



# Facilitator’s Guide

This guide was produced in partnership with the **National Education Association**



## EPISODE 2

# Blending Sounds in Syllables with Autumn (Kindergarten)

**Video length:** 13 minutes

**Watch the video here:**

[ReadingRockets.org/interventions/blending-sounds-in-syllables-with-autumn-kindergarten](http://ReadingRockets.org/interventions/blending-sounds-in-syllables-with-autumn-kindergarten)

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Watch the whole “Looking at Reading Interventions” series here:  
[ReadingRockets.org/interventions](http://ReadingRockets.org/interventions)



## Section 1: Purpose of this guide

This facilitator's guide for professional development (the Guide) is intended to provide suggestions for reading coaches, principals, team leaders, or other facilitators to use for professional development (PD) sessions.

The Guide is organized to facilitate discussion about the video, not for the facilitator to lecture. PD facilitators may find insight about the videos by reading the Guide before leading PD about the video.

## Use in conjunction with the Viewer's Guide

A separate Viewer's Guide intended for anyone to use during a first viewing of the video. Find it here:

- [Episode 2 Viewer's Guide](#) (printable PDF)

The Viewer's Guide includes the following:

1. Autumn's profile
2. Video overview
3. What to notice while watching the video
4. Questions to consider while watching the video the first time

PD participants should use the Viewer's Guide as they watch the entire video as the initial step in PD, either on their own or in a group.

## Using this guide for professional development

### General guidelines for using the guide

PD should start with all participants watching the entire video and using the Viewer's Guide to guide their watching.

The Guide organizes the video into short clips for the group to view before discussing the clips. The short clips are organized around the following themes:

- A. Preparing for Blending Sounds in Syllables
- B. Autumn Struggles with Blending Onset-Rime
- C. Autumn Learns about Blending Through-Vowel and End
- D. Next Steps in Teaching Autumn to Blend Onset-Rime

Each theme includes one to three short video clips for viewing, and one to five discussion questions for immediate discussion after each clip is viewed.



A PD facilitator may elect to offer several shorter sessions as part of ongoing shorter PD sessions, such as for a Professional Learning Community (PLC), or to have one half-day session to discuss the video.

## Use the guide for a series of shorter PD sessions

1. Ask participants to read the Viewer's Guide before viewing the entire video. As they view the video, participants should answer the questions in Section 4 of the Viewer's Guide.
  - Facilitators might want to use the first short session to view the video and discuss the questions in the Viewer's Guide.
  - Alternatively, facilitators might ask participants to view the video and answer the questions in the Viewer's Guide before the first session, then discuss the questions during the first session.
2. Before each PD session, select video clips and the discussion questions that will fit into the time frame for the session.
  - Facilitators may want to make a copy of the discussion questions for each participant so they can write notes during the session.
3. During the PD session, show the video clips and discuss each clip, using the questions in the Guide.
4. Consider using one or more questions from Section 4: Summarizing Questions before the session ends.

## Use the guide for a half-day session

**Preparation:** Make copies of the Viewer's Guide and the questions in Section 2 for each participant.

**Consider an agenda as follows:**

1. View the entire video.
  - Read the Viewer's Guide.
  - Answer questions in the Viewer's Guide while viewing the video.
  - Discuss the answers to the questions and other questions participants may have.
2. View short clips and ask discussion questions for each section listed in Section 2.
3. Discuss the questions from Section 4: Summarizing Questions before the session ends.

## Using the answer keys

Answer keys provide facilitators with suggestions for answers to each question in the Viewer's Guide and this Guide. Of course, you can adapt the answers to address the needs of participants in your session.



## Section 2: Questions for guiding the second viewing of the video

**Note about time stamps:** The location for the part of the video related to the question is in parentheses. The start and stop times are shown as minutes:seconds. For example, the first question starts at 38 seconds and ends at 1 minute, 8 seconds. The total time for each clip is also shown in minutes and seconds.

### Short session A: preparing for blending sounds in syllables

#### 2.1 Understanding the Importance of Phonological Awareness Skills (0:30 – 0:56) 0:26 total time

1. What phonological skill does the narrator say Autumn needs to have?

#### 2.2 Checking Whether Autumn Has the Necessary Prerequisite Skills (0:56 – 2:25) 1:29 total time

2. Why does Ms. Farrell start by asking Autumn to blend a two-syllable word and then a three-syllable word?
3. What is the other pre-reading skill Ms. Farrell checks before asking Autumn to blend onset-rime into a word?
4. Why does Ms. Farrell use pictures rather than printed words for the words when she is asking Autumn for the first sound in words?

