

# Starter Activities

## Word level objectives

### Session W1

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#### Objectives

Y7 W1 (Vowel choices) W9 (Phonemes and syllables) W10 (Analogy)

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#### Resources

A set of word cards, with one word containing the long **a** phoneme on each card, (e.g. *way, sail, reign, sleigh*). The full set should include several words with each spelling. Include two or three different sets of words, given alternately to groups sitting next to one another.

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#### Introduction

##### 1 minute

- Ask pupils, working as pairs, to jot down as many words as possible that include the long **a** vowel phoneme (**ay** as in *made* or *paid*) where it occurs anywhere in a word. Explain that they are looking for the sound not any particular way of spelling it.
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#### Activity

##### 7 minutes

- Pupils join up with another pair and compare their lists of words. They count how many different words they have collected and how many different ways of spelling the long **a** sound are included in their list. (It may be helpful if they use highlighter pens to do this.)
  - Groups say how many spellings for the long **a** they have found.
  - Record the range of spellings they have found for all to see.
  - Explain that these alternatives (vowel choices) can cause a lot of confusion when spelling even common and familiar words.
  - Give out a set of word cards to each group (or to each pair).
  - Give pupils a few minutes to group the words into the same spelling groups for the long **a** phoneme and to come up with any possible patterns they notice that might be helpful in making the right vowel choices when spelling.
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#### Review

##### 2 minutes

Ask each group to confer with another group that has a different set of words to check their conclusions.

Draw out their conclusions and make explicit the rules and patterns for spelling the long **a** phoneme.

**Possible follow-up lesson starter if required:** repeat the session using the long **i** phoneme to see if their conclusions stand (e.g. *wipe, wise, fright*).

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# Session W2

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## Objectives

Y7 W1 (Vowel choices) W9 (Phonemes and syllables) W10 (Analogy)

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## Resources

Mini-whiteboard for each pupil.  
Board or OHT.

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## Introduction

### 2 minutes

- Provide a mini-whiteboard for each pupil. Ask them to write the words **dig/digging** and hold up their whiteboards. Repeat with **hum/humming**. (Check for pupils who are confused about doubling consonants and who may need additional teaching.)
  - Explain that it is obvious that the end consonant is doubled when a suffix is added, but that you want the pupils to work out why.
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## Activity

### 5 minutes

- Ask pupils to think of short words ending in a consonant that is not doubled when a suffix is added. (Some pupils may need suggestions or a word sheet to support them.) Allow a couple of minutes then collect suggestions for all to see, e.g. *beep, burn, dream*.
  - Collect two lists of words as you go along, on board or OHT. (One for doubled consonants and one for not doubled, i.e. one for short medial vowels and one for long.)
  - Invite pupils to speculate about why the consonant doubles or does not double and give one minute of Time out discussion with a partner. (You may need to remind them at this point that the previous lesson starter was about vowels.)
  - Ask each pair of pupils to work out a rule that might help when deciding whether to double a consonant or not. If necessary help some pupils to arrive at an appropriate answer.
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## Review

### 3 minutes

Share findings and discuss difficulties. Choose a clear and correct explanation about doubling consonants after short medial vowels and confirm it.

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## Session W3

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### Objectives

Y7 W1 (Vowel choices) W9 (Phonemes and syllables) W10 (Analogy)

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### Resources

Mini-whiteboard for each pupil.

Jumbled list of words including hard/soft **c** either on handout sheets or on OHT.

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### Introduction

#### 2 minutes

- Remind pupils that the previous session concentrated on the influence of vowels on other letters. (Quickly check what they have learned about doubling consonants after short medial vowels.)
  - Tell them that this session will remind them of another way that vowels can influence the letters around them. In this case, the letter **c**.
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### Activity

#### 6 minutes

- Ask pupils to work in small groups. Show a word list on OHT (or provide a sheet for each group) with a selection of jumbled words showing soft/hard **c** as in *cinema, celebrate, cycle, card, coat, cup*.
- The task is to work out as quickly as possible what influence the vowel is having in these examples and to write the rule on a whiteboard.
- When groups come up with explanations, encourage them to join other groups and compare conclusions.
- If two groups agree, they hold up their explanation of the rule.

