

Step 3: Start Learning Two-Letter Blends

After your child has mastered Step 1 (short vowel sounds) and a few Step 2 (consonant sounds), it is now time to introduce two-letter blends.¹ Each letter within a blend is pronounced individually, but quickly, so that they seem to “blend” together. Our recommendation is to start with the short vowels. Continue with the letters /r/ /s/ /t/ /l/ /n/. Then work through letters /m/ /p/ and /f/, then /g/ h/ and /b/, and finally the rest of the letters. Do not worry if the blends are not real words. The main point of Step 3 is having your child learn how letters interact with other letters. At this point, you should help your child to recognize and to name the sound at the ending of an object or word.

Short Vowels Two-Letter Blends (One-Vowel Families)				
a	e	i	o	u
a + b = ab	e + b = eb	i + b = ib	o + b = ob	u + b = ub
a + c = ac	e + c = ec	i + c = ic	o + c = oc	u + c = uc
a + d = ad	e + d = ed	i + d = id	o + d = od	u + d = ud
a + f = af	e + f = ef	i + f = if	o + f = of	u + f = uf
a + g = ag	e + g = eg	i + g = ig	o + g = og	u + g = ug
a + h = ah	e + h = eh	i + h = ih	o + h = oh	u + h = uh
a + j = aj	e + j = ej	i + j = ij	o + j = oj	u + j = uj
a + k = ak	e + k = ek	i + k = ik	o + k = ok	u + k = uk
a + l = al	e + l = el	i + l = il	o + l = ol	u + l = ul
a + m = am	e + m = em	i + m = im	o + m = om	u + m = um
a + n = an	e + n = en	i + n = in	o + n = on	u + n = un
a + p = ap	e + p = ep	i + p = ip	o + p = op	u + p = up
a + q = aq	e + q = eq	i + q = iq	o + q = oq	u + q = uq
a + r = ar	e + r = er	i + r = ir	o + r = or	u + r = ur
a + s = as	e + s = es	i + s = is	o + s = os	u + s = us
a + t = at	e + t = et	i + t = it	o + t = ot	u + t = ut
a + v = av	e + v = ev	i + v = iv	o + v = ov	u + v = uv
a + w = aw	e + w = ew	i + w = iw	o + w = ow	u + w = uw
a + x = ax	e + x = ex	i + x = ix	o + x = ox	u + x = ux
a + y = ay	e + y = ey	i + y = iy	o + y = oy	u + y = uy
a + z = az	e + z = ez	i + z = iz	o + z = oz	u + z = uz

Two-Letter Blends (Consonant-Vowel Families)				
r	s	t	l	n
r + a = ra	s + a = sa	t + a = ta	l + a = la	n + a = na
r + e = re	s + e = se	t + e = te	l + e = le	n + e = ne
r + i = ri	s + i = si	t + i = ti	l + i = li	n + i = ni
r + o = ro	s + o = so	t + o = to	l + o = lo	n + o = no
r + u = ru	s + u = su	t + u = tu	l + u = lu	n + u = nu

¹ Although complete mastery of every consonant sound is not necessary, we do highly recommend that your child master the 5 short vowel sounds before proceeding toward Step 3 and blending.

Two-Letter Blends (Consonant-Vowel Families)		
m	p	f
m + a = ma	p + a = pa	f + a = fa
m + e = me	p + e = pe	f + e = fe
m + i = mi	p + i = pi	f + i = fi
m + o = mo	p + o = po	f + o = fo
m + u = mu	p + u = pu	f + u = fu

Two-Letter Blends (Consonant-Vowel Families)		
g	h	b
g + a = ga	h + a = ha	b + a = ba
g + e = ge	h + e = he	b + e = be
g + i = gi	h + i = hi	b + i = bi
g + o = go	h + o = ho	b + o = bo
g + u = gu	h + u = hu	b + u = bu

