Word Sorts

This activity is designed to help learners become increasingly confident with the spelling patterns of English. By taking learners from simple to complex structures, this approach helps learners make logical sense of word reading and writing in English.
the focus of word sorts

the
at
mat
mate
blue
yellow

high frequency words

decodable words

familiar content words
Please Note

**Note #1:** This IS a DECODING and ENCODING activity. By progressively exploring predictable patterns, learners are able to apply logical criteria as they decode words.

**Note #2:** This IS a systematic approach to learning. Teachers can sequence the sorting activities in such a manner that students progressively learn to decode predictable words as well as contend with exceptions.

**Note #3:** Learners should also learn to quickly recognise and use high frequency words as well as analyse known - but more orthographically complex - words in their oral vocabulary (e.g. hotdog, house, etc).
WORKFLOW
Scattered Picture or Words Cards

- sap
- mat
- was
- lap
- tap
- hat
- cat

Organised Picture or Words Cards

- HEADING #1
  - mat
  - sap
  - was

- HEADING #2
  - hat
  - lap
  - cat

- Out of Sorts
  - tap
The fat cat in the hat sat on the mat on a map covered in sap.

what?       did what?       where?       how?
DEMO #1
Supporting learners …

(a) **talk** regularly with learners (for oral language development, for shaping discourse, and for fostering verbal reasoning);

(b) **read** to learners, read **with** learners, and help learners read **on their own**;

(c) **write** for learners (e.g. from dictation), write **with** the learner (e.g. joint construction), and help learners write **on their own**;

(d) help learners **develop skills** (phonological awareness, decoding/spelling vocabulary, grammar, fluency, etc);

(e) help them **build content knowledge** and the strategies to build knowledge; and

(f) help learners be active in the ways that language and literacy are used as tools for **understanding and action**.

“For a beginning reader, every word is a unique pattern. Major statistical patterns emerge as the child encounters a larger sample of words, and later, finer-grained dependencies.” (Seidenberg, 2017, 92)

“Readers become orthographic experts by absorbing lots of data … The path to orthographic expertise begins with practice practice practice but leads to more more more more.” (Seidenberg, 2017, 108)

DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES
**Six Most Common Syllable Patterns**

- **Consonant + le**
  - cat, bed, pig, sun, bot, hog, gig, bib, quit …

- **R-controlled vowel**
  - far, ferment or torment

- **Vowel team or vowel pair**
  - pain or head or toy

- **Silent e or vowel consonant e**
  - ice

- **Open**
  - cap or stripe or cue

- **Closed**
  - cape or stripe or cue

**Pre-speller to spell it how it sounds**

- Oral language, print awareness, phonemic awareness and alphabetic awareness are the key features of this stage. These are the building blocks for formal literacy.

**Spell it by pattern**

- Once a learner has mastered the CVC pattern, it is time to contrast the short vowel sounds with long vowel sounds.

- Once this contrast is developing, learners explore the various diphthong forms and diverse vowel sounds in single-syllable words, such as bright. Learners also explore plurals, contractions, homophones, homographs and compound words.

- Learners clarify spelling patterns with the help of dictionary aids.

**Spell it how it sounds**

- The single-syllable, CVC form is the easiest way for learners to master consonants sounds, consonant digraphs, consonant blends, the short form of the vowels and simple r-controlled vowels.

**Consonant**
- cat, bed, pig, sun, bot, hog, gig, bib, quit …

**Digraph**
- with, chat, ship, fish, mush …

**Blends**
- plan, flag, ...

**R-controlled vowels**
- car, far, fir, stir, star, blur, ...

NB: the short form of each vowel (a, e, i, o, u) is only represented by a small number of spelling options … unlike the long form —>

**Spell by rule & dictionary aids**

- By this stage, learners can decode most, if not all, single syllable words. At this stage, learners become adept at adding common prefixes and suffixes as well as spelling a range of multisyllabic words, which requires that they identify syllable junctures. The unstressed, ambiguous schwa sound (often pronounced “uh”) is also present in many multisyllabic words, such as alone and confident. Learners will need to turn to other tools to disambiguate these unclear vowel sounds.

