Section 6

Consonant Clusters
Getting to Know Consonant Clusters

**Tutors:** Teaching kids consonant clusters will require you to go over the sound to letter correspondences involved in each lesson with them. You’ll need to: 1) demonstrate orally the singular and combined sounds that st, sp, ct, and other clusters make; then 2) have the kids read these sounds with you; and then 3) have them identify the sounds they make by themselves. Kids have a lot of trouble recognizing consonant clusters at the ends of words, so the strategy here is to teach them clusters at the beginning and ends of words simultaneously.
The st Cluster

_Tutors and Kids:_ The consonant _s_ can team up with the consonant _t_ at the beginning and at the end of words.

_Kids:_ Say the sound the consonant _s_ makes, as in sun.

Now, say the sound the consonant _t_ makes, as in turkey.

Now, put these two sounds together:

\[s + t, \text{ as in star.}\]
Let's read these words:

Add t to sake and make it stake
Add s to bet and make it best
Add s to fit and make it fist
Add t to sale and make it stale
Add s to but and make it bust
Add t to bus and make it bust

Here are some more st cluster words to read:

stab still stone stem staff stick stuck

list it lost it
dust it must it
gust it bust it

Let's read these words:

Add s to fit and make it fist
Add t to sale and make it stale
Add s to but and make it bust
Add t to bus and make it bust
Here are some more st cluster words to read:

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stab still stone stem
staff stick stuck
list it lost it
must it must it
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Now, read these sentences:

Stan stopped at the store and got a big fat steak. Stan ate all that steak. He ate the last bit of that steak. It tasted so good. Stan put his fist on the table and said, "That steak is the best one I ever had." It was the first time that Stan had cooked something. He must have felt like a star!
The sn Cluster

**Tutors and Kids:** The consonant *s* can team up with the consonant *n* at the beginning of words.

**Kids:** Say the sound the consonant *s* makes, as in *stop*.

Now, say the sound the consonant *n* makes, as in *net*.

Now, put these two sounds together: *s + n*, as in *snake*. 
Let's read these words:

Add n to sack and make it snack
Add s to nip and make it snip
Add n to suck and make it snuck
Add s to nag and make it snag
Add s to nob and make it snob
Add n to sore and make it snore

Here are some more sn cluster words to read:

snub        snug        snuff        snare        sneak

Now, read these sentences:

Sam sneaked into Steve’s sack and got out a snack. He ate stuff like cake, cookies, and coke. He got sick from too many snacks.
Introduction to Snake in the Woods

Tutors: This story focuses on teaching your students to decode consonant clusters at the beginning of words. Many of the words in the story have the sC ("s" plus consonant letter) combination, such as “sn,” “sc,” “sl,” and “st.” Review the following words with your student before you read Snake in the Woods:

creepy
always
brother
prove
going
Trina
afraid
crocodiles
flashlight
grabbed
crawling
hissing

If your students have difficulty with the story, read it with them again. Note whether they can read these words on their second time around.
The Snake in the Woods
by Bill Labov and Michael LeeYow

Jake had a snake as long as a tree in a park.
He got it in the woods where it’s creepy and dark.
His daddy used to say, “Don’t sneak in the woods.”
But Jake was slick and always up to no good.
Jake told his brother Fred about his plan.
To go to the woods to prove that he was the man.
Fred said, “Bro, the woods got scary things, you know.”
Since Fred was afraid, Jake took Trina to the woods.

It was cold and scary, so they wore their hoods.

Trina asked Jake if he was scared to go in there.

He said, “No, what do I have to fear?”

Trina said, “Beware!
You know there are crocodiles, bears, snakes, spiders and other things in there.”
Jake grabbed his stick and went straight down the path. The path was crooked and they were trapped in the grass.

Trina snuck up on Jake to play a trick. She picked up a stick and poked his neck real quick. Jake screamed, “Hey, what just bit me?!!” and almost climbed up a tree.

Trina said, “That’s not a bite--just little old me.” They kept on going until Jake had to rest.

He sat on an old log to catch his breath. Trina saw something crawling. It was getting close. She said “Don’t move,” and Jake sat there froze.

It crawled up his hand, and Jake started to pray.

