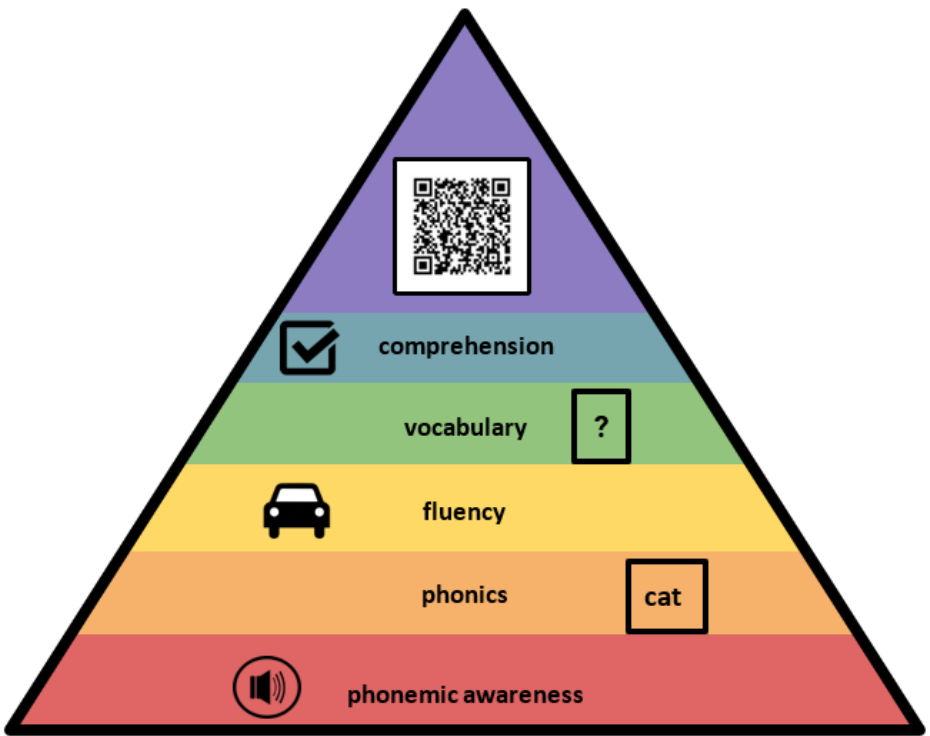


# Fast Phonics Fillers

especially for Elementary Guest Teachers

Scan the QR code to access a collection of quick phonics games and mini-lessons.



The Reading Pyramid ([www.reading.com](http://www.reading.com))

Welcome to **Fast Phonics Fillers**, a collection of quick phonics games, especially for elementary substitute teachers.

First of all, thank you so much for subbing. If you use one of these ideas today, please take a minute to leave some feedback. I would love to hear your suggestions for improvement as well as what worked well for you. [Please go here to answer a couple questions and leave feedback.](#)

**Note:** When a letter is written with slashes on either side, it means to make the sound of the letter instead of the letter name. For example, /t/ means to make the “t” sound, as in the word “teach.”

## Rhymes With “Guest”

Skill: Rhyming, Phoneme Substitution

Recommended Grade Level: K, 1, 2

“My name is [insert your name here], and I am happy to be your guest teacher today! Let’s play a quick rhyming game. Raise your quiet hand if you can tell me a word that rhymes with ‘guest’.”

Call on a few students while reinforcing how much you love to see their quiet hands.

“How many words can we find that rhyme with ‘guest’?” Accept nonsense words as long as they rhyme. Remember, rhyming is about how a word sounds, so spelling isn’t important here.

Examples: best, fest, jest, lest, nest, pest, rest, test, vest, west, zest, blessed, chest

**Make It Easier:** If students are struggling to understand what it means to rhyme, you can say, “I can make a rhyming word by changing the first sound in a word. The first sound I hear in ‘guest’ is /g/. If I take away the /g/ and replace it with a different sound, I will make a word that rhymes. So, if I take out the /g/ and replace it with /b/, I’ve made the new rhyming word “best.”

**Make It Harder:** “Can anyone think of a word that is more than one syllable that rhymes with ‘guest’?”

Examples: suggest, Celeste, southwest, northwest, impressed, expressed

## Getting to Know You

Skill: Alliteration

Recommended Grade Level: K, 1

Many lower-grade classes start the day with circle time of some sort. Use this time to get-to-know the students, build rapport, and practice alliteration.

“Introduce yourself by telling me your first name and ONE thing you like that starts with the same sound as your first name.” For example, “My name is Suzie, and I like snakes.” The class responds, “Their name is Suzie, and they like snakes.”

Before starting, give the students time to think of something to share. Make sure everyone has something in mind before starting the game.

To give the game a physical component, add a simple beat (ex. pat, pat, clap).

**Make It Easier** - If students are struggling to accurately isolate the first sound in their name, have them introduce themselves like this, “My name is Suzie - /s/, /s/, Suzie.” The class then responds, “Their name is Suzie - /s/, /s/, Suzie.”

**Make It Harder** - Have the students think of something that starts with the first sound of their first **and** last name. For example, “My name is Suzie Peterson, and I like snakes and pasta.” The class then

responds, "Their name is Suzie Peterson, and they like snakes and pasta."

