

About The Blue Material



The Blue Material

Material Description

The Blue Material is a series of increasingly abstract reading materials that focus on phonetic words with four or more letters. Most of these words begin and/or end with a consonant blend. The four-letter words are also called consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant (CCVC) words or consonant-vowel-consonant-consonant (CVCC) words. There are over 40 different blends if you include double letters like “ll” and “ss” (see Resources at the end of the manual for a list of all the blends with examples).

The Blue Material activities are sequential. They start with the child sorting picture cards into specific consonant blend categories, then progress to her reading and matching label cards, first to concrete objects and then to picture cards. She then advances to reading booklets and word lists and, finally, to reading sentences and short stories. The child may work with the blue series for quite a while as there are hundreds of words that fit this scheme.

Blue Consonant Blend Boxes

Each of the seven blue boxes contains three beginning consonant blend cards (e.g., “cr,” “pl,” and “dr”) and has two



“So, from the age of three till six, being able now to tackle his environment deliberately and consciously, he begins a period of real constructiveness.” — Maria Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind*, p. 167.

Isolating the Concept

Starting with the Blue Material resources, the difficulty or concept under study is isolated in red font. This sensorial impression draws the child’s attention to the concept and allows him to see the patterns of words.



Blue Consonant Blend Box



Blue Object Box



Blue Picture Box



Blue Booklets

corresponding blue picture cards for each blend (see NAMC's Curriculum Support Material). In total, the material introduces 21 beginning consonant blends. The images on the picture cards are limited to phonetic words with four or more letters (e.g., crab, plant, and drum). The child sorts the picture cards into columns, matching the picture cards to the corresponding blue consonant blend cards.

Blue Object Boxes

Similar to the Pink Object Boxes, each blue box contains six small, interesting objects and their matching blue label cards. The objects are limited to nouns represented by phonetic words with four or more letters that include consonant blends isolated in red at the beginning and/or end of the words (e.g., **d**rum, **f**rog, **c**rab, and **s**tamp). To offer variety, have at least eight Blue Object Boxes. As with the Pink Object Boxes, the child matches the label cards to the objects; however, in the Blue Object Boxes, the sounds are not isolated in each box but are mixed from the start.

Blue Picture Boxes

Similar to the Blue Object Boxes, each blue box contains six picture cards and matching blue label cards. The images on the picture cards are limited to nouns represented by phonetic words with four or more letters that include a variety of consonant blends isolated in red (e.g., **c**log, **s**tamp, **b**olt, and **p**lanet). There are eight boxes of blue picture and label cards (see NAMC's Curriculum Support Material). Similar to the object boxes, the child matches the label cards to the picture cards.

Blue Booklets

The small booklets with blue covers present a single phonetic word on every page. Each word has four or more letters and a beginning, ending, and/or middle consonant blend. Like the Pink Booklets, this material does not contain pictures for the child to use as cues when reading the words, so the booklets may include verbs and adjectives as well as nouns. Each of the ten booklets contains eight words, such as **c**arrot, **w**ent, **t**wig, **m**ilkman, **p**ump, **c**lap, **m**end, and **t**ilt (see NAMC's Curriculum Support Material).

Blue Word Lists

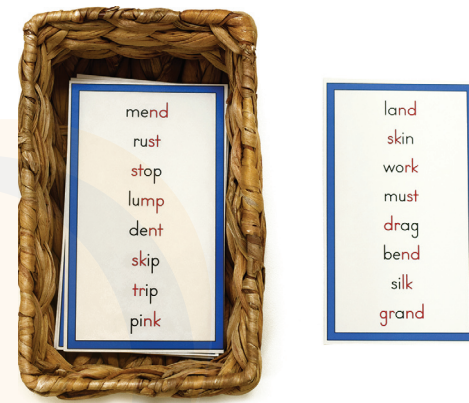
The word lists are printed with a blue border and each one contains eight words (see NAMC's Curriculum Support Material). Similar to the booklets, the 15 word lists do not include pictures for the child to use as cues, and they present a variety of words. For example, land, skin, work, must, drag, bend, silk, and grand.

Blue Sentence Strips and Short Stories

The sentence strips are bordered in blue and each one includes a sentence made up of words with consonant blends, action words, and sight words. For example, "The cat crept up on the rat as it slept." There are some sentence strips that include images. The short stories, which have a blue strip on the cover, present simple narratives composed of words with consonant blends, action words, and sight words (e.g., *My Trip to the Park*). See NAMC's Curriculum Support Material for Blue Sentence Strips and Short Stories.

Discovering More

- The important learning objective of the Blue Material is for the child to understand that when two consonants appear together in a word, he must blend the letter sounds together instead of pronouncing each sound individually.
- All reading activities are individual presentations.
- The child will have gained experience and confidence from reading individual three-letter phonetic words, action words, and sight words prior to beginning the Blue Material activities. In addition, most children will have advanced to reading multiple words with the Pink phrase strips, Pink sentence strips, and Pink short stories prior to reading phonetic words with four or more letters. Reading sentences, even simple ones, is quite a leap forward for the child on her journey to fluent reading because she must understand the context of each word as well as the role the word plays within the sentence.
- As mentioned, most children will have advanced to reading simple sentences and short stories with the pink series;



Blue Word Lists



Blue Sentence Strips and Short Stories

Sentence Strips with Images

The child begins reading the Blue Sentence Strips with the images to assist him with interpreting the text.



