

SORTS 31–35

Diphthongs and Other Ambiguous Vowel Sounds

NOTES FOR THE TEACHER

Sorts 31–35 deal with the spellings of a variety of other vowel sounds that are not influenced by *r* and are neither long nor short. These other vowel sounds usually involve two vowels (like the double *o* in *book* or the *au* in *cause*) or a vowel and a second letter that has some vowel-like qualities. The /l/ and /w/ sounds are examples of consonants that influence the sound of the vowel in an ambiguous way that is difficult to describe (*salt*, *crowd*). Often the influence of the second letter creates a *glide*, where the vowel sound slithers from one sound to another, as in the word *boy*, where the vowel starts out like the vowel sound in *door* but slides into a long *-e* sound at the very end (*bo-ee*). These glides, or diphthongs, can be tricky.

The study of diphthongs and other ambiguous vowels is appropriate for students in the late within word pattern stage who have already mastered most of the common and less common short- and long-vowel patterns as well as the *r*-influenced patterns presented in the previous sorts. Diphthongs and other ambiguous vowels are usually the last vowel patterns to be learned in the within word pattern stage. We place them here, after the *r*-influenced vowels, so that all of the vowel patterns are learned in a planned sequence. However, they could just as easily be studied after the complex consonants presented in the next set of sorts.

In *WTW* we recommend highlighting a new spelling feature by comparing it to what students already know—in this case, long- and short-vowel patterns. This approach may be accomplished here by combining sort 31 with sort 20 and conducting a three-column *sound sort*: short *-o* sounds, long *-o* sounds, and other *-o* sounds that are neither long nor short—in this case, the diphthong /oyee/. A pattern sort for the other category would follow this initial sound sort. For expediency, however, sort 31 immediately presents the two most common spellings for the diphthong /oyee/ (*oi* and *oy*) in a pattern sort.

The remaining sorts in this sequence alternate between *pattern sorts* for diphthongs (gliding vowel sounds) and *sound sorts* for the other ambiguous vowel sounds. Sort 32, for example, uses a sound sort to focus students' attention on the difference between the long *-u* sound in words like *boot* and *noon* and the other back vowel sound in words like *book* or *crook*—all spelled with the same double *-o* pattern. Sort 33 uses a pattern sort to highlight the two most common spellings of the /aw/ sound: *aw* and *au*. Sort 34 returns to a sound sort to compare and contrast the broad *-a* sound in words like *wash* and *watch* with the /all/ sound in words like *walk* and *bald*. Sort 35 presents a pattern sort that features the two most common spelling patterns for the /ow/ sound: *ow* and *ou*.

We recommend recycling sorts 31–35 to review all of these close back vowel sounds before the Spell Check 5—an assessment of 24 diphthongs and other ambiguous vowels studied in sorts 31–35. The review can be a giant pattern sort or a two-step sort that sorts first by sound and then by pattern within categories of sound.

Diphthongs and other ambiguous vowels are not as common as short and long or *r*-influenced vowel patterns, so there are words in each sort that may be unfamiliar to students. This is alright as long as students can read the words and are familiar with the majority of them. Homophones as well as words whose meanings are probably not known are asterisked. These word meanings must be introduced, discussed, and used in meaningful contexts throughout the week.

Use the Spell Check 5 on page 85 as a pretest to make sure your students need and can do these sorts. Students who spell all of the words on the Spell Check correctly may benefit from the study of the more difficult features introduced later in this supplement. Students who are obviously frustrated in attempting the spelling of the words in the Spell Check should start with easier sorts. Use the spelling assessments in Chapter 2 of *WTW* to pinpoint different starting points for different students.

Each of the sorts in this series contains approximately 25 words plus two column headers. Key words have been bolded and these should be placed at the top of each column. As always, key words are the most frequently occurring words of that particular spelling pattern. Oddballs are either high-frequency words whose patterns violate the dominant pattern-to-sound correspondence (e.g., *laugh*) or are words that have an unusual pattern for that particular sound. Some of these patterns form a consistent category of their own. For example, the high-frequency words *should*, *would*, and *could* have an unusual spelling pattern for that particular sound, but these three words form a small but consistent pattern-to-sound category by themselves.

If possible, share books and poems that contain some words with the same targeted spelling features. For example, the traditional song *I Wish I Was a Mole in the Ground* (Tashjian, 1941) has many diphthong sounds for *ou* and *ow*, and such books as *Minnie and Moo Go to the Moon* (by Denys Cazet) and *Midnight on the Moon* (by Mary Pope Osborn) contain many examples of *ou*, *ow*, and *oi*.

