KNOCK, KNOB, KNOT, KNIFE). Also, compare the earlier tricky word, DO, with both DEW and DUE. You can write these sentences for him to read:

- I DO my job.
- The DEW is on the grass.
- Mom is DUE home SOON.

The last spelling (for now) of /ew/ once again involves silent E. In these words, the /ew/ sound is again in the middle of the word, yet it is not spelled OO. Another quirk of English! Have him decode these two sentences:

- Where is my TOOB of tooth paste?
- It helps to be NOOD when taking a bath!

Tell him TOOB and NOOD ought to be spelled this way (think of NOODLE) – but they're not. Rewrite them correctly and let him study the spellings:

- Where is my TOOB of tooth paste?
- It is best to be NOOD when taking a bath!
- Where is my TUBE of tooth paste?
- It helps to be NUDE when taking a bath!

When these words are spelled correctly, the work he did in Stage 10 would indicate a long U sound. But the long U sound (YEW) is difficult to make when it follows /t/ or /n/. Have him try to pronounce these 2 words with a long U; it is difficult to do! The sound /ew/ is *close* to long U, but not exact. (Compare TUBE and CUBE: sometimes /ew/ sounds better and sometimes /yew/ sounds better!)

Now do the list of U-E words in the appendix. For all of them, the U says /ew/. If you have a calendar nearby, show him the month of JUNE. The 5 boxed words with the heading “/y/ + /ew/” in the appendix do have the long U sound. Cover these 5 words, or omit them, as you see fit.

The next task is to teach your child the sound /oo/ as in the word BOOK. As the teacher, you need to hear how different OO sounds in a word like BOOK compared to MOON. OO is a correct spelling for 2 entirely different sounds, /ew/ and /oo/:

- MOON = /m/ + /ew/ + /n/
- BOOK = /b/ + /oo/ + /k/

Since this new phoneme /oo/ is also spelled with the two-fer OO, there will be plenty of room for confusion here. Before moving on, make sure *you* can hear, and accurately produce, these two different vowel sounds.

Once you're ready, tell your child the two of you will spell the word BOOK together. Ask her what sound she can hear at the *beginning* of the word. When she answers /b/, agree with her that the first letter should be B, and write it on some paper. Ask her about the sound at the *end* of the word. When she tells you /k/, write the K, leaving space for the spelling of the vowel sound in the middle:

B K

Now ask her: what is the vowel sound between the B sound and the K sound? Help her to isolate the /oo/ sound. Once she can make the sound correctly, discuss it: it must be another new vowel sound!

So how can we spell this one? Here, you must give her the bad (or at least, confusing) news: this new sound is *also* spelled with a double O, just like the /ew/ sound in MOON. Now add the OO in the space between the B and the K and let her see it: BOOK. Then write some similar words below the word BOOK and have her decode them as well:

BOOK
LOOK
COOK
TOOK
SHOOK

Emphasize that the two-fer, OO, has two different sounds, just as each of the single vowels has two different sounds. For example, just as E says both /e/ and /E/; OO says both /ew/ and /oo/. No big deal. Compare the two sounds of OO side by side with your child:

BOOK	MOON
LOOK	SOON
COOK	NOON
TOOK	SPOON
SHOOK	LOON

Then see if she can pronounce these 2 columns of words with the *wrong* OO sound, for example, pronouncing BOOK as /b/ + /ew/ + /k/. Ten unrecognizable “words” will result. She can always recall the two sounds of OO by remembering the phrase GOOD FOOD. (Given their spelling, these two words should rhyme; clearly they don’t.) Now work through the OO words in the appendix starting with TOOK and BOOK. I have 2 exceptions listed in the appendix: FLOOD and BLOOD. They have neither the /ew/ nor the /oo/ sound. Instead, they have an /u/ sound:

BLOOD = /b/ + /l/ + /u/ + /d/
FLOOD = /f/ + /l/ + /u/ + /d/

Make her aware of these two exceptions; both are common words.

Parent Note: COULD, SHOULD, and WOULD rhyme with GOOD. They ought to be spelled COOD, SHOOD, and WOOD. Alas, these words are “tricky.” You’ll deal with them in Stage 14. Here’s an interesting aside just for you as the teacher. The words BULL, FULL, and PULL should also be in this /oo/ group, along with WOOL. All 4 words rhyme. Note the difference in vowel sound between these words and the following three: DULL, GULL, and HULL. The latter 3 are spelled correctly because their vowel sound is /u/. So why aren’t BULL, FULL, and PULL spelled logically, like WOOL, with the double O?

Answer: Those spellings are already taken by the words BOOLEAN (a type of logic), FOOL, and POOL. These words, of course, have the /ew/ sound.

I suggest the following test before moving on. On index cards, write 6-8 double O words with the /oo/ sound, 6-8 double O words with the /ew/ sound, and the words BLOOD and FLOOD. Shuffle the cards and see how she does. (You’ll test the other spellings of /ew/ (EW, UE, and U-E) a little further below.)

Next, tell your child the two of you will spell the word BOY together. Ask him for the initial sound and then write the correct letter on some paper: B. Now ask for the next (and final) sound in the word BOY. Here your goal is to get your child to correctly pronounce the next new phoneme, /oy/. Since all words have a vowel, /oy/ must be a vowel sound! The word BOY ends in a vowel sound. Contrast /oy/ with the 2 new vowel sounds you just covered: /ew/ and /oo/. It’s clearly a new sound. Now, simply tell your child: /oy/ is spelled by a new two-fer, OY. Finish spelling the word BOY and add some additional words next to it, defining them as necessary. Have him read all four:

BOY

TOY

SOY

COY

Emphasize that each of these words has only two sounds: the initial consonant sound plus the OY sound. OY, like SH and OO, is a two-fer, not a blend. As part of a two-fer, the sound of Y here is nothing like its sound in the words YELL and YES. OY, like all two-fers, must be recognized, at a glance, as a special letter combination that makes a single sound, in this case, /oy/.

The sound /oy/ is spelled OY if that sound occurs at the *end* of a word, as above. If it occurs in the *middle* of a word, /oy/ is usually spelled OI. Write these 4 words beneath the four you’ve already written:

BOY	TOY	SOY	COY
BOIL	TOIL	SOIL	COIL

Have him read the 4 new words. Stress that OI is simply a second spelling (a different two-fer) for the sound /oy/. So, OY at the end of a word, and OI in the middle of a word, both say /oy/. While COYN and JOI might be perfectly readable, COIN and JOY are the correct spellings.

Parent Note: Proceed slowly. There is plenty of room for confusion here. Earlier, the single two-fer, OO, spelled two different phonemes: /ew/ and /oo/. Now a single phoneme, /oy/, is being spelled by two different two-fers: OY and OI.

Next, have him work through the OY and OI word groups in the appendix. If you must hide parts of a word to help him decode it, don't split the O from the I (or the O from the Y). For example, you could gradually uncover the word POINT this way: POI (CV), POIN (CVC), POINT (CVCC).

Reminder: The earlier rule, "when two vowels go walking, the first does the talking," does not work with any of the new vowel combinations in this stage. Remind your child when that rule *does* work: only for the 4 vowel combinations AI, EA, EE, and OA (see Stage 10).

Next, tell your child the two of you will spell the word NOW together. Ask her for the initial sound and then write the correct letter: N. Now ask for the next (and final) sound in the word NOW. Here, your goal is to get her to correctly pronounce the next new phoneme, /ow/. It's the sound we make when we suddenly feel some pain: OWWW! Like /oy/, this is another new vowel sound – and it's spelled by a new two-fer: OW. Finish spelling the word NOW on your paper and add some additional words next to it, defining them as necessary. Have her read all five:

NOW	COW	HOW	BOW	POW!
-----	-----	-----	-----	------

Emphasize that there are only two sounds in these words: the initial consonant sound and the vowel sound, /ow/. As part of a two-fer, the sound of W here is nothing like its sound in the word WISH. The OW letter combination, another two-fer, makes a single sound, /ow/, just as OY, above, made the single sound /oy/.

In the *middle* of a word, /ow/ is usually spelled by the two-fer OU instead of OW. (You'll see in the appendix there are quite a few exceptions to this particular rule.) Write some examples for her to see, beneath the above words. Knowing that OU also says /ow/, see if she can decode these 5 new words:

NOW	COW	HOW	BOW	POW!
NOUN	COUCH	HOUND	BOUND	POUND

If necessary, show HOUND gradually: HOU (CV), HOUN (CVC), HOUND (CVCC).

When you think she's ready to decode the words in the appendix, do the OW words first. They are a little easier than the OU words and they involve only 3 rhyming groups. Try writing each rhyming group on some paper all at once. If she has trouble with any word, take the time to write it on an index card and hide parts of it with your finger to help her along. Don't be in a hurry – some of these words are quite difficult for a beginner.

I have 4 exceptions listed in this category: GROUP, SOUP, YOUTH, and TOUCH. Tell her the first 3 words ought to be spelled with OO instead of OU – that might allow her to identify all three. OU is an uncommon spelling for /ew/. TOUCH is a real odd ball. Tell her to ignore the O and it becomes perfectly phonetic: TUCH. (compare: MUCH, SUCH).

Parent Note: At this point, you may want to take some time to review *all* the two-fers your child has seen so far. As you write each one down, ask your child to make the correct sound: CH, SH, TH, OO (has 2 answers), EW, OY, UE, OU, OI, OW. Review as necessary.

I recommend a special “two-fer section” on your Word Wall where each two-fer is embedded in a simple word, as an aid to remembering its pronunciation. For example: CHIN, SHIN, THIN, ZOO/FLEW/BLUE, GOOD, BOY/BOIL, COW/COUCH.

Next, tell your child the two of you will spell the word JAW together. Ask him for the initial sound and then write its letter: J. Now ask for the next (and final) sound in the word JAW. Here, your goal is to get him to correctly pronounce the next new phoneme, /aw/. It's the sound we make when we see a cute baby or puppy: AWWW! Like /oy/ and /ow/, this is another new vowel sound – and it's spelled by a new two-fer: AW. Finish spelling the word JAW and add some additional words next to it. Have him read all five:

JAW

LAW

PAW

FLAW

SAW

Compare the /aw/ sound to /ew/, /oo/, /oy/, and /ow/. You want him to hear it's a new vowel sound. When the sound /aw/ occurs in the *middle* of a word, it's usually spelled AU instead of AW. Write the following additional 5 words:

JAW

LAW

PAW

FLAW

SAW

JAUNT

LAUNCH

PAUL

FLAUNT

SAUNA

Help with both pronunciation and meaning as necessary. (These words are harder than most!)

When you're ready to do the AW and AU words in the appendix, do the AW words first – they are easier, more common, and more amenable to rhyme. The AU group does not have many common words. You may want to pick and choose which ones you want to present to your child. Don't forget to add PAW/PAUL to your Word Wall's "two-fer section." (see the Parent Note above)

The words listed in the appendix as "other" all have one thing in common: the letter A followed by an L. You presented one of these groups to your child back in Stage 7 (the ALL group) because it had so many common words. Having a single A, all these words look like they should have the short A sound: /a/. However, in English, when the letter A is followed by an L, the A more commonly says /aw/ rather than /a/. (Exceptions: ALABAMA, ALFALFA, ALLERGY, ALGEBRA, ALIMONY.)

Time to Evaluate: You and your child have just finished covering 5 new vowel sounds – and 4 of them had multiple spellings. You can sum all this up in an amusing manner for him. Write the following sentences and let him read them (with some help as needed):

4 /ew/ sounds, 4 spellings:	Sue threw a prune in the lagoon.
4 /oo/ sounds, 1 spelling:	Look! That crook took my book!
4 /oy/ sounds, 2 spellings:	That boy enjoys his coins and toys.
5 /ow/ sounds, 2 spellings:	Wow! How loud that brown cow MOOS!
5 /aw/ sounds, 3 spellings:	Paul saw a small ball in the hall.

A more serious test: Take 3 common words from each of the 11 spellings, place them on flash cards, shuffle them, and see how he does. If you notice any significant weaknesses, take the time to go back and review.

The R-controlled vowel sounds, /ar/, /or/, and /er/, occur in thousands of common words. My experience is that children have less trouble with these sounds than with the above five. As teacher, note for yourself how the sound of the vowel reverts to its short sound in each of the following pairs of words, as soon as you remove the R: CART – CAT, PERT – PET, BIRD – BID, SHORT – SHOT, and BURN – BUN.

Do /ar/ first with your child. Say, but don't yet write, the word CAR. To spell this word, ask her for the first sound she hears. She should reply /k/. So, the first letter in the spelling could be C or K. Write the C and stop. Now ask her to say CAR but without the C sound. Help her, if needed, to isolate the sound /ar/. Discuss this sound with her. This sound is identical to the *name* of the letter R. Could this be the spelling? Write the R next to the C:

CR

If she seems okay with this spelling, remind her: all words must have a vowel. CR, alone, is simply the initial blend in words like CREEP, CRIB, and CRAB. CR can't be the way to spell CAR. Does she hear any short vowel sounds (/a/ /e/ /i/ /o/ /u/) in this word? No. Any long vowel sounds? No. So simply inform her: /ar/ is a new vowel sound and it's spelled AR. Cross out CR and write it correctly:

~~CR~~
CAR

Emphasize the following with her. AR is another two-fer. The two letters make a single sound: /ar/. AR is not a blend of either one of A's sounds (/a/ or /A/) with /r/. (Note: The letter R and its sound, /r/, are tricky in English: R is the only consonant that *always* changes the sound of a single-letter vowel if it follows that vowel.) Write some words under the word CAR, and ask her to read them:

~~CR~~
CAR
CART
FAR
FART
FARM
BAR
BARK
BARN

Next, do the AR words in Appendix L. Transfer problem words to an index card and hide letters with your finger only if needed.

Parent Note: The exceptions in the AR group, WAR and WARM, are actually pronounced WOR and WORM. Looking ahead, the 5 exceptions in the OR group are actually pronounced WERD, WERK, WERST, WERLD, and WERM. Thus, all the exceptions in this part of the appendix should be in the following group.

Next up: the new sound /or/. Tell your child you want his help in writing the full sentence, “I have a new toy for you.” All these words, except the word FOR, are decodable, or they were on a previous tricky word list. Allowing him to help as much as possible, get the following written:

I HAVE A NEW TOY YOU.

Now ask him: how shall we spell the word FOR? You should be able to get the initial F from him. Add it to your sentence:

I HAVE A NEW TOY F YOU.

Now get him to say FOR, but without the F sound. Once he has that sound correctly isolated, ask him how he thinks it should be spelled. (Remind him that the sound /ar/, above, was spelled AR.) If he gets it, fine; if not, tell him it’s spelled with a new two-fer: OR. Complete the sentence:

I HAVE A NEW TOY FOR YOU.

Parent Note: You might think that /or/ is not a unique phoneme – that its really just the blend /O/ + /er/. But /O/ + /er/ is slightly different from /or/. Think of the words MOWER and MORE, or LOWER and LORE.

As you did earlier with AR, discuss this new two-fer with him. It has a single sound – and that sound is *not* a blend of /o/ and /r/ or /O/ and /r/. Write these words (and pseudo words) under FOR and see how he does:

I HAVE A NEW TOY FOR YOU.
 FORT
 COR
 CORN

SOR
SORT
NOR
NORTH

In Appendix L, there are two spellings listed for the sound /or/: OR and ORE. In the ORE spelling, the final E is silent. Do these groups with your child, taking all the time you need.

Parent Note: The phoneme blend /O/ + /r/ is *nearly* identical to /or/, just as the phoneme blend /A/ + /r/ is *nearly* identical to /air/ and /E/ + /r/ is *nearly* identical to /ear/ (see the boxed Parent Note in Stage 10).

The last sound in this admittedly lengthy stage is /er/. In this case, your child already knows (from Stage 8) an important word with this sound: HER. It turns out HER is not a tricky word at all. In fact, it's perfectly phonetic. I included it on the first tricky word list solely because I wanted to have all the possessives (my, your, yours, his, her, hers, our, ours, their, theirs) for early sentence construction.

Given that your child already knows the word HER, I suggest you approach this final sound as follows. Ask if she remembers how to spell HER from Stage 8. (It's probably on your Word Wall.) Write it on some paper. Beneath it, write the word without the H:

HER
ER

Get her to pronounce the pseudo word ER by dropping the H sound from HER.

So, just as the sound /ar/ is spelled AR, and /or/ is spelled OR, /er/ is spelled by the two-fer ER. Point out that the sound of the vowel in HER is neither short nor long. (It's impossible to pronounce HER with a short E – and if she pronounces it with a long E, she will say the word HERE.) The phoneme, /er/, is a unique sound in English. Its spelling, ER, is found in thousands of words. Under the words HER and ER, write the following pseudo words:

HER
ER
TER
MER

FER
PER
VER

After she reads these pseudo words, go back and add some letters to make each of them an actual word. Then have her read them again:

HER
ERNEST
BUTTER
SUMMER
FERN
PEPPER
CLEVER

Before doing the /er/ words in the appendix, share this weird fact with her: ER, IR, and UR are all spellings for /er/. In other words, for reading purposes, ER = IR = UR. Write these words on some paper: HER, SIR, and FUR – and tell your child that they rhyme. After getting her to read SIR and FUR, do the exercise again with PERCH, BIRCH, and CHURCH. You can also use JERK, IRK, and LURK or BERT, DIRT, and HURT.

In the appendix, I have the words separated into ER, IR, and UR groups. Many of the words in these groups are boxed as high-frequency words, so give them special attention. Do the groups one at a time with your child. Note that the word GIRL could just as well have been spelled GURL. Only practice and experience will allow your child to master the correct spelling of a word when there is more than one possible phonetic spelling.

I would now add these words to the “two-fer section” of my Word Wall: CAR, HORN, and HER/SIR/FUR. I might also include the following “facts” on my Word Wall: WR = R, WH = W, KN = N, OO = EW = UE, OY = OI, OW = OU, AW = AU, and ER = IR = UR. (In Stage 15, you’ll add PH = F.)

Parent Note: Back in Stage 5, you’ll recall that you put off dealing with 16 *ending* blends involving the letter R: RB, RD, RF, RG, RK, RL, RM, RN, RP, RT, RST, RCH, RSH, RTH, RVE, and RSE. Do you have to do these now? Good news! They’re already done! If you look at the AR, OR, ER, IR, and UR word lists in Appendix L, you’ll see that you and your child just covered all these ending blends.

Stage 13

Words Ending in Long Vowel Sounds

Y as a Vowel

Your child has now studied 42 of the 44 phonemes in the English language listed in Table 1. Only /oor/ and *voiced* /SH/ remain. However, he has not yet seen all the ways in which those sounds can be spelled. He saw in Stage 10 that he could spell /E/ as EE (MEET) or as EA (SEAT). He saw in Stage 12 that he could spell /ew/ as OO (MOON), as UE (BLUE), or as EW (GREW). In this stage, he'll study new spellings for *all* the long vowel sounds. These new spellings occur when the long vowel sound is at the *end* of a word. He'll also see how the letter Y sometimes acts as a stand-alone vowel rather than as a consonant.

The Spelling Corner – As you work through this stage with your child, choose words from Stage 12 for your spelling practice. As you recall, most of the sounds in that stage have two (or more) spellings. That will make spelling more challenging now. Remind your child that the spelling of a vowel sound often differs, depending on whether that sound is at the end, or in the middle of a word.

Don't expect perfection. Even phonics-trained children need years of experience reading in order to become good spellers. The ER/IR/UR group is especially problematic. If she spells CHURCH as CHERCH (rhymes with PERCH) or as CHIRCH (rhymes with BIRCH), praise her for her phonetic ingenuity, but then correct HER/HIR/HUR.

Start by reviewing with your child the two spellings he knows for long A: A-E (as in BAKE) and AI (as in SAIL). Explain that these spellings are used when the long A sound occurs in the *middle* of a word. If the long A sound occurs at the *end* of a word, something that has not yet happened, he must spell it with a new two-fer: AY. Write these 5 words as examples:

BAY

SAY

JAY

RAY

PLAY

Have him decode these words. The first 4 have only 2 sounds each. Once he is comfortable with these words, you can then review the OY sound by writing these five words as well:

BAY	SAY	JAY	RAY	PLAY
BOY	SOY	JOY	ROY	PLOY

So, while OY says /oy/, AY says /A/. In Appendix M, I have the most common AY words listed. The spelling of WEDNESDAY is slightly irregular given its pronunciation: /w/ + /e/ + /n/ + /z/ + /d/ + /A/. Otherwise, I don't see any problematic words on this list. When finished, your child will have 3 spellings for the phoneme /A/: A-E, AI, AY.

