

## What ARE Onsets?

Onsets are letters at the beginning of a word (sh, br, sl, ...) that can be said as one unit. The onsets below are clusters of 2 or more letters. If your child knows how to pronounce them as a unit, he will be able to figure out an unfamiliar word in two different ways.

1. The first way is like magic! If you are listening to your cute-as-a-button child read, and he comes to a word he doesn't know, you can teach him this magic trick! He should just say the onset, then continue reading a few more words and think, "What word do I know that starts with that sound would make sense in the sentence?" If the word is in your child's (listening vocabulary), the word will pop into his mind, and he will go back and read the word! Like magic! I've seen it happen hundreds of times. He will have read a word he has never seen! He should then read the whole sentence for better understanding.
2. Second, it can help your little reader decode (sound out) the word **faster**. This is important for reading comprehension. I have taught MANY children this decoding trick. When he comes to a word he doesn't know, he can cover the onset with his finger and then read the rest of the word. For example, the word **string** looks like a big word to a beginning reader. Have your child cover the onset (**str**), and now the rest of the word looks familiar (**ing**). So he reads the **ing**, uncovers the onset **str** and reads the whole word. It works great and is FAST!

**How can I teach the onsets without sounding like a teacher?** First print the flashcards on pages 3 & 4. You can either cut them apart and use them that way, OR you can cut out the onsets only and you and your child can glue one onset onto each index card. After going through the cards with your child a few times, you can separate the cards he knows really well and not show those cards as much. When this is done you are ready to teach. (You could actually teach the routine for each onset as you and your child are making the flashcards.)

Teach these onsets with hand or body movements. Teach and practice by saying this routine:

1. Teach your child to say each letter, "**b - I says**,
2. Then he makes the sound of those two letters together, **/bl/** - [FYI - anything between those 2 slashes means "sound of" so you actually make the **sound** not say the letters.]
3. **Like in blink."**
4. As he is saying "blink" he should blink his eyes. The ones below are suggestions. You can encourage your child to make up others if he wants to. For example I used to teach "**s - h says /sh/ like in shake**. But one student suggested "s-h says /sh/ like in shark" and put her hand on her head like a fin and moved her head like a shark swimming through the water. I thought that was much cooler, so I changed shake to shark!

Practice with the flash cards. Show your child the onset and he says the routine [see #1 - 4]. Once he knows them really well - he can just make the sound of each onset and time him for speed of saying them all. [Kids like to compete against themselves].

**IMPORTANT TO KNOW:** Teachers sometimes tell beginning readers to make the first sound of an unknown word and read on. BUT actually they must learn to look at the first couple of letters, not just the first one, and this is why. The first letter might be a **t** but the sound of **/t/** is different than **/th/** or **/thr/**. If the word begins with **th** but they just make the **/t/** sound and read on, they will not be able to guess a word that makes sense in that sentence that starts with **/t/**.

\*\*\* If you would like information about **listening vocabulary** and how it can help your child, [click here](#).\*\*\*

## Onsets with Suggested Actions

(see #'s 1 - 4 above)

The actions are just suggestions. You and your child can make up the movements. Most are really easy to figure out, like clap. Others you might have to be creative. For example: for glasses - either touch someone's glasses or make glasses with fingers - circles around eyes; for quiet - put finger to lips; for phone - put your thumb to your ear and your pinkie to mouth; ground - touch the ground. You get the idea! Have fun!

say each letter		make the sound	say the words while making the action		say the letters		make the sound	say the words while making the action
b - l	says	/bl/	like in blink		s - c	says	/sc/	like in scared
c - l	says	/cl/	like in clap		s - k	says	/sk/	like in skin
f - l	says	/fl/	like in fly		s - p	says	/sp/	like in spin
g - l	says	/gl/	like in glasses		s - w	says	/sw/	like in swim
p - l	says	/pl/	like in play		s - m	says	/sm/	like in smell
s - l	says	/sl/	like in sleep		s - n	says	/sn/	like in sneeze
b - r	says	/br/	like in brush		w - h	says	/wh/	like in whisper
c - r	says	/cr/	like in crown		t - h	says	/th/	like in think
d - r	says	/dr/	like in drive		t - h - r	says	/thr/	like in three
f - r	says	/fr/	like in frown		c - h	says	/ch/	like in chop
g - r	says	/gr/	like in ground		s - h	says	/sh/	like in shark
p - r	says	/pr/	like in pray		q - u	says	/qu/	like in quiet
t - r	says	/tr/	like in triangle		p - h	says	/f/	like in phone
s - t	says	/st/	like in stand		w - r	says	/r/	like in wrist
s - t - r	says	/str/	like in straight		k - n	says	/n/	like in knee

## Flashcards

\*either cut apart and use or cut apart and glue on an index card.

**bl**

**cl**

**fl**

**gl**

**pl**

**sl**

**br**

**cr**

**dr**

**fr**

**gr**

**pr**

**tr**

**st**

**str**

<b>sc</b>	<b>sk</b>	<b>sp</b>
<b>sw</b>	<b>sm</b>	<b>sn</b>
<b>wh</b>	<b>th</b>	<b>thr</b>
<b>ch</b>	<b>sh</b>	<b>qu</b>
<b>ph</b>	<b>wr</b>	<b>kn</b>

\*\*\* For downloadable resources for parents, click here.\*\*\*

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