N.B. Some classes/groups will be able to work more quickly, without word list prompts, coming up with their own words and drawing conclusions in fewer steps. Less able groups might need to spend longer on each step so the session could be spread across two lesson starters.

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### Review

#### 2 minutes

Say nothing until most groups are holding up explanations or time is up. Ask the group that held up the first correct explanation to read their version of the spelling rule.

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# Session W4

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## Objectives

Y7 W1 (Vowel choices) W9 (Phonemes and syllables) W10 (Analogy)

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## Resources

Six word cards: one word on each, from a list of common polysyllabic words containing unstressed vowels, e.g. *interest, business, poisonous*.

A longer list of examples from the same word list, as OHT or handout. (You may wish to highlight or embolden the unstressed vowel in each word for some or all pupils.)

Board, flip chart or OHT.

Individual mini-whiteboards,

N.B: The *KS3 Spelling Bank* is a useful source of appropriate words.

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## Introduction

### 2 minutes

- Explain that some words are tricky to remember because they contain unstressed vowels. These vowels are difficult to make out because they are spoken quickly or quietly. They do not 'sound out' clearly because the spoken stress is elsewhere in the word. (Give a few examples to clarify the difference between stressed and unstressed and to mimic common errors, e.g. *doctor/docter*.)
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## Activity

### 5 minutes

- Give out a word card to about six pupils and ask each of them to read aloud clearly the word on their own card. Ask pupils who were not given cards to write each word on their whiteboard as it is read out.
  - Invite the pupils with cards to compare the spelling on whiteboards with the word on their card. Briefly discuss any differences, which are likely to be in misspelling of the unstressed vowel.
  - Remind pupils that unstressed vowels that can be spelt in several different ways.
  - Provide a list of examples of words with unstressed vowels, ideally drawn from these pupils' recent writing. Ask each pupil to circle one or two words that they have particular difficulty in spelling. (You could pre-select a couple of words in the list for certain pupils.)
  - Ask each pupil to think of a simple strategy (such as a mnemonic) to help them remember the vowel spelling in one of those words.
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## Review

### 3 minutes

Ask one or two pupils to share their ideas. Concentrate on the most common areas of difficulty and invite pupils to add to the list of words.

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# Session W5

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## Objectives

Y7 W1 (Vowel choices) W9 (Phonemes and syllables) W10 (Analogy)

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## Resources

A set of about twelve (or more) word cards, each with a word from the list of vowels with alternative spellings. Include some from each section for **ough**, **ear**, **ight**, **ou** and **au**. Use fewer words and select from only one set of letter strings to speed up the activity.

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## Introduction

### 2 minutes

- Remind pupils that you are still concentrating on the way that vowel phonemes are spelt.
  - Explain that this activity focuses on words which are pronounced differently although they have the same letter pattern. Give a few examples.
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## Activity

### 5 minutes

- Select the same number of pupils as you have cards, give a card to each pupil, and ask them to stand in a line where there is space to move around.
- Invite the remaining pupils to take turns (or select individuals if you prefer) to come to the front and move one pupil in the line to a different position.
- The aim is to group the words so that the same pronunciation patterns are grouped together. (For example, the pupils with cards for **tough** and **rough** would be left standing together, as would those with the cards **trough** and **cough**.)

N.B: Time taken will depend on pupils' ability and confidence and the number or variety of cards you provide. You may wish to use just a few words, concentrating on one letter string.

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## Review

### 3 minutes

Invite pupils to summarise what they have learned about the possible spelling of the same vowel sounds. Ask them to suggest strategies for remembering their personally tricky words from the given list.

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## Session W6

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### Objectives

Y7 W1 (Vowel choices) W9 (Phonemes and syllables) W10 (Analogy)

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### Resources

Mini-whiteboard for each pupil and one for the teacher.

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### Introduction

#### 2 minutes

- Tell the pupils that you are still investigating the spelling of vowel phonemes.
  - Tell pupils that there are only five words that end with the letters **eight**. (Write the words rather than saying them.)
  - Quickly write **height** and **sleight** for all to see, and say them as well as spelling them.
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### Activity

#### 3 minutes

- Ask pupils to think of the other three words. If they don't suggest them, provide **eight**, **weight** and **freight** and remind them that you asked for words that ended with the same letters not the same sound.
  - Clear the board/remove visual clues.
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### Review

#### 5 minutes

Finish the session with revision of selected words from the sequence of previous lesson starters which have addressed vowel choices. Say a word, wait six seconds, then write it on your mini-whiteboard. Can pupils write it correctly and hold up their whiteboards before you?

