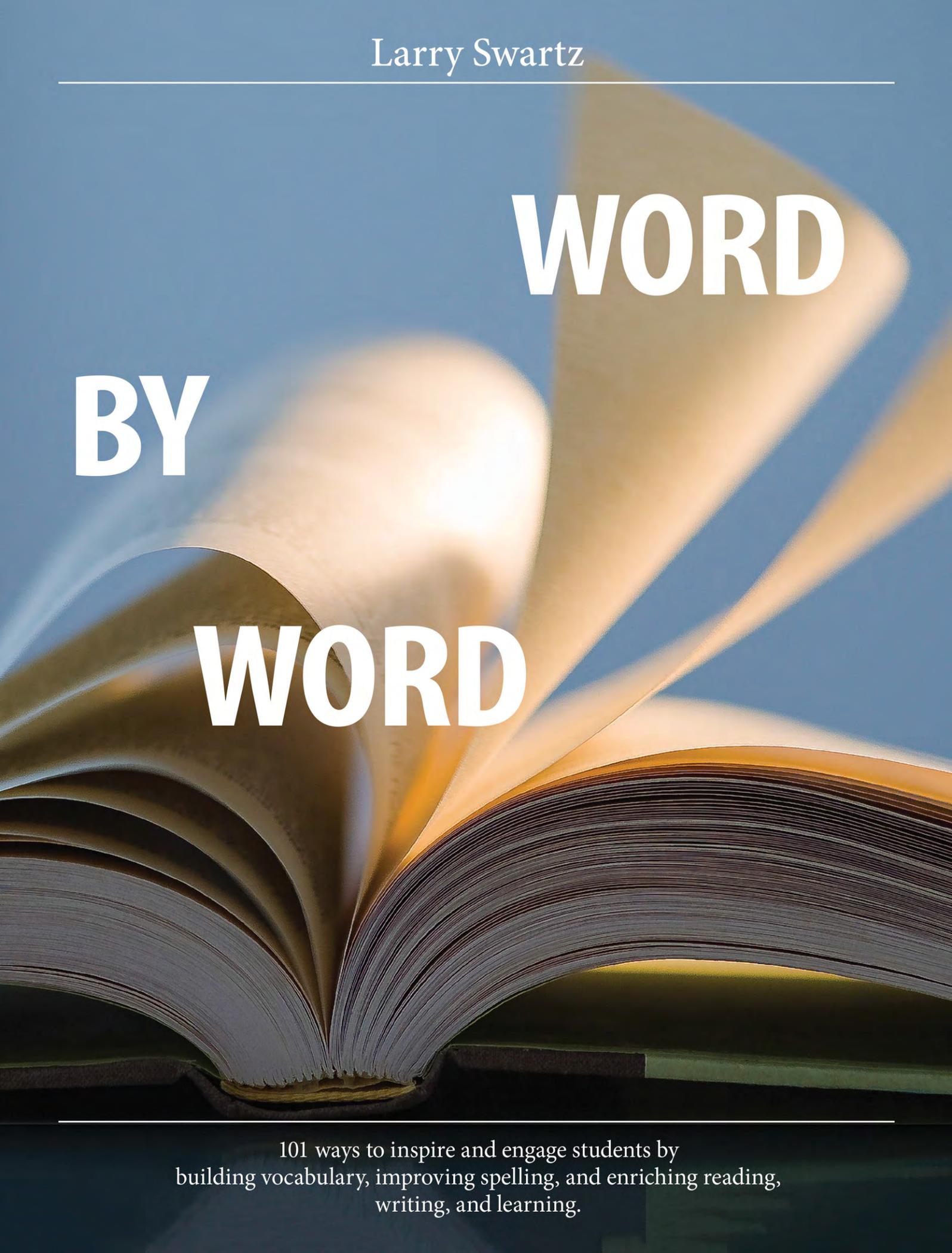


Larry Swartz



BY

WORD

WORD

101 ways to inspire and engage students by
building vocabulary, improving spelling, and enriching reading,
writing, and learning.

WORD BY WORD

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building vocabulary, improving spelling, and enriching reading,
writing, and learning

Larry Swartz



Pembroke Publishers Limited

Dedication

To my brother Stan, who solves a Jumble™ Word Puzzle each and every day

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1

Becoming a Word Collector

Selig loved everything about words—the sound of them in his ears (*tintinnabulating*), the taste of them on his tongue (*tantalizing*), the thought of them when they *percolated* in his brain (*stirring!*), and most especially, the feel of them when they moved his heart (*Mama!*).

—from *The Boy Who Loved Words* by Roni Schotter, illustrated by Giselle Potter

collect

- to bring or gather together (things, typically when scattered or widespread)
- to accumulate and store over a period of time
- to systematically seek and acquire (items of a particular kind) as a hobby

What in your life have you collected, do you now collect? Many of us—including young people—are collectors of things: stamps, coins, plush toys, dolls, figurines, comics, spoons, snow globes, etc. The goal of this chapter is to have students become word collectors so they can store them, use them, marvel in them, and expand their knowledge about them.

The strategies and activities in this chapter are designed to help students contemplate why words matter in their everyday lives, and how collecting words can be a significant habit/hobby that can lead to better success in reading, writing, and speaking. Here we will begin the journey of navigating the world of words, a journey that will unfold, not only as students explore strategies outlined in subsequent chapters, but also as they continue throughout their lives. The goals of this chapter include

- suggesting classroom events that inspect words day by day
- planting the seeds of becoming a word collector
- nourishing a fascination with the look, the sounds, and the meanings of words
- cultivating a love of words
- considering the alphabet as a way of learning and organizing words
- igniting students to become word gatherers as they read for pleasure, for information

10 Strategies for Collecting Words

Extension: Students can interview a parent or relative to find out what their favorite word is and why it is their favorite.

The picture book *The Very Kind Rich Lady and Her One Hundred Dogs* by Chinlun Lee tells the story of one woman who calls out the names of one hundred dogs; e.g., Fifi, Lola, Yogurt, Bingo.

1. Encourage children to become word collectors by providing them with their personal Word Collecting booklets. Students can collect words that they view (in the environment), hear (in conversations and discussions), and read (independently in books).

2. Students complete the following sentence stem:

My favorite word is _____
because...

These word choices can be shared in a class discussion or be displayed in a class blog or bulletin board.

