



QUAIL MAIL

Teacher Manual

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Goals/Objectives

English Language Arts Standard

Students will build vocabulary skills by sorting words into different categories, such as conceptual, semantic, and grammatical.

Language/ Reading Skills

Students will...

- use the language needed for success in school, including general academic words (which appear frequently in print, but rarely in social conversations), discipline-specific terms, and multiple meaning words (academic language)
- understand the structural features of the English language, including syntactic features like word order and parts of speech, and morphological features like prefixes, suffixes, plurals, and subject-verb agreement (English grammar)
- relate speech sounds to specific letters (phonics) and apply knowledge of letter-sound relationships to the process of identifying words (decoding)
- clarify the meaning of unknown words using strategies such as morphemic and contextual analysis (word learning strategies)
- recognize and apply knowledge of words and word parts such as morphemes and phonemes (word structure & knowledge)

Cognitive Skills

Students will...

- hold a spoken word in working memory while forming associations between picture, spoken word, and written word, and recalling semantic information to categorize the word (memory)
- focus on specific information about words, sustain that focus, and ignore distractions while carrying out a categorization task (attention)
- rapidly interpret and integrate auditory and visual information to identify words (processing)

Social-Emotional/ Executive Function Skills

Students will...

- increase metacognitive word categorization skills
- enhance sustained attention
- increase confidence in semantic decision tasks
- enhance motivation for conceptual vocabulary tasks
- increase self-regulation

Icon Key



Audio



Download



English Learner



Quick Check



Settings



Video

Exercise Screen



1 Menu

Shows:

- Time Spent / Time Scheduled for the exercise.
- Network connection status.
- Exit: Returns student to the Assignments screen.
- Continue: Returns student to the exercise.

2 Time

Bar fills in from left to right to show time spent in the exercise.

3 Progress Meter

Tracks and celebrates every 10% of exercise content completion.

4 Current Streak (Stamps)

Stamps appear to show the number of current consecutive correct answers. Resets after 3 correct in a row or an incorrect answer.

5 Number of Streaks (Acorns and Oaks)

An acorn drops into the launcher after a 3-in-a-row streak. After the next 3-in-a-row streaks, the acorn is launched to the hills beyond. The pile of acorns disappears and an oak tree grows after the student makes fourteen 3-in-a-row streaks in the session.

6 Answer Buttons (Mailboxes)

Presents possible answers. The student must choose the mailbox that shows the correct answer.

7 Points

Shows total points awarded across all of a day's sessions.

- Correct answers: 4 points for each correct answer.
- Bonus points: 10 points after 13 correct answers.
- High score: Animates when the student surpasses the highest score ever achieved in one session.

8 Go Button

Presents a question (picture or word). The student can click Go as many times as needed to hear the question again.

9 Help (Speaker)

Presents the category description again.

Exercise Overview

Task

In this exercise, the student sorts groups of words into semantic and linguistic categories that are represented by mailboxes. First, Quail Mail presents a set of mailboxes and introduces the sorting rules. For example, the rule for one bag might be: a kind of shoe. Next, the exercise presents a series of words to be sorted into the mailboxes. The student must click the correct mailbox to sort the word into the proper category.

Quail Mail introduces the sorting task with some basic categories, such as “dog” and “chair,” and the student sorts pictures instead of words. For the rest of the exercise, the student sorts written words that are also presented aloud.

The visual presentation and number of categories varies in the following ways:

- Pictures, Written Words: The student sees a written word with a picture that represents it.
- Written Words: The student see a written word only.
- Number of categories: The student sorts words into 2 categories, then into 4 categories.

Speed (Fluency) Round

Periodically, Quail Mail presents a speed round, which gives the student an opportunity to review the material at a faster pace and earn extra points. The student performs the same tasks as before, but faster; they only have a few seconds to sort each word. The round automatically ends after one minute and returns the student to the regular exercise. By requiring students to respond more rapidly while maintaining high accuracy, Quail Mail increases the attention and memory demands of the task.

Did you know?

Word sort activities enable students to form hypotheses and make generalizations about word meanings. The closed categorical vocabulary sorting activities in Quail Mail help students link new words to familiar ones they already know. In addition, students actively engage in searching, comparing, contrasting, and analyzing word meaning. Quail Mail enhances rapid word recognition and builds executive function organizational skills and cognitive flexibility as students form generalizations that they can later apply to new words they encounter in their reading.

Content

In Quail Mail, students progress through increasingly difficult content. For each type of content, supportive scaffolds (such as representing the words with pictures) are gradually withdrawn, increasing the attention and memory demands of the task as the student demonstrates mastery of the content.

