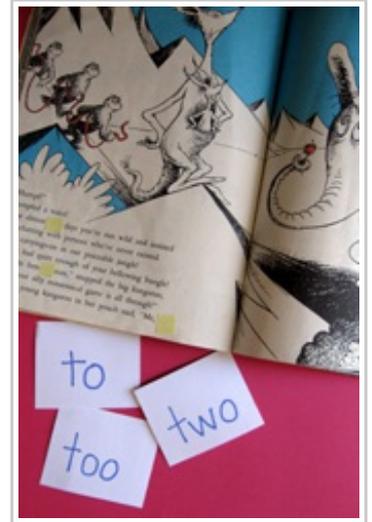


Homonym Adventures

By the middle of first grade, your child will probably have encountered her first few homonyms...those words that sound the same but are spelled differently, and mean different things, too.

There will be many years ahead for your child to develop this knowledge, but now's a great time to start exploring some basics. In particular, it's important for your budding reader to be able to tell the difference between "to," "two," and "too," as well as "here" and "hear," and "there" and "their." Your child may have problems spelling these words for the next year or two, but she can still learn to distinguish between them in a written text!

Kids often learn homonyms through flashcards, but here's an "organic" approach—using real storybooks—that should prove to be much more fun. Try it and see!



What You Need:

- A favorite storybook that you have read to your child at least once before
- Small post-its (you may need to cut some to size)
- 3 index cards

What You Do:

1. Take out a book that you have read to your child before, one that you know she enjoys. Go through the book and find every "to," "two," and "too." Cover each one with a small piece of post-it paper. Tell her you'll read it to her—but first, you and she will play a game together.
2. Take out the index cards and write one of each version of "to" on each one. Review with your child: what's the difference between these three? What does each one mean?
3. Now tell your child that you want her to read the book along with you and play a little game with words called homonyms. Snuggle up with your child and start reading together. Each time you get to a post-it covering a "to," have your child hold up the index card with the word that she thinks belongs in that spot. Make sure she's prepared to explain why she thinks her guess is correct! Then let her lift off the post-it and see if she's right. Try playing for a score to make it even more exciting!

Did You Know?

The most important thing about homonyms is how they can change the context of a whole story. Sure, your child can study their spelling with worksheets, but understanding these words within context is the most valuable part of learning their meaning, not to mention, it is what will be most useful for your young reader out in the "real world." For a budding reader, there's nothing like the thrill of looking at a real text and figuring out that she really can read and understand it after all!