Drill Bits

Drill Bits Phonics-oriented word lists for teachers

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

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

• Meet individual needs of students from a wide range of ages and backgrounds; VAT and TAX may be more appropriate examples of the short a sound for some students than CAT and FAN, which they may have memorized without learning the sounds associated with the letters.

• Teach students that exceptions are also predictable, and there are usually many examples of each kind of exception. These are called special categories or special patterns.

HOW THE LISTS ARE ORGANIZED

Word lists are presented in the order they are taught in many structured, multisensory language programs:   
Syllable type 1: Closed syllables — short vowel sounds (TIN, EX, SPLAT)   
Syllable type 2: Vowel consonant-e — long vowel sounds (BAKE, DRIVE, SCRAPE)   
Syllable Type 3: Open syllables — long vowel sound (GO, TRI, CU  
Syllable Type 4: r-controlled syllables (HARD, PORCH, PERT)   
Syllable Type 5: consonant-l-e words (CANDLE, TABLE, MUZZLE)   
Syllable Type 6: Vowel pairs — unique sounds (OUT, PAW), long vowel sounds (MAIN, COACH)

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

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

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

Separate lists address some of the common special categories. Instead of telling students that NATION is one of so many words which are exceptions because the t in NATION does not make the sound it makes in TIN, the student can learn there are thousands of words he or she can master by knowing that -TION often is pronounced SHUN. By learning that TI says SH in many other cases (-TIAL,- TIOUS), even more words can be unlocked.

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

“short a” 3

“short I” 8

“short o” 10

“short u” 12

E 14

Y 16

**Syllable type 1: Closed syllables**

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

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

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

ABOUT THOSE EXCEPTIONS

* Consider CHR as in CHRIS as a category to be taught as its own mini-lesson and incorporated into drill and review with the other letter/sound associations. CH is /k/ in many words of Greek derivation. The longer and more scientific the word, the more likely CH will represent the /k/ sound. CHR is always pronounced /kr/, as in CHRIS, CHRISTINE, CHRISTMAS, CHRYSANTHEMUM and PULCHRITUDE.
* Especially with younger students, it can help to give letters “personalities.” “Bossy Ls that change the vowels” can be easier to remember than “the consonant which tends to change the vowel sound right before it.”
* SHORT O There are several groups of o syllables that end in consonants, but have a long vowel sound (-OST, -OLD). These would be considered special categories. For the reasons stated above, they shouldn’t be introduced at the same time the student is learning closed syllables with short o sounds. O is also pronounced differently in different areas of the country. Students may confuse COM with CALM. If so, point out that CALM starts with the sounds of the word CALL, then adds an m at the end. Stretch out the l part of CALM (CAL-L-L-L-LM DOWN) and have the student discover the different feeling of the word.
* A similar confusion may occur between COW and CAL, which can be addressed in the same way. If the student is a sports fan, he or she may appreciate that Cal Ripken should not be confused with Cow Ripken. SHORT U The -UL combination is very easily confused with the o sound. The “Bossy L” personification can help here.
* CALLUS is the word for the things that show up on your hands from doing hard work;   
  CALLOUS is the adjective to describe people with “calluses on their heart.”   
  SHORT E Note that the /j/ sound in -JECT is always spelled with a j, while in the syllable -GEST it is always spelled with a g (not the word, but again, don’t teach that simultaneously to avoid confusion.) Y AS A VOWEL Since words with y as a vowel have the same sound as short i, and are also easily confused with short e, it’s tempting to give these short shrift. Don’t! You may want to choose useful words and learn the closed syllables with y in the context of those words. If your students play hangman, the words where y is a vowel may prove very popular for the word givers.

