

# PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS:

A Guidebook for Parents

By: Karina Kung



# INTRODUCTION

Hello! And thank you for viewing this compact parent guidebook about phonological awareness. This guide contains explanations regarding what phonological awareness is and why it is important for your child's reading success. It also covers the different components of phonological awareness and is filled with multiple activity ideas as well as printable and external resources for you and your child to work with. I hope you enjoy the activities suggested and that it inspires you to create some of your own!



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## WHAT IS PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS?

Phonological awareness is a strong predictor for a child's reading success. Phonological awareness is an umbrella term which covers basic awareness of speech sounds (knowledge that sounds make up onset-rimes, onset-rimes make up syllables, syllables make up words) and the advanced skills such as manipulation (substituting, deleting, reversing) of words.

## WHAT IS PHONEMIC AWARENESS?

Phonemic awareness is the most advanced level of phonological awareness. If a child has phonemic awareness, they possess the knowledge of individual phonemes (sounds of a language = phonemes). With this knowledge of individual phonemes, they're able to recognize and manipulate the sounds within words. For example, knowing that the word 'bat' starts with a /b/ sound and also knowing that if we change the /b/ to an /m/ it becomes 'mat' indicates that a child has phonemic awareness of the sounds /b/ and /m/. They understand that these are different sounds in their language and that sounds can be manipulated to produce new words.



## **WHY IS PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS IMPORTANT FOR READING?**

The awareness of sounds helps children (and adults) segment and blend words together which aids in reading and spelling. The knowledge of these sounds helps children learn how to decode words (sounding them out, pairing sounds to segment), and this helps children read unfamiliar words.

A child with weak phonological awareness will struggle with reading. When we read, we're focused on identifying the words in front of us, but we also need to keep track of the words we just read, and grab the meaning of the previous and future words we encountered. This is a lot to stay on top of, so by having good phonological awareness skills, we can focus more on the comprehension of the text we read and less on struggling to decode what a word says.

## **THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS AND PHONICS**

Phonics involves the relationship between sounds and their spelling. Phonics is different from phonological awareness because phonics refers to printed text, whereas phonological awareness refers to oral language (the sounds we hear, not the letters we read). Though strength in both of them is important for reading success, each of them play their own role. A child can have weakness in one area but not the other, vice versa or weaknesses in both.

# THE PA UMBRELLA

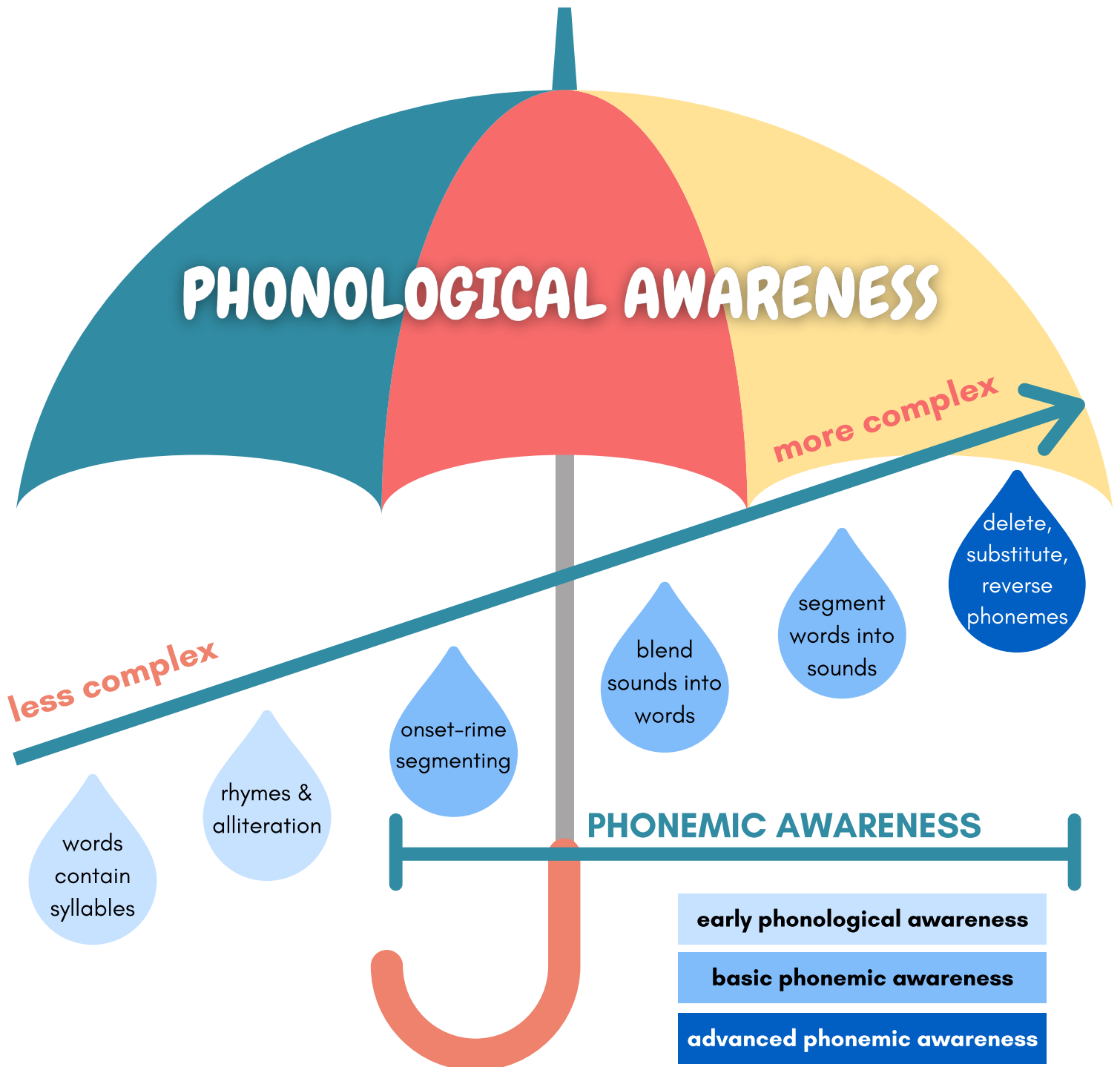


Figure adapted from Schuele, C. M., & Boudreau, D. (2008). Phonological Awareness Intervention: Beyond the Basics. *Language, Speech & Hearing Services in Schools*, 39(1), 3-20. <https://pubs.asha.org/doi/10.1044/0161-1461%282008/002%29>

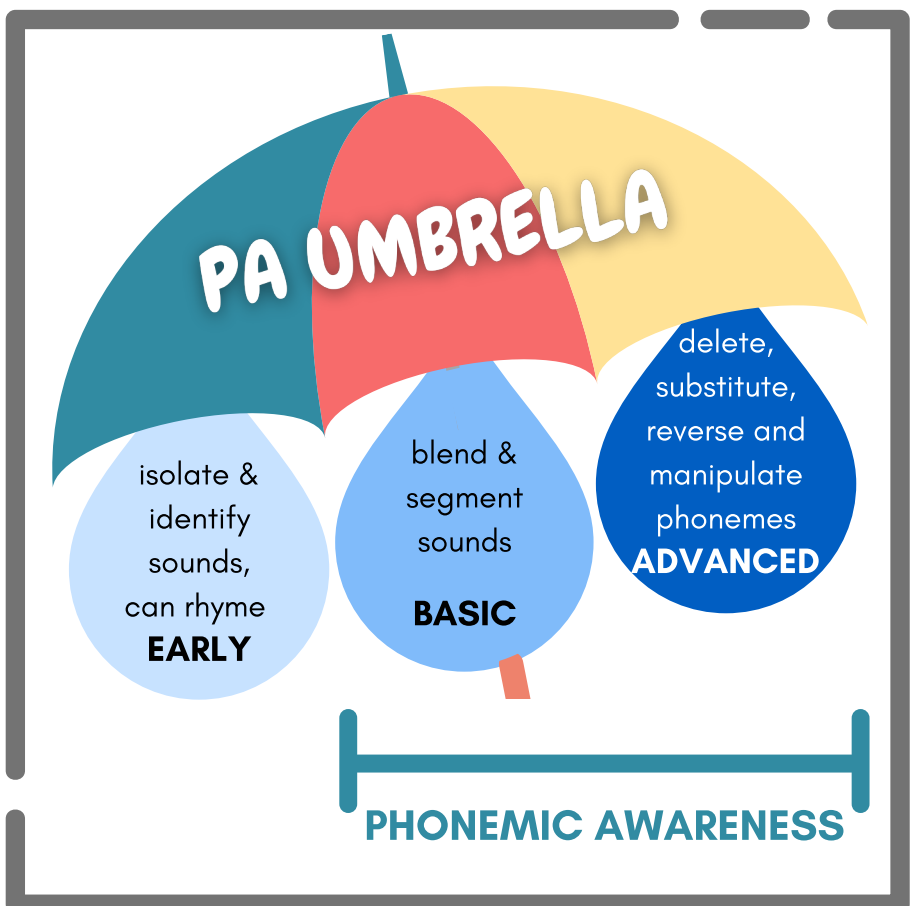
# THE PA UMBRELLA

The umbrella diagram shown previously is a general overview of phonological awareness. Phonological awareness is an umbrella term which represents a continuum of skills that develop over time.

