


**Differentiated Word Study:  
Creating Simple Routines &  
Activities for Young Readers in K-3**


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**What is Word Study?**




Teaching students how to categorize the sounds, patterns, and meanings in words to build their knowledge of the English language.

**Developmental Spelling Stages**

Spelling Stage	Sample Spellings	Instructional Focus
Emergent	 <i>mitten</i>	Voice-print match Alphabet knowledge Phonological awareness
Letter-Name-Alphabetic	kAt <i>cat</i> hsUp <i>shop</i>	Phonemic awareness Phonics & word identification Sight word vocabulary
Within Word Pattern	caek <i>cake</i> towst <i>toast</i>	Patterns in single syllable words Developing fluency
Syllables & Affixes Derivational Relations	hoping <i>hopping</i> sine <i>sign (signal)</i> edable <i>edible</i>	Vowel patterns within & across syllables Vocabulary development Roots, base words & affixation Word origins & derivatives

See Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston (2008). *Words Their Way*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed.

**Link Between Spelling and Reading**  
(Bear, 1991; Bear & Templeton, 1998)



Developmental spelling is a window into children's thinking & knowledge about words

**Differentiated Word Study  
for Small Groups**

- **Start with Assessment**
  - Determine instructional level
  - Create small groups
  - Select phonics features for instruction
  - Evaluate progress & instructional planning
- **Develop a Routine**
  - Weekly set of sorts & activities
  - Differentiate based on needs

**Start with Assessment**

- Begin with a developmental spelling assessment, e.g., PALS spelling
- Examine misspellings for **\*\*confusions\*\***
- Conduct ongoing informal checks
  - Monitor progress
  - Use to plan next week's features/sorts

### Sample Spellings

- What does the child KNOW?
- What does the child "USE BUT CONFUSE"?
- What is ABSENT from the child's spelling?

## Develop a Routine

Guiding Questions:

1. How is word study different from the phonics instruction in my basal series?
2. What is the range of spelling stages I might have?
3. Will I need separate word study and reading groups?
4. How many groups can I expect?
5. What materials are needed to teach word study?

## Sample Word Study Routine

Mon: Introduce features; Buddy writing sort

Tues: Word building; Add to word bank

Wed: Word hunt; Dictated sentence

Thurs: Beat the Teacher; Speed Reads

Fri: Game & Assessment

## Monday

Poetry reading  
Introduce the features  
Buddy writing sort

## Tuesday

Rereading  
Add to word bank  
Letter building  
Introduce & read new book

## Wednesday

Poetry reading  
Word Hunt  
Dictated Sentence  
Introduce new book


## Thursday

Rereading  
Speed Reads  
Beat the Teacher  
Pattern/Frame Writing

Word Families  
(-ug, -ut, -un)

b ut	d ug
b un	ck ug
b ug	s un
f un	sh ut
c ut	z un


Can you find the missing word?



## Friday

Poetry Reading  
Assessment & Game  
Introduce new book

### Slam It



Directions: Divide the words/phrases in your text evenly. Place words/phrases in the boxes. Players take turns a word & place it in that box of the same team. If phrasal patterns match, the first to "slam" it. Repeat with the next sentence.

### Word Study In Action



Hardy Elementary School

For more information please visit our website  
[www.readingfirst.virginia.edu](http://www.readingfirst.virginia.edu)

OR

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