Review the 2 spellings your child has seen for /O/: O-E (HOME) and OA (BOAT). Explain that these spellings are used when the long O sound occurs in the *middle* of a word. If /O/ occurs at the *end* of a word, there are *three* additional ways to spell it. You'll find these 3 spellings (O, OW, and OE) in Appendix M. Focus first on the O words. Have her compare the first 3 words there (GO, NO, SO) with the 3 exceptions at the bottom of that column (TO, DO, WHO). GO, NO, and SO are spelled correctly; TO, DO, and WHO are irregular – that's why they were tricky words back in Stage 8. All 6 should rhyme, but they don't. Have her decode the remainder of this O list. When finished, she'll have 3 spellings for /O/: O-E, OA, and O.

The OW spelling of /O/ will cause some confusion for a while. Your child just saw, in Stage 12, that the two-fer, OW, was a spelling for /ow/. Now she needs to learn that OW is also a common spelling for /O/. I recommend that you list both sounds of the two-fer, OW, side by side for her so that she can see (and hear) for herself that this two-fer, just like OO in the previous stage, has two different sounds. Write the following:

OW!	Long O
cow	low
how	slow
vow	blow
now	know
chow	snow
wow	mow
plow	glow
brow	crow
pow!	flow
bow	bow
town	grown

This is enough to confuse anyone! The only thing to do is to point it out explicitly to your child. You can have some fun with these 22 words by having her pronounce them *the other way*. In most cases, the result is not a word. Note, however, if the first sound is /n/, the resulting word can be pronounced either way: NOW, KNOW. And, of course, BOW can be pronounced both ways: BOW of a ship, BOW and arrow. I would write these 22 words on flash cards along with the six words NO, GO, SO, TO, DO, and WHO. Mix the 28 cards and use them to practice with her until she's confident. Having passed this test, she should have no major problems reading the other words in the OW list in Appendix M. Pay special attention to KNOW, KNOWS, OWN, and KNOWN – four important, high-frequency words.

The last spelling of long O is the least important one: OE. You can see in the appendix there are only about a half-dozen words in this group. The most important one is GOES. Your child already knows it as a tricky word from Stage 11. TOE, TOES, and the exception, SHOES, are also words she should know.

Before going any further, let's discuss the most versatile letter of all: Y. Uniquely, this letter can act either as a consonant or as a stand-alone vowel. At the beginning of a word, Y usually acts as a consonant. It has the sound your child already knows in

words like YES, YARD, and YELLOW. At the end of a word, however, Y always acts as a vowel. As a stand-alone vowel, Y has 2 possible sounds: /E/ (CANDY) and /I/ (CRY).

W also can act as a vowel – in the word LAW for instance. But in that word, AW is a digraph (a two-fer); the W is inseparable from the vowel A. Likewise, in the words BOY and DAY, OY and AY are digraphs; the Y is inseparable from the vowel preceding it. The letter Y, however, by itself, often acts as a vowel. In the word CANDY, Y is the only vowel in the second syllable; in CRY, Y is the only vowel.

Here are two useful facts you'll be teaching your child shortly. First, for any one-syllable word in which Y is the only vowel, Y says /I/. Examples: MY, CRY, TRY. Note: BOY and DAY do not violate this rule because Y is not the only vowel in those words. Second, for *nearly* all multi-syllable words ending in a stand-alone vowel Y (thousands of words), Y says /E/. Check out the appropriate sections in Appendix M for yourself.

Getting back to instruction, review the consonant Y with your child by having him read a few words that start with Y: YES, YARD, YAWN, YUCK, and YELLOW. Also, remind him that every syllable in every word must have a vowel. Now give him some surprising news: Y can sometimes act as a vowel! It's the only letter in the alphabet that can act either as a consonant or as a stand-alone vowel. In fact, he's already seen this happen with one of the tricky words he already knows. Can he remember which one? (MY in Stage 8). In the word MY, the letter Y clearly has the long I sound.

It turns out MY is not a tricky word at all. There are lots of one-syllable words in English just like MY. Here is where you should cover the words in the appendix starting with the words MY, BY, and WHY. Knowing that Y can act as a vowel that spells /I/, he should be able to read these 16 words with little trouble. (They all rhyme with MY). Acknowledge that the U in BUY and GUY is a little weird. Also, explain the difference between BY and BUY. Add the new interrogative, WHY, to your growing list of "question words" on your Word Wall. (WHEN, WHICH, WHO, WHAT, HOW, and WHERE are already there.)

Once he's comfortable with the above, place the 4 IE words from the appendix on some paper. IE is a rare spelling of /I/, but these are 4 common words he should know. (In a more rational world, these 4 words would be spelled PY, DY, LY, and TY.) Now your child has 3 ways to spell /I/: I-E (HIDE), Y (MY), and IE (PIE).

Review with your child the 3 spellings she has (so far) for /E/: EE (SPEED), EA (HEAT), and E-E (STEVE). These spellings are used when the long E sound occurs in the *middle* of a word. However, if the long E sound occurs at the *end* of a word, there are three additional ways to spell it, two of which will be new for her. You already looked at one of these spellings back in Stage 7 when you studied the E/EE group of rhyming words. I have reproduced that group here, in Appendix M. Simply do a quick review of these short words. This time I included some two-syllable words as well.

Now tell her there are two *new* ways to spell the long E sound when it occurs at the end of a word – and they both involve the letter Y acting as a vowel. Write these two-syllable words and ask her to read them:

TOASTEE
CANDEE
SLEEPEE
STORMEE

She likely can read these, given that you just reviewed the E/EE group of words. Tell her, that for BIG words (2 or more syllables), English uses Y instead of EE at the end of a word. Now write the correct spelling next to these 4 words:

TOASTEE	TOASTY
CANDEE	CANDY
SLEEPEE	SLEEPY
STORMEE	STORMY

Let her study the correct spelling for awhile. Then review what she has recently seen: for small, one-syllable words (MY, FLY, CRY) a final Y says /I/. For multi-syllable words, a final Y says /E/.

Spend as much time as necessary having her decode the large group of words in the appendix that start with the word BELLY. I purposely made this a large group. It acts as a good review of many of the sounds you've already covered – and most of the two-fers are represented in this list. I picked words whose meanings should be known to most children.

Parent Note: The rule for this section is as follows: *for two (or more) syllable words, an ending Y nearly always says /E/*. There are 7 exceptions listed at the end of the Y group in the appendix. Note that apart from JULY, these exceptions are all verbs. They are not the only exceptions. Consider this related group of words (all verbs, and all ending in IFY): TERRIFY, HORRIFY, UNIFY, MODIFY, NOTIFY, VERIFY, VILIFY, CLARIFY, DIGNIFY, FORTIFY, TESTIFY, SATISFY, JUSTIFY, QUALIFY, and SIGNIFY. For all these IFY verbs, ending Y says /I/.

My advice is to cover only the 7 exceptions I have listed in the appendix. Most of these IFY words are uncommon. They can (and will) be learned, that is to say, they will be self-taught, in the course of day-to-day reading.

In longer words, a final /E/ sound is sometimes spelled with the two-fer EY rather than with Y alone. Do this group in the appendix (starting with the word KEY) as well. This is not a common situation. In reading these words, your child can simply pretend the E is not there. If she does, these words could have been in the large group of Y words that she just finished. You can decide if you want to cover the 5 words listed as “exceptions” in this group. One of them, THEY, was already covered as a tricky word back in Stage 8. The other 4 exceptions are not common.

Before moving on, do the following short exercise with her as a review. The three groupings, below, show how Y acts *with* a vowel, or *as* a vowel, in one-syllable words. Paired with O or A, Y is part of a two-fer: an unbreakable unit that makes a single sound. Have her read through these groupings, first vertically, and then horizontally:

Long A	OY	Long I
day	boy	my
pay	toy	by
play	soy	cry
stay	coy	why
say	joy	try
way	ploy	fry
may	Roy	dry

So, in multi-syllable words, ending Y says /E/. In single-syllable words, an ending Y falls into one of the above 3 groups.

Adding the suffix, ING, to words that end in Y is simple: tack it on. Do the appropriate words in the appendix labeled “Adding ING.” These should be easy for your child.

Adding the suffix, Y, to a word usually changes it from a noun (SOAP) to an adjective (SOAPY). Adding the suffix, LY, usually changes an adjective (LOUD) to an adverb (LOUDLY). Look in Appendix M at the groups labeled “Adding Y” and “Adding LY.” If you examine those sections together, you’ll notice:

- Often, a Y can simply be added to a word without any changes.
- If the original word ends in a silent E, drop the E before adding Y.
- If the original word has a single, short vowel followed by a single consonant, double the consonant and add the Y.
- Like ING, LY can usually be tacked on without any other changes.

Do each of these sections, one at a time, with your child, explaining the “rules” as you see fit. Children, in general, won’t remember rules, but by having them decode enough words, the rules will become second nature.

Forming the plural of words ending in Y, AY, or OY is simple: if the only vowel in a word (or syllable) is Y, we make that word plural by changing the Y to an I and adding ES. In all other cases, simply add an S. In both situations, the final S has a /z/ sound. Doing these words from the appendix should go quickly with your child.

In multi-syllable words, one syllable is usually stressed (accented, emphasized) more than the other(s). Give your child some examples of this phenomenon by showing her the following table. The accented syllable is in uppercase:

First syllable stressed	Second syllable stressed
CARton	carTOON
BUTton	balLOON
FLOWer	aWAKE
KITten	beTWEEN
GIVen	supPORT
MOMmy	deMAND
FOGgy	aVOID

If she has trouble hearing the syllable that is being accented, pronounce the word the other way: kitTEN, for instance. Then it sounds really strange.

Speak some longer words and see if she can tell you which syllable is accented: aMERica, PUNishment, ENemy, umBRELLa, kangaROO, volunTEER, baNAna, SUPercaliFRAgilisticexpialiDOcious. You can easily include more words if your child needs extra practice.

The Schwa Sound

Finally, discuss with your child how the above syllable accenting affects the sounds of the vowels in the *unstressed* (unaccented) syllables. Since “schwa” is such a goofy name, let’s call this phenomenon *Lazy Vowel* when discussing it with your child. Of the 20 vowel sounds in the English language (see Table 1), the three that require the *least* effort to pronounce are /i/, /u/, and /er/. To make those 3 sounds, you barely need to open your mouth.

It turns out that in countless English words, the vowel-sound in the *unstressed* syllable, *no matter how that vowel sound is spelled*, defaults to either /u/, /i/, or /er/. To my ear, schwa is *not* a unique sound. Look at these examples:

schwa default sound is /i/:

LEMON = /l/ + /e/ + /m/ + /i/ + /n/

FOUNTAIN = /f/ + /ow/ + /n/ + /t/ + /i/ + /n/

KITCHEN = /k/ + /i/ + /ch/ + /i/ + /n/ (I can’t hear a T in KITCHEN.)

schwa default sound is /u/:

VANILLA = /v/ + /u/ + /n/ + /i/ + /l/ + /u/

AFRAID = /u/ + /f/ + /r/ + /A/ + /d/

AFRICA = /a/ + /f/ + /r/ + /i/ + /k/ + /u/

schwa default sound is /er/:

MOTOR = /m/ + /O/ + /t/ + /er/

DOLLAR = /d/ + /o/ + /l/ + /er/

BLIZZARD = /b/ + /l/ + /i/ + /z/ + /er/ + /d/

If you look in Appendix M, you’ll find many examples of Lazy Vowel; it’s a common occurrence in *unaccented* syllables. After explaining Lazy Vowel to your child, do the

first group in the appendix with him (the group labeled A = /u/). Note that both A's in AMERICA are lazy because the accent in this word is on the second syllable. I include PIZZA in the appendix as well. The spelling is hopelessly non-phonetic (it should be PEETSA) but every child needs to recognize this word! This Lazy Vowel phenomenon commonly occurs in words ending in AL or EL. In both cases, the final sound degenerates into a simple "ULL." Do those words in the appendix with your child as well.

While many cases of Lazy Vowel involve vowels defaulting to /u/, I have included two other groups of words in the appendix where the unstressed vowel defaults to /i/ or to /er/. Compare how SENT is articulated differently in the words CONSENT and ABSENT. In the word ABSENT, the second syllable is unstressed and the actual pronunciation is /a/ + /b/ + /s/ + /i/ + /n/ + /t/.

This whole Lazy Vowel phenomenon is easy to understand: why make the effort to properly pronounce a vowel in an unaccented syllable? Just mumble /u/ or /i/ or /er/ and be done with it. It makes our speech more efficient. I wouldn't make a big deal out of this topic. If your child insists on pronouncing these words phonetically, without defaulting to Lazy Vowel in the unstressed syllable, that's fine. It won't affect his reading in any significant way.

Parent Note: Lazy Vowel clearly makes spelling more difficult. A child hears the default sound (/u/, /i/, or /er/) and then spells the word based on what she hears: MOUNTIN instead of MOUNTAIN, DOCTER instead of DOCTOR. This is why it's so important that sight words be created properly, that is to say, *unconsciously* (see Chapter 3). Once a word has been correctly decoded a few times, it becomes a sight word, and its correct spelling becomes automatic.

Stage 14

Reading Sentences (Part III)

This is the final time your child will be restricted to reading carefully constructed decodable text. The next time she sees full sentences (Stage 17) she'll be an independent reader – able to read unrestricted text from any age-appropriate book. You're getting close to the finish line. In this stage, along with the new sentences and tricky words, you'll introduce her to a new phoneme, the 43rd or penultimate one: /oor/. You can hear this phoneme in the words POOR and SURE.

During this stage, she'll complete her study of the 50 most-used *irregular* words in the English language. You started this process when you introduced 12 tricky words to her in Stage 8. You added 19 new words in Stage 11. Below, you'll find the final 19 tricky words (including the word SURE) that will get the total to fifty. In this current list, both the previous lists are included.

Tricky Words (50)					
you	do	her	they	my	to
who	our	their	your	have	from
are	was	were	say	says	said
go	goes	come	give	what	where
one	of	been	does	gone	because
done					
two	would	there	some	whose	four
could	move	put	want	eight	should
woman	once	love	watch	above	only
sure					

Looking over this list, you can now see it has five words that have recently become perfectly phonetic. HER and OUR became phonetic in Stage 12; MY, GO, and SAY did the same in Stage 13. In addition, FROM, BEEN, BECAUSE, and SAID are almost perfectly phonetic. Eleven of the words on this list are simple to recognize if one simply ignores the final E: HAV, GIV, AR, GON, WER, DON, SOM, COM, GON, ABOV, and LOV.

Most of these words are among anyone's list of the 100 most-used words in the English language. I have included one such list in Appendix U, from the *Oxford English Dictionary*. If you examine that list, you'll see that 75% of the words on it are perfectly phonetic. The ones that are not, are included in my Tricky 50 list. The claim is often made (www.highfrequencywords.org) that knowing the 100 most-used words in English will give the reader access to approximately 50% of the text she'll ever be required to read. Whether the claim is true or not, the 50 words I have singled out as "tricky" are indeed important for her reading fluency.

Here are the criteria I used in constructing the sentences following later in this stage:

- All the previous criteria from Stage 8 and Stage 11 plus...
 - Any word on the above Tricky 50 list.
 - Any word having one of the new 8 vowel sounds covered in Stage 12.
 - Any word ending in a long vowel sound, including all the spellings from Stage 13.
 - Any interrogative.
 - Any preposition.
 - Any word that is phonetic based on what we have already covered.
 - The spelled form of any number from 1 to 999,999.
-

Post the 19 new words on your Word Wall and label the entire group "The Tricky Fifty." On some paper, write out the names of the numbers from one to ten that your child can already read. The paper should look like this:

1 – one	2 –	3 – three
4 –	5 – five	6 – six
7 – seven	8 –	9 – nine
10 – ten		

Tell your child the names of the missing numbers are among the new tricky words on the wall and that he should try to figure it out for himself. If he needs help, provide some phonetic hints: the number 2 starts with the /t/ sound, 4 starts with an /f/ sound, and 8 ends with a /t/ sound. Once he has picked out the correct words, make the following points:

- TWO is the only TW word in English with a silent W (compare TWIST, TWIG, TWEET, TWEEZERS). It seems crazy this word has a W until you consider the

related words TWIN, TWENTY, and TWICE. Discuss the difference in meaning between TO, TWO, and TOO with your child.

- Given its spelling, FOUR ought to rhyme with OUR, but it doesn't. Given its pronunciation, it ought to be spelled FORE, but it isn't. That's why it's tricky.
- EIGHT is one of the goofiest spellings in English. The only phonetic thing about it is the final T. It ought to be spelled ATE, but unfortunately that spelling is already taken. Discuss the difference in meaning between ATE and EIGHT.

Next, tell him there are 3 words that rhyme among the new tricky words. Let him pick out WOULD, COULD, and SHOULD based on their similar spellings. (Note: if he picks out MOVE, LOVE, and ABOVE, tell him you'll do those a little later!) With COULD, SHOULD, and WOULD singled out, let him know all three words rhyme with GOOD. Now he SHOULD be able to read them. The following sentences may help him understand the subtle differences in the meanings of these 3 words:

- WOULD you swim with me? (Are you willing to?)
- COULD you swim with me? (Are you able to?)
- SHOULD you swim with me? (Is it wise to?)

Ask how these 3 words SHOULD be spelled (WOOD, COOD, SHOOD). Their OU spelling (with a silent L!) is what makes them tricky. Thirteen words to go.

Now, ask her what the opposite (or complement!) of MAN is. If she doesn't know the word, tell her what it is and let her search for it on your word wall. She should notice that the word MAN is part of the word WOMAN. Help with the correct pronunciation if necessary. It ought to be spelled WOOMIN – with the two-fer, OO, corresponding to /oo/, not /ew/. Have her try to pronounce this word with a short O or a long O – that will quickly demonstrate why it's "tricky." (The fact that the second, unstressed syllable in WOMAN is pronounced MIN is an example of Lazy Vowel.) Let her read the following:

- That WOMAN across the street is my moms sister.
- Where is the WOMAN who lost her purse? Tell her I found it!

Parent Note: I suggest you take some time here to discuss the *plural* of WOMAN. Just as MEN is the plural of MAN, WOMEN is the plural of WOMAN. WOMEN, like WOMAN is irregular: it should be spelled WIMMEN given the way it's pronounced.

Next, tell her there are 3 other words on the wall that ought to rhyme, and let her pick out MOVE, LOVE, and ABOVE. Have her pronounce these words as though they

were regular (so that they rhyme with COVE and STOVE). Doing so results in 3 nonsense words. Point out that if they rhymed with COVE and STOVE, they wouldn't be tricky. Does she recognize LOVE if you hide the E? Write these sentences for her to read:

- Mom, I LOVE you so much!
- He LOVES to go to the zoo!
- We LOVE milk and cake!
- The ground is below. The sky is ABOVE.
- My nose is ABOVE my mouth.

Okay, so LOVE and ABOVE do rhyme with each other. Can she tell you how they ought to be spelled? (LUV and ABUV) Now, ask her if she thinks the third word (MOVE) rhymes with the other two. Get her to see that it can't rhyme because MUV = /m/ + /u/ + /v/ is not a word. Let her read these sentences:

- MOVE your bike! Its blocking the steps!
- When did you MOVE here with your family?

So how would the word MOVE be spelled if we all lived in Phonicsville? MOOV. Nine tricky words to go.

Tell your child there's another question word to include with the ones he already knows (WHEN, WHICH, WHO, WHAT, WHERE, HOW, WHY). Can he pick it out? Compare WHO and WHOSE side-by-side with him. These words sound identical except that the additional S in WHOSE has, as is often the case, a Z sound. Here are some sentences for him to read:

- WHOSE cat is in our tree?
- WHOSE book is this? Its Mikes book.
- WHOSE hat is on the desk? That hat belongs to Beth.

Have him tell you how it ought to be spelled: HOOZ. Add WHOSE to the Word Wall with the other interrogatives.

Write the word PUT on some paper and remark that if it rhymed with NUT and CUT, it wouldn't be a tricky word. Here are some sentences to help him figure out the word from context:

- For the last time, PUT your toys away!
- Do not PUT your finger in your nose. Its rude!
- PUT the dog outside. She needs to pee.

