

A READING  
CELEBRATION

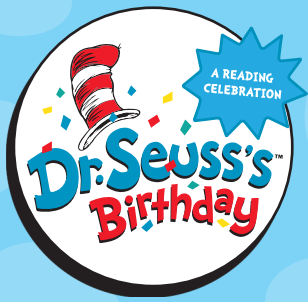
# Dr. Seuss's Birthday



# Ideas for Teaching Phonics Using Dr. Seuss Books!

Give Your Students the Gift  
That Keeps on Giving—  
**A LOVE OF READING!**





# Teachers, Did You Know?

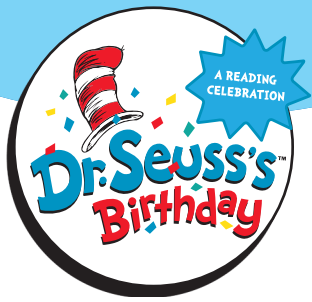
## Information about Dr. Seuss

With the publication of *The Cat in the Hat* in 1957 and *Green Eggs and Ham* in 1960, Theodor Geisel, AKA Dr. Seuss, revolutionized the way kids learn to read. In the mid-1950s a debate raged about how best to teach reading. Many American kids were struggling to learn to read. Some people felt it was because teachers focused too much on sight words and not on phonics. Others felt it was because the primers used at the time were boring and unappealing to kids.

Publishers following the debate wondered what they could do. William Spalding, the director of Houghton Mifflin's education division, gave Dr. Seuss a list of 225 words from a teacher-approved vocabulary list for six- and seven-year-olds. He challenged Dr. Seuss to write a book kids couldn't put down using only these words. The result: *The Cat in the Hat*. With only 236 words, **Dr. Seuss created a new kind of limited vocabulary book for beginning readers.** It had rhyme and repetition. It had outrageous illustrations and a subversive story line. **It was fun.** He then wrote *Green Eggs and Ham*, using only 50 words. The limited word count, repetition, and rhymes made it possible for a beginning reader to manage on their own. The funny, thoroughly relatable story about not wanting to try a new food made it appealing.

The limited word counts in *The Cat in the Hat* and *Green Eggs and Ham* might lead one to think that those early Dr. Seuss books were promoting the sight-word approach to reading. **But Dr. Seuss was trying to appeal to kids, not taking sides in the debate.** He showed us that phonics *and* sight words can be fun. While his books weren't strictly phonics-based, their rhyme and alliteration feature many phonics concepts. You won't find a Dr. Seuss book that limits itself to ONLY short vowel sounds or certain consonant blends, but you will find lots of opportunities for your students to practice phonics skills and find patterns in engaging, funny stories.

All reading teachers can agree that learning to read is serious business and can be hard work. They also agree that for kids to become strong readers, they need to read a lot. Full of relatable experiences, engaging illustrations, rhyme, repetition, and silly stories, Dr. Seuss's books make learning to read a joy instead of a chore. **Dr. Seuss's Beginner Books provide the perfect combination of kid-appeal, supportive vocabulary, and structure to get beginners reading eagerly.**



# Dr. Seuss and the Science of Reading

A thorough review of reading research shows that the following components are crucial to learning to read:

- Phonological awareness
- Phonics and word recognition
- Fluency
- Vocabulary and oral language comprehension
- Text comprehension

The research on phonics shows that systematic, explicit teaching of phonics, not just in incidental, teachable moments, is most effective.

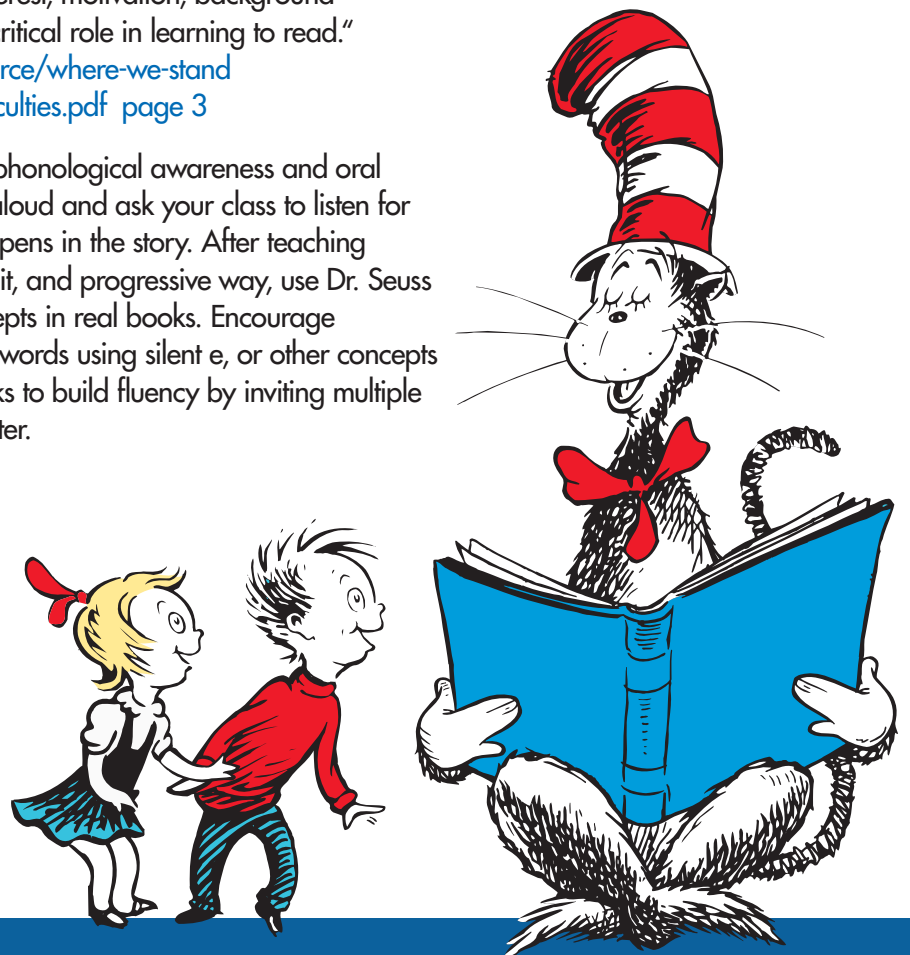
Also, multiple readings of rich and complex texts is recommended. When teachers read aloud and model decoding strategies and then allow students to practice these skills on their own, students develop fluency and comprehension skills. Finally, there should be “high-quality conversations about the text that focus on language, structure, and deepened understanding.”

