

How teaching students (r4) to “mark-up” words improves their spelling. by Mark Hansen



To be a good speller a child needs to become aware of the structure of words and the rules that determine their spelling.

In the 70's and 80's the proponents of the whole language approach to reading argued that students, as they read, only cursorily sample the graphic information in a word and then use context to predict the words meaning, but research since this time has overturned this hypothesis and demonstrated that proficient readers do in fact look at every letter in a word to determine its identity. Therefore, teaching students a methodology for closely looking at the structure of words so they can analyse the relationship between its pronunciation, orthography and origins can empower them to become both better readers and spellers.

When discussing words with students the use of shared language and processes for displaying information supports their learning. The following guide to marking up words is a suggestion for how we could jointly teach students to analyse words using the [Spalding](#) method.

The ideas in this paper link to 5 key elements in TfEL which we strive to achieve as quality teachers. These elements are:

Teaching students how to learn;

developing students understanding of learning and expanding their strategies for thinking, learning and working collaboratively

Building on learners' understandings;

identifying students' prior knowledge as a starting point for curriculum

Building a community of learners;

by creating a culture where everyone inspires and encourages each other's learning

Fostering deep understanding and skilful action;

by helping students build rich conceptual knowledge and mastery of complex skills

Promoting dialogue as a means of learning;

providing opportunities for students to learn through interaction and learning conversation with others.

Supporting student's learning by 'marking up' words.

These ideas are based on the Spalding marking system.

1. It all starts in reception.

- We use the terms letters, sounds and phonograms simultaneously. Students are in all probability familiar with the terms 'letters' and 'sounds'. The term phonograms is introduced because it is a generic term that represents both individual letters, digraphs and trigraphs etc. When we ask "What's this phonogram?" while showing the student the 'au' pattern we want them to respond by saying the sound "or" not the name of the two letters 'A' and 'U.'
- Students will firstly be introduced to lower case letters, and the range of sounds they represent, while at the same time being taught to write them on lines with correct starting points and formation.
- They will be taught multiple sounds for phonograms e.g. 'a' is said as " a, A, ar " **These differing sounds are said in the specific order of frequency of which they are found in words.**
- Rather than referring to letters by their names they are referred to, as often as possible, by their sounds. This is done to reinforce the sounds they represent. Hence 'C' is referred to as 'k, s.'
- As single phonograms are learnt students are asked to encode and decode simple words formed from them.
e.g. after they learn the letters "a, m, d, s, t" they write **mad, sat, mat, sad,**
- Students also learn to recognise and write common 2 and 3 letter phonograms e.g. ch ck sh oo igh er ur etc.
- Students undertake daily:
 - **oral phonogram reviews** to reinforce the learning of letter sounds to the point of automaticity. They will be shown flash cards and asked to say the sound or multiple sounds for each letter presented.
 - **written phonogram reviews** to learn to write the letters matched to the sounds they are told. E.g when told, " write K, S" the child writes "C".



Marking up Step 1 – Highlighting multiple letter phonograms

As students learn multiple letter phonograms they are encouraged to underline them in their writing.

The teacher models this skill by also underlining multiple letter phonograms in their own writing to reinforce the multi-letter phonograms' visual patterns.

When labels posters and displays around the room are also 'marked up' students more quickly come to recognise common 2 letter phonogram (digraph) patterns.

Please remember that you must put away books and equipment.

Marking up Step 2

Indicating which sound a particular phonogram represents by writing a number above it.

Students are taught multiple sounds for each vowel and many digraphs. To visually show which sound is being represented in a particular word, they are taught how to underline and mark some phonograms with numbers.

Follow these rules:

1. Single phonograms are not marked with underlining or numbers unless you want to indicate a sound other than their first is being used.

This is particularly true of the vowels.

First sound	Second sound	Third sound
No underlining or numbers. fan The 'a' has a short sound.	² table ₄ The 'a' has a long sound. This is its second sound	³ bath The 'a' has an 'ar' sound. This is its third sound

2. All multi letter phonograms are underlined.

If the phonogram has two, three or more sounds then the sound being used in a word can be indicated by putting a number above it to show which sound is spoken.

