LETTER COMBINATIONS

LESSON 7

OBJECTIVES

• Students will read words that have specific letter combinations.
• Students will identify the sound of specific letter combinations.
• Students will spell words that have specific letter combinations.

MATERIALS

• Letter cards from previous lessons*
• Lesson 7 letter cards*
• Lesson 7 word cards (two sets)*
• Spinner with letter combination sections**
• Spinner words worksheet*
• Supported spelling cards for each student*
• Sentence reading worksheet*
• Pocket chart
• Board and markers or chalk for teacher
• Personal whiteboards and dry-erase markers for students
• Notebook paper

*Blackline master available on CD.
**Assembly instructions available on CD.
TIPS

• Refer to the Appendix for a list of letter-combination words.

• Teach one or two letter combinations at a time, depending on student proficiency.

• The following is a suggested order of instruction:
  • Letter combinations that make one sound (e.g., ai and ay make the long a sound; ee and ey make the long e sound)
  • Letter combinations that make more than one sound (e.g., ow in snow and plow; ou in out and soup)
  • Emphasize that a letter combination should be treated as a unit. Teach students to see the letters as a combination, or team, that makes a particular sound.
  • Include a variety of words that use previously learned sounds.
  • Include words containing letter combinations and words without letter combinations, so students can practice recognizing the different ways vowel sounds are spelled (e.g., hose, boat, toe).

• Sounds with multiple spelling options:
  • Tell students that it can be difficult to know which option is correct, just from hearing the sound. Have students start a “spelling options” notebook to practice spelling words and memorizing which option goes with which words.
  • Provide multiple opportunities for students to interact with high-utility words in decoding and encoding activities.
  • When a strategy for choosing a spelling option exists, teach it (e.g., ay is more likely at the end of a word; ai more likely in the middle).

• Decode and encode, using real and nonsense words.

• Give direct feedback to students.

This lesson plan can be used to teach all letter combinations. For the purpose of demonstration, however, many of the activities in this lesson focus on long a letter combinations and spelling options.
DAILY REVIEW

LONG AND SHORT VOWEL SOUNDS

Teacher: Today we will review vowel sounds. Everyone, tell me the long sound for the letter o.

Students: /ɔ/

Teacher: Yes, that’s right, the long sound for the letter o is /ɔ/. What vowel do you hear in the word brake?

Students: /æ/

[Write brake on the board.]

Teacher: Raise your hand if you can explain why a is long in brake.

Bri: Because it has e at the end. The e makes the vowel say /æ/.

Teacher: What is the short sound for e?

Students: /e/

Teacher: What is the short sound for i?

Students: /i/

Teacher: Can anyone think of a word with /e/ or /i/?

Anthony: Pickle has short i.

Teacher: Correct.

OPENING

Teacher: Today, we will learn about sounds that vowels make when they are combined with other letters. We call these letter combinations because when vowels are combined with certain letters, they work together to make one sound. This is important because your reading for other classes will include many syllables with letter combinations. So understanding letter combinations will help you to read many more words.
MODEL AND TEACH: ACTIVITY 1

INTRODUCE LETTER-COMBINATION SOUNDS

TEACHING STRATEGY

Teach students that the letter combination *ai* makes the sound /ā/ and that a letter-combination sound counts as just one sound.

*Write the letters ai on the board.*

**Teacher:** When *a* and *i* are next to each other in a word, they are a team, and they make the sound /ā/, as in *train*.

*Write train, circling ai.*

**Teacher:** When *ai* are next to each other, although there are two letters, they make just one sound, /ā/. What sound does *ai* make?

**Students:** /ā/

After teaching the letter combination, demonstrate how to use letter cards to read the new sound.

*Display m, ai, and n in a pocket chart or on the table, leaving some space between the letters.*

**Teacher:** You blend letter combinations with other sounds to make words, as we did with digraph and closed-syllable words.

*Point to m and say /m/. Point to ai and say /ā/. Slide your finger under each letter as you blend the sounds.*

/m/ /ā/. Your turn. Blend the sounds as I slide my finger under the letters.

**Students:** /m/ /ā/

*Add the final /n/ sound: Slide your finger under the letters, stretching out the sound.*

**Teacher:** /mmm/ /āāā/ /nnn/. Now, you say the sounds as I slide my finger under the letters.
Students: /mmm/ /āāā/ /nnn/

[Move the cards next to each other. Slide your finger under the letters.]

