

Teacher Resource · Free resource

# Word sort activities – Year 1

Year group: 1

Source: DfE, *English Appendix 1: Spelling* (2013)

Purpose: Printable word sort activities for Y1 spelling patterns.

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## How to run a word sort

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**Print and cut** the word card grid below, or write words on small slips of paper

**Give pupils the column headers only** — not the completed sort

**Pupils sort in pairs** — they must say *why* each word goes where it does

**Discuss as a class** — focus on reasoning, not just the answer

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## Sort 1: End patterns – double letters and -ck

Column headers: -ff · -ll · -ss · -zz · -ck

Word cards — print and cut:

<b>cliff</b>	<b>well</b>	<b>miss</b>	<b>buzz</b>	<b>back</b>
<b>off</b>	<b>ball</b>	<b>hiss</b>	<b>fizz</b>	<b>lock</b>
<b>stiff</b>	<b>bell</b>	<b>fuss</b>	<b>jazz</b>	<b>duck</b>
<b>bluff</b>	<b>hill</b>	<b>mess</b>	<b>fuzz</b>	<b>neck</b>
<b>gruff</b>	<b>tall</b>	<b>dress</b>	<b>whizz</b>	<b>check</b>

Column header cards:

<b>-ff</b>	<b>-ll</b>	<b>-ss</b>	<b>-zz</b>	<b>-ck</b>
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*(Why these endings? In a one-syllable word with a short vowel, f, l, s, z are usually doubled. c is never doubled — we write -ck instead.)*

## Sort 2: Short vowel or long vowel? (the split digraph)

Column headers: Short vowel (no magic e) · Long vowel (magic e at the end)

Word cards — print and cut:

<b>cap</b>	<b>cape</b>	<b>hop</b>	<b>hope</b>	<b>bit</b>
<b>bite</b>	<b>pin</b>	<b>pine</b>	<b>cut</b>	<b>cute</b>
<b>hat</b>	<b>hate</b>	<b>fin</b>	<b>fine</b>	<b>not</b>
<b>note</b>	<b>kit</b>	<b>kite</b>	<b>rod</b>	<b>rode</b>
<b>mad</b>	<b>made</b>	<b>dim</b>	<b>dime</b>	<b>cub</b>
<b>cube</b>	<b>tap</b>	<b>tape</b>	<b>Tim</b>	<b>time</b>

Column header cards:

<b>Short vowel</b>	<b>Long vowel (magic e)</b>
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*(Adding a silent e at the end changes the vowel sound. The e 'reaches across' to make the vowel say its name.)*

### Sort 3: Plurals – -s or -es?

Column headers: Add -s · Add -es (after -s, -x, -ch, -sh, -z)

Word cards — print and cut:

<b>cat</b>	<b>fox</b>	<b>dog</b>	<b>bus</b>	<b>church</b>
<b>king</b>	<b>box</b>	<b>wish</b>	<b>cup</b>	<b>bench</b>
<b>hat</b>	<b>dish</b>	<b>book</b>	<b>match</b>	<b>brush</b>
<b>bag</b>	<b>tax</b>	<b>frog</b>	<b>class</b>	<b>lunch</b>
<b>bird</b>	<b>mix</b>	<b>tree</b>	<b>patch</b>	<b>flash</b>

Column header cards:

<b>Add -s</b>	<b>Add -es</b>
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*(Add -es after the letters -s, -x, -ch, -sh, -z. You can hear the extra syllable: church → church-es, not churchs.)*

### Sort 4: Exception words – which part is tricky?

Column headers: Tricky vowel · Strange letter pattern · Looks different from how it sounds

*All words are from the Y1 statutory common exception word list.*

Word cards — print and cut:

<b>said</b>	<b>where</b>	<b>love</b>	<b>come</b>
<b>was</b>	<b>friend</b>	<b>some</b>	<b>once</b>
<b>are</b>	<b>school</b>	<b>your</b>	<b>push</b>
<b>they</b>	<b>our</b>	<b>house</b>	<b>full</b>
<b>here</b>	<b>there</b>	<b>put</b>	<b>pull</b>

Column header cards:

<b>Tricky vowel</b>	<b>Strange letter pattern</b>	<b>Looks different from how it sounds</b>
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*(Exception words cannot be decoded from phonics alone. Discuss why each word is tricky — pupils who articulate the problem learn it faster.)*

## Blank sort template

Use to create your own sort for any Y1 pattern.

Pattern I am sorting: \_\_\_\_\_

Column header cards:

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3
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My word cards:


**Extension:** Can pupils add one more word to each column from memory?

Source: DfE English Appendix 1: Spelling (2013). Word sort pedagogy: Dymock & Nicholson (2017), Australian Journal of Learning Difficulties.