First sound used	Second sound used	Third sound used
Underlined but no number. <u>ch</u>ip	² <u>ch</u>emist	³ <u>ch</u>ef

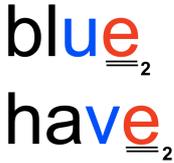
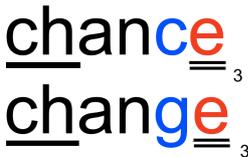
Marking up Step 3 – Indicating the “Jobs of e.”

As soon as students begin to read they come across a range of spelling conventions linked to the use of the letter “e” at the end of a word. The most common use of “e” is to act as a modifier of a single vowel followed by a single consonant e.g. win to wine, cub to cube.

Teachers often tell students that this split digraph is a ‘MAGIC E’ and are taught to pronounce the related vowel with a long sound, but usually they are not taught the other 4 ‘jobs’ the ‘e’ performs when it is placed on the end of a word.

The Spalding Method makes clear to students the ‘5 Jobs of E’. Teaching students these “5 jobs” supports them both as readers and spellers and although it may seem a little complicated at first teachers who make continual reference to these rules soon find they are understood by students especially when the reminder posters are displayed in the room.

The Spalding marking system uses double lines to call attention to some specific elements of a word. For Job 1 the last three letters just have a line put under each letter. For the other ‘Jobs the E’ has a double line placed under it and the number of the ‘job’ that is being carried out written next to it

JOB	Rule	marking process
Job 1 “magic e”	Making a single vowel that is followed by a single consonant, say its second sound (long sound).	 <p>individually underline the 3 letters involved or put a curved line from the ‘e’ to the vowel</p>
Job 2	Stopping an English word ending in v, or u	 <p>Put a double line under the ‘e’ and write the number 2 next to it.</p>
Job 3	Making a “c” or a “g”, at the end of a word, say its second sound. (soft sound)	 <p>Put a double line under the ‘e’ and write the number 3 next to it.</p>
Job 4	Giving a syllable a vowel. Every syllable needs a vowel so an “e” is often added to a final syllable when it needs one.	 <p>put a double line under the ‘e’ and write the number 4 next to it.</p>
Job 5 No job “e”	The “e” on the end of some words isn’t really needed. It might be there to give the word a certain look or to show how the word was said long ago.	 <p>Put a double line under the ‘e’ and write the number 5 next to it.</p>

See the poster in appendix 1.

Marking up Step 4

Indicating syllables.

To demonstrate syllabification words can be written with a diagonal slash or dashed mark between them e.g (to / geth / er) or. (to - geth - er)

The slash is probably a better option as it is more easily inserted into words as they are analysed rather than having to write the dash as you go.

Double letters are usually split (rab / bit & sum / mer) to show the single vowel is not coming at the end of a syllable and so is making its short sound. This method of handling double letters is the most common one used.

However some programs use a different method to show the vowel sound is not coming at the end of the syllable and they split the word into syllables after the double letter e.g. (rabb / it & summ/ er).

By holding their chin, as they say a word, students can count the syllables within it since their jaw drops with each syllable spoken.

Marking up Step 5

Making students sensitive to the convention that the single vowels A, E, I, O, U, usually make their second sound (names / long sound) at the end of a syllable.

Spalding has a list of spelling rules and the fourth of these rules relates to how single vowels are pronounced at the end of a syllable.

1. The letter q is always followed by u. The u is not considered a vowel here.
2. The letter c before e, i, or y says /s/ (cent, city, cycle), but followed by any other letter says /k/ (cat, cot, cut).
3. The letter g before e, i, or y may say /j/ (page, giant, gym), but followed by any other letters says /g/ (gate, go, gust). The letters e and i following g do not always make the g say /j/ (get, girl, give).

