

What to print

- **Once, for yourself:** run.pdf, 1 page. Hold it while you run the session.
- **One copy per girl:** sheets.pdf, 3 pages. Sheet A and Sheet B. That is 2 pages per girl. Sheet C is optional.
- **You do not need:** pages 5 to 7 of this guide, the key. The session runs without it.

Guide, Sound Hunt

Group 4 to 30 · Materials: paper, pencil · SDG 4, 5 · EN edition · Released · Nameet Potnis, author and English editor

Before you enter the room

- **Say sounds, never letter names: "mmm" and "sss", not "em" and "ess".**
- The eight Sheet B words and their answers are on the run sheet. Hold it while you read the rows aloud.
- Sheet C is for the 60 minute session only. For 30 or 45 minutes, print Sheets A and B.
- Before the room hunt, say what nobody picks up: nothing from a bin, nothing sharp, hot or plugged in.

Read this once at home. In the room you only need the run sheet. Where this says "you", it means whoever is running the session: a teacher, a volunteer, an older sister.

Who it is for

- **For ages 4 to 7.** Girls who are beginning to link spoken words with letters.
- **Reading and writing.**
- **Group size.** 4 to 30 girls.
- **Different levels in one room.** This is a listening activity, so nobody is shut out of it. A girl who cannot read a word yet does the whole session: you say every word aloud and she answers with a hand signal, a tick or a drawing. A girl who is already reading becomes the word finder, whose job is to bring the group harder words, not to answer faster than everyone else. Same activity, two ways in.

What you need

- One learner sheet per girl, or plain paper she rules into two columns
- One pencil per girl, or one shared between two

- **Free and optional:** a blackboard or wall space to write the two letters on, and the objects already in the room to point at
- **Nothing here costs money.**

Why the session is shaped this way

Sounds, never letter names. The sound of m is a hum, "mmm". The sound of s is a hiss, "sss". A letter has a name and a sound, and today only the sound is the job. If you say "em" once, expect to hear it back for the rest of the hour.

The two sounds are far apart on purpose. m and s feel completely different in the mouth. A girl who mixes up b and p is hearing accurately and meeting a genuinely hard distinction, which is why those pairs come later.

Everyone signals at the same moment. On your count of three, every answer appears at once, so no girl is reading her neighbour's hand and no girl is beaten to it. That is also what makes the answers worth anything to you.

The words are only carriers. Swap any word your group does not use for a local everyday word with the same first sound. The sound is the lesson.

Listening comes before marking. Sheet B is read aloud by you, row by row, at the pace of the slowest girl. Ask the readers to keep their pencils down until you have read the word, so nobody races ahead.

The quiet question is the real check. "What did you draw? What sound does it start with?" asked one to one tells you far more than a column of ticks, because a tick can be a guess or a copy.

Rows seven and eight were never practised. That is deliberate. They show you whether the girls are listening or following the pattern of the room.

Including everyone

A girl who cannot yet read. This session was built around her. Every instruction is spoken, you read every word on the sheet aloud, and the answers are ticks and drawings rather than writing. She is not behind here, she is doing the identical task. If she cannot write the letter under her drawing, she copies it from the board or leaves it blank and tells you the sound instead. She ends the session holding her own sheet with her own two drawings on it.

A girl who joins late. Sit her beside somebody already working and hand her the sheet at the row the group has reached. Tell her the task in one sentence: "We are listening for mmm and sss at the start of words." She does not need the earlier rows and she is not behind. Do not restart the group, and do not ask her in front of everyone where she was.

Boys in the room. Boys do the same activity and the same sheets. What keeps the session centred on the girls is who gets heard: watch the signals round and the closing round, and if the same few voices are carrying the session, use the count of three so every answer appears at once, then go round the circle in order so a turn does not have to be won. Ask the girls first in the room hunt.

If it goes wrong

The group answers with letter names instead of sounds. One girl says "em" instead of "mmm" and the whole group follows her. Stop using letter names yourself for the rest of the session. Point at the letter on the board and say only its sound. Tell the group once: "A letter has a name and a sound. Today we only need the sound." Then redo two easy words. Letter names are not wrong, they are just not today's job.

Everybody copies the fastest girl. Hands go up in a wave and you cannot tell who heard what. Switch to the count of three so every signal appears at the same moment, then ask two or three girls quietly and one to one while they are drawing. If you still cannot tell, that is your answer: run the same two sounds again next time before adding a new pair. Repeating a sound pair is ordinary practice, not a step backwards.

