

Learning together

Complex Consonant Spellings: Digraphs and Trigraphs

ACTIVITY #2

SEQUENCE: SPELLING AND SENTENCE STRUCTURE
2ND CYCLE – PRIMARY

By Lise L'Heureux,
Special Education Teacher, Director,
Instructor, Consultant and Coach



Purpose of the activity

The aim of this activity is to recognize, read and spell *consonant digraphs* (two letters = one sound) and *consonant trigraphs* (three letters = 1 sound).



Relevance of the activity

Certain consonant sounds are written with two, and sometimes three letters. When reading, these multiple-letter *graphemes* are more difficult to recognize and segment (where we cut between syllables) than single-letter graphemes. They're also more complex to write, and some letters are often forgotten or inverted when writing digraphs and trigraphs. This activity is going to help you efficiently read and write consonant digraphs and trigraphs more accurately.



Supplies

- Word lists 6 to 14 (see appendix)
- Optional: your child's vocabulary word list or words from a text or a book your child has read



LET'S GO!

What?



In this activity, we will learn the main consonant digraphs. We will also learn a spelling rule that tells us when to add an extra consonant after a short vowel sound to the final consonant sound /k/, /ch/ and /j/.

Why?



Reading and spelling get more difficult as the words get more complex. Some of those complexities are the consonant digraphs (two letters = one sound) and trigraphs (three letters = one sound). The consonant sounds we are seeing are written with complex graphemes, **meaning with more than one letter**, making it more difficult to read and spell words. By practising reading and writing the most frequent consonant digraphs, **CH, SH, TH**, it will make it easier to read and spell new words that include these graphemes.

When?



You will use this reading and spelling strategy for the consonant sounds **/ch/ /sh/ /th/ /ck/ /nk/** and **/ng/** because these sounds are written or can be written with two or three letters.

How?



Let's look at each of the complex consonant spellings one at a time. We will start with reading, then spelling words with these spellings.

1 Reading complex consonants

- When I read the letters **CH** or **TCH**, I pronounce the sound /ch/ like **chips**.
- When I read the letters **SH**, I pronounce the sound /sh/ like **shark**.
- When I read the letters **CK** or **KE** at the end of words, I pronounce them all /k/ like **cake**.
- When I read the letters **TH**, I pronounce the sound /th/ like **thumb** or a vibrating /th/ like the word **this**.



There is no rule to know which TH sound to pronounce, although there seems to be a dominance: pronounce mostly the silent TH (thumb) in nouns, adjectives, and verbs and the voiced TH (this) in pronouns, conjunctions and adverbs. When in doubt, try the 1st pronunciation, and if the word does not make sense, try the 2nd one.

- When I read the letters **NK**, I pronounce /nk/ like **rink**.
- When I read the letters **NG** at the end of words, I pronounce /ng/ like **song**.
- When I read the letters **GE** or **DGE** at the end of words, I pronounce the sound /j/ like **fudge**.



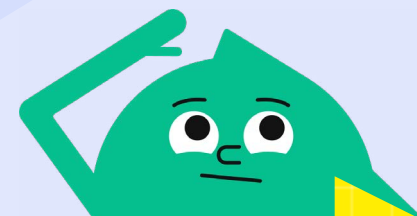
2 Spelling /ch/, /sh/, /th/ and final /k/, /j/, /nk/ and /ng/ sounds

- When I hear the sound /ch/ like **chips**, I generally write the letters CH, except...
 - When I hear /ch/ at the end of words, following a short vowel sound, I write TCH. Example: **catch, etch, switch**
- SH makes the sound /sh/ like **shark**. When I hear the sound /sh/, I write the letters SH.
- TH makes 2 sounds /th/ like **thumb** or a vibrating /th/ like the word **this**. Whether I hear the unvoiced or the voiced sound, I write the letters TH. There are a few exception words, generally verbs, where you spell the final TH with a silent E. Example: **bathe, loathe, breathe**.

- The final sound /k/ can be spelled 3 different ways, like packck, bake, park. The letter sound that precedes the /k/ sound will tell you which one to write.
 - Write CK after a short vowel sound: **back, deck, chick, rock, puck.**
 - Write KE after a long vowel sound (Magic E rule): **take, bike, spoke, duke.**
 - Write K after a consonant or a vowel digraph: **park, milk, mask; beak, cloak, break.**

Note

- When you hear the sound /nk/ after a short vowel, write NK: **bank, pink, honk, punk.**
- When you hear the sound /ng/ after a short vowel, write NG: **bang, length, thing, song, lung.**
- The final sound /j/ can be spelled 2 different ways: GE and DGE. It depends on what precedes that sound.
 - Write DGE if the final sound /j/ is preceded by a short vowel sound: **badge, lodge, fudge.**
 - Write GE if the final sound /j/ is preceded by a long vowel or a consonant sound: **cage, stooge, large.**



Don't forget!

It is always best to write down the rules! Practise each rule separately, giving your child time to practise. If your child can't remember the rule, ask a question that will make them find the answer on their own. If they still can't find the answer, don't wait until the point of frustration, give them the answer.



Word lists

LIST 6	LIST 7	LIST 8	LIST 9	LIST 10
CH	-TCH	SH	TH-SILENT	TH-VOICED
chip	itch	she	thin	the
chat	match	ship	thick	this
chin	fetch	shop	thing	that
chop	pitch	shut	thank	those
choke	patch	shy	with	these
chick	notch	dash	moth	them
child	catch	rush	bath	there
check	ditch	cash	thumb	then
charm	hatch	dish	think	than
chunk	clutch	brush	cloth	them
such	snitch	short	north	they

LIST 6	LIST 7	LIST 8	LIST 9	LIST 10
CH	-TCH	SH	TH-SILENT	TH-VOICED
coach	crutch	shell	truth	other
beach	snatch	shake	month	though
mulch	switch	shade	breath	rather
March	sketch	shock	without	father
inch	twitch	smash	throne	either
lunch	scratch	vanish	three	mother
perch	stretch	selfish	throw	weather
crunch	mismatch	usher	thrill	brother

LIST 11	LIST 12	LIST 13	LIST 14
CK	KE	K	NK
back	bake	ask	ink
rock	like	park	bank
puck	take	task	honk
neck	joke	milk	pink
luck	bike	mask	bunk
deck	lake	fork	sank
kick	deke	talk	junk
lick	cake	desk	rink
sack	poke	look	chunk
check	hike	week	think
shock	spoke	beak	thank

LIST 11	LIST 12	LIST 13	LIST 14
CK	KE	K	NK
thick	brake	soak	blink
chick	stroke	spark	crank
crack	flake	whisk	clonk
clock	spike	cheek	drink
stuck	smoke	sneak	blank
pluck	strike	shark	spunk
stock	awake	creek	clank
black	remake	brisk	shrink