Seek & Spell Challenge

Word Work Kids Love!

Laura Candler

Grades 2-5

Seek & Spell Challenge is an engaging word work strategy to build foundational reading skills and to improve spelling. Students work with a set of letters to create and record correctly-spelled words. While they are moving the paper letter tiles around, they try to find the mystery word made from ALL of the letters in the set. Seek & Spell Challenge activities can be completed by students working alone or with a partner. The activities can be used in a whole group setting, within small guided groups, or in literacy centers.

Benefits of Using Seek & Spell Challenge

Seek & Spell Challenge is more than a fun word game. When used regularly, it can boost spelling, phonics, and word recognition skills significantly. As your students search for words, they are decoding the letter arrangements and analyzing words. To do this, they will work with word families, learn to identify prefixes and suffixes, and begin to recognize sight words quickly. As your students check the spellings of the words, they will develop dictionary skills and the ability to use other word reference tools. Over time, you’ll notice that your students no longer have to look up every word because they can spell most commonly used words. Best of all, the hands-on aspect of manipulating the letter tiles keeps students engaged and on task. In fact, the activity is so fun and motivating that your students will beg you for a new mystery word each week!

Where to Find the Seek & Spell Files

All of the Seek & Spell Challenge materials are located in one zip file. In that zip file you’ll find this teacher’s guide, printables for 36 mystery words, and a set of editable PowerPoint templates. This teacher’s guide includes new introductory materials, blank editable PDF templates, teaching tips, and grading suggestions. The mystery word products, as well as all of the letter tiles and each set is identified by a different geometric shape. You’ll find that shape in all principles and materials within the set. The editable templates make it easy to differentiate instruction by modifying the guidelines and/or creating your own thematic or content-based mystery words.

Common Core Standards

Seek & Spell Challenge is aligned with Common Core Foundational Reading Skills specifically those dealing with phonics and word recognition. Furthermore, it’s aligned with many of the Language Standards in 2nd through 5th grade. Refer to the complete list of standards covered which can be found on page 2.

Seek & Spell Challenge Overview

Before you begin, read through this teacher’s guide and see the other materials in the zip folder to familiarize yourself with the program. Seek & Spell Challenge requires minimal preparation and almost everything is used on a weekly basis. Each week, print one set of each week’s mystery word recording page for each student. Your students will cut apart the letters at the bottom of the page. To turn letters and will move the letters around by following the mystery words. While they are working, they will look for and record smaller words that can be made from the same letter tiles. Refer to the guidelines on page 9 for specific details about the acceptable words that are permitted. If you want to modify the guidelines, you can add the customizable version in the Seek & Spell Challenge Template file.

Seek & Spell Challenge comes with ready-to-use printables for 36 mystery words, enough for one per week. You’ll find lists of all 36 words on the charts on page 8. You can also create your own mystery word printables using the customizable templates. The words can be used in any order, so you may want to record the date you use each word next to that word on page 8.

To better meet the needs of different students, there are several variations of each mystery word printable. The recording page on the left is easier and less intimidating than the one on the right because it uses larger fonts and has fewer recording lines. Both variations include a line under confusing lower case letters (b, d, n, p, and u).

If you prefer to have your students record the words they find in a journal or on paper, you can print the page that has three sets of letter tiles. These letter tiles do not have lines under any of the letters, but you can add them yourself or teach your students to add them.
Introductory Practice Lessons

Unless your students have previously completed a similar word work activity, you should plan to start with one or both of the Introductory lessons. The directions below refer to Practice Lesson A, and the same steps can be repeated for Practice Lesson B if needed. For the lesson to be most effective, you'll need a method of displaying the printables, such as under a document camera or with a computer and a projector. If you aren't able to display the materials for the entire class, you may want to conduct the activities in a small group setting.

Note: The mystery word for Practice A is "headlights" and the one for Practice B is "disappearing."

