

## Playing with *Fonix*

As the interest in phonics has increased, more and more teachers are incorporating some form of it in their classes. A lot of drilling is necessary for students to develop a good foundation for reading, but such activities can be a bore to young children. In this issue we look at some fun ways to work on the basics of forming words.

Shannon Koga's favorite phonics game is unique. Her students love the game so much that she has had to laminate the cards they use for playing it.

Take each of the children's names and break them up into English phonetic elements. For example, Shouji is SH-O-J-I, and Chiharu is CH-I-H-A-R-U. For older children use both their first and last names. Line up the letters of the names in order in front of each child. The first student rolls two dice. The first number determines which child a card will be taken from, and the second number determines which of those cards (one of the letters of the child's name) the player is allowed to take. The player then adds the letter to one of the cards in his own name and reads the whole 'word'. The child who has had a letter taken away also reads their new word.

Here is an example: Kenji rolls the dice: a 3 and a 5. Manami is sitting three chairs away from Kenji, so he will choose a card from her name. He should choose the fifth letter of her name, *m* because he rolled a 5. Let's say he adds it to the *i* of Kenji. He will read his new "name" ,Kenjim, pronouncing the vowels in their short English form, and Manami will read her name as Manai. The more the games progresses, the funnier the names get. The children eventually grasp which sounds are easier to create and where to put the letters they receive. The game ends after so many rounds. There is no winner or loser, but everyone has a lot of laughs.

Will Perry has adapted a game by Chris Hunt for his students to practice phonetic sounds. He uses VC (vowel-consonant) combinations, such as at, ox, eg, in, up, and so on. To play, spread 10 or 15 of these cards on the table and give each student a handful of colored counters. Students gather round the table, and with the timer set at 2 minutes, have each student take turns placing a counter on a card and reading the sound. When two minutes have expired, add up the number of times you have been round the group. Either keep a tally on a white board or count up all the counters of the last student in the circle. Recover the counters and try again with the aim of increasing the final tally.

against the clock, and not each other; **2)** weaker students have time to think and can learn from stronger students; and **3)** there is a built in guarantee of success.

On the first round of two minutes when students are finding their feet and warming up, the final score is low. On the second round students are more focused and there is a better chance to increase the score, often dramatically so, which is sure to bring out smiles.

One activity that Janina Tubby enjoys with her students is a card relay. Prepare a set of cards with your target phonic sounds. Each card will have two items. As an example, here are the first few cards using ai/ar/ir/oy



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One rule: Different students can place counters on the same card, but they cannot do so consecutively. That is to say, Taro can read *ax*, Kaori can read *om*, but Mikito cannot place a counter on 'om' immediately. Of course he can come back to in the next round.

Positive aspects of this game: **1)** It is cooperative: students are racing

sounds. In this case, two words are written on one card, one above the other in different colors: start/rain, rain/brain, brain/shark, shark/carpet, carpet/girl, girl/boy, boy/Meg, Meg/toy, etc.

To play the game, shuffle all the cards and deal them equally among the players. Include as many cards as you think the children can handle

while still keeping the game fun (60 cards for five children is a good balance). The student who has the "start" card begins by saying: "I have start. Who has rain?" The student with that card will respond, "I have rain. Who has brain?" and so on until the last card, which reads, "Hurray, we're finished!" Use the timer to see how quickly the students can read the cards. Make the game longer by replacing the final card of one series with a card from a new series. This game can be played with sight words, letters of the alphabet, and short sentences as well.

A simple way to introduce children to longer words is an activity that David Lisgo developed from an activity in *Finding Out: Teacher's Book 1*. First, prepare a number of VC cards, for example, "ed, ol, ix, at, of, un, eg" and more. Start with one card and have the



*Question building in action!*



*We did it!!*

child read it `ed,` then add a second card and read them together `ed\_ol,` and still another, `ed\_ol\_ix,` and so on. When the children are reading well, have them lengthen the consonant to encourage linking: `e\_dolix.`

After each child has made their chain, join the chains together in a circle and challenge a student to read the whole word. At the end of this activity,

show the children a long word that they aren't familiar with, such as 'hippopotamus', and for sure, someone will be able to read it successfully.

Michelle Morimoto wanted to share one of the activities that she often uses because after just a little coaching, she can step back and let students do all the practice / work by themselves. It incorporates speaking,

listening, writing and reading and is easily adaptable to all levels of phonics; from single letter sounds to words and even sentences.

There are a couple of variations, but the one she introduces here is fun and gets students moving around a bit. First, students are placed into 2-person teams. They then stand at opposite ends of a long table with cardboard dividers situated in front of each of them near the edges of the table. One student (S1) in each pair has a pile of one-sided flashcards placed face down. The other student (S2) has a white board marker and clear file with large writing lines on it.

S2, who cannot see the flashcards, asks, "What is it?" S1 answers /v/ /v/, making the phoneme only. S2 writes V v, then picks up his/her clear file and asks, "Is it okay?" S1 reads what was written and answers, "Yes, it is," or "No, it isn't." If S2 wrote the correct upper and lowercase letters for the sound that was made, he/she erases the letters and runs to change places with S1. Then the new S2 asks, "What is it?" and S1 "reads" the next card in the draw pile. Finished cards are placed face up, though a discard box



and/or draw box could be used. If a student writes the wrong phoneme, he/she says, "Once more, please." and S1 repeats the sound. When a pair of students finishes their pile, they call out, "We're finished!"

This game format is also good for vowel-consonant combos, CVC, silent E practice, etc. My higher-level students dictate short sentences to each other, i.e., "She likes to play tennis" or "The rat is in the hat". In this way, they can review recent phonics they've studied and even target grammar patterns, too.

Finally, Dawn Shimura explains about one of the many commercial phonics games available. Good for smaller classes, the Chip-O! Game is a board game for 2-4 players. If you have a class of up to 8 students, have two games

going at the same time, with the teacher standing between the two groups

There are 96 word cards. The board itself has at least two pictures for each word. I recommend the game for students who have had a solid introduction to phonics or who can sight read. However, they do not necessarily have to know how to read all of the words because they can learn as they go along.

Chip-O is available through Trend, Inc., Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA. Other publishers of children's materials, such as Frank Shaeffer and Scholastic, Inc. also offer games for practicing phonics.