

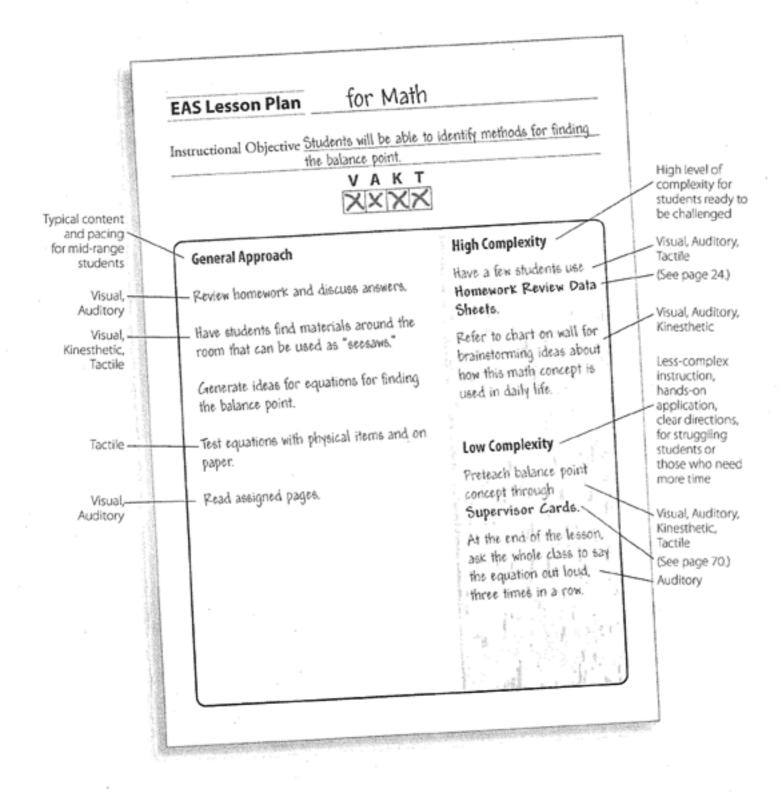
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Strategies for Review and Practice



Stretch 'ems

(K-5)

Phonemic awareness, a person's ability to recognize and manipulate individual sounds in a word, is essential to fluent reading. Many literacy programs are teaching students to "stretch out" the words as they attempt to decode or encode. Stretch 'ems make this approach even more effective by giving students a concrete, stretchy medium.

Materials

Card stock

1/2-inch-wide sewing elastic (found anywhere sewing supplies are sold)
Water-based, wipe-off markers

How To

- Cut the card stock into 1½ x 2½-inch rectangles and laminate the cards.
- Using scissors, make two small slits at the top (one of the short ends) of each card.
- Thread the elastic through the slits, stringing three, four, five, or more cards together so that they lie flat, side by side. Tie a knot in each end of the elastic.
- Choose a word that is appropriate for your class, like peanut, and select a 5-card Stretch 'em. Use the marker to write one or two letters on each card, forming the word peanut.
- 5. Hold up the Stretch 'em and gently pull on both ends of the elastic. The letter cards will separate, resulting in a stretching out of the word. The stronger the pull on the elastic, the greater the separation (see illustration).



- Draw students' attention to how the letters sound individually. Then slowly reduce the tension on the elastic, bringing the letters closer together, verbally blending them to form the word.
- Provide each student with a Stretch 'em and a marker and allow them to experiment.

Variations

- For more-advanced students, use Stretch 'ems to work on syllabication skills. Have the student break a multisyllabic word into separate syllables, writing one syllable on each card. The student might also work as a peer tutor, showing another student how words can be broken up into separate syllables, stretching the Stretch 'em to demonstrate.
- Flip up a letter and ask a student how the word will sound with the change.
- Use Stretch 'ems to practice math facts, leaving the answer flipped up.
- Use Stretch 'ems to follow a multistep process, using one card for each step. For example, if teaching a four-step problem-solving process, the first card might read "Describe Problem," followed by "Determine Objective," "Brainstorm Solutions," and "Make Choices."

Tips

- Make sure the slits at the top of the card are small enough to grab at the elastic. If they are too big, the cards will slide around too much.
- *Keep a supply of Stretch 'ems at writing centers or in your book corner so that students can independently access them.