

# Hands-On Learning

# WORD SORTING

Word sorting, one of the core instructional strategies in *Spelling Connections*, is a research-based method for developing spelling automaticity. Sorting words by spelling patterns focuses students' attention on those patterns and builds their understanding of the similarities and differences between and among words. Through repetition in sorting words, students begin to internalize the spelling system and develop into strong, independent spellers.

## How to Do Word Sorts

At MyZBPortal.com, you will find Digital Word Sorts and Word Sort Cards for every unit of *Spelling Connections*. There are separate sorts for the on-level, below-level, and above-level spelling words in each unit, and the patterns by which to sort the words are identified within the materials. Use the on-level Digital Word Sorts or the large Word Sort Cards for teacher-led sorts during whole-class instruction. Use the small, differentiated

Word Sort Cards for small-group instruction, independent practice, or center activities. Here are a few different ways to do word sorts.

**Teacher-Led Sorts** Read aloud the words with students, and then guide them in sorting the words by the designated spelling patterns. A teacher-led sort at the beginning of a unit is an excellent way to introduce the new patterns, show how one pattern may contrast with another, and model how to sort words efficiently.

**Individual Sorts** Provide students with Word Sort Cards appropriate for their level and have them independently sort the words by the patterns given. You can have them write the sorted words in columns. This aids in learning the patterns and serves as a record of their work.

**Buddy Sorts** Have partners with similar abilities work together to sort a set of Word Sort Cards at their level. Or have below-level spellers work with stronger spellers to sort on-level or above-level words. Buddy sorts provide an opportunity for repetition and practice under highly motivating circumstances.

**Speed Sorts** Challenge students to sort a set of Word Sort Cards as fast as they can. Individual students can complete the sort multiple times, each time trying to sort the words faster than the time before. Or students can compete with buddies or in teams. Speed sorting leads to automatic recognition and production of targeted spelling patterns.

**Blind Sorts** Have one partner read a word card aloud without showing it. The other partner must identify in which category to place the word, based on its spelling pattern. Then partners switch roles. Blind sorts give students practice visualizing the words.

**Open Word Sorts** Provide a set of Word Sort Cards for a fun partner challenge. One partner secretly decides the sorting criteria and sorts the words into those categories. The other partner studies the completed word sort and tries to identify the criteria by which the words were sorted.

**Multi-Unit Word Sorts** Combine Word Sort Cards from two or more units. Have students sort the words individually or with a partner. Multi-unit word sorts help reinforce similarities and differences among spelling patterns that have been taught.