“Please God, make this big snake go away.”
The snake crawled up his arm and slid around his neck. It spoke in his ear and gave Jake a little peck. “I’m sorry. Please don’t be scared of me,” the snake said. “Sometimes I get lonely laying in my dirt bed. I always wish that someone could stay with me and play, But they get scared, start screaming, and then run away.” Jake was still frightened, but Trina was brave. She picked up the snake, and they started to wave. “Come on, Jake. Let’s take him home!” she said. “We can play with him every day, and even scare Fred.” “So, snake,” said Jake. “I guess we’ll name you Sly, The nicest scary snake who almost made me cry!”
Comprehension Questions for Snake in the Woods

1. What was Jake’s plan?

2. What did Trina say was in the woods?

3. Why did Jake almost climb up a tree?

4. Who is Sly?

5. Would you have gone into the woods with Jake and Trina?
How did you like Snake In The Woods?

Circle the right answer

5  "Da Bomb"
4  "Hype"
3  "Decent"
2  "Aiight"
1  "Wack"

Student ____________________________  Date _____________
Tutor _______________________________  Grade ____________
sp Cluster Words

Tutors and Kids: There are lots of consonants which can team up with each other to make many words. Let’s try to read a few more consonant clusters:

Kids: Say the sound the consonant s makes, as in sock.

Now, say the sound the consonant p makes, as in pizza.

Now, put these two sounds together:

s + p, as in spoon
Let’s read these words:

Add s to pike and make it spike
Add s to lip and make it lisp
Add p to sun and make it spun
Add s to pit and make it spit
Add p to gas and make it gasp

Here are some more sp cluster words to read:

spell
wasp
spite
spare
speck
I spoke to Steve about a spot I saw on his spine. He said with a lisp, “It’s a red spot, so it must be a bite from a wasp.” I sped up to him and made a spin to see the spot some more. I made a gasp, and said to Steve, “That wasp is as bad as a snake! He must have bit you out of spite!” “Spare it, my man,” Steve said to me, “It’s just a speck on my back. Getting bit by a wasp is as nice as spice!”
Tutors and Kids: The sc and sk consonant clusters make the same sound most of the time. Let's sound out and combine the consonants s with k and s with c:

\[ s + k = \text{sk as in skate} \]

\[ s + c = \text{sc as in scar} \]

Let's read these sc and sk cluster words:

scan  skit  skill  scuff  ask  dusk
Now, try reading these consonant cluster words:

**Tutors and Kids:** Try to sound out the consonants c with t, and p with t.

\[ c + t = ct, \text{as in act, fact, exact, and pact} \]

\[ p + t = pt, \text{as in kept it and except it} \]

Now, try to sound out the consonants l with d, and l with t.

\[ l + d = ld, \text{as in old one, bold one, fold one, and sold one} \]

\[ l + t = lt, \text{as in belt it and melt it} \]

Now, try to sound out the consonants n with t, and n with k.

\[ n + t = nt, \text{as in rent it, sent it and lent it} \]

\[ n + k = nk, \text{as in bank it, rank it and sank it} \]
Now, see if you can read these sentences with lots of consonant cluster words:

Stan felt a sting on his hand when he stopped his bike at the hot dog stand. "Can you stop and hold on, Steve?" he asked his pal. "I got a cut on the skin of my hand when I stopped my bike just past the stand. "OK," Steve said, and he went close to Stan to see his hand. "I am mad," Stan told Steve. "I spent my last dime on stuff at the stand, and I don't have a band aid to stop the blood from the cut on my skin." "Don't get bent out of shape," Steve said. "My mom gave me a band aid the last time I put on these pants. Here it is!"
Introduction to Stuck In the Sand

This story is about two brothers and the tricks they play on each other in the summertime. The little brother Mike buries his big brother in the sand, but his big brother gets even with him in the end!

The story focuses on consonant clusters at the beginnings and ends of words such as:

- stuck
- stuff
- sand
- crab
- stole
- lost
- glove
- scare
- grabbed
- went

You’ll need to practice reading words together ahead of time like:

- treat
- around
- ice cream
- walked
Stuck In the Sand

My little brother Mike and I were at the beach last week. When Mom left us to step into a store, Mike said, “Let me bury you in the sand.”

I said “OK,” because there was nothing else to do.

He dug a hole and put sand on top of me. Then he put lots and lots of sand on me.
Last time we took a trip to the beach, I had my bike gloves with me. Next time we went, they were gone.

I felt that Mike stole them from me. I think Mike did it because he wanted to have those bike gloves, and I wouldn’t give them to him.

“Mike,” I said from under the sand, “I know you took my bike gloves, and I want them back. I love those gloves.”

“No way, man. I don’t take gloves,” Mike said, still sticking sand on top of me. “You just lost them. You always lose stuff!”

