

Five-letter words: vocabulary, sound and probability

A ready-to-print 35-minute lesson with three activities, answer key and reproducible source notes. No login or live puzzle answer is required.

Learning objectives

- Match eight common five-letter words to sourced definitions.
- Group words by a shared final sound and compare spelling with pronunciation.
- Calculate and compare simple probabilities from a documented word pool.

Suggested timing

1. Vocabulary match — 8 minutes.
2. Rhyme and spelling — 10 minutes.
3. Letter probability — 12 minutes.
4. Review — 5 minutes.

Teacher script

“Today we are treating words as three things at once: meanings, sounds and data. A spelling can give us clues, but a corpus or dictionary describes a particular collection—not every speaker and not every situation.”

Access and adaptation

- Read definitions aloud or let pairs complete the matching task.
- Accept the words spoken in the class's accent; the supplied pronunciation evidence is a US-English dictionary reference, not a correctness test.
- Calculators are optional. Percentages can be rounded to one decimal place.
- Review the sheet for the needs and context of the particular class.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Vocabulary match

Write the letter of the best definition beside each word. Then use any two words in a sentence of your own.

1. **THINK:** _____
2. **HOUSE:** _____
3. **PLACE:** _____
4. **NIGHT:** _____
5. **RIVER:** _____
6. **MUSIC:** _____
7. **HEART:** _____
8. **DREAM:** _____

- A.** The time when the Sun is below the horizon when the sky is dark.
- B.** Any large flow of a liquid in a single body.
- C.** Any interesting or pleasing sounds.
- D.** A muscular organ that pumps blood through the body, traditionally thought to be the seat of emotion.
- E.** Imaginary events seen in the mind while sleeping.
- F.** To ponder, to go over in one's mind.
- G.** A structure built or serving as an abode of human beings.
- H.** An area; somewhere within an area.

My sentences

Definitions: Definitions adapted from Wiktionary contributors (CC BY-SA 4.0). Fixed pack v1; every word passed the site's classroom safety filter.

Name: _____ Date: _____

2. Same final sound, different beginnings

Sort the twelve words into three groups of four that rhyme. Underline the letters that spell the shared final sound. Then read each group aloud and note anything your accent changes.

TRAIN	BRAIN	GRAIN	DRAIN
HEART	START	SMART	CHART
LIGHT	NIGHT	RIGHT	MIGHT

Group 1

Group 2

Group 3

Think further: Does sharing a rhyme always mean sharing every final letter? What evidence would you need before making a rule?

Pronunciation reference: CMU Pronouncing Dictionary commit 74790861f652b15e4ac49015a90074ad62a27690. The activity invites comparison with local accents rather than grading them.

Name: _____ Date: _____

3. Letter probability

The table counts how many words contain each letter at least once in a fixed pool of 400 common, safety-filtered five-letter words. A repeated letter still counts as one word.

Letter	Words containing it	Probability as a fraction	Percentage
A	160	160/400	40.0%
E	212	212/400	53.0%
R	146	146/400	36.5%
S	152	152/400	38.0%
T	138	138/400	34.5%

1. Which listed letter is most likely to occur in a randomly selected pool word? _____
2. Which is least likely? _____
3. What is the difference between those two counts? Show your working.
4. If 20 words were sampled independently, about how many would you expect to contain the most common listed letter?
5. Why does adding all five percentages not tell us the percentage of words containing “any of these letters”?

Pool: the 400 most frequent safety-filtered words in the site's “Most common” band. Zipf frequency bands from the wordfreq project, measured over the site's accepted-guess list. This is a learning sample, not a prediction of future puzzle answers.

Answer key and source notes

Vocabulary

THINK–F, HOUSE–G, PLACE–H, NIGHT–A, RIVER–B, MUSIC–C, HEART–D, DREAM–E.

Rhyme groups

1. LIGHT, NIGHT, RIGHT, MIGHT — LYT, NYT, RYT, MYT
2. TRAIN, BRAIN, GRAIN, DRAIN — TRAYN, BRAYN, GRAYN, DRAYN
3. HEART, START, SMART, CHART — HAHRT, STAHRT, SMAHRT, CHAHRT

The friendly respellings are aids, not a new phonetic alphabet. Discuss any class-accent differences rather than marking them wrong.

Probability

1. E is highest: 212/400 (53.0%).
2. T is lowest: 138/400 (34.5%).
3. 74 words.
4. $20 \times 212/400 = 10.60$, so about 11 words.
5. A word can contain more than one listed letter, so the groups overlap.

Reuse and corrections

You may print, adapt and share the original lesson under CC BY 4.0 with credit to FiveLetterWords.io. Retain Wiktionary's CC BY-SA attribution when reusing definitions. Method questions and corrections: fiveletterwords.io/about.

Sources and method

- **Frequency:** wordfreq (Robyn Speer) 3.1.1, <https://github.com/rspeer/wordfreq>. Code is MIT; the frequency data used here is CC BY-SA 4.0. The pool is the 400 highest-scoring safety-filtered words above the site's "Most common" cutoff (Zipf 4.0).
- **Definitions:** English Wiktionary contributors, <https://en.wiktionary.org/>, CC BY-SA 4.0. Definitions are selected and lightly formatted; exact entry URLs are in the pack manifest.
- **Pronunciation:** CMU Pronouncing Dictionary commit 74790861f652b15e4ac49015a90074ad62a27690, <https://raw.githubusercontent.com/cmuspinx/cmudict/74790861f652b15e4ac49015a90074ad62a27690/cmudict.dict>, BSD-2-Clause. Primary US-English dictionary pronunciations guide the fixed rhyme groups; local accents remain valid classroom evidence.
- **Optional learner levels in the guide:** CEFR-J Vocabulary Profile (ver 1.5) via Open Language Profiles, <https://github.com/openlanguageprofiles/olp-en-cefrj>. The CEFR-J Wordlist Version 1.5. Compiled by Yukio Tono, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. Retrieved from <http://www.cefr-j.org/download.html> on 1/20/2020. CEFR-J does not select the fixed pack's activities.

Safety: Every word and definition pool excludes the site's checked-in sensitive-word blocklist; teachers should still review each sheet for their own class.