Tip Sheet: Play with Word Families

FOR PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

For additional support on this topic, visit https://bit.ly/QTWordFamily to view a short video.

WHY?

Children with solid phonological awareness skills tend to become better readers. Phonological awareness skills develop while children are in preschool and elementary school. Drawing attention to rhyming words helps children pay attention to the sounds in words and supports their phonological awareness development.

WHAT?

Word families are groups of words with the same ending, such as *dog, log, hog*, and *smog*. Working with word families helps children notice **onsets** and **rimes**. The **rime** of a syllable or one-syllable word is the last part with the vowel, and the **onset** is the part of the word that comes before that. For example, with the word *dog*, the onset is *d-* and the rime is *-og*. All the words in a word family have the same rime but different onsets.

HOW?

Here are a few ways to introduce children to word families:

- For older preschoolers, use a flipbook that has one rime with different onset letters. Show children how to change the word by changing the first letter, but that the last part stays the same. (These flipbooks are commercially available, or you can make one yourself with index cards or paper, and a stapler. Be sure to include pictures to represent the words before the onset letter as a way to support their understanding.)

- Create charts of word families. Start with one word, such as *cat*, and ask children to add as many other words they can think of that that belong to that family, such as *hat* and *mat*.

- Make a word tower during circle time or with a small group of children during center time. Invite children to take turns saying words with the same ending, such as *back, stack, track, rack, lack*, etc. For each word, stack a block. Encourage the group to see how tall they can make the tower.

TEACHER TIP

Challenge children to think up as many words as they can for a word family, such as words that end in -an. Write these out on chart paper during circle time and ask children to count the words. This is a great way to integrate literacy and math skill development!

UF | **Lastinger Center for Learning**
UNIVERSITY *of* FLORIDA
www.lastingercenter.com