

IMPORTANT: READ THIS PAGE BEFORE SINGING

Sounds of the English Language

Before we jump into this *chocolaty* dessert of songs and resources, a few tips for sounding out letters and using singing to develop letter-sound correspondence is critical.

CONTINUANT SOUNDS can be sustained as you say them. It is very helpful to start with these letter sounds—*a, f, l, m, n, o, r, s, v,* and *z*—in early stages of learning to blend phonemes. The vowels *e, i,* and *u* can also be considered a continuous sound. To develop the ability to discriminate between vowel sounds, it is helpful to use a short, choppy sound for these vowels. More information can be found about this on the “Strategies for Short Vowels” page. The sounds corresponding with the letters *h, w,* and *y* are considered glide sounds, but can also be stretched slightly.

STOP SOUNDS are made by briefly blocking the air passage. These sounds—*b, c, d, g, j, k, p, q, t,* and *x*—are very difficult to say without adding a vowel after them. This is especially challenging when you are singing the sounds, but it is important to de-emphasize or clip the vowel sound. For example, B should sound like the /b/ at the end of the word “club” and M should sound like /m/ rather than “ma.” Because it is sometimes difficult to sing a pure sound (e.g., /l/ versus “la”), I will sometimes have the kids blend the letter sound with /ah/ before we start singing, as it introduces the skill of blending, but reinforces the concept of a pure sound.

When singing **VOICELESS SOUNDS**, it is important to “turn off your voice” and use only your mouth shape and breath. Singing *f, h, k, p, s,* and *t* with only air passing your lips is counter-intuitive for singing, but is fun for the kids and a memorable experience.