

Foundations for Literacy V

-el & -le

5.4

Ask your students to try to spell the word *twinkle* on a scrap piece of paper. This can be tricky because most beginning readers don't remember that there's an e with the l making the /l/ sound. Most kids will spell: twinkl [sic]. If kids spell it correctly, it's because they've seen this word several times.

Here's the thing: There *must* be an e at the end of *twinkle*, because every syllable must have a vowel. The tricky part is, is the e *before* the l or *after* the l? It could be either way. In this lesson, we'll learn a tip for deciding if it's l-e (usually) or e-l (rarely).



Read: Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

In all honesty, this lesson is not so much a phonics lesson as a “handy tip” lesson. We'll learn when to use an **l-e** (usually) and when to use an **e-l** (rarely) for words ending with the /l/ sound. Did you know that there are over three thousand words that end with l-e and only 400-some words that end with e-l? When in doubt, go with l-e. However, there is a “rule of thumb” to help guide our decision-making.

In words with -el and -le, **the /l/ sound comprises the entire final syllable of the word.** (Think: ta-ble, ap-ple, na-vel, tas-sel) This means that when we're spelling, we cannot forget the e, because every syllable has to have a vowel.

Observe the words *twinkle* and *little* in the book *title* with your students. Note the e's and why they must be there even though they're not saying anything at all. Clap the syllables in the word *twinkle*. Having two syllables means there must be two vowels. Do the same with *little*. Say, “The l-e and e-l spellings can represent the phoneme /l/ at the ends of words.

-le and -el, Inductive Lesson

materials include: -le, -el word cards, sorting header, pretzels, bubbles, nickels

First, cover the column to the far right on the sorting sheet (*nickel, breaks the rule*) with a blank piece of paper so that only the words *pretzels* and *bubbles* are showing. Invite your students to place their pretzels and bubbles above the proper columns.

Next, they'll decode the word cards (remembering that both -le and -el say /l/), sorting them into the proper columns according to how the /l/ sound is spelled. Explain that you are not going to use the third column, yet.

Note: When students read the singular word *bubble*, they often read it with no issues because we

know that final e is typically silent—even if it's not doing magic. However, when they see the word *bubbles*, many beginning readers say /bub-less/. They're not, yet, seeing this as a base word with an affix -s. This practice will help your students to skillfully navigate these kinds of words.

Also note that when a final s is not an affix, typically -ss is used (kiss, pass). That's the "floss rule" at play. *When a single-syllable word ends in f, l, or s, we usually double that final f, l, and s.*

When your students have finished decoding and sorting the word cards, uncover the final column and give the students a nickel to place above that column.

Say, "You did a great job sorting all the words according to their spellings. You placed all the words with /l/ spelled with an l-e in the first column. You placed all the words with /l/ spelled with e-l in the second column. Now, I'm going to move some of the words from each column into the third column under the word *nickel*. There's a RULE of thumb that we can use to help us decide—Which is it?! Is it going to be spelled with an l-e or an e-l?! Most words follow that rule of thumb. The words I move under the word *nickel* do NOT follow the rule

Again, **most** of these words are absolutely in the right place, however, like the word *nickel* some words are **rule breakers**. They do not follow the rule of thumb.

For older kids, say, "This time, I'm not going to tell you what the rule is. I'm going to share which words are **rule breakers**, and I'm going to see if you can figure out what the rule is on your own."

For younger kids, just explain how it works.

Here's the rule (and it's a doozy!):

If the letter before the /l/ sound takes two spaces, it's tall or long (b, d, f, g, k, p, t, y), the /l/ sound will begin with the letter that also takes two spaces, l-e. (ble, dle, fle, kle, ple, tle, yle)

Word Card Examples- wrinkle, marble, jingle, waddle, reliable, able, apple, likeable, turtle, stoppable, vegetable, humble

If the letter before the /l/ sound takes only one space, it's small (c, m, n, r, s, v, w, x, z), the /l/ sound will begin with the letter that also takes one space, e-l. (cel, mel, nel, rel, sel, vel, wel, xel, zel)

Word Card Examples- gravel, towel, shovel, hazel, jewel, camel, travel, funnel, tassel, barrel, quarrel, kennel, shrivel

It all boils down to the SIZE of the letter that precedes the /l/ sound (spelled -le or -el). And, yes, it seems ridiculous, but it works most of the time! Remember, **this is not a phonics rule**, but it's a tip that can help us decide whether to use an e-l or l-e when spelling multisyllabic words with the final sound /l/.

