

At the talk face 6

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Sound and spelling puzzles

I suppose that most students study English through the printed word, and spelling influences their pronunciation. However, the relationship between English spelling and pronunciation is not simple. Puzzles such as the ones on the opposite page are designed:

1 - to raise students' awareness of the sound/spelling distinction

2 - to help students to notice some common spelling patterns

1 Add a Sound

Ask students to create new words by combining the sounds in the black section with the words in the white section. Make sure that they think of the pronunciation of the words rather than the spelling. For example, /k/ + *aim* makes *came*. Notice here the two different ways of spelling the sound sequence /eim/.

key

1 = came, game, climb, care, cake, quite, queues, quarter, clues, glues

2 = worth, weighed, heart, highs, wise, hear, year, we're, hate, wait, your, war, hair, wear

3 = late, rate, leg, rail, lie, rose, rows, lows, rare, lake, rake

2 Change a Sound

In these two puzzles, students have to say what new word will be created if you change the vowel sounds as indicated. For example, if you change the vowel sound in *pan* to /ei/, you get *pain*. Notice that in both puzzles, the first phoneme is a short vowel sound and the second phoneme is the way that vowel letter is pronounced in the alphabet. In doing the puzzle, students should notice some spelling patterns such as the silent final e 'making the letter say its own name' in words like *plane*.

key

1 = pain, plane, ate/eight, made/maid, main, tape, rain, hate

2 = read, beat, cheek, feel, mean, sweet, wheel, seat, feed, meet

3 Beginnings and Endings

Students make as many words as possible matching the beginnings in the black box with the endings in the white box. They should then classify their words according to the vowel sound. This activity should help them notice some sound-spelling correspondences relating to the letter i.

Key

win = wit, lit, fit, sit, quit, will, mill, fill, wish, fish, fin, tin, sin
wine = light, might, night, fight, tight, sight, wife, life, mice, nice, line, mine, nine, fine, mile, file, tile, wide, tide, side, site, quite

4 Digraph Search

Ask students to find as many words as possible containing the digraphs EA or OU from the letters in the black ovals. Then they should classify the words into the five different possible pronunciations of the digraph below.

Key

EA: 1 = eat, east, heat, sea; 2 = wear, swear, 3 = ear, hear, 4 = earth, 5 = sweat

OU: 1 = rough, touch, tough, 2 = cough, 3 = out, hour, our, 4 = ought, tour, court, 5 = though

5 Mirror Word Crossword

In this crossword, the clues are the words pronounced backwards. In other words, the order of the phonemes is reversed. For example, *Kate's* consists of four phonemes /k/ /ei/ /t/ /s/. If we reverse the order, we get /s/ /t/ /ei/ /k/, which is the pronunciation of *steak*. This puzzle obliges the student to clearly separate in their minds the spellings from sounds.

Key

Across: 3 = steak, 4 = eat, 5 = seen, 7 = speak, 9 = name, 13 = nice, 14 = feel, 15 = time

Down: 1 = dates, 2 = meets, 3 = style, 6 = nine, 8 = knife, 10 = ace, 11 = meet, 12 = late

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1 ADD A SOUND

1	/k/	aim	air	lime
	/g/ +	ache	white	
		use	water	lose

2	/h/	earth	aid	art
	/j/ +	eyes	ear	
	/w/	or	eight	air

3	/l/	eight	egg	ale
	/r/ +	eye	owes	
		air	ache	

2 CHANGE A SOUND

1	/æ/ to /eɪ/	2	/e/ to /i:/
	pan		red
	at		check
	mad		men
	man		sweat
	ran		well
	hat		fed
			bet
			fell
			set
			met

3 BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

wi-	ght	fe
li-	ce	t
mi-	me	ne
ni-	le	
fi-	de	ll
ti-	sh	te
si-	qu-	n
/ɪ/	win	
/aɪ/	wine	

4 DIGRAPH SEARCH

EA words



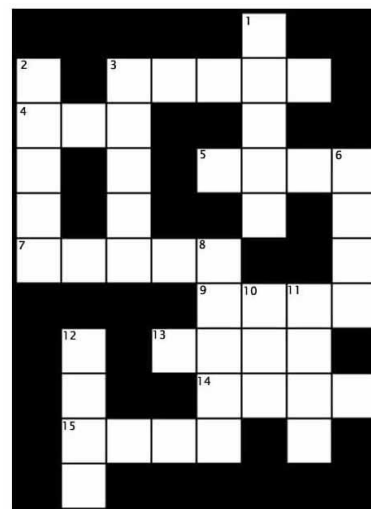
1	i:	2	eə	3	ɪə	4	ɜ:	5	e
			wear						

OU words



1	ʌ	2	ɒ	3	aʊ	4	ɔ:	5	əʊ
					or aʊə		or ʊə		
					out				

5 MIRROR WORD CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 3 Kate's
- 4 tea
- 5 niece
- 7 keeps
- 9 main
- 13 sign
- 14 leaf
- 15 might

DOWN

- 1 stayed
- 2 steam
- 3 lights
- 6 nine
- 8 fine
- 10 say
- 11 team
- 12 tail