



Activity: Identifying the number of sounds in words with 2 and 3 phonemes

“Reading Rope” Strand: Phonemic Awareness

Rationale

As students master the ability to identify, count, and manipulate syllables in words, they are ready to progress up the continuum of phonological awareness skills and begin working with phonemes. Phonemes are the smallest units of sound. Phonemic Awareness activities engage students in hearing, identifying and manipulating the sounds in words. Students must first be able to hear the individual phonemes in words before they are asked to decode words in print. If students are unable to orally discriminate amongst individual phonemes, they will struggle to sound out words accurately when reading print. In fact, studies have linked students’ oral blending (combining phonemes) and segmenting (breaking a word into phonemes) abilities to second grade reading proficiency (The 95% Group). This activity provides students an opportunity to practice hearing individual phonemes and counting the number of phonemes in words with 2 and 3 phonemes.

- Materials:**
- List of 2 and 3 phoneme words
 - [Elkonin box template](#) per student
 - 3 colored chips/cubes per student

2 Phonemes	3 Phonemes
At, on, it, bee, in, two, for	Box, mouse, sad, lip, shell, let, mat, house, pig, dog, cat

Description of Activity:

- Tell a small group of students (4-6 students) that they will be listening to the sounds in words and counting the number of sounds that they hear in a word.
- Model an example for the students: say a word in a segmented fashion (ex. aaaaa,tttt) and put up a finger for each sound that you say.
- Then, repeat the sounds and place a chip into a square of the elkonin box for each sound that you say. Make sure to place the chips down from left to right from the students’ perspective.
- Ask students how many sounds they heard in the word. Remind students that you can use the number of chips in the elkonin box as a reference.
- After students give the correct answer, have students repeat the sounds and the whole word while you place a finger on each chip of the elkonin box representing each phoneme.
- Pass out an elkonin box and chips to each student. Continue practicing with 2-sound words and progress to 3-sound words as students demonstrate mastery.



***Note:** If students struggle to hear each phoneme in the word, model saying the phonemes slowly with little to no space in between each phoneme (ex. *mmmmmm,aaaaaa,ttttt*). Ask students to say the sounds along with you. If students struggle to repeat the sounds correctly, say each individual phoneme and ask students to repeat it after you. Additionally, tell students to say the sounds aloud as they place each phoneme in the elkonin box

Recording: Mark Y if the student was able to identify the number of sounds; Mark N if they could not.

Words Used	at	box										
Student	1											

Words Used	at	box										
Student												