STANDARD WEEKLY ROUTINES FOR USE WITH SORTS 31–35

1. **Repeated Work with Word Sorts:** Students sort their own word cards several times independently and with partners after the sort has been introduced as described in each lesson below. Additional practice doing word sorts can occur through homework. See the homework form in the Appendix.
2. **Writing Sorts and Word Study Notebooks:** Students record their word sorts by writing them into columns in their notebooks under the same key words that headed the word sorts. You might ask students to choose 5 to 10 words to use in thoughtful sentences and coach them through the elaboration process described in Write and Draw on page 60. Do not allow students to use more than two spelling words per sentence, however, or you are likely to get nonsense.
3. **Word-O:** Ask students to conduct a word operation on three to four words as described on page 30. Add, subtract, or substitute consonants to make a new word. Start with the word *foil*, for example, and subtract the *f* to get *oil*. Add a *b* to *oil* to get *boil*. Add an *r* to get *broil*. Have students record their word operations in their word study notebooks by writing the new word to the right of the original word. Tell them to underline the letters that were changed in their operation.
4. **Speed Sorts:** Have students time themselves with a stopwatch as they sort their words into categories. After obtaining a baseline speed, they repeat the sort several times and try to beat their own time. Repeated, timed speed sorts help students internalize spelling patterns and develop automatic word recognition.

5. **Word Hunts:** Word hunts help students see the connection between reading and spelling. Have students search through books they have already read to find additional exemplars of diphthongs and other ambiguous vowel patterns. Have students record the words they find in the proper column in their word study notebook and share them with the group when they meet.
6. **Dictated Sentences:** Prepare a sentence that contains several of your word study words and have students write it to your dictation. Discuss spelling and mechanics.
7. **Blind or No-Peeking Sorts:** Blind or no-peeking sorts and no-peeking writing sorts require students to think about words by sound and by pattern and to use the headers as models for analogy. Blind or no-peeking sorts are a great way to practice for spelling tests.
8. **Games and Other Activities:** Additional sorts for diphthongs and other vowel digraphs may be found in the Appendix of *WTW* on pages 378 and 390. See the activities section at the end of Chapter 6 for games and other extensions.
9. **Assessment:** To assess students' weekly mastery, ask them to spell the words and categorize them by sound and by pattern. An assessment of the diphthongs and other ambiguous vowels presented in sorts 31–35 may be found on page 85: *Spell Check 5 Diphthongs and Other Ambiguous Vowels*.

SORT 31 OI, OY

This is a pattern sort for the diphthong /oyee/. Before demonstrating the sort, be sure to read and discuss the meanings of the asterisked words. If you feel there are too many unfamiliar words, eliminate some. Boldface words are the most frequently occurring words in that pattern and could be used as key words to head the column. The words *noise*, *choice*, and *voice* could be sorted with the *oi* words, or placed as oddballs because of their final *-e*. Remind your students that the final *-e* in these words signals the pronunciation of the last consonant sound. For example, the final *-e* in *noise* tells us that the final /s/ is pronounced more like a /z/. Similarly, the final *-e* in *choice* and *voice* signals that the final /c/ is pronounced like an /s/ rather than the hard sound of *c*. The words *enjoy* and *decoy* are two-syllable words and students may need help in eyeballing the *oy* pattern in the accented syllable.

Demonstrate, sort, check, reflect, and then **extend** as usual by following the standard weekly routines previously described. As you and your students reflect on this sort, help them form generalizations by asking which spelling pattern is used when the /oyee/ sound is at the very end of a word. Which spelling pattern is used when the /oyee/ sound is in the middle of a word?

<i>oi</i>	<i>oy</i>	
point	boy	noise
join	soy	choice
soil	joy	voice
spoil	coy*	
coil	toy	
foil*	ploy*	
moist	decoy*	
joint	enjoy	
boil		
coin		
broil		
toil*		
oil		
hoist*		

*difficult words that require discussion

SORT 32 OO, OO

This is a sound sort that compares the long -u sound in words like *soon* and *root* to another back vowel sound in words like *good* and *foot*. All of them are spelled with a double -o. The words *could*, *would*, and *should* are oddballs because they have the same vowel sound as the words *stood* and *good*, but are spelled differently. Conveniently, *would* and *wood* are homophones so you can discuss the necessity for having different spelling patterns to reflect their different meanings. The word *root* is also a homophone, though its partner, *route*, is not included in this sort. Feel free to add it by using the blank template in the back of this book. It will be interesting to see where your students would put it. Boldface words are the most frequently occurring words in that pattern and could be used as key words to head the columns.

