

# Tools for Instruction

## Identify Initial Phonemes

A phoneme is a speech sound, represented in print between slashes, or phoneme bars. For example, /k/ stands for the consonant phoneme heard at the beginning of *cat* and at the beginning and end of *kick*. Before students can begin to understand sound-letter correspondences, they need to grasp the concept of a phoneme—that a spoken word is made of small units of sounds. Guiding students to identify the first consonant sound in a word is a useful way to start them on the path to breaking words into component phonemes.

### Step by Step 10–15 minutes

#### 1 Introduce initial consonant sounds.

- Display a picture of the sun. Have students say *sun* with you.
- Say, *The word sun begins with the sound /s/. Listen as I stretch out the first sound: ssssun. What is the first sound of sun? (/s/)*
- Display a picture of a pig. Have students say *pig* with you.
- Say, *The word pig begins with the sound /p/. Listen as I repeat the first sound: /p/ /p/ /p/. What is the first sound of pig? (/p/)* (When isolating an unvoiced stop consonant sound, such as /p/, exaggerate the sound but do not add any vocal sounds.)

#### 2 Model isolating an initial consonant sound.

- Display a picture of a dog. Say *dog*.
- Demonstrate how you get your mouth ready to say the first sound. (When isolating a voiced stop consonant, such as /d/, try to minimize any added vowel sound after it.)
- Say, *When I say the word dog, I start with my tongue against my teeth. I use my voice to say /d/. That's the first sound of dog: /d/ /d/ /d/.*
- Say, *Get your mouth ready to say dog. What is the first sound? (/d/)*

#### 3 Provide practice with isolating an initial consonant sound.

- Prepare pictures of animals with single-syllable, single-initial-consonant names, such as a pig, dog, cat, mouse, seal, bug, lamb, or fish.
- Display one picture at a time for students to name.
- Ask, *What is the first sound in [name of picture]?* If students have difficulty isolating the sound, offer choices. See the example below.

*This picture shows a bug. Say bug with me, bug. Is the first sound in bug /k/ or /b/?*

#### 4 Provide practice with contrasting initial sounds.

- Tell students to listen as you say four words. Explain that three of the words start with the same sound, but one starts with a different sound.
- Have students name the word that is different and use the beginning sounds to tell why.

- Say, *Listen to how these words begin: soup, sun, time, seat.*
- Ask, *Which word has a different beginning sound? (time)*
- Ask, *What sound does time begin with? (/t/) What sound do soup, sun, and seat begin with? (/s/)*

- Encourage students to name other words that would fit in the list.

### Check for Understanding

If you observe...	Then try...
difficulty isolating consonant sounds	working with words that begin with the continuous sounds /f/, /l/, /m/, /n/, /s/, /sh/, /v/, which students may find easier to say.