- | |
|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">4. Vowels a, e, o, and u usually say their names/long sounds (a, e, o, u) at the end of a syllable (na / ture, me, o / pen, mu / sic). (These are referred to as open syllables.) This rule helps students know how to divide unfamiliar vowel-consonant-vowel words and then pronounce the word correctly. (re /port...rather than rep / ort) |
|--|

When students break a word into syllables, and a single vowel comes at the end of a syllable, they are asked to write (r4) in brackets after the word, to show that they are aware of the rule.
e.g.

na / ture (r4) na / vy (r4) ro / bot (r4) me (r4)

Marking up Step 6

Indicating blends, onsets or rimes.

To prevent confusion between phonograms and blends and word families when marking words we will put circles or rectangles around blends and word families.

This is how a phonogram is indicated.....

black

To indicate a word family we will box it.....

black

To indicate a blend we will also box it.....

black

Marking up Step 7

Highlighting irregular spellings.

Double lines can be used to highlight letters and letter groups in words that do not comply with major spelling patterns. This way students can see what part of a word follows the usual conventions and what parts do not.

³
laugh here the a makes its third sound 'ar' and the ugh represents 'f'

^{1 3}
machine₅ the 'a' makes a short sound and the 'i' represents an 'ee' sound

peo ple₃ ('eo' is an unusual phonogram. Students can be reminded that when two vowels are together they usually represent the first letter's long sound)

Marking up Step 8

Rule 17: the letters 'l', 's' and 'f' are usually doubled when they come at the end of a one syllable word and follow a single vowel.

At the end of the word students are asked to write (r17) in brackets to show that they are aware of the rule. e.g.

mess (r17) toss (r17) dull (r17) bell (r17) off (r17)

Putting it all together.

Whenever words are discussed with individuals, small groups or the whole class words can be marked up using the Spalding procedures.

A list of the 1000 most common words and how they are marked is available to teachers so they can check that the markings students and teachers decide on are correct.

The discussions that occur as joint decisions are made about how to mark a word leads to higher order thinking and a deep analysis of the structure of the words.

When words are pretested to check for spelling knowledge, students can be asked to 'mark up' words to show their syllable structure and what phonograms make them up.

Marking words to support reading.

The object of these procedures is not to derive meaning from a text (as you'll be stopping the flow of reading too often) or to enjoy a story (if you want to do that just read another text) it's to find words a student has difficulty with and by analysing and 'marking them up' help them to develop better word attack skills.

We ultimately want the child to become automatic and rapid in their response to letter patterns and able to decode words quickly.

The child needs to know the purpose of the exercise.

Telling the student the purpose of the exercise is an important Metacognitive activity. Metacognition is 'thinking about thinking' and ensuring that the student knows the purpose of the task being undertaken and how it can support their thinking, when they come across unknown words, makes the whole process more empowering and effective.

1. SAY "We are going to read this difficult book and identify what words are tricky for you. We will then talk about ways of tackling them."
2. Give the child a book that is at their instructional level (slightly beyond their present reading level but contains vocabulary with which they are familiar).

3. Ask them to begin reading.

4. When they come across a word they cannot decode stop and spend time on analysing it.

e.g. "The boy did not **know** he had left his lunch at home."

The child stops when they get to 'know' and after staring at it for a while they finally say 'care.'

e.g. "The boy did not **care** he had left his lunch at home." Stop here and:

- a. Write the word out on a piece of paper. In this case the word 'know.'

If the word has multiple syllables, then before you write it out, ask the child to identify these syllables by holding their jaw and counting the 'drops' as they say it. Then write the word leaving a space between each syllable e.g. like this (Mon day, re turn ing, fam i ly).

- b. Ask the child to identify double or multi phonograms* in the word and underline them. In this case they should do this kn ow. (Mon day, re turn ing)

- If they can't identify the double phonograms simply tell them what they are and then have them do the underlining.
- The phonogram may have more than one sound e.g. 'ow' 'ch', 'ou', Find out by (using the phonogram flash cards) which sound is represented in the word and whether it's the phonograms 1st 2nd 3rd etc. Place the number above the phonogram to indicate its sound value if it's anything other than the first sound.