Demonstrate, sort, check, reflect, and then **extend** this word sort by following the standard weekly routines previously described.

oo = ū	oo	
soon	good	<i>oddball</i>
cool	brook	could
fool	crook	would*
noon	wood*	should
groom	hood	
root*	stood	
tool	hook	
troop	foot	
hoop	wool	
stool	soot	
proof		
roost		

*homophone

More Difficult Words: (10) *coop, brood, spool, doom, gloom, spook, zoom, loot, rook, nook.*

SORT 33 AW, AU

This is a pattern sort for the /aw/ sound of *aw* and *au*. Before demonstrating the sort, be sure to read and discuss the meanings of the words, especially the asterisked ones. For *vault*, you might refer to Gringotts (the bank) in *Harry Potter*. Boldface words are the most frequently occurring words in that pattern and could be used as key words. The word *laugh* is an oddball because it has the *au* pattern characteristic of the /aw/ sound, but it has a short -a sound instead.

If you decide that this two-pattern sort is too easy for your students, consider bringing in the *ou* words from the next sort to increase the number of pattern contrasts (*bought, thought, brought*, and so on).

Demonstrate, sort, check, reflect, and then **extend** as usual by following the standard weekly routines previously described. As you and your students reflect on this sort, help them form generalizations by asking if there is a spelling pattern that is used more often when the /aw/ sound is at the very end of a word. Is there a spelling pattern that is never used when the /aw/ sound is at the end of a word? Are there any other recurring letter patterns within each category worth noting? Which pattern has more ends or els at the very end of words?

<i>aw</i>	<i>au</i>	<i>oddball</i>
saw	caught	laugh
paw	cause	
straw	fault	
lawn	pause	
claw	sauce	
draw	taught	
yawn	haul	
hawk	launch	
crawl	vault*	
dawn	haunt	
shawl*		
drawn		
raw		
law		
*difficult		

More Difficult Words: (7) *bawl, fawn, sprawl, thaw, flaw, maul, haunch.*

SORT 34 WA, AL, OU

This sound sort contrasts the broad *-a* in words like *wash* and *watch*, the /all/ sound in words like *small* and *salt*, and another /aw/ sound in words like *bought* and *fought*. In some dialects, the words *bought* and *fought* are pronounced more like the /ô/ sound in *more* and *store*. Either way is fine. There is no one correct pronunciation and English speakers of all dialects must associate their own pronunciation with the same spelling patterns. Even if some students think that *bought*, *thought*, and *brought* have the same vowel sound as *salt* and *talk*, they can still sort by pattern. Watch out for the word *walk*. Students will want to put it with the *wa* words but it does not have the same broad *-a* sound as *watch*. Note that two two-syllable words are used—*almost* and *also*, but these are very high-frequency words that students at this level should definitely learn how to read and spell if they do not know already.

Demonstrate, sort, check, reflect, and then **extend** as usual by following the standard weekly routines previously described. As you and your students reflect on this sort, help them form generalizations by asking what is the same about many of the words within a category in terms of their spelling patterns.

<i>wa</i>	<i>al</i>	<i>ou</i>
watch	small	thought
wash	almost	bought
wand	also	brought
wasp	walk	fought
swap	tall	ought
swat	salt	cough
	calm	
	talk	
	stalk	
	bald	
	chalk	
	stall	

More Difficult Words: (7) *water, psalm, palm, halt, sought, trough, though.*

SORT 35 OU, OW

This pattern sort contrasts the two major spelling patterns for the /ow/ sound in words like *sound* and *crowd*: *ou* and *ow*. These words should all be familiar to your students, but read and discuss them before demonstrating the sort anyway. Since the *ou* words in the previous sort (sort 34) were associated with the /aw/ sound, explicitly tell your students that the *ou* pattern in this sort represents the /ow/ sound this time. Oddballs include two words with *ou* patterns associated with yet another vowel sound (*tough, rough*), and one word with an *ow* pattern associated with the long -o sound. You might want to recycle your old long -o words with the *ow* pattern from sort 20 just to keep your students on their toes.

Demonstrate, sort, check, reflect, and then **extend** as usual by following the standard weekly routines previously described. If your students go on word hunts in search of more words that contain *ou* and *ow* patterns for the /ow/ sound, they might find the words *house, mouse, ounce, or pounce*. These words can be added to the *ou* group since they do have the /ow/ sound spelled with the *ou* pattern. However, you may need to discuss the role of the final -e in those words, as you did for the words *choice* and *voice* back in sort 31. Your students may also find two other high-frequency exceptions—*though* and *through*—which can both be placed in the oddball column since neither of them have the /ow/ sound. Help your students make generalizations about these pattern-to-sound relationships by asking them to reflect on the preponderance of rhyming words in certain categories.