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**Six Most Common Syllable Patterns**

- **Closed**
  - This syllable ends with a consonant and contains a single following, often in its short form
  - mat or pic-nic or fresh (e.g. CVC or CCVC)

- **Open**
  - This syllable type ends with a vowel and the vowel is often long
  - me or ve-to

- **Silent e or vowel consonant e**
  - ice

- **Vowel team or vowel pair**
  - pain or head or toy

- **R-controlled vowel**
  - far or ferment or torment

- **Consonant + le**
  - apple or simple orickle

END NOTE: As encoding and decoding skills become automatic, there is a gradual shift in the treatment of literacy. There is a shift away from encoding/decoding and toward composition/comprehension. Consequently, teachers assume that learners have the skills to create and consume texts. There is now an onus on conveying and extracting meaning and intentions through text. For instance, it is assumed that one can read the text [government form], but does one know what its means in context?)

**10 - 13: use many strategies / 13+: spell from knowledge**

- At this stage, there are few items which are missing from one’s skill set. Instead, spelling & vocabulary learning are inextricable linked.

**Emergent (3 to 5 yrs old)**

- A - Z

**Letter-Name Alphabetic (4 to 7 years old)**

- CVC

**Within-Word Pattern (7 to 9 Years old)**

- CVC e

**Affixes/Suffixes (9 to 11 years old)**

- -ed, -ing, -ly, re-

**Derivational (11 years & older)**

- prefixes, suffixes

- bases, roots

- Build WORDS

**Concept of Word**

- Pre-speller to spell it how it sounds
- Oral language, print awareness, phonemic awareness and alphabetic awareness are the key features of this stage. These are the building blocks for formal literacy.

**Spell by rule & dictionary aids**

- By this stage, learners can decode most, if not all, single syllable words. At this stage, learners become adept at adding common prefixes and suffixes as well as spelling a range of multisyllabic words, which requires that they identify syllable junctures. The unstressed, ambiguous schwa sound (often pronounced “uh”) is also present in many multisyllabic words, such as alone and confident. Learners will need to turn to other tools to disambiguate these unclear vowel sounds.

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Over time, we learn word patterns.

- **CVC words**
  - pin
  - mat
  - sip

- **CVCe words**
  - pine
  - mate

- **CVVC words**
  - day
  - boil

- **Multisyllabic words**
  - hotdog
  - before
  - bottle
  - helicopter
  - banana
## Sequence of Phonics/Spelling Instruction (example words)

### 3 - 5 yrs old
**Emergent (Print Concept):** sorting pictures of words into letter sound, rhyme, and concept categories

### 4 - 7 yrs old
**Letter Name Alphabetic:** hat, bug, fog, log, fig, twig, hen, drop, fresh, much, pass, class, sad, job, blob, grab, sick, trick, rang, swing, blend

### 7 - 9 yrs old
**Within Word Stage:** care, hope, bake, fire, huge, day, boy, boil, cow, next, road, knock, coal, friend, bread, spool, loud, whose, throw, roast, cause, pause, paws, taught

### 9 - 11 yrs old
**Syllables & Affixes Stage:** chief, whine, theme, athlete, pilgrim, mushroom, nervous, service, receive, reign

### 11+ yrs old
**Derivational Stage:** uneasy, insincere, manipulate, apathy, sympathy, benediction, benefactor, geography, confidence

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Stage Description</th>
<th>Examples</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 - 5 yrs</td>
<td>Emergent (Print Concept)</td>
<td>sorting pictures of words into letter sound, rhyme, and concept categories</td>
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<tr>
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<td>hat, bug, fog, log, fig, twig, hen, drop, fresh, much, pass, class, sad, job, blob, grab, sick, trick, rang, swing, blend</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 - 11 yrs</td>
<td>Syllables &amp; Affixes Stage</td>
<td>chief, whine, theme, athlete, pilgrim, mushroom, nervous, service, receive, reign</td>
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<tr>
<td>11+ yrs</td>
<td>Derivational Stage</td>
<td>uneasy, insincere, manipulate, apathy, sympathy, benediction, benefactor, geography, confidence</td>
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</table>

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**Advanced morphology**

**CVC**

**CVCe**

**CVVC**

**Multi-syllabic**

**Short vowel**
Sequence of Phonics/Spelling Instruction

3 - 5 yrs old
Emergent (Print Concept): focus is on phonemic awareness and on alphabet (letter name) knowledge

4 - 7 yrs old
Letter Name Alphabetic: ă, m, t, s, ĭ, f, d, r, ő, g, ı, h, ũ, c, b, n, k, v, ĥ, w, j, p, y, x, qu, z, sh, ch, th, wh, ck, consonant blends (e.g. st, pl, bl, gl, sl)

