

How can phonic/spelling *Initial-Consonants Word/Picture Cards* be used for (categorizing) vocabulary activities?

TEACH / LEARN THE CONCEPT. The *categorizing/classifying* process is very useful not only in language learning and basic education but also in work and everyday life. *Categorization* involves *recognizing, differentiating among, and/or grouping* items according to their similar and dissimilar features. *Classification* may require *sorting* into known *classes*. Both are valuable thinking skills that can be enhanced through the use of phonic/spelling *Initial-Consonants Cards* in learning activities and enjoyable, motivating (cooperative and/or competitive) games. Here are some suggestions for ways to do so:

SORT THE CARDS. Any number of cards can be laid out, face-up or -down—or simply offered in a pile. Working with manageable numbers of items, individuals, pairs, or groups can separate their cards into the four categories of: 1. **P/A = PEOPLE/ANIMALS** (singular common nouns; capitalized proper names). 2. **PI = PLACES** (singular common nouns; capitalized place names). 3. **Th = THINGS** (singular or plural common [un]countable nouns). 4. **A(V) = ACTIONS/ACTIVITIES** (base verb forms).

Participants can combine the stacks of cards collected *individually* for each category into one larger stack.

If *all* the cards have been used, each of the four groupings should contain 105 items. These might then be put into “subcategories”—such as *People vs. Animals* for *Category 1*—and proper vs. common nouns for people, and the like. Grouped items can then be read aloud so that listeners can identify their (sub)categories.

AN ANIMAL: /b/



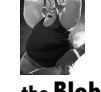
bear

A PERSON: /b/



blabbermouth

A PERSON: /k/



the Blob

A PERSON: /br/



brat

A PERSON: /br/



brother

AN ANIMAL: /b/



bull

A PERSON: /k/



Cain

AN ANIMAL: /k/



calf

A PERSON: /tʃ/



chief

A PERSON: /tʃ/



child

SEQUENCE THE CARDS. Putting words into order provides cognitive practice; sequencing is also good preparation for “playing real card games” with educational materials. When any number of cards from an *Intermediate/Advanced* phonic/spelling *Initial-Consonants Card Pack* have been sorted into 4 (or more) meaning categories, any number of items in each grouping can be arranged into alphabetical order as they are read (aloud): for instance, some of the P/A items may be bear, blabbermouth, the Blob, brat, brother, bull; Cain, calf, chief, child, chef, choir*, chef*, Christ, . . . Participants will notice that when more than one word begins with the same consonant(s), the *vowel spellings* of the relevant items determines their order. And unless all items with the same initial consonant sounds are *kept together*, words starting with digraphs (ch, sh), or clusters (bl, br) will come *between* words that start with the same *single* consonant letters.

LIST THE ITEMS. For more classification practice in initial-consonant phonics, each group can work with a different category of (alphabetized) cards. Less proficient students might read and copy the words in their pile in sequence; those wanting more challenge can have the items read aloud while they write down their spelling. If they leave space, advanced learners may even be able to add items of the appropriate category with the same beginnings *in between* those listed—as in baby, baker, bartender, bat, (bear,) beast, bees, best man, Billy, bird, (blabbermouth,) blind date, (the Blob,) blond, boogie man, bore, bozo, (brat,) . . .

PLAY CLASSIFICATION GAMES. At any time in the vocabulary-acquisition process, categorizing competitions can provide a quick but motivating diversion. Any number of phonic/spelling *Initial-Consonants Cards* can be used.

The first team draws and shows a card, pronounces its word, and has a certain time—perhaps a minute—to name *other items* in that category that begin with the same letter(s). For example, if a card shows a booth—a **PLACE** with the initial single consonant b, those holding it might say bakery, bank, bar, bathroom, beach, bog, building, business, etc. Players can get a point for every correct answer (and lose one for every error?). Competitors that want to *win* can accumulate points in rounds.

Listeners can jot down (some of) the words they hear and add their own items for use in future categorizing games. Dictionary use is encouraged. Additionally, listeners might suggest other (sub)categories that their items belong to.

The same competition can be conducted at “higher levels” by patterning it after the game of *Scattergories*.

As soon as a classification and an initial consonant letter or cluster is picked, players compete to list as many items as they can on a (prepared) grid within an agreed-upon time limit.

As they read their answers aloud in turn, listeners check off those they hear from others. Competitors receive a point for each item that *no one else* has thought of. Whoever accumulates the most points wins.