Materials for the Class
- Scissors
- Seek & Spell Challenge Guidelines (page 9)
- Seek & Spell Challenge Practice A recording page (10 or 11)
- Seek & Spell Challenge Practice Word Cards (page 13)
- Seek & Spell Challenge Practice Answer (page 14)
- Dictionaries (hard copy or digital)

Materials for Each Student
- Seek & Spell Challenge Practice A recording page (10 or 11)
- Dry erase board and marker
- Scissors
- Pencil

Lesson Sequence

1. Introducing Seek & Spell Challenge

Give each student a copy of the recording page with the letters still attached as well as a copy of the guidelines. Don’t let them cut apart the letters yet or they will miss your instructions! Ask if anyone knows what the word “seek” means. If not, explain that it means to search for something. Point to the letters at the bottom of the page and tell your students that all of the letters together make up the word, the “mystery word.” Have students use the letter tiles to spell words. The tiles will be too small for words as long as possible, and if they are lucky, they might even find the mystery word! Show them how to cut apart the letters to form letter tiles. Point out the list of letters that are in alphabetical order above the dashed line. Tell your students that if they ever think they might have lost a letter, they can compare their paper letter tiles with that list to find out.

Finally, if your students haven’t asked about the line under the letter d, point it out and explain that some lower case letters can be confused with other letters when they are upside down. For example, a “d” looks very similar to an upside down lowercase “p.” When they see a line under one of these letters, they should turn the letter tile so the line is under the letter. They will find these lines under the letters b, d, p, u, and n.

2. Clarifying the Mystery Word Concept

By now many of your students will already be searching for the mystery word, even without cutting apart the letter tiles. This is a good time to explain that while it’s fun to find the mystery word, the objective is to find as many words as possible and to spell them correctly. If they do find the word, they should not tell anyone; instead, they should secretly write the word on the back of their recording pages.

3. Introducing the Guidelines

Next, ask your students to cut on the dashed line to remove the letters from the recording blanks, and then to carefully cut apart the letter tiles. Now ask your students to move the letters around and try to form words, but ask them to write the words on a dry erase board rather than on the recording form. When everyone has found at least one word, display the Seek & Spell Challenge guidelines. Review the word requirements and ask your students to decide if their words meet those requirements.

Two of the most important guidelines are that words must have at least 3 letters, and they must be spelled properly. So if students aren’t sure of a word’s spelling, they must look it up using a dictionary or online word reference tool. If necessary, demonstrate how to check the spellings of their words.

4. Practicing the Guidelines

If your students need more practice determining if a word is allowed under the guidelines, you can use the Practice A Word Cards on page 13 to help them clarify their understanding of those rules. Mix up the word cards and display them, one at a time. As you show each word, ask your students to decide whether or not the word would be allowed according to the guidelines. After giving a few moments of think time, have them turn and share their responses with a partner. Finally, call on a student who believed whether or not the word would be allowed and why. Repeat with the remaining words. Refer to the answer page 14 for the answers and the reason for each classification.

5. Finding and Recording Words

When your students understand the guidelines, give them time to find and write words on their recording page. After about 10 minutes, ask them to draw a line under the last word they wrote on their own. Then pair each student with a partner who has a similar skill level. Ask them to compare words, check each other’s spellings, and work together to find additional words. Collect the paper letter tiles at the end of the lesson. You’ll also want to decide if your students need additional practice with the guidelines, in which case, repeat the activity using the Practice Lesson B materials.
Seek & Spell Challenge Guidelines

- Try to unscramble the letters to find one mystery word that uses ALL the letters in the set. If you find it, write it on the back of your paper but don’t tell anyone what it is. If you don’t find it right away, move on to the next step.
- Move the letters around and try to form smaller words that are made of 3 or more letters.
- When you find a word, write it on your paper. Be sure to spell each word correctly. If you aren’t sure of a spelling, check it with a dictionary.
- Don’t record proper nouns, names, or abbreviations.
- Be sure you know the meanings of all of the words you record on your list.
- You may use more than one form of a word (plural, past tense, etc.) as long as you have all of the letters to make the new word.