PUT rhymes with FOOT and SOOT, so it ought to be spelled POOT.

COME is a tricky word from Stage 11. One of the remaining words rhyme with it. Let your child pick it out.

- May I have SOME more milk?
- SOME dogs bark too much!
- SOMETHING is wrong with my bike.

SOME should be spelled SUM. Take time to discuss the difference between the words SOME and SUM. Six tricky words to go.

Write WANT on the board. It's a tricky word, so your child should not expect it to rhyme with GRANT and CANT. Maybe he can figure it out from context:

- Mom, I WANT to go to the store with you!
- Do you WANT more jelly on your toast?
- WHY are you yelling? WHAT do you WANT?

So, it's tricky because it ought to be spelled WUNT (rhymes with BUNT and STUNT).

Write the word THEIR on the board and ask your child to read it. It's from the first Tricky Word list in Stage 8. Tell her: in the five words remaining, there is one that is pronounced exactly the same as THEIR. (Not a rhyming word, but an exact equivalent.) When she picks it out, agree that this is an unusual thing in English: two words spelled differently, sounding the same, but with different meanings. (Like SUN and SON, or TWO and TOO.) Use these sentences with her:

- Your book is over THERE on the shelf.
- THERE goes my sister! Do you think she saw us?
- THEIR cat ran away yesterday!
- THEIR apartment is on Tenth Street.

Both words are pronounced as THARE (or THAIR). Discuss these two homophones with your child. THEIR indicates *possession*: their dog, their yard, their food. THERE indicates the *position* of something (or someone). It's the opposite of HERE:

- HERE is your cup; I have it in my hand.
- Your cup is up THERE on the top shelf.

Your child already knows the tricky word ONE from Stage 11. From the 4 tricky words remaining, she should pick out the one that is likely to be pronounced in a similar manner: ONCE = ONE + /s/. Now have her read the following:

- ONCE upon a time, a witch rode her broom stick in the land of Oz.
- When frying an egg, you SHOULD flip it ONCE in the pan.
- You may go out to play ONCE you have eaten.

She should suspect WATCH will not rhyme with MATCH or CATCH because it's a tricky word. If she doesn't recognize the word, have her read the following sentences, pronouncing WATCH in a way that *does* rhyme with MATCH. I think she'll then recognize the word:

- WATCH out Mac! You nearly ran into me!
- Would you like to WATCH a show with me?

To be regular, WATCH would have to be spelled WAWCH or WAUCH.

The next word, SURE, is something special. It's a tricky spelling of a new phoneme for your child: /oor/. There are only 5 other common one-syllable words that contain this phoneme: POOR, LURE, CURE, PURE, and YOUR.

Write SURE on some paper. Inform her that it rhymes with a tricky word she already knows from Stage 8: YOUR. This should lead her to pronounce the word as something like the word SEWER. Now have her read the following sentences using that pronunciation. She may then be able to figure out the *correct* pronunciation in context. (If not, help her out.)

- Do you WANT to come with me? SURE I do!
- Are you SURE you saw him at the park?
- I SURE hope the rain stops soon!

So here's the unusual case of S saying /sh/ instead of /s/. Mention to her there is another common word where a beginning S says /sh/. Write SUGAR and see if she can figure it out. SUGAR should be spelled SHOOGER (rhymes with BOOGER).

On your paper, under the word SURE, write the 5 other words that contain the phoneme /oor/: POOR, LURE, CURE, PURE, and YOUR. Tell her that all these words rhyme and see if she can figure out what the others are. Note (for yourself) that CURE and PURE both have a subtle /y/ sound: CURE = /k/ + /y/ + /oor/, PURE = /p/ + /y/ + /oor/. POOR and LURE do not: POOR = /p/ + /oor/, LURE = /l/ + /oor/.

Point to that last remaining tricky word and say "Uh oh! ONLY one word left!" (If necessary, stress the word ONLY as you repeat yourself.) Now have her read some sentences using this last word:

- I am ONLY six, but I have a big sister who is ten.
- Am I the ONLY one in this room who can speak French?
- We need ONLY FOUR things in life: food, shelter, LOVE – and a dog!

Introducing these 19 new tricky words was a challenge, but the payoff will be substantial. Your child has now been exposed to the 45 most common, but phonetically irregular, words in the English language. I say 45 instead of 50 because, as I mentioned earlier, 5 of the words are now perfectly phonetic: HER, OUR, MY, GO, and SAY. Knowing these 45 words will be beneficial going forward because it will enable your child to devote more mental energy to comprehension and less energy to decoding.

While the following exercise will take some time, it will improve your child's reading fluency. Before allowing him to read the decodable sentences below, prepare a special deck of flash cards containing all 45 Tricky Words. On one side of the card, print the word as it is *actually* spelled; on the other, print the word as it phonetically *ought* to be spelled. See the box below.

Motivate your child by telling him these flash cards have the trickiest words in our language. When he knows these words perfectly, he'll be an "expert" reader. When you practice with these cards, show only the side with the correct spelling (DOES). Show the phonetic side of the card (DUZ) only if he needs help. Caution: In the phonetic spellings, OO can say either /ew/ or /oo/, just as it does in GOOD FOOD. When your child can go through the entire group in under 3 minutes, he's ready to tackle the decodable sentences which follow.

Correct Spelling	Phonetic Spelling	Correct Spelling	Phonetic Spelling
above	abuv	said	sed
are	ar	says	sez
because	becuz	should	shood
been	bin	some	sum
come	cum	sure	shoor
could	cood	their	thair
do	doo	there	thair
does	duz	they	thay
done	dun	to	too
eight	ate	two	too
four	for	want	wunt
from	frum	was	wuzz
give	giv	watch	wawch
goes	goze	were	wer
gone	gawn	what	wut
have	hav	where	wair
love	luv	who	hoo
move	moov	whose	hooz
of	uv	woman	woomin
once	wuns	would	wood
one	wun	you	yoo
only	oonly	your	yoor
put	poot		

Decodable Sentences

I am proud that I can read!

The cow in the barn is mooing loudly. Maybe someone should milk the poor beast!

There is a toilet in our bathroom and a stove in our kitchen. These two rooms have a sink too!

Dad took my sister to the doctor because she has the flu.

Would you get a broom and help me clean this floor?

If you are thirsty, drink some lemonade.

Pass the salt and pepper please.

There is a bird chirping and singing in our birch tree. I think its a blue jay.

I just saw a shark in the surf!

Holy mackerel!

Not a mackerel, dude, a shark!

Do you want to throw a football around with me?

Here the river is wide and shallow, but up ahead, it grows narrow and deep.

That girl with a balloon is my sister. Her name is Emma.

My birthday is September 8. I am four. I was born on a Thursday.

Ben said, "Mom, do you love me?"

Mom said, "Oh Ben! I love you very much!"

"How much?" said Ben.

Then mom spread her arms far apart and said, "This much!"

My dog is in the back yard. He likes to play in the grass.

Mom says I must eat good food if I want to grow big and tall.

This rain is awful; I am sopping wet! Do you have a towel for me to dry off? Thanks!

I will get some flowers from our garden and put them in a vase.

Whose bike is on the porch? It should have a lock on it to keep it safe.

Where did this dirt on my shirt come from? I think a bird was at fault! Yuck!

When you eat, do you prefer a fork, a spoon, or a knife?

That boy standing there by the window took my book!

Yesterday was Sunday. I went to church with momma.

Dad did not like that new brand of beer. He threw the brew down the drain in the sink.

My brother put his computer on the shelf above his desk.

Its not polite to burp or fart in public!

Would you help me with my work? Its too difficult for me to do alone!

Could we have some popcorn for our snack?

I saw them at the playground. They were having a great time playing on the swing!

Do you have any more candy? Will you give me some?

Do you think we should go with Paula to the park?

No, we should stay home. Its too late to go out.

“What food do you like the best?” said Robert.

“I like pizza and meat balls best of all!” said Martha.

The woman sitting over there on the couch is my mother.

We are having corn on the cob, pork chops, and salad for dinner.

I cant swim with you now. I must watch my sister until my dad gets home.

The picnic will not happen this afternoon. I am sure its going to rain!

Is it true that Luke lost one of his new blue shoes?

Yes, but Sue found it outside.

A storm blew in from the west. There was some thunder and some hail.

There are only four girls in the van. Where are the other two girls?

Paul says that August is a hot month. Is that true?

Do you have any coins?

I have only eight dimes and four pennies.

Would you like to join our group? We read books together every Friday afternoon.

Do not spoil the party by being a grump!

“Why are you crying?” asked mom.

Sue said, “I am crying because I fell off my bike and hurt my elbow.”

Do you enjoy playing with that boy? His name is Roy.

Heck no – he annoys me! He is too loud and he acts like a clown.

When lost in the woods, its a good plan to go north, south, east, or west.

I saw a hawk flying over our house.

“Billy, do not try to sit here and eat with such dirty hands!” said mom.

“Go clean them – and use some soap!”

Who broke this window?

Sandy did. Its her fault. She threw the ball too hard. I could not catch it.

Hey Joe! Let me see your broken toe. How did it happen?
I was walking in bare feet and I hit my toe with a door. Ouch!

“Do you understand what will happen to you if you pick your nose in public?” said Aunt Bertha.

“Yes, I do,” said LeRoy, “I will have a clean nose!”

Tell me a joke.

OK. When does a car have too much gas?

Answer: (Caution: silent W in ‘answer’)

When three kids are in the back seat.

Tell me another.

Why did the banana go to the doctor?

Answer: It did not peel well.

Do you know that if a duck flies upside down, it will quack up?

“Hey mom. Will the pie be very long?”

“No dear,” said mom, “the pie will be very round.”

Why are two and four afraid of seven?

Answer: Because seven eight nine. Get it??

Knock, knock!

Who is there?

Justin.

Justin who?

Just in time for dinner!

Why do the French like to eat snails?

They cant stand fast food!

Parent Note: A few nursery rhyme snippets...

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
 Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
 All the kings horses and all the queens men
 could not put Humpty together again!

Are you sleeping? Are you sleeping? (feel free to sing!)
 Brother Jon, Brother Jon?
 Morning bells are ringing! Morning bells are ringing!
 Ding, dang, dong. Ding, dang, dong.

Handsome Boy Blue, come blow your horn!
 The sheeps in the meadow, the cows in the corn!
 Where is the boy who looks after the sheep?
 He is under a haystack, fast asleep!
 Will you wake him?
 No, not I! For if I do, he is sure to cry!

O, where have you been,
 Billy Boy, Billy Boy?
 O, where have you been,
 Charming Billy?
 I have been to seek a wife,
 She is the joy of my life,
 She is a pretty girl
 Who will not leave her mother.

Baa, baa, black sheep,
 Have you any wool?

Yes, sir, yes, sir,
 Three bags full:
 One for the master,
 And one for the dame,
 And one for the lovely girl
 Who lives down the lane.

Parent Note: What follows is optional. Do it only if you're child is interested.

Do you know what numbers come after 10?
 Yes, I do:

11 – eleven	16 – sixteen
12 – twelve	17 – seventeen
13 – thirteen	18 – eighteen
14 – fourteen	19 – nineteen
15 – fifteen	20 – twenty

But what comes after 20?
 Its easy:

21 – twenty-one	26 – twenty-six
22 – twenty-two	27 – twenty-seven
23 – twenty-three	28 – twenty-eight
24 – twenty-four	29 – twenty-nine
25 – twenty-five	30 – thirty

Say, I think I see a pattern here! Is the next number 31 (thirty-one)?

Yes indeed! Here are the important numbers you will need to go all the way to 100 (one hundred):

40 – forty
50 – fifty
60 – sixty
70 – seventy
80 – eighty
90 – ninety
100 – one hundred

But what comes after one hundred?

It all starts again: one hundred one (101), one hundred two (102), one hundred three (103) and so on – all the way to two hundred (200).

Then all the way to three hundred (300) and four hundred (400)?

Yes.

But what comes after nine hundred ninety-nine (999)?

One thousand (1000), one thousand one (1001), one thousand two (1002), and so on.

Do the numbers ever stop?

Nope. They go on forever! To infinity!

Stage 15

Unusual Spellings

Open and Closed Syllables

During this stage you'll be focusing your child's attention on some unusual spellings of the phonemes /aw/, /I/, /f/, and /ch/. You'll teach some common word families that when mastered, will make independent reading much easier. You'll also show him how to analyze multi-syllable words in a way that will minimize pronunciation errors. Specifically, this stage includes:

- The -LE family (for example: BOTTLE, SNUGGLE, WAFFLE).
- The irregular but common, IGH, OUGH, and AUGH families (MIGHT, BOUGHT, CAUGHT).
- The PH spelling of /f/ (PHONE, GRAPH).
- The -TION family (ACTION, MENTION).
- The T spelling of /ch/ (FIXTURE, POSTURE)
- About two dozen common words where the vowel *unexpectedly* has a long sound (COLD, FIND, WILD).
- The difference between *open* and *closed* syllables.

The Spelling Corner – The spelling you do with your child can now come from Stage 13 and Appendix M. These are tricky words for beginners because most of the long vowel sounds have two or more plausible spellings. When you ask a child to spell SLOW, for instance, does he say S-L-O, S-L-O-E, or S-L-O-W? (All these answers are phonetically feasible, but only one is ultimately correct.) Remind him that a long A sound at the end of a word is always spelled AY. For a long E sound at the end of a word, the number of syllables helps to decide if the word should end in E (FREE) or Y (BELLY). A long I sound at word's end is spelled Y (MY, CRY) but there are 4 exceptions: PIE, DIE, LIE, and TIE.

Throughout this stage, you'll be working with word lists in Appendix N. If you look there now, you'll see that in the first group, the Giggle Group, all the words end in LE. What I've listed there is only a tiny sampling of the more than 3000 such words in the English language. Note that for all the words in this group, the correct spelling could have been EL instead of LE: APPEL, NOODEL, SIMPEL, PICKEL, and so on. In fact, that's exactly how a whole group of similar-sounding words were just spelled in Appendix M, for example, CAMEL, TUNNEL, SHOVEL, and NICKEL. In other words, the

entire Giggle Group is simply that many more examples of Lazy Vowel – a topic just discussed in Stage 13. The final sound for every one of these new words is ULL, the sound you can hear in the words DULL, HULL, and GULL.

To present the above to your child, first get him to pronounce /u/ + /l/ correctly. Do this by having him read the rhyming words GULL, HULL, and DULL (a bird, a ship's bottom, the opposite of sharp). When he's sure of the sound of ULL, tell him that lots of two and three-syllable words end with this exact sound – but the spelling is LE instead of ULL. Place this list of words on some paper. On the left is the correct spelling; on the right is the way to say the word.

giggle	=	gig + GUL
sniffle	=	snif + FUL
puddle	=	pud + DUL
apple	=	ap + PUL
pebble	=	peb + BUL
puzzle	=	puz + ZUL
chuckle	=	chuc + KUL
turtle	=	tur + TUL
jungle	=	jung + UL

In pronouncing each of these words, he need only read the first syllable, and then add something that rhymes with “ULL.” The E is silent. In short, at the *end* of a word, LE is equivalent to UL: PICKLE = PIC/KUL. Point out that as he says each word, his tongue ends up touching the back of his upper teeth. He'll probably find this fun!

Once he seems to be catching on, do the GIGGLE Group in the appendix. If he has trouble with the three-syllable words listed there, like POSSIBLE, help out by splitting the word up: POS/SI/BLE. When finished with this group, tell him his phonics skills have now added another 3000 or so words to his I-can-read list.

The next topic, the GH groups in the appendix, will present more of a challenge for your child. The spellings there are horrendous. If brewers can market their beer phonetically as LITE, why must the rest of us spell it non-phonetically as LIGHT? I would tell you to skip the whole group, but it has far too many important and common words.

I've divided them into 5 sub-groups in Appendix N. Four sounds, already introduced, will now get alternate spellings:

- IGH spells /I/
- AUGH and OUGH both spell /aw/
- EIGH spells /A/
- GH spells /f/

Start this new topic by asking your child to use her knowledge from Stage 10 to spell the word BITE. When she answers correctly, write it on some paper. Now ask her to spell the rhyming word LIGHT. At this point, she ought to spell it LITE. Write it down as well:

B I T E
L I T E

Let her know that the second spelling *ought* to be correct, but this is an example of one of the trickiest spellings in English. Now spell it correctly:

B I T E
L I T E
L I G H T

Emphasize that while BITE is correct, LITE is not. Since the combination, IGH, represents a single phoneme in the word LIGHT, this is her first (and only) example of a *three-fer*: three letters making a single sound. IGH spells long I.

Parent Note: Some folks consider DGE a three-fer for /j/ (as in BADGE) and TCH a three-fer for /ch/ (as in MATCH). I think it's an open question as to whether the phoneme /d/ can be heard in BADGE or whether /t/ can be heard in MATCH. In any case, it's too subtle to worry about in the context of beginning reading instruction.

Now discuss the spelling of FIGHT: should it be FITE (like BITE) or FIGHT (like LIGHT)? Don't keep her in suspense; let her know *nearly all* the words ending in the sound "ITE" are spelled with this new three-fer. Now place the other IGH words from the appendix on paper or on index cards and let her decode them. At the end of the list in the appendix, the two of you can marvel at how the words BITE, KITE, and SPITE escaped this spelling madness!

As if three-fers weren't bad enough, your child is now faced with some awesome *four-fers*! Do the AUGH and OUGH word groups in the appendix together because these are both alternate spellings for the same sound: /aw/. Here's what you might do with him. Ask him to spell the word TAUGHT, as in "I taught my dog a new trick." If necessary, help him isolate the 3 sounds: /t/ + /aw/ + /t/. As he replaces each of these sounds with appropriate letters, write his answer on paper. Given what the two of you did in Stage 12, he should end up with one (or both) of two phonetically feasible alternatives:

T A U T T A W T

Either of these is a great answer. The word TAUGHT *should* be spelled in one of these 2 already-established ways. Now write the correct spelling:

T A U T T A W T
T A U G H T

Let him ponder this ugly spelling for a moment. Then point out that in this correct spelling, the 2 T's make perfect sense, but the vowel sound, /aw/, is spelled differently from what he learned in Stage 12: AUGH instead of AW or AU. In other words, AUGH must be a *four-fer* for the sound /aw/. Let him know that AUGH and OUGH are *both* alternate spellings for the vowel sound /aw/ and write some additional words for him to decode:

T A U T T A W T
T A U G H T
C A U G H T
B O U G H T
F O U G H T

There are only 3 four-fers in English – and your child just met 2 of them. Now do the remainder of the OUGH and AUGH words in the appendix. Here it might be more helpful to transfer these words to index cards where initially, they could be written this way: S-OUGH-T, D-AUGH-TER, N-AUGH-TY, and so on. In each case, the middle part of the word is read as /aw/. Help with definitions of these words as necessary.

Reviewing, the sound /aw/ now has 4 correct spellings: AU, AW, AUGH, and OUGH. Compare: FAULT, LAW, TAUGHT, and SOUGHT.

There's one more four-fer and then your child is done with them. Ask if she can remember how to spell the number 8 from the Tricky 50 list in Stage 14. (If you have a Word Wall, this should be easy.) Write it on paper: EIGHT. Since EIGHT has only 2 sounds, /A/ and /t/, EIGH must be another spelling of long A. In other words, EIGH must be another four-fer – one that spells /A/. The word EIGHT is not alone in having this weird spelling. Write these words under the word EIGHT, lining them up nicely:

E I G H T
W E I G H T
W E I G H
S L E I G H
N E I G H (The sound a horse makes)
N E I G H B O R
F R E I G H T

With some help, she should be able to decode these new words. Make sure she understands the difference in meaning between the above words and the words ATE, WAIT, WAY, SLAY, and NAY.

At this point, you've already done all the EIGH words in the appendix except for the exception word, HEIGHT. This would be pronounced HATE if your child used the word EIGHT as a guide. It's actual pronunciation is HITE – a spelling that would have been perfectly reasonable. Reviewing, your child now has 4 spellings for the sound /A/: A-E, AI, AY, and EIGH. Compare: SALE, SAIL, SLAY, and SLEIGH.