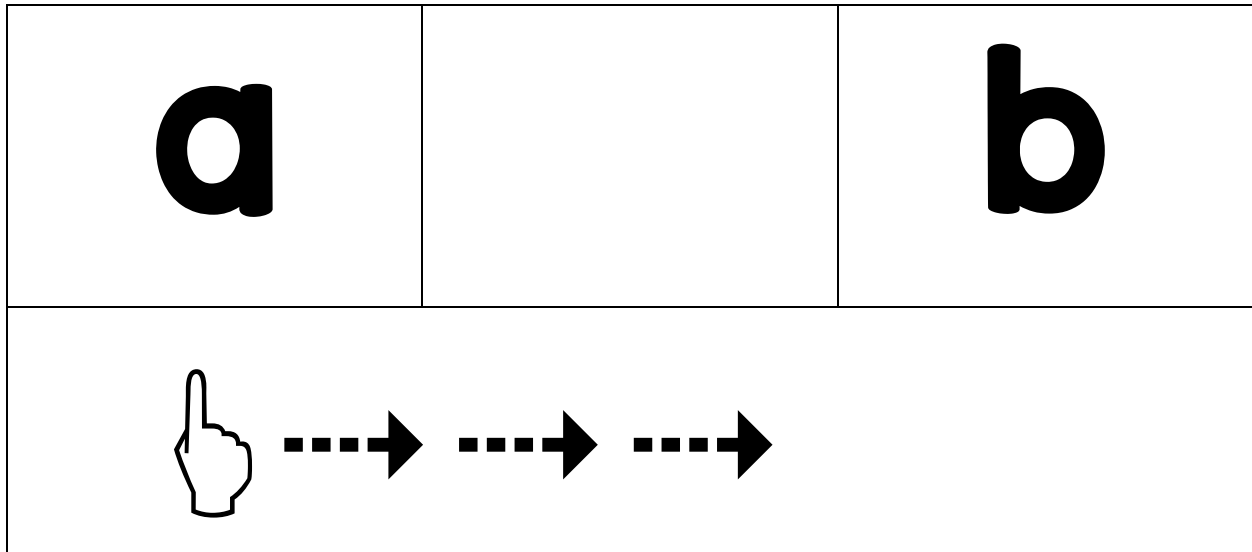
Two-Letter Blends (Consonant-Vowel Families)		
d	w	k
d + a = da	w + a = wa	k + a = ka
d + e = de	w + e = we	k + e = ke
d + i = di	w + i = wi	k + i = ki
d + o = do	w + o = wo	k + o = ko
d + u = du	w + u = wu	k + u = ku

When learning two-letter blends, have your child orally hold the sounds that he/she is making. Start slowly at first and then when your child is comfortable, speed up to form the blends.

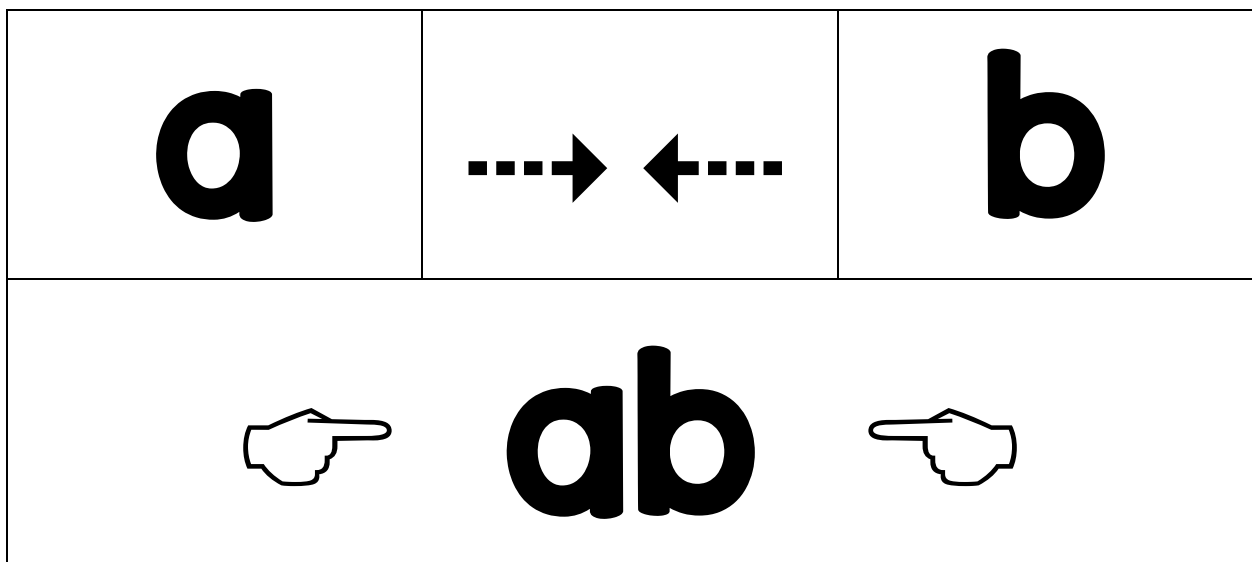
One tip is to have your child hold a rubber band. As your child blends the sounds, have him/her stretch the rubber band.