10 Mystery Word Letters:   a   e   d   g   h   h   i   l   s   t

Cut the letters apart, and use them to make words. Write words having 3 or more letters on the lines below. Can you find the mystery word that uses ALL the letters? If you do, write it on the back of this paper.

Name ____________________________
Date ____________________________

11. ____________________________
12. ____________________________
13. ____________________________
14. ____________________________
15. ____________________________
16. ____________________________
17. ____________________________
18. ____________________________
19. ____________________________
20. ____________________________
### Seek & Spell Challenge Practice

**Practice A**

Which words below can be made from the letters in ‘headlights’?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>head</th>
<th>heads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>is</td>
<td>sad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glad</td>
<td>sade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sag</td>
<td>sags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hed</td>
<td>ten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tag</td>
<td>seat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seating</td>
<td>Gail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Seek & Spell Challenge Practice Answers

**Practice A**

Which words below can be made from the letters in ‘headlights’?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>head</th>
<th>heads</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>is</td>
<td>sad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>glad</td>
<td>sade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sag</td>
<td>sags</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hed</td>
<td>ten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tag</td>
<td>heat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heating</td>
<td>Gail</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. head
2. heads
3. is
4. sad
5. glad
6. sade
7. sag
8. sags
9. hed
10. ten
11. tag
12. seat
13. seating
14. Gail

**Must have at least 3 letters**

- is
- sad
- glad
- sade
- tag
- heat
- heating
- Gail

**No such word exists**

- No such word exists

**There's only one “s” in the set.**

- No such word exists

**There's no “n” in the set of letters.**

- This is a name which is a proper noun.

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**Seek & Spell Challenge**

Cut the letters apart, and use them to make words. Write words having 3 or more letters on the lines below. Can you find the mystery word that uses ALL of the letters? If you do, write it on the back of this paper.

1. ____________________
2. ____________________
3. ____________________
4. ____________________
5. ____________________
6. ____________________
7. ____________________
8. ____________________
9. ____________________
10. ____________________
11. ____________________
12. ____________________
13. ____________________
14. ____________________
15. ____________________
16. ____________________
17. ____________________
18. ____________________
19. ____________________
20. ____________________

12 Mystery Word Letters:  a  a  d  e  g  i  n  p  p  r  s
Which words below can be made from the letters in "disappearing"?

- grin  ✔ 
- grins  ✔
- is  ❌
- sad  ✔
- rain  ✔
- raining  ❌
- raise  ✔
- raised  ✔
- raises  ❌
- gen  ❌
- pear  ✔
- dair  ❌
- spine  ✔
- reason  ❌

Must have at least 3 letters.

There's only one "r" in the set.

There's only one "s" in the set.

Not a whole word, sometimes used as an abbreviation (Gen. for General)

No such word exists, incorrect spelling of dare

There's no "o" in the set of letters.
Seek & Spell Challenge

Cut the letters apart, and use them to make words. Write words having 3 or more letters on the lines below, and be sure to spell them correctly. Proper nouns may not be included. Can you find the mystery word that uses ALL the letters? If you do, write it on the back of this paper.

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10. 

Seek & Spell Challenge

Cut the letters apart, and use them to make words. Write words having 3 or more letters on the lines below. Be sure to spell the words correctly. Proper nouns may not be included. Can you find the mystery word that uses ALL the letters? If you do, write it on the back of this paper, but don’t tell anyone what it is!

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10. 
11. 
12. 
13. 
14. 
15. 

Seek & Spell Challenge

Cut the letters apart, and use them to make words. Write words having 3 or more letters on the lines below. Can you find the mystery word that uses ALL the letters? If you do, write it on the back of this paper.

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10. 

Seek & Spell Challenge

Cut the letters apart, and use them to make words. Write words having 3 or more letters on the lines below, and be sure to spell them correctly. Proper nouns may not be included. Can you find the mystery word that uses ALL of the letters? If you do, write it on the back of this paper, and don’t tell anyone what it is!

