



It is important for beginning readers to have a physical way to show the relationship between sounds and letters or letter combinations. This is done through spelling. The letters and letter combinations, when placed in a specific order, make words. And when working on reading accurately, reading the sounds represented in word spellings works for about 50 percent of common English words. On the other hand, 36 percent of common words have one irregularity (at least one letter that does not represent its most common sound), and the other 14 percent have more than one. This is because there are 44 sounds in the English language and over 200 letters and letter combinations that make up those 44 sounds. Wow. That is a lot for readers to learn!

However, it is not impossible. We must teach readers to align the sounds in a word to their corresponding spellings, or orthographically **"Map It!"** Continued exposure and practice with mapping will, over time, eliminate the need to decode every word and allow readers to focus on meaning so they can understand what is being read.

How do we do this? If we are *spelling* a word, we say the word slowly, determine how many sounds we hear, and then look at the spelling to determine what letters or letter combinations create those sounds. If we are *reading* a word, we look at the letters and letter combinations and say the sounds slowly to determine how to read or say the unknown word.

It helps readers to use sound boxes to visually represent the words they are trying to figure out. *Your reader has been taught how to map words using sound boxes at school.* The ideas below can be used to help expand on what they have already learned about mapping or to help prompt them if they get stuck.

HOW CAN YOU HELP YOUR CHILD WITH THIS STRATEGY AT HOME?

1. Say the word slowly. Have your child say the word slowly. Ask, "How many sounds do you hear?" Say the word slowly again, holding up a finger for each sound. The number of sounds you hear is equal to the number of sound boxes used when mapping the word.
2. Use manipulatives such as coins, bingo chips, Cheerios, or small pieces of paper to represent each sound. Say the word slowly while laying out a manipulative for each sound you hear.
3. When a letter or letter combination represents a sound that is uncommon, point it out so the reader is aware. For example, sound out the word *light*. *L – igh – t.* *This word has three sounds and would have three sound boxes. The L and T are regular and make their most common sound, but the long-i sound is represented by the letter combination igh, which is not the most common spelling for that sound. It is important to point this out to the reader. They will see this same letter combination in words such as might, sight, height, right, night, and tight.*
4. After mapping a word, use it in context in a sentence or two, to keep meaning as the focus of reading.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT AT HOME!