3. Invite students to suggest names of pets they know. These names can be listed on a chart. Survey the class to determine the favorite name for a pet.
4. Create a classroom bulletin board entitled We Collect Words. Using sticky notes or strips of paper, students can record new, strange, or interesting words they wish to share with others.
5. Challenge students to collect ten to twelve words on a specific topic (names of places, colors, feelings) or a spelling pattern (three-syllable words, words with two different vowels, long words). Students can put an asterisk beside the three most interesting words on their list.
6. Students write three favorite words on a piece of paper. Papers are put into a hat, box, or jar. Students gather in a circle and each selects a slip of paper. Students choose their favorite of the three words on the slip to share with classmates.
7. Invite students to focus on a specific topic or spelling pattern. Challenge students to go on a word hunt for words that fit the pattern.
8. Collect paint samples from a local hardware store. If possible, provide each student with a single sample strip. Which color name is their favorite? As a follow-up, challenge some students to invent new names for colors (for crayons or markers, ice cream flavors, or nail polish).
9. Have students collect favorite words over a one-week period and display them alphabetically on a word wall. As a follow-up activity, survey students to find out which of the collected words are their favorites. Display five favorite words and have students vote on their favorite among them. Results can be tabulated on a graph.
10. Students complete sentence stems, listing words on a specific topic:

My favorite smell is _____.

My favorite crayon color is _____.

One word to describe me is _____.

The longest word I know that begins with the letter S is _____.

Here is a four-syllable word I know: _____

Here is a word I know with three different vowels: _____

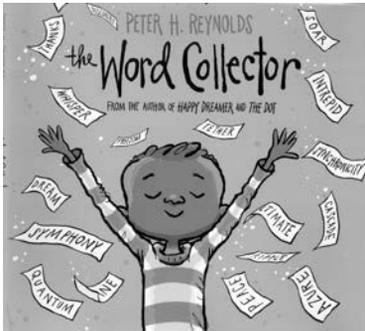
Using Picture Books about Word Collectors

Most picture books are word treasuries, in which students meet familiar words, are surprised by new words, and are impressed with the way an author has put words together to arouse emotions or create pictures in the head. When reading

aloud to children, the picture book seems to be the most accessible artifact for sharing, since the format allows much (narrative, visual images, vocabulary, etc.) to be shared in an economical amount of time. Picture books also predominate the independent reading habits of most primary children. Whether reading to, reading with, or listening to a child read, using picture books with students serves as a high-priority strategy for enriching reading—and word—power.

As the hero of Peter H. Reynolds' picture book, Jerome delights in inspecting, and collecting and filling his scrapbooks words that he hears, that he sees, that he reads. No teacher guide is needed for using this book with young people. Reynolds presents an invitation to readers young and old to pay attention (and collect) words that are short, that are sweet; words that puzzle or mystify; words that are simple; words that are powerful; words that are marvelous to say; words to enrich our language power and to carry in our language backpacks to take out as needed when reading, writing, and conversing. Reynolds (and Jerome) lead readers into thinking about and reaching for their own words to make their worlds better.

A number of picture books are specifically written to celebrate engagement with words. For preschool children there are several titles available to help them identify, name, and label things. Many picture books have also been written to demonstrate how words are important in the lives of the fictitious characters, words that enrich their vocabulary and word knowledge.



“Reach for your own words to tell the world who you are and how you will make it better.”
— from *The Word Collector*, Peter H. Reynolds

Bookshelf: Picture Books about Word Collectors

Learning about Words (ages 2 to 5)

Eric Carle. *My Very First Book of Words*

Jamie Lee Curtis; illus. Laura Cornell. *Big Words for Little People*

Lucy Cousins. *Maisy's Amazing Big Book of Words*

Xavier Deneux. *Touch: My Big Touch-and-feel Word Book*

Anna Dewdney & Reed Duncan. *Llama Llama Loves to Read*

Jimmy Fallon. *Your Baby's First Word will be DADA* (also *Everything is MAMA*)

Tad Hills. *How Rocket Learned to Read*

Lynn Maslen Kertell. *Bob Books: Sight Words Kindergarten Set*

Julie Morstad. *Today*

Roger Priddy. *First 100 Words*

Faith Ringgold. *Cassie's Word Quilt*

Michelle Romo. *Frankie's Magical Day*

Richard Scarry. *Richard Scarry's Best Word Book Ever*

Jessica Spanyol. *Carlo Likes Reading*

The Power of Words (ages 6+)

Pilar López Ávila; illus. Mar Azabel. *Ayobami and the Names of the Animals*

Kate Banks; illus. Peter Sís. *Alphabet Soup*

Kate Banks; illus. Boris Kulikov. *Max's Words*

Monalisa DeGross. *Donovan's Word Jar*

Melanie Florence; illus. Gabrielle Grimard. *Stolen Words*

Debra Frasier. *Miss Alaineus: A vocabulary disaster*

Yee-Lum Mak; illus. Kelsey Garrety-Riley. *Other-Wordly: words both strange and lovely from around the world*

Jane O'Connor; illus. Robin Preiss Glasser. *Fancy Nancy series*

Doreen Rappaport. *Martin's Big Words*

Peter H. Reynolds. *The Word Collector*
Lora Rozler. *Words*
Roni Schotter; illus. Giselle Potter. *The Boy Who Loved Words*
Beck & Matt Stanton. *Did you Take the B from my _ ook?*
Laya Steinberg; illus. Debbie Harter. *Thesaurus Rex*
Sonja Wimmer. *The Word Collector*

“Analyzing a word—considering how its meaning connects to other words and thinking about how the word works—is brain food. Our brains literally grow when we make new connections. Tying the meaning of a word to how it is used, to situations where it is used, and to related words creates real, physical connections to the brain.”
(Beck and McKeown, 2018)

Inspecting Words

These whole-class activities are provided as suggestions for how students can collect and inspect words day by day. If you implement one or more of these strategies, you can help students become word collectors, increasing their vocabulary and word power. The daily routine need take only a moment or two in your language arts program. Attention can be drawn to definitions, spelling patterns, usage, and/or etymology.

1. Word of the Day App

Word of the Day online programs or apps are designed to build vocabulary and information about words. For example, the whole class or individual students can subscribe to the Merriam-Webster Word of the Day program. Each day a word is sent to the inbox and *Did you know?* facts about the English language are featured. These new vocabulary words can be featured in the class for discussion.

2. Word-a-Day Calendars

Commercial word-a-day calendars can be purchased and put on display in the classroom. Focus students’ attention on a vocabulary word featured in a calendar.

