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Introduction

Dr. Maggie's Phonics Learning Centers is a collection of activities that reinforce fundamental phonics skills. Each activity, intended for independent or small-group learning centers, is designed to enrich phonics learning. The content and formats of the activities maximize children's motivation for participating in literacy learning and encourage them to practice each skill independently in a fun, engaging manner. You and your students will find them a developmentally appropriate way to practice meaningful phonics skills.

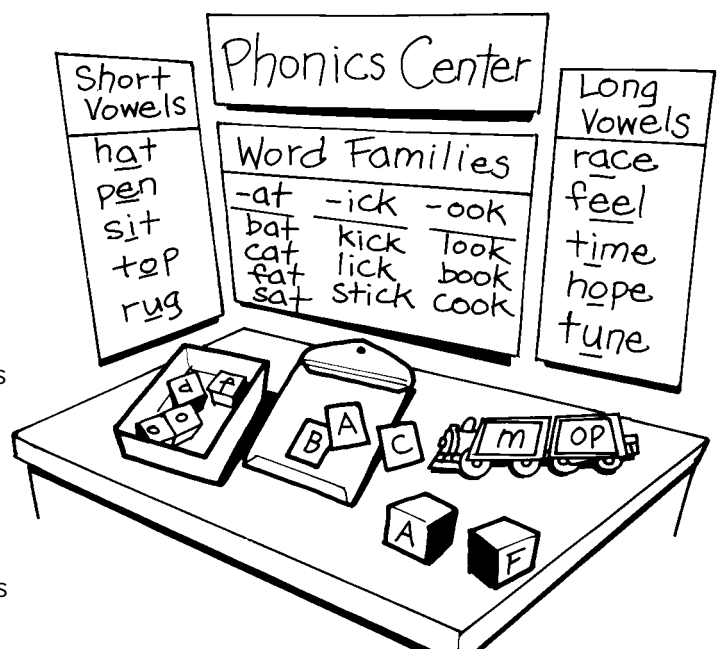
The activities in this resource address skills similar to *Dr. Maggie's Phonics Readers*—a set of 24 delightful short stories that reinforce phonics learning. If your children are familiar with these readers, *Dr. Maggie's Phonics Learning Centers* will be an even more engaging addition to your phonics program. However, these center activities are a perfect complement to any curriculum because they address important and commonly taught phonics skills.

The Value of Phonics Learning Centers

As with math, science, and other domains of language arts, learning centers are an excellent format for reinforcing phonics instruction. Making independent phonics activities available to children accomplishes many goals, including the following:

- Children have opportunities to independently investigate concepts and make meaning of those concepts for themselves.

- Teachers are able to customize instruction by providing activities geared toward each child's specific needs.
- Teachers can provide direct instruction to small groups of children while other children work independently.
- Children have opportunities to self-select their activities and, thereby, learn about making choices.
- Children are involved more actively in their learning than during whole-group direct teaching.
- Teachers have opportunities for both anecdotal and concrete means of assessment. Anecdotal assessments can be made while observing children working independently, and concrete assessments come from examining work children complete at the centers.



Implementing the Activities

The following list of phonics concepts is ordered from most developmentally basic to most advanced. Incorporate the concepts into your phonics curriculum in this sequence:

