



Phonological Stages – Grade Three

What should my third grader be able to do?

By the end of grade three your child should be able to:

- Delete initial sounds from words that start with blends; NOTE: *Blends* are clusters of 2-3 consonants that are not separated by a vowel (e.g. "Say the word *bring*. Now say it again but don't say 'b'." Child: "ring").
- Delete final sounds from words that end with blends (e.g. "Say the word *fast*. Now say it again but don't say 's'." Child: "fat").
- Substitute initial sounds in words that start with blends (e.g. "Say the word *glow*. Say it again but change 'g' to 'f'." Child: "flow").
- Substitute vowel sounds in the middle of words (e.g. "Say the word *straight*. Now change 'ay' to 'ee'." Child: "street").
- Delete sounds from words in middle blends (e.g. "Say the word *winter*. Now say it again but don't say 't'." Child: "winner").

How can I help my third grader develop phonological awareness skills?

- Children in grade three are well on their way to becoming very proficient readers and writers. Many children in this grade, however, still struggle to carefully read every single sound they see from left to right, and to write every single sound they hear in words. *Sounding out words* when both reading and spelling is a very important skill that your children will use throughout their lifetimes to read and to spell unfamiliar words. In order to read words accurately, they need to be encouraged to slowly say every sound in an unfamiliar word and to refrain from trying to guess at the word by scanning only the first couple of letters. Similarly, when trying to spell a long or unfamiliar word, encourage your children to say the word slowly one syllable at a time, and to spell each sound they hear and feel their mouth is making.
- In grade three children will also need support to learn and consolidate phonics rules and to recognize common spelling patterns. You can support this learning by having them practice both reading and spelling words with patterns such as the long vowel silent 'e' rule (e.g. the word *man* becomes *mane* when silent 'e' is added to the end), consonant doubling in the middle of a word to make a short vowel sound (e.g. the long 'u' vowel in the word *super* becomes a short 'u' vowel when there are two



consonants after the vowel in the word *supper*), -ck at the end of a syllable to make the 'k' sound (we spell the word *sock* with -ck at the end instead of with 'c' or 'k' at the end), etc.

- Continue to work with your third graders on phonological awareness activities that involve vowel sounds and consonant blends, as these two areas continue to pose difficulties for many students in their elementary years. Children in grade three also need to learn and consolidate their knowledge of vowel patterns, such as: ee, oo, ai, oa, ea, ur, or, ir, er, ar, oor, etc.
- Since the five short vowel sounds tend to be difficult for students to remember in both their reading and their spelling, teach your third grader to think of an easy to remember visual cue to help them remember these sounds. Good visual cues for the short vowels are: *apple* for short 'a', *elephant* for short 'e', *igloo* for short 'i', *umbrella* for short 'u', and *octopus* for short 'o'.
- Another excellent way to help third graders read and spell all the sounds accurately in words is by using something call *non-words*. Non-words are made up words that don't mean anything. For example, some non-words that have the short 'a' sound in the middle are: *zan, faf, baj, shan*. When you have your children practice saying, reading and spelling non-words with a particular pattern they are struggling with, they cannot use guessing as their go-to strategy since the words are not real words that are in their existing vocabulary. Non-word training forces children to really look at all the sounds they see to read them, and to say all the sounds in the words to spell them.