2

In this example the marking would look like this kn ow

5. Have them sound out the word phonogram, by phonogram kn ow
6. Write out some other words with similar phonogram patterns to that which caused them confusion e.g. if the 'kn' was the problem you'd write: knowing, knot, knife, knowledge. While if 'ow' was the problem you'd write: snow, tow, flow, mow.
7. Record the original word on a list to revise on a regular basis. You may also want to add some of the other example words you gave them. Students need multiple exposures to commit new words to their long term memory..
8. Read on to the next problem word.

Improving a child's Reading and Spelling by 'marking up' words.

Introduction for caregivers

Often a child with reading difficulties, in the early primary years, can read simpler texts and display a fairly good knowledge of common sight words. Their writing might also show they can predominately use simple phonetic information to attempt to spell words correctly. When spelling unknown words they might be able to come up with reasonably phonically correct alternatives, e.g. snale for snail - orthu for author.

However they stumble as a reader when confronted by more complex words, which they do not know by 'sight', and where decoding requires them to recognise less common spelling patterns or analyse multiple syllables.

Learning a range of phonogram to the point of automaticity is one of the best ways to assist them to work out unknown words. Then by using their knowledge of phonograms and spelling rules to analyse and 'mark up' words they can improve their ability to memorise.

A lot of what we do in English, when we write and read, occurs at the unconscious level.

Often we know when to put an 'e' on the end of a word or double a letter when adding an 'ing' but often we aren't actually able to articulate why. It's just something we have picked up over time and from experience. This can make it difficult however, when we are trying to help kids, because often although we can tell them **what** to do we may not be able to tell them **why** they should do it.

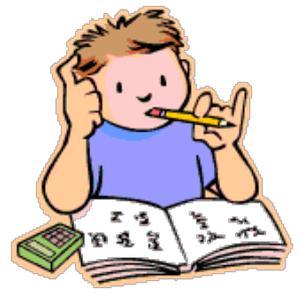
This paper explains some of the basic principles around analysing words but there are always exceptions.

If you would like to help your child at home just follow these general rules.

1. Read with them each day
2. Take the role of coach and jointly work at actively finding out more about the words they stumble over.
3. Mark words up together to see how they work
4. Keep a record of new words they learn
5. Go back over and revisit these words regularly – every few days
6. Record and celebrate their improvements.
7. If they have brothers or sisters get them to work with their siblings as a team with a joint reward for achievement. 'If you girls can teach each other these ten phonograms you'll each get an ice-cream'.
8. If your child doesn't enjoy receiving assistance don't push the point. Kids who are upset don't learn effectively – distress actually prevents learning. If this is the case you need to win their active participation in learning before starting to help them. Your child's teacher can help with advice for doing this.

Words I have learned

Write the words out once normally and next to them show how they can be 'marked up'. Practice reading the words on a regular basis. Have someone test you on their spelling.



	Word	Marking
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	Word	Marking
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Phonograms and Associated Hints. 42 most common double or triple phonograms.