	Presentation	Simple Categories & Words
Basic Categories	Pictures	<i>A kind of shoe</i> (pictured: boot, sneaker, sandal, pump)
	Written Words	
Superordinate Categories	Pictures, Written Words	<i>A kind of animal, like a lion</i> cat, lizard, mouse, rabbit
	Written Words	
Thematic Categories	Pictures, Written Words	<i>Things that belong on clothing, like a buckle</i> zipper, button, snap, laces
	Written Words	
Descriptive Categories: Functions	Pictures, Written Words	<i>Things you can use for cleaning, like a brush</i> broom, mop, soap, bucket
	Written Words	
Descriptive Categories: Features	Pictures, Written Words	<i>Clothes to wear in cold weather, like a coat</i> boots, hat, mittens, earmuffs
	Written Words	
Linguistic Categories: Syntax & Morphology	Pictures, Written Words	<i>Where is it?</i> beach, house, city, park
	Words	

Facilitate and Encourage

Introduce

Engage

To introduce this exercise to your students, start by saying: Today, we are going to practice sorting words and pictures into categories. Sorting can help us better understand how things are similar and how they are different. Before you practice sorting by yourself, we will practice together. Provide the students a copy of the Quail Mail Sorting Worksheet in [Student & Teacher Resources](#). The categories for this example are eyeglasses, hat, and boots. As you are working through this activity, place the word/picture in the correct category as the students say it.

1. Show the students a picture of eyeglasses. Say: *What category does this picture belong to? That's correct. This picture is a type of eyeglasses.*
2. Present a picture of a hat. Say: *What category does this belong to? Amazing effort! This is a picture of a type of hat.*
3. Present a picture of a pair of boots.

Say: *What category does this belong to? Excellent thinking! This is a picture of a type of boot. Now, you will practice sorting the rest of the words and pictures.* Prior to transitioning to student practice, determine if they will be practicing individually or in small groups.

Demo

1. Say: *Today, we're going to practice sorting pictures and words into categories. Together, we'll work on an exercise called Quail Mail. I'll get us started, and then I'd like for you to try.*
2. Project the "Introduction - English or Spanish" demo for Quail Mail.
3. Follow along with the demo, which explains how the exercise works.
4. Demo the keyboard shortcuts:
 - Go button = Space bar
 - Possible answers (top to bottom) = Number keys 1 - 4

Notes

Speed (Fluency) Round Demo - Say: *When the Go button turns into a timer, the speed round begins. Work on the exercise as before, but faster. Remember that you need to respond as quickly as possible, without making mistakes, to earn the most points.*

Direct students to log in and work individually on the Quail Mail Demo for approximately 10 minutes. This time period mimics the timing of the exercise once it's assigned. Debrief with students to ensure they understand the task and objective of the exercise. Ask: *What did you notice?* Have students share anything that they have questions about.



Quail Mail includes instructional audio for the exercise introduction and instructions. By default, these are presented in English. You can, however, select Spanish instructions for all, some, or individual students on the Manage page in mySciLEARN.

Facilitate and Encourage

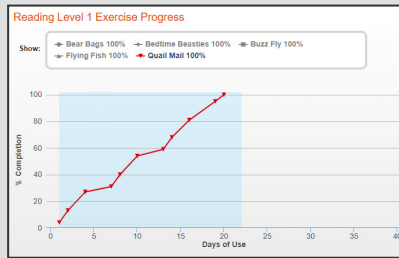
Monitor Student Progress

Review Quail Mail reports regularly to monitor student progress. Use the data to determine which students are succeeding and which students might be struggling to make progress.

Where to look...

PROGRESS: Reading Readiness Exercise Progress - Quail Mail

The colored line shows student progress and their percent complete. Each dot indicates a day the student worked on the exercise.



What to look for... what it means

Is the line going up?

The student is completing content accurately and making progress.

Is the line flat across several dots?

The student may be struggling and you need to find out why.

Are there long lapses between dots?

The student may be skipping this exercise.

USAGE: Usage Details - Schedule

Schedule		Minutes/Questions		Start Time		Total Minutes	
Days of Use	Date	Bear Bags	Bedtime Beastics	Buzz Fly	Flying Fish	Quail Mail	
22	04/06/2021						
21	04/05/2021	●					
20	04/01/2021	●					
19	03/30/2021	●					
18	03/29/2021	●					
17	03/26/2021	●					

Schedule

See if the student has met their daily schedule, and check what's planned for the next few days:

- Time completed
- Time not completed
- Exercise Skipped
- Planned for day

Do you see half-filled gray circles?