There's one last listing in the GH Groups in the appendix. The five words there all have the spelling OUGH or AUGH, yet now, these spellings do *not* say /aw/. What these 5 words *do* have in common is the fact that GH spells /f/. Place these 5 words on paper:

ROUGH
TOUGH
ENOUGH
LAUGH
COUGH

Let him know that for these 5 words, GH is a two-fer for the sound /f/. That alone may be enough for him to identify some of them. You could also say these words are such oddballs, you're going to spell them as they *should* have been spelled, that is, phonetically:

ROUGH	(RUFF)
TOUGH	(TUFF)
ENOUGH	(ENUFF)
LAUGH	(LAFF)
COUGH	(CAUFF)

Once he realizes what these words actually are, point out that the first 3 rhyme, and GH spells /f/ for all of them. These are some of the craziest spellings that exist in English, yet they're all common words; your child needs to master them. Perhaps make up some humorous sentences for him to read – sentences that might help him remember these words:

- I may be ROUGH and I may be TOUGH, but I think I have had ENOUGH of these silly spellings!
- To spell the word LAFF as L-A-U-G-H is INSANE!
- If you COUGH something up, spit it in the sink or toilet!

Note: Two other common words that would normally be covered here, THOUGH and THROUGH, will be covered in Stage 17.

Time to evaluate. When you think your child has mastered the words in the GH groups, place the most common of these words on flash cards, shuffle them and see how he does. This is a TUFF test. Take your time here and be sure he can decode most of these words – they occur frequently in children's books.

After the GH groups, the PH group will be easy. Whether this two-fer is at the beginning, middle, or end of a word, it always has the sound /f/. There are some amusing words in this group that should make the task of remembering how to pronounce PH an easy one. With the substitution of F for PH, all the words are surprisingly phonetic. I would simply place them on paper, tell your child that PH is a two-fer for /f/, and see how he does.

The hardest word on the list is SPHERE. If necessary, write SFERE on a flash card and hide the S: FERRE. Once he reads it, show the S: SFERE. Now substitute the PH for the F: SPHERE.

Next up: some words which simply don't follow the rules. In the appendix, I call them the WILD group since WILD is one of the words listed there. All the phonics to date

would suggest the vowels in the WILD Group should have their short sound. Nevertheless, all these vowels are long. If all these words ended in E, like they once did in OLDE English, a CHILDE would FINDE MOSTE of them trivial. Even though that final E has long since vanished, she must still recognize these two dozen common words.

Simply show her this group of words with the caution that *all* the vowels are long; she shouldn't have too much trouble. Point out that the word WIND can be said with a long I, or a short I, but the meaning changes with the pronunciation. (The word BOTH should also be mentioned here because it too, is an outlier. It's not pronounced like CLOTH, BROTH, and MOTH.) Point out that FROST, COST, and LOST are not on the list because they are pronounced exactly as we would expect, with a short O.

Now, focus your child's attention on a common suffix that is always pronounced in a manner at odds with its spelling: TION. (Over 2500 English words end in this suffix.) If you think about words like ACTION, FICTION, and ADDITION, it becomes apparent that TION is pronounced "SHIN" (or, perhaps, "SHUN," depending on where you live). What's more unusual in this situation is that T says /sh/. (That the vowel in this unstressed suffix is pronounced /i/ or /u/ is just another example of Lazy Vowel.) In Appendix N, I have included a list of words that should get him accustomed to reading this common word ending. The key here, is that he not try to sound out this suffix phonetically; he must simply recognize it and think: SHIN. Use flash cards and go slowly; many of these words are two or more syllables. Define them as necessary.

Next, look at the TURE family of words in the appendix. If you think about how you pronounce words like FIXTURE and PASTURE, you can hear that TURE does *not* rhyme with PURE and CURE. Instead, TURE is pronounced /ch/ + /er/, or simply "CHER". With this understanding of how to read TURE, the words in this group are surprisingly phonetic. If necessary, with a word like SIGNATURE, hide the TURE part of the word and let your child read SIGNA. Then he simply needs to add the sound "CHER" to read the entire word. He will likely need help with some definitions even after successfully decoding some of these words.

In multi-syllable words, each syllable has a vowel. Often, these are stand-alone vowels that can have *either* their short or long sound. So now you can show your child some general strategies for deciding how to pronounce these vowels. For example, the words BASIC and HABIT are both two-syllable CVCVC words. Yet in the first, the A is

long, and in the other, short. Why? A related question is this: in longer words, how does the reader figure out syllable boundaries?

It turns out there are some general rules that can help a beginning reader in this regard. Here's a summary of the most helpful rules:

- *Open* syllables end in a vowel (CCV, CV, V) and typically have a *long* vowel sound: BA/SIC. BA is an open syllable. SIC is not.
- *Closed* syllables end in a consonant (CVC, VC) and typically have a *short* vowel sound: HAB/IT. Both HAB and IT are closed syllables.
- Syllable boundaries usually occur between consecutive consonants: BUT/TER and MAS/TER. Note how this rule keeps us from reading MASTER as MA/STER. (In MA/STER, the A would have a long sound because MA is an open syllable.)
- Syllable boundaries never split consonant digraphs (SH, CH, TH, NG) because digraphs produce a single sound. So, the word BISHOP can't be read as BIS/HOP (both vowels short). However, that still leaves two possibilities: BI/SHOP (long I) or BISH/OP (short I). Here, only more reading experience can help – and the fact that BI/SHOP is not a word.
- Common prefixes (DE, DIS, EM, IM, IN, IR, MIS, NON, PRE, RE, SUB, UN) and common suffixes (ED, ER, ES, EST, ING, FUL, LESS, LY, MENT, NESS, OUS, Y) are always their own syllable and they obey the above rules for open and closed syllables.
- TION and TURE (covered above) are always their own syllable.

The above guidelines are for you. I believe, however, that your child can understand the open/closed distinction and the necessity of splitting a word at two consecutive middle consonants (unless those consonants form a two-fer).

Parent Note: These guidelines are not perfect. A beginner trying to read words like HOTEL or COMET for the first time could still misread them as HOT/EL (short O) and CO/MET (long O). If these words are already in the beginner's *speaking* vocabulary, such mistakes will be minimized. These mistakes will also decrease with time and reading experience.

In Appendix N, you'll find some groups of words that will help your child decode open and closed syllables. Don't think she must master all these words before moving on. There are too many. Do some now, from each group, until she gets the hang of it – and then come back later, as needed, for more practice. In the first group, the initial syllable is closed. In the second, the initial syllable is open. In the third group, you'll find a more

challenging mix. Be sure she understands that for open syllables, the vowel is long, and for closed, the vowel is short.

I think you should present these words – at least initially – as I have them in the appendix: already split into syllables. This will help her learn the open/closed distinction and it will make her decoding easier. Naturally, she won't have this aid when she's reading independently. Nonetheless, this experience of reading words that have been divided for her will still be a useful one: her confidence will keep growing and she'll be learning to view longer words as the sum of pieces (syllables) that are individually manageable.

She'll also be learning that faced with an unknown word, multiple pronunciations are often possible. Later on, when she comes across a word like MOMENT, for example, she'll try decoding it as both MOM/ENT (short O) and MO/MENT (long O). When one of the pronunciations matches a word in her *speaking* vocabulary, she'll know which one to pick.

Parent Note: Open and closed syllables are not infallible. For instance, in the appendix I wrote IN/VES/TIG/A/TION instead of IN/VES/TI/GA/TION. I did so to keep a short I in the 3rd syllable. Yet the second way of dividing the word seems more natural to me. It helps to understand that Lazy Vowel trumps all rules. The 3rd syllable in INVESTIGATION is unstressed – therefore its vowel is going to be pronounced /u/ or /i/ *no matter what*.

Note that the distinction between open and closed syllables fully explains why the following three groups, which you and your child covered earlier, all have a *long vowel* sound:

- ME, HE, SHE and so on (from Stage 7)
- GO, SO, NO and so on (from Stage 13)
- CRY, MY, DRY and so on (from Stage 13)

All three of these word groups contain only a single open syllable. So the vowel sound must be long.

Stage 16

Soft C, Soft G, Contractions

There are only a few more phoneme-letter relationships your child needs to learn in order for him to successfully set out on his own as an independent reader and speller. These topics include:

- The vowel Y in the *middle* of a word: what is its sound?
- Alternate sounds for some consonants. Your child has already seen that S often spells /z/. But in addition, C can spell /s/ (CITY), and G can spell /j/ (GENTLE). What rules govern this behavior?
- Contractions. As soon as he opens a book, he'll run into words like DON'T and HAVEN'T. You need to teach him what these are and how to pronounce them.
- Thousands of words end in E. When is that E silent? What does the silent E tell a reader about the word to which it is attached?
- The vowel digraphs IE and EI: how should he handle these two-fers? What sounds do they symbolize?

The Spelling Corner – Many Stage 15 words are not easy words to spell. Do what you can, but realize that your child has years to work on his spelling. It might be best to start with words from the WILD group in Appendix N: they're common words with relatively easy spellings. After that, see how he does with some of the easier words in the GIGGLE group – words like APPLE, BOTTLE, and NOODLE.

If you ask him to spell some of the words from the GH groups, remind him these are among the trickiest spellings in the English language. He should expect the three-fer, IGH, and the four-fers AUGH, OUGH, and EIGH. Start with one of these words, NIGHT for instance, and once he gets it, stay with other words that rhyme with NIGHT. If he hears a word ending in "SHIN," does he remember to spell it as TION? Emphasize that nearly every word having the sound /f/ is spelled with F, not PH. He should use PH only if he's sure that PH is the correct spelling. Such assurance becomes possible only after the word has been successfully decoded 2-5 times.

If you ask him to spell some of the multi-syllable words, clearly pronounce each syllable so he can determine whether the syllable is open or closed.

You and your child have already investigated the letter Y when it occurs at the *beginning* of a word as a consonant (Stage 6), and at the *end* of a word as a vowel (Stages 12 and 13). If Y appears in the *middle* of a word or syllable, it should be read as a vowel having the sound /I/ or /i/. Look at the two word groups I have prepared in Appendix O. In one group, the Y spells long I, in the other, short I.

Present the first group to your child, informing her that Y says /I/, just as it does in the words MY and DRY. Also mention that there are 2 animals (PYTHON and HYENA) to be found within the group. The words in the group almost perfectly follow the rules for open and closed syllables. If she imagines each Y as the letter I, the words are surprisingly phonetic. Help with syllable boundaries (if needed) by splitting the words up, for example: ty/phoon and an/al/yze.

When you present the second group of words, let her know that Y can also symbolize the sound /i/. (This is the fourth sound of Y. Compare: YES, MY, CANDY, and MYTH.) There is also another animal (LYNX) to be found in the group. If she needs support, you can again write these words in a manner that helps with syllable boundaries: symp/tom and hyp/no/tize, for instance. She may have trouble with the word LYNX. You can rewrite it, replacing the Y with I, and the X with KS: LINKS. It's perfectly phonetic:

LYNX = LINKS = /l/ + /i/ + /ng/ + /k/ + /s/

She has already seen how to use S (or ES) to form the plural. She has also seen that it's common for S to have a Z sound. In Appendix O, I have a group of words that have nothing to do with the plural, yet the S symbolizes /z/. Make sure she can read and pronounce these words correctly. The group reviews many "tricky" words she already knows.

The letter C symbolizes two phonemes – but they are phonemes already symbolized by other letters. When C is followed by A, O, or U, it has a K sound. You already covered this with your child in Stage 3. However, when C is followed by E, I, or Y, it has an S sound. *Hard* C refers to its K sound, while *soft* C refers to its S sound. In Appendix O, I have included some of the more common words where a soft C is required. There are no exceptions to this soft C rule: CE, CI, and CY should all be pronounced as though they were written as SE, SI, and SY:

CENTER = SENTER

CITY = SITY

CYNIC = SINIC

Happily, this rule makes hundreds of additional words phonetic.

After explaining to him when a soft C is required, practice with the appropriate group in the appendix. Initially, the words rhyme, but not for long. If necessary, replace the C with an S in some of the words (EX/SEPT) as a temporary reading aid. Point out that the silent E in a word like BOUNCE has nothing to do with making a prior vowel long. It's there solely to make the C soft.

There is a similar situation with the letter G. G has its *hard* sound, /g/, when it's followed by A, O, or U, and its *soft* sound, /j/, when it's followed by E, I, or Y. In Appendix O, you'll find a sampling of such words. In this case, there *are* some common exceptions to the rule. I include them at the end of the list. Here are some things to note as the two of you work through this soft G list:

- The silent E in a word like CAGE serves two functions: it makes the A long and the G soft.
- The silent E in a word like PLEDGE is there only to make the G soft. The other E has its short sound.
- In the word, ORANGE, the NG is *not* acting as a two-fer. The word needs to be read in a way that interprets GE as a unit rather than NG. Orange = /or/ + /i/ + /n/ + /j/. Lazy Vowel is at work in the second syllable.
- There are other Lazy Vowel examples in this list: ORIGINAL, GENERAL, and even the word SAUSAGE (/s/ + /aw/ + /s/ + /i/ + /j/).
- The word GIRL is only an apparent exception to the soft G rule. The letter I in this word is an inseparable part of the two-fer IR. As such, it should not change the pronunciation of the G from hard to soft. Still, the spelling, GURL, would have been a more logical choice (rhymes with CURL).
- Words that end in NGER (like FINGER, ANGER, HUNGER, and LONGER) are not exceptions because both NG and ER are inseparable two-fers in such words. The E in these words has no effect on the G; instead, it's an integral part of the R: ER = /er/.

Once again, you can temporarily replace the G with a J if it helps him read some of these words: MA/JIC, JI/GAN/TIC. Soft C and soft G occur frequently in English. Upon finishing this section, he'll be able to decode hundreds of additional words.

Countless English words end in the single vowel E. I estimate a final E is silent 99% of the time. Your child already knows most of the important *exceptions* to this rule, namely, the one-syllable words in the E/EE group from Appendix G: ME, WE, SHE, HE, THE, and so on. Apart from these few exceptions, final E's are nearly always silent. This is a useful rule for the beginning reader. Up until this stage, you have deliberately given her the impression that silent E has only one purpose: to make the other vowel in the syllable long. In this current stage, you're expanding the role of silent E: attached to a C or G, a final E causes a *soft* sound.

If you look in the appendix, you'll see there are some additional roles of silent E. I have 9 categories there, labeled A through I, with examples in each category. The category descriptions are given below. The goal here is to show her that a silent E at the end of a word can have many meanings. The categories in the appendix are as follows:

- A. The E makes the prior vowel in the syllable long. This is the most important, and the most common role of a final E.
- B. The E makes the prior C soft. It may, or may not, also make the prior vowel long.
- C. The E makes the prior G soft. It may, or may not, also make the prior vowel long.
- D. All English syllables must have a vowel.
- E. English words don't end in V.
- F. English Words don't end in U. (The main exceptions are MENU, TOFU, FLU, GURU, and of course, YOU.)
- G. Nouns that are singular, yet end in S, could cause confusion. A final E announces that the word is singular and it prepares the word for the second S that will make it plural (HOUSE/HOUSES).
- H. Some words end in E for no apparent reason whatsoever! She has already seen many of these listed as tricky words.
- I. Worse still, in some words, a final E is utterly misleading as to how the word should be pronounced: it would seem to indicate a long vowel, when in fact, the vowel stays short. (Note: these are all examples of Lazy Vowel.)

These 9 groups will provide some beneficial review for your child and help her become better at decoding words when a final E is present. Go through the groups one at a time, explaining each category as you go.

Next up are the two-fers IE and EI. I postponed these until now because many EI words (like RECEIVE) use the soft C sound you just introduced to your child. Here's a pleasant fact about these two digraphs: with few exceptions, they both symbolize /E/. Look at the lists I've provided in the appendix. Note how consistently the sound of both

EI and IE is long E. This is another useful rule for a beginning reader. You've already covered nearly all the exceptions to this rule:

- The EIGH group from Appendix N (EIGHT, WEIGHT, and so on) where EI is part of a four-fer.
- The small IE group from Appendix M: TIE, DIE, LIE, and PIE.

Of the other exception words listed in Appendix O, FRIEND and THEIR are the most important. Ask your child how FRIEND ought to be spelled (FREND).

As you practice these words with your child, point out how many of them have a soft C sound, and how many end in silent E simply to keep the word from ending in V. Note that the E at the end of HYGIENE and CAFFEINE serves no purpose whatever, and that for the rhyming words, SHRIEK and SHEIK, one uses IE and the other uses EI.

It's time to deal with contractions. They show up everywhere so it's a good idea to cover them now – otherwise they will confuse and frustrate your child as he sets out on his own in Stage 17. I have 33 of the most common contractions listed in Appendix O. There are nearly 100 contractions in English, but many are obscure: MIGHT'VE for example. To motivate this topic with him, write the following:

He is eating.
She is sleeping.
We are playing.

Have him read these 3 simple sentences. Now, focusing on the first sentence, have him read it repeatedly, but each time a little faster. As he does so, can he hear how the two words, HE and IS, start coming together? Explain that when we speak, we often say: "He's eating" instead of "He is eating". Now write "He's eating" across from where you wrote "He is eating":

He is eating.	He's eating.
She is sleeping.	
We are playing.	

Let him study the paper for a while; this is a novel (and weird) topic for him. Point out that HE'S is called a *contraction*: a combination of two words into one. A contraction is a short-cut method of both speaking and writing – and such contractions are everywhere. Point out how the word IS is partially gone. The S is still there, but

something called an *apostrophe* has taken the place of the missing I. Also, point out that the original sentence has 4 syllables while the short-cut sentence has only three. If spelled like it sounds, we would write HE'S as HEEZ. Write HEEZ in parentheses on your paper. Make sure he understands this equivalency: He's = He is. (These 33 contractions may be another candidate for your Word Wall.)

Now, do the same thing as above with the other two short sentences. As you do so, make these points:

- SHE'S, sounds like SHEEZ, and it's short for SHE IS. The apostrophe again takes the place of I in this example.
- WE'RE, sounds like WEER, and it's short for WE ARE. The apostrophe takes the place of A in this example.

When finished, your paper will look like this:

He is eating.	He's eating. (HEEZ)
She is sleeping.	She's sleeping. (SHEEZ)
We are playing.	We're playing. (WEER)

Make sure he can read all 6 sentences correctly. Now make 3 flash cards – one for each of the above contractions. On one side, write the contraction (SHE'S) and on the other, write what it's short for (SHE IS). You'll be using these to review shortly.

Before moving on, point out how awesome are the new words CONTRACTION and APOSTROPHE. Both words are perfectly phonetic given the phonics and rules that have already been covered – including the interpretation of open and closed syllables, and Lazy Vowel.

Ok, that was an elaborate introduction to three of the contractions listed in the appendix. Now you can speed things up a bit. There are 7 contractions that involve the word WILL. Write out these 6 short sentences on paper:

I will go with you.
 You will go with me.
 He will go with us.
 She will go with us.
 They will go with us.
 We will go with them.

Have your child read each one and then tell her the *first two words* in each sentence have a contraction. If she reads the sentences rapidly, can she guess what the contractions might be? One at a time, go back and write the same sentence, but now with the contraction, each time emphasizing the correct pronunciation. (I would include the phonetic pronunciation in the parentheses.)

I will go with you.	I'll go with you. (ILE)
You will go with me.	You'll go with me. (YOOL)
He will go with us.	He'll go with us. (HEEL)
She will go with us.	She'll go with us. (SHEEL)
They will go with us.	They'll go with us. (THAIL)
We will go with them.	We'll go with them. (WEEL)

Have her read all 12 sentences while you monitor her pronunciation. Does she see that the apostrophe takes the place of WI in each case?

Now ask her this: what if everyone in these 6 sentences wanted to stay home? In other words, how would we *negate* these 6 sentences? See if you can lead her to the correct contraction, WON'T (will not). The correct pronunciation is WOANT.

I will go with you.	I'll go with you.	I won't go with you.
You will go with me.	You'll go with me.	You won't go with me.
He will go with us.	He'll go with us.	He won't go with us.
She will go with us.	She'll go with us.	She won't go with us.
They will go with us.	They'll go with us.	They won't go with us.
We will go with them.	We'll go with them.	We won't go with them.

Now make 7 new flash cards to go with the 3 you made earlier.

Now that she knows contractions can be used to negate things, you can do the other 13 negating contractions *as a large group*. (I leave it to you to decide whether you want to include the slang contraction AIN'T for AM NOT. AIN'T is perfectly phonetic, and it rhymes with PAINT.) Write these on paper:

She is not going with us.
 He can not go with us.
 I do not want to go.