Word progressions

at

cat

sat

sad

had

lad

glad

lad

lack

quack

sack

slack

stack

smack

smash

mash

ash

atat

sat

spat

splat

splash

flash

flask

ask

mask

mast

last

past

pat

at

ax

tax

ash

hash

mash

trash

track

tract

act

fact

fast

fat

flat

that

splat

splash

trash

thrash

Basic short a syllables

Ab

fash

quap

nax

grat

fract

grav

glam

shrap

jab

scrab

val

asm

alt\*

mag

gand

ag

prac

wax

atch

ack

lask

flam

quag

plat

yak

Syllables with blends

flam

grat

sprat

scram

thrax

strag

blan clam

fraz

plast

shrag

splam

drast

bran swag

graph

cras

smank

prax

wrath

glash blab

brack

spratch

glant

Without beginning consonant

ag

apt

ank

ash

ap ant

ac

ad

am

amp az

al\*

ab

asm

af ax

atch

alt\*

aph

act

alp\*

* \*As in ‘altitude’, not alternative

Especially Challenging Syllables

phland quank thrant shrap slank stratch

pram blap swaft cath whamp stract

clasm rapt

Vocabulary Enrichment

brash rant spasm grasp shank drab

chap sham shag clash bland cram

prank malt clad daft flank graft

chasm thrash slab cran dram asp

hasp yak flax span clan ban

dank swank yak shad

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

call

stall

squall

fall

mall

stall

small

swall

salt

malt balt

phalt

twad

halt

thank

flank

stank

swank

crank thank

rang

sang

sprang

bang

clang

squat

swat

swab swap

stalk

scald

chalk

walk

bald

quaff

calm

balm

CLOSED SYLLABLES: SHORT I

Short I word progression

it

fit

hit quit

sit

sip lip

slip

yip quip

quiz

quick quit

risk

frisk

Basic syllables

lix

inct

lib

twis

pict

im

inch

jim kip

dif

ipt

shrim

ism

chig

quib vid

gid

yit

gist

zil

tric

splin sprit

kish

itch

shriv

fric

plish

twid

Syllables with Blends

brit

stim

fris

squin

strict writ

smin

swiv

lisk

ism ilt

tinct

ipt

crin

prish thrill

chrit

blimp

ink

sprin scrib

ing

rift

slim

dwin

Syllables without a beginning consonant

ism

im

inc

it

ilt

ipt

ink

ing

in

inct

inch

itch

inge

ill

ic

isp

id

ig

ish

idge

ist

ilk

il

ind

Vocabulary Enrichment

sprint

shrill

jig

skill

skimp

shrimp

thrift grim

strict

kilt

writ

spilt

chrism

flit

script

brink

vim

glitch

strict

nix glib

shrift

rift

squid

miff

brig grid

grist

brisk

twinge

shtick

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

salpig

laprag

imcash

rifsam

frintap blapstag

mistflad

twiljam

danquim shigman

thrapism

implist

valdip stanting

biftril

dalnaft

safdis trimplast

radvil

stalgram

haspic

a, I basic syllables review

chisp

frag

ad

in

ist

strad

sist

inct

hap

link

grat

imp

twim

sprat

chris\*

ast

quib

squill

anch

shat ish

asm

ang

glam

isk

ab

fash

im

dras

ic gic

cig

mand

brash

rift

squip

rav

glatch

phic

shrap

apt

ipt

amp

ict

act id

ad

ish

Closed Syllables: Short O

Word Progressions

PROGRESSION 1

top

stop

slop

flop

flog log

lob

slob

slot

lot pot

plot

plod

prod

pod rod

cod

shod

shop

shock stock

sock

mock

mom

mob

PROGRESSION 2

mob

glob

slop

slob

rob throb

shop

clop

clod

trod shod

log

bob

blob

cob fob

gob

hob

job

lob mob

sob

sock

frock

shock

PROGRESSION 3

shock

smock

stock lock

flock

flog dog

frog

bog botch

notch

scotch scoff

doff

toff

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

ob

vom

yonk

quon

bol ston

com

coc

cos

fol ox

bot

chron\*

hom

trop bod

rost

holl

lob

pont gond

tox

osk

strom

Vocabulary Enrichment

frond

throb

opt

clot

blot bloc

blob

clod

grog

prod doff

fob

bond

Bronx

throng splotch

cog

posh

romp

lob chock

broth

smock

phlox

a, I, o basic syllables review

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

clom

writ

snag

oct

om

ism

asm

osm im

ad

shriv

scot

chris\*

chron\*

wrath

strad bom

drif

wint

inc

apt

drom

twip

thrax sprill

dwin

vom

quip

quon

squin

ash cim

cint

kom

mast

drab

hom

stinct

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

consist

contact

astonish

admonish

district