Your students have already sorted the words into the *pretzels column* and the *bubbles column*. Now ask them to **move** the following word cards from where they were to place in the *nickel column*: *nickel, bushel, cycle, snorkel, bagel, bicycle, whale, muscle*

These words are **rule breakers**. Do you see that small letters are followed by the tall l and the tall letters are followed by the small e? We must remember these odd balls. This sorting will promote accurate spelling.

As your students move the words into the **rule breaker** column, you can give hints about why you're moving the words. *"Hm. That letter takes two spaces, so it goes here. That's a single space letter and /l/ is spelled with an e-l, so that stays here. This one . . . Oh! Short letter, tall letter."*

You can get more and more explicit with your hints until the students arrive at the answer or you can simply tell them that "When the letter before the /l/ sound is tall or hangs low (it takes two spaces on handwriting paper) we usually use the l-e. When the letter before the /l/ sound is small (it takes a single space on handwriting paper), we usually use the e-l."

☺ *Did you know the rule (of thumb)? I didn't!*

Words with /l/ Spelled with l-e and e-l Game Board

materials include: game boards, movers, dice, crayons

Provide students with game boards, movers, dice, and crayons. Students will place their movers on the *Roll Again* space, roll their dice, move the indicated number of spaces, and decode the l-e/e-l words—remembering that both letter combinations say /l/. Color in the words that "follow the rule" (of thumb) but draw four vertical black lines through the words, like bars on a jail cell, on the words that "break the rule" of thumb. Play continues until all spaces have been colored. This game be played across a couple of days. Either while you're playing or after you have finished the game, **ask your students to read all the *Rule Breakers* once again.**

Additional Notes-

When we see double consonants before the /l/ sound, the vowel usually makes its short sound. (e.g., little, buckle, bottle, simple, giggle, candle, paddle, tumble, muzzle, jungle)

When we see single consonants before the /l/ sound, the vowel usually makes its long sound. (e.g., bugle, table, bridle, noble, stable, title, cradle, cable, feeble, ladle, idle) This one's tricky because it looks as though the e is jumping over two consonants to do magic. It's no problem for decoding. Our students are good at "flipping" the vowel sound to find a word they know. For spelling, our students need to remember how the -le syllable works.

If the vowel is making a long sound with e-l, we can simply see the Magic e rule at play—though it's really an open vowel. (e.g. bagel, hotel, label, navel, etc.)

If the vowel is making a short sound with e-l, we can simply see another rule we know at play. (e.g., squirrel- blocker guy, vowel- ow, jewel- ew, tinsel- double consonants, mussel- blocker guy, bushel- double consonants, marvel- double consonants, etc.)

We know that e's often don't do magic when following a v, like in *have*, *give*, and *love*. Sometimes the e doesn't do magic with the -el ending when the e follows a v. It's a really a closed vowel. (travel, gravel, shovel, level, shrivel, dishevel, etc.)

Note that the sound /l/ at the ends of single syllable words is typically spelled with two l's. (e.g., ball, tell, hill, doll, dull, etc.) That's the floss rule at play.

If you remove the /l/ sound, and there's a word there (base word), the /l/ sound is probably

spelled with an a-l. (e.g., magical, critical, mystical, etc.)

Words with /l/ Spelled with l-e and e-l Spelling Practice

materials include: spelling practice page, pencils

When giving kids words to spell, please say, “This word follows the rule,” or “This is a rule breaker.” Students will spell many words with e-l and l-e.

PART II

Adding -tion Makes the Verb (action word) Into a Noun (person, place, or thing)

materials include: Conversation Hearts, -tion says /shun/ practice page, pencils

Give your students a few Conversation Hearts. Note the spelling of the sounds as you say /shun/.

The t in /shun/ doesn't say /t/. Together with the i that t says /sh/. In this lesson we'll learn that t-i-o-n says /shun/. That's weird, right? Note, too, that the i does not say its name (even though there are two vowels together).

But something else is happening that is interesting. In these words, the whole word is changing (or morphing) in form. When we add t-i-o-n to verbs (action words) the words change into nouns, and they're often abstract nouns, ideas or qualities, rather than physical people, places, or things.

Also note that sometimes another vowel is added before t-i-o-n for ease in pronunciation. (add→addition)

Have the students read aloud each sentence on the practice page, one by one. Invite your students to demonstrate an understanding of the action words by providing simple definitions or by using them in sentences.

Then, have the students change the designated words from verbs to nouns by adding t-i-o-n. Guide them as they progress through this practice. This is not a time for independent work. A lot of discussion will make this work engaging and helpful. Notice together exactly how to spell the new, morphed words. *Did you eliminate some letters? Did anything need to be added or changed before adding the t-i-o-n?*

Please coach the students to say the base word, think about that word would be when it's used as an abstract noun with t-i-o-n saying /shun/. Then they'll make the sounds across that word and write what they say.