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8. 
9. 
10. 
11. 
12.
Second Grade

L.2.2.D Generalize learned spelling patterns when writing words.
L.2.2.E Consult reference materials, including beginning dictionaries, as needed to check and correct spellings.
RF.2.3 Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.
RF.2.3.A Distinguish long and short vowels when reading regularly spelled one-syllable words.
RF.2.3.B Know spelling-sound correspondences for additional common vowel teams.
RF.2.3.C Decode regularly spelled two-syllable words with long vowels.
RF.2.3.D Decode words with common prefixes and suffixes.
RF.2.3.E Identify words with inconsistent but common spelling-sound correspondences.
RF.2.3.F Recognize and read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words.

Third Grade

L.3.2.E Use conventional spelling for high-frequency and other studied words and for adding suffixes to base words (e.g., sitting, smiled, cries, happiness).
L.3.2.F Use spelling patterns and generalizations (e.g., word families, position-based spellings, syllable patterns, ending rules, meaningful word parts) in writing words.
L.3.2.G Consult reference materials, including beginning dictionaries, as needed to check and correct spellings.
RF.3.3 Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.
RF.3.3.A Identify and know the meaning of the most common prefixes and derivational suffixes.
RF.3.3.B Decode words with common Latin suffixes.
RF.3.3.C Decode multi-syllable words.
RF.3.3.D Read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words.

Fourth Grade

L.4.2.D Spell grade-appropriate words correctly, consulting references as needed.
RF.4.3 Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.
RF.4.3.A Use combined knowledge of all letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and morphology (e.g., roots and affixes) to read accurately unfamiliar multisyllabic words in context and out of context.

Fifth Grade

L.5.2.E Spell grade-appropriate words correctly, consulting references as needed.
RF.5.3 Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.
RF.5.3.A Use combined knowledge of all letter-sound correspondences, syllabication patterns, and morphology (e.g., roots and affixes) to read accurately unfamiliar multisyllabic words in context and out of context.

Seek & Spell Challenge

Set 1

12 Mystery Words

Word #     Word Date Used Page #
1 cartwheel 3-5
2 skateboard 6-8
3 misleading 9-11
4 brainteaser 12-14
5 repainting 15-17
6 thunderstorm 18-20
7 delightful 21-23
8 watermelon 24-26
9 matchboxes 27-29
10 graduation 30-32
11 supermarket 33-35
12 measurement 36-38

Mystery Word Letters: aceehlirtw

Can you find the mystery word that uses all the letters? If you do, write it on the back of this paper, and don’t tell anyone what it is!
1. **Seek & Spell Challenge**

Cut the letters apart, and use them to make words. Write words having 3 or more letters on the lines below, and be sure to spell them correctly. Proper nouns may not be included. Can you find the mystery word that uses ALL of the letters? If you do, write it on the back of this paper, and don’t tell anyone what it is!

1. ___________________
2. ___________________
3. ___________________
4. ___________________
5. ___________________
6. ___________________
7. ___________________
8. ___________________
9. ___________________

9 Mystery Word Letters: aceehlrtw

? a c e e h l r t w

2. **Seek & Spell Challenge**

Cut the letters apart, and use them to make words. Write words having 3 or more letters on the lines below, and be sure to spell them correctly. Proper nouns may not be included. Can you find the mystery word that uses ALL of the letters? If you do, write it on the back of this paper, and don’t tell anyone what it is!

1. ___________________
2. ___________________
3. ___________________
4. ___________________
5. ___________________
6. ___________________
7. ___________________
8. ___________________
9. ___________________
10. ___________________

10 Mystery Word Letters: abdekorst

? a a b d e k o r s t

3. **Seek & Spell Challenge**

Cut the letters apart, and use them to make words. Write words having 3 or more letters on the lines below, and be sure to spell them correctly. Proper nouns may not be included. Can you find the mystery word that uses ALL of the letters? If you do, write it on the back of this paper, and don’t tell anyone what it is!

