



WORD BUILDERS

BLENDS & DIGRAPHS

Dear Family,

Welcome to *Word Builders: Blends & Digraphs*! This kit is designed to help your budding reader become even more adept at recognizing letters and their sounds, building words, and reading those words.

Research shows that two of the most powerful predictors of early reading success are **alphabet knowledge** and **phonemic awareness**. Alphabet knowledge means knowing the shapes and names of letters and the sounds they make. Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate separate sounds in spoken words. Another key component of reading is **phonics**, the relationship between sounds and the letters (or spellings) that represent them.

Word Builders: Blends & Digraphs offers a playful way to enhance phonemic awareness by developing your child's ear for common sounds in words. It also builds phonics skills by helping your child associate specific groups of letters with their sounds, in particular **blends** and **digraphs**. Blends are two or more consonants that appear together in a word, with each letter keeping its own sound (for example, the sounds /f/ and /l/ in the word *flag*). Digraphs are



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sh

also two consonants that appear together in a word, but they represent only one sound (for example, the sound /sh/ in *ship* or *fish*). As your child learns to recognize these spelling patterns—and more words—his or her reading skills will start to soar!

When children can recognize letters quickly and accurately and can distinguish the individual sounds in words (for example, the three sounds in *chat* — /ch/ /a/ /t/), they can more easily learn sound-spelling relationships (phonics) and apply that knowledge to decode (or read) words. Children with strong decoding skills spend less mental energy on recognizing words, leaving them more energy for understanding and enjoying what they read. Research shows that children who can easily decode words read much more than children who are less skilled at decoding. Educators agree this increased reading, in turn, results in greater reading growth.

Word Builders: Blends & Digraphs supports your child in acquiring these important skills. Along the way, your child will have plenty of opportunities to experience the “I can do it all by myself” satisfaction that builds confidence in reaching new goals.

Enjoy!

What's Inside Word Builders: Blends & Digraphs

This box contains 55 easy-grip foam magnetic letter tiles. With these tiles, your child can build simple words to get started on the road to reading success. The letter tiles include:

- 21 blends: *bl, cl, fl, gl, pl, sl, br, cr, dr, fr, gr, pr, tr, sc, sk, sm, sn, sp, st, sw, nk*
- 7 digraphs: *ch, ph, sh, th, wh, ck, ng*
- 21 consonants: *b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, y, z*
- 5 vowels: *a, e, i, o, u*
- 1 blank tile

Word Builders features lowercase letters because these are the letter forms children see most often when they read any text. You'll notice that the consonants (including the blends and digraphs) are in black type while the vowels are in red. This configuration helps your child recognize and understand word-building patterns.

Also inside the box is a write-on/wipe-off magnetic board for your child to use with the letter tiles. There's also a writing line for your child to practice writing the words he or she forms. (Be sure to use a dry-erase marker for easy cleaning.) Research shows a strong correlation between writing and reading.

Playing and Learning With Word Builders

After your child has had a chance to explore the letter tiles independently, try some of these quick and fun learning activities.

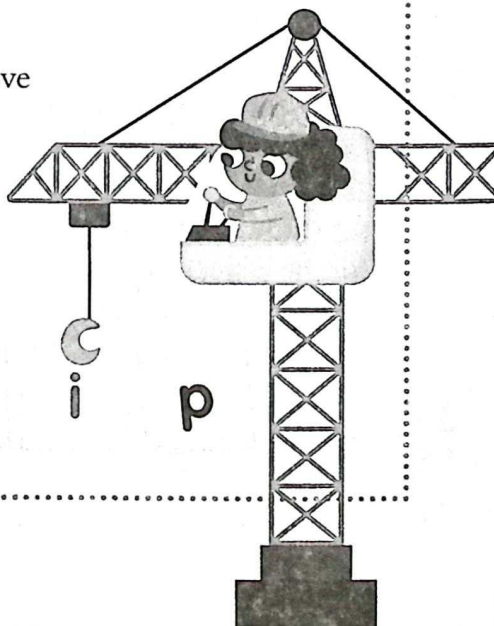
Sound It Out!

- Explore rhyming words with the letter tiles. Start by putting the letters of a simple three-letter word, such as *lap*, on the magnetic board. Have your child blend (put together) the letter sounds together, /l/ /a/ /p/, and read the word: *lap*. Next, take away the first letter, *l*, and replace it with a consonant blend tile, such as *cl*. Ask your child to read the new word: *clap*. Then, take away the *cl* and replace it with a digraph tile, such as *ch*, to make the word *chap*. Continue the activity, always starting with simple three-letter words, and transition to the blends and digraphs tiles (for example, *hip* to *ship* to *chip*, or *top* to *stop* to *shop*).
- For another version of the above activity, start with a blend or digraph tile, such as *gr* or *th*, and invite your child to use the other single-letter tiles to create new words that start (or end) with that blend or digraph.