The student is working on this exercise, but not meeting the scheduled time. Make sure that they have time to complete their daily schedule. If fatigue is an issue, add some breaks to their schedule.

Do you see red circles?

The student is skipping this exercise. Provide support to help them re-engage.

USAGE: Usage Details - Minutes/Questions

Schedule		Minutes/Questions		Start Time		Total Minutes					
Days of Use	Date	Bear Bags	Bedtime Beastics	Buzz Fly	Flying Fish	Quail Mail					
		Min	Ques	Min	Ques	Min	Ques				
22	04/06/2021	-	-	-	-	30	33	-	-		
21	04/05/2021	15	111	-	-	-	15	65	-		
20	04/01/2021	-	-	-	-	-	15	75	15	34	
19	03/30/2021	-	-	-	-	-	15	69	15	124	
18	03/29/2021	15	130	-	-	15	19	-	-	-	
17	03/26/2021	9	88	-	-	10	22	11	46	-	
16	03/25/2021	-	-	-	-	15	29	-	-	15	156
15	03/22/2021	15	136	-	-	-	-	15	64	-	-
14	03/18/2021	-	-	-	-	11	24	11	41	8	84
13	03/16/2021	-	-	10	2	-	-	10	28	10	76

Are many days highlighted in red?

The student is not meeting their daily schedule. Check the Schedule tab in this report to investigate further.

Is the student answering fewer questions than usual?

They may be distracted or losing focus. In comparison to their previous activity, a low number of questions to minutes may indicate the student is not applying themselves to the task.

Is the student answering more questions than usual?

They may be rushing. In comparison to their previous activity, a high number of questions to minutes may indicate that the student is trying to amass points or progress through the content without actually learning it. Remind them that making progress depends on accuracy, not speed.

Facilitate and Encourage

Where to look...

PROGRESS: Progress Details - Quail Mail

Category	Progress Status	Percentage	Questions
Basic Categories			
Pictures	Complete, advancement criteria met	100%	84
Superordinate Categories			
Pictures, Written Words	Complete, advancement criteria met	91%	144
Written Words	Complete, advancement criteria met	93%	64
Thematic Categories			
Pictures, Written Words	Complete, advancement criteria met	94%	112
Written Words	Complete, advancement criteria met	93%	64

Percent Correct

Each category includes 32 words to sort. After a warm-up activity where students sort 8 pictures without mistakes, students sort all of the words 2 ways—first as a picture, then as a written word. To make progress, the student must get the following percent correct scores for a task:

- Pictures (warm up): 100%
- Pictures, Written Words: 90%
- Written Words: 90%

Questions

The typical number of questions varies based on the category and task:

Basic Categories

- Pictures: 84-92

Superordinate Categories

- Pictures, Written Words: 80-144
- Written Words: 64-128

Thematic Categories

- Pictures, Written Words: 80-152
- Written Words: 64-128

Descriptive Categories: Functions

- Pictures, Written Words: 80-136
- Written Words: 64-160

Descriptive Categories: Features

- Pictures, Written Words: 80-120
- Written Words: 64-128

Linguistic Categories: Syntax & Morphology

- Pictures, Written Words: 80-184
- Written Words: 64-128

What to look for... what it means

Are there red bars under Progress?

If a student doesn't answer enough questions correctly, they will repeat the task. Red bars indicate that the student was unable to pass a task after 3 attempts, and will revisit that content after some practice. Make sure that the student remains focused and motivated.

Is percent correct well below 90%?

The student may be struggling. See the "Adjust Instruction/Intervene" section in this teacher manual for suggestions on supporting struggling students.

When a task is repeated, does the number of questions decrease?

The student has mastered some categories and is making progress. Provide positive feedback as needed and make sure the student remains motivated.

When a task is repeated, does the number of questions stay the same?

The student has not mastered additional categories. If their percent correct increases, they are learning from their mistakes and may simply need more practice. Remind them to listen to and observe the corrective feedback to better understand why their answer was wrong before moving on to the next question.

Has the student taken too many questions without passing?

Typically, students answer 80-150 questions to complete a Pictures, Written Words task and 64-128 questions to complete a Written Words task. If the student needs to repeat a task (red bars), or the student has answered more than the typical number of questions, the student may be struggling. See the "Adjust Instruction/Intervene" section in this teacher manual for suggestions on supporting struggling students.



Reading Level 1 Progress Monitoring Chart in [Student & Teacher Resources](#)

Adjust Instruction/Intervene

Differentiation Activities

Differentiating instruction requires continually striving to know and to respond to each student's needs in order to maximize learning. Use the data in Quail Mail reports to adjust instruction to meet each student's needs and respond to variance among learners. The activities below are suggestions to support students who might be struggling with their progress in Quail Mail.



