

RISE Arkansas

An informational newsletter exploring the Science of Reading in Arkansas

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Issue 26

Executive Function

In each RISE Newsletter, we use research and science to guide us as we inform parents about the most effective way to teach children to read. There are many skills involved when reading and we know that many of them have prerequisites that must be developed and practiced before a child can progress. For example, before reading multisyllabic words, a child must learn and become fluent in using each of the individual syllable types.

In the same manner, executive function skills are a crucial set of mental skills that children need before they can be good readers. These skills help us pay attention, plan, and stay organized. In this month's newsletter, we are going to provide information and resources for parents to explain more about these skills and how they can help their students acquire these skills to ensure students are ready to read!

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Not sure if your child has issues with executive functioning skills? Do they tend to . . .

- have trouble starting more complex tasks
- have a hard time staying on task
- have trouble organizing materials and keeping their room nice and tidy
- struggle to come up with alternate ways to solve a problem
- have trouble managing emotions
- have the inability to multitask
- have trouble paying attention or listening

If your child has trouble with any of these indicators, don't worry! We aren't born with these skills but almost everyone can learn them. Keep reading to find out more!

Executive function is the brain's air traffic controller, intercepting a tangle of thoughts and impulses and steering them toward safe, productive outcomes. Executive function allows children to improve their abilities to stay focused, plan ahead, regulate their emotions, and think flexibly and creatively. Read more on the Edutopia website.



Resources and tools

Students are not born with executive functioning skills but parents can teach strategies and give students tools to enhance these skills. Children start to develop executive functioning skills around the ages of 3-5 years and development continues until the mid 20's. Here are a few simple and fun ways parents can encourage students to focus their attention, use working memory, and practice basic self-control skills.

- Help children create and use a calendar
- Model how to make to-do lists and encourage them to make their own
- Play matching games and practice sorting activities
- Work puzzles
- Play card games that require quick decisions to be made
- Board games that require strategic responses to opponent's moves
- Cooking
- Read I Spy books
- Solve Crossword Puzzles



Want to learn more? This 16-page guide from The Center on the Developing Child describes a variety of activities and games that represent age-appropriate ways for adults to support and strengthen various components of Executive Functioning Skills in children.

More about Executive Functioning Skills

From The Center on the Developing Child

Executive function and self-regulation skills provide critical supports for learning and development. There are three basic dimensions of these skills:

- Working memory — The ability to hold information in mind and use it.
- Inhibitory control — The ability to master thoughts and impulses so as to resist temptations, distractions, and habits, and to pause and think before acting.
- Cognitive flexibility — The capacity to switch gears and adjust to changing demands, priorities, or perspectives.

It is easy to tell that storytelling is beneficial!

Not only do students enjoy hearing stories, but they also love telling them! Oral storytelling is a great way to have students strengthen their executive functioning skills. Here is an easy way to have students sharpen their memory and sequencing skills.

- Staple 3 sheets of paper together. Label the pages, "First," "Next," and "Last."
- Ask children to draw pictures and write about their day.
- Have children share their story with a family member.

Over time, encourage students to add more complex details and events to each story. Your child will be a storytelling master in no time!



Multisyllabic words

Reading is a code-based system, and readers are most successful when they are taught the code. Over the last few months, the RISE Newsletter has explored syllable types. Over the next few months, our focus turns to **multisyllabic words** or words with more than one syllable. We will offer tips and strategies to help your budding readers tackle these more challenging words!

As students progress through the grades, parents will notice a big difference in the words students are required to read. As a parent, it's essential to know how to help your child identify and tackle a word with more than one syllable. Last month we discussed the most common way to break down a VC/CV word. This month, we will figure out what to do if the most common way doesn't work!

Did you know every syllable has a vowel?

If a word has more than one vowel and the vowels are not beside each other, you know it is a multisyllabic word. Now, let's follow the steps we used in the last few months to figure out how to read the word.

- Find the vowels.
- Identify how many

s e c r e t

consonants are between the vowels. The word secret has two consonants between the vowels, so it has a VCCV pattern.

- The most common way to divide a VCCV pattern is between the consonants, so let's divide this word into two parts between the consonants c and r.

- Readers would then read each of these as closed syllables, meaning both vowels would make the short sound. Readers would quickly recognize that when combined, sec and ret, does not produce a real word. So, let's try and divide the word after the first vowel.

s e c r e t

- Readers can now see that the first syllable is an open syllable and the vowel would be read as a long vowel sound. The second syllable is a closed syllable and the vowel would be read as a short vowel sound.

s e c r e t

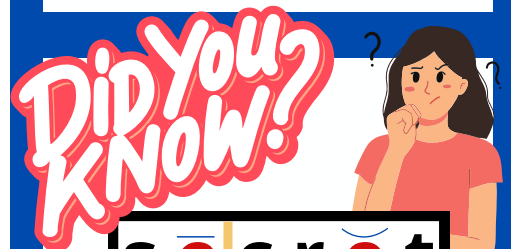
- When readers blend these two syllables, they will recognize the word secret!



It is not a

s e c r e t

Decoding
multisyllabic
words is easy if
you follow the
steps!



s e c r e t

Did you know the line
over a long vowel
sound is called a
macron?