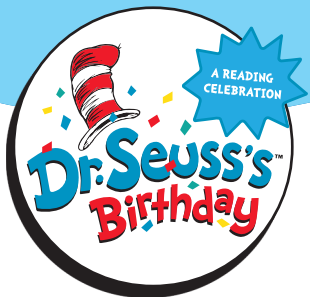
[nwea.org/blog/2022/the-science-of-reading-explained/](https://nwea.org/blog/2022/the-science-of-reading-explained/)

Further research also indicates that “interest, motivation, background knowledge, [and] culture . . . all play a critical role in learning to read.”

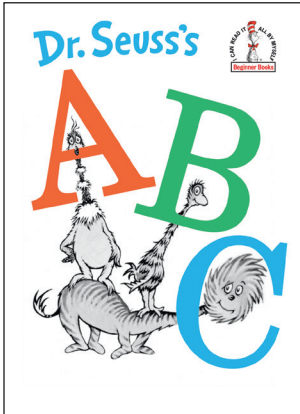
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Dr. Seuss books are great for building phonological awareness and oral language comprehension. Read them aloud and ask your class to listen for certain sounds or to describe what happens in the story. After teaching phonics concepts in a systematic, explicit, and progressive way, use Dr. Seuss books to show examples of those concepts in real books. Encourage students to look for specific phonemes, words using silent e, or other concepts they’ve just learned. Use Dr. Seuss books to build fluency by inviting multiple and choral readings or a readers’ theater.





# Rhyme, Alliteration, and Assonance Teach Phonological Awareness



Dr. Seuss is the king of zany rhymes. Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize sounds in spoken language. Recognizing rhyme, alliteration, and assonance are examples of phonological awareness. Playing listening games builds this awareness.

## ACTIVITY #1

**Dr. Seuss's ABC** provides great examples of alliteration: "Aunt Annie's Alligators, AAA!"

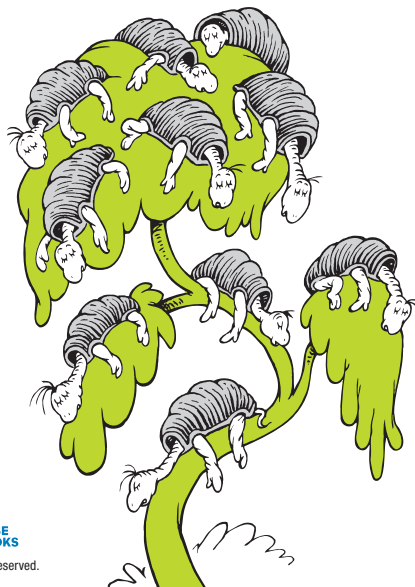
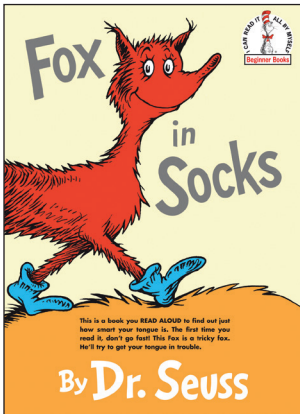
**Fox in Socks** also features alliteration and **assonance**. Sometimes assonance rhymes, and sometimes it doesn't. For example, the long *E* sound in this tongue twister:

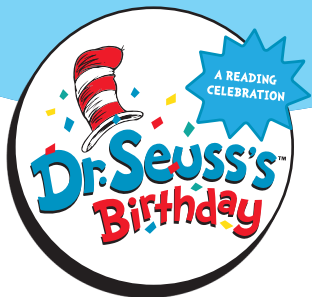
Through three cheese trees three free fleas flew.  
While these fleas flew, freezy breeze blew.  
Freezy breeze made these three trees freeze.  
Freezy trees made these trees' cheese freeze.  
That's what made these three free fleas sneeze.

Help your students learn tongue twisters with alliteration and assonance to practice hearing different and similar sounds.