Phonemic awareness falls under the umbrella term of phonological awareness. Phonological awareness can be divided into three levels: early, basic and advanced, with basic and advanced representing phonemic awareness (the highest levels of phonological awareness)

Quick summary of phonological awareness skills

- **early:** isolate & identify sounds
- **basic:** blend & segment
- **advanced:** manipulate





## EARLY PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

- Typically seen in preschoolers
- Understands that words are made of syllables
- Understands rhyming words (cat, sat, hat, mat)
- Understands alliteration (The big blue ball)

## BASIC PHONEMIC AWARENESS

- Typically seen in kindergarten to first graders
- Can separate **onset** from **rime**
  - Onset: consonants before the vowel
  - Rime: the rest of the syllable
  - For example down vs. brown
    - d = onset
    - br = onset
    - own = rime
- can find and name the **initial** and **final sounds** (not letters) of words
  - initial: knows that fish and phone both have a /f/ sound at the beginning
  - final: knows bat and cat both end with the /t/ sound
- **blending** sounds into words (take individual phonemes and combine them to create a word)
  - for example: scrap /s/ /c/ /r/ /a/ /p/
- **segmenting** words into sounds (the reverse of blending), breaking apart words into their phonemes
  - for example: graph /g/ /r/ /a/ /f/





## ADVANCED PHONEMIC AWARENESS

- Typically seen in third to fourth graders
- deleting, substituting and reversing specific sounds AKA manipulating phonemes
  - **deleting:** “say hand,” “say it again without the /h/” “and”
  - **substituting:** “say map”, “say it again but change the /m/ to a /t/ sound” “tap”
  - **reversing:** “say bat,” “say it again but backwards” “tab”

## HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD IMPROVE THEIR PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS?

I know that as a parent, you want to help your child succeed in any way that you can! If you recall from the umbrella diagram, phonological awareness is learned based on an upward incline. As your child ages, their phonological awareness should mature and become more sophisticated. They can move from identifying individual sounds or syllables to manipulating them! It is recommended to use direct teaching activities to help your child learn.

Here are some activities you can try at home which can target specific phonological awareness skills! Remember, phonological awareness targets what your child **hears**, not what they read. The flashcards included can be printed double sided for your convenience, but when presenting them, please ensure you are only presenting the image to your child!

# EARLY PA ACTIVITIES

## WHICH ONE DOESN'T BELONG? ODD ONE OUT!

In the game of odd one out, your child has to use their detective skills to determine which word does not have something in common with the other words. Give a list of three words with either the same initial sound/syllable or ending sound/syllable and see if your child can determine which one does not belong! Below is a list of words you can use depending on your child's age

### Final syllable (-at)

- fat, cat, map
- pat, mit, bat
- yap, hat, sat
- chat, rat, hit

### Final syllable (-ap)

- gap, lap, mat
- bit, slap, clap
- ban, tap, cap
- trap, wrap, hat

### Final syllable (-ing)

- twin, sing, ring
- thing, bring, woke
- fling, meet, meet
- wing, king, queen

### single syllable words (initial sound)

- map, mat, dog
- bee, bean, pop
- tree, tea, me
- cup, car, got

### single syllable words (final sound)

- hare, bear, meat
- shop, hop, bought
- pen, ten, led
- mouse, house, boost

### 2-syllable words (initial sound)

- apple, answer, balloon
- paper, pizza, guitar
- teacher, table, movie
- zebra, zipper, giraffe

### 2-syllable words (final sound)

- father, mother, baby
- after, water, bottle
- monkey, cookie, tiger
- safety, party, number

# EARLY PA ACTIVITIES

## RHYMING GAMES WITH I SPY...

I spy is a great game to play due to its versatility! In this version, you'll be looking for rhyming words. For example "I spy something that rhymes with \_\_\_\_\_". In this activity, you can make up silly words as well (I spy something that rhymes with pable for 'table').

Here are a list of commonly used words you can use at home

### Single syllable words

- chair
- couch
- bed
- book
- mat
- roof
- dish
- spoon
- sink
- soap

### Two-syllable words

- table
- remote
- clothing
- window
- curtain
- toilet
- hammer
- carpet
- hanger
- toaster

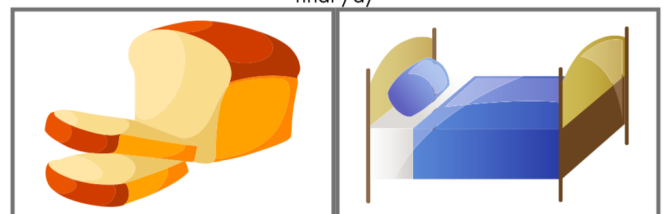
## INITIAL/FINAL SOUND MATCHING FLASHCARDS

Matching games are a great way to help your child develop their phonological awareness. Similar to odd one out, your child will select two words based on their similar initial sound or final sound. I've included a very large resource of flashcards with most sounds in the English language for you and your child to try together. See appendix for full flashcards.

initial sound matching



final /d/



# BASIC PA ACTIVITIES

## BLENDING: TELL ME THE WORD I'M SAYING

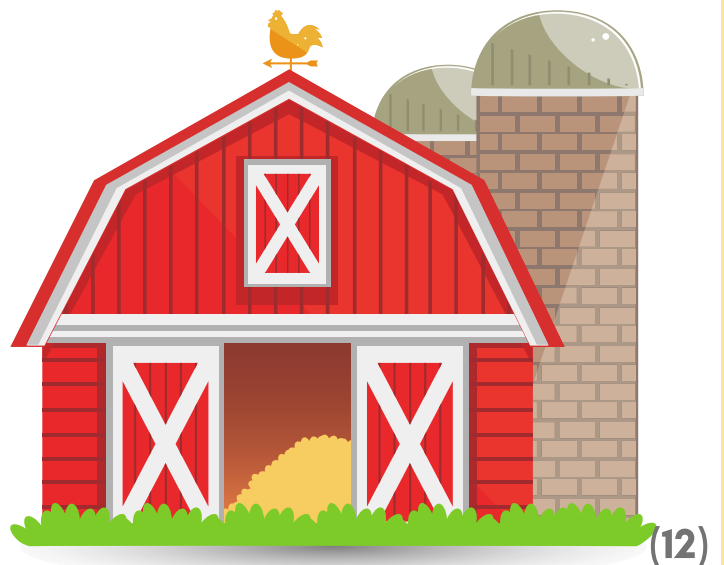
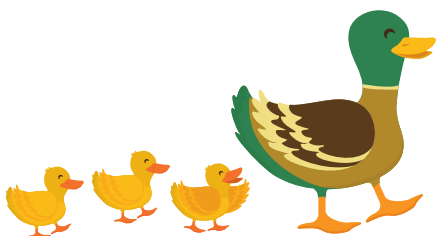
In this activity, you will break apart words into individual phonemes or syllables (onset-rime) and ask your child “what word am I saying?” For example you could say the word “slide” as /s-l-ai-d/ or as /sl-ide/

## BLENDING: OLD MACDONALD HAD A /D U K/

Sing the song of Old Macdonald with your child, but instead of saying the animal name you can give each individual phoneme and see if your child can blend the sounds together to get the word. If you happen to have a farm set of physical toys, that would be a great resource to accompany with this activity!

Reading Rockets has a great worksheet with different printable farm animal flashcards here:

<https://www.readingrockets.org/sites/default/files/blending-segmenting-activities-pals.pdf>



# BASIC PA ACTIVITIES

## SEGMENTING: COUNT THE SEGMENTS OF WORDS (CLAP OUT THE SOUNDS) SEPARATE ONSET FROM RIME

In this activity, you can ask your child to clap out the onset-rimes that they hear in a certain single syllable word. For example, give them the word “blow” they should clap /bl/ and /ow/. Below are some words you can use. You can also use the flashcards provided in the appendix!

- hop
- jug
- fat
- let
- win
- slip
- tent
- vest
- plug
- slug
- clam
- mask
- good
- fish
- bike
- queen
- van
- yes
- king
- jump
- bad
- cave
- name
- game

## SEGMENTING: STRETCHY SOUNDS

Take a look at the flashcards together and work on stretching each of the onset-rime combinations. For example with the word alligator, you can say it together like aaallliigaaatooorrr, as you stretch out each syllable blend.