#### 2.3 Ms. Farrell Asks Autumn to Blend Onset-Rime (2:26 – 4:22) 1:56 total time

5. When Autumn successfully blends /s/ /un/ into 'sun,' why does Ms. Farrell ask her to blend another word?
6. How does Ms. Farrell use the felts to help Autumn understand blending the sound parts?

### Short session B: Autumn struggles with blending onset-rime

#### 2.4 Autumn Blends 'Make' and Attempts to Blend 'Sick' (4:23 – 5:39) 1:16 total time

7. Why is working with onset-rime harder for students than working with syllables?
8. Why does Ms. Farrell ask Autumn to point to the felts and say the sounds when she is struggling with blending 'make'?
9. How does Ms. Farrell try to help Autumn blend /s/ /ick/ into "sick" after she responds "sit"?



## Short session C: Autumn learns about blending through-vowel and end

### 2.5 Autumn Learns to Blend the Initial Consonant and Vowel with the Ending Consonant Sound (5:40 – 6:29) 0:49 total time

10. Why did Ms. Farrell rearrange the two sizes of felts so that the large one was first and the small one was second?
11. Why is it easier to blend /siii/ /k/ than /s/ /iiik/?

### 2.6 Autumn Blends 'Rat' (6:30 – 6:56) 0:26 total time

12. Why does Ms. Farrell ask Autumn to tell her the parts of 'rat' again after she was successful in blending 'rat'?

### 2.7 Autumn Guesses 'Strawberry' for 'Shop' (6:57 – 8:20) 1:23 total time

13. How does Ms. Farrell respond positively to Autumn's incorrect response of 'strawberry' for 'shop'?
14. Autumn's response of "strawberry" is completely incorrect. Previously, her incorrect responses included at least one of the word parts. What does this tell Ms. Farrell about Autumn at this point in the lesson?
15. If Ms. Farrell were to work with Autumn again, what is one thing Ms. Farrell would teach Autumn to do if she wasn't sure of an answer?

### 2.8 Autumn Blends 'Mop' (8:21– 9:32) 1:11 total time

16. Why does Ms. Farrell stop and ask Autumn to find the picture of the word she is blending ('mop')?
17. Why does Ms. Farrell ask Autumn to say the parts of 'mop' again after showing her the picture?
18. What does Autumn still need to accomplish before she will be ready to start learning to read with phonics lessons?



## Short session D: next steps in teaching Autumn to blend onset-rime

### 2.9 Next Steps for Autumn (9:32– 11:33) 2:01 total time

19. If Ms. Farrell had been able to continue with Autumn, what step would she take to help Autumn understand blending two parts of a syllable better?
20. Why might Ms. Farrell include blending syllables in future lessons that focus on blending onset-rime?
21. How does the lesson end?
22. How does Autumn seem to feel about her lesson?

## Section 3: Summarizing questions

1. Do you have any students who might benefit from improving their phonological awareness skills?
2. What did you learn?
3. How do you plan to use what you learned in your instruction?
4. How can you use what you learned with a small group?



## Section 4: Answer keys

### Answer key for Viewer's Guide

1. **At the beginning of the video, which two skills does Ms. Farrell check to see Autumn has before teaching onset-rime?**

Blending syllables and identifying first sounds.

2. **Why does Ms. Farrell check whether Autumn can blend syllables into a word?**

Blending syllables is an easier phonological awareness task than blending onset-rime. If Autumn had difficulty blending syllables, Ms. Farrell would have begun by teaching her to blend and segment syllables.

3. **Why did Ms. Farrell check to see if Autumn could easily identify the first sound in a spoken word after Autumn showed she has mastered blending syllables?**

Being able to identify the first sound in a word is the first step in understanding that syllables, which are easily heard and understood as units of speech sound, can be broken into smaller units and that one of the units is the first sound. Students who cannot identify the first sound in a word are not ready to learn to practice blending onset-rime.

4. **Autumn easily blends /s/ /un/ into the word 'sun'. Why does Ms. Farrell give her more words?**

Being able to blend onset-rime into one word is not enough evidence to be certain that Autumn has mastered the skill. On the second word, 'make', Ms. Farrell learns that Autumn is not automatic at blending onset-rime.