3. Word Wizard

One of the classroom duties can be to assign a student to be word wizard of the day. The word wizard collects, records, and posts new or unusual words that they notice in the environment or in their reading. These words can be displayed on a whiteboard, a bulletin board, or an interactive whiteboard.

4. Solving a Word Puzzle

A featured word puzzle can be displayed in the classroom for students to solve independently or with a partner. Words chosen for the spelling puzzle could include new vocabulary words or focus on a spelling pattern.

5. Read-All-About-It Headlines

Draw students’ attention to the headlines that appear on the front page of a newspaper. Students can point out unfamiliar words featured. As an alternative, students can note spelling patterns that appear in the headlines.

For word puzzles, see Chapter 10.

In the Classroom: Becoming Word Searchers

with thanks to Sue Freypons, Grade 6 Teacher

When I visited a Grade 6 classroom, I asked the students to work in groups to brainstorm questions that they had about words. Here are some examples that prompted students to become inquirers—word searchers!

- What are some *q* words that aren't followed by the letter *u*?
- How many new words are added to the dictionary each year?
- Why don't we just eliminate silent letters if they are silent anyway?
- Why does the word *Wednesday* have a *d* after the *e* when we pronounce it "Wensday"?
- Are there many words with just vowels? What is the longest word with vowels only?
- What words have the *ph* sound in the middle of the word?
- Why is a building called a building when they are already built?
- Why do some words end in *-able* and some in *-ible*?
- Are french fries French?

The next phase of the lesson focused on students finding answers to some questions about words. Each student was given a question to investigate using the Internet. Through inquiry, students searched words, their origins, and/or their definitions:

Q: What is the plural of the word *ice cream*?

A: The word *ice creams* can be used to name various types of ice cream or a collection of ice creams; e.g., *The candy store had a variety of chocolate ice creams on display.*

Q: What are some words that have all five vowels?

A: *education, automobile, evacuation*

Q: Where does the name *Canada* come from?

A: Canada comes from the Huron-Iroquois word *kanata*, meaning village or settlement.

Q: What is the difference between a homonym and homograph?

A: Homonyms are words that sound alike but have different spellings and different meanings (*knight/night; suite/sweet*). Homographs are words that are spelled the same but have different meanings (bear, rose).

Q: Are there any words that begin with silent letters?

A: *knowledge, knot, pterodactyl, wrist*

Investigating Silent Letters

From time to time, I present a word-collecting challenge to the students. Focusing on a specific vocabulary or spelling rule, students are encouraged to collect words they encounter from their reading, from the environment, and by searching the Internet. In this instance, I introduced a word-collecting event to help answer several students' questions about silent letters. The picture book *P is for Pterodactyl* proved to be an ideal source to present the concept of silent letters to the students.

A challenge was presented to the students: Which of the following letters is the most common silent letter: *B, H, K, T, W*? To begin, we brainstormed words with silent letters that we were familiar with. Students worked in groups of three to complete a chart, listing words with silent letters. Throughout the week, students collected and added to the chart, listing words they encountered in their reading and as they searched words on the Internet.

P is for Pterodactyl: The worst alphabet book ever: All the letters that misbehave and make words nearly impossible to pronounce by Raj Halder & Chris Carpenter, illustrated by Maria Tina Beddia, is a whimsical alphabet book that presents an array of words that begin with letters that are not pronounced (*H is for Heir; J is for Jai Alai, M is for Mnemonic*). A sentence accompanies each page of text to help readers say these words properly; e.g., *The noble knight's knife nicked the knave's knee.*

A Is for Alphabet

Research makes it clear that readers and writers require alphabet knowledge. Helping young children explore and understand the sounds and symbols of alphabetical letters is essential to literacy development. Alphabet centres for young children should include a variety of writing instruments, magnetic letters, alphabet cards or tiles, alphabet books, and sight-word lists. At the centre, students can experiment with writing by drawing and tracing letters, making rhyming words, playing alphabet games, constructing words, and creating personal dictionaries by listing words alphabetically.

For students of all ages, the alphabet is a meaningful way to classify words:

- Students can explore vocabulary on a specific topic by listing them in alphabetical order.
- Word puzzles and word games challenge students to explore words alphabetically.
- When using a print or online dictionary, it is important that students understand how words are presented in alphabetical order to provide easy access to the definitions of words.
- Students come to understand how the alphabet is used to organize words and titles: e.g., class lists, library shelving by author, bibliography references, etc.

Primary Activities (Ages 4–7)

An Illustrated Alphabet

As a whole-class activity, students can create an illustrated alphabet. The alphabet can be made up of mixed images or it can be themed (e.g., story characters, animals, foods). For young children, ensure that the words they choose to illustrate do not begin with consonant blends; brainstorm words that begin with the letter but have a pure sound (e.g., *car* instead of *chair*). Display the completed work for easy reference.

Teaching Tips

- Older students (or buddies) can create an illustrated alphabet for younger children.
- Completed pages can be assembled into a class book for students to read independently.
- The activity can be repeated at different times of the year, exploring different spelling concepts (e.g., adjectives, two-syllable words, etc.).

Letter Sorting

Select a handful of plastic or magnetic letters for students to examine. Invite them to find letters with different features; e.g., straight lines, curved lines, tails, etc.

Survey and Graph of Alphabet Letters

Have each student write the first letter of his or her first name on a sticky note. Notes can be displayed on the wall or the board to form an alphabet graph. Which letter is the most popular? Which letters are missing from the graph?

Animal Alliteration

Provide students with a stuffed animal that can serve as the class mascot. Have students suggest alliterative names for the toy; e.g., Bodhi Bear, Big Bunny, Cool Carl, Silly Sally. Invite them to name things that this animal might like that begin with the same letter:

Bodhi Bear likes burgers.
He visited Buffalo.
He likes big balloons.
His favorite colors are blue, black, and brown.

What Word Am I?

Play this game with students by giving clues:

I am a T word that is a red vegetable.
I am an J word that is a kind of drink.
I am an R word that is a large animal with a horn.

Extension: For older students, the game can be played in pairs or in teams. Students can devise challenging vocabulary questions to be asked. Score can be kept.