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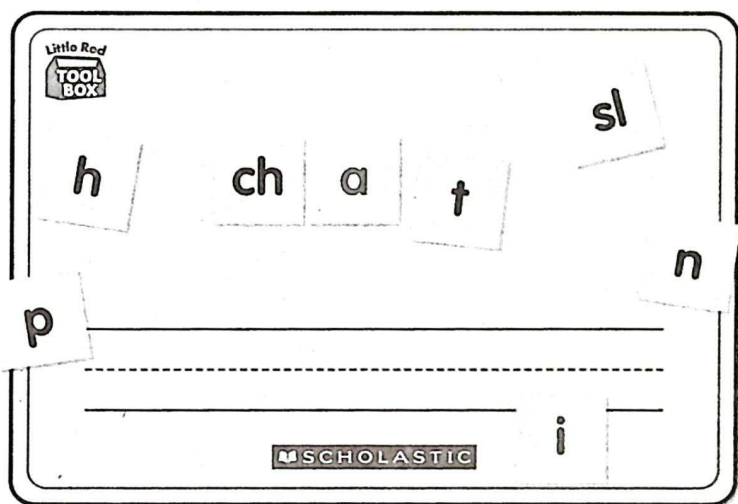
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Building Words

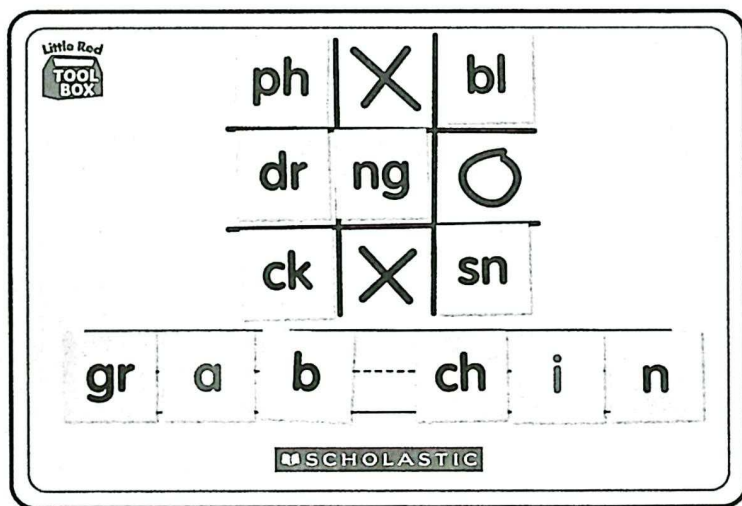
- Choose a few letter tiles that your child can use to build some words; for example, *a, ch, h, i, n, o, p, sl, and t*. Start by having your child make a simple three-letter word, such as *pat*. Then, ask your child to change the letter *p* to the letter *h* and read the new word. (*hat*) Change the *h* to *ch*. What's the new word? (*chat*) Change the *t* to *p*. What's the new word? (*chap*) Change the *ch* to *n*. What's the new word? (*nap*) Change the *a* to *i*. What's the new word? (*nip*) Change the *n* to *sl*. What's the new word? (*slip*) Continue the activity until your child has built 8 to 10 words. Be sure to give your child time to read each new word and offer support as needed (for example, by helping sound out the letters).



- For another version of word building, start with a simple word, such as *top*, and tell your child to change one letter tile to make a word that is the opposite of *go*. What is the word? (*stop*) Next, tell your child to change one letter tile to make a word that describes a place where you buy things. What's the word? (*shop*) Continue the activity, asking your child to change one letter tile at a time to create a new word based on the definition you give.

Blends & Digraphs Tic-Tac-Toe

Use a dry-erase marker to draw a tic-tac-toe grid on the write-on/wipe-off magnetic board. Place a blend or digraph tile on each space. Players take turns choosing a space and saying a word that begins or ends with that blend or digraph. For an added challenge, the player must



spell the word on the board, using the blend or digraph tile and other letter tiles. If the player is correct, he or she can claim the space by marking it with an X or O.

Beginning or End?

Choose a digraph that can appear at the beginning or end of words (such as *ch*). Using a dry-erase marker, write letters to form both types of words on the magnetic board, leaving out the digraph. For example, you might write *air*, *op*, *ip*, *pea*, *bea*, and *in*. Next, give the digraph tile to your child. As you point to each partially formed word, ask your child, "Beginning or end?" Have your child decide where to place the tile to form the word. (For example: *ch* + *air* = beginning; *pea* + *ch* = end)

Mystery Blend

Using a dry-erase marker, write four incomplete words (such as *__ar*, *__ump*, *__ick*, and *__op*) on the magnetic board. (You can also use the other letter tiles to form the incomplete words.) Then, challenge your child to find the "secret" blend that will form a word with all four (in this case, *st* will form *star*, *stump*, *stick*, and *stop*). Repeat with other blends or digraphs.



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Scavenger Hunt

Before reading a book with your child, select (or have your child pick) two or three blend and/or digraph letter tiles and place them on the write-on/wipe-off magnetic board. As you read the book, invite your child to be on the lookout for words that contain those blends and digraphs. Have your child write the words on the board using a dry-erase marker. How many words can your child find?

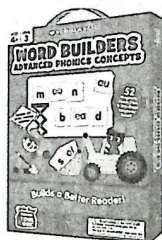
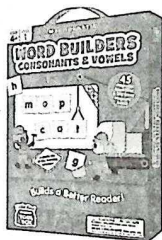
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Extend the Learning

For more skill-building fun, check out *Word Builders: Consonants & Vowels (Level 1)* and *Word Builders: Advanced Phonics Concepts (Level 3)*! With all three sets, your child can build hundreds of words to boost his or her reading and spelling skills.



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