

Words, such as **at**, in which each letter has its usual sound, are called phonic words.

We also find a number of words which are not pronounced as they are spelled; for example, the word **sleigh**, which is made up of three sounds; namely, the ordinary sounds of **s** and **l** and a third sound which is not the sound of **e**, **i**, **g**, nor **h**, but the sound of the alphabet name of **a**. Words such as **sleigh**, in which some letters do not have their usual sounds, are called non-phonic words.

b. Learning to read phonic words.

If we knew how to make the usual sounds of the printed letters **a** and **t**, and also knew how to unite these sounds to form new words, we should know how to read the word **at** if we came across it in reading a sentence, though we had never seen the word before. Similarly, if a child has been taught the sounds (not the **ABC** names) of the letters **a**, **t**, **m**, **s**, **p**, and has been taught how to put sounds together to make words, he will be able to read, at sight, any new word that is made up of these sounds, and can, therefore, read the words **at**, **mat**, **sat**, **pat**, **tam**, **tap**, **Sam**, **sap**, **map**, **mast**, **past**, **stamp**, **stamps**. Thus, by learning a few sounds, he is able to read many words, without any assistance from the teacher. The farther he goes the more rapidly his list of words increases; for example, by learning the sound of **i** (Lesson 17), he gains the power to read thirty new words.

The learning of the **ABC**'s, as taught long ago, did not give this power. For example, the child who puts the alphabet sounds of **a** and **t** together will not get the word **at** but the word **eighty**.

If the child happens to have learned the **ABC**'s, the knowledge will be a great advantage, later on, when he comes to spell words, but it is better, during the first twenty lessons, for both teacher and learner to *forget all about the alphabet names of the letters*, and confine the work entirely to easy phonic words and to the sounds that the letters really have in these words. The way to find out what sound a letter really has is simply to say a phonic word (which contains the letter) slowly and notice the sound made for the letter.