SightWords has a great printable with different syllable length words for you and your child to stretch out:

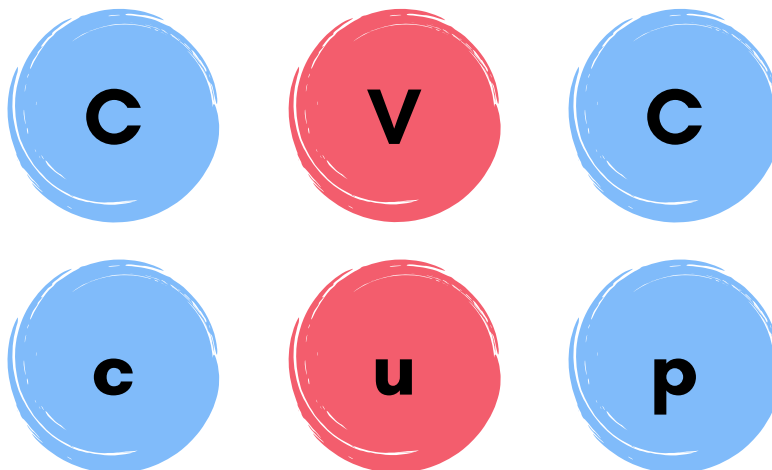
[https://sightwords.com/pdfs/phonemic/syllables/stringing\\_syllables\\_together.pdf](https://sightwords.com/pdfs/phonemic/syllables/stringing_syllables_together.pdf)

# BASIC PA ACTIVITIES

## SEGMENTING: TELL ME THE SOUNDS YOU HEAR IN THE WORD \_\_\_\_\_

In this activity you'll say a word and ask your child to segment the individual phonemes (sounds) that they hear in a word. This can be done with 1-syllable or multiple syllable words depending on your child's age and level.

You can use coloured tokens (one colour for vowels, the other for consonants) or pieces of coloured paper to indicate each sound segment that they identify. Then you can count how many sounds you have in total! For example, in the word "cup" there are 3 sounds /c u p/ which you could represent by using your tokens as a blue red blue or CVC (consonant vowel consonant) sequence, where **blue tokens = consonants** and **red tokens = vowels**.



# BASIC PA ACTIVITIES

## FARMER IN THE DELL: THE SEGMENTING SONG

In this activity you will sing the familiar tune of “The Farmer in the Dell” (here is a YouTube link to Super Simple Songs if you are unfamiliar with the tune! <https://youtu.be/E-krsNziXEw> ). In this activity your child will segment each sound that they hear in a given word. Begin with words that have three phonemes (such as cat, pop, mad) and work your way up to longer words. You can count the sounds on your fingers or clap them out, you can be as creative as you want!

**Say the sounds you hear,  
Oh say the sounds you hear,  
Let’s say, all the sounds  
Say the sounds you hear!  
[INSERT WORD]**

Examples

BOOK /b/ /oo/ /k/  
three sounds!

SHARK /sh/ /a/ /r/ /k/  
four sounds

ORANGE /o/ /r/ /a/ /n/ /j/  
five sounds!

## ADDITIONAL BLENDING AND SEGMENTING RESOURCES

There are additional blending and segmenting ideas for you and your child to try out on the Reading Rockets website!

<https://www.readingrockets.org/content/pdfs/dodeam1trblendseg.pdf>

# ADVANCED PA ACTIVITIES

## SUBSTITUTION: SILLY SOUND GAME

In this activity, say a word and then tell your child to make “silly words” by changing the first or last (or even middle) phoneme. This can also be helpful for making rhymes if you swap out the initial phoneme! An example of the game might look like the examples below.

### **initial sound sub**

- fridge
- midge
- sidge
- pidge

### **middle sound sub**

- feather
- femer
- feper
- feber

### **final sound sub**

- bar
- bat
- baf
- bap

## DELETE THE INITIAL PHONEME

In this activity, you will say a word out loud and then ask your child to delete the first sound they hear. Then ask them what word remains and they will tell you the word that is leftover! Here are some suggestions:

- seat-eat, sand-and, knit-it, nice-ice, farm-arm, hair-air, rash-ash, bat-at, bye-eye, cart-art, pat-at, gold-old, pitch-itch.
- fall-all, sheet-eat, send-end, sit-it, land-and, mask-ask, near-ear tape-ape, page-age, learn-earn, cold-old, pink-ink, tar-are, sour-our
- shelf-elf, shin-in, mat-at, shout-out, sold-old, chart-art, slow-low, throw-row, shrug-rug, plate-ate, sleeve-leave, thread-read, blast-last, play-lay, shrub-rub



# ADVANCED PA ACTIVITIES

## DELETE THE FINAL PHONEME

Deleting the final phoneme is more difficult than deleting the onset. This activity is the same as deleting the initial phoneme except they will delete the final phoneme instead. Say the word aloud to your child and then ask them to delete the last sound they hear. Then ask them to say the word that remains. Here are some suggestions

- nose-no, save-say, niece-knee, life-lie, mice-ice, couch-ouch, page-pay, beach-  
bee, force-for, seat-sea, grape-gray, team-tea, bone-bow
- mean-me, pave-pay, bike-buy, make-may, pipe-pie, group-grew, boat-bow,  
beef-bee, dice-die, treat-tree, soak-sew, rose-row, neat-knee
- farm-far, teach-tea, scorn-score, cart-car, bust-bus, lamp-lamb, paint-pain,  
heard-her, grasp-grass, belt-bell, build-bill

## RANDOMLY PICK AND REVERSE

Use the flashcards (or any toys you have around) and randomly select them. Say the word that describes the object or picture. Then try and say the word again, but this time say it backwards! Sometimes this will be a real word, but most times it'll be silly! Enjoy having fun saying silly sound with your child. Some examples are included below.

- bat - tab
- man - nam
- coat - toak
- late - tail
- ball - lob (make sure you maintain the same vowel sound!)

# ADVANCED PA ACTIVITIES

## MANIPULATE SOUNDS USING A DIE OR A SPINNER!

Using a 6-sided die or this **virtual spinner** linked below, pick words using the flash cards, or any words with sounds you wish to target. Then roll a die or click the spinner and complete the task that corresponds to the number/task on the spinner.

<https://www.superteachertools.us/spinner/spinner.php?title=Sound+Changes%21&directions=Click+the+wheel+below+to+spin%3A&colorscheme=color1&labels=remove+the+last+sound%2Cremove+the+first+sound%2Cchange+the+first+sound%2Cchange+the+vowel+sound%2Cchange+the+last+sound%2Creverse+the+word>

1) remove the last sound

2) remove the first sound

3) change the last sound

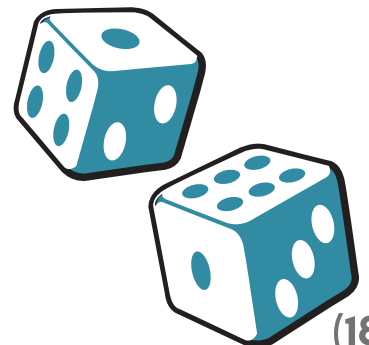
4) change the first sound

5) change the vowel sound

6) reverse the word

Here is an additional resource by OnTrackReading which provides more words to practice deletion and substitution with your child!

<https://static.ontrackreading.com/files/AuditoryProcessingWordList.pdf?mtime=20181114085501&focal=none>



## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

### THERE ARE 44 PHONEMES

**FUN FACT:** There are 44 phonemes in Canadian English but there are only 26 letters!

ThoughtCo provides great examples and a thorough explanation of the 44 phonemes in English

<https://www.thoughtco.com/sounds-in-english-language-3111166>

ULDForParents has created a great resource which explains each of the consonant and vowel sounds seen in English with pictures and examples for each. I highly recommend printing this resource out to assist your child identify their sounds! This is especially helpful for the vowel sounds as they can be quite tricky.

<https://uldforparents.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/44-sounds.jpg>

### ADDITIONAL BLENDING AND SEGMENTING RESOURCES

There are additional blending and segmenting ideas for you and your child to try out on the Reading Rockets website!

[https://www.readingrockets.org/content/pdfs/dodea\\_m1\\_tr\\_blendseg.pdf](https://www.readingrockets.org/content/pdfs/dodea_m1_tr_blendseg.pdf)

# APPENDIX

Please enjoy the free use of all these flashcards! Remember that phonological awareness targets what we **hear** and not what we read.

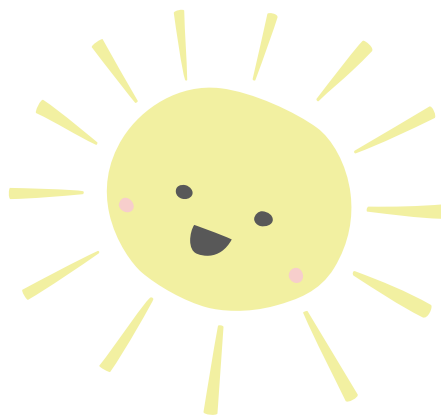
These flashcards are organized by initial phoneme sound matching (for example, **b**all and **b**ee both begin with an initial /b/ sound) and then final phoneme sound matching follows (for example ham**m** and bomb**m** both end with an /m/ sound).