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# Session W7

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## Objectives

Y7 W12 (Using a dictionary)

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## Resources

Dictionaries.

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## Introduction

### 3 minutes

- Ask a confident pupil to sit at the front, facing the rest of the group, with a dictionary. Ask this pupil to look up the words you say, as quickly as possible and to read the first word of the definition when he/ she has found it. (Choose about three words.)
  - Ask the remaining pupils to observe and identify any techniques used by the first pupil to speed up the reference process. If prompts are needed, ask them if he/she always starts the search in the same place.
  - Make sure that someone (even if it's you!) suggests the use of approximation - the word starts with a letter that is near the middle of the alphabet, so open the dictionary near the middle.
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## Activity

### 5 minutes

- Use four large cards showing the letters, in order, of each quartile of the alphabet, turned away so that they can be revealed one at a time. (Suggestion with overlap: *abcdefg, ghijklmn, nopqrst, tuvwxyz.*)
  - Continue giving one word at a time and ask pupils to hold up the number of fingers to correspond with the right quartile of the dictionary for the first letter. Work through quickly so that pupils respond at speed. Vary your response by either revealing the correct card to show which quartile or by choosing one pupil's suggestion and checking the relevant card to see if they are correct.
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## Review

### 2 minutes

Using dictionaries in pairs, ask pupils to practise their speed referencing: give them pairs of words and ask them to find the references, saying first which will occur first in the dictionary, e.g. *Which will come first, **transcribe** or **transmit**? **Predict** or **presume**?* Look them up and check. There should be time for three pairs of words.

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# Session W8

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## Objectives

Y7 W15 (Dictionary and thesaurus)

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## Resources

Organise seating in pairs so that tables are arranged in lines or so that a linear sequence can be seen from left to right (e.g. like a snake around the room).

Three small cards for each pair of pupils, each card with one word on it. Each word should begin with either the same first two letters or the same first three letters.

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## Introduction

### 1 minute

- Ask each pair to lay out their words on their table so that they are clearly visible and in alphabetical order.
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## Activity

### 7 minutes

- Invite each pair in turn to rove around the room, taking their cards, until they find another set of cards showing words that should come immediately before their set, in the dictionary. They should sit down at the table directly to the right of this pair, displacing the two pupils who then take their turn to rove around and find their nearest dictionary 'partners'.
  - Once complete, ask pupils consecutively in the order of their seating positions to read their words aloud from left to right. These should be in the correct dictionary order. If a pupil thinks a mistake has been made, he/she should indicate this and has a chance to make one move, putting a pair and their set of cards into an alternative position. The newly displaced pair should find a new spot.
  - Give pupils, working alone, one minute to put the following nonsense words into alphabetical order: *scrangleworth; scrautish; scrystic; scrooning; scrullion.*
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## Review

### 2 minutes

Ask the pupils with their hands up first to read the order they suggest.

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# Session W9

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## Objectives

Y7 W4 (Prefixes)

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## Resources

Cards with prefixes, large sheets of paper.

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## Introduction

### 1 minute

- Give each pair of pupils one common prefix to work with, such as **auto**, **tele**, **trans**, **circum**. Make sure that three or four pupils are working with the same prefix.
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## Activity

### 7 minutes

- Ask pupils to write their prefix in the middle of a sheet of paper (or provide these already set out).
  - Ask pupils to create a 'word web' of up to five words beginning with that prefix. (You may wish to ask some pupils to investigate only two or three words in the time available.) Individual dictionaries should be used to look up the definitions of each new word.
  - The aim is to find out the meaning of the prefix itself. Suggest that it may help if brief definitions or key words are jotted down next to each word on the web.
  - Allow two minutes for the three or four pupils using the same prefix to group together and share their ideas about the meaning of their prefix.
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## Review

### 2 minutes

List the prefixes on board/flip chart/OHT and ask each new larger group to tell you their findings. Confirm, add to or clarify their conclusions so that all pupils are clear about the meaning of each prefix.

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# Session W10

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## Objectives

Y7 W4 (Prefixes)

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## Resources

Cards with antonym prefixes. (See *KS3 Spelling Bank* for examples.)

