

# Favorite Multisensory Tips and Tricks For Teaching Phonemic Awareness and Sounding Out Words

Presented By Heidi Butkus

email: [heidi@heidisongs.com](mailto:heidi@heidisongs.com)

**The International Dyslexia Association recommends multisensory teaching methods for children with learning disabilities, such as dyslexia.**

Multisensory teaching is *simultaneously* using multiple pathways in the brain to reach your students. Why is multisensory teaching important? If one pathway to the brain is blocked, (as in a learning disability) there are other alternatives or paths to take in information.



## Functional MRI's show us that:

The brain has millions of connections, or "wires," shooting out in many directions as we learn. Brain imaging of struggling readers show "diffused activity scattered throughout the brain,"\* since some of these connections work inefficiently or not at all. (Scattered activity is an inefficient use of brain power.)

However, good readers "use specific portions of the left brain, with brain activity highly focused in very specific areas."\* This is a very efficient use of brain power.

\*Quote from: Laurie Wagner: "School Support for Learning Disabled and ADD Learners."

**Multisensory learning experiences can actually remap the brain over time, training it to use the less preferred areas in future learning.**

When reading lessons are taught in a multisensory way, brain images show a more focused use of the left hemisphere. The brain scans of the struggling readers look more and more like the activity of good readers!

You really can help children change how they use the pathways in their brains!



Let's suppose that some of your lowest achievers actually do have a reading disability. (Only it won't be identified until later, so you're on your own.)



Once they are identified, they could someday qualify for special education services. Meanwhile, what can you do in the classroom to help? Use methods designed to reach these children, and you are likely to reach all of your children.



We may learn differently, but we can all learn together!



Children with these learning difficulties can be taught very efficiently using multi-sensory techniques. So here are some tricks that work for me!



One thing that I always try to do is bring movement into everything that I possibly can.

The brain is not a disconnected organ on legs. The brain relies on the body, its senses, and movement in order to learn. **Movement, and the application of what we have learned should be an ever present part of the learning process.**

Learning to sound out words happens as part of a progression of phonemic awareness skills. Without these skills, they probably won't be able to begin to sound out words in print.

### What is Phonemic Awareness?

It is the ability to manipulate and play with the sounds of language in skills such as rhyme, words that start with the same sounds, sound substitution and deletion, and taking words apart and breaking them into units of sound.

It is an auditory skill.

### Phonemic Awareness Progression of Skills

1. Blending parts of compound words  
(play + ground = playground)

2. Blending initial sound to rest  
of word in longer words  
(/m/ + arshmallow = marshmallow)

3. Blending initial sound to rimes in shorter words  
(/m/ + at = mat)

4. Blending 3 phonemes/sounds in context  
("I like to /r/ + /u/ + /n/" =  
"I like to run.")

5. Blending 3 phonemes  
(/b/ + /a/ + /t/ = bat)



### Phonemic Awareness is important because:



1. It's the single best predictor of reading ability in Kindergarten, followed by letter names and Kindergarten teacher predictions!

2. Learning to sound out words happens as part of a progression of phonemic awareness skills. Without these skills, they probably won't be able to begin to sound out words in print.



3. Without direct instructional support, phonemic awareness will elude about 25% of all middle class children and even more of those from less literacy rich backgrounds.

Phonemic awareness can be developed through instruction.

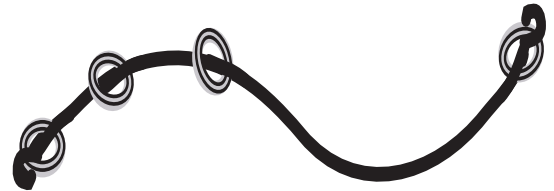
This subsequently accelerates children's reading and writing achievement. Multisensory systematic phonics and phonemic awareness instruction in Kindergarten and First Grade can help at-risk children avoid ever experiencing reading problems!

Here are some great ways to practice phonemic awareness without excluding your active learners.

## Here are some great ways to practice phonemic awareness!

To develop rhyme, try giving general directions by rhyming the names of children or groups that you are calling on. Example: say "Bonathan" rather than "Jonathan," or "bow boo" rather than "row 2," etc. The children then call out the word you are saying.

**Segmentation Sliders:** Kids slide one bead across the pipe cleaner for each sound they hear in a word. You can also have them say some sounds and blend them together to make a word. To make them, put three beads on a pipe cleaner (or more for words with more than three sounds), with two beads fastened on either end. These beads, called "Push Up Rings," can be purchased at [www.abcstuff.com](http://www.abcstuff.com).