7 - 9 yrs old
Within Word Stage: a-e, ai, ay, ei, ey, ee, ea, ie, e-e, i-e, igh, y, o-e, oa, ow, u-e, oo, ew, vowel+r, oi, oy, ou, au, ow, kn, wr, gn, shr, thr, squ, spl, tch, dge, ge, homophones

9 - 11 yrs old
Syllables & Affixes Stage: adding inflectional endings, detecting syllable junctures multisyllabic words, homographs & homophones

11+ yrs old
Derivational Stage: advanced morphology (prefixes, suffixes, roots) and diverse forms of base words.
A child begins to recognise . . .

- **the**
- **at**
- **mat**
- **mate**
- **blue**
- **yellow**

**high frequency words**

**decodable words**

**familiar content words**
To grow as a writer ...

GRADE K

Source: The Reading and Writing Project: http://readingandwritingproject.org
And grow as a reader.

GRADE 1
(decoding, word recognition and fluency)

I had three apples when I went to school today. I gave one apple to my teacher. I have two apples left.

My friend likes to eat apples. I asked if he would like an apple. He said yes! I have one apple left.
Stages of Spelling Development

1) Pre-speller - birth to 4

2) Spell it like it sounds - 4 - 7 years old

3) Spell it by (visual) pattern - 7 - 9 years old

4) Spell it by rule - 9 - 11 years old

5) Coordinating multiple strategies - 10 - 13 years old

6) Spell it from knowledge - 13 years and older
So, for a mature reader . . .

Reading skill is related to using the ‘correct’ pathway for the type of word being read. (Wise Younger et al., 2017, p. 91)

PRACTICAL REMINDERS
### Equipment

#### Letter Name-Alphabetic Pattern

**SPELLING - “short a” (Sort 1)**

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#### CVC ė

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#### CVC ū

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#### Out of Sorts

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**pictures (optional)**

**word lists**

**word cards, sort categories & blank cards**

**coloured tokens**

**space to write words and sentences**
## Two approaches: closed and open

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Closed Sorts</strong></th>
<th><strong>Open Sorts</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In a closed sort, the learner is provided with the categories into which the words need to be sorted.</td>
<td>In an open sort, the learner is provided with the word cards. Once examined/sorted, the learner identifies the categories.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Considering: patterns and concepts

Pattern Sorts
Organising words into phonic and orthographic patterns to building understanding of decodable structures.

Concept Sorts
Organising words or pictures into conceptual categories, such as “animate” vs “inanimate” objects.

Our Current Focus
Steps

1. Cut out either the word or picture cards for the sort activity.
2. Organise the category headings for the sort.
   a. If performing a **closed sort**, provide learners with category headings under which the learner will categorise the words or pictures;
   b. If performing an **open sort**, provide the learners with at least two blank cards so they can write the category headings once they have organised the words or pictures

(continued on next page …)
Steps

3. Help the learners categorise the words or pictures.
   a. Consider words that do not fit the patterns. These are called *Out of Sorts* words (like “said” or “was” or “of”)
   b. Also, write words on blank word cards that fit the patterns.

4. Once words are sorted, review them by saying them out loud.

5. Choose a few words and perform semantic maps.

6. Use these and other related words in rich, juicy sentences.

7. Reflect on the patterns and rules that have been covered.

8. Record the learners’ progress.
Integrating into Practice

*Word sorts* should be included as part of integrated practice. As the workflow suggests, there should be a focus on word meaning/use once the sort has been completed.

The example on the following page illustrates how a word sort (or word study) can be incorporated into a rich literacy lesson. Also, think about how words can incorporated into *interactive writing practices*.

If left unintegrated, there is the risk that the activity becomes a rote learning activity. If this eventuates, learners may not recognise words when they later see/use them in context.
KEY RESOURCES . . .
Sources of phonics sequences


Example Spelling Rules

Appendix A

SPELLING RULES

Rule 1 C softens to /s/ when followed by E, I, or Y. Otherwise, C says /k/.

Rule 2 G may soften to /j/ when followed by E, I, or Y. Otherwise, G says /g/.

Rule 3 English words do not end in I, U, V, or J.

Rule 4 A E O U usually say their names at the end of a syllable.

Rule 5 I and Y may say /i/ or /ai/ at the end of a syllable.