Junior/ Intermediate Activities (Ages 7+)

I Packed My Backpack

Each player adds one item to be “packed” in an imaginary backpack. The game is cumulative; as the brainstorming continues, each player must list in order the items that have been previously mentioned. A further challenge is to list only words that start with a single alphabet letter, words in alphabetical order, or words on a particular theme. The following example shows how the game might be played by suggesting things we read:

Player #1: *I packed my backpack with an atlas.*
Player #2: *I packed my backpack with an atlas and a biography.*
Player #3: *I packed my backpack with an atlas, a biography, and a comic book.*

Alphabetical Order

Display five or six words that might appear on a single page in a dictionary. Challenge students to create a list of the words in alphabetical order.

Collaborative Alphabet Books

The alphabet provides a convenient pattern for collaborative efforts. Each student can be assigned to create a page of an alphabet book. This can be as simple as identifying nouns or verbs for each letter of the alphabet. The names of animals, authors, book titles, or countries are examples of potential alphabet book creations, as are curriculum topics (math vocabulary, science vocabulary, capital cities, ancient civilizations). Many alphabet books offer syntactic patterns that provide a suitable launch into writing: *Animalia* by Graeme Base; *Tomorrow's Alphabet* by George Shannon and Donald Crews; *A My Name is Alice* by Jane E. Bayer, illustrated by Steven Kellogg; *Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten* by Joseph Slate, illustrated by Ashley Wolff.

2

Becoming Word Wise

Monday is vocabulary day, when Mr. Daniels goes over the new words for the week. As far as reading lessons go, that isn't so bad. All I have to do is listen as he tells us the word's meaning, and I can usually remember it because I make mind movies about each one and that helps me remember.

But today, during vocabulary Mr. Daniels brings up two words: alone and lonely. He asks for volunteers to explain the difference between the two.

— from *Fish in a Tree* by Lynda Mullaly Hunt

Your *epidermis* is showing! Your *proboscis* is showing!

Often when we hear or read new words, we might not be able to make sense of what is being said because we don't understand what the words mean. We can often get by without knowing the word, but we most likely don't want to seem foolish or uninformed by not "getting it." If we don't know that an *epidermis* is the skin, or the *proboscis* is a nose, this joke might seem rude.

In order to be proficient users of words, we all need to have frequent encounters with new words. In the classroom, explicit instruction can provide students with a focus on vocabulary learning, but we need to go beyond a focus on word study and provide them with opportunities to be engaged with—and maintain—their vocabulary learning in a number of ways. To help students inspect and respect words, it is important that they stretch their understanding of words by meeting words they have learned beyond those that have been introduced into the word-study component of any program. To engage and enrich students' vocabulary, we also need to value that students take their learning outside the classroom, and seek examples of words they have learned elsewhere in their lives; when listening to conversations; when watching television, movies, and theatre; and when exploring the Internet.

It is significant that helping students learn new words shows them how to learn new concepts. Vocabulary instruction is both a reading skill and a writing skill,

**"Texts of all kinds (print, visual, and digital) are filled with what could be fascinating ideas and information, but even if our kids are able to decode and pronounce words, they may not understand their meaning without explicit vocabulary instruction."
(Overturf, Montgomery & Smith, 2013)**

and may be considered particularly challenging since students are giving and receiving vocabulary while being exposed to new words and using new words themselves. In this chapter are activities that help students

- consider specialized vocabulary by preparing a glossary of terms
- increase their fascination with words by investigating some interesting word facts
- complete a quiz to consider familiarity with vocabulary and learn new vocabulary
- explore print and online dictionaries to access meanings of familiar and unfamiliar words
- consider the components of a definition by examining the dictionary and composing definitions.
- expand word knowledge by paying attention to words at school, at home, in the community

Four Phases of Learning Vocabulary

Jordan Catapano (TeachHub) points out that there are four unique phases of incorporating vocabulary understanding into any classroom's curriculum. Catapano uses the term "phases" to represent the slow transition from seeing a word for the first time to fully understanding a word and being able to use it.

Phase One: Monitoring Level of Familiarity

- How familiar is the student with any given word they encounter?
- Are words extremely familiar, slightly familiar, or completely new?

Phase Two: Attacking New Words While Reading

- How does the student make sense of the word (e.g., examining the root word, using a dictionary, considering the context)?

Phase Three: Learning the Definition of a New Word

- Does the student naturally understand the meaning of the word?
- Is the student able to understand the word when it is encountered in a new setting?

Phase Four: Owning the Meaning of a Word

- Does the student successfully use the word in their oral and/or written communications?

Specialized Vocabularies

Compiling and Working with Specialized Vocabularies

This list provides some suggested topics (some students might wish to choose their own topic).

Baking terms

Fishing words

Exotic fruit names

Theatre words

Star Wars words

Terminology for a sport (e.g., soccer, hockey)

Bullying vocabulary

Celebrations around the world	Sea creatures
Instruments around the world	Geology (rocks and minerals)
In-the-hospital terms	Gaming words
Sewing terms	Tech time
Ice-skating words	Words from Harry Potter (people, places, things)
Parts of a car	Music words
Body parts	Architecture words
Carpenter tools	Math words
Features of graphic texts	

- Students choose a topic of particular interest. Using the Internet, they investigate a list of at least ten terms (and their definitions). This activity can be done by students working independently or in pairs. If working alone, students can collect at least 10 words on a topic. If working with a partner, the list of words could be longer. If each student in a class of 25 collects ten words, the class will collaboratively be collectors of 250 words that they likely didn't previously know.
- Students can work independently to list vocabulary words that are particular to a topic of expertise or interest. They then meet with a partner to compare lists and work together to add additional words to their personal lists. Students can use the Internet to research other words that might be added to their lists.
- Students can work in groups of three or four to brainstorm vocabulary words and prepare lists on a chart within a given time period (e.g., 5 minutes). On a signal, groups rotate to a new chart and add vocabulary words. Which is the longest list in the room?

Working with Vocabulary Lists on Special Topics

- Challenge students to create an alphabetical list of terms on a topic of their choice. Can they find at least one word for each letter of the alphabet?
- Students work with a group who has prepared a different vocabulary list. Working collaboratively, students find a way to organize all the words on the lists by pattern (e.g., by syllables; words with double consonants or words with double vowels; words with one vowel, two vowels, three different vowels; etc.)
- Students create a word search puzzle for others to solve using words they've collected on a topic of interest.
- Students create a glossary of terms of ten to twelve vocabulary words by providing brief definitions of those words.
- Students post the words on a class website.
- The class can prepare a quiz (fill in the blank, true or false, multiple choice) of specialized vocabulary words, with each student contributing at least one question. Once students have submitted questions, prepare a quiz to test students' knowledge of specialized terms.
- A small group of students can gather the word lists and arrange the vocabulary in alphabetical order. In this way, a class dictionary of specialized vocabulary can be posted and shared with others.