Teacher: *Main*: The whole word is *main*. Now, I will slide my finger under the letters, and you will read the word.

Students: main

Teacher: Although there are four letters, there are just three sounds because *a* and *i* make one sound, /ā/.

[Model counting with you fingers.]

Teacher: /m/ /ā/ /n/: three sounds.

Repeat the sequence with other words, gradually reducing your modeling.

TIPS

• Introduce additional letter combinations as your students master each sound.

• Some letter combinations represent more than one sound (e.g., the different sounds for *oo* in *book* and *school*). Explicitly teach these differences and associate them with key words.

ERROR CORRECTION

Guide students who make an error to the correct sound by using questions about the key word. If necessary, have students repeat the blending sequence to read the word.

MODEL AND TEACH: ACTIVITY 2

IDENTIFYING LETTER COMBINATIONS IN WORDS

DECODING

This activity teaches students to identify letter combinations and treat them as a single unit of sound.
Write several words with letter combinations students already have learned on the board (e.g., toast, pail, each, found, and snoop). During the course of the lesson, scaffold by circling the letter combinations and then reading the word. Remove the scaffold as students gain proficiency.

**Teacher:** When you read a word, look for a letter combination. Use that sound when you read the word.

* [Circle oa in toast.]*

**Teacher:** I circled the letter combination *oa* because it helps me notice it and remember that it says /o/. /t/ /o/ /s/ /t/, *toast*. What did I circle?

**Students:** *oa*

**Teacher:** And what does *oa* say?

**Students:** /o/

**Teacher:** Yes! Let's sound it out together as I slide my finger under the word. Then say the word quickly.

**Students:** /t/ /o/ /s/ /t/: *toast*.

**Teacher:** Very nice job!

* [Point to pail.]*

**Teacher:** Bri, do you see a letter combination?

**Bri:** The *ai* is a combination.

**Teacher:** Please circle the *ai* letter combination and tell me its sound.

* [Bri circles ai.]*

**Bri:** It says /ã/.

**Teacher:** Everyone, sound it out together and then say it quickly.

**Students:** /p/ /ã/ /l/: *pail*.

**Teacher:** Laura, please circle the letter combination in the next word.
Laura circles **ea.**

**Teacher:** You circled **ea.** What sound does it make?

**Laura:** /ē/

**Teacher:** Please read the word for us.

**Laura:** **each**

**Teacher:** Excellent. Danzel, it’s your turn to circle the letter combination in the next word.

Danzel circles **ou.**

**Teacher:** What is the most common sound for **ou**?

**Students:** **Ou** says /ow/, like in **out**.

**Teacher:** Perfect. Read the word for us, please.

**Danzel:** **found**

Repeat the sequence with other words.

**MODEL AND TEACH: ACTIVITY 3**

**WHAT SAYS...**

**ENCODING**

Spread letter cards in front of students. Follow these directions:

1. Dictate a sound.
2. Have a student repeat the sound (listen for correctness).
3. Have the student point to the corresponding letter cards.

Focus on new letter-combination sounds, but also include previously introduced letter combinations and letter sounds. In some cases, more than one letter card will represent the same sound. In that instance, have the student show each of the spelling options he or she has learned (e.g., /ā/ can be represented by *a*-consonant-**e, ai, or ay**).
Teacher: I will ask you what makes a certain sound. You will repeat the sound and point to the letter card or cards that make the sound.

What letter combination says /ä/?

[Students say /ä/ and point to ai.]

Teacher: Good. Show me another letter combination that says /ä/.

[Students say /ä/ and point to ay.]

Continue dictating sounds.

TIPS

- An alternative method for sounds with multiple spelling options is using questioning similar to the following example: “There are three ways of spelling /ä/ in words. What is one way to spell /ä/? What is another way? What is the third way?”

- Introduce new letter combinations as a new spelling option for a sound. For example, when introducing ea, tell students that ea is one spelling option for long e; other options are ee and e-consonant-e. Remind students that they have learned other sounds that are spelled in more than one way (e.g., /k/ can be spelled c, k, or ck; /f/ can be spelled f or ph).