Rule 6 When a one-syllable word ends in a single vowel Y, it says /i/.

Rule 7 Y says long /i/ only at the end of a multi-syllable base word.

Rule 8 I and O may say /i/ and /o/ when followed by two consonants.

Rule 9 AY usually spell the sound /ai/ at the end of a base word.

Rule 10 When a word ends with the phonogram A, it says /i/.

Rule 11 Q always needs a U; therefore, U is not a vowel here.

Rule 12 Silent Final E Rules

12.1 The vowel says its name because of the E.

12.2 English words do not end in V or U.

12.3 The C says /s/ and the G says /j/ because of the E.

12.4 Every syllable must have a written vowel.

12.5 Add an E to keep singular words that end in the letter S from looking plural.

12.6 Add an E to make the word look bigger.

12.7 TH says its voiced sound /TH/ because of the E.

12.8 Add an E to clarify meaning.

12.9 Unseen reason.

Rule 13 Drop the silent final E when adding a vowel suffix only if it is allowed by other spelling rules.

Rule 14 Double the last consonant when adding a vowel suffix to words ending in one vowel followed by one consonant, only if the syllable before the suffix is accented. *This is always true for one-syllable words.

Rule 15 Single vowel Y changes to I when adding any ending, unless the ending begins with I.

Rule 16 Two I's cannot be next to one another in English words.

Rule 17 TI, CI, and SI are used only at the beginning of any syllable after the first one.

Rule 18 SH spells /sh/ at the beginning of a base word and at the end of the syllable. SH never spells /sh/ at the beginning of any syllable after the first one, except for the ending -ship.

Rule 19 To make a verb past tense, add the ending ED unless it is an irregular verb.

Rule 20 ED, past tense ending, forms another syllable when the base word ends in /d/ or /t/. Otherwise, ED says /d/ or /t/.

Rule 21 To make a noun plural, add the ending -S unless the word hases or changes, then add -ES. Occasional nouns have no change or an irregular spelling.

Rule 22 To make a verb 3rd person singular, add the ending -S, unless the word hases or changes, then add -ES. Only four verbs are irregular.

Rule 23 AI- is a prefix written with one L when preceding another syllable.

Rule 24 -FUL is a suffix written with one L when added to another syllable.

Rule 25 DGE is used only after a single vowel which says its short (first) sound.

Rule 26 CK is used only after a single vowel which says its short (first) sound.

Rule 27 TCH is used only after a single vowel which does not say its name.

Rule 28 AUGH, EIGH, IGH, ough. Phonograms ending in GH are used only at the end of a base word or before the letter T. The GH is either silent or pronounced /f/.

Rule 29 Z, never S, spells /s/ at the beginning of a base word.

Rule 30 We often double F, L, and S after a single vowel at the end of a base word. Occasionally other let- ters also are doubled.

The Alphabetic Code
the interface between oral and print language

https://youtu.be/dA4nt3rxTYM
MONITORING PROGRESS
# Keeping a record

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Patterns Explored</th>
<th>HFWs Explored</th>
<th>Further Vocabulary</th>
<th>Source Text(s)</th>
<th>Opportunities to Write</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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### Session Planning and/or Record Keeping

**Big picture goal or question being pursued in the learning:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session #</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description / Observations</th>
<th>Skill(s) / Task(s)</th>
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</table>

**Summary of achievements and next steps:**
## Alphabetic Knowledge (0-1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Domain</th>
<th>Progress</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the learner know all uppercase letters? (0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the learner know all lowercase letters? (0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can the learner recognize letters in the environment? (0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can the learner recognize known letters in different fonts and orientations (e.g. upside down)? (0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the learner know the most common sounds associated with all or known letters? (0-1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Can the learner use the above knowledge to attempt spelling familiar/common words? (0-2)</td>
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## Letter-Sound Spelling Knowledge (0-4)

