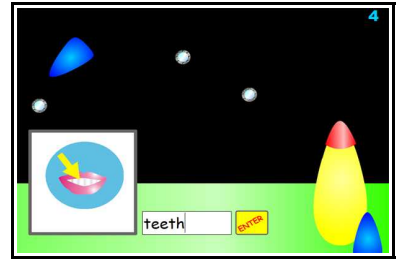


Teaching ideas

Rocket Rescue



Phonics learning opportunities

To practise segmenting for spelling.

Organisation

This game can be used as: 1) A teaching tool; 2) Independent practise; 3) A spelling test

Teaching ideas

Using the game as a teaching tool (whole class or small group)

Click on the Start button. A picture representing a word will appear and the word will be spoken. If you want to hear the word again, click on the picture.

Model soundtalking the word. Count out the phonemes on your fingers. Model drawing this number of soundbuttons on a whiteboard. Soundtalk the word again and model writing the grapheme that represents each phoneme above the relevant sound button.

Ask the children if they agree with your spelling of the word (making deliberate mistakes here can lead to some interesting discussions). Type the word into the computer and click on Enter.

With subsequent words ask all children to say the word, soundtalk it, draw soundbuttons and write the word on their individual whiteboards. Pick a willing volunteer and ask them to show you how they have spelt the word. Type this into the computer. Ask all children to show (using thumbs up/thumbs down) whether they agree or not with this spelling. Give the first child the choice of whether to keep their original spelling or change it. Click Enter to let the children find out how they have done. Encourage all children to tick each letter they got right.

Obviously this will be a slow process for the first few tries but as children become familiar with the game you should aim to pick the pace up and work through words quickly. N.B Don't expect to get through all ten words during the teaching segment of a phonics session.

Using the game for independent practise

Just let the children play. If the room is noisy, headphones may be helpful. Remind the children to try and soundtalk the words and listen carefully for all the phonemes. Encourage them to reflect on any spelling they get wrong and try to learn from their mistakes.

If children are working in pairs, ensure that both partners are involved in playing the game. For example, have a rule that one child should do the typing but that the other child will tell them exactly which letters to type in. Once they have completed the game they should swap roles.

At the end of the session, ask children to mark their partner out of ten (by holding up fingers) on how well they did at sticking to their role, sharing and being helpful.

Using the game as a spelling test

Obviously you can very simply test an individual child on a single computer. However, you can also test a large group of children in a computer suite. You will need one child per PC. If there are too many children, simply get them all to bring a reading book and get half the group to do the test whilst the other half read, then swap over.

Simply ask the children to do the test and then put their hand up when they get to the final score screen. The scores are large so that you can see them from a distance and record them on a class list. They are also written in different colours for different phases so you can check that

Teaching ideas

children are playing the right game. Phase 2 (Orange), Phase 3 (Purple), Phase 4 (Green)

A note about assessment

This game only gives you a quick snapshot of how well a child is doing in terms of spelling at a particular phase. Before you decide whether they are ready to move on to the next phase you also need to consider how they are doing with reading as well.

Troubleshooting Sound Issues

You need to be able to hear sounds on your computer to play this game. The sounds in this game can't be turned off so if you can't hear them the problem is almost certainly with your computer set up. Over the many years that I have worked in schools, I have found that getting computers to play sounds can cause teachers quite a lot of stress. Below are some of the things that I have found that can get an unco-operative computer to start playing sounds again.

Obviously, these are simply my experiences. Your computer set up (and anything that you choose to do to it) is your responsibility. If in doubt, speak to your ICT co-ordinator or technician.

Things that can help – some of these sound really obvious but it's very easy to miss the obvious when you are stressed out and have 30 children getting impatient.

Windows PCs - In the taskbar at the bottom right of the screen, there is a speaker icon. Clicking this icon opens a volume control which can be used to increase the volume and check that mute isn't selected.

Laptops - Some laptops have actual volume buttons or dials. They are often hidden away on the side.

- Lots of laptops use keyboard buttons to control the volume. This often involves holding down the Fn (Function) key and pressing another button. Look for a speaker icon.

Headphones - These need to be plugged into the correct hole on the computer. It is usually green but may be another colour. It will usually have a little picture of headphones or a speaker symbol.

-With some computers, you can plug headphones in at either the front or back. Sometimes headphones will work when plugged into the front but not the back or vice versa.

- If the headphones themselves are broken, new ones may be the only answer.

External speakers plugged into the computer - See the suggestions for headphones – plus:

- Check that the wires going into the speakers are firmly connected.

- Check that the speakers are plugged into the mains and both the speakers and the socket are turned on.

- Check that the volume is turned up on the speakers.

Speakers built into the monitor - There may be a physical volume control button or dial. These are often underneath or behind the monitor.

- Sometimes you have to press a menu button (on the monitor) repeatedly to bring up a volume control on screen and then use arrow or +/- buttons (on the monitor) to control the volume.

Speakers built into a projector - You may need to use buttons on the remote control to change the volume.

- Sometimes pressing the menu button on the remote control brings up volume controls on screen. Arrow buttons can then turn the volume up or down.

- Sometimes the mute button on the remote has been pressed by accident. Press it again to turn mute off.