“I do not!” I yelled. “You always take stuff!”
“You can’t prove it!” Mike said.
“I live with you and I know you lose stuff!”
“Those gloves are not lost. You have them,” I said.
“I do not, you ugly ape!” Mike yelled.
“Come closer and say that in my face,” I said.
“No way. I’m all done with you,” Mike said.
“You’re all covered in sand and you can’t get out.”

He was right. I couldn’t move my arms and legs. I was so mad.

“Stop it and come here! All I ask is that you get me out of here!
Or else I’m gonna stick you in the sand!” I yelled.

But Mike just laughed and said, “Ha, ha. You don’t scare me!

You’re stuck! You’re stuck, and I’m going to get ice cream at the stand with Mom. You lose this time!”
I yelled, “You’re gonna get it! I NEVER lose!” But Mike was gone, and I was still stuck in the sand.

The sun was hot, and no one was around to get me out. A crab walked by my face. I thought it was gonna bite my nose. I yelled so loud that my arms and legs began to move in the sand. I was free!

And I knew just what to do. I grabbed that crab and zipped him up in my bag. I found Mike and Mom at the ice cream stand. I didn’t say anything.
We drove home, and I went into Mike’s room. I got the crab out of my bag, and put it in his bed. And do you know what I found in his bed? MY BIKE GLOVES!

Ha, ha! Mike had a big scare that night, and I got my gloves back. Mike better not play me like that any more. He better treat me well, ’cause I’m the big brother, and I never lose!
Comprehension Questions
for Stuck In the Sand

1. Why did Michael want to bury his big brother in the sand?

2. How did Michael’s big brother finally get himself out of the sand?

3. Why did Michael’s big brother want to get even with Michael when they got home from the beach?

4. What did Michael’s big brother do to get even with Michael?
How did you like Stuck In The Sand?
Circle the right answer

5
“Da Bomb”

4
“Hype”

3
“Decent”

2
“Aiight”

1
“Wack”

Student ____________________________
Tutor ____________________________
Date ____________
Grade ____________
3-Letter Consonant Clusters

Tutors: Teaching kids 3-letter consonant clusters is the next step after they learn to sound out 2-letter consonant cluster words. This section will require you to go over the sound to letter correspondences that 3-letter consonant clusters make. You’ll need to: 1) demonstrate orally the combined sounds that clusters such as str, scr, spr, make; then 2) have the kids read these sounds with you; and then 3) have them identify the sounds they make by themselves. Kids have a lot of trouble recognizing 3-letter consonant clusters such as -rst at the ends of words, and they need help enunciating -sts and -sps endings. You’ll need to focus on these clusters at the ends of words as well.
3-Letter Consonant Clusters

**Tutors and Kids:** We learned that consonants can team up with other consonants at the beginning and end of words, as in:

- **snake**
- **wasp**
- **skate**
- **belt**
- **hand**
Now, let’s add other consonants to these teams and say their sounds:

\[
\begin{align*}
   s + \text{pray} &= \text{spray} & s + \text{cram} &= \text{scram} \\
   s + \text{trike} &= \text{strike} & s + \text{pray} &= \text{spray} \\
   s + \text{tray} &= \text{stray} & s + \text{cream} &= \text{scream} \\
   s + \text{trip} &= \text{strip} & s + \text{trap} &= \text{strap}
\end{align*}
\]

Now, let’s read these consonant cluster words:

spruce  spring  scrap  scroll  strap  straw

Now, let’s read these sts and sps consonant cluster words:

toast  roasts  wasps  fists  lisps  nests

Now, let’s read these rst consonant cluster words:

first  burst  worst
Now, let’s read these sentences:

Stan struck out with the girls in his class. He strode on in the lunch room on the first day of school in some scruffy blue jeans with a stripe on the hem. The girls in the lunch room let out a scream as Stan drank from a can of Sprite. “Get out of here with your scruffy old self,” the girls screamed. “Don’t strut in here until you scrub yourself!” Stan made two fists and burst out loud, “This is the worst! Spread out and listen, y’all. Don’t act like beasts. I’m the best. Jeans don’t make a man! My good acts and deeds make me who I am!”
Tutors: This story may be a challenge for your students to read because it concentrates on clusters of consonants at the beginnings and the ends of words. Review the following words with your students before you read Ghosts in the Basement:

- snarled
- stumbled
- screechy-scratchy
- crumbled
- strange

Help your students pay close attention to the consecutive consonants at the beginning and the ends of these words. You can start with the word in the title, GHOSTS. Remind them that “h” can be a “ghost letter.” The “gh” cluster is never pronounced after the vowel, but when it comes before the vowel, “h” is the only letter that is silent.