**REPEAT:** Does the learner know the most common sounds associated with all or known letters? (0-1)

**REPEAT:** Can the learner use the above knowledge to attempt spelling familiar/common words? (0-2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill Domain</th>
<th>Progress</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the learner able to associate/match/category common words with their beginning letter/sound? (0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the learner able to associate/match/category common words with their final letter/sound? (0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the learner able to associate/match/category common words by rhyming/phonogram patterns? (0-1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the learner learning to spell/recognize age-appropriate high frequency words (e.g. Dolch/Fry)? (0-1a)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the learner able to encode and decode simple CVC words, which consist of known consonants, short vowels, common phonograms and consonant blends? (0-2a)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the learner understand and apply the CVCe rule, and how it effects the long form of the vowel? (1-2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the learner developing an understanding of complex vowel partners such as &quot;ea&quot; in bread and each, in CVVC words? (1-2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the learner able to recognize, spell and read common compound words (e.g. hot dog) as an introduction into multiletterable words? (1-2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the learner able to add inflectional endings / suffices to common CVC and CVCe words? (1-2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the learner applying knowledge of known patterns to decode new words (e.g. I know munch so I can decode crunch, lunch, hunch, etc)? (1-2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is the learner engaging in invented spelling of increasing sophistication? (1-2)</td>
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</table>

## Participating in Writing Activities (A)

### Has the learner consolidated emergent writing stage, scribbling -> controlled scribbling -> mock writing -> writing the familiar? (0)

### Can the learner write familiar words (e.g. name)? (0-1)

### Is the learner able to and/or motivated to make emergent texts with assistance (e.g. DO NOT ENTER sign for one’s bedroom)? (0-2)

### Is the learner developing a command of handwriting skills? (0-2) ...

### Does the learner engage in interactive writing? (1-3)

### Is the learner composing sentences of increasing sophistication? (1-3)

### Can the learner explore written forms when dictating to another? (0-2)

### Can the learner write relatively independently or jointly with proper scaffolding, including sentence stems, textual models and visual prompts? (2-4)

### Does the learner appreciate the need to write/compose differently when writing for different audiences in different forms (e.g. a science reports vs an infographic)? (2-4)

### Can the learner explore complex topics through both everyday language/forms and academic language/forms? (3-4)

### Can the learner use expository/information forms to synthesise, report on, explain and evaluate information drawn from a range of sources? (3b-4)

### Does the learner use spelling/decoding/interpreting words with a knowledge of common prefixes, roots, and suffixes and inflectional endings? (2-4)

### Is the learner able to quickly spell and read various words which are part of the same word family (e.g. explain, explanation, explanatory)? (2-4)

### Is the learner applying vowel shifting rules for word families (e.g. divine -> divinity)? (3-4)

### Does the learner use a combination of strategies (e.g. sound it out, notice patterns, apply rules, apply knowledge, consult reference - dictionary)? (2-4)

### Can the learner explore written forms when dictating to another? (0-2)

### Can the learner write relatively independently or jointly with proper scaffolding, including sentence stems, textual models and visual prompts? (2-4)

### Does the learner appreciate the need to write/compose differently when writing for different audiences in different forms (e.g. a science reports vs an infographic)? (2-4)

### Can the learner explore complex topics through both everyday language/forms and academic language/forms? (3-4)

### Can the learner use expository/information forms to synthesise, report on, explain and evaluate information drawn from a range of sources? (3b-4)

C = Consolidated / D = Developing / E = Emerging / B = Beginning / — = Not started / N.A. = Not applicable
Monitoring Growth in Key Areas

1. Phonological processing and phonemic awareness
2. Alphabetic knowledge
3. Common onset-rime patterns
4. Decoding (reading) skills
5. Encoding (spelling) skills
6. Sight / High Frequency Word Recognition
7. Fluency (reading connected text)
8. Comprehension

- e.g. Phonemic Awareness Skills Mapping (PASM)
- e.g. Letter Sound Assessment
- e.g. Z-Test
- e.g. Specific Phonic Assessments
- e.g. Qualitative Spelling Inventories
- e.g. Dolche and Fry’s Word Lists
- e.g. Qualitative Reading Inventory V
- e.g. Progressive Achievement Tests in Reading
CONCLUSION
What’s the Point (again)?

“Learning to read is the process of acquiring the several types of **statistical knowledge** that support rapid and efficient comprehension, starting with **phonological structure & orthographic structure**.” (Seidenberg, 2017, 108)

“For a beginning reader, every word is a unique pattern. Major statistical patterns emerge as the child encounters a larger sample of words, and later, finer-grained dependencies.” (Seidenberg, 2017, 92)

“The path to orthographic expertise begins with **practice practice practice** but leads to more more more more.” (Seidenberg, 2017, 108)

the focus of word sorts

the
mat
blue
at
mate
yellow

high frequency words
decodable words
familiar content words