



Grade Level: 2 through 6

Participants: Individuals

Objective: Exercise fluency, flexibility, and phonics.

Time: 15 to 30 minutes

Quick View

In this fun, phonetic activity, students race to locate as many hidden words as possible from a “Master Word” written on the board. As they consider vowel combinations and consonant clusters, students lengthen their word lists while simultaneously strengthening their phonetic skills.

Example

Master Word: ORIGINAL

- Vowels: a, i, i, o.
- Consonants: g, l, n, r.
- Vowel combinations: ai and oa.
- Consonant clusters: ng and gr.
- Rhyming words: nail, rail, gal, and more
- Words spelled frontwards and backwards: gal and lag

Derivative words: a, I, an, in, or, go, ago, lag, gal, oar, loan, groan, goal, girl, ail, air, lair, lion, oral, nail, rail, railing, long, ring, rang, rain, gain, grain, grin, organ, origin, and more.

Take Home

Increased word analysis skills and a fun new game to share with family and friends

Materials

- Pens or pencils
- Paper
- Chalkboard and chalk, or similar
- Timer

Getting Ready

- Select a word from the Master Words list and write it on the board. You can choose one from the suggestions below or make up your own.

Master Words Suggestions

- Dictionary
 - Earthling
 - Machines
 - Playground
 - Shakespeare
 - Dinosaur
 - Friendship
 - Original
 - Planets
 - Wildflowers
- Decide on a time limit for the challenge. Five minutes is usually sufficient, but you may wish to lengthen or shorten the allotted time in accordance with your student’s ages and abilities.

Activities and Procedures

- 1 Show the class the Master Word and have them write it at the top of their papers.
- 2 Explain the following Word-A-Thon Rules to the class:

Rules of Play

- Words may be any length.
- Proper nouns do not count.
- Letters cannot be used more often than they appear in the Master Word.
- Words may be used only once.
- A word and its plural are allowed as two words.
- Misspelled words do not count.
- One point is awarded for each correct word.

- 3 Explain the Strategy Tips to the class.

Strategy Tips

- Note which vowels you see. Do you have more than one of any vowel?
 - Note which consonants you see. Do you have more than one of any consonant?
 - Start with 1 letter words, 2 letter words, 3 letter words, and so on. Two and three letter words are the easiest to find.
 - Look for vowel combinations. For example, in the word, ORIGINAL, the vowels are a, i and o. The most common vowel combinations are ai and oa, as in rail and loan.
 - Look for consonant clusters, like ng: ring, long, railing or gr: grin, grail, grain
 - Look for words by changing one vowel: lag to log or ail to oil.
 - Look for words by changing one consonant: ail to air or rail to rain.
 - Look for rhymes by changing the first consonant: gain to rain, or nail to rail or nag to rag to lag.
 - Try spelling words both forwards and backwards: on and no, rail and liar, and gal and lag.
 - If there is an “s” in your word, use both singular and plural forms of words.
- 4 Set the timer and begin.
 - 5 Students will enjoy comparing words and word counts after time is up.

Extensions

- Award extra points for vowel combination words.
- Award extra points for consonant cluster words.
- Award extra points for each word that no one else has.
- Tell students that here are five animals hiding in the phrase, ANIMAL KINGDOM (dog, dingo, lion, koala, mink).
- Have students compete to find the most words within this phrase in five minutes, and award extra points for each animal name found.
- Find words with four or more letters.
- Find words whose second letter is a specific vowel.
- Find words whose second letter is any consonant.

From the book “Creative Genius” by Marjorie Sarnat

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