

# Rebecca Sitton's APPLESEED



PLANT THE SEEDS TO GROW SPELLING AND WORD-SKILL LITERACY.

## Ask Rebecca

Rebecca,

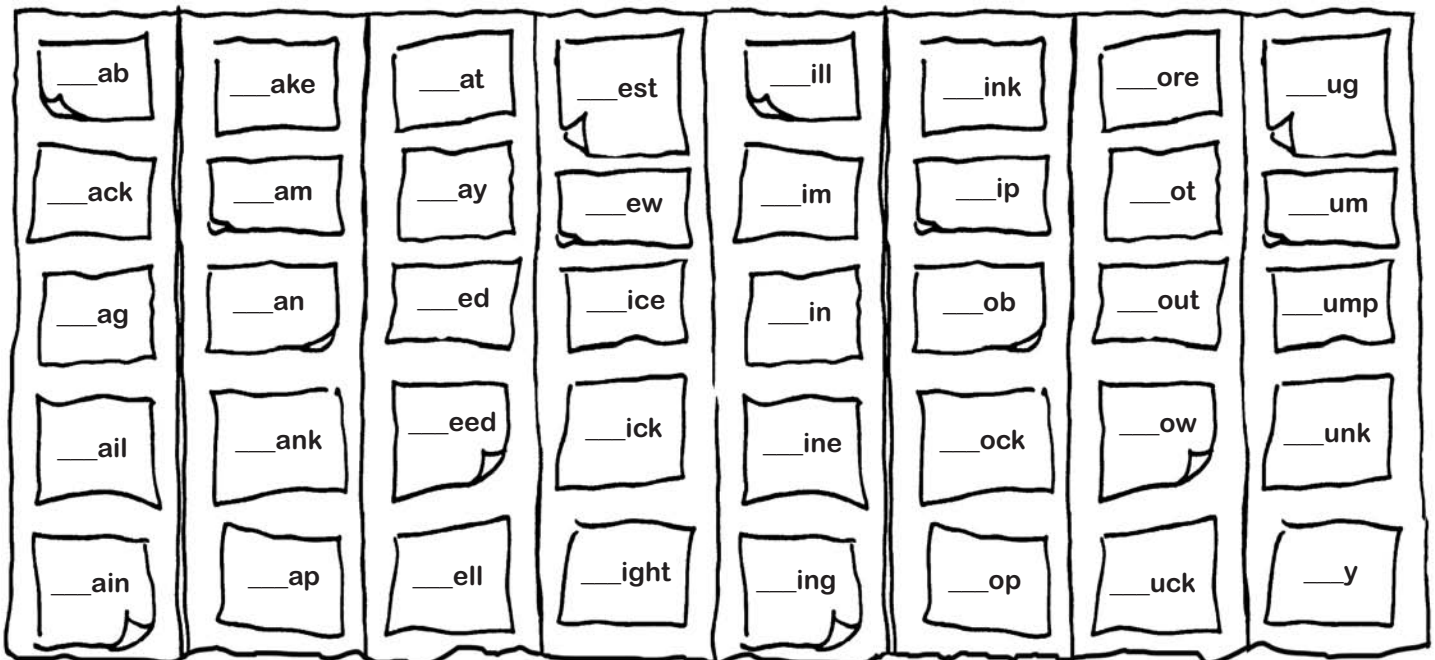
Our primary team likes to teach word patterns, such as hat, bat, cat. The intermediate team wants us to use the Sourcebooks because they use them. Why does the Sourcebook Series focus on high-frequency words instead of word patterns?

Cindy McIver  
Second Grade Teacher

Dear Cindy,

I think teaching word patterns to primary students is as important as you and your team think it is. Often, now, word patterns are called onsets and rimes. There are 40 researched rimes (e.g., \_\_ack, \_\_op, \_\_in) that can form up to 650 one-syllable primary words with the addition of beginning letters, or onsets. All are included in my Sourcebook activities in Level One, again in Level Two, and intermittently thereafter. In fact, in addition to these 40 rimes listed here, I include several other rimes that I've discovered are nearly as productive for making many words.

Yet, learning high-frequency words is important, too. We teach spelling for writing, and a focus on high-use writing words offers students and teachers the opportunity to see the results of their labor where it counts—in students' everyday writing. The high-frequency words are introduced in order of



their frequency so that beginning writers gain facility with spelling in their writing early on. This develops confidence among student writers which helps them to feel more comfortable writing.

continued . . .



## Ask Rebecca (continued)

How, then, is instruction for word patterns and high-frequency words combined in the Sourcebooks?

Each unit in the Sourcebook sequentially introduces a set of high-use writing words. In the Level 1 Sourcebook which is used in grade 1, the first 35 high-frequency words emerge. I call them Core Words. In grade 2, high-frequency Core Words 36-170 surface. First, the grade-level Core Words provide springboards for teaching patterns and a host of other general communication skills in the part of the unit that I call Build Skills and Word Experiences. Later in the unit, every high-frequency Core Word introduced so far in the program is a potential test word to determine which words students still need to learn to spell. By the end of Level 2, this bank of Core Words for testing grows to high-frequency words 1-170. By the way, the Core Words students miss on these tests become their Spelling Words, a differentiated list of words for each student to target for their study.

To be more specific to answer your question about teaching word patterns, here is an actual example of how word patterns become a part of a unit's instruction.

When the high-use word *will* is introduced in Unit 3 of Level 2, one activity from which teachers may choose (teachers have activity choices to differentiate and balance their instruction) is to make more words by changing the onset of *will*. Fifteen more words are suggested that students can form with new beginning letters. Within this activity, teachers reinforce the concepts that double letters stand for one sound and that short vowel words are usually spelled with one vowel letter. Then there is the suggestion for students to write sentences using their new \_\_\_ill words.

Next, the activity options in this unit springboard to more word-making ideas. The patterns \_\_\_up, \_\_\_ad, \_\_\_en, \_\_\_ug, and \_\_\_est are recommended. For challenge, students take the \_\_\_ill words they've made and add the suffixes *s*, *ed*, and *ing*. Then they're challenged to make contractions using *will*.

So, you can see that the high-frequency words are the catalyst for word-pattern activities, as well as many other activities that build all-purpose word experiences that fortify all the communication skills—reading, writing, vocabulary, spelling, usage, grammar, speaking, and thinking.

Your intermediate team undoubtedly wants you and your primary colleagues to begin the Sourcebook Series so that students can more comfortably transition into the upper levels of the materials. All skills and words are recycled, but, of course, it would be easier if students already had a skill base on which the teachers could continue to build. Why not accommodate them this way? Select two primary teachers to begin the program now. Start with Unit 1, even though it is past February. The skills and word experiences will be new to your students, and the instructional progression will remain intact. Use the program until the end of the school year. If you have questions getting started, call me. Then, at the end of the school year, decide as a team whether the Sourcebooks meet your needs. Ask questions such as: *Does the Series satisfy our position that word patterns are a priority in our primary communications curriculum? Does the Series provide other benefits? Easy enough!*

Do you have a question? Call me at home or toll free at the office, send me an e-mail, or set up a complimentary conference call for a group of colleagues who have questions. • e-mail: [rsitton@sittonspelling.com](mailto:rsitton@sittonspelling.com)

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