

The Blueberry Game - “Silly Sounds” Oral Blending

After students have learned the sounds for the letters of the alphabets, they must learn how to put letter-sounds together smoothly, without a break. This allows students to decode or “sound out” words quickly and efficiently.

Some students pick this skill up easily, others find it difficult. For students who are just learning to decode, and those for whom decoding is a challenge, it is easier to start by putting just two sounds together than it is to put together three or more sounds.

This game is designed so that students can practice putting two letter-sounds together without a break. This is a skill that is related to pronunciation, not to words or meanings. Tell students that in order to become fluent at reading words, they have to be able to connect letter sounds smoothly. Tell them that this game helps them practice doing that, but they won’t be making words. They’ll be making “silly sounds” that aren’t words. We call them silly sounds because they don’t mean anything. But if they can read silly sounds well, that will help them learn to read real words.

Making the Game: Run off the berries on light blue cardstock. Laminate if desired for extra wear. If you are doing just one game, you can cut around each circle. If you are making a number of games, to save time, just cut between the circles with a paper cutter to make small squares. Set up five manila envelopes (or zip-up plastic bags); label one bag for each short vowel. Put the berry pieces for each short vowel in a separate envelope. The basket pattern should be copied on brown or tan cardstock. Laminate if desired and cut out the baskets.

Setting Up: Select the berry pieces for the short vowel combination you’d like to practice. Place the berries face down on the table. Give a basket to each student playing the game.

How To Play: Students take turns picking a blueberry from the table top. If they can pronounce the vowel-consonant or consonant-vowel combination correctly, they may place it above their basket. If they cannot, the teacher should model, all the students repeat, and the blueberry is placed face down back on the table. (Use the short vowel sounds.) The person who earns the most blueberries is the winner.

Note: If you want to get fancy, draw the outline of a large blueberry bush on a piece of green poster board. Place this on the table, and set up the game by putting the blueberry pieces face down on the outline of the bush. Students can then “pick” a blueberry from the bush when it’s their turn. Or, run off individual bushes on green cardstock. Students select the number of berries that you designate and place them face down on their own bush. Then they take turns picking the berries, saying the sounds, and placing them above their baskets. Extra berries should be placed in rows above the first.