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## Introduction

### 2 minutes

- Provide the same selection of antonym prefixes on small cards for each pupil or pair. (Pupils should alternate in turn if working as a pair.)
  - Explain that these are all negative prefixes (creating antonyms) and that they are going on to remind themselves of some of the more unusual antonym prefixes.
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## Activity

### 7 minutes

- Go quickly through a selection of root words and ask pupils to hold up the correct antonym prefix to be added, e.g. you say **appear** and they should hold up the **dis** card. (Make sure that pupils are clear about the correct choice before moving on to your next word.) Throw in a few 'wild cards' such as **unspoken** to keep them on their toes. They should not hold up any cards here.
  - Go through your list of words, one at a time and invite pupils to suggest the correct prefix to create the antonym. Sometimes hold up the correct card to confirm a correct answer (string out the suspense at times) and sometimes appear hesitant and ask them to speed-check in the dictionaries before they commit to a particular answer.
  - Write **unnecessary** and **dissatisfied** on the board or flip chart. Give pupils one minute to discuss with a partner ways to remember the doubled consonant when the prefix is added to these two words. Collect suggestions and ask pupils to choose the one that appeals most and remember it.
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## Review

### 1 minute

Finish the session by asking what other helpful information the dictionary provided to speed up the search for words. Remind pupils about the top and bottom page alphabetical references.

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# Session W11

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## Objectives

Y7 W17 (Word classes)

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## Resources

OHP or board.  
*KS3 Spelling Bank* for reference.

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## Introduction

### 3 minutes

- Provide some phonetically plausible nonsense words, e.g. *schrenting, chulper, franstious, frount, brandled, lurgeful*.
  - Give pupils two minutes to create a couple of sentences using all the nonsense words you have given, e.g. *The frount felt very lurgeful because he had been schrenting all day. He had brandled the heavy chulper until he was almost franstious.*
  - Hear a few.
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## Activity

### 5 minutes

- Ask pupils how they decided which job in the sentence each of the words should perform. (If their answers emphasise only similarity to known words, move the discussion towards the spelling of those words.)
  - Show and say, one by one, a short list of common words, suggesting a sentence containing each word to contextualise it. Invite pupils to add a suffix to each word, using it in a new sentence where its word class has changed, e.g. *home/homeless, hate/hateful, glad/gladness, heaven/heavenly*.
  - If prompts are required, provide a list of possible suffixes.
  - Encourage pupils to use the correct terminology, e.g. *adding the suffix changes the word from a noun to an adjective*.
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## Review

### 2 minutes

Discuss which suffixes indicate that a word is doing the job of a verb. Collect their suggestions and remind them that the **ed** suffix can also indicate a verb-like word being used adjectivally to modify a noun, as in *a pointed nose, a startled bird*.

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# Session W12

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## Objectives

Y7 W17 (Word classes)

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## Resources

Words on card, plus a set of questions for the pupil guessers to ask. Control the level of difficulty by your choice of the hidden word and by the range of questions on the card given to each guesser. The number of pupils who play will depend upon the level of difficulty you select and the time you allow.

### Example words:

*happy/happiness, slow/slowly, wait/waiting, recognise/unrecognisable*

*call/recall, child /children, operate/operation, joy/enjoyment*

*recognise/unrecognisable, approve/disapproval, impress/impressionable, retrieve/irretrievable*

### Example questions:

*Is it a noun/verb/adverb/adjective?*

*Is it positive/negative?*

*Is it singular/plural?*

*Does it have a prefix? Does it have a suffix?*

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## Introduction

### 1 minute

- Explain the activity, emphasising that we need to know the terminology of language in order to play the game and to analyse language use.
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## Activity

### 7 minutes

- Ask a pupil to sit at the front of the room, facing the rest of the group. Choose a confident and able pupil so that others can latch on to the techniques needed for this activity.
  - Give him/her a root word (that can be seen by all) and show the rest of the group another word that cannot be seen by the pupil seated at the front. For example, by pinning the word on the wall above or writing it on the board behind the pupil. This second word should derive from the first by the addition of letters and may include the dropping of letters where a suffix has been added.
  - The pupil at the front must guess the hidden word by asking questions of the rest of the group, but can only ask from a selection of questions, given to him/her on a card.
  - Once the word has been guessed correctly, invite another pupil to play. Provide two new words.
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## Review

### 2 minutes

Discuss which terms helped pupils to find out what the words were.