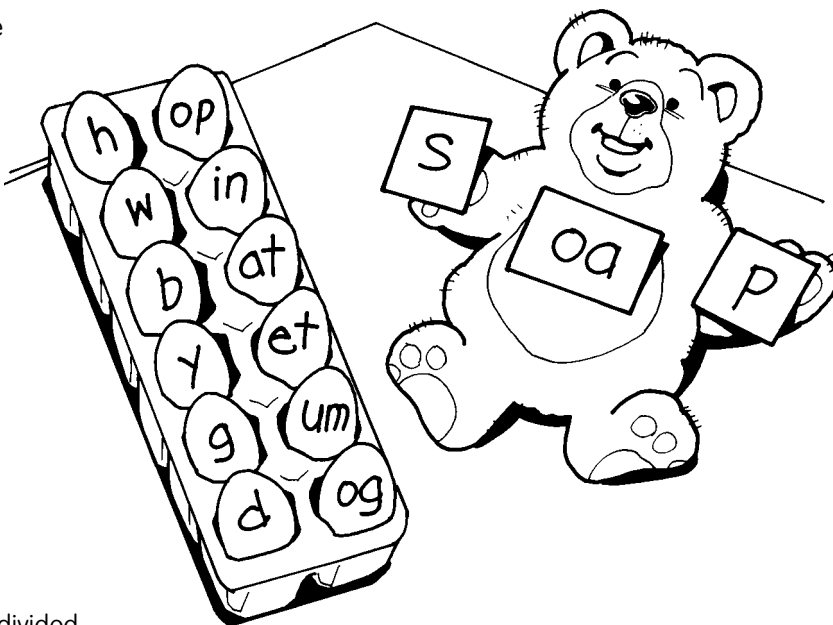
- Phonemic Awareness (e.g., syllable counting, sound blending, word segmentation)
- Letter Recognition
- Sound/Letter Matching
- Sight Word Recognition
- Short-Vowel Word Families
- Consonant Blends and Digraphs
- Long-Vowel Word Families
- Vowel Digraphs and Diphthongs
- R-Controlled Vowels
- Contractions
- Simple Word Endings

Dr. Maggie's Phonics Learning Centers is divided into four sections that align with this sequence of phonics concepts: Phonemic Awareness, Letter/Sight Word Recognition, Word Blending, and Advanced Phonics.

Phonemic Awareness activities focus on the sounds of language. In these activities, children orally break words into their component sounds and build them back into whole words.

Letter/Sight Word Recognition activities involve identifying, writing, and matching sounds to letters. Because young readers must gain the same automaticity with sight words as with letters, these activities are ideal for reinforcing sight word recognition, as well.

Word Blending activities provide written and oral practice blending onsets (initial sounds) with rimes (word families) and blending individual phonemes. For example, Eggstra Special Words (page 16) is an onset-rime blending activity, while Word Bear (page 21) is an individual-phoneme blending activity.



Advanced Phonics activities cover the more complex skills children learn as they near fluency. These concepts include r-controlled vowels, contractions, and word endings, to name a few.

All activities in this resource are adaptable to a variety of phonics concepts. Customize the activities by plugging in sounds, letters, or skills children need to target. When selecting target concepts, consider children's developmental level, their phonics knowledge, and the skills to which they were most recently introduced. The flexibility of the activities enables you to reinforce each skill using a different format, one skill using a variety of formats, or each skill using the same format. Materials needed for each activity appear in boldface type in the activity's "Setting Up" section.

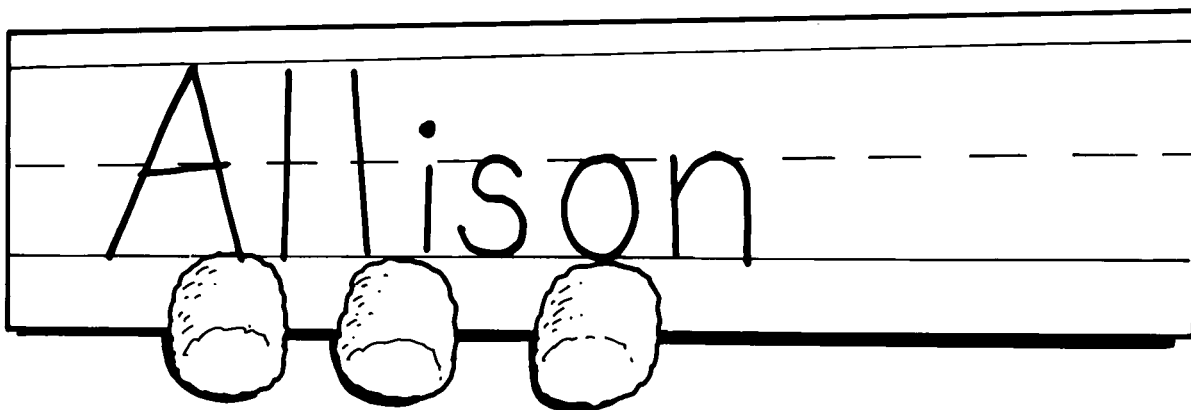
Cotton-Ball Names

Setting Up

Place **sentence strips**, **cotton balls**, **glue**, and a **chart featuring children's names** at the learning center.