She does not want to go.
 We are not going.
 She could not go.
 He would not go.
 I should not eat so fast.
 We did not sleep well.
 I have not seen her today.
 He has not had his bath yet.
 She was not home.
 They were not sleepy.
 I am not sleepy!

Make it a game. Underline the two words that will get a contraction and see if she can guess what that contraction might be. After all, she probably uses many of these contractions in her day-to-day speech:

She <u>is not</u> going with us.	She isn't going with us. (IZINT)
He <u>can not</u> go with us.	He can't go with us. (CANT)
I <u>do not</u> want to go.	I don't want to go. (DOANT)
She <u>does not</u> want to go.	She doesn't want to go. (DUZINT)
We <u>are not</u> going.	We aren't going. (ARNT)
She <u>could not</u> go.	She couldn't go. (COODINT)
He <u>would not</u> go.	He wouldn't go. (WOODINT)
I <u>should not</u> eat so fast.	I shouldn't eat so fast. (SHOODINT)
We <u>did not</u> swim today.	We didn't swim today. (DIDINT)
I <u>have not</u> seen her today.	I haven't seen her today. (HAVINT)
He <u>has not</u> had his bath yet.	He hasn't had his bath yet. (HAZINT)
She <u>was not</u> home.	She wasn't home. (WUZINT)
They <u>were not</u> sleepy.	They weren't sleepy. (WERNT)
I <u>am not</u> sleepy!	I ain't sleepy! (AINT)

Make up 13 more flash cards – 14 if you did AIN'T – and take a well-deserved break.

Do the last 10 contractions as a group, just as you did above. By the end of this final exercise, your paper will look something like this:

<u>Let us</u> go to the game today!	Let's go to the game today! (LETZ)
<u>I am</u> not sleepy yet!	I'm not sleepy yet! (IME)
<u>It is</u> not polite to pick your nose.	It's not polite... (ITS)

He is here! <u>I have</u> seen him!	He is here! I've seen him! (IVE)
<u>They are</u> coming to the game.	They're coming... (THAIR)
<u>They have</u> had enough!	They've had enough! (THAVE)
<u>Who is</u> that lady in the blue dress?	Who's that lady... (HOOZ)
<u>We have</u> had a great time today!	We've had a great... (WEEV)
<u>You are</u> my best friend!	You're my best friend! (YOOR)
<u>You have</u> been a big help today!	You've been a big... (YOOV)

Make up your final 10 flash cards and add them to the deck. For the next few days, review all 33 contractions using the flash cards. When you practice with your child, show him one side, and have him predict the other (in both directions). Make sure he's pronouncing the contraction correctly. Once you're convinced he knows his contractions, it's time to move on to the last stage in this reading program.

Stage 17

Independent Reading

For your hard-working child, this stage marks the pivotal transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” It’s unlike the previous stages in that *daily formal instruction in phonics is no longer a requirement*. In fact, this stage never really ends as long as “reading to learn” remains a priority in an individual’s life.

If you look at appendices P and Q, you’ll see you’ve already taught him 95% of the code that’s there. You’ll present the final 5% over these next few months, but at a more leisurely pace. What he needs now, more than anything else, is to read, but in a supervised setting. In addition to this independent reading, encourage him to write. It can be little notes that he leaves for you at various places around the house, or more formally, it can be short stories about any topic that fires his imagination. You can of course write a response back for him to read. His writing can now become the basis for continued spelling lessons. If, for example, he writes HOAM instead of HOME, congratulate him for a perfectly phonetic spelling but then help him correct it. (Tell him FOAM **is** spelled the way he thought HOME would be spelled.)

You can teach the few phonics topics remaining (see “Completing the Code” below) over the next few months as she becomes a more fluent and confident reader. Here are my recommendations for the *immediate* future:

- Teach her how to use a dictionary by having her search for words she already knows.
- Let her pick her own age-appropriate books. I wouldn’t worry too much about whether books are at the “right” level. If a book is too easy for her, or too difficult, she’ll quickly get bored and put it down. Within reason, allow her to be the judge.
- As much as possible, have her read aloud in your presence. This allows you to monitor her reading and to see if there are any unexpected problems. Find a balance between intervening too fast, in order to help, and allowing her to become frustrated. If a book is clearly too difficult for her, help her switch to one which will allow more success.

As you listen to him read, there are at least five ways things can (and will) go wrong:

- 1) He reads a word incorrectly because he forgets something he already learned: that AI says /A/, for example, or that GE says /j/, or that SAID is one of the Tricky Words, so it doesn't rhyme with MAID.
- 2) He reads a word phonetically, but nonetheless incorrectly, because the word does not follow standard phonics rules: BALLET, CHOIR, COLONEL.
- 3) He accents the wrong syllable: CON/ceal rather than con/CEAL.
- 4) He divides a multi-syllable word incorrectly: BON/US (short O) instead of BO/NUS (long O).
- 5) He pronounces a word correctly but it's not in his speaking or listening vocabulary, so he misses the main idea of the sentence.

Deal directly with situation #1 by reviewing whatever phonics he has forgotten. If, for example, he reads DEAD incorrectly, as /d/ + /E/ + /d/, remind him that DEAD is one of the exceptions to the "two vowels walking" rule. If the word were BEAD or PLEAD, his pronunciation would be correct. Also, it's unlikely the word DEED will make sense in the context of the sentence if the actual word is DEAD.

Situation #2 is more problematic. Tell him he is correct with his phonics, but CHOIR, for example, is one of those words in English that doesn't follow the rules. See if he can correct himself, by looking at the word within the context of the sentence. If that doesn't work, encourage him to look it up in a dictionary. This is preferable to simply telling him what the word is for two reasons. Looking up CHOIR will reinforce its odd spelling. It will also encourage him to be less dependent on you. I find it's a good exercise to ask, once the word is identified, how the word should have been spelled in order to be considered phonetic: QUIRE (or KWIRE).

Situation #3 is a common mistake which will naturally decrease over time as reading fluency and vocabulary grow. Remind him that English is an accented language and have him try accenting the word in a different way. Maybe he'll then recognize it. Show him there are some words that can be accented *either way*, but the meaning changes with the accenting:

OB / ject	or	ob / JECT
REB / el	or	re / BEL
PER / mit	or	per / MIT
REF / use	or	re / FUSE

Situation #4 is also a common mistake for beginning readers. Just review open and closed syllables (Stage 15) and then have him try again with the word's syllables divided in a different way.

Emphasize situation #5 as a valuable learning opportunity. Reading will quickly increase a child's vocabulary as long as he doesn't skip the unknown word. As in situation #2, he should first try to figure out what the correctly-decoded word might mean from its context. Then he should consult a dictionary to see if his contextual guess is correct. You might consider having him *collect* the words that represent new vocabulary for him, keeping them in a personal folder with the accompanying definition. Encourage him to review his "new word" list each day. Tell him he can take a word off that list only when he is sure he has mastered its meaning.

Continue reading to her on a regular basis even though she is now reading on her own. As you discuss the story, point out any unusual rule-breaking words that are not among the 50 Tricky Words she already knows. Familiarize yourself with the phonics topics that remain (see below) so that when one of those topics comes up naturally during your reading, you can cover it at that time. The topic most likely to come up first is the one I call "Other Vowel Combinations."

As she starts reading silently, remind her not to skip over words she doesn't know. Encourage her to use the dictionary or to ask you for the meaning. You can also show her how to type a word whose meaning is unknown, LOLLYGAG for instance, into an internet search window to get an online definition: "fool around, dawdle." Doing so will often provide her with the correct pronunciation as well – as long as she clicks on the sound symbol next to the word. When she finishes her silent reading of a book, get her to talk about it, so you can gauge her comprehension.

Completing the Code

50 Irregular Words

If you look at Appendix S, you'll find my *final* version of the Tricky 50 irregular English words. I know what you're thinking. Wasn't that the final version you saw back in Stage 14? Well, I did remark at the time that the words HER, OUR, MY, GO, and SAY had become wholly phonetic. Rather than simply take these five words off the list, making it the Tricky 45, I think it more helpful to replace them with 5 relatively important words that are not wholly phonetic: EYE, NONE, FRIEND, THOUGH, and THROUGH.

I leave it to you to introduce these 5 new tricky words to your child and to add 5 new cards to the deck you used for practice in Stage 14. Use the full deck once a week to keep reviewing these 50 high-frequency words until your child knows all of them cold.

Other Vowel Combinations

If you look back at the vowel digraphs (two-fers) you covered in the previous stages, you'll find these: AI, EE, EA, OA, OO, UE, OI, OU, AU, OE, IE, and EI. Each of these produces a single sound. There are, however, other vowel combinations. I don't mean AA, II, UU, AE, and AO – no common words have these spellings. But that still leaves EU, IO, EO, IU, UI, UA, and IA. Only one in this last group, EU, is a digraph. If you look at Appendix T, you'll see it's an uncommon two-fer in English. Its sound is either /y/ + /ew/ or /ew/. Those 11 words are all I could find and none of them are likely to show up in a child's book. Skip this digraph or cover it – as you see fit.

The key thing to understand about the other 6 new vowel combinations (IO, EO, IU, UI, UA, and IA) is they are *not* two-fers. This implies *both* letters make a sound, and therefore a syllable boundary occurs *between* each of these pairs of vowels. This will be something new for your child.

Discuss the IO group first. Since a syllable boundary occurs between the I and the O, the I will be in an open syllable. Your child should therefore expect a long vowel sound and that's what she'll get: either long I or long E. The O will be long or short, depending on whether it's in an open or closed syllable. There are some common words here. I didn't include any words ending in TION because that's the special sound ("SHIN") you already covered in Stage 15. There are many words that end in IOUS as well, but you'll cover those in the OUS group further below. The main point to stress

here is that IO is *not* a two-fer, so both vowels make a sound. Note that in some of the IO words, REGION for example, the second syllable is dominated by Lazy Vowel: /r/ + /E/ + /j/ + /i/ + /n/.

There are no surprises in the EO group: both letters make a sound and the E is long. In a few of the words, DUNGEON for example, the 2 sounds of EO nearly merge into what sounds like a short I: DUN / GIN. This is another example of Lazy Vowel. As expected, the G in DUNGEON has its soft sound.

In the IU group, I have included only a small sampling of the hundreds of words that end in IUM. The letter I has a long E sound in an open syllable while the U is short because it's in a syllable closed by the M. Be aware of the soft C in CALCIUM and the soft G in GERANIUM.

Cover the next 2 groups together: UA and UI. I have eliminated from these groups, words like QUAKE and QUIT where the U is an integral part of the Q, making the side-by-side vowel structure only apparent. With Q words accounted for earlier, the UA group is perfectly well-behaved. U has its long sound, /y/ + /ew/, or, in some cases, simply /ew/. In the words spelled with AL, the AL has the lazy ULL sound your child first saw in Stage 13. In TRUANT and in LANGUAGE the final vowel defaults to a lazy /i/:

/t/ + /r/ + /ew/ + /i/ + /n/ + /t/
/l/ + /a/ + /ng/ + /g/ + /w/ + /i/ + /j/.

In the UI group, the words in the first box are what your child might expect at this point. There are only a few common words there. In the second boxed group (FRUIT, JUICE and others), you see yet another (infrequent) spelling of the sound /ew/. For these 6 words, UI is acting as a two-fer, producing a single sound. We may prefer the spelling FROOT JOOSE, but we must deal with the language we have. In the third boxed group of UI words, the U is silent. It's there simply to keep the G from going "soft." The word GUESS, for instance, without that silent U (GESS) would have to be pronounced JESS, as in DIGEST. There are only a few words where this phenomenon occurs.

The entire IA group is what you and your child should expect: a long vowel sound (E or I) on the open side of the syllable divide, and a short or long vowel sound on the other side, depending on whether that syllable is closed or open. The words listed are only a small sampling of such words. Note: for words *ending* in IA, the sound of the A defaults to a lazy /u/.

Past Tense

Take a few moments to remind your child a verb is the action word in a sentence – the word describing what the person, animal, or thing does. That action can be going on right now:

I scrub the floor.

She jogs with her dad.

He plays with his brother.

The boat floats in the lake.

Often, however, the action may have happened in the past. To indicate the past, we usually add D or ED to regular verbs:

I scrubbed the floor yesterday.

She jogged with her dad.

He played with his brother last week.

The boat floats in the lake.

The following rules for adding D or ED are complex. They are for you, not for your child.

- If the verb already ends in E, simply add the D (LOVE, LOVED)
- If the verb has a vowel digraph (OA, EE, AW, and so on), simply add ED (CHEER, CHEERED)
- If the verb has a single vowel followed by a single consonant, double the final consonant and add ED (WAG, WAGGED).
- If the verb ends in the sound /sh/, /ch/, /s/, /k/, /p/, or /f/, the added D or ED will have a /t/ sound (KISS/KISSED, NURSE/NURSED).
- If the verb ends with a /d/ or a /t/ sound, adding D or ED will create a second syllable (FLOAT, FLOATED).
- If the verb ends in the single vowel Y, change the Y to I and add ED (MARRY, MARRIED).

Rather than expect your child to remember all this (he won't), do the various groups in Appendix T where I have examples of each of the above 6 situations. You can choose whether or not to explain the rule that governs the group. I would simply practice with each group separately, monitoring pronunciations, and making sure each past tense verb remains a single syllable (except in the one group where it doesn't!)

Comparative and Superlative

The rules for forming comparative and superlative are similar to the above rules for forming past tense – especially for when to double the consonant. Here too, we change Y to I before adding ER or EST.

fat – fatter – fattest
sweet – sweeter – sweetest
rainy – rainier – rainiest

Start by giving a concrete example. We use a word without a special ending, TALL for instance, to describe a *single* child: Dave is a TALL boy. We add the ending ER to compare two children: Dave is TALLER than Sheila. And we add the ending EST to compare 3 or more children: Dave is the TALLEST kid in his class. Here is another example:

North Dakota is a COLD state.
North Dakota is COLDER than Oklahoma.
Alaska is the COLDEST state in the nation.

Sum it up: when describing a single noun (person, place, thing), use neither ER nor EST on the adjective; when comparing two nouns, use the ending ER on the adjective; when comparing 3 or more nouns, use the ending EST. Once he understands the concept, practice with the triplets I've provided in the appendix.

Additional Word Families

Look in the appendix at the -OUS, -SION, -SURE, -CIAL, and -TIAL families. Many of the words in these families will be unfamiliar to a young child even though he or she may well be able to accurately pronounce them. They all have difficult spellings. You may wish to pick and choose which words to cover in each group.

Place the words you want to do from the OUS group on some paper. I'll assume JOYOUS is one such word. Right next to it, write the way JOYOUS is *pronounced*:

JOYOUS	JOY-ISS	
NERVOUS	NER-VISS	(and so on)

Explain the while JOYOUS is the correct spelling, JOY-ISS is the correct pronunciation. (Remind her it's really nothing more than Lazy Vowel from Stage 13.) With the understanding that OUS = ISS, let her decode the other words in the list the same way.

Similarly, do the IOUS, UOUS, and CIOUS groups from the appendix. As you did above with JOYOUS, re-write the words from these groups in a manner that will explain their pronunciations. Here are my suggestions for getting started with each of these groups:

for the IOUS group:	OBVIOUS	OB-VEE-ISS	(and so on)
	VICTORIOUS	VIC-TOR-E-ISS	
for the UOUS group:	STRENUOUS	STREN-U-ISS	(and so on)
	TENUOUS	TEN-U-ISS	
for the CIOUS group:	PRECIOUS	PRE-SHISS	(and so on)
	FEROCIOUS	FER-O-SHISS	

As you practice these groups with your child, emphasize the fact that OUS consistently says ISS due to Lazy Vowel. (You might consider placing this fact, OUS = ISS, on your word wall.) Teach some new vocabulary by defining unknown words and then ask her to come up with sentences that use the new words.

In the first SION group, SION says "SHIN." As you recall, that's identical to the sound of TION in Stage 15. (Compare: ACTION and MISSION.) This should be a fairly easy group to do with her. Explain that SION, like TION, says SHIN. Then let her read the other words listed.

In the second SION group, as well as in the SURE group, you and your child finally encounter the 44th and final phoneme of English. That sound (see Table 1) is *voiced* SH, symbolically, /SH/. I first discussed this unusual sound back in Chapter 2. It can clearly be heard in the word ASIA: /A/ + /SH/ + /u/. Even though it's the voiced equivalent of /sh/, it is never spelled SH. If you look over the 2 groups of words with asterisks in the appendix, you'll notice this sound occurs in such common words as PLEASURE and DECISION.

Before you do these two *voiced* SH groups with your child, get her to accurately produce the voiced sound in isolation. To do this, start by having her review the *unvoiced* sound, /sh/, she has been making since Stage 7. That should be easy. Once she is making the unvoiced sound, tell her to keep the shape of her mouth unchanged, but now add some voicing. (Demonstrate it yourself, going from /sh/ to /SH/ for her.) If your child is having trouble with this new sound, have her say TREASURE. This word has 2 syllables; the second syllable starts with the sound in question.

Now place the words MISSION and VISION on some paper. Compare and contrast their sounds this way:

MISSION	MIS-SHIN	← sh is <u>unvoiced</u>
VISION	VI-SHIN	← sh is <u>voiced</u>

Once she can pronounce VISION correctly, place the remainder of the *voiced* SION words on the paper under the word VISION and help with pronunciations as necessary:

MISSION	MIS-SHIN	← sh is <u>unvoiced</u>	
VISION	VI-SHIN	← sh is <u>voiced</u>	
COLLISION	CO-LI-SHIN	← sh is <u>voiced</u>	(and so on)

Do the same with the SURE group. Have her compare the *second* syllable of FLASHER (unvoiced SH) with the *second* syllable of PLEASURE (voiced SH). When she can pronounce these two words correctly, introduce the SURE group this way:

FLASHER	FLASH-ER	← sh is <u>unvoiced</u>	
PLEASURE	PLE-SHER	← sh is <u>voiced</u>	
TREASURE	TRE-SHER	← sh is <u>voiced</u>	(and so on)

In the final two groups, CIAL and TIAL are both spellings for the same sound: “SHULL.” Think of the word DULL and then replace D with SH: SHULL. All the words in these final two groups can be pronounced with the final syllable, “SHULL.” This is, again, nothing other than Lazy Vowel. What is unusual in these two groups is that in the one, C says /sh/, and in the other, T says /sh/. Simply have her equate both CIAL and TIAL with “SHULL”:

FACIAL	FA-SHULL	PARTIAL	PAR-SHULL	
SOCIAL	SO-SHULL	ESSENTIAL	ES-SEN-SHULL	(and so on)

The Mute Group

You've arrived at the last phonics topic in this book. What better (and easier) way to end than with the Mute Group! Gathered at the end of Appendix T are some of the weirdest spellings in the English language. Happily, the number of words is quite manageable. Eleven small groups, each having a letter that's silent – a letter that is mute. Two of the groups, K and W, provide review, but the other 9 are new. Have fun with these words. Show the groups one at a time to your child and see if he can simply read the words once you tell him which letter is silent.

THE END

Your feedback would be much appreciated.

You can contact me at:

stephenparker81451@gmail.com

or on Twitter @ParkerPhonics.

Free pdf copies of this book are available at

ParkerPhonics.com.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Here are the 60 “words” that can be formed from the letters A, E, I, O, U, M, N, and S. **Boldface** indicates a real word, a person’s name, the name of a letter, or an important prefix or suffix.

Note: In these early stages, you are treating English as though it has no irregularities. Therefore, be careful with the words SON, IS, and AS. These are irregular words in English. At this early point in the program, they should be pronounced as they are in the words SONIC, HISS, and ASTEROID.

Word	Example	Word	Example	Word	Example	Word	Example
mass	mascot	sass	sassy	nas	nasty	ass	asteroid
mess	message	ses	sesame	-ness	nest	ess	escape
miss	mistake	sis	sister	nis	tennis	iss	hiss
moss	mosquito	sos	isosceles	nos	nostril	oss	ostrich
muss	musty	sus	suspense	nus	bonus	us	fuss
mam	mammal	Sam	sample	nam	dynamic	am	amuse
mem	member	sem	seminar	nem	nemesis	em	empty
mim	mimic	sim	simple	nim	nimble	im	improve
mom	mommy	som	somber	nom	nominate	om	omelet
mum	mumble	sum	summer	num	number	um	umbrella
man	manage	san	sandal	Nan	banana	an	antique
men	mention	sen	sentry	nen	continent	en	enjoy
min	minimum	sin	sincere	nin	tannin	in	insect
mon	monsoon	son	sonic	non-	nonsense	on	moron
mun	munch	sun	sunset	nun	enunciate	un-	unwrap

Appendix B

VC stands for vowel-sound/consonant-sound.

