

How I Customized the First 16 Steps of *All About Spelling* for My Older Students

by Merry Marinello, Customer Care Representative

Here's how I customized *All About Spelling* Level 1 for my older kids. Of course, your children will probably need different customizations depending on their prior spelling knowledge, but this may give you some ideas to get started.

NOTE: the Step numbers refer to the Steps in the *All About Spelling* Level 1 Teacher's Manual.

Step
1

The First 26 Phonograms

In this step, students learn the sounds of the first 26 phonograms. Most older students already know some of the sounds, so it's a matter of figuring out which phonograms need to be taught.

I started by saying, "Some of the letters have multiple sounds, and I don't know if I've taught you all of them. Let's do a quick review and see." Taking some of the blame helps ease your student's pain—he can't know it if it hasn't been taught.

I put the cards that were mastered behind the Mastered tab in the Spelling Review Box. Then I worked on one vowel and one consonant each day until they were mastered. I simply held the cards up, said the sounds, and had the kids repeat—quick and easy. After several days, the kids knew the Phonogram Cards.

Step
2

Segmenting Words

The ability to segment is very important for older students, so don't skip this step! Focus on being able to hear the first sound in a word. Choose just a few words to start. If you think your child has trouble with certain sounds, try to pick words that contain those sounds. Do the same thing with last sounds. Then segment words with two sounds, followed by words with three sounds. As soon as your student understands segmenting words, you can move on to the next Step.

You'll practice more difficult segmenting later in Level 1, such as in Step 13, which focuses on segmenting words with blends. When I went through Step 2 with my kids, I did throw a couple of longer words at them just to see how they would do. Segmenting is a skill that you'll want to continue to work on as your students start learning longer words.

Step
3

The Letter Tiles

I had my kids alphabetize the tiles and point to a few vowels and consonants.

**Step
4**

The Sound Cards

Sound Cards are the opposite of Phonogram Cards: you say the sound, and the student writes the phonogram. It is important for your student to learn these Sound Cards because spelling is a combination of segmenting words into their sounds and then knowing which phonogram to write.

Just as I did when teaching the Phonogram Cards, I told my kids that I wanted to see if I had taught them how to write all the sounds. I quickly assessed which Sound Cards they knew and which cards they needed to work on. After that, we began each day by spending a few minutes working on the Sound Cards that they hadn't yet mastered.

**Step
5**

Short Vowels

I taught the Key Card, had the kids spell a few sample words, and then moved on. Some kids confuse short e's and short i's, or sometimes other vowels, so you can spend as much or as little time here as you need to.

**Steps
6-10**

Short A, I, O, U, E

Again, I quickly covered the concept, chose just a few sample words, and moved on. Step 9 also introduces the multiple sounds for ch, th, and sh, so be sure to cover those. One of my children surprised me by confusing these phonograms, so we spent some extra time here.

**Step
11**

S, X, QU

One of my kids had struggled with the sounds of these letters when we introduced the Sound Cards, so I spent a bit more time on these words.

The Level 1 dictations are easy, so I opted to skip dictation entirely until we got to Level 2. You could also choose to do just a sampling of the dictation sentences. However, if writing is a struggle for your child, you may want to start with these shorter phrases and sentences because the length and number of dictations will gradually increase throughout the series. This helps students increase their stamina and spelling ability.

**Step
12**

TH, SH, and CH

For my child who had confused some of these phonograms in Step 9, we spent a bit more time on these words. The other child just went on to the next Step.

**Steps
13-15**

Segmenting and Spelling Words with Blends

Some kids struggle with hearing two consonants next to each other and will leave a letter out when they spell. Ending blends are easier than beginning blends, so assess each one. Both of my children needed a bit of work on blends—not so much for these particular words, but because the concept was one they struggled with in longer words.

**Step
16**

Letters C and K

This Step introduces rules for the letter c that apply to longer and harder words as well. One way to increase the difficulty is to challenge students to think of a longer word, or to find one in their reading that follows the same rule or pattern. This is a way to get them thinking more deeply about the rules.

Need More Help?

Please let me know if you have any questions! I'd be happy to help brainstorm solutions. That's my main job as Customer Care Representative!

Email me at support@allaboutlearningpress.com.

For more tips, see my blog post about [Using *All About Spelling* with Older Students](#) or visit www.AllAboutSpelling.com to learn more.