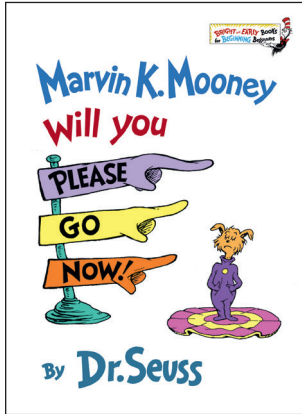
## ACTIVITY #2

**PLAY I'M GOING ON A TRIP:** Play the word game, "I'm Going on a Trip," with your students, using alliteration. Provide a letter sound as the category. For example, "I'm going on a trip and I'm only taking things that start with *B*." The first student might say, "I'm going on a trip and I'm taking a blueberry." The next might add a bear or a beanbag chair. You can decide whether your students should repeat the items added before theirs (I'm going on a trip and I'm taking a blueberry, a bear, a beanbag chair, and a book.) or if they should just add their word. Older kids might try this with assonance. Go on a trip and take only things that have the "oo" sound, like a newspaper, a poodle, a tuba, and a newt.





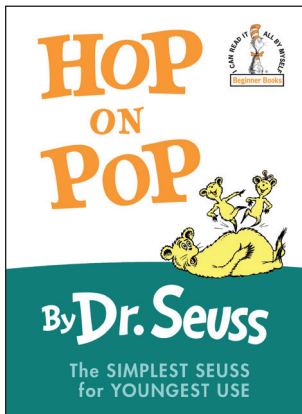
# Syllables—More Phonological Awareness



Counting and identifying syllables also builds phonological awareness. Syllables are the building blocks of words. Each syllable contains one sound, or beat, of a word. The sound is called a phoneme. To apply the rules of phonics, you need to be able to identify phonemes. Model breaking words into syllables by clapping or stomping the beats of words and having your students mimic you.

## ACTIVITY #1

**SYLLABLE CLAP:** *Marvin K. Mooney, Will You Please Go Now!* is a fun book to explore syllables. The title has two sections of five syllables each: Mar-vin K. Moon-ey / Will You Please Go Now. So do many of the ways Marvin can go: *You can go by foot. You can go by cow.* Have your students clap along as you read the story aloud. How many five or ten syllable phrases or sentences they can hear?



*Hop on Pop* is written almost entirely with one syllable words. Have your students clap along as you read aloud to find the few multisyllable words in the book.

## ACTIVITY #2

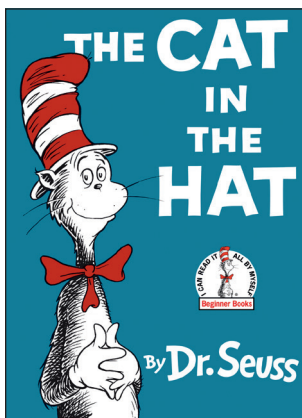
**SYLLABLE TOSS:** Arrange your class or group of kids in a circle. Provide a ball for them to toss, bounce, or roll across the floor. Start with kids' names. Give the first student the ball. Ask them to say their name and break it into syllables. For example, "Kiana. Ki-an-a," and say the first syllable and roll or toss the ball to someone else. The second person would say "an" and roll it to another kid, and that kid would finish the name with, "a." Then they would say their name and start the ball rolling again. "Jason. Ja-son." After they are used to breaking words into syllables, have them play the game with other kinds of words, like Dr. Seuss characters: Marvin K. Mooney, Bartholomew Cubbins, Horton, Thing Two, and Yertle the Turtle.

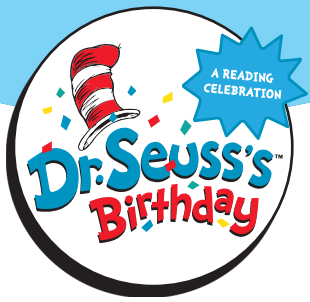
## ACTIVITY #3

**GET POETIC:** Explore syllables with your students by writing haikus and cinquains. Haikus are Japanese poems, traditionally about nature or the seasons. Their form is based on syllables: each poem consists of three lines, with the first and third line consisting of five syllables and the second line consisting of seven. The cinquain is a descriptive poem structured by syllables, too. A cinquain has five lines, with the syllables following a pattern of 2, 4, 6, 8, 2. Neither has to rhyme, but they can. For older readers, have them search favorite Dr. Seuss books and create haikus or cinquains using the text. They might have to change the line breaks that Dr. Seuss used. That's okay!

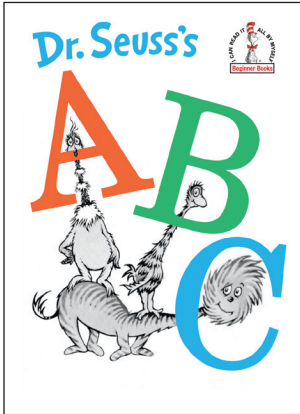
For example, from *The Cat in the Hat*

It was too wet to play  
So we Stayed in the house all  
That cold, cold wet day





# Alphabetic Principle



To be successful readers, kids need to recognize letters and know the sounds they make. That's the alphabetic principle.

**Dr. Seuss's ABC** provides an excellent starting point for building those skills.

- Each letter is shown in upper and lower case, and Dr. Seuss uses color to make the featured letter stand out.
- Examples of words beginning with that letter are provided.

Share **Dr. Seuss's ABC** with your students. Choose a letter to focus on and explore it in your classroom and in other books.

## ACTIVITY #1

**LETTER SCAVENGER HUNT:** Choose a letter. Provide students with small colored sticky notes. Invite them to mark words that start with the letter they are searching for on classroom signs, posters, or book covers. Make a list of all the words your class finds in the classroom that start with your featured letter. This would get into a whole discussion of proper nouns and headline-style, which I don't think is what we are going for. Or is there another reason?

