

Activity

7

## Playing with Words

### Underlying Concept/Standard:

Understanding that sentences are made up of words and that words are units in our language; distinguishing letters from words

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN

This activity is extra easy if you have building blocks, Duplo Blocks, or Legos in your room. Don't have any? Turn small, empty boxes (from vitamin bottles, individual cereal servings, spices, paper clips) into homemade blocks. If you make your own blocks, use leftover scraps of wrapping paper or stickers to decorate them. Your students and families can help you with that from home or during a special evening or afternoon event.

Why play with blocks to learn about words? Combining physical and mental activity is the best way to learn at this age. Your child can practice phonological awareness skills and counting at the same time.

### NOW LET'S PLAY

Say a short sentence, such as "I like milk." (Begin with all short, single-syllable words.) Show your students how to move a block from one spot to another each time you say a word. At the same time, hand and arm muscles are growing strong for writing.

Let them try (in whole groups, everyone has something to build with on their desks; in small groups or individually, you can do this in the block/building center or at a small table). If students have trouble, separate out the individual words with more of a pause between each. Say "I," have them move the block, then go on to "like," let them move the block, and finally "milk," with the last block moved at that time. Talk with them about what they should do to play this game.

Let students count the number of blocks they moved (they can write the number if they are able). Then ask them how many *words* they heard. If a child doesn't know, let her count the blocks again while you say each word in the sentence. Quickly say the sentence and ask her to listen carefully. Pause and help her if she hesitates. Stick to simple, single-syllable-word sentences until your students get the idea.

### CHANGE IT UP

Later, you can change to multi-syllabic words and increase the length of sentences. For example, "I like spaghetti with meatballs" moves five blocks in this game.