5. **When Autumn cannot blend /m/ /ake/ into a word, how did Ms. Farrell change the task?**

Ms. Farrell backs up a half step on the phonological continuum and has Autumn try to blend the body (initial sound and the vowel sound as a unit) and the coda (the sound or sounds after the vowel) to make a word. It is easier for a student to blend the vowel sound into a consonant than to blend the initial consonant into the rime.

6. **The video shows that Autumn has been taught to identify which parts of a word?**

First sound and last sound.

7. **If Ms. Farrell has future lessons with Autumn, what would she include in the lessons?**

Ms. Farrell would start with something Autumn has mastered, move to what Autumn has mostly mastered, and finish with working on a yet-to-be-mastered skill. She would start with a warm-up working at the syllable level where Autumn is confident. Then she would have Autumn practice blending the initial sound and vowel sound as a unit where Autumn has shown she can do the task, and then transition to onset-rime blending.



## Answer key for Section 2: questions for guiding the second viewing of the video

### Short session A: preparing for blending sounds in syllables

#### 2.1 Understanding the Importance of Phonological Awareness Skills (0:30 – 0:56) 0:26 total time

**Note to Facilitator:** A good time to review the hierarchy of phonological/phonemic awareness skills is right after the introduction. Review that:

- The order of difficulty for blending and segmenting single syllable spoken words is (from easiest to most difficult): syllables, onset-rime, phonemes.
- When a student has difficulty blending and segmenting words at any of the levels, the teacher should determine if the student can blend and segment at the next lowest level. For example, when a student has difficulty with onset-rime, the teacher should see if the student can blend syllables. If the student cannot blend syllables, the teacher needs to start at that level. (There is no lower level than syllables.)

#### 1. What phonological skill does the narrator say Autumn needs to have?

Autumn needs to understand that words are composed of individual sounds and she must be able to blend individual sounds into a word. The example given is blending /k/ /a/ /t/ into 'cat'.

#### 2.2 Checking Whether Autumn Has the Necessary Prerequisite Skills (0:56 – 2:25) 1:29 total time

**Note to Facilitator:** It might help the group to know that Autumn was not originally scheduled to be filmed. One student who was scheduled was absent, giving Ms. Farrell the opportunity to work with Autumn. Ms. Farrell needed to do a quick, informal assessment to determine what instruction might benefit Autumn. Ms. Farrell knows there are two major areas that kindergarten children often struggle with when preparing to learn to read: phonological and orthographic. Ms. Farrell began the lesson by assessing Autumn's phonological awareness, to determine if Autumn needed to develop in that area.

#### 2. Why does Ms. Farrell start by asking Autumn to blend a two-syllable word and then a three-syllable word?

Ms. Farrell starts her quick assessment at the easiest level of phonological awareness: syllables. If Autumn can quickly blend 2 and 3 syllables into words, she has demonstrated mastery of blending syllables.





**Note to facilitator:** You may want to mention that — in addition to blending — a student needs to be able to segment and manipulate syllables to demonstrate mastery. If Ms. Farrell had more time, she would have also assessed whether Autumn can segment and manipulate syllables.

**3. What is the other pre-reading skill Ms. Farrell checks before asking Autumn to blend onset-rime into a word?**

Ms. Farrell checked to see if Autumn could identify the first sound in a spoken word. If Autumn can do this, she has a critical skill necessary for understanding that a syllable can be broken into parts. If a student cannot identify the first sound in a word, it is unlikely that the student can master blending and segmenting at the onset-rime level. When a student can identify the first sound in a word, he/she is learning that syllables can be broken into parts.

**4. Why does Ms. Farrell use pictures rather than printed words when she asks Autumn for the first sound in words?**

Ms. Farrell uses pictures to give Autumn a visual representation of the word without using print. Using a picture has two purposes. First, when working on phonological awareness we want to keep students focused on just the sounds in words and not have print as a distraction. Second, Ms. Farrell had never worked with Autumn before and a picture helps to ensure that Autumn hears the word that Ms. Farrell says correctly.

**2.3 Ms. Farrell Asks Autumn to Blend Onset-Rime (2:26 – 4:22) 1:56 total time**

**5. When Autumn successfully blends /s/ /un/ into 'sun,' why does Ms. Farrell ask her to blend another word?**

To determine if Autumn is truly adept at blending onset-rime, Ms. Farrell gave Autumn another word to try. It turns out that Autumn was not able to blend the second word. That shows Ms. Farrell that Autumn needs to work on learning to blend onset-rime.