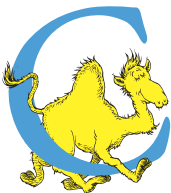


## ACTIVITY #2

**SENSORY LETTERS:** Cut upper- and lower case letters out of fine grain sandpaper or another textured material. Mix them and have kids sort and match the cases. Encourage kids to trace the letters with their fingers as they sort.

Provide modeling clay for students to make letter shapes. Alternatively, use raw pizza dough. Start with clean hands and have students create letter shapes with the dough. Bake and serve!

A sand tray or a tray with shaving cream in it will work for kids to practice their letter shapes, too.



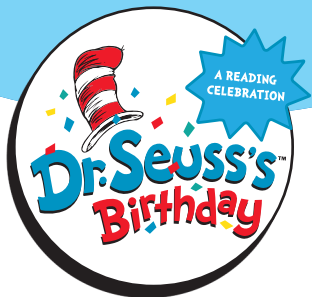
## ACTIVITY #3

**CREATE DESCRIPTIVE ACROSTIC POEMS:** An acrostic is a poem created using the letters of a word. Write the word, such as your name, vertically. Then write words that describe you that start with each letter. For example:

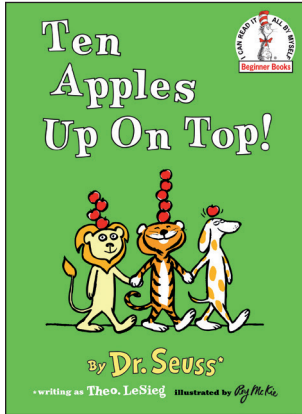
- D**raws crazy pictures, Dartmouth grad
- R**hymes and repeats, revolutionary
- S**illy, sassy
- E**xcites kids about reading, educator
- U**nconventional
- S**urprising
- S**killed artist and writer

Invite your students to create acrostic poems using their names and other words to explore alliteration.





# Sight Words



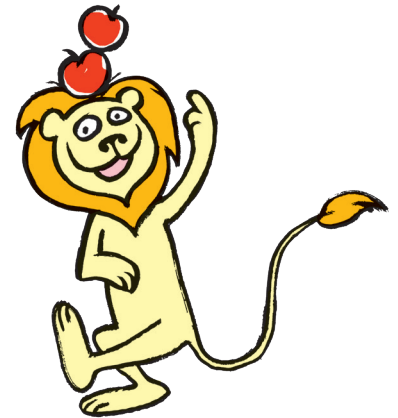
Not all reading can be learned using phonics. Many words in English don't follow the rules of phonics. Others appear so often that it makes sense for kids to learn those high-frequency words by sight.

Enter limited vocabulary and predictable texts. By using rhyme, repetition, and controlled vocabulary, Dr. Seuss helps kids learn tricky sight words that defy the usual phonics rules.

Numbers are a good example of rule breakers. Why is one pronounced "won" and not "on-ee"? And why is "two" pronounced "too" and not "t-wo"? **10 Apples Up on Top** and **Dr. Seuss's 123** allow new readers to learn to read the alphabetic representation of numbers.

Predictable stories with limited vocabulary are more easily decoded and memorized than other texts, so it's important to check for comprehension. Fortunately, **The Cat in the Hat, Green Eggs and Ham**, and other Dr. Seuss texts have fun stories to explore.

When kids read predictable texts on their own, ask questions about what happened or how they might change the story to ensure comprehension and not just recitation. A simple comprehension review would ask a student who, what, when, where, and why questions.



## ACTIVITY #1

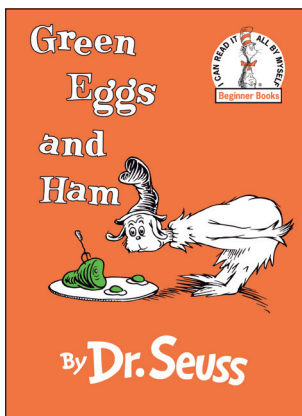
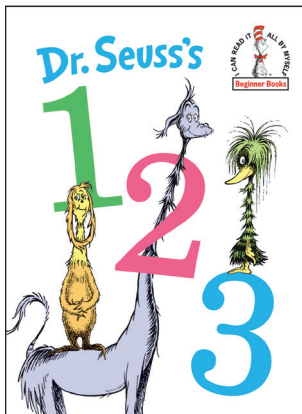
**CHART IT:** When teaching phonics concepts like vowel sounds or blends, make a wall chart with words the kids know featuring different sounds. An "oo" chart could start with words like **noodle** and **food**. As students learn new phonics patterns or sight words that fit, add them to the chart. For example: **shoe, through, blew, blue, two, to, too, and who**. This can help students see phonics patterns and exceptions. Do it with other vowel sounds or consonant blends.

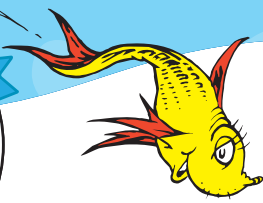
## ACTIVITY #2

**ROB THE BANK:** As students learn more and more words by sight, add them to a list, creating a class word bank. Once you have at least fifty words, invite students to write sentences, paragraphs, or even stories using words from the bank, like Dr. Seuss did with **Green Eggs and Ham**.