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# Session W13

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## Objectives

Y7 W10 (Analogy)

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## Resources

OHT or board.

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## Introduction

### 2 minutes

- Explain that this game will show just how much pupils already know about the patterns of English spelling. They have to guess which word the teacher has in mind, when all they have to guide them is the first letter and a dash for each other letter.
  - If they guess inappropriately, the teacher (or the person at the board) will score points.
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## Activity

### 6 minutes

- Choose a word several pupils have found tricky, as shown in their recent writing. Write up the first letter and a dash for each subsequent letter.
  - Pupils guess what letter follows the first letter. If they guess correctly, write in the letter and proceed with further guesses. If they suggest a letter which *could* have followed, and prove this by giving a word including that letter sequence, write up that word but no-one scores any points. If they guess incorrectly, the teacher scores a point.
  - The game ends when either the pupils guess the word, or the teacher scores an agreed number of points.
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## Review

### 2 minutes

Discuss what pupils have learnt about the predictability and patterns of English spelling.

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# Session W14

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## Objectives

Y7 W17 (Word classes)

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## Resources

Copies of texts A and B - two or three sentences of narrative. Half of the class have text A, the other half have text B.

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## Introduction

### 3 minutes

- Ask pupils to discuss, in pairs or small groups, which words do the most important job in a sentence, in terms of the reader's understanding and enjoyment - the verbs or the nouns? Ask one or two pairs/ groups to explain their choice and give reasons for it.
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## Activity

### 5 minutes

- Give two different texts as handouts (A and B) to adjacent groups so that one group cannot see the other's text.
  - Ask the groups with text A to cross out all the words except the nouns or the noun phrases. Ask the groups with text B to cross out all the words apart from the verbs (including non-finite verbs) and auxiliary verbs. (Provide a quick reminder of the way that auxiliary verbs link up in verb chains to ensure that pupils are comfortable with the terminology.)
  - Select a pupil with text A to read the remaining words to those who have text B. How easy is it to understand what the text is about when the verbs are missing?
  - Now select a pupil with text B to read the remaining words to those who have text A. How easy is it to understand what the text is about when the nouns are missing?
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## Review

### 2 minutes

Compare the two texts and ask pupils if their conclusions would have been the same if only nouns had been left behind in text A, rather than the noun phrases as well.

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# Session W15

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## Objectives

Y7 W11 (Strategies for learning spellings) W10 (Analogy)

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## Resources

A4 whiteboards, marker pens and cleaning cloths for each student.

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## Introduction

### 3 minutes

- Teacher models example on whiteboard.
  - Words that can be found in the name of someone on the staff, e.g. **Miss Carroll** (*miss, is, scar, car, roll*).
  - Letters must be taken in sequence.
  - Then try with **Mr Atkinson** (*at, in, son, kin, on*). Model the thought process as you are doing this, gradually asking for ideas from students.
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## Activity

### 4 minutes

- Individually, students write own names or the name of a 'celebrity' on A4 whiteboards and make list of words that can be found in the names. Take a few examples.
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## Review

### 3 minutes

- Explain the value of this: to help look for patterns in words. This is a way of remembering spellings. For example, can you see any words in the word **separate** that might help you to remember the spelling? (**rat, rate**) Check that they are aware of which bit of the word is difficult.

## Homework:

Find the words within the word that will help you to remember these words:

friend (end)

because (cause)

vegetable (get, table, able)

library (bra)

tomatoes (mat, toes)

comfortable (fort, table, tab, able)

pleasant (as, ant)

handsome (hand, hands, and, so, me, some)

business (sin, bus, in)

environment (iron, men, on).

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# Session W16

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## Objectives

Y7 W11 (Strategies for learning spellings)

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## Resources

OHT: Spelling game - ladders.

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## Introduction

### 4 minutes

- Put a completed ladder grid on OHP. Show how to change one letter at a time to make the word at the bottom of the grid, e.g.
    - band
    - s**and
    - sane
    - s**ame
    - s**ome
  - Complete one with pupil's help, e.g.
    - red
    - l**ed
    - lid
    - l**ip
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## Activity

### 4 minutes

- Pupils complete one or more in pairs:
    - two into son
    - bold into safe
    - world into mount
    - wild into song
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## Review

### 2 minutes

Share answers and discuss the strategies used.