MODEL AND TEACH: ACTIVITY 4  

SEGMENTING SOUNDS 
ENCODING

Use letter combinations that students have learned while following the sequence below:

1. Dictate a word.
2. Have a student repeat the word (listen for accuracy).
3. Have the student say each sound in the word and count the sounds in the word.
4. Have the student say the letters again as he or she collects the corresponding letter cards.
5. Have the student check by reading the word and receiving feedback or using a dictionary or spell-checker.
Example 1: Segmenting With a Letter Combination That Makes Just One Sound

In this example, students have learned the letter combination *oa* for /ə/.

Teacher: The steps for spelling words with letter combinations are similar to the steps we used to spell other words. We segment the sounds and find the letters for each sound.

The word is *goat*. Repeat, please.

Students: *goat*

Teacher: I count the sounds in *goat*.

[Model counting with your fingers.]

Teacher: /g/ /ə/ /t/: I hear three sounds. Now I think about the letters that make those sounds, and I get the letter cards.

/g/–*g*; /ə/–the letter combination *oa* says /ə/; and /t/–*t*.

I check the word by reading it: /g/ /ə/ /t/, *goat*.

Teacher: Now I will help you spell a word. I'll remind you of each step.

First you repeat the dictated word. The word is *float*.

Students: *float*

Teacher: Next, count the sounds in *float*.

Students: /f/ /l/ /ə/ /t/: There are four sounds.

Teacher: Think about the letters that make the sounds and get the letter cards.

[Students sound out the word and pick their letters.]

Teacher: Finally, check the word by reading it.

Students: *float*

Repeat the sequence with new words, gradually decreasing your modeling.
Example 2: Segmenting With Multiple Spelling Options Learned

In this example, students have learned about spelling options: different ways to spell the same sound. Think aloud to model how to choose the correct spelling option.

Teacher: When spelling words, we segment the sounds and find the letters for each. Some sounds have spelling options, which are different ways to spell the same sound. I’ll show you how to spell a word with spelling options. I’ll think aloud to demonstrate how I figure out which spelling option to use for a letter-combination sound.

The word is chain.

Students: chain

Teacher: I count the sounds I hear in the word.

[Model counting with your fingers.]

Teacher: /ch/ /ā/ /n/: I hear three sounds. Next, I think about what letters make those sounds, and I get the letter cards.

[Choose the letter cards as you say them.]

Teacher: /ch/–ch; /ā/–I know that /ā/ can be spelled ai or ay. It was one of the words we read on a word card. I’m trying to remember. When long a is in the middle of the word, it’s usually ai, so I’m pretty sure it is spelled ai. And then /n/–n.

I check the word by reading it and looking at the word card or dictionary: chain.

TIPS

• Remind students that it can be difficult to tell which option is correct just from the sound. Have students start a “spelling options” notebook to practice spelling words and memorizing which option goes with which words.

• Provide multiple opportunities for students to interact with high-utility words in decoding and encoding activities.

• When a strategy for choosing an option exists, teach it (e.g., ay is more likely at the end of a word; ai more likely in the middle).
ERROR CORRECTION

Tell the student the correct letter combination.


GUIDED PRACTICE: ACTIVITY 1

SPINNER WORDS
DECODING

Students identify and read words that contain a letter combination they have been taught. A letter combination is selected from a spinner that has been divided into 4–6 spaces, each space containing a letter combination the students have learned. Students find a word with the letter combination from the spinner words worksheet.

**Teacher:** We will read lots of words that contain letter combinations. First, you spin to find out the letter combination. Then find a word on the word list with the letter combination and say the word.

Anthony, please spin and tell us your letter combination.

**Anthony:** I landed on *ee*.

**Teacher:** What does *ee* say?

**Anthony:** */ē/

**Teacher:** So, now you’ll look on the word list and find a word with *ee* and say the word.

**Anthony:** *bleed*

**Teacher:** Right. Everyone, what does *ee* say?

**Students:** */ē/

**Teacher:** Laura, please spin and tell us your letter combination.

**Laura:** *ow*

**Teacher:** *ow* can make two sounds. Who can tell me one of the sounds *ow* makes...Danzel?
Danzel: It says /ō/ like slow.

Laura: It also says /ow/ like in owl.