In the Classroom: Preparing and Presenting a Glossary of Specialized Vocabulary

Tara Swartz-O'Neill, Grade 4 Teacher

Since the start of the school year, I have been working with my Grade 4 class on weekly spelling lists. Each word list focused on a particular letter blend, sound, or concept learned in class. I felt that it was good to have a spelling pattern to explore, but I wondered if these words had a meaningful context for the students to apply their understanding.

The Word Collector by Peter H. Reynolds was given to me by my teacher-librarian and proved to be an ideal spark to my word-study program. The picture book tells the story of a young boy who loves to collect words. As a class, we discussed how we are all word collectors already. Each student has spent their whole life collecting words: big words and small words, nouns and verbs, happy words and sad words, simple words and complex words.

Following the reading of the book, I explained to students that they would be creating their own spelling lists of ten or more words of their choice. As a class, we discussed what a glossary is and how it is typically used. Another picture book, *Peaceful Fights for Equal Rights*, served as a model for glossary. We came up with words that would belong in specific categories, such as baking, sports, or playing an instrument. Two students have families from Croatia, and they decided they could write out a list of Croatian words their peers have never heard before. Since we had just completed our Habitats and Communities unit in science, some students decided to define specific animals from their chosen biomes. One of my students, a competitive gymnast, chose to write a glossary of gymnastics terms. Another student is a horseback rider, and she chose to write a glossary of horseback riding terms. The students then used laptops to research and type out their words.

This was by far the most exciting vocabulary activity we did this term. First, when students learned they were going to be choosing their own spelling words, their excitement was highly evident. Once they found out that the words could be about any topic they were interested in, their minds really began racing. Every single student was keen to list words they already knew and to use the Internet to research words connected to their subject. Students were encouraged to not just copy information, but to also explain the meanings of the vocabulary terms in their own words. They were excited to be able to share their final lists with their teachers and peers. We had become word collectors and, as a community, we had more 200 new vocabulary words to exchange with each other. The students were prouder of their end products than they had ever been with a memorized spelling list. The glossary activity helped me to understand that when students are empowered and given choices they become masters of their own learning. Preparing and presenting a glossary encouraged my students to use their knowledge and expertise to teach others about new topics and to become wordhunters on an expert topic. The words became a gateway into the students' lives, hobbies, and interests, and fostered a love for vocabulary—and spelling.

Peaceful Fights for Equal Rights by Rob Sanders, illustrated by Jared Andrew Schorr, presents an alphabetic list of terms intended to help students think about taking action for peace. A glossary of terms at the back of the book provides explanations for vocabulary items spread throughout the picture book; e.g., campaign, endure, mediate, picket, vigil.

Sample Glossary

Alex's Gymnastics Glossary	
Word	Definition
aerial	Like a cartwheel but with no hands
Barani	A trampoline and tumbling stunt in which the performer does a front straight or tuck somersault with a half twist
cartwheel	A circular sideways handspring with the arms and legs extended
flip	To turn over with sudden quick movement
floor	The lower surface of a room, on which one may walk, that has springs under it
grips	Fabric that goes over your first three fingers and down over your palm and buckles around the wristband on your wrist. Under the piece on your palm is a dowel to help you hold onto the bar.
gymnastics	Exercises developing or displaying physical agility or coordination
handspring	A jump through the air onto one's hands followed by another onto one's feet
rebound	After one bounce it is a rebound
rings	A circular band, typically a precious metal or wood
round-off	Like a cartwheel but you keep your legs together
trampoline	A rectangular bed made of mesh that you jump on
vault	A beat board with springs in between where you run and jump on it, and land on a soft mat

Exploring Fun Word Facts

When you present students with word facts, you can arouse their curiosity about words and entice them to consider the strangeness and wonder of words. Students are encouraged to share word facts that they come across as they collect and inspect vocabulary.

- The word *asthma* begins and ends with a vowel and has no other vowels in between.
- The longest word in dictionaries having only one vowel is *strengths*.

- *Doorhinge* is the only word that rhymes with orange.
- *Chilver* (a rare word that means female lamb) is one of the few possible words that rhymes with silver.
- In the word *unimaginatively*, the vowels and consonants alternate
- *United Arab Emirates* is the longest name of a country consisting of alternating vowels and consonants.
- *Ouenouaou* is the name of a stream in the Philippines. It has nine letters and only one consonant.
- *Sequoia* is a word that contains all five vowels.
- The word *facetiously* contains all five vowels in consecutive order.
- *Aerious* is the shortest word with the five vowels occurring in alphabetical order.
- The longest common word without any of the five vowels is *rhythms*. *Tsktsk* is the longest word that doesn't contain any vowel at all (you indicate your disapproval of someone by making a tsktsk sound)
- The word *swims* is *swims* even when turned upside down.
- The name of the infinity sign is *lemniscate*. The word is Latin for "decorated with ribbons."
- *I am* is the shortest complete sentence in the English language.
- The part of a wall between two windows is called the *interfenestration*.
- A *pangram* sentence is one that contains every letter in the language.
- *Google* is a misspelling of a real-life mathematical term *googol* (a 1 followed by 100 zeros). The original name of the search engine invented by Larry Page and Sergey Brin was BackRub.
- *I*, *we*, *two*, and *three* are some of the oldest words in the English language, first appearing in medieval manuscripts. The shortest, oldest, and most commonly used word is *I*.
- Provide students with a photocopy of these facts. In groups, students can discuss which fact(s) they found to be the most interesting.
- A single word fact can be posted daily for the students to consider.

