Find, cover, write: a short-a spelling session

Turn a word search into a 15-minute spelling routine with a memory check and a gentle revisit.

15 minutes | 1-12 learners; independent or pairs

Who this is for

Readers learning short-a spellings. Learners can read simple consonant-vowel-consonant words with support.

Prepare

One short-a puzzle per learner, pencils, and this recording sheet. Keep the puzzle answer page with the adult.

1. Read together | 3 minutes

Read the ten words. Ask learners to point to the letter making the short-a sound. Explain any unfamiliar word with a picture or sentence.

2. Find and say | 5 minutes

Give each learner the puzzle page. Circle complete words and say them aloud. Partners may take turns finding and reading; finishing first is not the goal.

3. Cover and write | 4 minutes

Cover BOTH the grid and word bank. Say CAT, BAG, MAP, FAN and TAP, one at a time, and let learners write them in the recording boxes.

4. Check and choose | 3 minutes

Reveal the list and compare one word at a time. Circle a letter that needs attention, practise it, and choose one word to revisit later.

Questions, options and checking

What this practises

Say sounds, notice spelling patterns, and check spelling from memory

Questions to ask

Which words end in -at? / What stays the same in CAT, HAT and MAT? / Which part helped you remember BAG?

Offer more support

Use five words, read them together first, and let a partner point to a starting letter. Offer a plain word list if scanning a grid is tiring.

Extend the activity

Ask learners to suggest another short-a word and explain how they checked it. Revisit two words later rather than making the grid harder.

Answers and checking

Dictation order: CAT, BAG, MAP, FAN, TAP. The participant sheet deliberately leaves the five boxes unlabelled. Keep the word bank covered during dictation. Accept discussion in the learner's own words.

Limits and care

Finding a printed word is not evidence of spelling it from memory. Use the covered writing step to decide what to practise next; this is not a reading assessment.

Word bank

CAT, HAT, MAT, BAG, MAP, CAP, FAN, JAM, BAT, TAP

Open the guide and tool

https://handydaytools.com/blog/short-a-spelling/

https://wordsearch.handydaytools.com/?puzzle=spelling-short-a#maker

Print page 3 for participants. Keep pages 1-2 with the adult. Download the separate sample game or puzzle from the guide when listed.

Free for personal, classroom and free community activities. Please do not resell or rehost our original files. Full terms: handydaytools.com/use/

My spelling check

Name (optional): _____ Date: _____

1. Listen and write:

2. Listen and write:

3. Listen and write:

4. Listen and write:

5. Listen and write:

One spelling I want to revisit: