

# Word Sorts



## What is a Word Sort?

A word sort is a word study activity where children compare, contrast and sort words according to specific features. It allows children to form hypotheses, explore concepts and make generalizations about the properties of written words. Word sort activities help students link new words to the familiar ones they can already spell. They allow students to practice and reinforce their word work in a very fun and different way.

## Why Do Word Sorts?



- Emphasize conceptual learning
- Students attend to the structure of words
- Students learn classification skills
- Word sorts provide a multi-sensory experience
- Word sorts allow students to look at words from their level of knowledge
- Students are able to apply their knowledge about how words work
- Students hypothesize and make generalizations about the properties of written words
- All students can participate
- Reinforces both visual and auditory memory

### **Open Sorts**

An open sort is a divergent thinking activity. There is no “right way” to do an open word sort. The focus is on the process students undergo as they complete the activity. Students discover and identify the characteristics of a group of words they have been given. How they choose to group the words is entirely up to them.



### **Closed Sorts**

Students sort words by specific characteristics that are defined by the teacher. Responses are more convergent. However, the goal is not to produce “correct” responses. Rather, the focus is again on students’ thinking processes and on their reasoning.



### **Word Sorting Tips**

- Students need to dialogue about their sorts.
- Modelling the process must be done, sometimes several times so that students are comfortable with the format.
- Work with the whole class, a small group or a combination of both.
- Integrate with content areas, especially in the intermediate and middle years.
- Choose sorts that are meaningful to students.....sorts that will make them better spellers and be aware that the sorts will change as students become more proficient at sorting activities and spelling.

Monday

Students sort words into groups. The teacher must decide on the form of the sort and facilitate acquisition of lists of words.



Tuesday

Students sort words into the categories determined on Monday. They are timed to see how fast they can sort.

Wednesday

Students “hunt” or look for words that have the same pattern as their Word Study words. The “word hunt” connects the patterns students are learning to reading. It is important to connect the fact that spelling and reading have the same patterns.

Thursday

Students complete a Blind Sort. The teacher assesses student progress.

Friday

Friday is test day. The students may also play games to reinforce the knowledge they have gained during the week.