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Introduction

Purposeful practice is essential for improvement and mastery of literacy skills. When given proper instruction, materials, and opportunities to practice and apply what they learn, all students can experience literacy success.

Over the past two decades, scientific research has revealed how expert readers read and what goes wrong when students fail to read. One of the most important findings is how important early intervention is to avoiding problems for students at risk for reading difficulties (Torgenson, Wagner, and Rashotte 1994).

Children who fall behind in first-grade reading have a one-in-eight chance of ever catching up to grade level (Juel 1994). Seventy-five percent of children whose help is delayed to age nine or later continue to struggle throughout their school careers (Francis et. al. 1996). If help can be given at an earlier age, children may be more successful in their later years.

Allowing children opportunities with independent practice can give children the help needed to be successful. Whole-class lessons are most effective when the materials and activities involved are available to small groups or individuals for further application. Students need to practice what they have learned in order to assimilate the new information into their current knowledge base. Through literacy centers, students gain opportunities to manipulate, repeat, share, and expand upon the presented materials at their own pace. The literacy centers in this book provide the meaningful, independent practice that is a natural follow up to whole-class instruction.

Children learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process. Classrooms that incorporate literacy centers into their daily routine become less teacher directed and more student driven. As students' knowledge grows, they learn to think critically, make decisions, and solve problems. Additionally, they demonstrate the personal characteristics of responsibility, self-esteem, self-management, and integrity needed to function in today's society.

What Is a Center?

Centers are effective teaching tools developed to support and reinforce whole-class instruction. They offer teachers a way to engage students of various abilities in active learning. Centers are designed to provide purposeful activities that encourage students to work independently, allowing the teacher to focus on differentiated instruction with students who may need extra support. Various learning tasks along with multiple degrees of teacher interaction are involved.

Centers provide a motivating and engaging learning environment. They are process oriented and offer opportunities for students to practice new skills and to problem solve at their own pace.

Introduction (cont.)

Why Are Literacy Centers Valuable?

An optimal literacy learning environment is created when whole-group instructional periods are combined with reinforcement and independent practice in literacy centers. Through independent practice with literacy centers, students drive their learning.

With *Ready! Set! Go! Literacy Centers*, students gain opportunities to manipulate, repeat, share, and expand upon the presented materials at their own pace. Students learn best when they are actively involved in their own learning process. *Ready! Set! Go! Literacy Centers* allows this process to happen naturally and effectively. The literacy centers in this book focus on the individual needs of each student.

Research shows that literacy centers have several instructional advantages:

- Literacy centers address different learning styles better than paper and pencil tasks; they also motivate students by providing varied stimulating activities (Wait and Stephens 1989).
- Literacy centers result in improved communication between home and school (Optiz 1995).
- Literacy centers play an important role in meeting the needs of each student (Huyett 1994).

Why Ready! Set! Go! Literacy Centers?

Research has made great strides in identifying critical skills that consistently relate to reading success. The National Reading Panel (2000) concluded that the need for systematic and explicit instruction in the following five components of reading is critical to reading success: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. It is essential to understand each one of these five components in order to provide the best literacy center experiences for students.

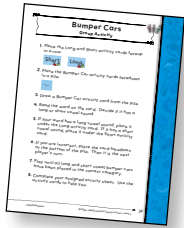
Ready! Set! Go! Literacy Centers are rooted in the five components of reading and are also aligned with the Common Core State Standards. Each center is differentiated, providing students an optimal learning experience at their individual learning levels. Basing the development of the centers on these components ensures that with focused, purposeful instruction and practice, the needs of all students in all areas of literacy development will be met.

On the following pages, you will get an in-depth look at each of the five components of reading. These overviews provide a clear and concise analysis of the components to assist not only in your literacy center-design and implementation but also in planning your overall reading instruction.

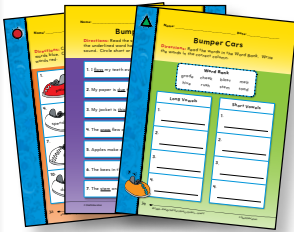


Bumper Cars

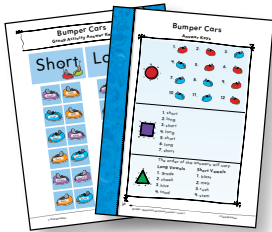
Long and Short Vowels



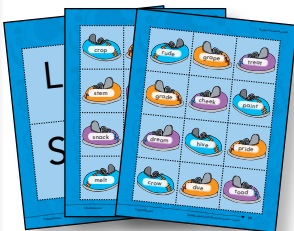
Group Activity



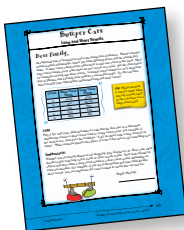
Differentiated Activity Sheets



Answer Keys



Activity Cards



Family Letter

With *Bumper Cars: Long and Short Vowels*, students will categorize bumper cars with words that have long and short vowels.

Center Objectives:

- Students will read words with common vowel sounds.
- Students will identify long and short vowels.

Center Standards:

- **CCSS:** Distinguish long and short vowels when reading regularly spelled one-syllable words
- **Content:** Use basic elements of phonetic analysis to decode unknown words
- **Language:** Communicate for social and instructional purposes within the school setting

Materials:

- Group Activity (page 31)
- Differentiated Activity Sheets (pages 32–34)
- Answer Keys (pages 35–36)
- Activity Cards (pages 37–42)
- Family Letter (page 43)
- scissors
- red and blue crayons

Recommended Literature:

- Barchers, Suzanne I. *Main Street Game Day*.
Huntington Beach: Teacher Created Materials, 2012.
- Barchers, Suzanne I. *Mike Makes Up His Mind!*
Huntington Beach: Teacher Created Materials, 2012.
- Barchers, Suzanne I. *On the Road with Rose and Bose*.
Huntington Beach: Teacher Created Materials, 2012.
- Van Dusen, Chris. *A Camping Spree With Mr. Magee*.
San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2003.

