

Word Chaining: A Simple Routine for Reading & Spelling



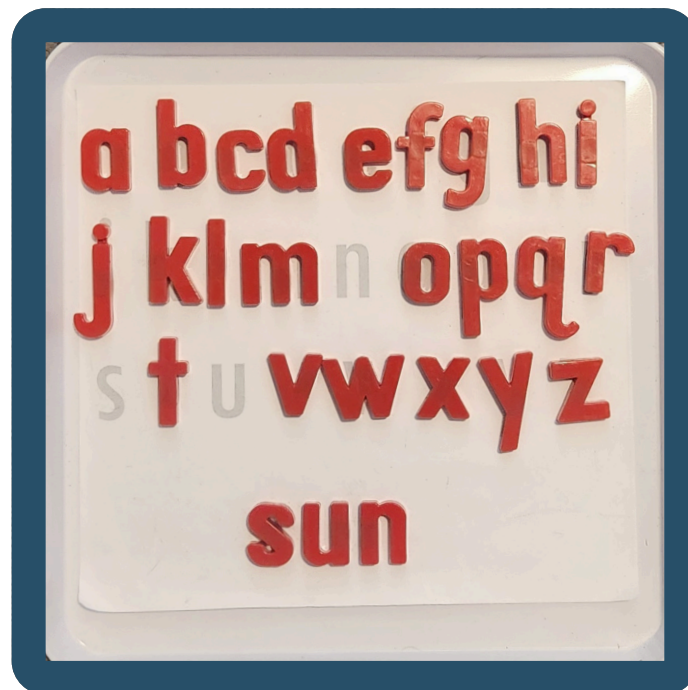
What is word chaining?

A word chain is a sequence of words where only one sound changes at a time. Students build, read, and change words, moving between encoding and decoding.

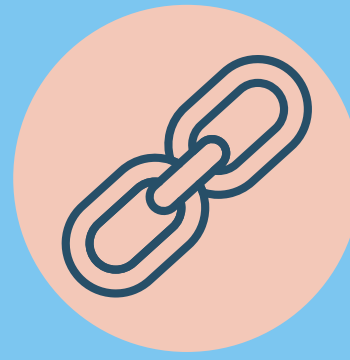


Why use word chaining?

Word chaining builds phonemic awareness and phonics together, giving students repeated practice with blending and segmenting. It also supports orthographic mapping in an efficient routine.

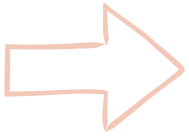


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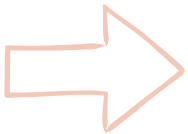
How to use word chaining

sun → fun → fan → man



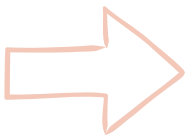
Step 1: Build the first word

Say the word: "sun." Students segment the sounds and build it with letters.



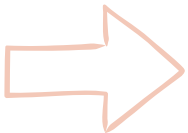
Step 2: Encoding (spelling)

Say the new word: "fun". Students identify which sound changed and replace the correct letter.



Step 3: Decoding (reading)

Tell students which sound or letter to change. They make the change and read the new word: "fan."



Step 4: Repeat

Continue changing one sound at a time, moving back and forth between encoding and decoding.

Learn more: Listen to our episode *Word Chaining for Building Phonemic Awareness with Anjanette McNeely* for a full classroom walkthrough of this routine.