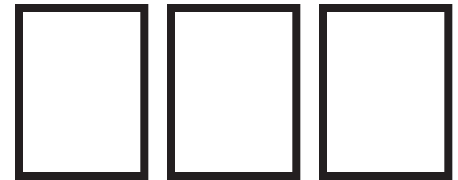
**Segmentation Sliders**

Try stretchy toys to practice segmenting and blending sounds.

Say a word, and then stretch out the toy as you segment the word. Let it snap back together and say the word again. I got my last set in the Target dollar section.

Try pushing manipulatives into "Elkonin Boxes" for each sound that you hear in a word.

Say a word, and then slide one magnet or button into each box for each sound that you hear. You can vary the activity by giving them different themed objects to push. You can download free masters at: [http://bogglesworldesl.com/elkonin\\_boxes.htm](http://bogglesworldesl.com/elkonin_boxes.htm)



**Elkonin Boxes**

Use commercially prepared phonemic awareness picture cards. There are lots of different types of cards available at [EarlyReadingMastery.com](http://EarlyReadingMastery.com). We like to use "Word Whackers" (a mini fly swatter) to smack the word that I segment. For example, the teacher says, "Smack /c/ /a/ /t/." The child swats the picture of the cat.

Sort real objects by beginning, ending, or middle sound.

The children sort the manipulatives by sound. Remember that once you add in letters to the sort, this became a phonics activity rather than a phonemic awareness activity.

The Alphabet Action Song can help children memorize words that start with a given letter. This song is on my CD, "Singable Songs for Letters and Sounds" and "Musical Math."

Provide a little motivation!

I keep a box of unusual **balls** at my feet next to the reading table. Each time I finish a phonemic awareness "task" with a group, I roll a ball to each of the children that were trying their best. Those that were "just sitting there," not responding, don't get one. They play with it for one minute, and then throw it back into my box on the count of three. This works like a charm! I also have a box of **wind-up toys** that they can play with for one minute. (Winding these toys is also good for developing the pincher grasp needed to hold a pencil properly.) I also have a **tennis ball puppet** named "Mr. Ball" that they can feed pennies. They LOVE Mr. Ball!

Use Puppets!

Try giving directions for transitions (especially highly predictable ones, like lunch and recess) by segmenting a word. The kids should then guess what you said. Ex.: "It's time for /l/ /u/ /n/ /ch/."

One puppet can speak only in segments:

Teacher: "What's your name?"

Puppet: "/b/ /o/ /b/."

Teacher: "How old are you?"

Puppet: "/s/ /i/ /x/."

Teacher: "Who is your teacher?"

Puppet: "/y/ /oo/."

Another puppet might always put a certain letter sound in front of every word.

Teacher: "What's your favorite food?"

Puppet: "Maghetti."

Teacher: "What is your favorite color?"

Puppet: "Murple."

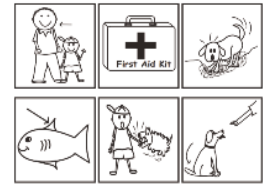
Teacher: "How old are you?"

Puppet: "Mix."

Try giving directions for transitions (especially highly predictable ones, like lunch and recess) by segmenting a word. The kids should then guess what you said.

Ex. "It's time for /l/ /u/ /n/ /ch/."

Play sound blending bingo. We practiced blending sounds by using a bingo game with pictures from CVC word families. Instead of calling out "big," you say, "/b/ ig" or "/k/ it."



Elicit a physical response with whatever program you're using.

Ex: "Jump up and down if it rhymes. Stand on one foot if it doesn't." See the next page for lots of examples!

(The book in the on screen example is called Phonemic Awareness: The Skills They Need to Succeed by Michael Heggerty, Ed.D.) This program is well put together and easy to follow.

The book Sounds in Action by Yvette Zgonc (published by Crystal Springs Books) has a wealth of wonderful phonemic awareness activities.

### The Rhyme Song

Rhyming words,  
They sound the same in the middle  
And at the end, end, end!  
They sound the same in the middle  
And at the end, end, end!

Boat, boat. Boat rhymes with goat!  
Boat, goat, boat, goat!  
House, house. House rhymes with mouse!  
House, mouse, house, mouse!

(Repeat this pattern  
with the following words:)  
Whale/tail, cat/bat, rug/bug,  
nest/ vest, mop/top, fan/can.

