

Word Chaining

Word Chaining is an activity that can help students to focus on the individual sounds in words and improve phonemic awareness.

Watch the [Word Chaining Video](#) here for an example.

Step 1: Students segment a word and write the graphemes (letter or letters that represent the sound) to spell the word.

Step 2: The teacher asks the students to change the first word to a second word that is different by only one sound. It is important that only one sound is different because this forces students to think carefully about all the sounds in the word.

Step 3: Students exchange one grapheme for a different grapheme that represents the sound in the new word. Sometimes, students will add a sound to the word without deleting one, so they'll need to add a new grapheme to the word without changing any of the old ones. Students may also delete a grapheme from the word without adding one, so they may remove a grapheme without changing any other ones.

Step 4: The teacher continues to ask students to change the word by one sound each time.

You can also do this activity without letters. Watch an example of [sound chaining without letters here](#).

When you do word chaining, only one sound should change at a time. Look at the example list below—can you find the mistake?

Example	Example
flop	flop → flap : only one sound changes
flap	flap → flab: only one sound changes
flab	flab → grab: two sounds change (/f/ changes to /g/ and /l/ changes to /r/). It would be more helpful to students if only one sound in the blend changed at a time because that helps kids to focus on each sound in the blend.
grab	
grub	grab → grub: only one sound changes

Activity: Look at the sound chaining lists below. Each time a student makes a new word, they should change the word by only ONE sound (Note: remember, more than one letter can represent one sound!). Can you find the mistake(s) in list 1 and list 2?

List 1	Notes on List 1:	List 2	Notes on List 2:
shack		time	
tack		tim	
track		slim	
tramp		slant	
ramp		slap	

Activity: Can you come up with a word chaining list that you can use with your students this week? You can find [word lists for word chaining here](#).