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# Session W17

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## Objectives

Y7 W1 (Vowel choices)

N.B: Use this starter only if pupils are not secure in their knowledge of vowel phonemes.

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## Resources

List of contrasting words: some double consonants; others do not, e.g. **hop/hopping** and **hope/hoping**. Highlight the vowel in a different colour, so pupils know which bit they are looking at.

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## Introduction

### 3 minutes

- Clarify difference between vowels and consonants. Ask for list of vowels, one from each of five pupils. Scribe record on whiteboard.
  - The **names** of the vowels (**ay, ee, eye, ow, you**) are known as **long** sounds.
  - Vowels can also have a short sound. Illustrate with words on board (**a** - ant, **e** - egg, **i** - ink, **o** - orange, **u** - umbrella). Exaggerate the sound as necessary for pupils to understand.
  - Stress the objective which is to learn that words ending with a single consonant preceded by a short vowel double the consonant before adding **ing** and other vowel suffixes.
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## Activity

### 5 minutes

- Pupils investigate how to add endings like **ing/ed/er/ier/ish/est** onto words.
  - What do they notice about all of these suffixes? (All begin with vowels.)
  - Pupils group words according to the spelling pattern. (Differentiate words by having fewer types of ending for less able.)
  - Pupils then work out the rules for adding these endings.
  - Give one minute to sort them and two minutes to work out the rules.

jump - jumped;	walk - walker ;	hop - hopping;	hope - hoped;
sun - sunnier;	pack - packed;	fit - fittest;	write - writer;
care – caring.	train - trainer;	win - winner;	hate – hating;
	stand – standing.	drop – dropped.	mine – mining.
  - Reveal rule or list of examples for each.

*When words end in two or more consonants, or the vowel is not a short vowel, just add the ending. Words with a short vowel and a single consonant double the final consonant.*  
(Words ending in modifying **e** drop the **e** when a vowel suffix is added.)
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## Review

### 2 minutes

Remind pupils of the rule: words ending in a single consonant preceded by a short vowel double the consonant before adding **ing/ed** etc.

Words which already end in two consonants or end in a consonant and have a consonant suffix added, don't need doubling.

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# Session W18

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## Objectives

Y7 W2 (Pluralisation)

Revise **s/es/ies** plurals and introduce **f - ves** changes.

N.B: Use this starter only if pupils' writing reveals uncertainties about plurals.

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## Resources

Individual whiteboards, pens and cleaning cloths.

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## Introduction

### 3 minutes

- Confirm understanding of the terms singular and plural and discuss what pupils know about how to make a singular word into a plural.
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## Activity

### 5 minutes

- On individual whiteboards, pupils write **s/es/ies** to make the following words plural: *medal; penalty; replay; winner; injury; rule; goal; trophy*.
  - Record correct answer on board.
  - Football games have a first half and a second half. It is said to be a game of two halves. What is the rule for making words ending in **f** plural? (**f** becomes **v + es**). Ask for other examples and record them on class whiteboard. There are some exceptions: *chiefs; beliefs; roofs; dwarfs*.
  - Some words end **fe**: what happens to these? *Knife/knives; life/lives; wife/wives*.
  - If *cliff* becomes *cliffs*, what is the rule for making these words plural?
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## Review

### 2 minutes

Pupils write a note for themselves about creating plurals, and list examples for each rule.

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# Session W19

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## Objectives

Y7 W10 (Analogy) To help pupils see the family likenesses between words.

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## Resources

Cards or a jumbled collection of words which belong to different word families, e.g.

*Sign/signature/resign/design/assignment/signal*

*Hand/handling/handy/handful/handle*

*Ease/easy/easier/easiest/easily/uneasy*

*Crumbs/crumbling/crumble/crumbled.*

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## Introduction

### 2 minutes

- Explain about word families that share a root word.
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## Activity

### 5 minutes

- Pupils, in pairs, must group together (or highlight if working with a single sheet for all) the words that are in the same family.
  - Pairs who finish in time can suggest additional words and word families.
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## Review

### 3 minutes

Discuss what pupils have learned about word families.

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