Words you can make if you have only vowels in your seven Scrabble tiles:

- **AA:** a type of lava
- **AE:** grapheme formed by the letters a and e
- **Al:** a sloth with three long claws; a branch of computer science
- **AIEEE:** a secondary examination in India
- **EUOUAE:** a medieval musical term
- **UOIAUAI:** old English word meaning "twin"

Extension: Encourage students to collect and share fascinating word facts that they encounter in the environment, in the media, and in their reading.

sesquipedalian
(adj.) having many syllables; words that are characterized by being long

"Two of the hardest words in the language to rhyme are *life* and *love*.
Of all words."
— Stephen Sondheim, composer and lyricist

Long Words

Pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis: a lung disease contracted from the inhalation of very fine silica particles, especially from a volcano (45 letters)

Antidisestablishmentarianism: opposition to the establishment of the Church of England (28 letters)

Some facts about the word *supercalifragilisticexpialidocious* (34 letters)

- It is the title a song written for the movie musical *Mary Poppins*.
- It is an adjective meaning extraordinarily good; wonderful.
- The word appears in some dictionaries (like Oxford) but not all.
- The song lyrics identify it as "something to say when you have nothing to say."
- The first record of the word *supercaliflawjalisticexpialidoshus* is its appearance in a 1931 newspaper column as a made-up word that describes "all words in the category of something wonderful." It was perhaps first used in the 1940s.
- What does it actually mean? super = above; cali = beauty; fragilistic = delicate; expiali = to atone; docious - educable: atoning for being educable through extreme beauty and delicacy

Testing Vocabulary Skills

See page 32 for Vocabulary Skills Test. The correct answers to the test:

1. c); 2. b); 3. b); 4. a); 5. c); 6. a); 7. b); 8. b); 9. c); 10. a); 11. a); 12. c); 13. a); 14. c); 15. b).

Students can work alone or with a partner to complete the Vocabulary Skills Test on page 32. It is unlikely that students will be familiar with many of the vocabulary words, but the goal of the quiz is to

- enrich vocabulary by introducing students to new words and their meanings
- invite students to discover the definitions of one or more of these words by using the Internet or dictionary
- become curious about unfamiliar words they meet in their reading, their environment, the media

Preparing a Vocabulary Quiz

Invite students to work alone or in pairs to develop a vocabulary quiz using the multiple choice model of the Vocabulary Skills Test on page 32. Students each prepare 8 to 10 questions, highlighting vocabulary words that may not be familiar to others. Students may choose to use words connected to a particular theme or topic, as suggested on page 25. Once they have completed their own quiz, students can exchange and solve a partner's quiz.

“Vocabulary research strongly points to the need for frequent encounters with new words if they are to become a permanent part of an individual’s vocabulary repertoire. Those encounters should not be limited to the week in which words are the focus of instruction. Rather students should have opportunities to maintain their vocabulary learning and elaborate their understanding of words by meeting words they have learned in contexts beyond the instructional ones.” (Beck, McKeown, and Kucan, 2013, p. 109)

D Is for Dictionary

Exploring a Print Dictionary

Most definitions that students need to look up can be found on the Internet. However, dictionaries and other reference materials (thesauruses, picture dictionaries, language dictionaries) should be available to students to access when they need to discover the spelling, meaning, or usage of the words they encounter in their reading and writing. Students can use dictionaries more effectively if they are familiar with the features and are presented with strategies to develop skills that are relevant to their reading and writing.

Why Use the Dictionary?

The best way to encourage dictionary use in the classroom is to provide students with a purpose for using the dictionary. Brainstorm a list of reasons for using the dictionary for supporting reading and reading. Some reasons might include

- to discover the meaning of the word
- to discover the pronunciation of the word
- to discover the history or origin of a word
- to find a synonym
- to check the spelling of a word
- to check other forms of a word, such as the past tense of a verb or the plural of a noun

Digging Into the Dictionary

Present the definition of the word *definition* (or any other word) to students and point out the features that give information about the word. Present students with an invented word, like *frod*. Invite students create a definition for this word by including

- its pronunciation

definition

late Middle English: from Latin verb *definire* “to set bounds to”

- a statement of the exact meaning of a word, especially in a dictionary
- an exact statement or description of the nature, scope, or meaning of the action

Extension: What might the definitions be for one of these words: flazar, foxitin, frinkle, froodle, froosh?

- the part of speech it is
- one or two definitions to explain the meaning of the word
- a sentence that includes the word for each definition
- synonyms
- an illustration (optional)

In Your Own Words

The following words have been added to online and/or print dictionaries in recent years:

avatar	multi-tasking
blog	module
gigahertz	Twitter
meme	binge-watch

Have students write a brief explanation in their own words for two or more of these words. As a class, research the dictionary definition for each word and compare it to the ones students have written.

Being Guided by Guide Words

There are two guide words at the top of each print dictionary page: the guide word on the left shows what the first word on the page is; the guide word on the right shows what the last word on the page is. The words on each page are words that come between the guide words. Example: The guide words on one page of a dictionary are *planet* and *platypus*. If you are looking for the word *plasma* or *platinum*, you know it will be on that page. The word *plague* will be on the preceding page and the word *please* will be on the next page.

Students can

- Turn to any page and identify the two guide words
- List three words that come between the two guide words
- Write the definition for one of the guide words
- List the word that appears directly after the first guide word; directly before the last guide word
- Find the page that the word *definition* appears on. What are the two guide words on that page?

Exploring an Online Dictionary

There are several online dictionaries available to students who need to find the meaning, spelling, and usage of a word. The Oxford Online Dictionary and the Merriam-Webster Dictionary are the most common references for students to investigate. For specific searches, the Internet provides reference for synonyms (e.g., The Macmillan Thesaurus), rhymes (The Rhyming Dictionary), and idioms (The Idiom Dictionary). Other examples of online dictionaries with specific content:

- Etymology Dictionary (word origins)
- Pseudodictionary (made-up words)
- Linguee, Ultralingua, Websters Online Dictionary: Rosetta Edition (multilingual dictionaries)

Students who are comfortable using the Internet to gather information will likely be comfortable looking up the definition of a word as needed. It is important

3

Does Spelling Count?

If I practiced
spelling words
in English
like saying them in Spanish
like—pehn-seel
for pencil,
imagine

— from *Imagine* by Juan Felipe Herrera; illus. Lauren Castillo

The aim of spelling learners, whether children or adults, is to discover the patterns that are there for them to find—and to use and to build words they might next need in their writing. Displaying lists of words and encouraging students to create their own lists helps stretch student investigation and understanding of spelling patterns.

In the introduction to her resource *The Spelling Teacher's Book of Lists*, spelling guru Jo Phenix explains:

Making lists of words which share some element of spelling is a good idea. The act of making lists helps us to focus on the patterns. Once we have done this we will notice other words and can add to our lists. Seeing words grouped together can often help us to remember that they are similar. The lists can become a resource to use for checking spellings. (Phenix, 2003, p. 7)

Working with words helps students become aware of a particular pattern, noticing words that fit and words that do not fit. After they have focused on a particular pattern, students may find words jumping off the page, triggering a memory of similar words they have looked at before. A spelling pattern cannot be generalized from a few words. The more words we have, the more likely you are to spot

the connections. The more we spot the connections, the better we are at recognizing, understanding, and applying our word-building skills.