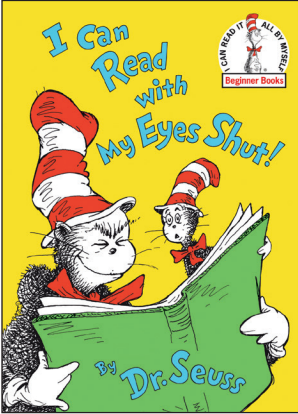
## ACTIVITY #3

**THE GOAT IN THE MOAT OR A PIG WITH A WIG:** Check understanding of predictable text by having students change the story and make it their own. For example, after they have read a story, ask them to create a new story based on what happened, but change the characters or setting. Invite them to use any new words they've learned. The new story doesn't have to rhyme, but it should be wacky, just like Dr. Seuss's original.





# Onset, Rime, and the Silent E



Dr. Seuss is the king of rhyme. And he's the king of rime. Throughout his work, he plays with onset and rime, two important phonics ideas.

Onset is the initial consonant sound before a vowel, like the C in cat. Rime is the vowels and consonants or blends that follow the onset: *at* in cat. Playing with onset and rime and switching different sounds and blends in and out can help kids learn word families and phonemes, or the sounds that letters make.

Usually, these phonics concepts are taught in patterns of vowels (v) and consonants (c). For example some patterns with short vowels go *vc*, *cvc*, and some with consonant blends like *ccvc* and *cvcc*.

Many of the Dr. Seuss's Beginner Books play with onset and rime.

***I Can Read With My Eyes Shut!*** provides lots of examples of rime patterns:

-ees, -ants, -oses, -ones, -ice, -ad, -ut, -ot, -ight

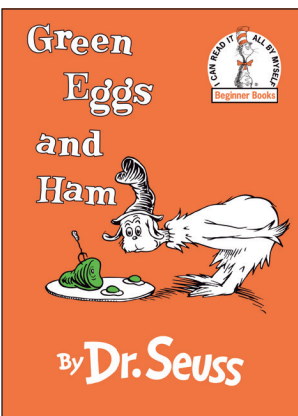
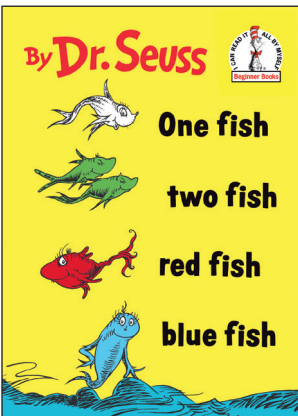
***One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*** provides some long vowel sounds and silent E examples throughout:

Long vowel sounds created by silent E: like, Mike, bike, ride, five, nine, kite, game

Other long vowel sounds: light, night, high, I, right, kind

And examples of silent E without a long vowel sound, too: blue, little, are, some, have

***Green Eggs and Ham*** explores onset in a fun way. Dr. Seuss uses different onsets for repeating rimes, -ox, -ouse, -oat, -ar, -ee, -ain, -ay, and -am, to create a funny, rhyming story.



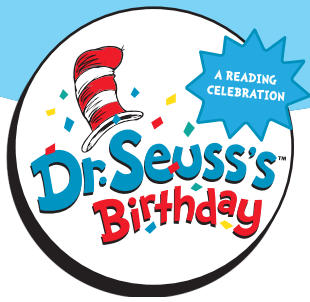
## ACTIVITY #1

**PLAY SOUND HOPSCOTCH:** Create a hopscotch game with chalk or construction paper. Provide the onset for the whole game: (ch- for example), and write it in the first box and the last box of the hopscotch so kids can see it. Write appropriate rimes in the other boxes: (-ip, -op, -in, -at, -omp, -ug, -um, -ick, -unk) so that kids will be able to create words. Have students say the onset ch- out loud, and toss a marker (or roll a die), and hop to the matching square. Then have them create a word by reading the onset again and the rime in the box: "Chomp!"

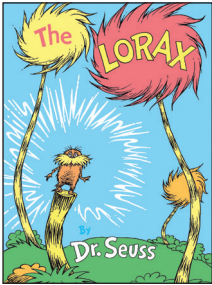
## ACTIVITY #2

**SOUND CHAINS:** When exploring onsets and rimes, choose a specific onset or rime for students to identify. Then, create a paper chain! Have kids work in pairs to identify onsets or rimes. Provide slips of paper and pencils for each pair as they read text together. Taking turns, one student reads the sentence and then points out the word with the onset or rime. If needed, the partner can help. The partner writes the word on a slip of paper. Then they switch roles, with the second student reading and partner writing. When they've finished their text, help them glue and assemble their chain.





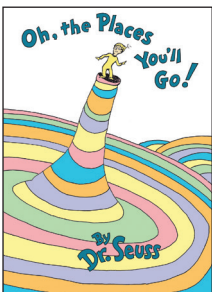
# Fluency



Fluency is the ability to read with speed, accuracy, and proper expression. [readingrockets.org/helping/target/fluency](https://readingrockets.org/helping/target/fluency)

If a reader takes too long to complete a sentence or paragraph, they won't be able to remember the beginning of what they read. This impacts comprehension.

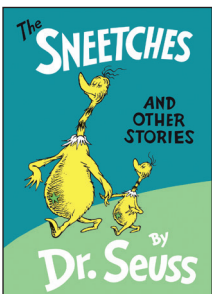
## ACTIVITY #1



**Predictable text** is a good way to practice fluency because the rhyme and repetition or limited word count provide scaffolding for beginning readers. Repeated readings of predictable text builds confidence and motivation. It also provides an opportunity to master sight words and phonics patterns. Dr. Seuss books make repeated reading fun.