Adapting it

- Swap any word for a local everyday word with the same first sound. Keep four m words and four s words on Sheet B.
- Avoid words starting with two letters that make one new sound (ship, chair, thumb), words where the letter and the sound disagree (one, hour, know), and words starting with two sounds run together (stop, small, tree), where both answers are defensible.
- If the room is bare, hunt in names instead: "Whose name starts with mmm?" Use only the names of girls who offer their own.
- Choosing a new pair another day: keep the two sounds far apart. m and s, b and t, f and k, l and p. Do not pair b with p, s with z, or m with n until the group is confident.

Running it shorter or longer

30 minutes. 0 to 4 sound circle, 4 to 11 two sounds two signals, 11 to 16 sound hunt, 16 to 26 mark it on paper, 26 to 30 close. Only Sheet B gets done in the room, so Sheet A goes home undrawn and you lose the drawing, which is where you see whether a girl can find a word of her own rather than repeat yours.

45 minutes. The clock on the run sheet.

60 minutes. 0 to 5 sound circle, 5 to 15 two sounds two signals, 15 to 25 sound hunt, 25 to 40 mark it on paper, 40 to 60 second sound pair and close. In the last stretch, run the signals, the hunt and the marking again with **b** and **t**, using Sheet C: ball, table, bag, tin, book, top, basket, ten. Two contrasting pairs is the most an early years group will hold in one session.

Keeping it safe

The girls hunt the room, so say what they may not pick up before they start. Nothing from a bin, nothing sharp, nothing hot, nothing from a socket or a cable. They bring you what they found rather than holding it up themselves, and you look at it before the room does. Nothing goes in the mouth. Before you hand anything out, check it cannot fit inside a child's mouth: if it fits inside a ring made by your thumb and first finger it is too small for this room. Seeds, beads, coins and small bottle caps are out. Count what you handed out back in at the end.

CC BY 4.0 · Potnis Family / potnis.org. Written and edited in English by Nameet Potnis. Copy, print, adapt and share with credit.

Key and facilitation cues

Answers and what to say, Sound Hunt

Answers

The drawings on Sheets A and C have no single correct answer. Accept any word that truly starts with the sound. The tick rows do have answers.

Words to read aloud for Sheet B

Read each word twice, stretching the first sound. Never say the letter name. Rows 7 and 8 were not practised, on purpose: they show you whether the girls are listening or following the pattern of the room.

Row	Say this word	Correct box
1	moon	m
2	sand	s
3	soap	s
4	mat	m
5	salt	s
6	milk	m
7	stone	s
8	market	m

Four answers are m and four are s, and they do not alternate. A sheet that ticks neat alternating boxes down the page is usually a guess in a pattern. Ask her two of those rows again aloud.

Words to read aloud for Sheet C

Row	Say this word	Correct box
1	ball	b
2	table	t
3	tin	t
4	bag	b
5	tooth	t
6	bucket	b

Any word may be swapped for a local everyday word with the same first sound. Keep four and four on Sheet B. The guide says which words to avoid when you swap, and which sound pairs to keep apart.

What you might see

What is on the page	What to offer next
Ticks scattered, and she cannot say the sound when asked quietly	A smaller listening task. Two words at a time, hand signals only, no sheet. Run the same pair again next session
Ticks mostly right, drawing copied from a neighbour	Ask her for one word of her own, out loud, and write it under her drawing. Finding her own word is the next step, not neater ticks
Ticks right including rows 7 and 8, and her own words on Sheet A	Give her the word finder job next time, and try a second pair on Sheet C

Sticky points

What happens	What to say or do
She says the letter name, "em", not the sound	"That is the letter's name. What is its sound?" Then say it for her, stretched
She repeats the whole word louder instead of the sound	Stretch the start yourself, "mmm...at", and ask again
She hears the last sound instead of the first	Say the word slowly and tap the table once as you begin it. "Tap, then listen"
She cannot hold a long word in her head	Use short words: mat, sun, bag, top, not market or basket
She writes the letter backwards, or writes none	Count it correct. Today is hearing, not spelling. Note it for a writing session
She gives a word in another language with the right first sound	Count it correct and say so to the whole group
The room is too noisy	Pull the group into a tighter circle and lower your voice instead of raising it
One girl answers every time	Use the count of three, then go round in order. Give her the word finder job
She will not speak in the closing round	She points at her drawing, you say the word. That is her turn taken

After the session

Keep Sheet A. The next reading and writing session can open with "show your partner your two drawings and say the sounds." If rows 7 and 8 were weak across the group, run this same pack again with m and s before moving on. Repeating a pair is ordinary practice and costs nothing.