For optimal printing, print double sided and flip on the long edge

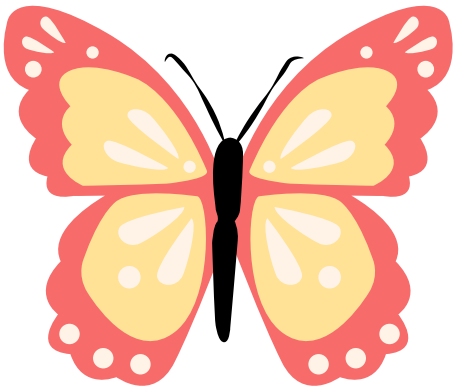
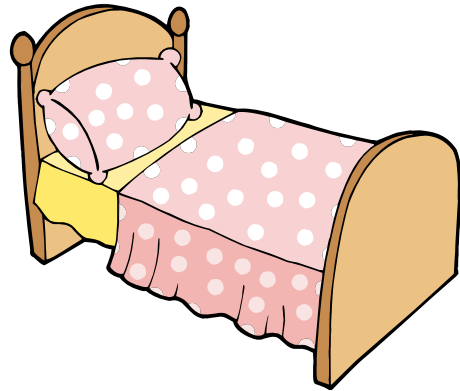
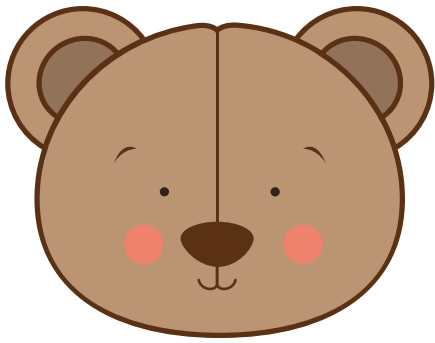
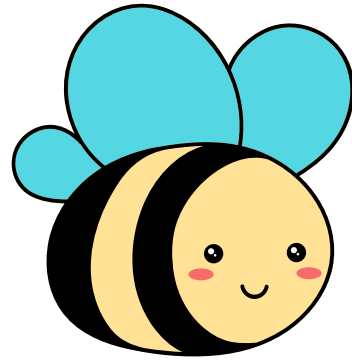
If you wish to only print the images (and not the words) print only the odd page numbers.

Thank you and enjoy!

- Karina



initial sound matching



initial sound matching

bee

ball

bed

bear

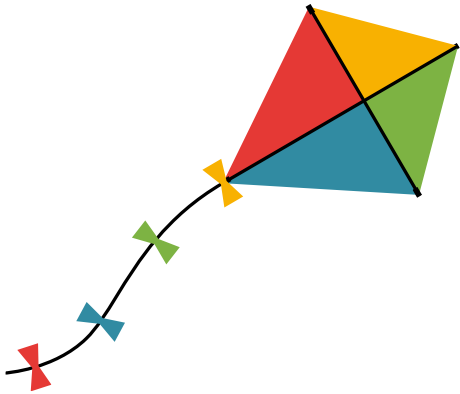
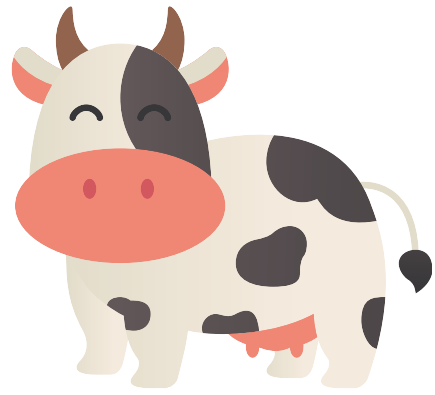
bus

butterfly

book

boat

initial sound matching



initial sound matching

cow

cake

king

kite

cat

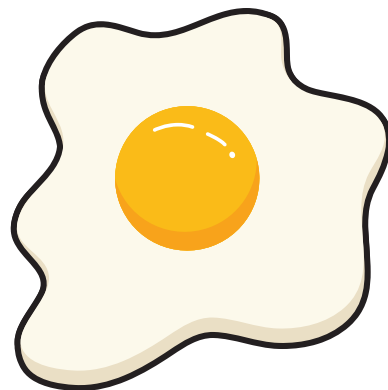
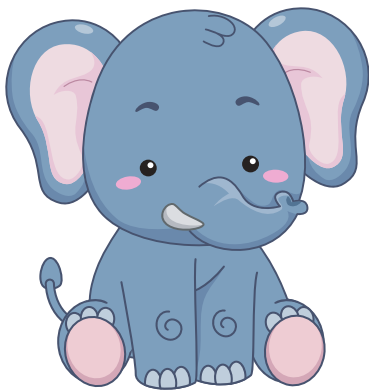
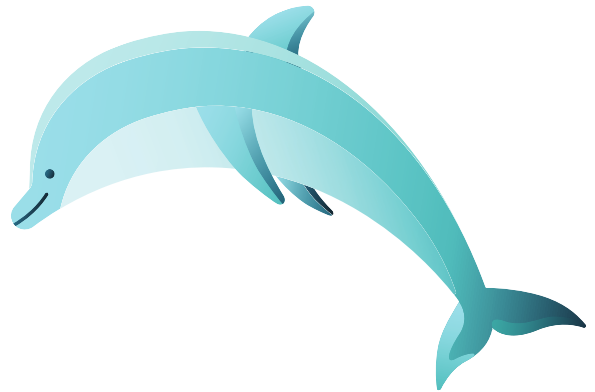
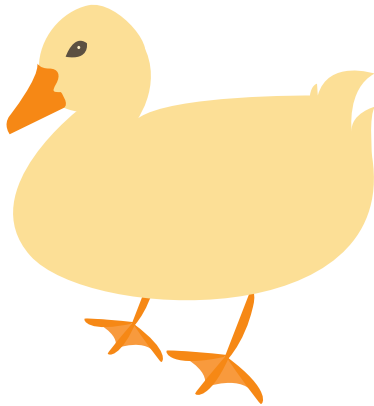
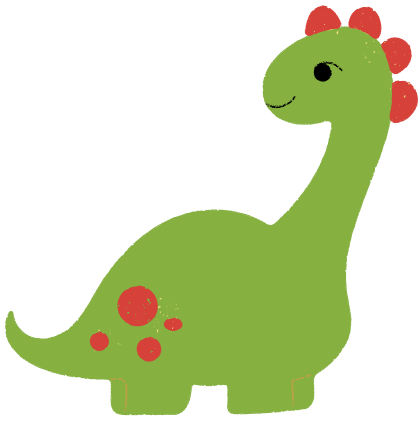
key

camera

carrot



initial sound matching



initial sound matching

dog

dinosaur

dolphin

duck

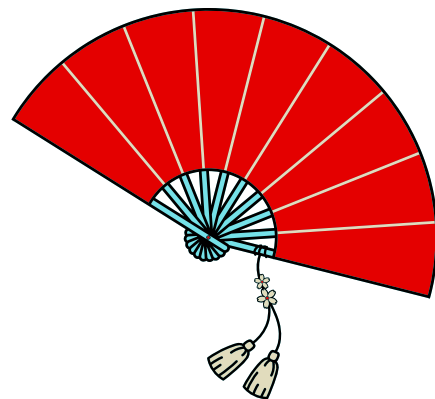
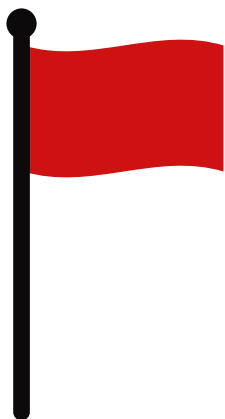
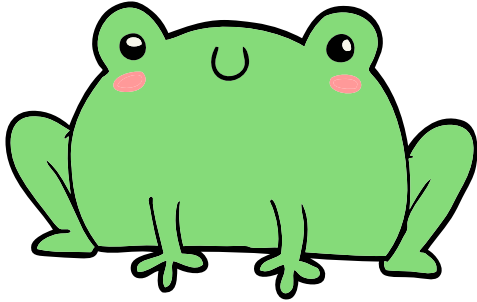
doll

dress

egg

elephant

initial sound matching



initial sound matching

fish

frog

flower

fork

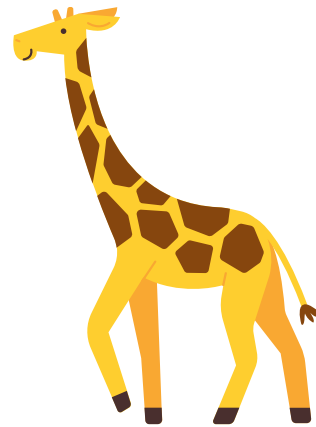
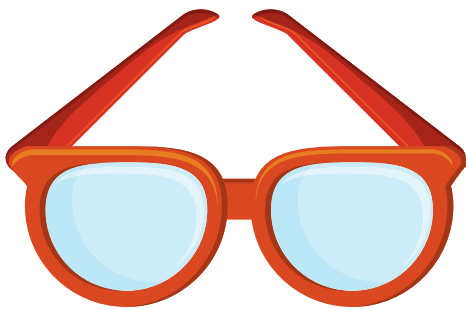
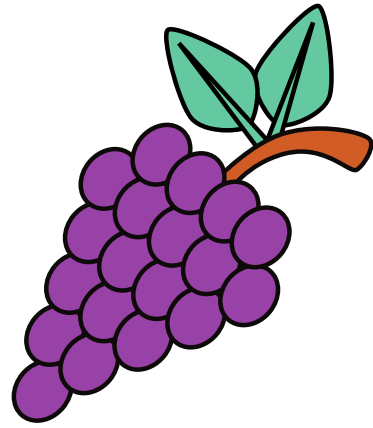
foot