Center Fun

Children write four or five classmates' names and their own name on individual sentence strips. They say each name slowly and clap the syllables of the name. After deciding how many "beats" are in the name, they glue that many cotton balls on the strip under the name. Children then say each name slowly and touch a cotton ball for each syllable in the name.



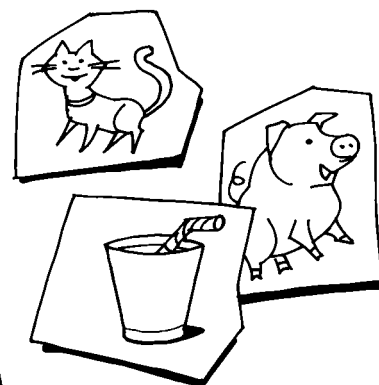
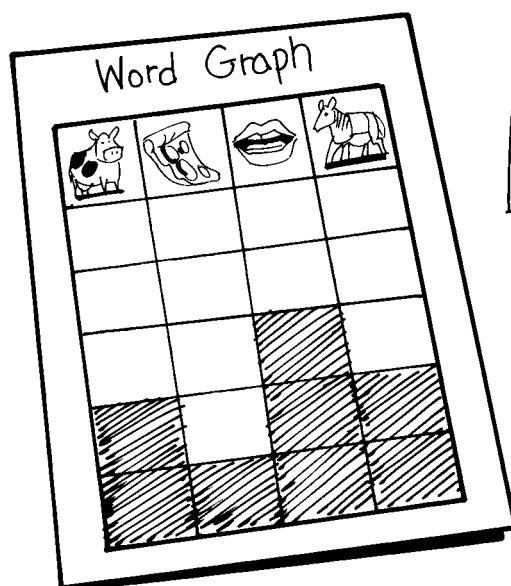
Graphing Sounds

Setting Up

Select two to four target sounds, and reduce the **alphabet pictures (pages 26–28)**. Glue pictures that begin with the target sounds in the top row of boxes on a **Word Graph (page 29)**. Place copies of the customized graph at the learning center with **crayons or markers** and **magazine, newspaper, and print-ad pictures**. (Note: This activity can be customized to address medial and ending sounds as well. Be sure the alphabet pictures at the top of the graph reflect the sounds in the proper position.)

Center Fun

Children name each picture, identify which target sound begins the word, and color a box in the graph under that letter. For example, if children are working with target letters *c* and *p* and have pictures of a cat, a cup, and a pig, they color in two boxes under the *c* alphabet picture on the graph and one under the *p* alphabet picture.



Guess My Picture

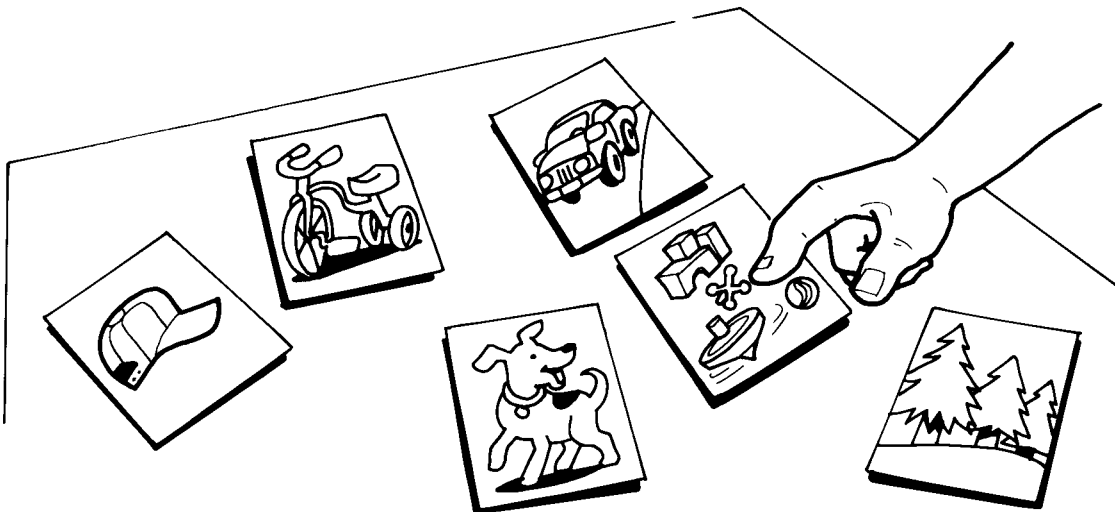
Setting Up

Place faceup at the learning center **magazine, newspaper, print-ad, and alphabet pictures (pages 26–28)**.