CVC stands for consonant-sound/vowel-sound/consonant-sound.

VC	CVC						
	PT	PG	PN	TG	TM	DG	DN
up	pat	peg	pan	tag	Tim	dig	Dan
at	pet	pig	pen	tug	Tom	dog	den
it	pit	gap	pin	get	mat	dug	Don
add *	pot		pun	got	met	God	Ned
Ed	putt *	PS	nap	gut	mitt *		nod
id	tap	pass *	nip		mutt *	DS	
odd *	tip	pus		TS	Matt	sad	GS
egg *	top	sap	TD	toss *		Sid	sag
ug!		sip	tad	sat		sod	gas
	PD	sup	Ted	set	TN		Gus
	pad		Todd *	sit	tan	DM	
	pod		dot		ten	dam	GM
	dip	PM		GN	tin	dim	mug
		Pam	PP	gun	nut	mad	gum
	DD	map	pap	nag	net	mid	Meg
	dad	mop	pep	nog	not	mud	
	did		pip				
	dud		pop	GG	TT		
			pup	gag	tot		
				gig			

* These words are still considered CVC (or VC) because double consonants like SS, TT, and DD make a single sound. Double consonants are not blends.

Note: Boxed words are important, high-frequency words.

Consonant Blends

CCVC stands for a word with a beginning consonant blend.

CVCC has a final consonant blend.

CCVC and CVCC				CCVCC
ST-	SN-	-MP	-NT	
stem	snap	imp	ant	stamp
Stan	snip	ump	mint	stomp
stun	snit	sump	pant	stump
step	snot	pomp	punt	stand
stop	snag	pump	tent	stunt
stud	snug	temp	tint	spend
		damp	dent	spent
SM-	-ST	dump	sent	
smug	mast	tamp		
smog	mist			
	must			
SP-	nest	-ND	-PT	
span	past	and	apt	
spin	pest	sand	opt	CVCCC
spun	test	end		tempt
spat	dust	send	-SP	
spit	gust	mend	gasp	
spot		pond		
sped		tend		
spam				

Appendix C

VC	CVC							
	BF	BT	BG	BN	FG	KP	KD	KM
ebb	buff *	bat	bag	ban	fig	cap	kid	Kim
if	fib	bet	beg	Ben	fog	cop	cod	Mack
off		bit	big	bin	gaff *	cup	cud	mock
ick!	KB	but	bug	bun	guff *	pack	deck	muck
ack!	back *	tab	gab	nab		pick *	Dick	Mick
	buck	tub		nub		peck	dock *	
	cab		BS		FS	puck	duck *	KN
	cob	BD	bass	FP	fuss			can
	cub	bad	Bess	puff		KT	KS	kin
		bed	boss		FN	cat	kiss	nick
	BP	bid	bus	FT	fan	kit	cuss	neck *
	bop	bud	sob	fat	fin	cot	sack	con
	pub	dab	sub	fit	fun	cut	sick	
		Deb				tack	sock *	
	KF		BM	FM	FD	tick	suck	KG
	cuff *	BB	bam!	fem	fad	tock		keg
		Bob	bum	miff *	fed	tuck	KK	cog
		bib	mob	muff *	doff *		kick	

* Words ending in FF or CK are CVC words because both FF and CK make a single consonant sound.

Note: Boxed words are important, high-frequency words.

CCVC and CVCC					CCVCC
ST-	SC-/SK-	SM-	-SK	-PT	scamp
stab	scab	smack	bask	kept	skimp
stub	skiff	smock	task		scant
staff	scoff		tusk	-CT	
stiff	skip		desk	act	
stuff	scat	-ST	disk	fact	
stack	skit	best	dusk	pact	
stick	scam	bust	mask	tact	
stock	skim	fast	ask		
stuck	scum	fest		-FT	
	scan	fist	-SP	aft	
SP-	skin	cast	cusps	gift	
speck	skid	cost		daft	
			-ND	deft	
-NT	SN-	-MP	band	sift	
bent	snob	bump	bend	soft	
bunt	snub	camp	bond		
font	sniff		fond		
cant *	snack		fund		

* Contractions, with proper apostrophes, will be covered in Stage 16.

Appendix D

VC	CVC		Consonant Blends					
ill	LP	LD	still	lend	flab	slap	elm	clasp
Al	lap	lad	spell	lint	fluff	slip	helm	clamp
	lip	led	spill	left	flack	slop	kelp	cleft
LL	lop	lid	smell	lift	fleck	slit	gulp	flint
lull	pal	doll	skill	loft	flick	slot	pulp	clump
	pill	dull	skull		flock	sled	milk	flask
LG				blab	flag	slid	sulk	gland
lag	LF	LM	last	blob	flap	slam	silk	glint
leg	fell	Mel	list	bluff	flip	slim	film	plump
log	fill	mill	lost	black	flop	slum	pelt	plant
lug		mull	lust	block	flat	split	silt	slump
gal	LK		lisp	bled	fled			slant
gill	lack	LN	lamp	blog	floss	pluck	melt	slept
gull	lick	Nell	limp	blip		plug	felt	splint *
	lock	null	lump	blot	slab	plop!	belt	elk
LB	luck	nil	land	bless	slob	plot	tilt	Clint
lab	kill			bliss	slack	plod	self	splat!
lob	cull		club	blam!	slick	plus	elf	spilt
bell			cliff		slug	plan	cult	
bill	LS		click	clot			golf	
	lass		clock	clad	glib	bland	gulf	
LT	less		cluck	class	glob	blend		
let	loss		clog	clam	glop	blond		
lit	sell		clap	clan	glut	blast		
lot	sill		clip		glad	blest		
tell	Sal				glass	blimp		
till					glum	blunt		

* A CCCVCC word!

Appendix E

CVC		Consonant Blends					
rib	ram	brass	drug	grid	scram	rest	crest
rob	rim	brim	drum	grab	scrap	rust	crust
rub	rum	bran	drat!	grub	scrub	rasp	crisp
ref	ran	brat	dress	gruff	scrod	ramp	cramp
rack	Ron	Brad	drip	Greg	stress	romp	crimp
Rick	run	bred	drop	grill	strap	rump	crump
rock	rat	brick	drab	grass	strip	rant	crept
rag	rot	brag	drag	grin	struck	runt	craft
rig	rut		drill	grim		rent	
rug	red	crass		grip	frost	rend	primp
rap	rid	cross	fret	grit	frump	rapt	prompt
rip	rod	cram	Fred	grad	frisk	risk	print
Russ	riff	crap	frock	gram	frock	raft	scrimp
	rem	crop	Fran			rift	script
		crud	frill	trot	grump		sprint
		crab	frog	trod	grand	draft	
		crib		track	grant	drift	trill
		crack	press	trick	grunt	dreck	trust
		crick	prim	truck	graft		tramp
		crock	prom	tram	grasp		tromp
			prep	trim		strand	trump
			prod	trap	brunt	strict	trend
			prick	trip	brisk	strum	tract
			prig	trek	brand		

Appendix F

CVC				Consonant Blends	
van	jab	buzz *	hot	swim	went
vat	Jeb	fizz	hog	swig	wept
vet	Jeff	fuzz *	hut	swell	welt
vim	job	Liz	had	twin	weld
Val	Jack	razz *	hid	twig	spritz
win	Jill		hub	twit	dwelt
wet	jock	yes	huff	twist	yelp
wit	jig	yum!	hack	zest	hump
wed	jog	yen	heck	jest	hand
web	jug	yip	hick	just	hint
wick	jam	yet	hag	jump	hunt
wag		yuck!	hug	jilt	husk
wig	Jim	yell	hiss	vast	heft
well	Jan	yack	ham	vest	hilt
will	Jen		hem	vamp	helm
	jet	hat	him	vend	help
Zen	Jed	hit	hum	vent	held
zap!	jot	hell	hen	west	hulk
zip	jut	hill	hip	wisp	hasp
zit	jazz *	hull	hop	wimp	hemp
zig-zag	jell			wind **	Swiss
Zack				wilt	swag
				wend	swept

* A CVC word because ZZ symbolizes a single sound: /z/.

** Pronounce this with a short I rather than a long I.

Note: Boxed words are important, high-frequency words.

S = /z/			
as	is	has	his

Some Anomalies					
QU = KW	X = KS		WR = R	WH = W	KN = N
quit	ox	sex	wrap	when?	knot
quiz	ax	six	wreck	whip	knack
quilt	box	lax	wrist	whim	knit
quick	fax	tax	wren	whiz	knob
quip	fix	wax		wham!	knock
quest	fox	pox		whiff	
quell	max	vex		whump!	
quack	mix	flex		whap!	
squid	nix	text		whack!	
squint	sax	next		whisk	
squish	hex	tux		whomp!	
	flax				

Appendix G

SH			CH			TH	
SH-	-SH	-SH	CH-	-TCH	-NCH	TH-	THR-
ship	ash	brush	chap	batch	inch	thus	throb
shop	cash	crash	chip	botch	bunch	that	thrift
shack	dash	crush	chop	catch	lunch	thump	thrill
shock	dish	fresh	check	ditch	hunch	theft	thrust
shed	fish	bash	chick	fetch	munch	thick	thrash
shall	gash	gush	chuck	hatch	pinch	thug	thrum
shell	rash	hush	chill	latch	punch	them	thrall
shin	lash	sham	chin	match	ranch	than	
shun	lush	brash	chat	pitch	stench	then	
shot	mash	Josh	chum	patch	branch	thin	
shut	mush		chest	stitch	brunch	thud	
shaft	sash	clash	champ	snatch	crunch	this	
shift	wish	flash	chimp		drench		
shelf	Welsh	flesh	chump	snitch	French	-TH	
	squish	flush	chant	sketch	quenched	bath	
	hash	trash	chug	scratch	trench	Beth	
SHR-	gosh!	plush		crotch	scrunch	math	
shred	rush	slash	-CH	crutch	flinch	path	
shrub	stash	slush	much	itch	finch	wrath	
shrug	splash		such		wrench	with	
shrill	smash		rich	witch *		smith	
shrimp	blush		which *	Dutch		fifth	
			belch	blotch		sixth	
				clutch		tenth	
				glitch		broth	
				stretch		moth	
				notch		cloth	
				hutch		filth	
				etch		depth	
				wretch		width	

* Discuss the difference with your child

Two Special Groups		Final S says /s/		Final S says /z/	
E/EE	ALL	snacks	nuts	cans	drums
be	all	hats	plants	balls	beds
he	ball	lips	tents	eggs	bugs
me	call	pets	pests	bells	stands
she	fall	chicks	gifts	hens	ends
we	hall	quits	fists	kids	pigs
see	mall	rocks	stamps	twigs	hands
three	tall	pots	bumps	thrills	shells
tree	stall	lamps	gulps	swims	smells
pee	wall	ducks	puffs	fins	runs
bee	small	helps	ships	cobs	webs
glee	squall	jumps	cups	nods	grins
knee		maps		sees	trees
spreed				bags	tubs
fee				spuds	
flee				is	his
free				as	has
the **					

** Usually pronounced /TH/ + /u/ (voiced TH)

Appendix H

ING	ANG	UNG	ONG	ENG
king	bang	dung	long	length
ring	gang	hung	song	strength
sing	rang	sung	wrong	England
wing	sang	flung	strong	
thing	slang	strung	throng	
fling	fang	stung	bong	
string	hang	lung	prong	
swing	pang	swung	gong	
bring	clang	clung	Hong Kong	
sting	ANK	INK	UNK	ONK
sling	bank	fink	bunk	bonk
ding	drank	blink	dunk	honk
cling	rank	brink	gunk	wonk
ping	sank	drink	junk	conk
wring	tank	kink	punk	plonk
spring	yank	link	sunk	zonk
I sing.	thank	pink	chunk	
He sings.	blank	rink	stunk	
They sing.	crank	sink	trunk	
You sing.	prank	slink	clunk	
We sing.	spank	stink	drunk	
She sings.	stank	think	flunk	
my ring	dank	wink	hunk	
our ring	plank	ink	plunk	
your ring	flank	mink	shrunk	
their ring		shrink		
her ring		clink		
his ring				

Some decodable multi-syllable words					
seven	consent	exist	liquid	present	sickness
eleven	backpack	fastest	magnet	punish	solid
belong	bandit	finish	mattress	puppet	sunset
nothing	banish	sandwich	melted	rabbit	talent
hundred	basket	gossip	muffin	rapid	radish
absent	biggest	habit	napkin	restful	chipmunk
fungus	British	hottest	panic	robin	vanish
difficult	bucket	illness	picnic	rocket	tennis
comet	cabin	insect	planet	rubbish	himself
elastic	Wisconsin	fragment	planted	sadness	expect
electric	often	limit	plastic	racket	address
blinking	chicken	event	pocket	visit	abolish
fantastic	combat	ticket	sinking	English	jacket
halibut	comment	timid	disrupt	bashful	invent
ketchup	complex	topic	banana	publish	diminish
minimum	contest	relax	basketball	children	selfish
maximum	cricket	drinking	benefit	splendid	begin
public	dentist	pumpkin	cabinet	tantrum	goblin
vivid	discuss	drumstick	dustpan	enchant	upset
lament	exit	disgust	bathtub	within	reckless

Adding ES creates a second syllable*			
box	boxes	glass	glasses
fox	foxes	branch	branches
dish	dishes	fizz	fizzes
wish	wishes	dress	dresses
brush	brushes	splash	splashes
flush	flushes	scratch	scratches
fix	fixes	catch	catches
kiss	kisses	bench	benches
crash	crashes	lunch	lunches
itch	itches	munch	munches

* The final S says /z/

Adding ING to words			
sit	sitting	kiss	kissing
dig	digging	wish	wishing
swim	swimming	fish	fishing
skip	skipping	thrill	thrilling
fib	fibbing	flush	flushing
run	running	plant	planting
jog	jogging	stand	standing
grin	grinning	grasp	grasping
drip	dripping	sketch	sketching
spit	spitting	belch	belching
chop	chopping	twist	twisting
fix **	fixing	pitch	pitching
mix	mixing	dump	dumping

** X is never doubled because it already stands for 2 consonants: KS.

Note: When adding ING, double a single consonant following the vowel. If you don't, the vowel becomes long (compare BIDDING and BIDDING). You'll deal with long vowels shortly.

Appendix J

/A/						
bake	came	ale	crane	ape	ate	fade
make	game	bale	mane	gape	date	jade
lake	same	gale	pane	tape	fate	made
take	tame	male	sane	drape	hate	wade
snake	lame	pale	wane	grape	late	shade
quake	blame	sale	plane	escape	mate	blade
brake	flame	tale	Jane	shape	rate	glade
cake	shame	whale	insane	scrape	crate	trade
wake	name	stale	lane	cape	gate	grade
fake	became	scale			slate	spade
flake	frame	Yale	bare	Dave	state	
sake		exhale	dare	gave	plate	knave
shake	craze	female	fare	pave	skate	square
mistake	faze	inhale	mare	rave	Kate	
cupcake	gaze		rare	save		bathe
	haze	chase	share	wave		clothe
	maze	base	flare	shave	haste	
	raze	vase	glare	brave	waste	
	blaze	case	stare	grave	paste	
	glaze	erase	scare	slave	taste	
	graze		spare	behave		

/E/						
here	Pete	theme	Steve	mime	these	Steven
complete	concrete	extreme	athlete	compete	fete	excrete
stampede	severe	crème	serene	impede	Eve	millipede

/U/						
cube	cute	fume	muse	use	dispute	amuse
puke	mute	volume	compute	fuse	excuse	perfume
rebuke	refute	legume	mule	abuse	confuse	commute

/I/						
dime	hide	life	file	fire	bite	dive
lime	ride	rife	mile	tire	white	hive
mime	side	wife	pile	wire	kite	jive
time	tide	strife	tile	shire	mite	live
chime	wide	knife	vile	spire	rite	chive
grime	glide	fife	smile	ire	site	thrive
slime	bride		while	retire	trite	five
crime	pride	dine		hire	spite	drive
	stride	fine	pipe	admire	smite	strive
bike	slide	line	ripe	desire	quite	
dike	divide	mine	wipe	inspire	write	
hike	inside	nine	gripe			wise *
like		pine	swipe			rise *
Mike	tribe	wine	snipe	strike		prize
pike	scribe	vine	stripe	spine		size
spike	bribe	shine				
dislike	describe	swine				

* A final S can have a Z sound

/O/						
joke	dome	abode	tote	bone	cope	rose
poke	home	code	wrote	cone	mope	chose
woke	Rome	mode	smote	hone	dope	hose
yoke		node	dote	tone	hope	close
spoke	dole	rode	quote	clone	pope	doze
bloke	hole		vote	drone	rope	froze
choke	mole			scone	scope	pose
broke	pole	cove	lobe	stone	slope	suppose
smoke	role	stove	globe	throne	grobe	nose
stoke	sole	drove	robe		trope	oppose
stroke	stole	trove	strobe			those
	whole	rove	probe			

Appendix K

/O/		/E/					
OA		EE			EA		
boat	hoax	deed	steel	steer	bead	jeans	seat
float	coax	feed	kneel	queer	lead	lean	cheat
goat	load	heed	eel	sneer	plead	mean	treat
coat	road	need	beef	peer	read	clean	each
gloat	toad	seed	reef	beet	knead	bean	beach
bloat	moat	bleed	beep	feet	leak	cheap	peach
cloak	oath	breed	deep	meet	beak	leap	reach
soak	coach	creed	keep	sweet	bleak	ear	teach
oak	roach	freed	peep	sheet	speak	dear	heap
oat	poach	greed	seep	fleet	squeak	fear	feast
goal	topcoat	speed	weep	tweet	deal	smear	peak
coal	unload	weed	sheep	greet	heal	gear	weak
foam	croak	meek	steep	sleet	meal	near	sneak
loam	toasting	seek	sleep	street	real	rear	tea
roam	loafing	week	creep	keen	seal	tear	sea
loan	throat	sleek	beer	teeth	steal	clear	pea
moan	toast	creek	deer	green	squeal	hear	beast
groan	roast	feel	jeer	seen	beam	year	least
oar	coast	heel	leer	teen	cream	wheat	yeast
roar	boast	keel	cheer	queen	team	eat	east
soar	oaf	wheel	squeeze	peek	dream	beat	season
soap	loaf	peel	freeze	cheek	gleam	neat	reason
board		jeep	breeze	sweep	steam	defeat	oatmeal
hoard		deem	sneeze	Greek	stream	heat	seacoast
		seem	geese	degree	scream	meat	ease *
		teem	cheese *	sleeve	heave	grease	tease *
		breech	leech	speech	leave	release	please *
					weave	increase	decrease

* A final S can have a Z sound

/A/					
AI					
raid	rain	stair	trail	quaint	affair
afraid	vain	fair	flail	saint	detail
laid	chain	hair	quail	paint	attain
paid	train	lair	jail	pigtail	raisin
braid	sprain	pair	mail	bait	sailboat
aid	drain	chair	nail	wait	obtain
maid	brain	flair	pail	strait	refrain
repaid	strain	air	rail	trait	explain
gain	stain	ail	frail	remain	complain
lain	Spain	snail	hail	aim	railroad
slain	plain	fail	waist	maim	maintain
main	grain	sail	faith	claim	raincoat
pain	again	tail	mailbox	repair	airline

16 EA exceptions	
/e/	/A/
dead	bear
head	tear
bread	wear
instead	pear
read *	swear
threat	break
sweat	steak
meant	great

* Discuss the two pronunciations of this word

Adding S or ES		
likes	bites	needs
makes	prizes *	sleeps
grapes	chokes	peaches *
skates	ropes	cleans
saves	snores	beasts
bikes	dozes *	roaches *
hides	supposes *	seas
wipes	mules	trains
tires	uses *	flashes *

* Requires an extra syllable because the last sound in the original word is /s/, /z/, /ch/, or /sh/