**6. How does Ms. Farrell use the felts to help Autumn understand blending the sound parts?**

Ms. Farrell uses felts to visually demonstrate how she is blending the onset sound into the rime to make a whole word. She demonstrates by sliding the onset felt across the desk to join the rime felt. Using felts provides a concrete representation of sounds, which are abstract.



## Short session B: Autumn struggles with blending onset-rime

### 2.4 Autumn Blends 'Make' and Attempts to Blend 'Sick' (4:23 – 5:39) 1:16 total time

#### 7. Why is working with onset-rime harder for students than working with syllables?

A syllable has a vowel sound, which is an open push of air. It has what is called an acoustic clue that makes it easy to hear and separate each syllable from the rest of the word. You can count the syllables you hear when someone is speaking a foreign language even if you do not know the meaning of the words. There is no such acoustic clue for breaking a spoken syllable into parts. This makes working at the onset-rime level challenging for some students who do not easily grasp the concept that a single syllable can be broken into parts.

#### 8. Why does Ms. Farrell ask Autumn to point to the felts and say the sounds when she is struggling with blending 'make'?

The manipulatives are a concrete representation of the sounds, which are abstract. By having Autumn touch the felts and say the sounds Ms. Farrell is helping Autumn make the connection that the felts represent the sounds. Ms. Farrell is adding both touch and sight to the work with sounds.

#### 9. How does Ms. Farrell try to help Autumn blend /s/ /ick/ into "sick" after she responds "sit"?

Ms. Farrell demonstrates blending and tells her the word is "sick". Even after doing that, Autumn still responds with "sit".

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## Short session C: Autumn learns about blending through-vowel and end

### 2.5 Autumn Learns to Blend the Initial Consonant and Vowel with the Ending Consonant Sound (5:40 – 6:29) 0:49 total time

#### 10. Why did Ms. Farrell rearrange the two sizes of felts so that the large one was first and the small one was second?

Ms. Farrell switches the felts to give Autumn a visual clue that she is now blending a large chunk of sound with a smaller chunk.

Ms. Farrell is backing up a little step on the phonological continuum by shifting the task from blending onset-rime to blending the body of the syllable (the vowel and all sounds before it) with the final sound.



**11. Why is it easier to blend /sīīī/ /k/ than /s/ /īīīk/?**

There are two reasons it is easier to blend /sīīī/ /k/ than to blend /s/ /īīīk/. First, it is easier to blend a vowel sound into a consonant sound than to blend a consonant sound into a vowel sound. Second, blending with the larger part of the syllable first is easier because the student has said most of the sounds and needs only to add the last sound.

**2.6 Autumn Blends 'Rat' (6:30 – 6:56) 0:26 total time**

**12. Why does Ms. Farrell ask Autumn to tell her the parts of 'rat' again after she was successful in blending 'rat'?**

Ms. Farrell is reinforcing what Autumn has just successfully accomplished and helping Autumn to articulate both parts of the word after she says it. Autumn has not yet mastered the concept that a syllable can have two parts. Saying both parts of the syllable while touching the felts after she blends the word correctly gives Autumn another exposure to the concept.

**2.7 Autumn Guesses 'Strawberry' for 'Shop' (6:57 – 8:20) 1:23 total time**

**13. How does Ms. Farrell respond positively to Autumn's incorrect response of 'strawberry' for 'shop'?**

She tells Autumn that 'strawberry' and 'shop' both start with the letter 's'. Ms. Farrell is using positive error correction by telling Autumn something that was similar about the word she guessed and the correct response. Ideally, Ms. Farrell would have been able to say something like "you got the first sound right" or "the word you said has one syllable" or "you got the last part right." However, 'strawberry' and 'shop' do not start or end with the same sound. Autumn's guess is so far off the mark that Ms. Farrell has to stretch to come up with something that isn't a negative response like "no, that isn't right".

**14. Autumn's response of "strawberry" is completely incorrect. Previously, her incorrect responses included at least one of the word parts. What does this tell Ms. Farrell about Autumn at this point in the lesson?**

Autumn is getting tired and is wildly guessing.

**15. If Ms. Farrell were to work with Autumn again, what is one thing Ms. Farrell would teach Autumn to do if she wasn't sure of an answer?**

Ms. Farrell would teach Autumn to ask for help instead of just guessing.