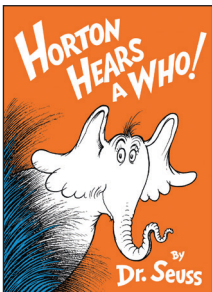
Invite kids to read predictable text, like Dr. Seuss Beginner Books, on their own, or do choral reading in groups or as a class. Choral reading builds fluency, confidence, and motivation, especially for kids who might be self-conscious about reading aloud.

[readingrockets.org/strategies/choral\\_reading#:~:text=Choral%20reading%20is%20reading%20aloud,aloud%20have%20built%20in%20support](https://readingrockets.org/strategies/choral_reading#:~:text=Choral%20reading%20is%20reading%20aloud,aloud%20have%20built%20in%20support).



Repetitive text is fun and especially good to build beginners' stamina. You can have everyone read the whole book, or you can split them into groups where the book has obvious speakers—like Sam-I-Am and the other character in *Green Eggs and Ham*. Remind students to read slowly so that listeners can understand them (and so stronger readers don't go too fast for others to keep up).

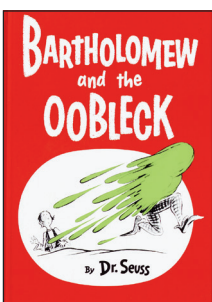
## ACTIVITY #2

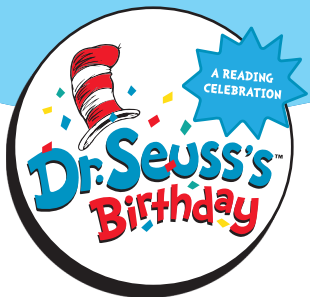


For more emphasis on accuracy and proper expression, try a **readers' theater**. You can combine choral reading and individuals reading aloud. You can use excerpts or split up longer books or pieces of text to make them manageable for beginning readers. Readers' theater allows your class to dive deep into a text, explore what it means, and decide how to best act it out as they read it aloud. Readers' theater can provide opportunities for graphic art (props, sets, signs) and movement, along with reading. Create your own readers' theater scripts of Dr. Seuss books or find them online. For more experienced readers, check out some of Dr. Seuss's longer books like ***The Lorax***, ***Oh, the Places You'll Go!***, ***The Sneetches***, ***Horton Hears a Who!***, or ***Bartholomew and the Ooblek***. Be sure to add in comprehension checks for longer books.

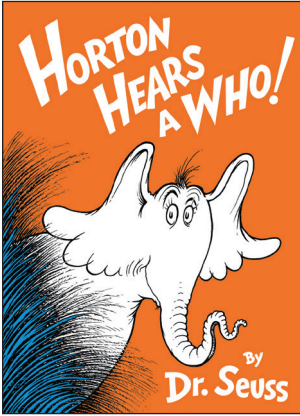
Avoid round-robin reading. Some students get anxious waiting for their turn. They may end up reading ahead or counting sentences to see what they will be reading instead of listening and processing what others are reading.

Be sure to have students practice and demonstrate fluency with unpredictable text, too, to be sure they understand what they read and are not just reciting or phonetically pronouncing the text.





# Suffixes, Prefixes, and Root Words



As your students get older or develop more sophisticated decoding skills, introduce the concepts of prefixes, suffixes, and root words. Many phonics and reading curricula provide extensive lists of affixes and root words, or you can find them online.

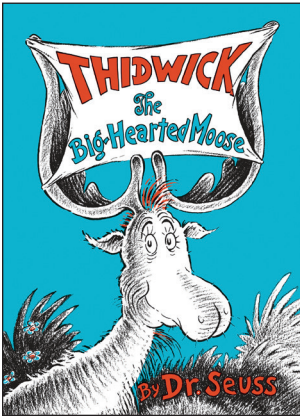
[www.readingrockets.org/article/root-words-roots-and-affixes](http://www.readingrockets.org/article/root-words-roots-and-affixes)

Knowing that un- always means “not” and tri- always means “three” can help speed decoding and build comprehension. The same goes for recognizing -ful, -ness, and -ly.

After learning about prefixes, suffixes, and roots, invite students to look for examples in texts they are reading. Dr. Seuss uses lots of them. He uses compound words, too. It can be fun to find examples of a new concept in text.

**Horton Hears a Who!** provides lots of examples of -ly, -ed, and -ing.

**Thidwick the Big-Hearted Moose** does too, as well as un-, -less, and compound words like big-hearted, moose-moss, Tree-Spider, woodpecker, something, and bobcat.



## ACTIVITY #1

**SEUSSIAN WORD PLAY:** While exploring suffixes, prefixes, and root words with your students, point out how Dr. Seuss played with words and even made words up. Some of Dr. Seuss’s words are just nonsense, but you can create fun words with meaning, too. Invite your students to use some common prefixes and suffixes to make up fun words like *tribooks* or *mustardful*. For each word, ask them to provide a definition and use it in a sentence. The sillier, the better.

