

Reviews

Monster Phonic Fun Word Families

www.creative-english.com 2008

Monster Phonic Fun consists of two packs of laminated playing cards, which can be used to teach children to produce sounds correctly. Each pack has 56 cards, giving practice in 14 sounds, and a leaflet with instructions for a game that can be played with them. A reference list of the target sounds also appears on this leaflet.

Each card has four words which contain the target sound, printed underneath a picture of a monster with the mouth and tongue in the position needed to create that sound. (The monster pictures also often include illustrations of at least some of the words in the lists.) One word on each card is printed in bold, with the target sound highlighted in red. The game consists of trying to collect an entire set of four words (ie four cards) containing the same target sound by asking another player if they have a particular word.

The Level 1 pack introduces basic sounds, including the short vowels, /tʃ/

and /ʃ/. The Level 2 pack includes more complex sounds made up of more than one letter, such as the /f/ in *photo* and the /ʃən/ of *action*.

Games that can be played with these cards are not limited to the one suggested on the accompanying leaflet. Creative teachers will find many ways to use them, perhaps getting students to make up stories containing the words on the cards in their hands.

A colleague tried these cards with a nine-year-old Russian boy and they were a great success. Although the monsters, with their exaggerated mouths, may appear a little grotesque to adult eyes, they were a hit with this particular child, who was soon clamouring to 'play monsters' in every lesson. His teacher remarked that monsters are always a favourite with children and that card games involving monsters are sure to go down well. The only drawback she could see was that the words were printed at the bottom of the cards and so were concealed when held in the

elephant
giraffe
lion
monkey

fish
mouse
rabbit
tortoise

chair
cheese
lunch
watch

fish
shape
shop
wash

airplane
bus
car
motorcycle

apple
banana
lemon
mango

balloons
cake
clown
party

child's hand. However, the layout probably reflects the developers' concern to teach the correct mouth positions for the words via the monster pictures, and the position of the words on the cards was not considered an insurmountable obstacle to playing the game successfully.

Word Families is a vocabulary-teaching game also involving a pack of cards. As with *Monster Phonic Fun*, the cards each have an illustration and four words, one of which is printed in bold. The difference is that here the words are grouped according to categories rather than sounds, eg sports, animals, transport, colours. Again there are two packs of cards, one at a higher level than the other. In the higher-level pack, more abstract concepts are introduced. A similar game is recommended on the accompanying leaflet, ie collecting four cards in a set by asking other players if they have a particular word. Once again, teachers are not limited to this and the cards would lend themselves to many other possibilities. The *Word Families* illustrations are attractive and, as with *Monster Phonic Fun*, the cards are laminated and durable.

Ian Mainwaring
Harrogate, UK

box
hot
job
top

feather
mother
there
with

fish
shape
shop
wash

baby
body
cherry
lady

book
cook
look
took

cup
hut
mud
up