Bumper Cars

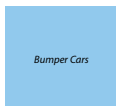
Group Activity



1. Place the Long and Short activity cards faceup in a row.



2. Mix up the Bumper Car activity cards and place them facedown in a pile.




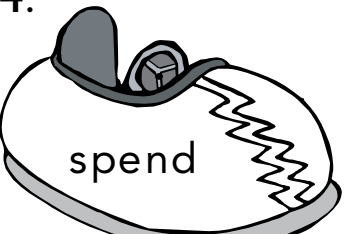
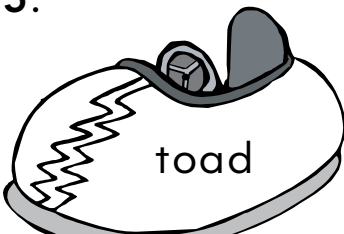
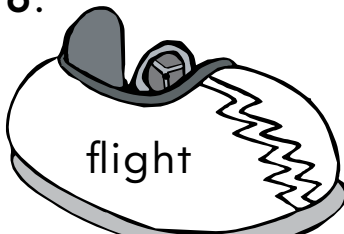
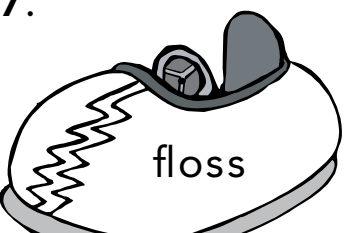
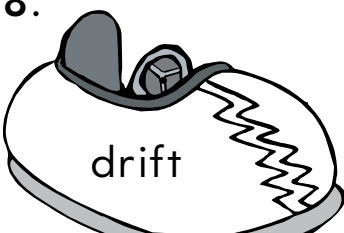
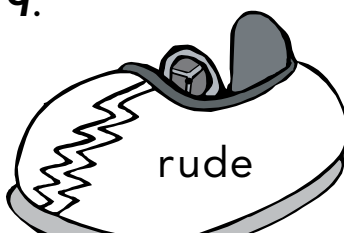
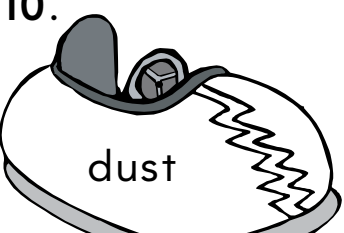
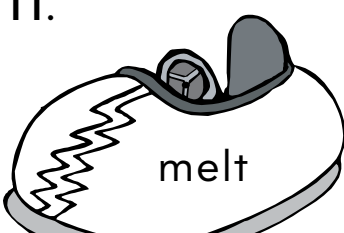
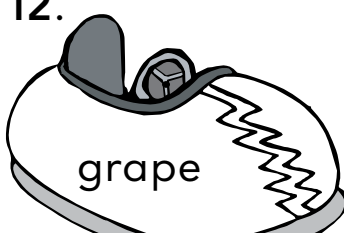


3. Draw a Bumper Car activity card from the pile.
4. Read the word on the card. Decide if it has a long or short vowel sound.
5. If your word has a long vowel sound, place it under the Long activity card. If it has a short vowel sound, place it under the Short activity card.
6. If you are incorrect, place the card facedown at the bottom of the pile. Then it is the next player's turn.
7. Play until all long and short vowel bumper cars have been placed in the correct category.
8. Complete your assigned activity sheet. Use the activity cards to help you.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Bumper Cars

Directions: Color the bumper cars with short vowel words blue. Color the bumper cars with long vowel words red.

1.  paint	2.  dream	3.  snack
4.  spend	5.  toad	6.  flight
7.  floss	8.  drift	9.  rude
10.  dust	11.  melt	12.  grape

Bumper Cars

Long and Short Vowels

Dear Family,

An important part of learning to read is the instruction of phonics. Phonics teaches sound-symbol relationships, where you learn different letters and the sounds they make. A short vowel sound occurs when there is only one vowel in the word. Most long vowel sounds occur when there are two vowels in a word. See the chart below for examples of long and short vowels. Learning vowel sounds is a very important part of phonics and will help your child be a successful reader. Try the activities below to help your child practice long and short vowels.

Vowels	Short Vowel Words	Long Vowel Words
a	snack	grape
e	ten	dream
i	clip	bike
o	hop	boat
u	dust	due

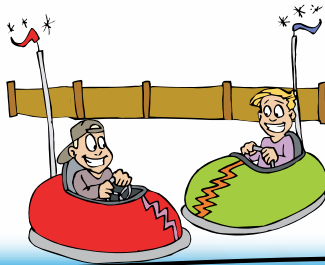
Tip: When you hear a vowel's name when you say a word, such as the *o* in *boat*, it is a long vowel word.

I Spy

Play *I Spy* with your child and make it a rule that the first clue is to determine whether the word is a short vowel word or a long vowel word. For example, if the word is *tree*, your first clue would be, "I spy an object with a long vowel in its name." When someone guesses the object, it is his or her turn to spy something new.

Emphasize It!

Whether you are having dinner or out shopping, play *Emphasize It!* Have your child decide to play with long vowel words or short vowels words. Then look around for objects that have either a long vowel sound or a short vowel sound, depending on what was decided. For example, if you are in the kitchen and your child decides short vowels, you can emphasize the vowel sounds in words like *cup* and *hot*.



Happy Playing!