

DRAGON'S DEN



Phonics learning opportunities

To practise blending for reading.

NB. Using fake words ensures that children have to learn to blend and not just recognise words by sight. As children get older and need to be able to read more and more words they will find it increasingly tricky to learn them all by sight.

Organisation

Whole class, small group, 1:1 or independently

Teaching ideas

Choose which phase to work on and then choose the specific sets of letters you want to practise. Alternatively, you could choose a general mixture of words from each phase for revision or enter your own words.

Model soundtalking each sound in the word on the egg and then blending the sounds together and saying the final word. Ask the whole class to repeat this process.

Ask the children to decide whether the word is real or fake. Make sure they all give an opinion and don't sit passively. The easiest way to do this is to ask them all to give an action (e.g. thumbs up/down, point left or right etc). Drag the egg to either the green (real) or red (fake) dragon.

For subsequent words, ask the children to soundtalk and then say the blended word. It works well to ask an individual child to do this and then get the whole class to repeat. If the first child struggles, ask others to help. Again, ask the children to decide whether the word is real or fake.

Shaking things up

Printable versions of the dragons and eggs are available on the printable resources page. Use these to play small group, hands on versions of the game.

Hide eggs with real and fake words around the classroom or around the playground. Split children into teams. Send one team to find all the real words and the other team to find the fake words (give them bags or boxes to collect them in). Set a time limit. When the time is up, gather the children together and check the words that the groups have found. Soundtalk each word together and decide whether it is real or fake. Give each team a point for each word of the correct type (real or fake) that they collected. Take away a point for each word of the wrong type.

Top tips

For every word (even words that they are familiar with) expect children to soundtalk the word and blend it to say the word. Don't just let them read the words. Phonics sessions are all about learning to blend and segment so the children need to be practising these skills. Wherever possible, get the whole class to repeat the soundtalking and the blending as well. Outside of phonics sessions, encourage children to only use blending to work out unfamiliar words.

If children aren't sure about the meaning of some of the real words, let them know what the words mean but don't get caught up spending lots of time explaining them. Remember that you've only got a short amount of time and the main objective is to practise blending not to expand their vocabulary. Make a note of words they are unsure of and revisit their meanings in literacy sessions (or other lessons if that is more appropriate).