Rhyming words,  
They sound the same in the middle  
And at the end. The end!

## Songs for Phonemic Awareness



### Brother Starts the Same as Bop

(To teach words that begin the same)

Brother starts the same as bop!  
Bop bop, brother brother, bop!  
Bop bop, brother brother, bop!  
Bop bop, brother brother,  
Bop, bop, bop!

(Repeat with sister/stop, and  
mommy/mop.)

These songs are all on  
the CD,  
"Little Songs For  
Language Arts"  
by HeidiSongs.

### Syllable Counting

Syllables, syllables,  
Let's all count the parts of  
words!

Syllables, syllables,  
Clap and count with me!

### Sound It Out

(To practice blending sounds into words)

How do you sound it out,  
How do you sound it out?  
Say all the sounds and then you drag 'em  
out!  
/r/, /u/, /n/,  
/rrrrrr/, /uuuuuu/, /nnnnnn/.  
Run! Run! Run, run, run!

Repeat this pattern with:  
Jump, swim, fly.



### Touchdown Without Touch

(Syllable Deletion)

Touchdown without touch is down!  
Touchdown without touch is down!  
Touch, touch, touch!  
Down, down, down!  
Touchdown without touch is down!

(Repeat with football without foot, underpants  
without under, and tiptoe without tip.)

# Elicit a Physical Response: Get 'Em Moving!

Example: "If these words rhyme, then..... If they don't, then...."

"If these words start the same, then..... If they don't then...."

If these words end with a /t/, then.... If they end with an /m/, then...."

Chug like a train!



Pretend to brush your teeth.



Mop the floor!



Clap!



Pretend You're a Dinosaur!



Walk like a monster!



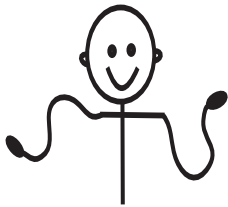
Flap your wings!



Pat the Floor!



Swim like an octopus!



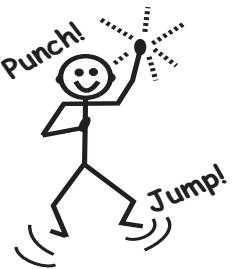
Gallop like a horse!



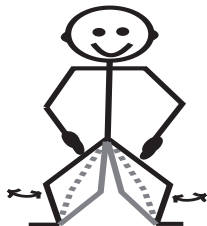
Jump and Cheer!



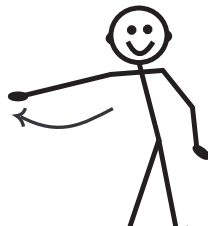
Punch!



Wiggle your knees!



Karate chop!



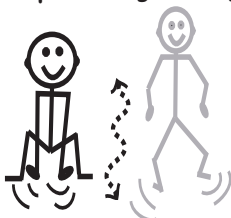
Kick!



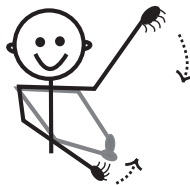
Pretend you're a monkey!



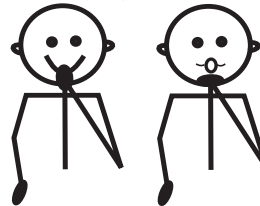
Jump like a grasshopper!



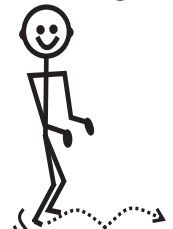
Chomp like an alligator!