<i>ou</i>	<i>ow</i>	oddball
sound	brown	tough
cloud	clown	rough
found	growl	grown
ground	howl	
pound	owl	
shout	crown	
count	drown	
mouth	frown	
south	gown	
couch	plow	
scout	town	

Collect more *ou* and *ow* words and then sort them by rhyming families: *found, sound, pound—out, shout, pout—ouch, couch, pouch—house, mouse, louse—town, clown, brown—owl, howl, growl—now, plow, cow*, and so on.

More Difficult Words: (10) *foul, drought, stout, doubt, fowl, prowl, scowl, brow, vow, touch*.

SPELL CHECK 5 ASSESSMENT FOR DIPHTHONGS AND OTHER AMBIGUOUS VOWELS

Before assessing your students' mastery of the spelling patterns associated with diphthongs and other ambiguous vowel sounds, give them a chance to review. Combine all of the word cards from sorts 31–35. Sort them by sound first, and then by pattern within categories of sound.

This assessment is presented in a writing sort format and checks for correct spelling of 24 of the 125 words sorted in sorts 31–35. All of the words assessed have been studied

before in these previous sorts. Photocopy and enlarge page 85 for all students you wish to participate in the Spell Check. Say each word clearly and ask your students to write the word in the box labeled with the correct vowel pattern. For example, if you call the word *calm*, students would write *calm* in the third box labeled with an *al* at the top, since the word *calm* is spelled with an *al* in the middle. If you are grading this Spell Check, consider giving one point for writing the word in the correct category and another point for the correct spelling of the entire word.

Call out the words in the following order and use each word in a sentence to make sure your students understand what word you are saying. Say each word once, use it in a sentence, then say it again:

1. crawl, 2. chalk, 3. growl, 4. joy, 5. spoil, 6. mouth, 7. caught, 8. point, 9. taught,
10. drawn, 11. couch, 12. stalk, 13. drown, 14. brought, 15. cloud, 16. gown,
17. yawn, 18. calm, 19. haul, 20. noise, 21. thought, 22. rough, 23. fault, 24. could

Allow time for students to reorganize their words if needed. The words *brought*, *thought*, *rough*, and *could* might also be squeezed into the *ou* box since this is a pattern-writing sort. Otherwise, the answer sheet will look like this:

1. aw	2. au	3. al	
crawl	caught	chalk	brought
drawn	taught	stalk	thought
yawn	haul	calm	rough
	fault		could
4. ow	5. ou	6. oy	7. oi
growl	mouth	joy	spoil
drown	couch		point
gown	cloud		noise

SORT 31 oi/oy

<i>oi</i>	<i>oy</i>	boy
point	join	soil
noise	soy	spoil
coy	coil	joy
foil	moist	joint
boil	toy	voice
coin	broil	ploy
toil	oil	hoist
enjoy	decoy	choice

Words Their Way: Word Sorts for Within Word Pattern Spellers © 2004 by Prentice-Hall, Inc.

SORT 32 Double o (Long -u and Schwa Sound)

oo = ū	ōō	soon
good	cool	crook
fool	wood	could
noon	groom	hood
root	stood	tool
hook	troop	foot
hoop	should	brook
stool	proof	wool
would	soot	roost

SORT 33 *aw/au*

<i>aw</i>	<i>au</i>	saw
caught	lawn	cause
paw	straw	fault
law	claw	sauce
taught	draw	laugh
haul	pause	yawn
haunt	hawk	crawl
dawn	launch	vault
shawl	drawn	raw

SORT 34 *wa/al/ou*

<i>wa</i>	<i>al</i>	<i>ou</i>
watch	small	thought
walk	salt	wash
tall	calm	bought
wand	talk	stalk
bald	wasp	fought
swap	chalk	stall
ought	swat	brought
cough	also	almost

SORT 35 *ou/ow*

<i>ou</i>	<i>ow</i>	sound
brown	cloud	clown
growl	found	howl
tough	ground	crown
owl	pound	shout
drown	rough	frown
gown	mouth	plow
south	grown	couch
scout	town	count

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Spell Check 5 Sorts 31-35 Diphthongs and Other Ambiguous Vowels Name _____

1. aw _____ _____ _____	2. au _____ _____ _____	3. ai _____ _____ _____	
4. ow _____ _____ _____	5. ou _____ _____ _____	6. oy _____ _____ _____	7. oi _____ _____ _____