sh	sh - a snake is outside the house so be quiet so it doesn't come in. Action: finger up to lips and say 'sh'
ti	Tall letter sh as in <u>st</u> ation
th	th – th – “thanks” - soft/hard (thin & they)
ck	two letter ck – (always comes after a single vowel - ack, eck, ick, ock, uck) Only give this rule as an extra bit of info after going through the oral phonogram process
wh	Action: Hold palm up to lips so that they can feel their breath as they say in a breathy manner
ar	ar as in car Action: driving a car swerving around corner and saying <u>arrrrrr</u>
ee	double letter ee
ay	ay as in play – usually at the end of a base word. Action: Hands down the slippery slide
oa	oa as in boat Action: make waves with your hand
oo 2 sounds	oo – OO zoo – look Action: hands up to eyes as if using binoculars
ch 3 sounds	ch / k / sh – Action: arms move around like the drive rods of a train and saying sounds. (chin, school, chef)
ed 3 sounds	ed - d - t Action – make a fist, hand outstretched palm down, open hand vertical. “bed, pushed, jumped”
ph	Two letter ph - as in phone Action: finger up to ear as if on the phone
ear	ear - as in early – Action: yawn stretch
wr	wr – two letter ‘r’ as in write Action: pretend to write in the air
aw	aw - as in jaw Action: holding the jaw – story of the little fish being chased by the shark.
ur	ur - as in nurse – Action: lifting medicine out of a bowl.
er	er - as in her Action: make out you're rocking a pram as <u>her</u> baby cries.
ow 2 sounds	'ow' 'Oh'- how, low Action: wiggling hands move down near floor – little worm getting low to avoid a lawnmower.
ai	ai - 'never at the end of a word' or “as in paint” Action – paint up and down
oi	oi – ‘never at the end of a word’ – (as in point) Action: wiggle finger as we do when saying no. Harry Potter with a wand.
oy	oy - as in boy with a toy. Do a yo yo motion
or	or – ordinary “or” and ordinary ape – arm up as if swinging in tree.
au	au – as in autumn Action -do their hand spinning around in a bowl and then jumping out as they say “au” Story - A little fish “a” called autumn jumps out of his fish bowl “U” when fed too much food by a naughty child.

ci	Small letter sh as in <u>sp</u> cial
eigh	A – four letter A. (as in the word number eight)
igh	I – ‘3 letter I’ (as in sigh) Action – sigh
ir	ir - as in first Action” put outstretched arm out – story – two runners in a race. The first put out his arm to cross them line first and win.
ou 4 sounds	ou, o, oo, u. Action – hold bottom Story about a person who had a barbeque and sat on it (ou as in round, ‘o’ as in soul, ‘oo’ as in you, and ‘u’ as in country.)
a 3 sounds	ee, e, ay ea as in eat – action – pretend to eat, ea as in head – touch your head, ea as in break – pretend to break something
oe	oe – ‘oe as in toe’ – point to toe
kn	kn – two letter n (as in knot) Action – tie a knot
ui 2 sounds	oo, U – Action: waving Story - One day a banana jumped out of a fruit bowl to go buy a suit . “ U” is the bowl “i” is the banana (fruit, suit)
y 4 sounds	y, ee, I, i - lassoing something and acting like a cowpoke. Yes, mummy, sky, gym
dge	dge – three letter “j” edge
ey 2 sounds	‘ay’ ‘ee’ Story this is “ay’s twin brother they look almost the same and when we first see him we say “ay” then change to “ee” Action: Squint as you look at the phonogram because he is hard to recognise. (they, key)
ei 3 sounds	“ee” “a” “i” Point to the ‘e’ and say “ee” Then point out that if the you can imagine the ‘e’ and ‘i’ were pushed together they would look like an “A.” so say “A” Then point to the ‘i’ and say “i” (receive, veil , forfeit)
ie 3 sounds	“ee” “i” “j” Say this one in reverse order – fiend, pie, lilies
ough 6 sounds	Harry Potter orders soup in a restaurant with his owl sitting on his shoulder. The waiter spills hot soup onto his hand and shirt cuff. He is shocked and says ‘oh’ his owl says ‘oo’ he looks at his cuff and is so angry he can’t talk so he point to his cuff and just says ‘uff’ he then points at the waiter and says ‘off’ then in an angry tone he shakes his finger and says ‘or’ then he points at his shoulder and says ‘ow’ because he will have the owl attack the waiter and it will hurt and he’ll be saying “ow”. Tell the story and act it out with the hand movements and lots of expression. ‘oh’ - ‘oo’ - ‘uff’ - ‘off’ - ‘or’ - ‘ow’ though - through - enough - trough - thought - bough
ng	Hold bridge of nose as you say ‘ng as it is a nasal sound “as in sing”
ew 2 sounds	“ew” “U” grew - new I grew a new shoot says the seed. The e looks like a seed and the w like water about to flow onto it and start if growing.
wor	When a ‘w’ comes before ‘or’ – ‘or’ is pronounced as ‘er’ as in ‘work’.