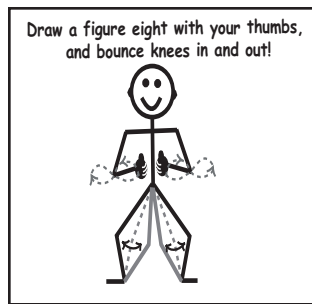
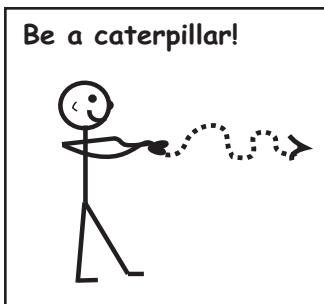
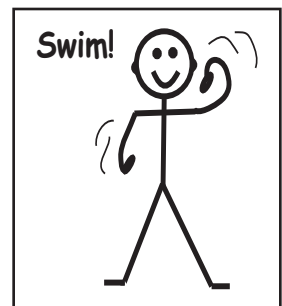
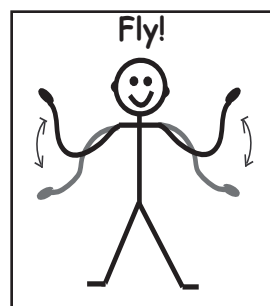
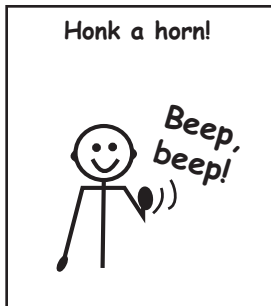
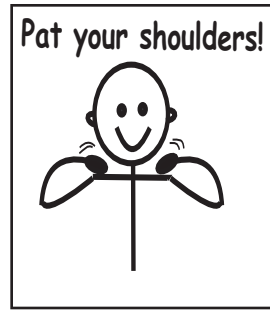
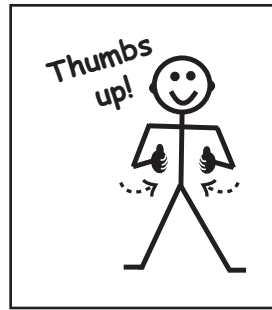
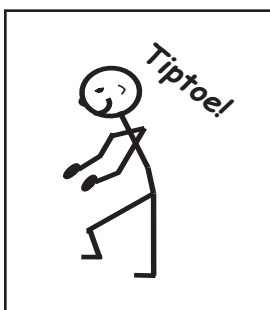
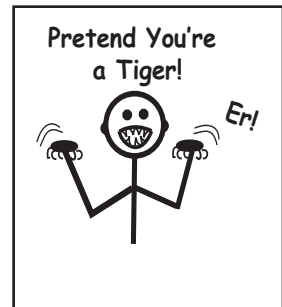
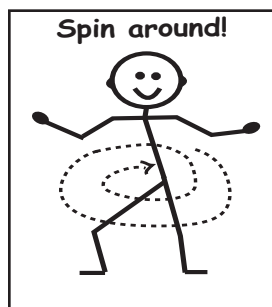
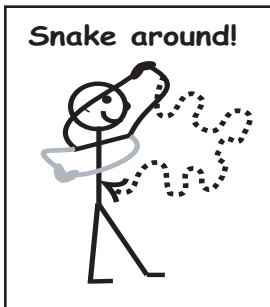
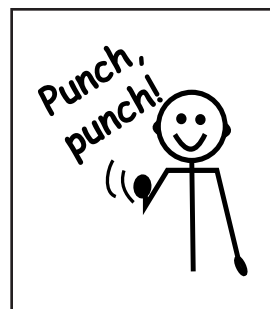
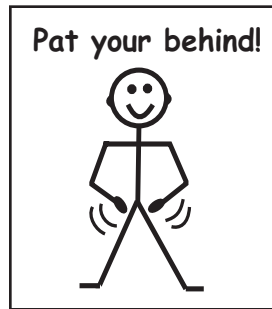
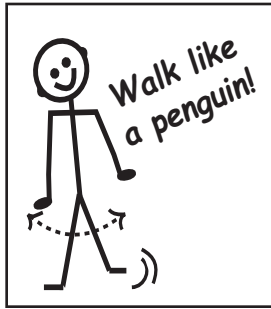
Blow a kiss!



Hop like a kangaroo!



# Elicit a Physical Response: Get 'Em Moving!



# Transferring Phonemic Awareness Skills to Sounding Out Words in Print

To get started, show them the letters. Point to them as you say the sounds, and then blend them slowly. Start with just two sounds.

Examples: /mmmm/ /aaaaa/ ..... "ma!" /sssssss/ /aaaaa/ ..... "sa!"

Add in a third sound when most children are getting the first two.

These are the easiest consonant sounds to start with because they can be drawn out:

f, l, m, n, r, s, v, z

## Sounding Out Words Using Zoo-Phonics

1. Lay out the cards to form a word.

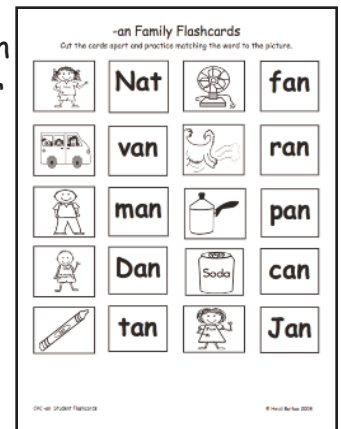
Have the children do the motion and make the sound for each letter as you point.

