

Games with Words

Whether your child is learning to read sight words, needs work on vocabulary lists, or is simply bored with the same old spelling activities, these five word games will inject an element of fun into the learning process.

For each game, you'll need a list of focus words — you can look online for sight word lists or use the spelling or vocabulary words that your child's teacher has sent home or assigned for review. Play these games with as many or as few words as you'd like. Be guided by the age and concentration span of your child.

I recommend starting with between eight and ten words and then adding more if your child has the patience for it. You can mix up the words regularly too, replacing those that your child has mastered with some new challenges.

1. Bam!



This game can be played by 2-4 players.

You will need:

- Craft sticks – two per focus word, plus five additional sticks
- Marker pen
- Tin can or similar

Get ready:

Use the marker to write a focus word on one end of each craft stick. Repeat until you have two sticks for each word. Write BAM! on the remaining five craft sticks. Place all sticks into the can so that the end with the word on it is hidden inside the can.

How to play:

Players take turns drawing a stick from the can. Players can either read the word on the stick, or quickly look at the word, cover it up, and then spell it without looking. If the player answers correctly, she keeps the stick. If the player answers incorrectly, the stick is returned to the can.

If the player draws a BAM! stick, she must return all her sticks to the can.

Play continues until the parent calls time. Alternatively, a time limit can be set and the winner is the person with the most sticks in their possession when time is up.

2. Bin Ball

For 1+ players.

You will need:

- A clean bin or large container
- Paper

Get ready:

Write each focus word on a piece of paper, and then crumple the paper into a ball. Place all the crumpled papers in the container or bin.

How to play:

Players take turns reaching into the container to choose a paper ball. Players will then un-scrunch the paper ball and either read aloud the word or quickly look at it, then cover up the word and spell it.

If answered correctly, the player can crumple the paper up again, and try to shoot a “basket” in the bin. For each basket scored, the player receives one point. Continue playing until all of the paper balls are in the basket, or take them out and start all over again!

To play with a large group of children, divide the group into two teams. Each basket made results in a point for the team. The team with the most points at the end of the game is the winning team.

3. Roll It

For 2 players.

You will need:

- A set of focus word cards, shuffled and placed face down in a stack
- A die
- A sheet of paper to keep score

How to play:

Players take turns picking up a card from the stack, then reading the word or covering it up and spelling it. If the answer is correct, the player rolls the die for a score. The number rolled is recorded on the score sheet as the player’s score for that turn.

The first player to reach a pre-agreed number of points wins the game.

4. Swat It!

For 2+ players.

You will need:

- Two clean fly swatters (though hands will work too)
- A set of index cards with the focus words written clearly on them

How to play:

For two players: Lay all of your words out on the table face up. Give each player a fly swatter.

The parent calls out a focus word. The first child to find and swat the word reads or spells it aloud (turn to face the opposite direction for spelling). If the

player answers correctly, she scores a point. The first player to reach a pre-agreed number of points is the winner.

For a larger group: Tape word cards to a wall. Divide players into two teams. The first player for each team steps forward and competes to be the first to swat the word called. The player who wins the round scores a point for his team. Repeat for each pair of players until all team members have had a turn. The first team to reach a pre-agreed number of points is the winner.

5. Word Pong

For 1+ players.

You will need:

- One disposable paper or plastic cup for each focus word
- One ping pong ball

Get ready:

Write one focus word on the bottom of each cup. Arrange the cups in a triangle formation across a table top.

How to play:

Players take turns bouncing the ping pong ball into the cups. Whichever cup the ball lands in, the player must turn over and read the word or cover it up and spell it. The cup can be left upturned so that all words are eventually read/spelled or turned back over before the next turn. Players receive a point for each correct answer, or simply play for fun without scoring.

For larger groups, divide the players into two teams. The first team to reach a pre-agreed number of points is the winner.

Happy spelling — and playing!