Doreen Scott-Dunne effectively summarizes the goals of effective spelling practice:

For students to become successful spellers, it is necessary for us to strike a balance between their inquiries into word patterns and their growing word knowledge. Key to that balance is that information from investigations and word knowledge is cognitively stored, easily and often accessed, and directly applied to proofreading and editing. By teaching spelling through inquiry and through having students pay attention to how words work, we can enable our students to become proficient spellers and engaged problem solvers with words. (Scott-Dunne, 2013, p. 124)

In this chapter, students will have opportunities to

- develop spelling power by focusing on patterns: vowels, consonants, syllables, prefixes, suffixes, root words, plurals, compound words, hyphenated words
- come to understand that effective spelling is a problem-solving process that uses knowledge of sounds, patterns, letters, and meaning
- use personal dictionaries as a reference to document familiar and unfamiliar words
- practice word building through independent and small-group activities
- become word detectives, strengthening their word knowledge by noticing, inquiring, and gaining information about words and how they are spelled
- build and use words they might need in their writing
- consider memory tricks (mnemonics) to reinforce spelling rules
- consider the strengths and challenges of participating in spelling bees

When we introduce building word strategies in our classrooms by focusing on patterns, we are helping students to build their understanding of how words work, so that they can expand their curiosity about words and apply this information in their writing.

Strategies that Help Us Grow as Spellers

- Look for patterns.
- Look for word parts.
- Write sounds in words that you know.
- Write a vowel in each word.
- Write a vowel in each syllable.
- Write the beginning of a word that you are sure of.
- Write the ending of the word that you are sure of.
- Think about words that sound the same.
- Think about the meaning of the word.
- Think of a rule that helps you remember the word.
- Use a dictionary or internet to check spellings.
- Ask someone for help.

(Booth & Swartz, 2004, p. 88)

Sound Patterns: Vowels

Teaching Tips

- An effective way to help students learn about vowels is to collect rhyming words that share the same pattern. Focusing on one spelling pattern can make it easier for students to make the connection between the sound and the letter(s) used to represent the sound.
- Generally, short vowels are easier to learn because the sounds are usually represented by one vowel only. Long-vowel sounds can be complicated because they usually consist of more than one vowel
- Investigating, collecting, and categorizing words can help students become aware of a spelling pattern (a sound and its spelling). Once students connect a sound with a letter or letters, they can make reasonable attempts to spell other words with the same sound.

Word-Building Activities with Vowels

Primary

1. Display a rhyming poem on a chart or interactive whiteboard. Read the poem out loud and then have students join in to chant the poem. Identify the rhyming pairs in the poem. Have students brainstorm other words that might have the same rhyme pattern.

Rain, rain go *away*
Come again some other *day*.

2. Display the following fill-in-the-blank letter combinations.

s_t p_t s_n
h_t g_t f_n

Have students write three three-letter words for each of the following. Each of the three words should have a different vowel; e.g., t_ p (tip, top, tap)

Bonus: add one letter to the following to make a four-letter word:

wrd	tck
pll	1st
frn	sng

Junior/Intermediate

The vowel combination *ea* has both a long-e sound (*please*) and a short-e sound (*head*). Students work with a partner to brainstorm *ea* words in two columns. A time limit of five minutes might add to the challenge.

Extension: Some students brainstorm and list words with *ea* and words with *ee*; both make the long-e sound. A time limit of five minutes might add to the challenge. Which is the longer list?

Sound Patterns: Consonants

Teaching Tips

- Building rhyming families can help students hear differences in the sound of words.

The word *latchstring* holds more consonants in a row than any other English word: ltchstr (six consonants).

- Consonant combinations at the end of words are difficult to hear clearly (*fold, strict*) The letters *m* and *n* that appear with a vowel before certain consonants create a sound that might be difficult to distinguish. When students leave out an *m* or *n*, they are likely not hearing the consonant sound; e.g., “stad” for *stand*, “cap” for *camp*.

Word-Building Activities with Consonants

Primary

1. Have students, in pairs, go on a word hunt in the classroom, examining posters, books, and signs. The challenge is to find and list ten words that begin with a two-consonant combination: e.g., *blue, friend, what*.

Extension

The activity can be repeated, having students investigate words that

- end in two consonants: e.g., *shrimp, kept*
- have three consonants in a row anywhere in the word: e.g., *string, weight*
- have double consonants; e.g., *tall, classroom*

Bonus

Students hunt for words that begin with two consonants and end in two consonants: e.g., *thing, thumb, spill*.

2. Present this string of words to the students:

shoeshineshapefishcrashfinishovelleashshirtshellshoesharkshieldshop-shareshelvesharp

There are no spaces between each word; they begin or end with *sh*. Have students write the separate words that appear in this puzzle (there are more than 15 words).

Extension

Students can create their own string puzzle using the consonant combinations *ch* or *th*.

Junior/Intermediate

Working alone or with a partner, students select any one page of the novel they are reading to go on a treasure hunt to find consonant words:

- Words that begin and end with two consonants
- Words that have three or more consonants in a row
- Words with double consonants
- Five-letter words with only one vowel
- Plural words with at least three different consonants

Syllables

Teaching Tips

- A knowledge of syllables can help students to spell. If they are aware of all the syllables or beats in a word, they can try to represent each beat or

This activity can be used for Intermediate students as well.

syllable with letters. Syllables allow students to work with smaller bits of information to which they can apply spelling strategies, such as phonic patterns and meaning patterns.

- Remind students that every beat contains at least one vowel.
- In order to demonstrate that syllables are linked to beat, clap out the beats of the words. Clapping the beats of familiar names will help students recognize one-syllable, two-syllable, and multi-syllable names.
- When students have difficulties with spelling multi-syllabic words, they may not be clearly enunciating the syllables in the words. Learning the strategy of saying words clearly in syllables can help students acquire new techniques for spelling development.
- Are students trying to represent every syllable in their written work? If parts of a word are left out, ask students to say the word out loud and listen for the beats. Students can then be encouraged to spell every beat. Clapping the beats can help them discover the number of syllables a word might have.