Sentence to learn all the ‘er’ phonograms

Her first nurse works early.

Single Phonograms: with hints.

a	a (apple) A (baby) ar (can't) Act out worm (finger) coming out of an apple.
c	k (cup) s (when c is followed by e , i , y, eg circle) Action: Say "K" lift hand to drink and make a "SSS" sound for hot coffee
d	d (dinosaur) Scary - put up hands like claws, stomp feet and say d,d,d,d, dinosaur
f	f (fish) Action: Pulling in fish saying "f" sound
g	g,j - g (goat) j (when g is followed by e , i , y , (gym, gem, ginger) Say gj,gj,gj – acting out a butting goat
o	o (octopus) O (open) oo (do) Action: Children put their hand in a hole they make with their arm and look puzzled as they feel around and say o, Oh, oo! as they feel the octopus and pull their hand out
s	s (snake) z (is) Action: wiggle hand like as snake and fall asleep with head on hand. Sleepy snake
qu	kw (queen) wave like the queen
b	b (bat) bat and ball. Action:Draw a "b" in the air.
e	e (elephant) E (me) Action: elephants are scared of mice and go 'e' "eeeeeeee" when they see one. lift arm like a trunk
h	h (house) no hint needed – could wave arm like smoke from a chimmney
i	i l - Action: shake pen & get ink in the eye. i (ink) l (i usually says l at the end of a syllable eg silent)
j	j (jump) jump and kick up legs
k	k (kick) kicking K
l	l (lizard) Action: shoot hand out as the lizard darts away
m	m (mouse) – look at its ears – rub tummy say 'mm' like a mouse thinking about cheese
n	n (Ned by the net)
p	p (pelican) Draw his long neck and his head Action: flap arms

r	r (robber) reaching for money.
t	t (tap) - stand up and with arms forming a T move them back and forward saying – t,t,t,t like a sprinkler starting when tap turned on
u	u (umbrella) U (music) oo (put) Haven't got a hint – Just learn as a rhyme
v	v (vampire) fangs - fingers forming v shape
w	w (wiggly worm)- wiggle hand
x	Box Slash the air in an X shape
y <small>problem sound as we say E in Australia</small>	y <u>consonant</u> used usually at the beginning of a syllable - as a <u>vowel</u> E - daddy or l (my, type) or i (gym, Flynn) Hint - Cowboy waving lasso over head saying Y, E, l i)
z	z (zebra) Paint the stripes in a Z shape in the air

Undertaking Oral and Written Phonogram Reviews

Oral Phonogram Reviews.

Purpose: for students to automatically say the most common single or multiple sounds a phonogram represents upon seeing it.

The process:

Before you begin tell the students they are going to do an oral phonogram review.

Then say “Why do we do an oral phonogram review?” They should all reply by saying, “To get better at our reading.”

Next simply show the student the phonogram flash card one at a time and have them say the sounds it represents.

This should be a rapid process. **ALL** students should respond. Do not let anyone fail to participate because they need to engage to develop automaticity.

Initially all children should do the actions.

The hints should not be said in the first reading as the review should be rapid.

The hints can be said after the initial rapid oral review is completed.

The teacher needs to watch the students during this process so they can sort the phonogram cards into two piles. One pile being for those phonograms that all students identified instantly and the other for phonograms that need further practice. On the second and subsequent reviews over the day a focus is then placed on those phonograms that students are not yet automatic at recognising.

Written Phonogram Reviews.

The process:

Purpose: for students to automatically write a phonogram when told its sound along with any necessary identification hint. For a child to write ‘ai’ the teacher says “Write ‘A’ never at the end of a word.” Usually you will only do about 10 -15 phonograms so the process is short and focussed

The process:

Before you begin tell the students they are going to do a written phonogram review.