Blending Methods

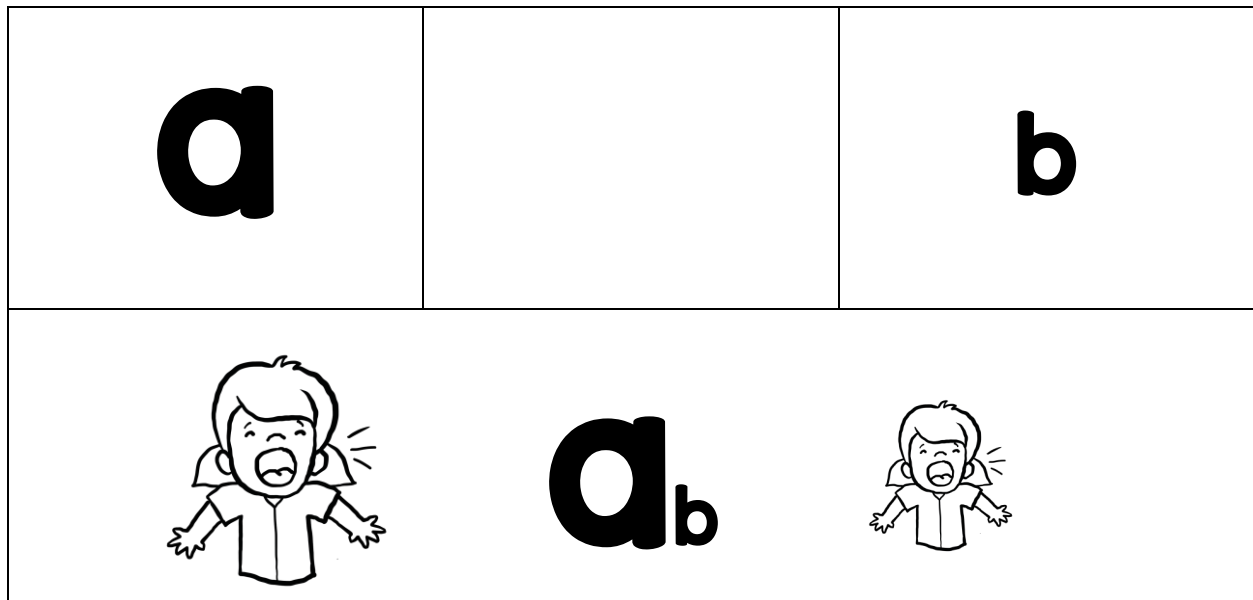
When starting to blend, it is recommended to have your child hold the sound of each letter continuously. This is often referred to as successive blending or “keeping the motor running.” Teach your child to hold the sound of each letter until the next letter sound. Make sure to have your child voice each sound. One way to practice this technique is to tell children that they have a magic wand (i.e., finger). Have them move their finger slowly across the page from left to right as they clearly voice each sound.



Another technique, called pushing, is to have your child hold the first sound until the sound on the right comes toward it. This can be accomplished by practicing use flashcards (i.e., move both letters toward each other letter).



A final technique is called isolated blending. To use this technique, have your child say the first letter sound the loudest and the next letter sound a little quieter.



Whatever method you chose, the key to successful blending and eventually reading is practice. Our recommendation is to start with short vowel two-letter blends, which we call one-vowel families. To help strengthen your child's reading skills, rhyming is also an important concept that should be introduced early and often.

The next progression in blending is to practice two letter blends in consonant-vowel families. As your child recognizes various consonant-vowel families, your child's reading skills will improve immensely!