Word-Building Activities with Syllables

Primary

1. Read aloud a favorite nursery rhyme to the students. Repeat the activity, clapping the beats of each syllable. Students then join in to clap the beats/syllables of the poem as they say the words. As a final activity, students clap the beats only, without saying the words.
2. Arrange students into four groups according to the syllables in their first names: Group #1 (one syllable); Group #2 (two syllables), Group #3 (three syllables) Group #4, (four syllables or more). Which group is the largest? Point to students in each group and have them say their name and clap the syllable beats that accompany their name. The activity can be repeated using last names.

Junior/Intermediate

Invite students to brainstorm and list words on a chart according to the number of syllables in each word. For this activity, students can focus on a particular spelling pattern (e.g., words that end in the suffix *-tion*, words that end in the suffix *-ment*, words that begin with the prefix *pre-*). One-syllable words can be excluded from this chart.

Prefixes

Teaching Tip

- Two essential points for students to consider about prefixes:
 1. Their meaning: a prefix changes the meaning of the word it is added to.
 2. Their spelling: a prefix is always spelled the same way.

Word-Building Activities with Prefixes

Primary

Play a prefix game with the students: give clues to words that begin with a prefix; record answers as students suggest them. Then, review the words and circle the prefix in each word:

Prefix *bi-*: I am something with two wheels that you can ride. (bicycle)

Prefix *tri-*: I am a geometric shape with three sides. (triangle)

Prefix *sub-*: I am a ship that travels underwater. (submarine)

Prefix *un-*: I am the opposite of fortunately. (unfortunately)

Prefix *tele-*: TV is an abbreviation for the word. (television)

Prefix *trans-*: A bus, a car, a boat, a train are types of... (transportation).

Prefix *photo-*: This is a kind of picture I keep in a picture frame. (photograph)

Prefix *re-*: I do this to garbage to help save the environment. (reduce/reuse/recycle)

Junior/Intermediate

Provide lists of the common prefixes the students are likely to meet in their reading and writing. Students can work with one or two friends and discuss each of these prefixes, brainstorming other words that can be used as an example for each.

Prefix	Meaning	Example
auto-	self	autograph
extra-	outside	extraordinary
pre-	before	preview
re-	back, again	recycle, re-use
sub-	under	subtract
tele-	far	telescope
trans-	across	transport
un-	not	unknown

Groups can choose one of the prefixes and prepare a written list of words that use that prefix.

Extension

This can become a game, with each person (or team) listing words in a certain time limit. Students are encouraged to consider two-syllable, three-syllable, and multi-syllable words. Once the lists are, players score points for every syllable in the words they have listed.

- *Un-*, meaning “not,” is the most common prefix in the English language; it is used mostly for adjectives (*believable/unbelievable; aware/unaware*). By exploring this prefix, students will come to realize that *un-* means “not” and usually changes a word to its opposite meaning. Students can work in

pairs to play a prefix game. Each player in turn suggests a word that begins with the prefix *un-*. The game continues until a player is stumped and can't provide a word.

- Prefixes can often be used to write the opposite of a word. For example, by adding the prefix *ir-* to *regular*, the word made is *irregular*. Adding *un-* to *selfish* forms the word *unselfish*. Provide students with a list of words. They create the opposite of the words by choosing and adding the prefix *in-*, *un-*, *ir-*, or *im-*.

possible	equal	safe
accessible	movable	sure
accurate	possible	spell
available	read	true
do	replaceable	wind
edible	responsible	fantasy

Suffixes

Teaching Tips

- Informing students about the suffixes can prepare them to use ones that they are familiar with. Knowing part of a word leads students to spell words correctly. This applies to suffixes (and prefixes) because the spelling never changes.
- The suffixes *-ed* and *-ing* change the part of speech or tense. Words ending in *-ed* can be confusing, as they can make three different sounds: “t” sound (walked, missed), “d” sound (washed, climbed), or “ed” sound (lifted, wanted). All are spelled with *-ed*.

Word-Building Activities with Suffixes

Primary

Most adverbs end in *-ly*. Have students change the following adjectives to adverbs by adding the suffix *-ly*.

slow	strong	strong
quiet	careful	kind
soft	quick	happy
patient	loud	real

Junior/Intermediate

1. Students can explore prefixes and suffixes by connecting syllables to make new words. Have students choose one syllable from each column to create three-syllable words. Syllables can be used more than once.

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
ad	di	sion
com	ver	tion

con	van	tize
	nec	tage
	pen	ture
	fes	sate
	cus	
	clu	
	mis	
	ven	
	ces	

2. Have students solve the following word problems to spell a word correctly. Reminder: when the last sound in a word is a *y* by itself, it is changed to an *i* before adding a suffix.

Example: funny + er = funnier

silly + er =

employ + er =

steady + ing =

try + ed =

lucky + ly =

foolish + ly =

easy + ly =

wise + ly =

safest - est + er =

tasty + est =

hurried - ed + es =

lucky + ly =

unfortunately - ly =

Root Words

Teaching Tips

- A knowledge of roots can help students understand how words are built and therefore how to spell them. Breaking a word down into its component parts can help students to spell a word piece by piece.
- When we add prefixes and suffixes to roots we are building derivations. This can be a useful spelling strategy since, in most cases, the spelling of the root does not change. There are some exceptions; e.g., pronounce/ pronunciation (the *o* is omitted).
- When students are unsure about how to spell a word, suggest other words that are built from the same root. These patterns often give information that is not clear from looking at only one word.

Word-Building Activities with Root Words

Primary

Explain to students that root words can be built from one or more parts. A plural, prefix, suffix, or verb ending can be added to a root to form a new word

The word *spell* is a root word for other words: *speller*, *spelling*, *spelled*, *misspell*.

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Word by Word celebrates the power of words to help children become literate, effective, and compelling communicators.

This comprehensive guide explores key strategies for making words the core of classroom instruction and engagement. Based on the premise that knowing and using words is central to successful learning, this remarkable book shows you ways to ignite student interest in

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- seeing the humor in wordplay
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- enhancing their writing
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Lisa Juan

Larry Swartz has explored literature-based learning with students and teachers for forty years in North America, England, New Zealand, and China. As a classroom teacher, consultant, and instructor with OISE–University of Toronto, he has inspired colleagues and children alike to learn in new and exciting ways. Larry is a well-known course instructor, speaker, and workshop leader who has been involved in the creation of numerous books for teachers. Active in promoting the use of the best children’s books in classrooms, Larry earned the Reading for the Love of It “Heart Award of Recognition” and was honored as a reading champion by Scholastic Canada. Larryswartz.ca promotes active, joyful learning, including a monthly list of books that “Dr. Larry Recommends.”

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