Then say “Why do we do a written phonogram review?” They should all reply by saying, “To get better at our spelling.”

Next read out the single or multiple sounds a phonogram makes and or provide the accompanying recognition hint.

For example for ‘O’ the teacher says “ o O oo” (Its three sounds)

While or ‘oi’ The teacher says “Write ‘oi’ as in point – never at the end of a word”

The students repeat what the teacher has said and then write the phonogram they think represents the sound/s.

The teacher waits till everyone has written their answer before they either:

- immediately reveal the phonogram card so the students see if they identified the correct one or
- read the next sound out (and mark them after the whole list has been given)

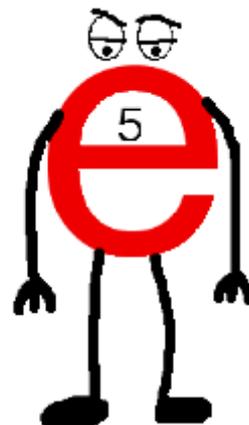
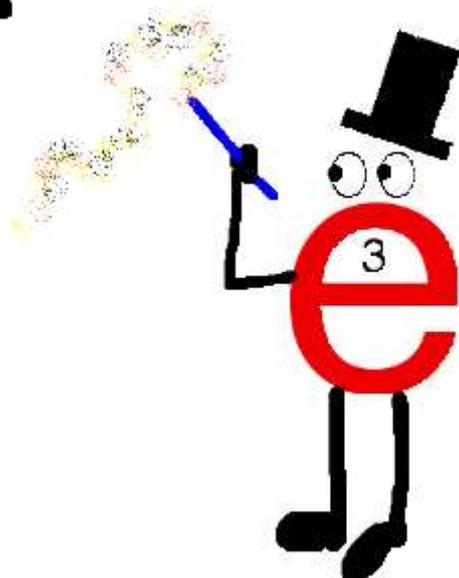
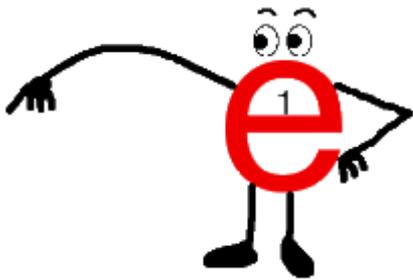
Students mark their own work and when they find that they have incorrectly written a phonogram they indicate this to the teacher and the teacher gives them an immediate opportunity to hear the sound and hint again so the student has a second opportunity to write the phonogram correctly.

Students need to approach these tasks with a Growth Mindset and understand the importance of honest self-review and practice.

The 5 Jobs of

“ ”