Teacher: Good job! Laura, now find a word in the list with ow and read it. You might have to try both sounds to determine which is correct.

[Laura’s word is crown.]

Laura: /c/ /r/ /ō/ /n/: /crōn/. That doesn’t sound right. /c/ /r/ /ow/ /n/: crown.

Teacher: Very nicely done! Everyone, what sound does ow make in crown?

Students: /ow/

Continue building and reading words.

TIPS

• The spinner could specify a sound option for letter combinations with more than one sound. For example, ea could be in three different spinner spaces for its three sounds: /e/, /æ/, and /a/.

• For more independent work, do the activity in pairs.

GUIDED PRACTICE: ACTIVITY 2

GO FISH FOR WORDS

DECODING

This activity uses a deck of cards containing pairs of words with previously taught letter sounds and newly introduced letter combinations. Two or more students play a Go Fish card game following typical Go Fish rules, with a few exceptions.

1. Each player is dealt five cards. The remaining cards are placed facedown to form a stack (the “fish pond”).

2. Player A asks a specific player (Player B) for a match with a specific word that Player A holds in his hand (e.g., “Monica, do you have plain?”).
a. If Player A cannot pronounce the word on the card, provide assistance. Player A will put the card at the bottom of the fish pond and select a replacement card. The turn passes to the next player.

b. If Player B has the requested card, he or she gives it to Player A. Player A then gets another turn.

c. If Player B does not have the requested card, he or she says, “Go fish,” and Player A draws the top card from the fish pond. If the drawn card is the requested word, Player A keeps it and gets another turn. If the drawn card is not the requested word, Player A keeps it and the turn passes to the next player.

3. As soon as a player has a pair of words, they are placed faceup on the table.

4. The game continues until someone has no cards left or the fish pond runs out.

5. The student who has the most word pairs wins the game.

Include questions to reinforce students’ understanding of letter sounds.

**Teacher:** We will play a card game called Go Fish for Words. It’s just like regular Go Fish, except it is played with word cards. There are a few differences: You ask another player if he or she has specific word that matches a word in your hand.

If you have trouble reading a word, I will help you figure out how to read it. Then you’ll have to put it back in the fish pond and select another card.

When you have a pair of matching words, lay them faceup on the table in front of you. The person who has the most pairs wins.

* [Deal cards and determine who goes first.]

**Laura:** Bri, do you have the word *flat*?

**Bri:** Go fish.

* [Laura draws a card that is not a match.]

**Bri:** Anthony, do you have the word *w...w...wast*?

**Teacher:** Bri, point to the letter combination in that word and tell me its sound.

**Bri:** *Ai* says /ā/.
Teacher: Great. I can tell you know all the sounds in your word. Now, blend the sounds together to read the word.

Bri: /w/ /Ā/ /s/ /t/: waist.

Teacher: Good job, Bri. Put the card at the bottom of the fish pond and pick a new card to add to your hand.

Danzel, it’s your turn.

Play continues around the circle until a player matches all the cards in his or her hand or the fish pond runs out.

TIPS

• After cards are dealt, have students sort the words in their hand into categories, such as syllable type, vowel sound, letter combination, etc.

• If your group is small, consider letting players take one turn at a time, regardless of whether a player gets a match.


GUIDED PRACTICE: ACTIVITY 3

SUPPORTED SPELLING

ENCODING

Choose a vowel sound to target—for example, /ā/. Distribute a laminated spelling support card to each student that lists the various spelling patterns for /ā/ (see the following graphic). Dictate a word that contains the target sound. Students then determine its correct long a spelling pattern and spell it by writing it on the support card with a dry-erase marker.
Write *lake, play,* and *train* on the board. Refer to these words as you introduce the activity.

**Teacher:** Let’s practice spelling words that have the long *a* sound. So far, we’ve learned three spelling options for /ā/. On the board you can see words using the different spellings. Who can tell me about one of the words and its /ā/ sound?

**Laura:** *Lake* has a silent *e* at the end, so the *a* is long.

**Teacher:** Excellent! One option is the VCe pattern, as in *lake*. Danzel, will you tell me another spelling option for /ā/?

**Danzel:** *Ai* says /ā/ in *train*.

**Teacher:** Yes, the letter combination *ai,* which is in *train,* makes the long *a* sound. And the third option we have learned is…Bri?

