

SOUND SPELLING...

Thinking about spelling from a sound perspective.

Below are examples from a young speller.



cog



ches



gof



pug



bush

What's going on here? Can you see a pattern? What would you do to assist this child?

If you answered that this child is not attending to blends, you are exactly right.

(They look like they have done well attending to digraphs : sh, ch.)

HOW TO HELP THIS CHILD:

1. First check that the child is **saying the blends** in their speech. You may be able to do this by listening to how they say words such as *stop, black, brown, glue, golf, milk* and *best*. If they can't say the blends, and they are at an age where they should be able to, then this is where intervention should begin—by working on **saying the words correctly**.
2. Check their **awareness of blends**. Present a list of words and have them tell you whether the words are the same or different. This year, when I screened school-entry students, many of the students could not “hear” the difference between one test item : *lip-limp*. If children can't perceive the presence of a blend, they will not be able to sound these out for spelling. If this difficulty persisted, intervention would involve presentation of blend minimal pairs (eg. back– black).
3. **Segmenting of words**. Present words with blends in them and show the child how to count out the sounds and then link them to letters. I like to use glass stones for this activity. (I call these SOUND STONES). Using four stones, say a four-sound word, such as “plug”. Next, drop each stone into the child's hand as you say each sound: /p/.../l/.../u/.../g/. Remember to say SOUNDS not LETTER NAMES. Now have the child say the whole word (“plug”) and then “give the sounds back to you”. If they break the sounds up as /p/.../u/.../g/, they will find that they have one sound stone left over. If they break it up as /pl/ .../u/ .../g/, again they will have one stone left. **It is important for children to be able to break the word into ALL its sounds** to highlight the presence of each sound in the blend. After the child is able to do this correctly for a given word, place the stones down on a piece of paper, and then have them write a letter for each sound. WORDS to TRY: plug, slip, truck, brat, camp, pink (Note: for the word “pink”, they might say /p/.../i/.../ng/.../k/. This is actually correct. Teach the child, that before a /k/ sound, the sound is /ng/ but we write it with the letter n. This is why sometimes children write “pink” for “pink”).
4. Now talk about **blends**. Explain what a blend is. Give lots of examples. When a child can do step 3 easily and consistently, you can now say a word and ask them, “What **blend** does it start with?” (or “end with?”) Have a set of blend cards spread on a table. The child should say the blend, find the card and then write the word.

Sound Segmenter has a section dedicated to blends. **Minimal Pairs to the Max** includes pairs that contrast words with and without a blend. Finally, LOTS of blend words/pictures are provided on **The Speechie's Ultimate Picture Library**. See www.pelican-talk.com to purchase.