fox

fan

flag

initial sound matching



initial sound matching

grapes

guitar

giraffe

glasses

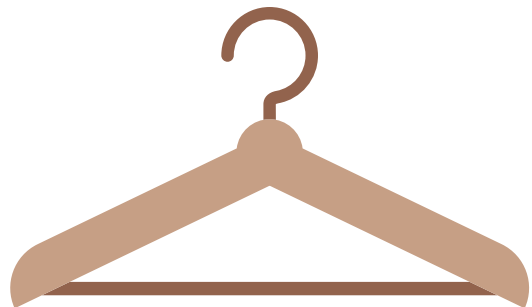
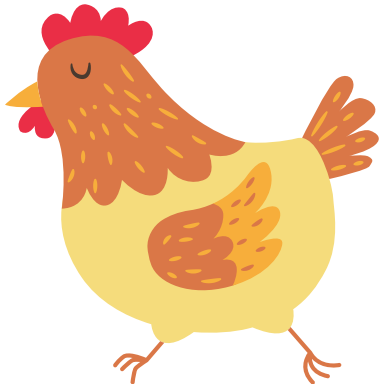
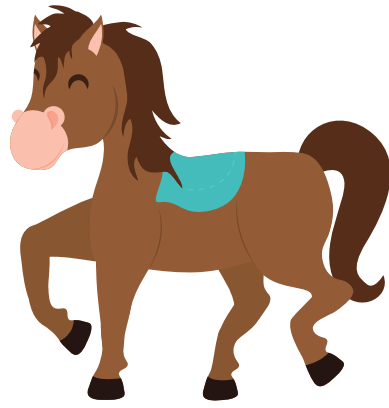
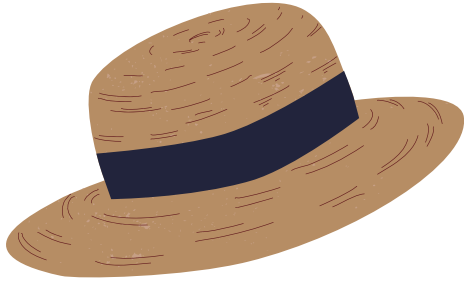
grass

glove

globe

gift

initial sound matching



initial sound matching

horse

hat

house

hen

hand

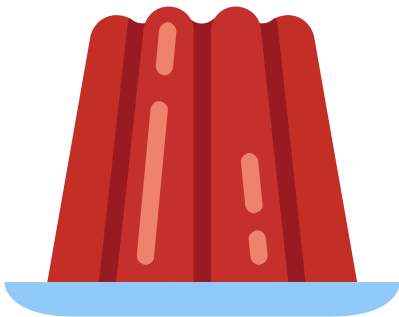
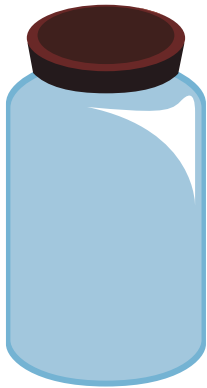
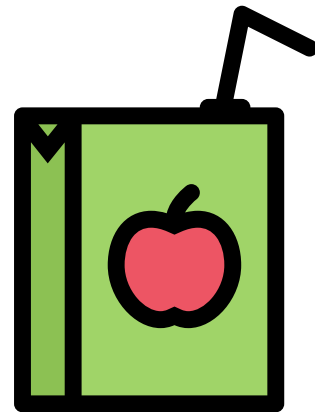
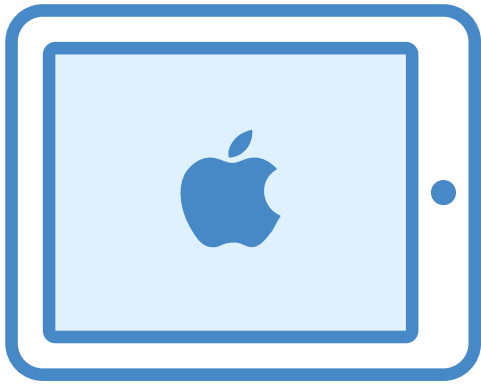
heart

hanger

helmet



initial sound matching



initial sound matching

ice cream

ipad

juice

jacket

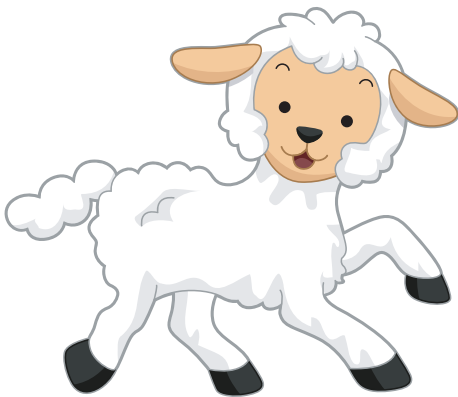
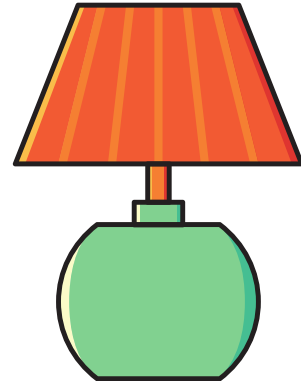
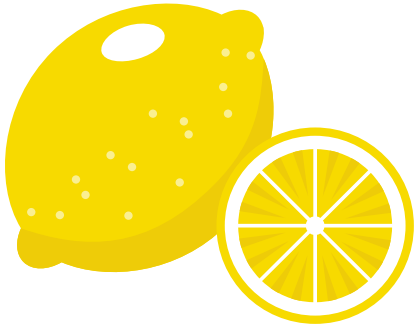
jump

jar

jellybean

jello

initial sound matching



initial sound matching

leaf

lion

lamp

lemon

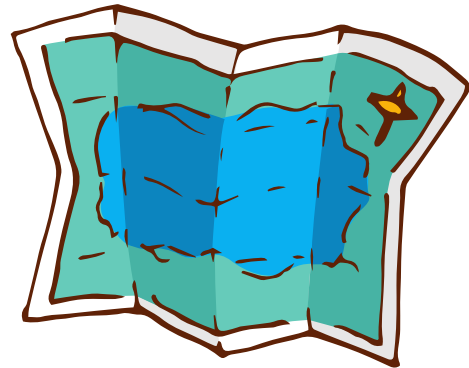
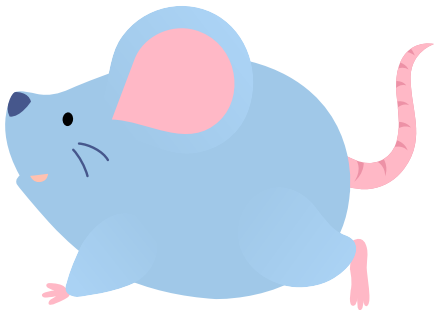
lock

ladder

lips

lamb

initial sound matching



initial sound matching

monkey

milk

moon

mouse

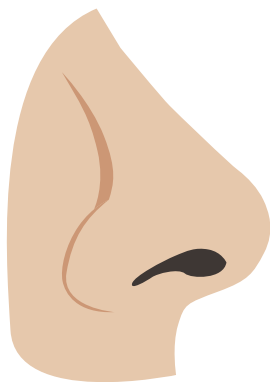
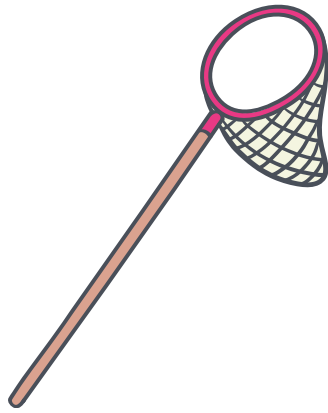
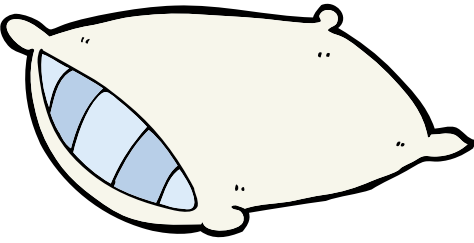
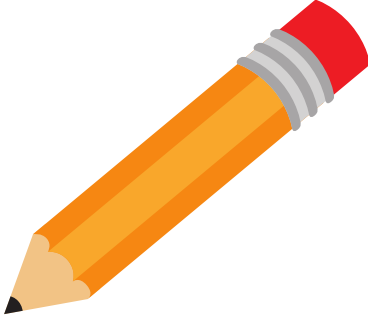




map

mitten

nest

noodles

initial sound matching

initial sound matching

net

nose

pencil

pillow

panda

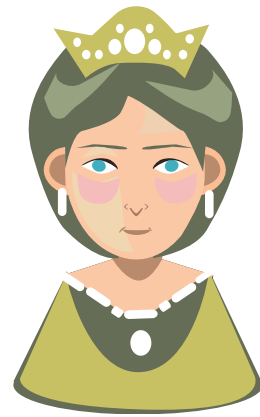
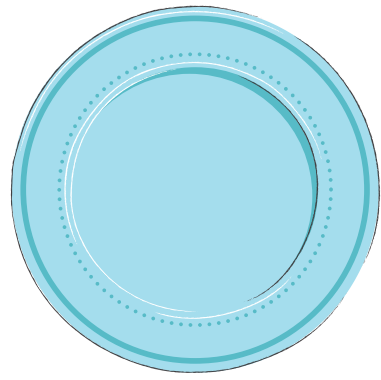
pig