**2.8 Autumn Blends 'Mop' (8:21– 9:32) 1:11 total time**

**16. Why does Ms. Farrell stop and ask Autumn to find the picture of the word she is blending ('mop')?**

Ms. Farrell wasn't sure if Autumn was saying 'mom' or 'mop'. Mrs. Farrell checks with the picture to confirm that Autumn said 'mop'.



**17. Why does Ms. Farrell ask Autumn to say the parts of 'mop' again after showing her the picture?**

Autumn struggled a bit before she finally responded 'mop'. Autumn gets a chance to solidify her understanding that the two sound parts /m/ and /op/ make the word 'mop'.

**18. What does Autumn still need to accomplish before she will be ready to start learning to read with phonics lessons?**

Autumn needs to master and be automatic with her pre-reading skills. After she can confidently and accurately blend and segment onset-rime, she will need to confidently and accurately blend and segment two and three sound words. She will also need to be automatic with all her letter names and most of the letter sounds.

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## Short session D: next steps in teaching Autumn to blend onset-rime

### 2.9 Next Steps for Autumn (9:32– 11:33) 2:01 total time

**19. If Ms. Farrell had been able to continue with Autumn, what step would she take to help Autumn understand blending two parts of a syllable better?**

Ms. Farrell would model blending body and coda for 5 or so words, with Autumn copying her right after. After that, Ms. Farrell would ask Autumn to blend body and coda into words on her own. Once Autumn masters the task, she would move on to onset-rime blending.

**20. Why might Ms. Farrell include blending syllables in future lessons that focus on blending onset-rime?**

Blending syllables is easy for Autumn. Warming up with an easy task — blending 2 or 3 syllables into words — could help Autumn have a positive attitude and stay open to learning while she practices a skill she is still learning.

**21. How does the lesson end?**

Autumn easily blends /s/ /oap/. She ends with a success.

**21. How does Autumn seem to feel about her lesson?**

Autumn skips her way to the door, so it seems she enjoyed her time with Ms. Farrell.



## Answer key for Section 3: summarizing questions

### 1. Do you have any students who might benefit from improving their phonological awareness skills?

Use this question to have participants discuss their students who might be struggling with blending onset-rime

Thoughts for teachers to consider:

- What student behaviors do they observe that might be clues to difficulty with blending onset-rime?
- Do teachers have any data from assessments that might indicate a student's difficulty with blending onset-rime?
- Do the students they are thinking about have the prerequisite skills for blending onset-rime?

**Note to facilitator:** The prerequisite skills for blending onset-rime are (1) being able to blend syllables and (2) identifying first sound.

- If students not do not have all the prerequisite skills, what will they need to learn and practice before moving to practicing at the onset-rime level?
- How will teachers go about teaching the missing skills and having students practice them?

### 2. What did you learn?

Use this question to have participants reflect on and consolidate their learning by expressing it aloud.

### 3. How do you plan to use what you learned in your instruction?

Use this question to have participants develop and express specific action plans for teaching their students: Who? What? When? How will you measure student progress?

### 4. How can you use what you learned with a small group?

Teaching the strategy to use when blending onset-rime is easy in small groups with 2–5 students who are similar in their instructional needs. This can work even if some students are working at the syllable level, some are at the body-coda level, some are at the onset-rime level, and others are at the phoneme level. In other words, a group can be composed of students working at different levels of phonemic awareness; however, it is always better if students are close in their instructional needs. Small group instruction is difficult and unlikely to work if some students are working on phonics skills and others are not.

The same steps will need to be taken for all the skill levels student are working on. For example, if some students are working to blend syllables, the teacher will model syllables when the first student working on syllables has a turn. Likewise, for blending body-coda, onset-rime and phonemes.



Step 1. I DO — The teacher demonstrates how to use the strategy (I Do) for the group.

Step 2. WE DO — The teacher and all the students use the strategy for one or two words.

Step 3. YOU DO — The teacher calls on one student at time to blend syllables, body-coda, onset-rime, or phonemes, depending on the student's level. As a student becomes more proficient blending, the teacher moves to having the student blend at the next hardest level.

**Notes for YOU DO:**

1. Each student blends syllables, body-coda, onset-rime, or phonemes. The other students are silent while the student uses the strategy to blend.
2. To keep all students engaged, after a student blends, the teacher can randomly call on a different student to give a thumbs up. Some teachers call on all students to chorally blend, but only after the individual student has successfully blended.