Examples of modifications made from practice page:

- decorate → /d/-/e/-/c/-/or/-/a/-/tion/ → *decoration* (replaced the e with an a to add the t-i-o-n)
- add → /a/-/dd/-/i/-/tion/ → *addition* (added an i and then added the t-i-o-n)

**It's okay if kids begin with addition [sic]. Just remind them to ask themselves if it makes a word they know. If it doesn't, they need to think about how to make it a word they recognize without straying too far from the base word. Help as needed. Then, students must write the sounds they say, using what they know about how words work.*

- invite → /i/-/n/-/v/-/i/-/t/-/a/-/tion/ → *invitation* (replaced the e with an a, and then added the t-i-o-n)

Decode Nouns Built by Adding -tion to Verbs (action words)

materials include: t-i-o-n word list (you can cut or fold between columns to simplify), pencils

Invite your readers to decode these nouns and determine which action word (verb) was used to make them. In other words, students will be finding the base words, recognizing that the word changed or *morphed* (changed gradually with incremental steps) with minor adjustments to the base word. (e.g., creation- create, option- opt, education- educate)

Additional Notes:

*The t-i says /sh/ in other words with just the t-i (e.g. patient, cautious, potential, nutritious).

There are some other words (other than those with t-i) that sound like they have an s-h saying /sh/, however the sound is spelled with **s-i** or **c-i**.

Note the following words where the s-i makes the /sh/ sound:

s-i-

expression, mansion, mission, vision, pension, concussion, discussion, session, decision

When decoding words with s-i, and we make the sound /s/, for the s-i, we get really close to the correct pronunciation, and we can typically recognize what the words is saying. Spelling, however, can be a bit tricky if we don't explicitly teach the alternate spellings.)

-sion— Make the Verb (action word) Into a Noun (person, place, or thing)

materials include: -sion says /shun/, pencils

Have the students read aloud each sentence to you, one by one. Invite students to demonstrate an understanding of the action words by providing simple definitions or by using them in sentences.

Then, have the students change the designated words from verbs to nouns by adding s-i-o-n. Guide them as they progress through this practice. This is not a time for independent work. A lot of discussion will make this work engaging and helpful. Notice, together, exactly how to spell the new, morphed words. *Did you eliminate some letters? Did anything need to be added or changed before adding the s-i-o-n?*

Please coach the students to say the base word and to think about what that word would be when it's used as an abstract noun with s-i-o-n saying /shun/. Then, they'll make the sounds across that word and write what they say.

Examples of modifications made from practice page:

- collide → /c/-/o/-/ll/-/i/-/sion/ → *collision* (got rid of the d-e and then added the s-i-o-n)
- comprehend → /c/-/o/-/m/-/p/-/r/-/e/-/h/-/e/-/n/-/sion/ → *comprehension* (got rid of d and then added the s-i-o-n)

**It's okay if kids begin with collidsion [sic], just remind the students to ask themselves if it makes a word they know. If it doesn't, they need to think about how to make it a word they recognize without straying too far from the base word. Help as needed. Then, they must write the sounds they say, using what they know*

about how words work.

- permit → /p/-/er/-/m/-/i/-/ssion/ → *permission* (got rid of t, added ss, and then added the s-i-o-n)

★ Note the following words where the c-i makes the /sh/ sound:

c-i-

ancient, special, precios, vicios, gracios, official, delicios, magician, social

When decoding words with c-i, and we make the sound /s/, for the soft c, we get really close to the correct pronunciation, and we can typically recognize what the word is saying. Spelling, however, can be a bit tricky if we don't explicitly teach these alternate spellings.

t-i, s-i, & c-i, What's the Base Word?

materials include: spelling pages, pencils

Students must understand that a base word is an actual word. When the t-i-o-n or the s-i-o-n or the c-i-o-n is stripped away, we must be left with a word that holds meaning.

Ask students to try to determine the base word for each of the given words on the spelling pages and then spell those base words on the provided lines. This work requires a lot of brainwork, so please be patient and give your students much support. This should not feel like a test of knowledge. Rather, it should feel like a puzzle to solve together.

t-i, s-i, and c-i Say /sh/ Game Board

materials include: game boards, movers, dice, crayons

Provide students with gameboards, movers, dice, and crayons. Students will roll their dice, move the indicated number of spaces, and decode the t-i, s-i, and c-i words— remembering that these combinations can sound like /sh/. Be sure to ask, for most words, "What is the base word, here?" We absolutely want our kids to be able to identify what words would say without the endings -tion, and -sion. Play continues until all spaces have been colored. This game may be played across a couple of days.