VOCABULARY CATEGORIES GAME: TEAM A		
Round 1	Round 2	Round 3
PLACES <u>b</u>	THINGS <u>cr</u> = /kr/	ACTIONS <u>sh</u>
√ <u>bank</u>	<u>cracker</u>	<u>shiver</u>
√ <u>bakery</u>	<u>cradle</u>	<u>share</u>
√ <u>bar</u>	√ <u>crane</u>	√ <u>shave</u>
<u>bathroom</u>	√ <u>crate</u>	<u>ship</u>
√ <u>beach</u>	<u>crutch</u>	<u>shock</u>
<u>boat</u>	√ <u>cream</u>	√ <u>shoot</u>
<u>bog</u>	√ <u>crib</u>	<u>shove</u>
√ <u>building</u>	√ <u>cross</u>	<u>shop</u>
<u>business</u>	<u>crumbs</u>	√ <u>show</u>
<u>bureau</u>	√ <u>crown</u>	√ <u>shut</u>
<u>border</u>		<u>shelter</u>
Score = 6	Score = 4	Score = 7

LIST & WRITE ABOUT VOCABULARY IN CATEGORIES.

Students learning “English for Academic Purposes” can get experience in *organization* by reading and listing the relevant card items (and others) in categories—in whatever form makes the most sense to *them*. On the left is a small portion of a *classic outline* that uses roman numerals, capital letters, Arabic numbers, and lower-case letters. On the right is part of a sample “graphic organizer.”

I. people & animals

A. people

1. proper names

a. Gain

b. Liz

c. Glenn

d. the Pope

e. Plato

2. kinds of people

a. child

b. clerk

c. grad

d. host

B. animals

1. mammals

a. bull

b. deer

c. goat

d. lion

2. other animals

a. birds: crow

b. insects: flea

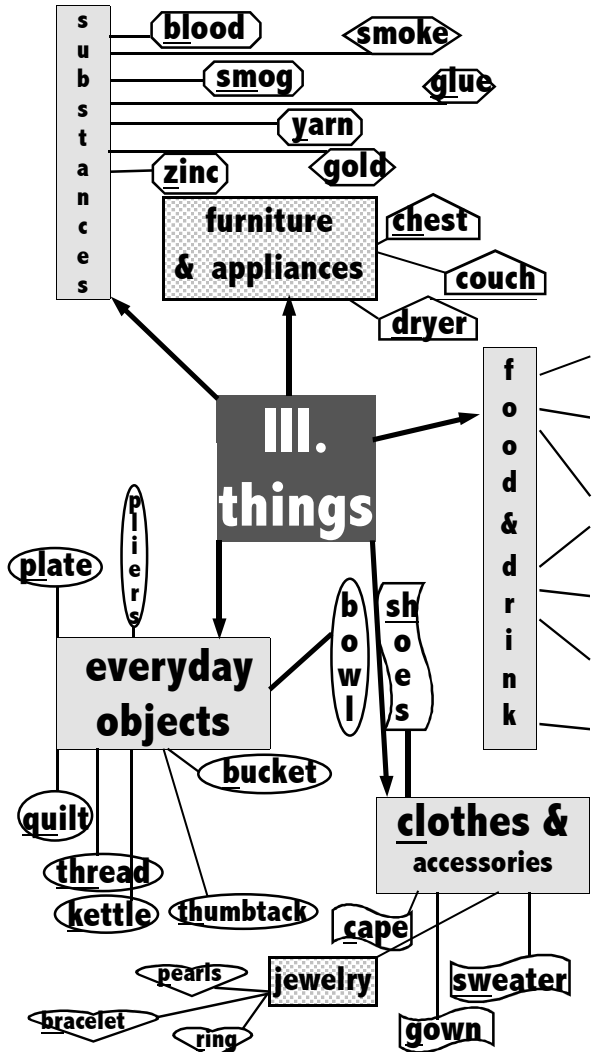
c. rodents: mouse

II. places

A. geographical

1. countries

China



More advanced participants might be able to write "compositions of classification" from their outlines or graphic organizers. They may mention all or just some of the items from their phonic/spelling *Initial-Consonants Cards* and/or add others to improve the quality of their writing. Here are segments of some possible examples:

Kinds of People

Some people are famous. We know them by name—like the Biblical figure Cain, the actress Liz Taylor, the astronaut John Glenn, the Pope (not his given or family name), the philosopher Plato, and thousands more. . . .

Both famous and ordinary people can be classified in many ways—by their occupation, position, situation, personality, and

Some possible job titles are chief, chef, clerk, client, farmer, plumber, priest, sailor, sheriff, . . .

Kinds of Things

Some things are "countable nouns" with singular and plural forms. They are everyday objects like blocks, bowls, bracelets, buckets, cents, disks, drums, feathers, flags, flowers, gems, keys, pliers, . . .

Many other singular words name "uncountable nouns"—substances or collections like blood, bread, cheese, champagne, chrome, fire, fruit, gold, glue, hair, juice, leather, smoke, . . .

Writers can then exchange papers—or work together—to reconstruct the outlines or graphic organizers their compositions are based on. Whatever the steps in these activities, they will provide vocabulary and other language practice in categorizing or classifying items—and lead to further skills development and knowledge in those areas.

Both outlining/graphic organizing and basic composition writing and reading lend themselves to language review, enhancement, and assessment activities—including further instruction in phonics, spelling, vocabulary in categories, sentence formation, and much more—with and beyond phonic/spelling *Initial-Consonants Cards*.