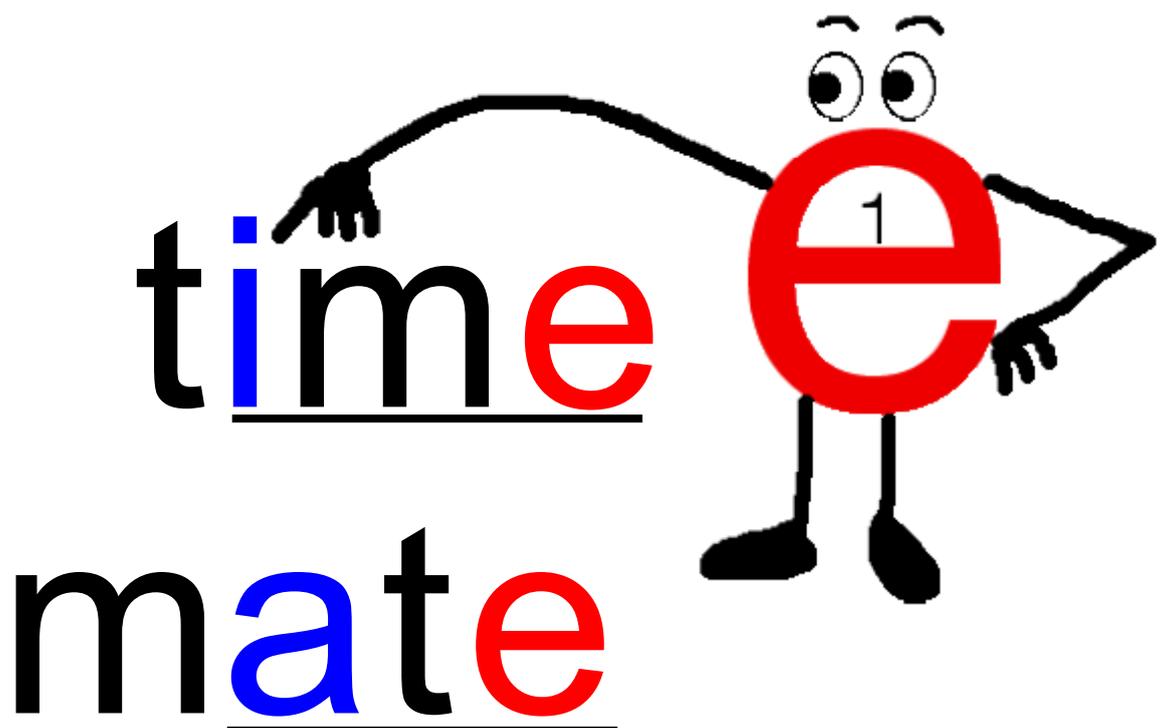
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Job 1.

Making a single vowel
that is followed by a
single consonant, say
its second sound.

(its long sound / name)



Job 2.

Stopping an
English word
ending in
v, or u.



bluee₂

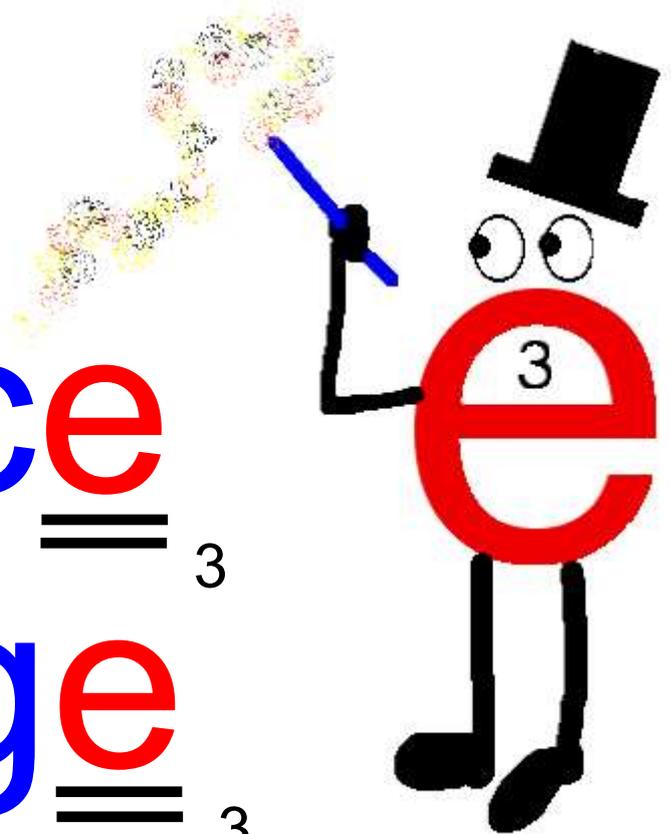
havee₂

Job 3.

Making a “c” or a “g”,
at the end of a word,
say its second sound.

chance ce ₃

change ge ₃



Job 4.

Giving a syllable a vowel.

Every syllable needs a vowel so an “e” is often added to a final syllable when it needs one.

lit-tle₄

puz-zle₄

ket-tle₄

rid-dle₄



Job 5.

No job “e”

The “e” on the end of some words isn’t really needed.

It might be there to give the word a certain look or to show how the word was said long ago.

come₅

house₅