## Sounding Out Words Using Picture Matching from HeidiSongs CVC Word Families and Sight Word Book

When I introduce a word family, I always start by introducing the flash cards for them first. We learn the to match the words to the pictures, and then practice sounding out the words. After I introduce the words, we practice sorting the words into families. Then I send a set of flashcards home for parents to practice with their children at home.



When teaching kids to read CVC words, remember that often children must be taught the vocabulary of the words on the worksheet and/or flashcards. They won't always know the words.

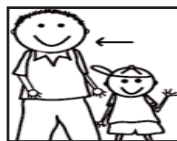


cat

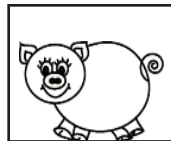


bit

-ig



(big)

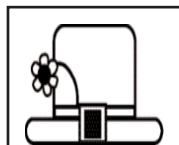


(pig)



(dig)

-at



(hat)



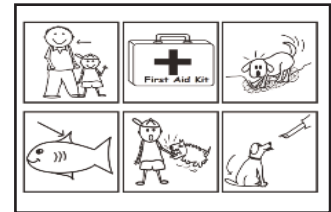
(mat)



(sat)

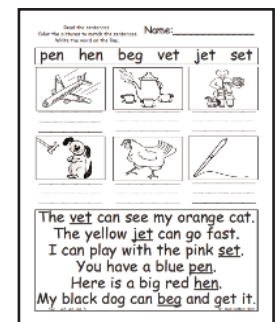
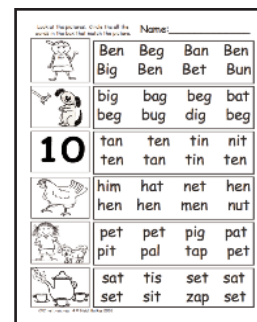
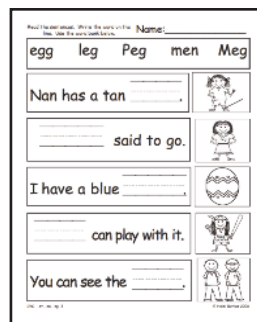
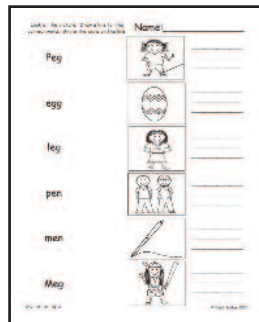
Once they know the pictures and vocabulary, we play bingo by holding up word cards and having them read the word together, and then look for its picture.

There's a bingo game for sound deletion on the CVC Resource CD, also.



Short I Bingo

Note: The bingo games are ONLY on the CVC Resource CD, not in the book with the worksheets. There wasn't room for everything in there!



I like to have kids practice matching the words and pictures together for about a week before they do it on a worksheet.

Practicing "encoding" these sounds (also called writing!) is important. And if kids are going to be able to write phonetically, then they will need access to many more sounds than just the 26 common ones we usually teach.

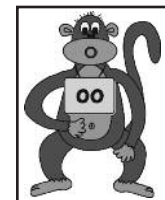
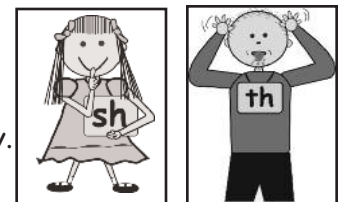
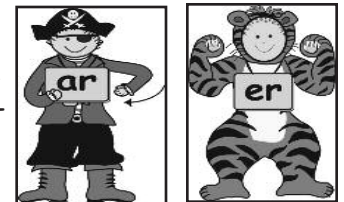
## Sounds Fun!

This is a system that I created to teach and practice letter combinations such as diphthongs and digraphs in a fun and active way that kids would love- and remember! It works a lot like Zoo-Phonics.

1. Show a flash card with a visual cue.
2. Kids respond physically and verbally.
3. Remove the visual cue and practice as before.

After working with them on it for about a month, I removed the character to see how they would do. More than half of the class had memorized them easily.

I also gave them practice reading words that fell into that word family group. We did the motions while sounding them out.



Sing Along Songs That Teach!

Contact information: Heidi Butkus  
email: heidi@heidisongs.com  
P.O. Box 603  
La Verne, CA 91750  
www.heidisongs.com