Next, take a look at the “sts” cluster in GHOSTS. This combination is really hard for people to pronounce. Try to say GHOSTS with your students. Don’t be surprised if it comes out as GHOSS, or GHOSSSES, or GHOSTES.

Remember that with words like GHOSTS, you don’t have to pronounce all the sounds to read it right: as long as the reader knows what it means!

As you read through the story, you will find more challenging words. You may need to practice with your students words like WASPS’ NESTS, and GHOSTS’ NESTS after you’ve read the story.
I never wanted to go down in the basement at our house. It was dark down there. If you stood at the top of the steps, you could even hear some strange noises coming up from below. It smelled funny, too. My cousin Jamal said there were ghosts in his basement, too.

One day, the big kids had a test at school and so we were left at home. My mother was at work. My sister Tamyra said that she was going down to the basement, just to check it out. She asked me if I wanted to come. She said, “Are you scared to go?” I said, “No, I’m not scared. Are you?”

Tamyra opened the door and started to go down the stairs. I went behind her, one step at a time. I took my stick with me, just in case. But when I got halfway down, I couldn’t see where Tamyra was. The light was switched off, and I didn’t know where the switch was. I took another step, and then there was a loud crack.
I whispered, “Tamyra! What’s that?”

She said, “It’s just the stair creaking. It always does that.”

But it wasn’t a creak. There was something else down there.

I got right near the bottom. Then I saw it. It was all grey and against the wall, like a grey cloud. I stumbled on the stick, and I fell right against the wall. My hand went right into that grey thing, and it crumbled! It fell all apart, in little pieces. You could see them all drifting down.

I screamed, “Tamyra! I just killed a ghost!”

Tamyra came up. “That’s no ghost,” she said. “It’s a wasps’ nest.”

I said, “It’s no wasps! It’s a ghosts’ nest!”

She said, “It isn’t no ghosts’ nest! There were wasps down here last Spring. And they stung me, too.”

We went a little further into the basement. We found this little room, and it smelled strange in there.

It smelled like some animal had died a long time ago. Then something ran across my leg. It snarled at me and it bit me.
I yelled, “Tamyra! I just got bit by a rat!”

She said, “That’s just Patches. She always comes sneaking down here. She scratched me, too.”

So Tamyra said, “You are scared of everything. I’m leaving you here now.”

Tamyra went up the stairs and Patches went up under her legs. She closed the door behind her. Now it was all dark. I started to go up the stairs, feeling my way, but I didn’t want to touch anything. Then I heard it, “Sscrzzzzzzzt!”

It was a different sound - a loud, screechy-scratchy sound. It sounded like when you scratch your nail against the blackboard, but only louder! I just ran up those stairs, and I banged the door shut behind me.

Tamyra was in the kitchen, fixing scrambled eggs. She said, “See, there’s no ghosts in the basement. We’ll go down there again after lunch.”

I didn’t say anything. I didn’t even eat those scrambled eggs. And I never went down into that basement again.
Comprehension questions for Ghosts in the Basement

1. Who is Patches?

2. Why didn’t the storyteller eat scrambled eggs? Didn’t Tamyra know how to cook them?

3. Do you think there really was something scary down in the basement? Was it just imagination? Why do you think so?

4. Did you ever go down to a scary place yourself? What happened?
How did you like Ghosts in the Basement?
Circle the right answer

5  “Da Bomb”
4  “Hype”
3  “Decent”
2  “Aiight”
1  “Wack”
Section 6: Progress Assessment for Consonant Clusters

Tutors: Have the kids read the words below without any help from you. If they sound out the words correctly, leave the space next to the word blank. If they don’t read the word correctly after 7 seconds, mark an x in the space, and after the test, write the word out as it was incorrectly read. If the student reads less than 90% of the words correctly, you’ll need to work more on this set of lessons with him/her.

Kids: Sound out the consonant clusters and read the words below:

1. fast  _       11. melt  _________  21. scrape________
2. mold ________ 12. steps _________  22. still  _________
3. stuck ________ 13. speak________  23. stems _________
4. lasts ________ 14. stripe________  24. cast    _________
5. disks ________ 15. stage _________  25. snot    _________
6. pond ________ 16. lists _________  26. snap   _________
7. snake________  17. bunk _________  27. stone  _________
8. spunk________  18. stale _________  28. snub   _________
9. just   ________ 19. bolt _________  29. rust    _________
10. stud ________ 20. stare________  30. felt    _________

______ out of 30 words read correctly, ______% read correctly