Adding ING			
bake	baking	moan	moaning
take	taking	weep	weeping
skate	skating	toast	toasting
share	sharing	feed	feeding
bike	biking	speak	speaking
hike	hiking	dream	dreaming
ride	riding	rain	raining
slide	sliding	sail	sailing
smile	smiling	wear	wearing
bite	biting	pee	peeing
write	writing	see	seeing
behave	behaving	flee	fleeing
puke	puking	speed	speeding
rise	rising	soak	soaking

Appendix L

/ew/					/oo/	/oy/	
OO		EW	UE	U-E	OO	OY	OI
moon	moo	blew	true	tube	took	boy	boil
soon	mood	chew	glue	nude	book	joy	soil
spoon	tooth	brew	flu	dude	hook	soy	coil
croon	booth	crew	Sue	prude	cook	toy	oil
goon	pool	dew	blue	rude	crook	coy	spoil
lagoon	poop	flew	due	include	brook	Roy	toil
loon	spoof	grew	clue	Duke	shook	ploy	foil
noon	root	knew	untrue	Luke	nook	cloy	roil
balloon	scoop	new	avenue	fluke	look	annoy	broil
groom	shoot	stew	cruel	June	rook	enjoy	coin
boom	boot	threw		prune	good	busboy	join
doom	too	strew		tune	wood	convoy	groin
loom	tool	slew		dune	stood	decoy	loins
room	troop	Jew		flute	hood	destroy	poison
zoom	zoo	Jewish		brute	foot	employ	joint
broom	boo!	screw		salute	soot	loyal	point
food	hoof	news		costume	wool	royal	appoint
fool	raccoon	shrew		consume		alloy	void
goo	bloom	lewd		pollute	except:	boycott	droid
goop	proof	drew		crude	flood	ahoy!	avoid
hoop	gloom			conclude	blood	troy	devoid
hoot	roof						hoist
loop	scoot		/y/ + /ew/				moist
loot	drool		few	rescue			foist
snoop	kook		tissue	value			exploit
buffoon	saloon	pooch	fuel				toilet
baboon	igloo	groove					oink
goof	spook	ooze					
boost	cool	choose					
moose	goose	loose					

/ow/			/aw/		
OW	OU		AW	AU	Other
cow	round	out	jaw	haul	
bow	found	pout	raw	maul	-ALT
how?	ground	rout	saw	Paul	salt
now	hound	scout	law	laud	halt
vow	mound	shout	paw	fraud	malt
chow	pound	spout	flaw	fault	
brow	sound	stout	draw	vault	-ALK
plow	bound	trout	claw	taut	walk
wow!	wound	sprout	thaw	taunt	stalk
ow!	loud	lout	straw	haunt	talk
pow!	cloud	clout	slaw	jaunt	chalk
yow!	proud	devout	lawn	flaunt	
allow	count	about	pawn	aunt	
	mount	couch	yawn	daunt	-ALL
brown	fount	pouch	fawn	gaunt	ball
crown	south	grouch	dawn	launch	fall
down	mouth	slouch	crawl	haunch	all
drown	oust	crouch	brawl	exhaust	hall
frown	joust	ouch!	bawl	August	call
gown	roust	astound	shawl	sauna	tall
town	foul	around	sprawl	because *	small
clown	noun	amount	hawk	assault	wall
owl	our	discount	gawk	autumn **	stall
howl	sour		awful	augment	mall
growl	flour	except:	outlaw	applaud	
fowl	dour	group	spawn	cause	
prowl	devour	soup		Australia	
cowboy		youth		gauze	
crowd		touch		applause	

* Not so tricky after all!

** Silent N prepares for “autumnal”

/ar/			/or/			
AR			OR			ORE
jar	farm	harp	or	orbit	actor	bore
far	fart	harsh	nor	stubborn	cantor	gore
arch	arctic	lard	for	forget	captor	core
arm	hard	march	cord	port	condor	lore
art	harm	larva	lord	minor	doctor	more
bar	lark	marsh	ford	major	horse	pore
barf	mark	park	dorm	worn	comfort	chore
bark	dart	part	form	moron	corncob	shore
barn	March	start	storm	effort	corner	sore
car	market	scarf	born	harbor	north	tore
card	cartoon	scarlet	corn	morning	forth	spore
cart	tar	shard	horn	sort	porch	wore
chard	target	shark	morn	short	scorch	store
charm	tart	sharp	torn	snort	color	snore
chart	yard	smart	thorn	airport	author	score
dark	yarn	spark	fort	formal	discord	explore
starch	harpoon	star	export	escort	absorb	before
apart	alarm	quart	import	New York	coral	ignore
snarl	carve	starve	valor	sailor	dork	adore
Carl	bard	alarm	victor	pork	moral	implore
arc	arcade	carp	sport	stork	gorilla	restore
arrive	artist	carpet	scorn	savor	forest	
arsenic		charcoal	organ	afford	orb	
			mortal	door *	cork	
				floor *	fork	
	except:		except:			
	war		word	worst	worm	
	warm		work	world		

* OOR is an uncommon spelling for /or/

/er/						
ER			IR		UR	
after	hotter	cover	smirk	dirt	turn	hurl
under	smaller	monster	squirm	first	burn	turd
never	bigger	oyster	chirp	whirl	spurn	surf
over	smarter	fern	birch	sir	burst	turf
her	softer	stern	birth	stir	church	curl
hers	faster	verb	girth	third	burp	burger
other *	taller	booger	mirth	thirst	slurp	curt
brother *	darker	finger	irk	girl	hurt	purse
mother *	harder	expert	shirk	skirt	blurt	blur
sister	liver	computer	shirt	squirt	lurk	slur
tower	butter	internet	quirk	flirt	curb	concur
shower	river	disaster	firm	bird	spurt	purr
flower	farmer	corner	direct	squirrel	lurch	fur
power	carpenter	silver	twirl	swirl	burner	churn
number	wonder	permanent	smirch	confirm	disturb	curve
perch	destroyer	term		fir	survive	curse
asteroid	lever	September			cur	blurb
otter	perk	sneakers			suburb	burnt
herd	jerk	thunder			absurd	burden
nerd	clerk	tender			duress	unfurl
hunger	permit	blister			incur	nurse
dinner	insert	ladder			occur	current
twerp	verse	nerve			curtail	curtain
perform	serve	observe				
toaster	barber	anger				
singer		thinker				

* The O in these 3 important words is closer to an /u/ sound.

Appendix M

/A/			/O/			
AY			O	OW		OE
away	pay	Norway	go	arrow	minnow	doe
bay	play	dismay	no	below	mow	foe
day	player	betray	so	blow	narrow	hoe
decay	ray	saying	also	borrow	pillow	Joe
delay	runway	playing	pro	bow	row	toe
essay	say *	staying	metro	bowl	shadow	oboe
gay	slay	Monday	cargo	burrow	shallow	woe
gray	spray	Tuesday	jello	crow	show	goes
hay	birthday	Wednesday	hello	elbow	slow	tiptoe
hurray!	stay	Thursday	loco	glow	snow	
yay!	stray	Friday	bingo	flow	sow	
lay	sway	Saturday	banjo	grow	sparrow	except:
may	today	Sunday	buffalo	grown	stow	shoe
nay	tray	okay	mango	hollow	swallow	canoe
May	way	blue jay	oregano	know	throw	
maybe	repay	clay	pesto	low	tow	
fray	layer	array	condo	mellow	widow	
subway	holiday	display	tempo	knows	willow	
pray	mayhem	portray	motto	own	window	
prayer	slay		torso	known	yellow	
spray	stingray		poncho	growing	billow	
			going	knowing	sorrow	
			jumbo	showing	bellow	
			yo-yo	following	fellow	
			except:	snowing	follow	
			to			
			do			
			who			

* SAY is no longer a “tricky” word.

/I/		/E/				
Y	IE	Y			EY	E/EE
my	pie	belly	greedy	screwy	key	be
by	die	any	grouchy	silly	monkey	he
why?	lie	angry	grumpy	skinny	donkey	me
cry	tie	berry	hairy	sleepy	money	we
try		bloody	happy	stinky	honey	she
fly		bossy	hungry	snowy	valley	fee
fry		bumpy	injury	soapy	turkey	bee
shy		candy	itchy	softly	trolley	knee
sky		chewy	jelly	sorry	hockey	pee
sly		comedy	jolly	speedy	barley	see
spy		creamy	jumpy	starry	whiskey	flee
dry		creepy	kitty	sticky	kidney	glee
ply		curly	lousy	story	chimney	tree
spry		daddy	lucky	study	goosey	agree
guy *		daily	mainly	stuff	parsley	three
buy *		dearly	many	sunny	alley	free
		dirty	mommy	thirsty	jockey	coffee
		easy	thirty	goofy	homey	toffee
		enemy	nasty	toasty	volley	disagree
		every	nippy	tricky		degree
		fairly	noisy	tummy		employee
		family	party	ugly		foresee
		foggy	penny	very		referee
		funny	puppy	cloudy		levee
		fussy	rocky	yummy		spree
		fuzzy	rusty	forty	except:	
		pity	sadly	fifty	obey	
		except:			prey	
		July	defy	supply	grey	
		reply	deny	apply	hey!	
		multiply			they	

* slightly irregular due to the U

Adding ING					
try	trying	dry	drying	hurry	hurrying
cry	crying	say	saying	play	playing
fly	flying	stay	staying	study	studying
fry	frying	stray	straying	annoy	annoying

Adding Y to a short vowel word			
sun	sunny	fish	fishy
fun	funny	rock	rocky
pig	piggy	smell	smelly
mom	mommy	stick	sticky
dad	daddy	slush	slushy
sex	sexy *	fuzz	fuzzy
fog	foggy	mess	messy
mug	muggy	hand	handy

* Never double X. It already represents 2 consonants: KS

Adding Y to a long vowel word			
shine	shiny	foam	foamy
smoke	smoky	soap	soapy
haze	hazy	toast	toasty
grime	grimy	weep	weepy
slime	slimy	sleep	sleepy
scare	scary	sneak	sneaky
shade	shady	rain	rainy

Adding LY to a word			
safely	widely	rudely	loosely
loudly	timely	lonely	bravely
lately	freely	likely	closely

Forming the Plural; Subject-Verb Agreement							
Change Y to I and add ES				Simply add S			
candy	candies	dummy	dummies	pay	pays	annoy	annoys
belly	bellies	fifty	fifties	day	days	monkey	monkeys
story	stories	jelly	jellies	play	plays	turkey	turkeys
penny	pennies	body	bodies	pray	prays	kidney	kidneys
party	parties	bunny	bunnies	stay	stays	destroy	destroys
twenty	twenties	fly	flies	tray	trays	decay	decays
kitty	kitties	try	tries	boy	boys	delay	delays
guppy	guppies	cry	cries	toy	toys	spray	sprays

The Schwa Sound (also known as Lazy Vowel)

Lazy vowels defaulting to /u/							
A = /u/			AL = "ULL"		EL = "ULL"		
panda	flora	abide	pedal	dismal	camel	channel	
vanilla	about	adore	royal	mortal	tunnel	snorkel	
extra	adapt	adult	animal	arrival	squirrel	gavel	
zebra	adopt	agree	normal	comical	travel	rebel	
Canada	aloof	avoid	dental	metal	vowel	barrel	
alarm	apart	ajar	floral	central	towel	funnel	
along	awake	alone	medical	survival	axel	gospel	
adorn	abuse	aware	hospital	medal	chapel	marvel	
amend	appoint	arrest	sandal	formal	novel	shovel	
umbrella	momma	America	equal	signal	damsel	pretzel	
afraid	attach	pizza *	festival	carnival	panel	hazel	
acclaim	amaze	plaza	mental	loyal	nickel	level	
annoy	parka	around	several	petal	grovel	vessel	
arrive	soda	abort			morsel	tinsel	

* very irregular!

Lazy vowels defaulting to /i/					
cotton	Boston	kitten	shorten	payment	prudent
carton	bitten	listen	given	thousand	sudden
button	fasten	rotten	nervous	kitchen	skeleton
mountain	item	talent	pavement	student	atlas
fountain	enemy	element	absent	happen	lemon
focus	gallon	evident	garment	ribbon	pelican

Lazy vowels defaulting to /er/					
altar	lunar	molar	polar	solar	vicar
collar	cougar	dollar	mortar	pillar	stellar
vulgar	cheddar	regular	odor	actor	color
donor	humor	honor	alligator	mayor	favor
rigor	razor	vigor	tumor	tutor	author
vapor	doctor	cursor	fervor	sailor	monitor

Appendix N

The Giggle Group					
giggle	jiggle	drizzle	puddle	kettle	tinkle
apple	juggle	eagle	purple	kissable	example
babble	cuddle	fickle	puzzle	little	fizzle
battle	snuggle	fiddle	riddle	lovable	sniffle
beetle	needle	fixable	rubble	marble	startle
bottle	nibble	feeble	sample	middle	sizzle
bubble	doodle	wobble	gobble	mumble	humble
buckle	nipple	wiggle	handle	struggle	tumble
bumble	noodle	ankle	simple	tackle	uncle
bundle	nuzzle	possible	muffle	tattle	waffle
candle	battle	visible	mingle	temple	jungle
cattle	paddle	gargle	people *	terrible	huggable
chuckle	pebble	hassle	knuckle	tickle	huddle
cripple	pickle	poodle	crumble	saddle	topple

* Slightly irregular - just hide the O.

The GH Groups					
IGH = /I/		AUGH = /aw/	OUGH = /aw/	EIGH = /A/	GH = /f/
night	fright	caught	ought	eight	rough
light	delight	taught	bought	weight	tough
might	tonight	daughter	sought	freight	enough
right	lightning	naught	fought	sleigh	laugh
sight	thigh	fraught	thought	weigh	cough
tight	sigh	naughty	brought	neigh	
fight	high	haughty	wrought	neighbor	
slight	except:	distraught			
flight	bite				
bright	spite			except:	
plight	kite			height	

PH = /f/					
phone	humph!	Ralph	elephant	prophet	phonics
phase	phew!	orphan	phantom	triumph	pamphlet
oomph!	graph	telephone	nephew	Philip	sphere
phooey!	dolphin	alphabet	emphasis	phrase	

The Wild Group			
IND	ILD	OST	OLD
bind	mild	most	old
find	wild	ghost	cold
mind	child	post	fold
blind		host	hold
grind			sold
wind			told
kind			gold
behind	OTH		scold
	both		bold

TION = “SHIN”		TURE = “CHER”	
action	direction	rupture	mixture
mention	caution	nurture	lecture
fiction	portion	fixture	texture
fraction	election	capture	fracture
addition	condition	posture	literature
subtraction	infection	pasture	vulture
multiplication	attention	culture	rapture
question *	tradition	picture	stature
ambition	invention	feature	creature
section	suction	mature	moisture
affection	adoption	venture	overture
option	potion	puncture	furniture
edition	motion	departure	adventure
connection	lotion	signature	sculpture
junction	notion		

* “CHIN” rather than “SHIN”

First Syllable Closed				
din/ner	com/plete	des/cribe	mis/lead	im/press
sup/per	prob/lem	des/pise	sub/ject	in/sult
lad/der	com/mon	des/pair	sub/way	in/sist
dus/ty	per/haps	per/fect	sub/mit	in/spect
trav/el	dif/fer/ent	thir/teen	dis/as/ter	in/stinct
chil/dren	ex/am/ple	or/bit	fan/tas/tic	fif/ty
hel/lo	en/ter/tain	ov/en	dis/like	un/kind
nap/kin	hun/dred	emp/ty	dis/cuss	un/like
mis/ter	loud/ly	pub/lish	dis/rupt	un/do
con/test	dis/tant	in/spire	dis/pute	con/tain
trum/pet	con/stant	sep/ar/ate	dis/gust	kin/der/gar/ten
tun/nel	div/ide	en/joy/ment	dis/turb	in/ter/es/ting
les/son	sub/tract	his/tor/y	bur/den	un/der/stand
nev/er	fes/tiv/al	val/en/tine	fig/ment	but/ter/fly
bet/ter	ad/ven/ture	fing/er	com/ment	hos/pit/al
mom/my	im/por/tant	sup/pose	com/et	ill/ness
dad/dy	how/ev/er	bot/tom	sing/ing	dis/cov/er
hap/pen	sev/er/al	straw/ber/ry	num/ber	vow/el

First Syllable Open				
la/dy	po/ta/to	na/ture	cre/a/tion	pi/lot
la/zy	ba/sic	mo/tion	ro/ta/tion	fla/vor
la/ter	hu/man	sta/tion	re/peat	bo/nus
ti/ny	pre/pare	va/ca/tion	be/tween	fi/nal
o/pen	pre/tend	na/tion	re/lax	be/hind
pa/per	pre/dict	lo/tion	u/nit	e/qual
pro/vide	re/lax	vi/bra/tion	u/nite	fa/tal
tu/lip	re/fute	e/mo/tion	o/dor	re/quire
so/lar	no/ble	tri/umph	e/vil	to/ma/to
pho/to	de/ny	re/mark	i/vy	re/mind
de/pend	de/coy	be/yond	ba/con	fre/quent
de/sire	de/lay	re/main	gra/vy	be/neath
to/tal	ta/ble	mo/ment	i/tem	re/quest
ri/val	ho/tel	thou/sand	ma/ple	e/qua/tor

Mixed Syllables	
vol/ca/no	ex/act/ly
e/lec/tric	in/for/ma/tion
mel/o/dy	ev/er/y/one
an/at/o/my	de/jec/ted
Hal/lo/ween	dis/be/lief
ar/gu/ment	un/der/wear
choc/o/late	e/quip/ment
co/op/er/ate	in/ves/tig/a/tion
e/vap/or/ate	con/grat/u/la/tions
in/stru/ment	op/por/tu/nit/y
rep/re/sent	vo/cab/u/lar/y
pre/ven/tion	al/lig/a/tor
cu/cum/ber	com/mu/nit/y
re/mem/ber	con/stel/la/tion
par/tic/u/lar	ca/lam/it/y
tem/per/a/ture	con/stip/a/tion
lo/co/mo/tive	Oc/to/ber
cal/cu/la/tor	No/vem/ber
ed/u/ca/tion	ap/pli/ca/tion
ev/er/y/thing	dic/tion/ar/y
con/so/nant	con/sti/pa/tion

Appendix O

Y = /I/			Y = /i/		
style	hyphen	tyke	crystal	lyrics	syllable
type	hydrant	tyrant	cryptic	myth	synthetic
hype	dynamic	hybrid	nymph	mystery	system
analyze	dynasty	dynamite	syrup	hypnotize	symptom
hyena	python	hyper	lynx	rhythm	symbol
typhoon	nylon	hydrate	lynch	physics	analysis
tycoon	pylon	typhoid	lymph	typical	tryst

S often spells /z/					
nose	abuse	pause	use	is	whose
rise	cause	suppose	his	refuse	these
hose	tease	expose	as	always	please
rose	close	compose	was	those	has
wise	accuse	praise	does	chose	choose
pose	oppose	cheese	goes	dispose	raise
prose	advise	excuse	says	disclose	enclose

C can spell /s/ (Soft C)					
ice	space	circle	certain	since	reduce
nice	face	citrus	cents	wince	produce
rice	lace	city	succeed	mince	decide
spice	place	cycle	ceremony	sentence	mercy
twice	brace	cyan	fascinate	princess	exercise
vice	trace	cell	icy	recess	lettuce
dice	cereal	celebrate	spicy	except	literacy
mice	cents	cigar	fancy	bounce	pencil
lice	accent	cymbal	Nancy	pounce	sauce
price	celery	cynic	dance	notice	December
slice	cement	cyclone	glance	choice	simplicity
ace	center	cider	chance	rejoice	service
grace	concentrate	circus	prince	cylinder	force
race	magnificent	central	process	faucet	peace
pace	necessary	exciting	absence	fence	embrace

G can spell /j/ (Soft G)			
age	huge	large	college
cage	refuge	charge	courage
page	merge	orange	manage
rage	emerge	gym	sausage
sage	range	gyp	lounge
stage	change	gypsy	sponge
wage	strange	rigid	ginger
image	urge	gender	Ginny
engage	purge	gin	gel
package	virgin	urgent	gently
garbage	verge	general	original
damage	fudge	gentle	gesture
passage	judge	gem	gigantic
average	grudge	germ	giant
cabbage	nudge	gene	allergy
village	edge	gibberish	tragic
voyage	pledge	energy	logic
savage	ledge	stingy	imagination
luggage	dodge	apology	refrigerator
advantage	lodge	magic	intelligent
digit	badge	gyrate	agency
agile	agenda	agitate	emergency
except:			
gill	gift	get	give
girl	giggle	gimmick	tiger

Silent E categories				
A	B	C	D	E
home	nice	stage	pickle	have
mistake	space	image	noodle	give
five	embrace	damage	struggle	move
mule	chance	huge	rattle	love
arrive	prince	change	snuggle	above
case	choice	fudge	rubble	twelve
wise	spice	manage	bottle	glove
sale	disgrace	sponge	drizzle	nerve
Steve	sauce	orange	purple	reserve
game	fence	college	temple	involve
time	practice	garage	terrible	resolve
F	G	H	I	
true	house	breeze	climate	
blue	mouse *	sneeze	private	
due	moose	are	accurate	
clue	goose *	cheese	deliberate	
glue	horse	were	delicate	
recue	corpse	awe	opposite	
subdue	nurse	come	definite	
tissue	spouse	some	estimate	
avenue	curse	done	volatile	
argue	eclipse	giraffe	chorale	
continue	promise	medicine	literate	

* The plural, of course, is mice and geese.