Does the student understand the exercise goal/task?

After initially reviewing the exercise goal/task with the student, if the student is demonstrating difficulty, consider clarifying the instructions, setting a goal based on student area of need, and modeling and practicing self-monitoring to encourage accuracy, confidence, and independence.

- First, start by setting a clear goal:
 - Set a goal in student-friendly language prior to beginning the exercise. The goal should be positively stated, written using clear and concise language, and be observable and measurable.
 - Review the goal with the student and check for understanding.
- Next, introduce and model how the student will monitor their goal:
 - Choose or create a self-monitoring chart for students to track their progress (aligned with the Reading Level 1 Progress Monitoring Chart found in Teacher Resources). Use the chart to motivate, encourage, and allow the student to practice self-monitoring. Include the goal on the self-monitoring chart.
 - Explain and model the steps needed to complete and interpret the self-monitoring chart.
 - Practice completing and interpreting the self-monitoring chart with the student.
- Then, clarify the expectations by modeling and reviewing the specific steps required to complete the exercise:
 - Review the steps of the activity with the student.
 - Model or explain the steps of the activity.
 - Practice completion of the task with the student.
 - Encourage the student to explain or show you how to complete the task.
 - Monitor independent practice and provide feedback and prompts as needed.

Facilitate and Encourage



Is the student on task and engaged with the activity?

When a student is struggling to stay on-task and engaged, consider the strategies below as a starting point to increasing student engagement.

- Adjust the pacing or duration of instruction.
- Provide built-in breaks as well as allow the student to request breaks as needed. Involve the student in determining their preferred and most successful work schedule. Some students prefer longer work periods and longer breaks while others prefer shorter work periods and more frequent breaks. Adjust as needed to increase student momentum, success, and confidence.
- Consider student motivation. Motivation can be intrinsic and extrinsic. How to motivate the student is largely dependent on their learning needs, preferences, and reinforcers. Student observation, reinforcer surveys, rapport building, and parent and student questionnaires can be helpful in determining how to increase student motivation.



Are there words in the task (prompt and response) that the student doesn't know?

- Define and review key vocabulary used in the task.
- Display key vocabulary words and definitions.
- Promote student practice with vocabulary sentence strips, guided notes, response cards, or note cards.



Does the student struggle with sorting by category?

Practice sorting based on different kinds of categories using the Quail Mail Sorting Worksheet in [Student & Teacher Resources](#). You can use the Quail Mail reports to prioritize the areas that the student needs most help with. Below are some examples to get you started.

- Basic: Sort pictures of... frogs / butterflies / cats
- Superordinate: Sort a kind of... clothing / food / furniture
- Function: Sort things you can use for... writing / lunch / gym class
- Thematic: Sort things you can find in the... kitchen / classroom / playground
- Descriptive: Functions: Sort things that you can... clean with / write with / eat with
- Descriptive: Features: Sort things that are... fuzzy / smooth / rough
- Syntax/Morphology: Sort words for... actions (verbs) / objects (nouns)

Facilitate and Encourage



Does the student require development with vocabulary acquisition?

- Provide exposure to vocabulary words by creating a word wall that is updated based on the content being taught.
- Facilitate multiple opportunities to read and sort high frequency sight words and words at the student's instructional and independent learning level.
- Build in practice with vocabulary words related to the content being taught.
- Pair pictures with vocabulary words if the student is struggling to read/identify the written or textual version of the word.



Does the student need support with syntax/morphology?

- Utilize sentence starters and guided writing prompts to assist the student with sentence structure and development.
- Encourage multiple opportunities to practice vocabulary words in isolation and in-context.
 - Isolation: The student directly practices words in a reading or sorting activity. Notecards, sorting worksheets, and response cards are strategies that support targeted practice.
 - In-context: Develop a classroom library that is rich in a wide variety of high interest text based on the students' learning levels.

Facilitate and Encourage

Adjust Instruction/Intervene

Student Resources

You may decide to use the following monitoring sheet with your students:



Quail Mail Sorting Worksheet in [Student & Teacher Resources](#)

Use this worksheet to introduce the activity to your students, or provide extra practice. Students will need one copy.



Reading Level 1 Completion Chart in [Student & Teacher Resources](#)

Students can self-monitor their progress in each Reading Level 1 exercise by filling in the bar each day with their actual completed percentage. This provides students with an overall view of how much content they've completed compared to how much they have left to do. Students will need one copy.