1. ___________________
2. ___________________
3. ___________________
4. ___________________
5. ___________________
6. ___________________
7. ___________________
8. ___________________
9. ___________________
10. ___________________

10 Mystery Word Letters: abdekorst

? a a b d e k o r s t

4. **Seek & Spell Challenge**

Cut the letters apart, and use them to make words. Write words having 3 or more letters on the lines below, and be sure to spell them correctly. Proper nouns may not be included. Can you find the mystery word that uses ALL of the letters? If you do, write it on the back of this paper, and don’t tell anyone what it is!

1. ___________________
2. ___________________
3. ___________________
4. ___________________
5. ___________________
6. ___________________
7. ___________________
8. ___________________
9. ___________________
10. ___________________

10 Mystery Word Letters: abdekorst

? a a b d e k o r s t

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Cut the letters apart, and use them to make words. Write words having 3 or more letters on the lines below, and be sure to spell them correctly. Proper nouns may not be included. Can you find the mystery word that uses ALL the letters? If you do, write it on the back of this paper, and don’t tell anyone what it is!
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Cut the letters apart, and use them to make words. Write words having 3 or more letters on the lines below, and be sure to spell them correctly. Proper nouns may not be included.

1. _______________________
2. _______________________
3. _______________________
4. _______________________
5. _______________________
6. _______________________
7. _______________________
8. _______________________
9. _______________________
10. _______________________
11. _______________________

11. Mystery Word Letters: a a b e e i n r r s t

12. _______________________
13. _______________________
14. _______________________
15. _______________________
16. _______________________
17. _______________________
18. _______________________
19. _______________________
20. _______________________

12. Mystery Word Letters: a a b e e i n r r s t

9. Mystery Word Letters: a e g i i n n n p r

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Cut the letters apart, and use them to make words. Write words having 3 or more letters on the lines below, and be sure to spell them correctly. Proper nouns may not be included. Can you find the mystery word that uses ALL of the letters? If you do, write it on the back of this paper, and don’t tell anyone what it is!

Mystery Word Letters: a e g i i n n p r

Cut the letters apart, and use them to make words. Write words having 3 or more letters on the lines below, and be sure to spell them correctly. Proper nouns may not be included. Can you find the mystery word that uses ALL of the letters? If you do, write it on the back of this paper, and don’t tell anyone what it is!

Mystery Word Letters: d e h m n o r r s t t u
Cut the letters apart, and use them to make words. Write words having 3 or more letters on the lines below, and be sure to spell them correctly. Proper nouns may not be included. Can you find the mystery word that uses ALL of the letters? If you do, write it on the back of this paper, and don’t tell anyone what it is!
Cut the letters apart, and use them to make words. Write words having 3 or more letters on the lines below, and be sure to spell them correctly. Proper nouns may not be included.

Can you find the mystery word that uses ALL of the letters? If you do, write it on the back of this paper, and don’t tell anyone what it is!

1. ____________________________
2. ____________________________
3. ____________________________
4. ____________________________
5. ____________________________
6. ____________________________
7. ____________________________
8. ____________________________
9. ____________________________
10. ____________________________

10 Mystery Word Letters: a e e l m n o r t w
Cut the letters apart, and use them to make words. Write words having 3 or more letters on the lines below, and be sure to spell them correctly. Proper nouns may not be included. Can you find the mystery word that uses ALL of the letters? If you do, write it on the back of this paper, and don’t tell anyone what it is!

1. ___________________________
2. ___________________________
3. ___________________________
4. ___________________________
5. ___________________________
6. ___________________________
7. ___________________________
8. ___________________________
9. ___________________________
10. ___________________________

10 Mystery Word Letters: a b c e h m o s t x
Cut the letters apart, and use them to make words. Write words having 3 or more letters on the lines below, and be sure to spell them correctly. Proper nouns may not be included. Can you find the mystery word that uses ALL the letters? If you do, write it on the back of this paper, and don’t tell anyone what it is!
Cut the letters apart, and use them to make words. Write words having 3 or more letters on the lines below, and be sure to spell them correctly. Proper nouns may not be included. Can you find the mystery word that uses all the letters? If you do, write it on the back of this paper, and don't tell anyone what it is!

11. Mystery Word Letters: a e e e m m n r s t u

Name _______________________ Date ______________________