Teacher and child working on the activity with the Blue Object Boxes



The goal of the Blue Material activities is to build a strong foundation for reading

Preparing the Material

When you are preparing the Pink, Blue, and Green Material from NAMC's printable resources for your classroom, clearly indicate the contents of each box/drawer by coding it with either a numbering system or the specific phonogram, whichever is most appropriate.

however, it is important to note that the child returns to reading individual words again in the early blue activities. Reading individual words helps isolate the concept that is being learned with the Blue Material, which is reading phonetic words with four or more letters including a consonant blend. Isolating the concept provides the child with repeated exposure to and success with these types of words.

- The child may spend a substantial amount of time working with the Blue Material activities because there are so many combinations of phonetic words with four or more letters. Children may experience some difficulties at first, merging the consonant blend sounds together to arrive at a meaningful word. However, practice and patience will yield the desired results for the child on her path to fluent reading.
- The first activity, Introducing Consonant Blends, is an introduction to the graphemes and phonemes of two-letter consonant blends at the beginning of words with four or more letters. The child sorts picture cards that begin with consonant blends, matching them to the isolated blend cards. Once the child is comfortable working with these consonant blends, she is introduced in the next activities to reading words with beginning blends (e.g., crib and flag) and ending blends (e.g., melt and wisp), and to compound words (e.g., dustpan and bunkbed).
- Parts 1 and 2 of the activity Matching with the Blue Material are familiar matching activities with labels cards and objects or picture cards. In the activity Reading with the Blue Material, the child works with the Blue Booklets and then the Blue Word Lists to demonstrate third-period-lesson type learning. The final two presentations, Reading Blue Sentences and Stories, allow the child to show his mastery of the concept by applying everything that he has been learning with the Blue Material, actions words, and sight words to reading more advanced material. The ultimate goal is to build a solid foundation for reading by providing all of the keys necessary to be successful.

Activity Introducing Consonant Blends



Introducing consonant blends

Purpose

To help a child understand that when there are two consonants together at the start of a phonetic word with four or more letters, he must blend these letter sounds together.

Material

Blue Consonant Blend Boxes (see NAMC's CSM).

Presentation

- Invite the child to the language arts shelf to introduce the Blue Consonant Blend Boxes.

Age

- 5–5.5 years old

Direct Aim

- To identify consonant blends at the beginning of words and blend the sounds together.

Indirect Aim

- To learn the mechanics of reading.

Control of Error

- The teacher.
- Visual and auditory sense.

Points of Interest

- Seeing the isolated consonant blend in red.
- Hearing the consonant blends in words.
- Sorting the picture cards.

Vocabulary

- Names of the objects in the pictures.

Notes

- There are 21 beginning consonant blends. Depending on the child, present two or three at a time.
- Some children need to work with all seven blend boxes. Others will be ready to advance after working with only a few blend boxes.



Child repeating the sound of the consonant blend on the blend card



Child sorting the picture card below the appropriate consonant blend card



Child continuing to place picture cards below the consonant blend cards

- Ask the child to select one of the blue blend boxes, for example, box 1, and to carry it to the table.
- Place the box in the top left corner of the table and remove the lid.
- Remove the consonant blend cards from the box one at a time (e.g., “cr,” “fr,” and “dr”). Show the consonant blend to the child and say the sound for each blend (e.g., /cr/, /fr/, and /dr/). Emphasize that the sounds of the two letters are blended together.
- Ask the child to repeat the sound of each consonant blend.
- Place the blend cards in a row at the top of the table, leaving space between them.
- Remove the picture cards from the box and stack them neatly in front of the child.
- Select the top picture card from the stack and name it out loud, emphasizing the consonant blend: “Cr-a-b.”
- Ask the child to repeat the name.
- Place the picture card below the correct consonant blend card and point to and say the blend.
- Invite the child to continue naming and sorting the remaining picture cards below the consonant blend cards.
- Once all of the picture cards have been sorted below the blend cards, invite the child to point to each blend, starting at the top left, and to sound out each blend.
- Return the picture cards into a random stack.
- Invite the child to repeat the activity.
- On other days, repeat the presentation with other Blue Consonant Blend Boxes, following the needs of the child.
- Remind the child to return the material to the shelf when finished.
- Tell the child that he is now free to work with the Blue Consonant Blend Boxes in the same manner.

Extensions

Playing Games

- Invite two children to repeat the activity by taking turns selecting picture cards and placing them below the appropriate consonant blend cards.
- Invite the child to repeat the activity by sorting the picture cards from two or more Blue Consonant Blend Boxes.
- Invite some children who are familiar with all of the beginning consonant blends to play a game of “I spy.” For example, “I spy one of your friends in the classroom whose name starts with /br/. ” A child will respond, “Brandon.” Continue in the same manner with other names and objects.

Matching Label Cards

- Invite the child to repeat the activity, this time introducing the matching label cards (see NAMC’s Curriculum Support Material). Note: This will be the child’s first opportunity to read a word with four or more letters including a blend.
- Stack the six label cards for the three categories (“fr,” “dr,” and “cr”) in front of the child.
- Give the child the top label card from the stack and ask her to sound it out: “Fr-o-g.” If necessary, remind the child to blend the sounds of “fr” together (/fr/) and then sound out the remaining letters, faster and faster until she can form the word “frog.”
- Ask the child to place the label card below the matching picture card.
- Ask the child to continue matching the other label cards in the same manner.
- Invite the child to point to each label card, starting at the top left, and to read each word aloud one more time.



Playing games



Matching label cards



Child matching the final label card