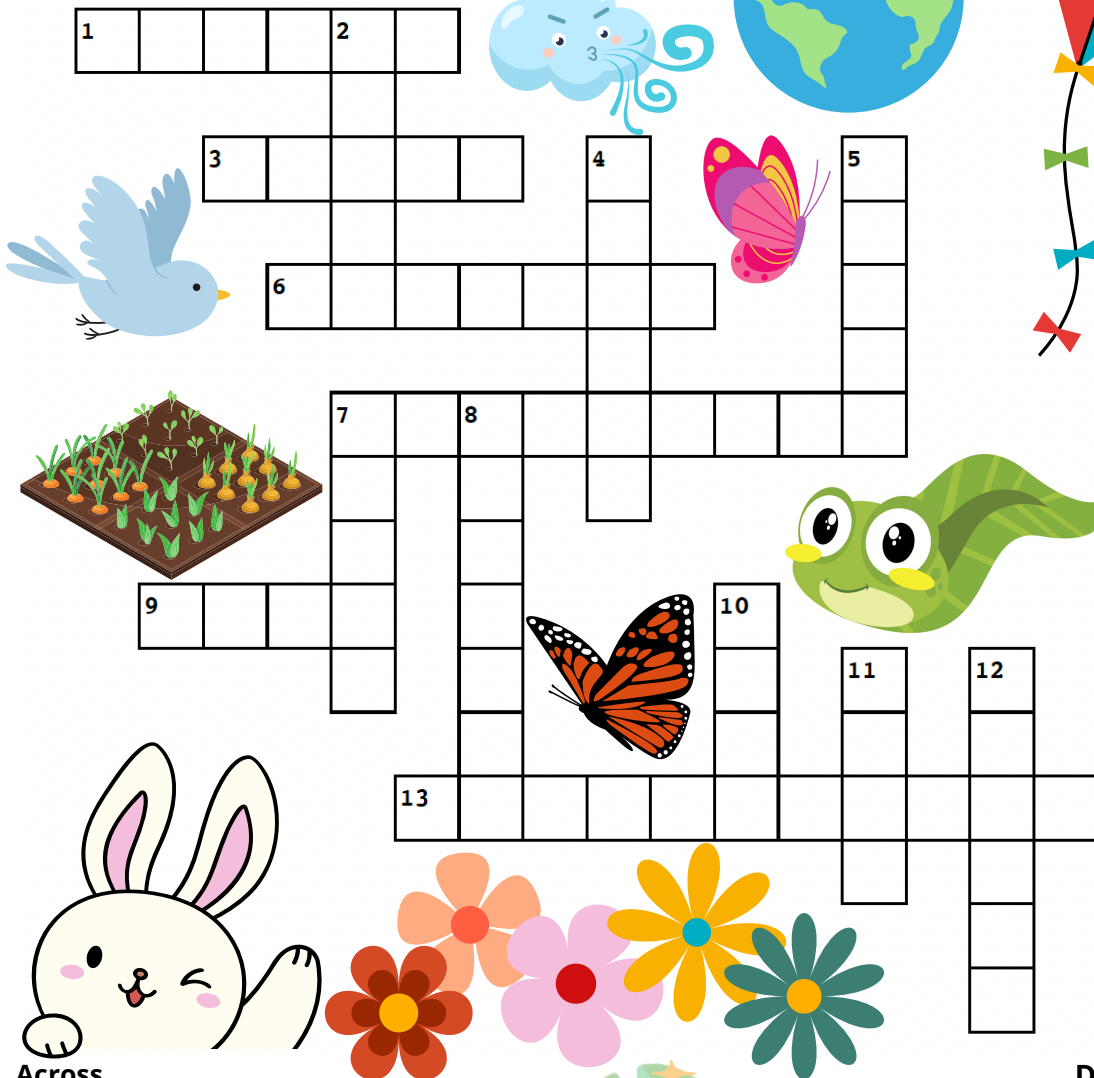
The curved line over a
short vowel is called a
breve.

Springtime Crossword Puzzle



Word Bank

flowers
storms
germination
kite
rain
bunny
Earth
April
garden
birds
wind
tadpole
vernal
butterfly



Across

1. another word that can be used to describe anything happening or appearing in the springtime, comes from the Latin word *vernus*, which means "pertaining to spring"
3. the planet on which we live; the world
6. the seed-bearing part of a plant, consisting of reproductive organs (stamens and carpels) that are typically surrounded by a brightly colored corolla (petals) and a green calyx (sepals)
7. a nectar-feeding insect with two pairs of large, typically brightly colored wings that are covered with microscopic scales
9. the perceptible natural movement of the air, especially in the form of a current of air blowing from a particular direction
13. the development of a plant from a seed or spore after a period of dormancy

Down

2. the fourth month of the year, in the northern hemisphere usually considered the second month of spring
4. a small piece of ground used to grow vegetables, fruit, herbs, or flowers
5. a rabbit, especially a young one
7. warm-blooded egg-laying vertebrates distinguished by the possession of feathers, wings, and a beak and (typically) by being able to fly
8. the tailed aquatic larva of an amphibian (frog, toad, newt, or salamander), breathing through gills and lacking legs until the later stages of its development
10. moisture condensed from the atmosphere that falls visibly in separate drops
11. a toy consisting of a light frame with thin material stretched over it, flown in the wind at the end of a long string
12. violent disturbances of the atmosphere with strong winds and usually rain, thunder, lightning, or snow