

Silent letters: word cards and sorting sheet

Cut out the 36 cards, shuffle them, and ask the learner to sort them into the five columns below. Six cards have no silent letter; they are there to be spotted. Say each word aloud while sorting.

timber	sign	wrist	knot	resign	foreign
wrap	limb	wren	wrong	campaign	bomb
nest	wrestle	knee	comb	number	knuckle
numb	ring	wrinkle	knight	magnet	know
lamb	knife	climb	write	signal	thumb
reign	knock	knit	design	wreck	crumb

Sorting sheet

KN- (silent K)	WR- (silent W)	-MB (silent B)	-GN (silent G)	No silent letter

Check: 8 cards in KN-, 8 in WR-, 8 in -MB, 6 in -GN, 6 with no silent letter. In number and timber the B is sounded because it starts a new syllable; in signal the G comes back because a vowel follows it. Compare them with numb, climb and sign.

Dictation list and answer key

Read each sentence aloud twice, say the target word once more on its own, and give time to write it. Twelve words cover the four families on the cards plus -MN and GN-. The three stretch words are optional.

#	Sentence to read aloud	Answer	Family
1	She scraped her knee on the step.	knee	KN-
2	Use a knife to cut the bread.	knife	KN-
3	Do you know the answer?	know	KN-
4	He wore a watch on his wrist.	wrist	WR-
5	Please write your name at the top.	write	WR-
6	That answer is wrong.	wrong	WR-
7	The lamb stayed close to its mother.	lamb	-MB
8	He hurt his thumb with the hammer.	thumb	-MB
9	We will climb the hill after lunch.	climb	-MB
10	Stop when you reach the sign.	sign	-GN
11	The leaves turn red in autumn.	autumn	-MN
12	The dog likes to gnaw on a bone.	gnaw	GN-
S1	She tapped the door with one knuckle.	knuckle	KN-
S2	Iron out every wrinkle in the shirt.	wrinkle	WR-
S3	Add up the numbers in the first column.	column	-MN

Marking

Score each word right or wrong, then note the kind of error, because the two common kinds need different follow-up. Missing letter (nife, rist, lam, sine): the learner has not yet attached the word to its family; go back to the cards. Added letter (knest, wring for ring, thumbe): the learner is over-applying the pattern; sort the family cards against the no-silent-letter cards again. A wrong vowel with the silent letter in place (clime, autum) is progress on this lesson and a separate spelling point.

Review a week later

Dictate the same twelve words in a new order plus three that were not on the first list, using your own short sentences. Tick the ones that are right both times; only the others need a third round.

thumb	write	sign	knee	gnaw
climb	wrong	autumn	knife	wrist
lamb	know	knot	wreck	comb

New in the review: knot, wreck, comb. Word counts and the lesson plan are on the article page; the lesson has not been trialled in a classroom, so treat the timings there as estimates.