cosmic

combat

napkin

ostrich

contract

caltrop

transpond

constrict

optic

quondam

oblong

codfish

bombastic

discomfit

tomtom

mascot tonsil

jonquil

agnostic

contrast

abscond

insist

inflict

instinct

distinct

indistinct

district

kingpin

victim

misprint

pigskin

anthrax

lambast

flatfish

napkin

dishpan

dishrag zigzag

Finland

candid

kidnap

frantic

tranquil

bandit

transfix

disband

miscast

pilgrim

brandish

windbag

mantis

baptism

drastic

fantastic

plastic

sandwich

mishap

baptist tinsmith

tactic

impact

intact

aspic

WORDS

WITH

DOUBLE

LETTERS

gossip

shopping

commit

bobbin

soffit

rabbit

tannic

SHORT U

Word Progressions

up

cup

cut

cub

rub shrub

scrub

stub

stump

slump clump

rump

trump

truck

trust rust

rut

hut

hug

rug shrug

drug

drum

plum

plump

Basic Syllables

mus

tux

tub

rupt

sug sub

lug

hud

junct

sud yup

punct

rud

jum

hum scut

mum

sput

nun

pum sus

suc

sum

mund

flus

Basic Blends

blust

rupt

trum

clut

frug guv

struct

fluct

ump

flust shrug

funct

truc

drun

glud spud

splud

runk

flut

grub crump

bund

lunt

stut

scrub

Without Beginning Consonant

un

up

ug

unc

ush ust

ump

ud

unct

ut umb

und

us

uck

unk ux

ub

uct

upt

UL words and syllables

full

dull

mull

cull

gull bull

cul

cult

dult

sult hulk

bulk

sulk

mult bulb

culc

ult

vul dul

ulk

ul

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

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

fungus

tiptop

disgust

mistrust

construct

instruct

conduct

adjust disrupt

unzip

adjunct

pundit

uncommon

influx

drumlin

callus induct

unsnap

obstruct

cuspit

updraft

submit

subsist

mustang campus

abduct

sunlamp

album

brushland

WITH UL

adult \*

Istanbul

culprit pulpit

fulcrum

insult

consult

sultan

bashful

handful

cupful

wilful

SHORT E

WORD PROGRESSIOSN

ed

red

fred

bred

bed bet

jet

pet

wet

whet fret

set

sent

bent

went west

quest

quench

bench

stench step

strep

stretch

fetch

fed

Basic Syllables

fess

zed

dren

vex

ject

elt rel

wren

vent

lect

vest

gest trem

rel

cred

cem

cess

gel cept

phren

ex

em

emptreft

ef

met

esc

Syllables with blends

fret

ench

rept

trem

cred

est clem

brell

shelt

dren

elk feld

temp

flex

stress

shred squelch

plent

splen

tress

fled gresh

sprent

blen

venge

esh

c/g practice

cent

cest

cem cell

cept

cess ence

edge

enge gest

gent

gel gen

gem

gex

Syllables without a beginning consonant

ex

eb

ent

et est

elm

ef

elk ed

empt

em

esk en

ect

el

ev esh

eld

elf

end

Vocabulary enrichment – single syllable

left

press

fleck

mess

squelch heft

end

flesh

shred

clench deft

wren

mesh

elk

drench crest

smelt

quench

cleft flex

yen

dwell

vet

Multisyllable words

convent

magnet

contest

pummel

descant

selfish

contest

conquest suggest

ingest

congest

absent

enchantment

dispel

splendid

compel tendril

suspect

extend

advent

spectrum

subject

inject

falcon entrap

impel

insect

shrapnel

convex

inspect

impending

contend consent

connect

comment

happen

Y as a Vowel

Real Words:

Lynn

gym rhythm

crypt lymph

gyp lynx

lynch hymn

myth

Y following c or g

gypt

cym cyg

gyn cyl

cyst

Syllables

sys

cym

cyg

dys

mys

hys

crys

byss bysm

clysm

tyl

nym

cryl

thyst

lys

lyst lyt

rysm

syl

lypt

cryph

cyp

glyph

typ cyl

phyx

phys

sym

sympt

sync

byt

byz phyll

myst

gypt

chrys

nyx

synth

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

synthetic

mystical

cylinder

syncopate

chrysanthemum

lymph

cygnet

physical

gym

analytic

apocalyptic

anonymity

aneurysm

anaphylactic

synthesis

mystery

pygmy

synchronize

crypt

lymphaticcynic

encyclical

cyclical

gypsum

paralysis

cryptic

acronym

physicist

physics

syllable

rhythm

idyll

crystal

cyst

typical

misogynist

gymnasium

analysis

onyx

catalyst polygamy

myth

hieroglyphic

syndrome

chlorophyll

acrylic

cystic

dysfunction

dyslexic

gypsy

paralytic

anonymous

amethyst

cynical

Egypt

Phyllis

Yvonne