

How Words Work: The 7 Basic Principles

(making and breaking words, from Reading Recovery and MCPS)



1. Add a new letter or letters to the end of words you know.

(probably the easiest for children)

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ go—going▪ can—can't▪ I—I'm | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ look—looked▪ come—comes▪ see--seem |
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2. Change the first letter of a word you know.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ to--do▪ Dad--had▪ come--some | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ get--let▪ mom--Tom▪ went--sent |
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3. Change the last letter of a word you know.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ up--us▪ is--if▪ out--our | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ will--with▪ his--him▪ at--as |
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4. Add a letter or letters to the front of a word you know or take away the first letter.

(amazingly difficult for children)

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|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ is--his▪ and--stand▪ or—for▪ am--Sam | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ at--that▪ it--sit▪ all--fall |
|---|--|

5. Change the middle of a word you know. (harder)

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ get--got▪ ran--run▪ make--made | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ home--hole▪ come--came▪ like--line |
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6. Put two words you know together.

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|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ in + to--into▪ a + go--ago▪ to + day--today | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ can + not--cannot▪ up + on--upon |
|---|---|

7. Take a part of one word and add it to a part of another word you know.

(easier for children than one might think!)

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|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ sh/she + op/stop--shop▪ pl/play + an/can--plan▪ th/the + ing/going--thing | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ ju/jump + st/stop--just▪ sh/fish + ook/look--shook▪ kn/know + ee/see--knee |
|---|--|

Always use two examples when teaching these principles and remember that to spell a new word in writing or to solve an unknown word in reading, children learn to go from their known words to new words through “analogies”. These principles are taught as part of Reading Recovery lessons but are worthwhile for every learner. **Note: This is not a sequence.**

another resource from <http://www.teachmama.com> to help our little ones learn while they play. . .