Choose pictures that are easily identifiable and rhyme with many familiar words.

Center Fun

Working in pairs, one child secretly selects a picture (without pointing to it or saying which it is) and gives the other a clue to its identity using the following format: *It begins with ___ and rhymes with ___*. For example, a clue for a picture of toys could be *It begins with /t/ and rhymes with noise*. After the other child correctly identifies the picture, the children switch roles and repeat the game.



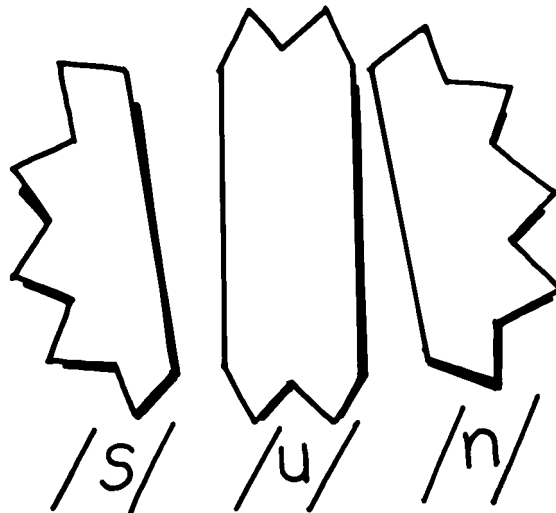
Phoneme Puzzles

Setting Up

Cut **die-cut shapes** into parts to represent the number of sounds in the word. For example, cut a pig shape into three parts, a cow into two parts, and a frog into four parts. Place the pieces of each shape into a separate **resealable plastic bag**, and leave the bags next to an **overhead projector** at the learning center.

Center Fun

Children assemble the puzzles on the overhead projector. They slowly take the puzzle apart, saying each sound in the word, and blend the sounds as they put it back together. For example, a child working with a sun puzzle would slowly take the three pieces apart while saying /s/ /u/ /n/ and slide the pieces back together while blending the word back into *sun*.



Skip-to-My-Lou Phonics

Setting Up

Teach children the song "Skip to My Lou." Write *-ip* several times on a **sentence strip**, leaving space in front of each. Cut a piece of **laminating film** to fit over the sentence strip, and attach the film to the strip with **masking tape**. Place the sentence strip/laminating film, a **tape recorder and cassette**, and **erasable overhead projector markers** at the learning center.

Center Fun

Children select an onset and use overhead markers to write it on the laminating film in front of each *-ip*. Then, children quietly sing "Skip to My Lou" using the new word (e.g., *Flip, flip, flip to my Lou . . .*). Children tape-record themselves singing their new version of the song.



Where Do You Hear the Sound?

Setting Up

Photocopy four sets of the **animal shapes (page 30)**, and cut them out. Draw three horizontally connected boxes on each animal in one of the sets of shapes. Label each of the remaining three shapes for each animal with three dots according to the following directions: Make the first dot larger than the other two on one shape, the second dot larger on another shape, and the third dot larger on the third shape. The large dot represents the sound children identify when they select that shape. For example, the dog shape with a large dot in the third position indicates that children should identify the final sound in the word, /g/. Place **red, yellow, and green pom-poms** and the set of shapes with horizontal boxes at the learning center. Place the dotted sets of shapes in a **paper bag** at the center.

Center Fun

Children select an animal shape with boxes; slowly say the name of the animal; and push a green pom-pom into the first box as they say the first sound, a yellow pom-pom into the second box as they say the second sound, and a red pom-pom into the third box as they say the third sound. After working with all the shapes with boxes, they pull all the shapes with dots from the bag, one at a time, and say the target sound identified by the large dot on each shape.

