

## Using Word Study Cards

Word study work involves the close examination of words that are related to one another in some way. Word study is a wonderful way to inspire children about the richness of our language and get them interested in writing and reading more. To begin, offer spoken language lessons. Then, when children are beginning to read, introduce the card games. When children gain reading experience, they will naturally become interested in accurate spellings. This is the perfect time to introduce the Movable Alphabet Activities. Detailed instructions for all of these activities are provided below.



We recommend proceeding through the topics in the order listed below. However, this order is not set in stone—follow the children’s curiosity so that this work is timely and connected to their lives/interests.

Topic	Definition
1. Compound words	Two words that we put together to make a new word (e.g., star...fish, starfish; gum...drop, gumdrop)
2. Related nouns	
• Animals and their young	Special names we give to baby animals that are different from what we call their parents (e.g., cat/kitten, dog/puppy)
• Animals and their homes	Special names we give to the homes where animals live (e.g., bear/den, bird/nest)
• Animals and their groups	Special names we call animals when they are together in a group (e.g., a gaggle of/geese, a flock of/sheep)
• Masculine and feminine	Two words that mean the same thing but one word is for a male and one word is for a female (e.g., boy/girl, king/queen)
3. Antonyms	Words that mean the opposite of each other (e.g., shallow/deep, tall/short, awake/asleep)
4. Synonyms	Words that mean the same thing as each other (e.g., tiny/miniscule; tidy/clean)
5. Contractions	Two words that we squish together to make a new word that means the same thing (e.g., you are/you’re; we will/we’ll)
6. Homonyms	Words that sound the same but mean different things like I ate lunch or I have eight shirts

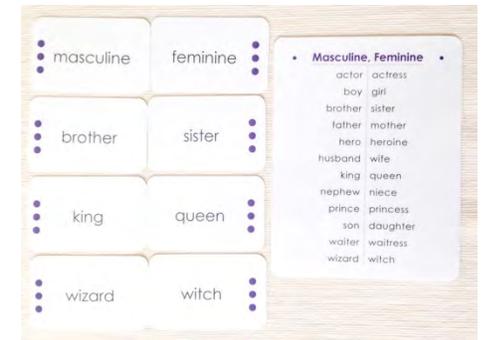
## Spoken Language Lessons

Before using Word Study Cards, expose children naturally to the vocabulary they contain. Read all of the materials yourself and use the featured words in natural conversations. Then, conduct specific spoken language presentations for each type of word being studied (e.g., antonyms, synonyms, animals and their homes, etc.). To begin, invite a small group of children to work with you. Choose one Word Study topic and name your lesson. For example, say, “This is a lesson on Antonyms. I’m thinking of two words that mean the opposite of each other.” Then, give several examples based on the card materials (e.g., sunny / cloudy; shallow / deep). Next, invite the children to come up with their own examples. Enjoy this and pepper in examples from the materials throughout the lesson. Summarize and conclude the lesson by encouraging the children to talk with their friends and family about these kinds of words.

## Reading Games

You can present the Word Study Cards to children once they are beginning to read non-phonetic words (e.g., via 3-part reading cards or grammar activities). They do not need to be fluent readers to begin. In fact, this word- and short-phrase-based work will help them become more fluent readers. All of the presentations follow the same basic structure as described in the following example (given for Compound Words).

1. Invite one or two children to work with you. Go together to the shelf and say, "These are the compound word cards. Please carry them carefully to our work area."
2. When seated, take out the first stack of word cards (those that form the left-side of the compound word—dots on the left). Guide the child to read each word and lay out the cards so that they form a column on the left side of your work space.
3. Take out the second stack of word cards (those that form the right-side of the compound word—dots on the right). Say, "We're going to find two words that we can put together to make a whole new word."
4. Take the first card from the stack and read it. Then, place it on the right-side of the word at the top of the column you've already laid out. Read the word together (e.g., "sail plane"). If it makes a compound word, place the card next to it. If not, try matching it to the next card down in the column. Don't worry if the child thinks "sail plane" is a word. The child's logic rules in this activity. The point is to convey the concept of compound words.
5. Let the child read and match the rest of the cards, making adjustments as they deem necessary (this is self-correcting work).
6. When they are finished, encourage repetition by mixing up one column of cards. After they re-match, mix up the other column of cards. Then, randomize all the cards into one stack to be sorted and matched.
7. If the cards include a control chart, guide the children to use the chart to check their own work.
8. When the child is finished, demonstrate how to randomize each column of cards back into its container. Free the child to repeat the work alone or with a friend whenever s/he likes.



## Movable Alphabet Activities

After children have repeated the card matching activity, add a challenge to and renew interest in the work by doing it alongside the movable alphabet.

This is one of the earliest activities where children begin to refine their spellings. Begin as in the Reading Game (above) but also bring two movable alphabets (e.g., the red alphabet and the black alphabet) to your work area. When the cards are laid out in two columns, turn one column of cards face-down (in place). The child can then use the black alphabet to make a list of what is hidden. Then, turn the remaining column of cards face down! The child can use the red alphabet to create the next column of missing words. Turn the cards face-up to check work independently. Extend this work beyond the cards by encouraging children to make their own movable alphabet lists of words for specific words study topics (e.g., compound words, antonyms).