## **"I Spy" Sound Game**

Skill: Phoneme Recognition and Isolation

Recommended Grade Level: K, 1

This game is similar to the traditional "I Spy" game, but the focus is on the *sound* that the object starts with.

"I spy with my little eye, something that starts with /p/." (Reading Eggs)

Model how to play the game then let the kids partner up to play for a few minutes.

**Make It Easier:** Limit the playing field to one wall or section of the classroom and say the names of the objects in that area before starting the game.

**Make It Harder:** Focus on the ending sound instead of the beginning sound: "I spy with my little eye, something that ends with /t/. To make the game harder still, focus on a sound in the middle: "I spy with my little eye, something that has an /u/ sound in the middle."

## **Making New Words**

Skill: Phoneme Recognition and Manipulation

Recommended Grade Level: K, 1

Consider how your last name can be used to practice phoneme substitution.

For example: "My name is Mrs. Sobczak. That's two syllables - /sob/ and /zak/. Say my name and clap the syllables. Let's play a quick game with the first syllable and see how many new words we can create!

Listen for the first sound, and raise your quiet hand when you hear it. [Wait for hands.] What's the sound? That's right - /s/.

Replace the /s/ with /k/. What's the new word? That's right; it's /kob/. /Kob/ rhymes with /sob/. That's one word. How many others can we make?"

Repeat the exercise, replacing the first sound with 4-5 consonant sounds to make more new words. If time allows and your name has more than one syllable, see how many words you can make with the other syllable(s).

**Make It Easier:** If the students are struggling to identify individual sounds (phonemes), focus instead on having the class clap the syllables in your name and the names of their classmates.

**Make It Harder:** Delete and substitute the ending consonant sound to make new words. To make it harder still, substitute the middle vowel sound.

## Going on a Picnic

Skill: Phoneme Recognition

Recommended Grade Level: K, 1, 2

“Let’s go on a picnic! We can only bring things that follow my rule. See if you can figure out what my rule is.

I’m bringing apples. Tell me something you’d like to bring, and I’ll tell you if we can bring it or not.”

In this case, the rule is that we can bring anything that has a short “a” sound. Examples: **apples**, **bananas**, a **mat** to sit on, a **bag** to carry things, my **cat**, my **dad**, but not my mom, etc.

Jot down the allowed items so you can review them occasionally, stressing the short a sound if it seems like the class needs a hint.

If the student suggests something that follows the rule, say, “Yes! You can bring that.” If not, say, “Sorry; we can’t bring that. Can you think of something else to bring?”

Encourage students not to blurt out the rule: “If you think you know my rule, tell me something that you’d like to bring that follows the rule.”

**Make It Easier:** Make the rule based on the sound the item starts with, or to make the game easier still, choose only single-syllable items.

**Make It Harder:** Make the rule based on a particular spelling pattern, such as the o-e pattern: “We can take our noses, but we can’t take our toes. We can take roses, but we can’t take cocoa.” [Go here for a list of words to choose from.](#) (2022)

Note: To see a similar version of this game, [watch this Instagram video.](#) (Nancy Bullard/Mrs. B. TV, 2023)

## **Air-writing Sight Words**

Skill: Strengthening the Visual Center

Recommended Grade Level - K, 1

Have the students stand next to their desk.

“Create a white board in the air in front of you. You can make it any color you want. Now imagine a marker. It can be any color you want - even a glittery rainbow! - and it smells like something you really, really like. Take the cap off and smell your imaginary marker. Now, let’s use what we’ve created to help us learn our sight words. Let’s start with ‘the.’ T, h, e. The.” ([Watch this short video for an example.](#)) (Abbey Pawlitzke, 2017)

Most lower grade classrooms have sight words posted on a “word wall” somewhere in the room and/or at the student’s desks. Choose words from the wall or from these lists, if necessary: [Go here for a list of sight words by grade level.](#) (2023)

For the greatest benefit, encourage the students to use their whole arm to write the word. “Your white board is HUGE! Let’s fill it up.”

**Make It Easier:** Instead of using sight words, have the students air-write their names, then the names of a couple classmates.

**Make It Harder:** Have the students balance on one foot while writing the sight word in (pretend) sand with their other foot.



## Sight Word Exercises

Skill: Moving words from short-term memory to long-term

Recommended Grade Level - K, 1, 2

“Brain breaks” are crucial for the lower grades, and spelling sight words while doing exercises is a great way to move those words to long-term memory.

Have the students face the word wall. (If you don't see a word wall in the classroom, choose 5-10 words from [these lists](#) and write them on the board.) (2023)

For each word, perform an exercise while looking at the word and spelling it out loud. Exercises that work well include squats, side reach (left and right), jog in place, jumping jacks, and arm circles, forward and backward.

[For an example video, go here](#). (Annelise, 2021) To show the video to the class, Google “Sight Words Workout - Fry's 1-20” on the computer that's connected to the room's SMART board.