**Bri:** *Play* has *ay* at the end. It says /ā/.

**Teacher:** Yes, another letter combination, *ay,* also says /ā/. I’m very impressed. Remember, when you hear /ā/ at the end of a word, it is usually spelled *ay.* When you are spelling words, it is important to know which option goes with which word. It takes a lot of practice and memorization. We’re going to practice right now.

Each of you has a spelling support card for long *a* that has the different spelling options we reviewed. I will dictate a word. Your job is to spell the word, using the correct long *a* spelling pattern. The spelling support card gives you a way to practice with different options before you determine the correct spelling. When your answer is ready, hold it up and show me. I will demonstrate.

The first word is *paint.*
Next, I determine the spelling option. Let’s see…I will try \textit{ay}.

\textit{[Write \textit{paynt} on the \textit{ay} line of the spelling support card.]}  

That’s not right because \textit{ay} comes at the end of a syllable, so I will erase and try \textit{ai}.

\textit{[Write \textit{paint} on the \textit{ai} line.]}  

Yes, \textit{paint} is spelled \textit{ai}.  

Let’s spell another word: \textit{spray}.  

\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textbf{Students:} & \textit{spray} \\
\textbf{Teacher:} & \textit{Spraaaay}. What is the last sound you hear? \\
\textbf{Students:} & /\textit{ā}/ \\
\textbf{Teacher:} & Right, the last sound is the long \textit{a}, /\textit{ā}/. Which sample word also ends with a long \textit{a} sound? \\
\textbf{Students:} & \textit{play} \\
\textbf{Teacher:} & Notice the spelling option when the last sound is a long vowel. Now, write the word with the spelling option you chose. Hold up your answer when you’re done. \\
& Anthony, please show your card and explain how you got your answer. \\
\textbf{Anthony:} & I spelled it with \textit{ay}, just like \textit{play} is spelled with \textit{ay}. \\
\textbf{Teacher:} & Yes, when the last sound is /\textit{ā}/, often it is spelled \textit{ay}, so try that option first. \\
\end{tabular}  

Continue dictating and spelling more word cards.

\textbf{TIPS}  

- Scaffold by dictating words with the same spelling pattern (e.g., \textit{ai} and then \textit{ay} words).  
- If students have not been taught all of the spelling options for a specified vowel, cover that option on the spelling support card with a sticky note.

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE: ACTIVITY 1

SENTENCE READING

DECODING

Give students 10–15 decodable sentences containing letter-combination words. Have students read the sentences silently, circling the letter combinations. After the silent reading, call on students to read sentences aloud. One way to structure the read-aloud is modeled below; other variations are described in the Adaptations section.

Prepare a bag or box with numbers inside corresponding to the number of sentences.

**Teacher:** You have a worksheet with 15 sentences on it. Read each sentence silently. When you see a word with a letter combination, circle the letter combination. Read each sentence three times because you will be reading them aloud a little later. While you are reading, I might come up and ask you to whisper read so I can listen. Please begin, everyone.

*[Circulate among students and listen to them read.]*

**Teacher:** Now we will read aloud. When it is your turn to read, pick a number from this bag and read that sentence. I’ll be asking questions about the sentences, so you all must read the sentences silently if it isn’t your turn.

*[Laura picks a number and reads the corresponding sentence.]*

**Teacher:** Excellent reading, Laura! Danzel, what word in Laura’s sentence had a letter combination, and what sound does it make?

*[Danzel responds.]*

Students continue reading sentences.

**ADAPTATIONS**

- Write the sentences on sentence strips.
- Write the sentences on a whiteboard or overhead.
- Have students choose 3–4 sentences to practice and then read, using their best reading.
- Have students read the sentences to a partner.
INDEPENDENT PRACTICE: ACTIVITY 2

WRITE AND SORT
ENCODING

Focusing on one vowel sound at a time, have students write the spelling options for that sound across the top of a blank sheet of paper, creating column headings. Assist students as necessary. Dictate words that contain the sound. Have students spell the words in the column that corresponds to the spelling option.

Teacher: We’re going to practice spelling words with the long a sound. First let’s make columns for each spelling option for /ā/. At the top of one column, write the spelling option for the long a in play. Write play next to it.