penguin

pumpkin



initial sound matching



initial sound matching

plate

parrot

queen

quiet

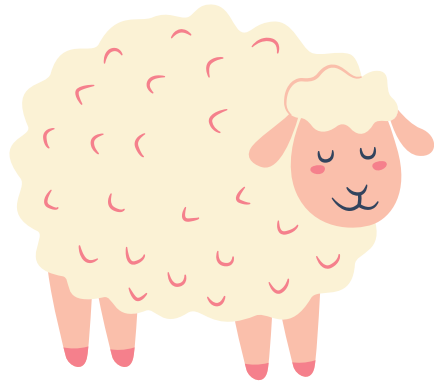
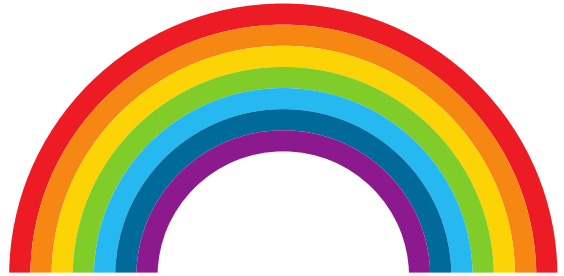
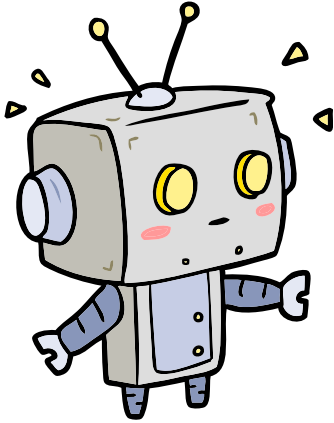
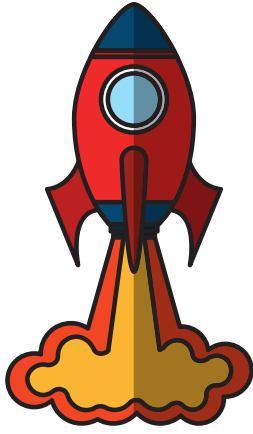
question

quilt

rabbit

rat

initial sound matching



initial sound matching

rose

rocket

rainbow

robot

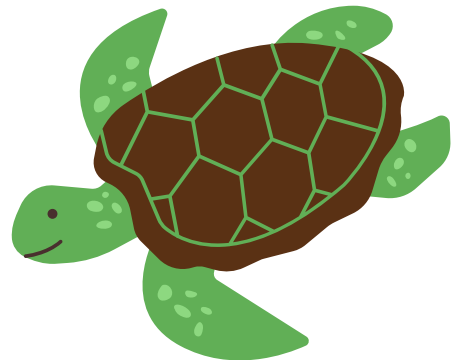
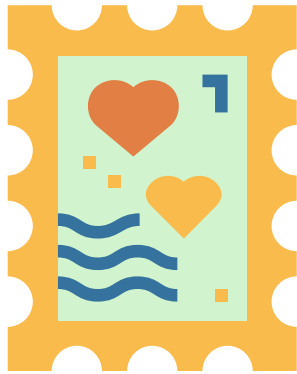
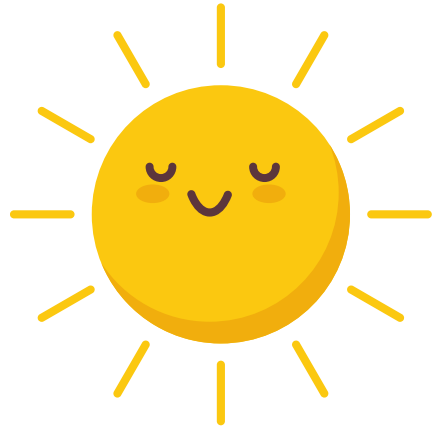
sheep

shoe

shirt

ship

initial sound matching



initial sound matching

sun

spoon

star

sunflower

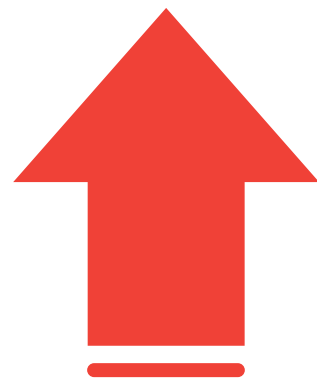
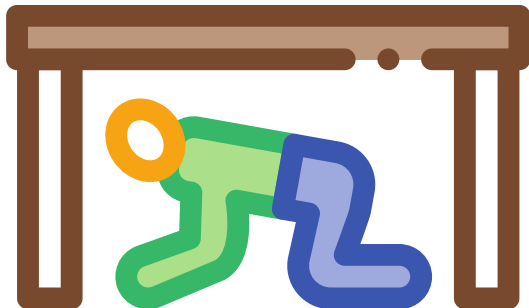
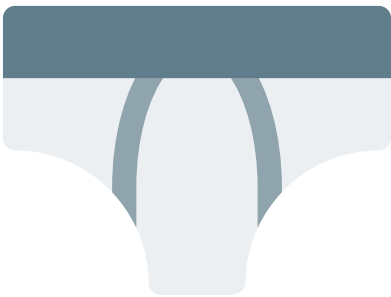
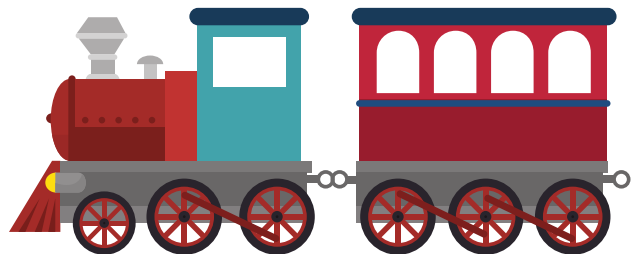
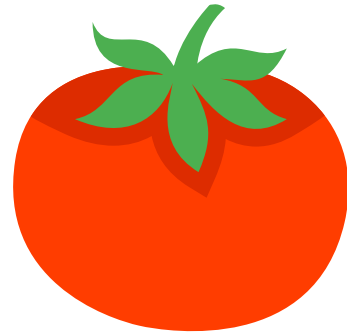
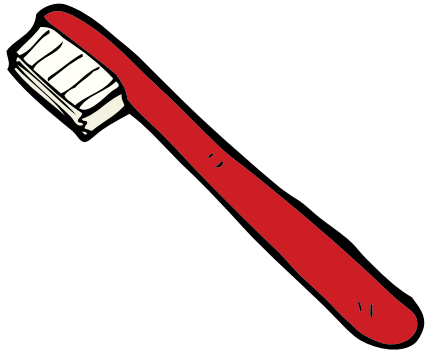
spider

stamp

turtle

tiger

initial sound matching



initial sound matching

tomato

toothbrush

train

tree

umbrella

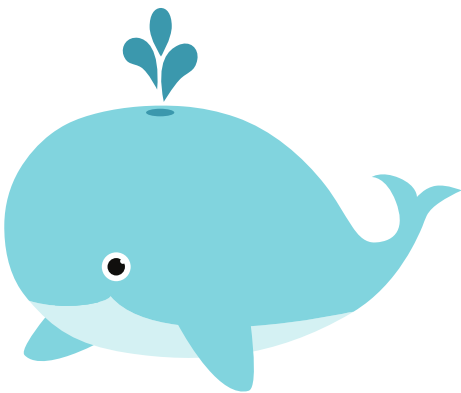
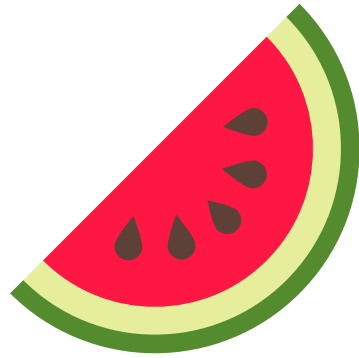
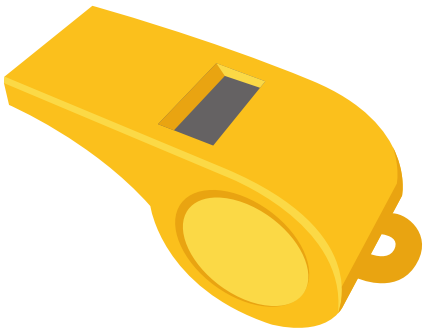
underwear