IE and EI both spell /E/				
IE		EI	diminutives	plurals
grief	cookie	receive	doggie	sixties
thief	movie	conceive	Mollie	ladies
chief	believe	deceive	Tommie	armies
brief	relieve	receipt	Maggie	babies
belief	achieve	perceive	Susie	cookies
relief	piece	conceit	Katie	bodies
field	niece	ceiling	oldie	bunnies
yield	shriek	either	softie	pennies
shield	fiend	neither	kiddie	goodies
wield	cashier	leisure	cutie	candies
hygiene		seize		
		weird		
		caffeine		
		deceit		
		sheik		
		protein		
except:				
stein	reign	feint	their *	vein
veil	view	heir		

* An earlier tricky word

33 Common Contractions		
Contraction	Short for	Phonetic
aren't	are not	ARNT
can't	can not	CANT
couldn't	could not	COODINT
didn't	did not	DIDINT
doesn't	does not	DUZINT
don't	do not	DOANT
hasn't	has not	HAZINT
haven't	have not	HAVINT
he'll	he will	HEEL
he's	he is	HEEZ
I'll	I will	ILE
I'm	I am	IME
isn't	is not	IZINT
it's	it is	ITS
I've	I have	IVE
let's	let us	LETS
she'll	she will	SHEEL
she's	she is	SHEEZ
shouldn't	should not	SHOODINT
they'll	they will	THAIL
they're	they are	THAIR
they've	they have	THAVE
wasn't	was not	WUZINT
we'll	we will	WEEL
we're	we are	WEER
weren't	were not	WERNT
we've	we have	WEEV
who's	who is	HOOZ
won't	will not	WOANT
wouldn't	would not	WOODINT
you'll	you will	YOOL
you're	you are	YOOR
you've	you have	YOOV

Appendix P

The Code: Spelling

Encoding Sounds (Phonemes) into Letters

Sound		Possible Letters			
1	/A/	a-e* (made) ea (great)	ai (sail) eigh (eight)	ay (stay) ey (they)	a (nation) ei (vein)
2	/a/	a (hat)			
3	/E/	ee (week) e (me)	ea (heat) ei (receive)	y (candy) e-e* (theme)	ie (field) ey (key)
4	/e/	e (bed)	ea (bread)	ai (said)	
5	/I/	i-e* (time) ie (pie)	i (tiny)	y (cry)	igh (high)
6	/i/	i (sit)	y (myth)		
7	/O/	o-e* (hope) oe (toe)	oa (boat) ough (though)	o (go)	ow (snow)
8	/o/	o (got)	a (father)		
9	/u/	u (nut)	oo (blood)	o (from)	ou (rough)
10	/ew/	oo (moon) u (student) ou (you)	ew (grew) o (do) ough (through)	u-e* (prune) ui (fruit)	ue (blue) oe (shoe)
11	/oo/	oo (book)	u (pull)	ou (could)	
12	/oy/	oi (soil)	oy (joy)		
13	/ow/	ou (loud)	ow (cow)		
14	/aw/	au (fraud) augh (taught)	aw (lawn) ough (bought)	a (ball)	o (dog)
15	/ar/	ar (car)			
16	/or/	or (corn)	ore (store)	our (four)	oor (door)
17	/er/	er (perch)	ir (birch)	ur (church)	
18	/ear/	ear (dear)	eer (deer)	ere (here)	
19	/air/	air (fair)	are (fare)	ear (pear)	
20	/oor/	ure (sure)	oor (poor)		

* The hyphen stands for any consonant.

Sound		Possible Letters			
21	/b/	b (bat)			
22	/d/	d (dog)	dd (add)		
23	/f/	f (fun)	ph (phone)	ff (stuff)	gh (rough)
24	/g/	g (gift)	gu (guest)	gh (ghost)	gg (egg)
25	/h/	h (happy)			
26	/j/	j (jar)	g (germ)		
27	/k/	k (keep)	c (cat)	ck (pick)	ch (school)
28	/l/	l (lake)	ll (bell)		
29	/m/	m (man)			
30	/n/	n (net)	kn (knife)	gn (gnat)	
31	/p/	p (past)			
32	/r/	r (run)	wr (write)		
33	/s/	s (sleep)	c (city)	ss (kiss)	
34	/t/	t (top)	ed (picked)	tt (mutt)	
35	/v/	v (van)	f (of)		
36	/w/	w (wish)	wh (white)		
37	/y/	y (yellow)			
38	/z/	z (zipper)	s (hands)	zz (jazz)	
39	/sh/	sh (ship)	t (action)	s (mission)	c (special)
40	/SH/ *	s (vision)	z (seizure)		
41	/ch/	ch (chin)	t (nature)		
42	/th/	th (thank)			
43	/TH/ *	th (mother)			
44	/ng/	ng (sing)			

* Voiced version of the sound (see Chapter 2)

Appendix Q

The Code: Reading

Decoding Letters into Sounds (Phonemes)

Letter	Possible Sounds			
a	/a/ (apple)	/A/ (paper)	/aw/ (ball)	
b	/b/ (boy)			
c	/k/ (cat)	/s/ (city)	/sh/ (precious)	
d	/d/ (dog)			
e	/e/ (enter)	/E/ (me)		
f	/f/ (fan)	/v/ (of)		
g	/g/ (get)	/j/ (energy)		
h	/h/ (hat)			
i	/i/ (in)	/I/ (title)	/E/ (stadium)	
j	/j/ (jam)			
k	/k/ (kiss)			
l	/l/ (lip)			
m	/m/ (mat)			
n	/n/ (nap)			
o	/o/ (box)	/O/ (bonus)	/aw/ (dog)	/ew/ (do)
p	/p/ (pickle)			
qu	/k/+w/ (quit)			
r	/r/ (run)			
s	/s/ (sit)	/z/ (pans)	/sh/ (tension)	/SH/ (vision)
t	/t/ (top)	/ch/ (future)	/sh/ (action)	
u	/u/ (up)	/y/+ew/ (cube)	/ew/ (rude)	/oo/ (pull)
v	/v/ (van)			
w	/w/ (win)			
x	/k/+s/ (box)			
y	/y/ (yell)	/E/ (candy)	/I/ (fly)	/i/ (myth)
z	/z/ (zip)	/SH/ (seizure)		

Letters	Possible Sounds		
ai	/A/ (sail)	/e/ (said)	
air	/air/ (fair)		
ar	/ar/ (far)		
are	/air/ (care)	/ar/ (are)	
au	/aw/ (fraud)		
aw	/aw/ (lawn)		
ay	/A/ (pay)		
ch	/ch/ (chip)	/k/ (school)	
ck	/k/ (stick)		
dd	/d/ (add)		
dge	/j/ (badge)		
ea	/E/ (seat)	/e/ (head)	/A/ (great)
ear	/ear/ (dear)	/air/ (pear)	
ed	/d/ (called)	/t/ (picked)	
ee	/E/ (keep)		
eer	/ear/ (beer)		
ei	/E/ (receive)	/A/ (vein)	
er	/er/ (her)		
ere	/ear/ (here)	/air/ (there)	
ew	/ew/ (new)	/y/+ /ew/ (few)	
ey	/E/ (key)	/A/ (they)	
ff	/f/ (stiff)		
gg	/g/ (egg)		
gh	/g/ (ghost)	/f/ (laugh)	
gn	/n/ (gnat)		
ie	/E/ (brief)	/I/ (pie)	
igh	/I/ (sight)		
ir	/er/ (dirt)		
kn	/n/ (knee)		
ll	/l/ (bell)		
ng	/ng/ (sing)		

Letters	Possible Sounds		
nk	/ng/+ /k/ (sink)		
oa	/O/ (boat)		
oe	/O/ (toe)	/ew/ (shoe)	/u/ (does)
oi	/oy/ (boil)		
oo	/ew/ (moon)	/oo/ (good)	/u/ (blood)
or	/or/ (corn)		
ore	/or/ (store)		
oor	/oor/ (poor)		
ou	/ow/ (cloud)	/oo/ (could)	/ew/ (you)
ow	/ow/ (cow)	/O/ (snow)	
oy	/oy/ (toy)		
ph	/f/ (phone)		
ps	/s/ (psychic)		
sh	/sh/ (ship)		
ss	/s/ (mess)		
tch	/ch/ (batch)		
th	/th/ (thin)	/TH/ (these)	
tt	/t/ (mutt)		
ue	/ew/ (blue)	/y/+ /ew/ (cue)	
ui	/ew/ (fruit)	/i/ (build)	
ur	/er/ (church)		
ure	/oor/ (lure)		
wh	/w/ (when)		
wr	/r/ (wrist)		
zz	/z/ (jazz)		

Letters	Possible Sounds		
a-e*	/A/ (bake)		
e-e*	/E/ (theme)		
i-e*	/I/ (time)		
o-e*	/O/ (stone)		
u-e*	/ew/ (tune)	/y/ + /ew/ (cute)	
augh	/aw/ (caught)		
eigh	/A/ (eight)	/I/ (height)	
ough	/aw/ (thought)	/O/ (though)	/ew/ (through)

* The hyphen stands for any consonant.

The following common letter strings are phonetically irregular. The beginning reader should master these 14 pronunciations. Many of these are good examples of Lazy Vowel (see Stage 13).

Letters	Possible Sounds	
-ind	/I/ + /n/ + /d/ (find)	/i/ + /n/ + /d/ (wind)
-ild	/I/ + /l/ + /d/ (child)	/i/ + /l/ + /d/ (build)
-ost	/O/ + /s/ + /t/ (most)	/aw/ + /s/ + /t/ (lost)
-old	/O/ + /l/ + /d/ (cold)	
-le	"ull" (bubble)	
-ous	"iss" (joyous)	
-ious	/E/ + "iss" (curious)	
-cious	"shiss" (precious)	
-tion	"shin" (fraction)	
-sion	"shin" (mission)	/SH/ + "in" (vision)
-sure	"sher" (pressure)	/SH/ + /er/ (measure)
-ture	"cher" (future)	
-cial	"shull" (facial)	
-tial	"shull" (partial)	

Appendix R

Consonant Blends

31 Beginning Blends			45 Ending Blends		
bl	pl	spl	ct	mp	rb
br	pr	spr	dth	mpt	rd
cl	sc	shr	ft	nth	rf
cr	sk	sph	fth	nch	rg
dr	sl	squ	x = ks	nk	rk
dw	sm	str	lt	nt	rl
fl	sn	tr	lf	nd	rm
fr	sp	tw	lm	ngth	rn
gl	sw	thr	ln	pth	rp
gr	st	scr	lth	pt	rt
qu = kw			lp	tch	rch
			lsh	xt	rsh
			ld	sp	rth
			lk	st	rve
			lch	sk	rst

Appendix S

The Tricky 50

Correct Spelling	Phonetic Spelling	Correct Spelling	Phonetic Spelling
above	abuv	put	poot
are	ar	said	sed
because	becuz	says	sez
been	bin	should	shood
come	cum	some	sum
could	cood	sure	shoor
do	doo	their	thair
does	duz	there	thair
done	dun	they	thay
eight	ate	though	tho
eye	I	through	throo
four	for	to	too
friend	frend	two	too
from	frum	want	wunt
give	giv	was	wuz
goes	goze	watch	wawch
gone	gawn	were	wer
have	hav	what	wut
love	luv	where	wair
move	moov	who	hoo
none	nun	whose	hooz
of	uv	woman	woomin
once	wuns	would	wood
one	wun	you	yoo
only	oonly	your	yoor

In the above phonetic spellings, OO sometimes spells /oo/ and sometimes spells /ew/, just as it does in GOOD FOOD.

Appendix T

EU = /ew/ or EU = /y/ + /ew/				
eulogy	neuter	feud	leukemia	queue
eunuch	neuron	sleuth	deuce	eureka!
pseudo				

IO	EO	IU	UA	UI	IA	
lion	eon	opium	usual	ruin	friar	mania
radio	video	odium	dual	fluid	liar	via
riot	rodeo	sodium	actual *	truism	dial	petunia
idiot	meow	podium	jaguar	bruin	trial	giant
audio	peony	medium	sexual	suicide	vial	Maria
scorpion	peon	radius	truant	intuit	denial	dialog
biopsy	yeoman	genius	ritual *	genuine	jovial	piano
axiom	meteor	helium	nuance	tuition	trivial	aviation
ravioli	stereo	calcium	mutual *	penguin	material	utopia
violin	nucleon	premium	sensual		maniac	pliable
biology	galleon	aquarium	gradual	fruit	fiasco	diatribe
carrion	jeopardy	stadium	factual *	juice	phobia	amphibian
champion	theology	delirium	virtual *	suit	diary	burial
chariot	surgeon	tedium	punctual	bruise	media	medial
Ohio	dungeon	geranium	annual	cruise	anemia	menial
studio	theorem	aluminum	casual	recruit	diagram	median
cardio	geometry	gymnasium	persuade		diamond	alias
violent	luncheon		language	guide	diaper	pariah
million	deodorant		valuable	guess	Georgia	bacteria
onion				guilt	genial	Louisiana
opinion				guitar	bias	California
union				guile	avian	aviator
region				disguise	familiar	deviate
				guest	diagonal	brilliant

* The T has a /ch/ sound, as in Stage 15

Forming the Past Tense					
Add D		Add ED		Double the Consonant	
smile	smiled	play	played	beg	begged
love	loved	stay	stayed	wag	wagged
close	closed	enter	entered	tag	tagged
pee	peed	scream	screamed	grin	grinned
use	used	snow	snowed	jog	jogged
die	died	plow	plowed	grab	grabbed
lie	lied	rain	rained	brag	bragged
share	shared	foam	foamed	rub	rubbed
behave	behaved	moan	moaned	fib	fibbed
dine	dined	jeer	jeered	pin	pinned
describe	described	cheer	cheered	rob	robbed
snore	snored	dream	dreamed	drum	drummed
chuckle	chuckled	clean	cleaned	hum	hummed
giggle	giggled	boil	boiled	stun	stunned
		join	joined		
ED = /t/		2 Syllables		Change Y to I, add ED	
flush	flushed	nod	nodded	carry	carried
kiss	kissed	wait	waited	hurry	hurried
check	checked	skate	skated	cry	cried
sip	sipped	chat	chatted	fry	fried
laugh	laughed	float	floated	try	tried
fish	fished	melt	melted	copy	copied
pinch	pinched	end	ended	envy	envied
leak	leaked	wilt	wilted	bully	bullied
splash	splashed	yield	yielded	empty	emptied
soak	soaked	fade	faded	marry	married
skip	skipped	trade	traded	tarry	tarried
sniff	sniffed	taste	tasted	comply	complied
cough	coughed	waste	wasted	worry	worried
bake	baked	toast	toasted	imply	implied
chase	chased	greet	greeted	reply	replied
look	looked	shout	shouted	rely	relied
crash	crashed			supply	supplied

Comparative and Superlative					
hot	hotter	hottest	shady	shadier	shadiest
tall	taller	tallest	sunny	sunnier	sunniest
smart	smarter	smartest	dirty	dirtier	dirtiest
soft	softer	softest	messy	messier	messiest
small	smaller	smallest	hard	harder	hardest
wet	wetter	wettest	easy	easier	easiest
ripe	riper	ripest	brave	braver	bravest
sweet	sweeter	sweetest	cheap	cheaper	cheapest

The OUS Family			
OUS = “iss”	IOUS = /E/ + “iss”	UOUS = /U/ + “iss”	CIOUS = /sh/ + “iss”
joyous	obvious	strenuous	precious
enormous	previous	arduous	gracious
nervous	serious	incongruous	luscious
jealous	curious	conspicuous	vicious
famous	envious	continuous	spacious
scandalous	various	fatuous	atrocious
fabulous	hilarious	ingenuous	conscious
dangerous	furious	innocuous	delicious
numerous	tedious	sensuous	ferocious
ravenous	odious	sumptuous	malicious
hazardous	studious	virtuous	pernicious
poisonous	victorious	voluptuous	suspicious
generous	hideous	ambiguous	
odorous	nefarious	tenuous	
perilous	notorious		
rigorous	glorious		
barbarous	copious		
zealous	spurious		
callous	delirious		
pompous	dubious		
raucous	melodious		
gorgeous	devious		

Below, in column 2 and column 3, the 44th (and final) sound of English finally appears.

It's the voiced version of /sh/, symbolically, /SH/.

SION = “shin”	SION = /SH/ + “in”	SURE = /SH/ + “er”	CIAL = “shull”	TIAL = “shull”
tension	vision *	measure *	facial	partial
mansion	decision *	treasure *	racial	martial
pension	collision *	pleasure *	social	spatial
mission	version *	closure *	crucial	essential
session	illusion *	leisure *	glacial	potential
passion	division *	exposure *	special	torrential
omission	explosion *	composure *	official	initial
expansion	occasion *	fissure *	financial	credential
admission	confusion *	seizure *	artificial	prudential
expression	conclusion *			
compassion	invasion *			
permission	aversion *			
	fusion *			
	erosion *			

* The S in these words has the same **voiced** sound as the SI in the word ASIA:

ASIA = /A/ + /SH/ + /u/

The Mute Group					
mute B	mute C	mute G	mute H	mute K	mute L
bomb	scissors	sign	ache	knew	half
comb	science *	assign	chaos	knave	calf
dumb	ascend	design	Christmas	knee	folk
doubt	descend	gnat	character	knife	yolk
lamb	scent	gnaw	chord	knit	caulk
thumb	scene	gnarly	echo	knob	
crumb	muscle	gnash	orchid	knock	
climb	scintillate	cologne	school	knuckle	
numb	czar	gnome	ghost	knight	
mute N	mute P	mute S	mute T	mute W	
autumn	psalm	aisle	castle	wrap	
solemn	pseudo	debris	fasten	wrath	
column	psych	island	hustle	wreck	
condemn	pneumonia	isle	listen	answer	
damn	coup	Illinois	moisten	wretch	
hymn	raspberry		nestle	wrist	
	cupboard		whistle	wrong	
	receipt		wrestle	sword	
			jostle	two	

Appendix U

The 100 Most Frequent English Words

Rank	Word	Rank	Word	Rank	Word	Rank	Word	Rank	Word
1	the	21	this	41	so	61	people	81	back
2	be	22	but	42	up	62	into	82	after
3	to	23	his	43	out	63	year	83	use
4	of	24	by	44	if	64	your	84	two
5	and	25	from	45	about	65	good	85	how
6	a	26	they	46	who	66	some	86	our
7	in	27	we	47	get	67	could	87	work
8	that	28	say	48	which	68	them	88	first
9	have	29	her	49	go	69	see	89	well
10	I	30	she	50	me	70	other	90	way
11	it	31	or	51	when	71	than	91	even
12	for	32	an	52	make	72	then	92	new
13	not	33	will	53	can	73	now	93	want
14	on	34	my	54	like	74	look	94	because
15	with	35	one	55	time	75	only	95	any
16	he	36	all	56	no	76	come	96	these
17	as	37	would	57	just	77	its	97	give
18	you	38	there	58	him	78	over	98	day
19	do	39	their	59	know	79	think	99	most
20	at	40	what	60	take	80	also	100	us

Source: *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* (11th edition, 2006).

Given the phonics presented in this program, only the 23 boxed words could be considered slightly irregular.

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