

C9: Which Sounds Longer?

Lesson Objective: Using word length cards as visual aids, children will hear spoken words and determine that the length of the sound of the word is different from the length (size) of the item the word represents.

Materials

- [Word Length Cards](#)
- [List of Suggested Word Pairs](#)

Instead of showing written words (because we're not trying to read yet!), we will use cards with different numbers of triangles on them, with each triangle representing one letter. Print and cut the cards along the dotted line.

NOTE: Don't make the mistake of writing out the letters that spell the words you choose. Doing this defeats the purposed of helping your child hear the differences in word lengths!

Activity

Video: How to play Which Sounds Longer?

In this game you will select two words of different syllable lengths — for example, grasshopper (3 syllables, 11 letters) and car (1 syllable, 3 letters). Find the appropriate word length cards (11 and 3 triangles), but keep them out of the child's view. Clearly speak the two words to the child. Have him repeat the words to you, and then ask him to pick which one he thinks sounds longer.

Adult: I am going to say two words to you, and you are going to decide which word sounds longer.

Listen to the words: grasshopper and car.

Say the words back to me.

Child: Grasshopper. Car.

Adult: Good. Which word sounds longer? Grasshopper? Or car?

Child: Um...car?

C9: Which Sounds Longer? (continued)

Adult: Well, a car is a lot longer than a little grasshopper,

but I am asking which word sounds longer
when you hear it or say it out loud.

Let's try again: Grasshopper. Car.

Which word sounds longer?

Child: Grasshopper.

Adult: Very good! The word grasshopper is longer
than the word car.

Here, I'll show you. [Reveal the word length cards.]

After he has made his choice, show him the two word length cards. Line up the cards (as in the photo above) to make it visually clear to the child that one is longer than the other. This subtly introduces the concept that the number of letters usually affects the phonological length of a word.

Adult: We use these cards to show how long the words are.

Each triangle stands for a letter.

Which word looks longer?

Child: That one. [pointing to the card with 11 triangles] Adult: Which
word do you think that is: car or grasshopper?

Child: Grasshopper?

Adult: Why do you think that word is grasshopper?

Child: Because it's longer.

Adult: Yes, the word grasshopper sounds longer
than the word car, and it also looks longer
than the word car when you write it out.

Start with word pairs where the longer word has three or more syllables (the left column of the word pair list). Once the child has the hang of the game, use some pairs where the longer word has just two syllables.

C9: Which Sounds Longer? (continued)

As in the above example, make sure you have some pairs in which the smaller word describes a bigger object. This way, you can tell if your child understands that he is looking for the longer-sounding word or is simply picking the larger object that the word represents. He has to learn to consider the words separate from the objects they represent or their meanings.

NOTE: You do not need to count out the syllables in the words yet. That will come later! Also, do not get distracted by counting the letters in each word. We are only concerned right now with “longer” and “shorter,” not exact numbers.

Small Groups (2-5 children)

Additional Materials: Note: You do not need to use the word length cards.)

■ optional: plastic tray

Adaptation: Read the main activity, watch the video, and follow the instructions above, with the following changes:

Do the activity with the group. Say a pair of word aloud; for example, grasshopper and car. Have all the children repeat the words. Ask them which word sounds longer. After they answer, place the two appropriate word length cards on the tray. Ask the children, “Which one of these cards could be grasshopper? Which one could be car?”

After practicing with several word pairs, call on children to answer individually. Say another pair of words. Let the child answer which one he thinks sounds longer. Then put the word length cards on the tray, in front of that child. Point to one of the cards and ask, “Which word do you think this is?” Get group confirmation of the child’s answer.

Pass the tray to the next child and repeat the activity.