up

under



initial sound matching



initial sound matching

volcano

vase

violin

vest

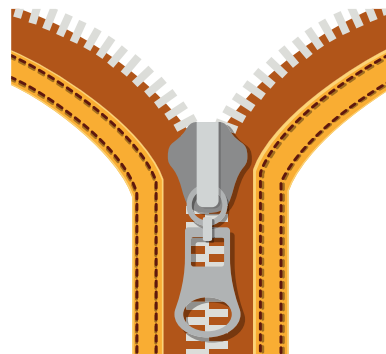
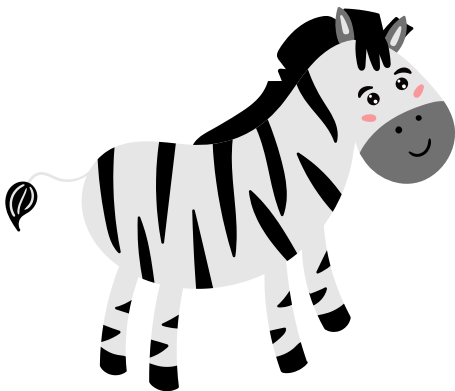
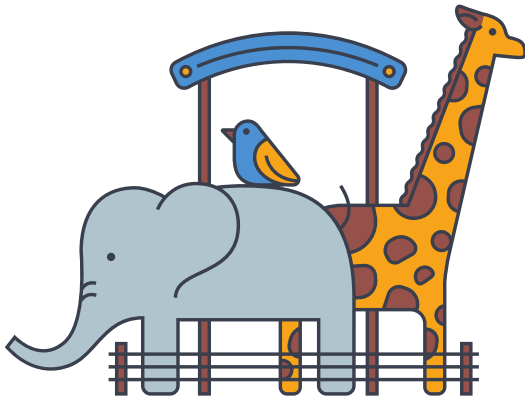
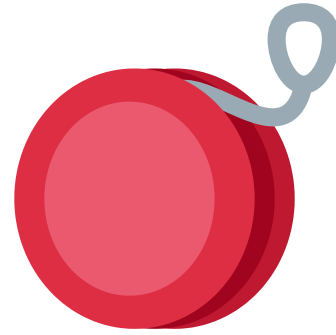
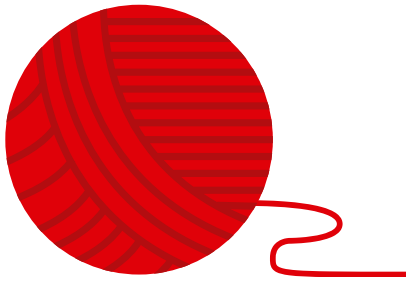
watermelon

whistle

wolf

whale

initial sound matching



initial sound matching

watch

wagon

yo-yo

yarn

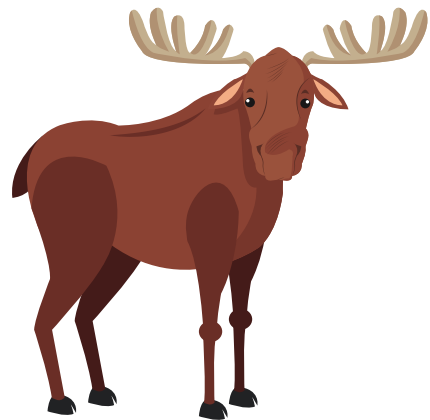
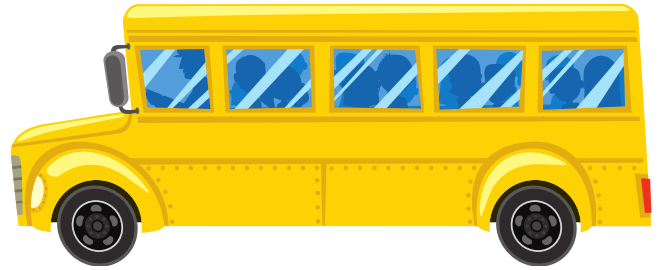
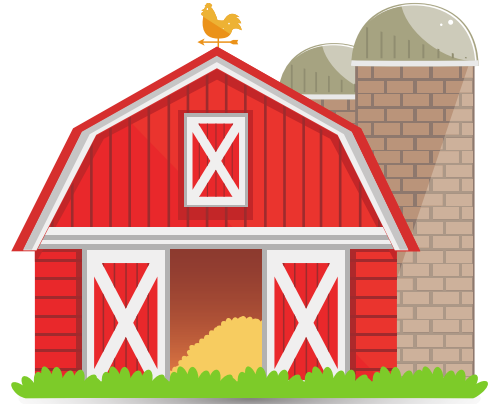
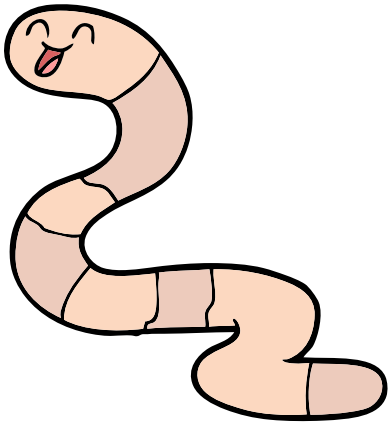
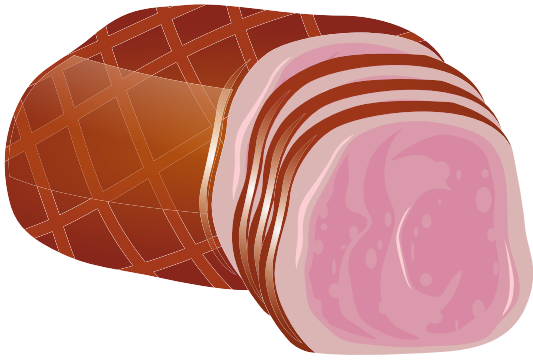
unicorn

zoo

zipper

zebra

final /m/



Karina Kung | SLP

final /s/

final /m/

bomb

ham

farm

worm

bus

dress

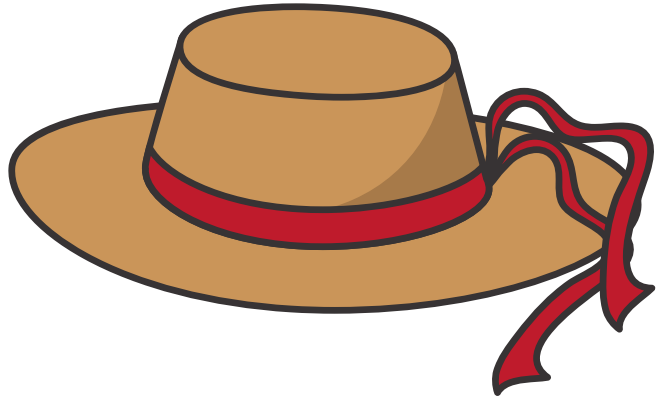
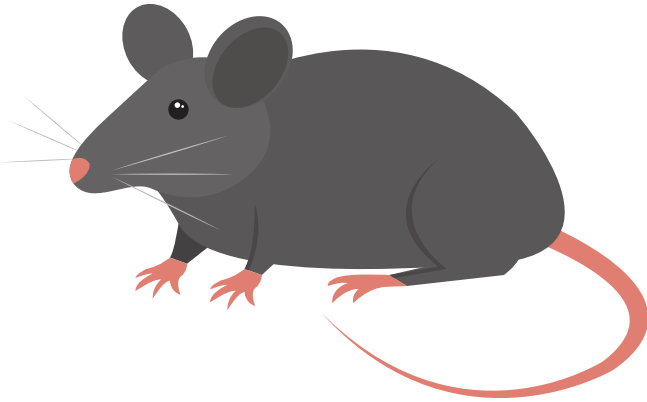
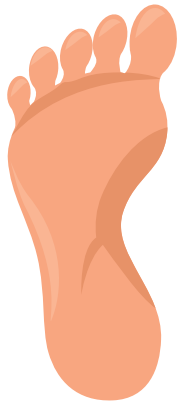
moose

grass

final /s/

(54)

