

# Word Families

## Targeted skill

By creating word families, young children are learning the characteristics of rhyming words and learning to identify the beginning and ending of a word. They are also learning that individual letters (and their sounds) can be changed to make new words.

## Materials

- ◆ paper
- ◆ marker or pencil

## What to do

It can be confusing for young children that changing the first sound of a word creates an entirely new word. On a piece of paper, write a common, familiar word such as “cat.” Under that word, write “\_at.” Then ask your child to think of another letter that would make a new word. Continue in this manner to create a long list of words (such as *fat, hat, mat, pat, rat, sat, bat*). Ask your child to reread the words.

Then (or on another day, depending on your child’s interest) continue the lesson with another familiar word family. Common word families include *-ad, -an, -et, -it, and -op*.

\* Try to find rhyming words in one of your child’s favorite books. We are doing ‘Good Night Moon’ in class.

## Extending the activity

- ◆ Be sure to include two-letter beginning sounds. For example, when working with the *-ap* family, use such initial sounds as /cl/, /fl/, and /ch/.
- ◆ You can use simple flipbooks to reinforce this idea. Cut several index cards in thirds. Use a stapler to attach three or four (depending on your child’s ability) of these small pieces to one end of a full-size index card. On each small piece, write a different initial letter. On the full-size card, write the ending. Then flip the small pieces to reveal a new word. As your child thinks of more initial sounds for a particular family, encourage him or her to add more small pieces to create more words. You can also clip out/draw pictures of the words, so the child can read it on their own. <sup>+ glue or</sup>

## Decoding

### Word Families (continued)

- ✦ Point out the similarities between word families. That is, help focus your child's attention on the vowel sound of similar words. For example, compare the *-an* family with the *-en* family. Compare the number of words that are in each family and check to see if all possible combinations have been identified.

#### What your child is practicing

Young children are surprised by the idea that simply changing the first sound of a word creates a new word. Understanding this idea helps your child learn to read a lot more words quickly and ties in to learning to rhyme words as well.