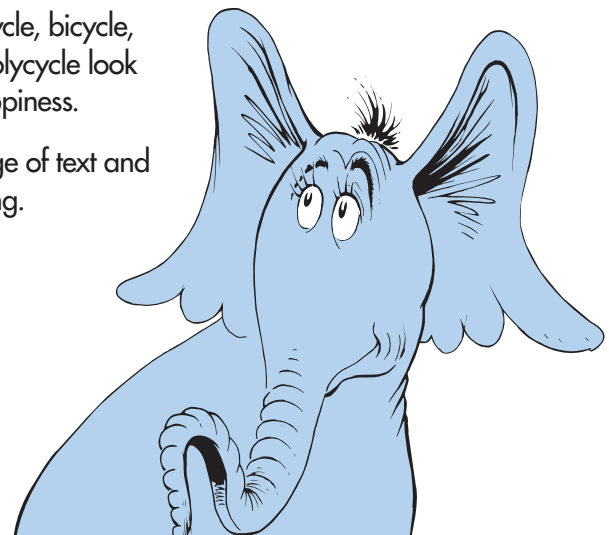
## ACTIVITY #2

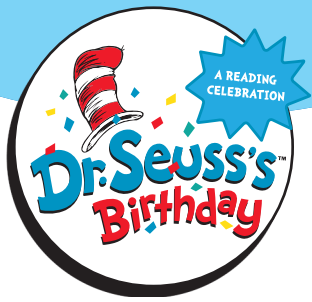
**CHANGE THE MEANING:** Encourage students to swap out prefixes or suffixes to change the meaning. For example, if they swap -ed for -ing, they take a verb from present to past tense.

If they swap out -less for -ful, like hopeless and hopeful, it changes the meaning to the opposite.

Encourage them to try out multiple prefixes or suffixes and look for patterns. Uni-, bi-, tri-, and poly- for example: unicycle, bicycle, tricycle, and polycycle. (What would a Seussian polycycle look like?) Or -er, -est, and -ness: happier, happiest, happiness.

For a deeper experience, have them take a passage of text and change prefixes and suffixes to change the meaning.





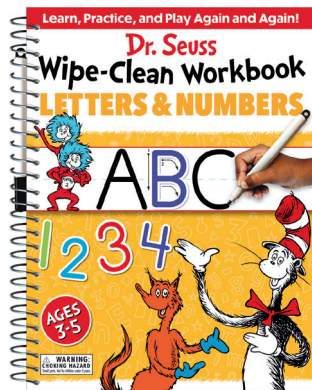
# Continue Learning with Dr. Seuss!

Dr. Seuss Workbooks for More Practice

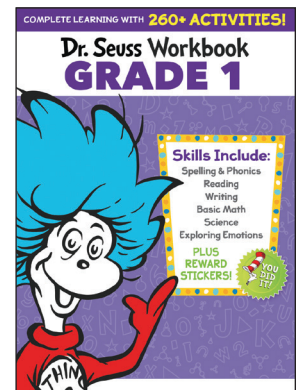
Random House has created workbooks using Dr. Seuss illustrations and style to provide opportunities to practice reading, writing, math, science, and social-emotional concepts. While the workbooks are organized by grade level, using them should be skill-based and not strictly grade-level based. For exercises supporting concepts explored above, see the following workbooks:

## TEACH ALPHABETIC PRINCIPLES AND EARLY PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS (LETTER SHAPES AND SOUNDS AND RHYMING)

Wipe-Clean Workbook: Letters & Numbers  
Preschool and Kindergarten

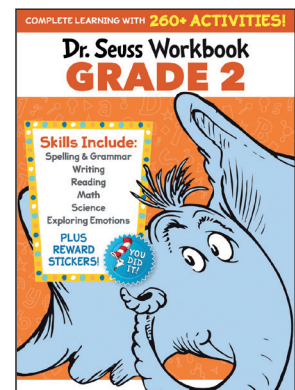
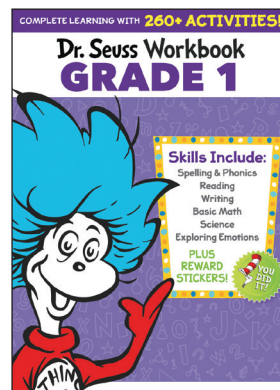


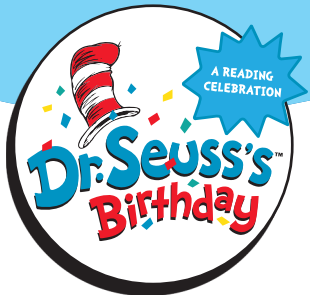
TEACH SYLLABLES  
Grade 1 Workbook



## TEACH SIGHT WORDS

Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 2 Workbooks

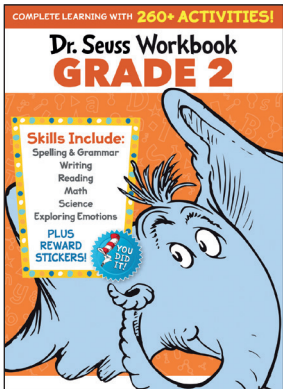




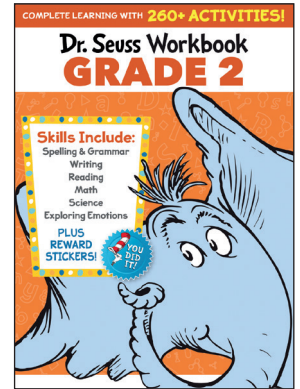
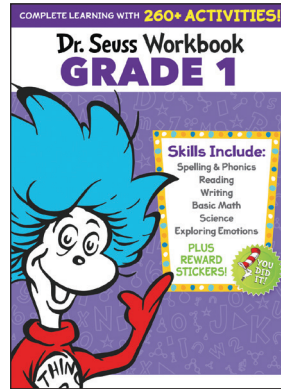
# Continue Learning with Dr. Seuss!