[Circulate among students to check for accuracy.]

Teacher: In the next column, write the spelling option for long a in train. Write train.

[Circulate to check for accuracy.]

Teacher: In the last column, write the spelling option for long a in lake. Write lake.

[Circulate and check for accuracy.]

Teacher: Which spelling options are letter combinations?

Bri: Two of them, ay and ai.

Teacher: Which spelling option usually is used when the last sound in the word is long a?

Laura: ay

Teacher: Very good. How about if the last sound is a consonant? How do you know which option to use?

Anthony: You just have to know it. You have to practice and remember.

Teacher: Exactly. You must memorize the spelling. I’m going to dictate words that you have been practicing. Write the word in the correct column.

Dictate words.
TIPS

• Use the same sample words for each spelling option, so students have a consistent frame of reference for spelling.

• Dictate words that are high utility and that have been modeled or practiced during prior activities.

GENERALIZATION

To reinforce the concept of the great number of letter-combination words, have each student open to a randomly selected page in different content area textbooks and scan the page for letter-combination words. Have students share their findings with one another.
LETTER CARDS
LETTER COMBINATIONS
ai ay ee ea
ie igh oao ow
oe ue ew oo
ui eu oy oi
ou aw au

LEsson 7 WORD CARDS
broom
bay
coal

SPINNER INSTRUCTIONS
MATERIALS
• Paper plate
• Brass brad
• Material for spinner pointer (e.g., coffee can lid, plastic drinking straw, etc.)
• 2 spacers (e.g., washers, grommets or eyelets from the hardware store)
• Scissors

PREPARATION
• Divide and label the paper plate with letter combinations.
• Cut an arrow out of the material for the pointer.
• With scissors, make a small hole in the center of the paper plate.
• Punch a small hole in the arrow.

ASSEMBLY
• Place a washer over the hole in the paper plate.
• Place the pointer over the washer.
• Place another washer over the pointer.
• Line up the holes in the paper plate, washers and pointers.
• Secure everything with the brass brad, pushing the brad through the spinner from top to bottom.
• Open the brad tabs on the underside of the paper plate to hold assembly in place.
• Check to see that the pointer spins freely and adjust as necessary.

SPINNER WORDS WORKSHEET
true
plow
foot
lead
claim
high
treat
threw
dawn
south
sway
knew
grue
queen
town
plead
flight
tool
flown
tie

MATERIALS
• Paper plate
• Brass brad
• Material for spinner pointer (e.g., coffee can lid, plastic drinking straw, etc.)
• 2 spacers (e.g., washers, grommets or eyelets from the hardware store)
• Scissors

PREPARATION
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• Place a washer over the hole in the paper plate.
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• Line up the holes in the paper plate, washers and pointers.
• Secure everything with the brass brad, pushing the brad through the spinner from top to bottom.
• Open the brad tabs on the underside of the paper plate to hold assembly in place.
• Check to see that the pointer spins freely and adjust as necessary.

SPINNER WORDS WORKSHEET
true
stream
throat
plow
own
toad
foot
great
sprawl
lead
wheel
draw
claim
pound
haunt
high
point
coin
treat
joint
suit
threw
seep
greed
dawn
grow
free
south
coast
troop
sway
faith
break
knew
found
weak

Word Recognition and Fluency: Effective Upper-Elementary Interventions for Students With Reading Difficulties © 2010 The Meadows Center for Preventing Educational Risk, The University of Texas at Austin
SENTENCE READING

LETTER COMBINATIONS

1. The paint on the wall is still wet.
2. It is hard to grow plants in this soil.
3. Will Gail go south for her road trip?
4. Mr. Drake gave a speech to the high school class.
5. This is the last night of the show.
6. Turn the sound on the TV down!
7. Gran will see that Jake has grown and can reach the lock.
8. Jenn had to tie the back of her gown.
9. Greg will haul his new toy all over town.
10. How did he get on top of the roof?
11. Ann chose blue paint for her room.
12. Joe went to sleep soon after his big yawn.
13. That coin was found in Spain.
14. It will be hard to beat the best team.
15. Mrs. Kern went to claim her tray in lost and found.

First of 6 pages:
All reviewed spelling patterns included