final /t/



Karina Kung | SLP



final /v/

final /t/

coat

foot

hat

rat

Karina Kung | SLP

five

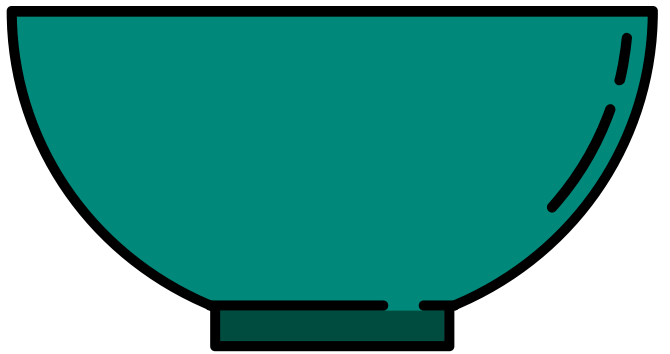
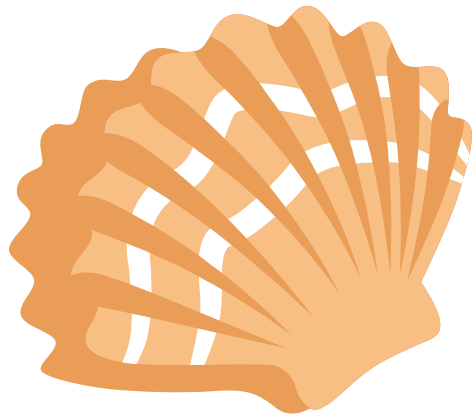
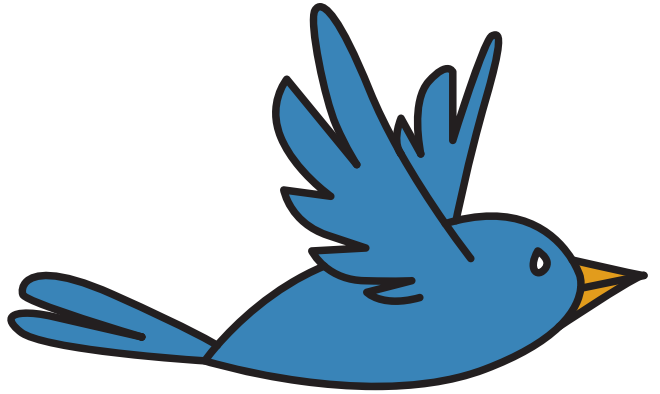
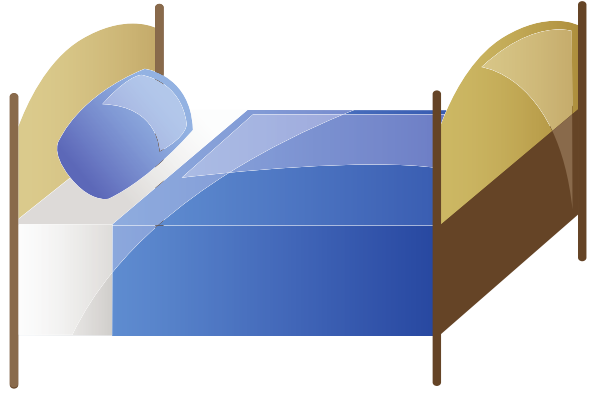
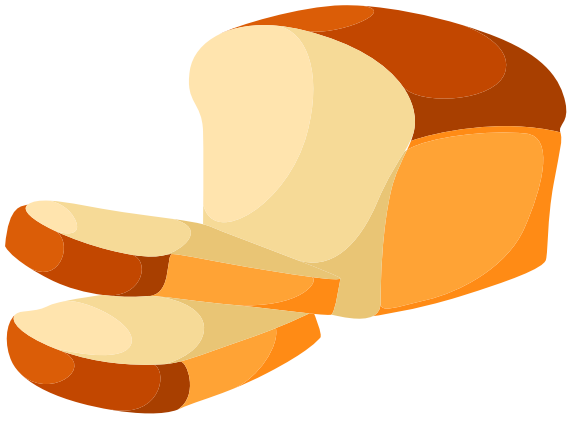
glove

final /v/

(56)



final /d/



Karina Kung | SLP

final /l/

final /d/

bed

bread

bird

hand

shell

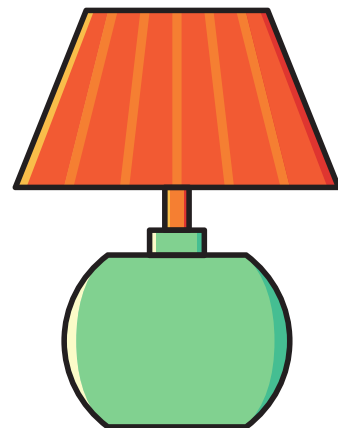
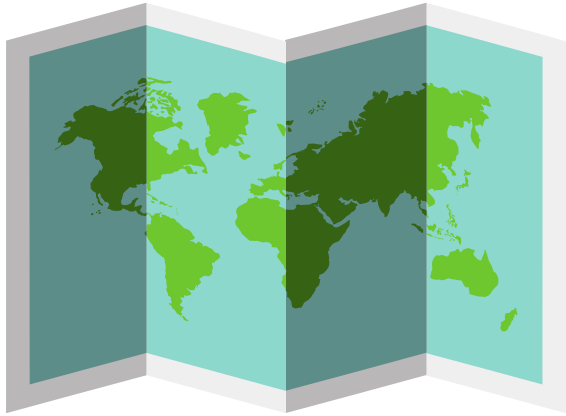
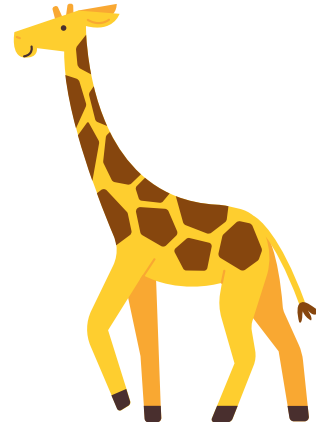
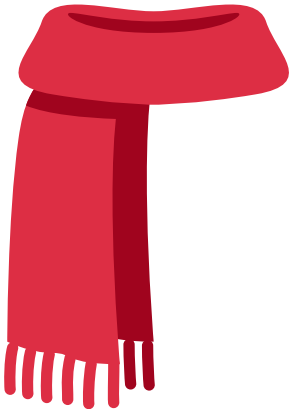
ball

bowl

snail

final /l/

final /f/



final /p/

final /f/

leaf

knife

giraffe

scarf

sheep

map

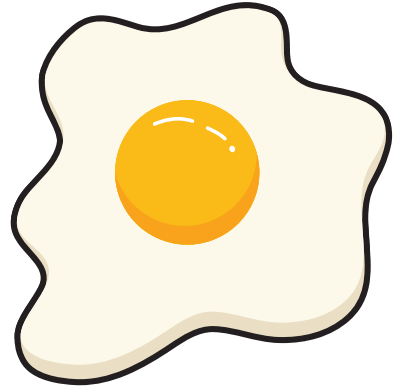
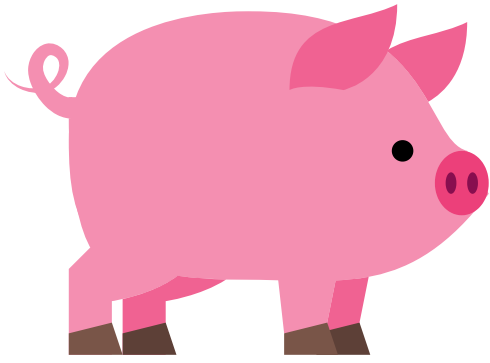
lamp

cup

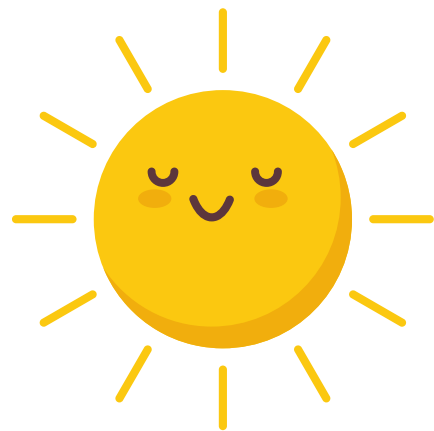
final /p/

(60)

final /g/



Karina Kung | SLP



final /n/

final /g/

dog

pig

egg

bag

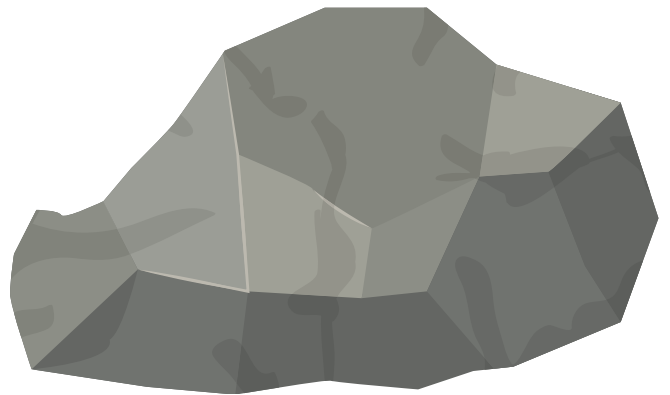
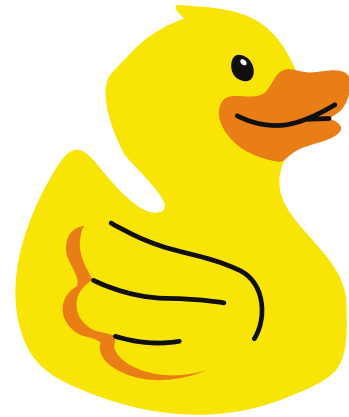
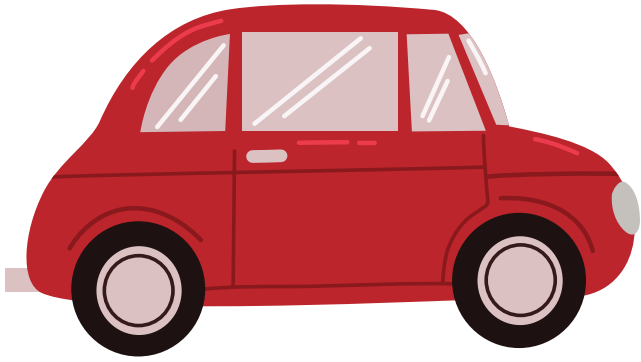
Karina Kung | SLP

sun

lion

final /n/

final /r/



Karina Kung | SLP

final /k/

final /r/

bear

car

door

star

duck

clock

rock

neck

final /k/



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