**Make It Easier:** Choose words from a list that is one or two levels below grade level.

**Make It Harder:** Choose words from a list that is one or two levels above grade level.

## Map My Word

Skill: Phonemic Awareness, Orthographic Mapping

Recommended Grade Level - 1, 2

Pick a word from the word wall in the classroom or pick one from [this list of two, three, and four phoneme words](#). (Van Alst, 2023) Determine how many letters and sounds it has. If you are unsure, consult this [list of graphemes](#). Each grapheme makes only one sound, aka phoneme. (Bates)

**How To Play:** Have students choose five crayons from their box and put them in a line on their desk. "I'm going to say a word. First, repeat the word, then pull down one crayon for each sound you hear. [Do a practice round to demonstrate.] Use the words on the class's word wall

**Make It Easier:** Use only these words: hat, cat, top, mop, cut, sun, kid, lip (Geiger)

**Make It Harder:** Draw a rectangle on the board and divide it into 5 boxes. After students have pulled down the crayons, ask for a volunteer to write the word on the board - one sound per box. Use the words in the example photo:



(Campbell)

## Riddle Me This

Skill: Vocabulary/Homophones

Recommended Grade Level - 2, 3, 4

Click [here](#) for a list of ten homophone riddles.  
(Pepper)

Say the riddle and give the class a chance to guess the answer: "What type of fruit sounds like it should live underground?"

Answer: berry (bury)

After solving the riddle (or when they're done guessing), ask for a volunteer to write the answer and its homophone pair on the board.

As a class, come up with a motion for each word and do the motion while spelling the word. For example, while spelling "berry," pantomime plucking a raspberry from a bush. While spelling "bury," pantomime digging a hole with a shovel.

**Make It Easier:** Write the homophone pair on the board yourself.

**Make It Harder:** "What are some other homophone pairs you know? Let's practice those, too."

## Word Riddles

Skill: Advanced Word Study

Recommended Grade Level - 2, 3, 4

Write the following words on the board:

conflicts  
helpful  
example  
problems  
imagine  
plans  
printed  
upset

Riddle 1: I have three syllables. I have the same end syllable as the word *staple*. My first syllable has the same vowel sound as the word *egg*. Which word am I? **(example)**

Riddle 2: I have one syllable. I have the same vowel sound as the word *hand*. I begin with the same two-letter blend as the word *plum*. Which word am I? **(plans)**

Riddle 3: I have three syllables. I have two short i sounds and one short a. I begin with the same beginning sound as the word *iguana*. Which word am I? **(imagine)**

Riddle 4: I have two syllables. My first syllable shares a vowel sound with the word *under*. I am an adjective. Which word am I? **(upset)**

(Rivers)

**Make It Easier:** Only write the words **example, plans,**

**imagine**, and **upset** on the board.

**Make It Harder:** Exclude a word bank and see how many words the students can generate that follow the rules.

## References

4 Free Phonics Games to Help Your Child Learn to Read. (n.d.). Reading Eggs. <https://readingeggs.com/articles/phonics-games/>

[Annalise T.]. (2021, January 17). *Sight Words Workout - Fry's 1-20* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/MIGAnw4H288>

Bates, M. (n.d.). *The 44 Phonemes in English*. The Reading Well. Retrieved March 16, 2023, from <https://www.dyslexia-reading-well.com/44-phonemes-in-english.html>

[Abbey Pawlitzke]. (2017, March 17). *Air Writing Strategy for Sight Word and Spelling Practice* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/Ww-YEOgQQb4>

[Nancy Bullard/Mrs. B. TV]. (2023, February 8). *Desert Island* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.instagram.com/reel/CobEIdAufkr/>

Campbell, S. (n.d.). *Activities to Promote Orthographic Mapping*. Campbell Creates Readers. Retrieved March 16, 2023, from <https://www.campbellcreatesreaders.com/blog/promoteom>

Geiger, A. (n.d.). *CVC Word Lists*. The Measured Mom. Retrieved March 24, 2023, from <https://www.themeasuredmom.com/free-printable-cvc-word-list/>

K. (2022, September 2). *131+ Long O Vowel Sound Words (Free Printable List)*. Literacy Learn. Retrieved March 24, 2023, from <https://literacylearn.com/long-o-vowel-sound-words/>

Pepper, S. (n.d.). *Homophone Riddles*. Homophone List. Retrieved March 16, 2023, from <https://homophonelist.com/homophone-riddles/>

Rivers, T. (n.d.). *MAKE WORD STUDY FUN: STRATEGIES FOR PLAYING WITH WORDS*. Markers and Minions. <https://markersandminions.com/make-word-study-fun-strategies-for-playing-with-words/>

Van Alst, J. (2023). *Two, Three and Four Phoneme Words*. Make, Take, & Teach. Retrieved March 16, 2023, from <https://blog.maketaketeach.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/Phoneme-Segmentation-Words1.pdf>

(n.d.). *Dolch Sight Words List*. Sight Words: Teach Your Child To Read. Retrieved March 16, 2023, from <https://sightwords.com/sight-words/dolch/#lists>

(2021, November 30). *What is The Reading Pyramid?* Reading.com. Retrieved March 20, 2023, from <https://www.reading.com/blog/what-is-the-reading-pyramid/>