Dr. Seuss Workbooks for More Practice

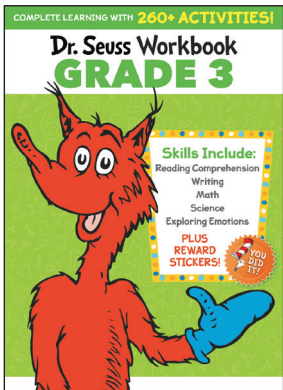
TEACH ONSET  
AND RIME AND  
COMPOUND WORDS  
Grade 2 Workbook



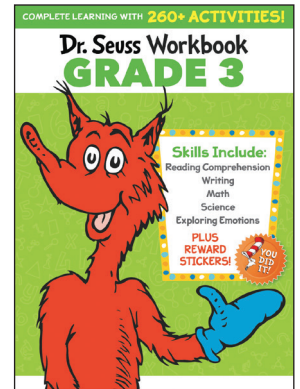
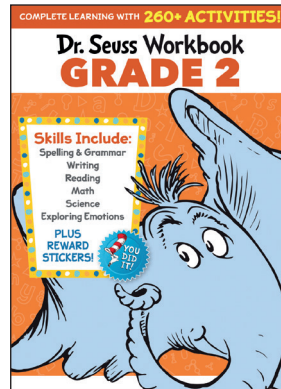
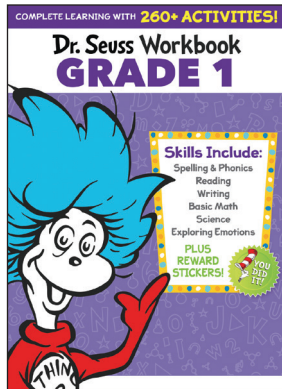
TEACH SHORT VOWEL SOUNDS, LONG VOWEL SOUNDS,  
OTHER LETTER SOUNDS AND SILENT E, AND BLENDS  
Kindergarten, Grade 1, Grade 2 Workbooks

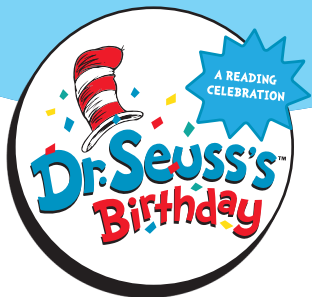


TEACH ROOTS,  
PREFIXES, AND  
SUFFIXES  
Grade 3 Workbook



TEACH READING COMPREHENSION  
Grade 1, Grade 2, Grade 3 Workbooks





# The Great Birthday Bird of Katroo Wants to Know About YOU!



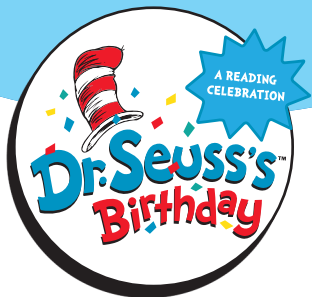
Today is a celebration of Dr. Seuss's birthday, but we want to know all about you, too! Fill in the blanks about yourself below.



Dr. Seuss	Me
Dr. Seuss's birthday is March 2.	My birthday is _____.
Dr. Seuss would be 119 years old this year.	I am _____ years old.
Millions of kids read on Dr. Seuss's birthday.	On my birthday, I like to _____ _____.
Dr. Seuss wrote over 50 books during his career.	I want to read _____ books this year.
Dr. Seuss loved to write books.	When I grow up, I want to _____.







# Rhyme with Fox in Socks!

Rhyming words can get your tongue in trouble! Find out how smart YOUR tongue is!  
Finish each word so it rhymes with the one next to it.

**FOX**                      **SOCKS**                      **B** \_\_\_\_\_

**TRICKS**                      **BRICKS**                      **ST** \_\_\_\_\_

**LOCK**                      **BLOCK**                      **CL** \_\_\_\_\_

**SEW**                      **CROW**                      **SL** \_\_\_\_\_

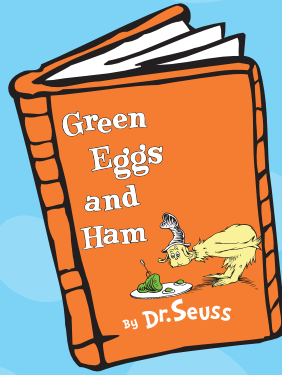
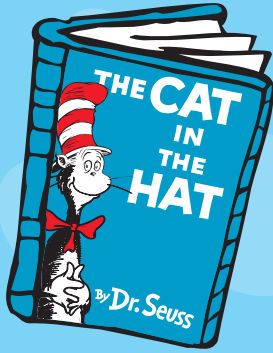
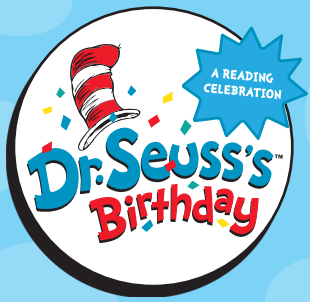
**ROSE**                      **HOSE**                      **GR** \_\_\_\_\_

**BLUE**                      **CHEW**                      **GL** \_\_\_\_\_

**LUCK**                      **DUCK**                      **ST** \_\_\_\_\_

**FREEZE**                      **BREEZE**                      **SN** \_\_\_\_\_





**“The more that you read,  
the more things you will know.  
The more that you learn,  
the more places you’ll go.”**

**—Dr. Seuss, *I Can Read with My Eyes Shut!***

