## Look, Touch, Say

I learned this quick and engaging routine during a LETRS training session. It’s a nifty way to review letter sounds, syllable types, spelling patterns, word definitions, and much more. Because it constantly cycles back to the basics of what you want to teach, it promotes mastery learning. It’s a short routine, only taking two to three minutes, so it makes for a good warm up prior to word building or word dictation activities, and it is an excellent way to review material. I’ve modified and adapted it over time so I can use it in a variety of situations and once you become familiar with it, I think you’ll find yourself doing the same.

In our first scenario, we’ll use Look Touch Say to teach common spelling patterns, and we’ll use manipulatives rather than a word list as our material for teaching. To start, decide on the patterns you want to teach and/or review: word chunks such as *ate, ain, eep*, etc., vowel teams (*ee, ai, oi*), r-controlled groupings (*or, ar, ir*), inflectional endings (*ing, er, ed*), and so on. Plastic tiles, magnetic tiles, foam blocks – anything will do. The materials I used with kindergarteners and third graders readers came from companies such as Step By Step Learning, Touchphonics, and Wilson Language, but you can, of course, make your own materials.

Let’s imagine it is November and you are teaching first grade. Let’s also imagine you have been using the 37 Most Common Phonograms chart mentioned earlier as your scope and sequence. Your lesson last week focused on short o families: *ock, op, ot*. This week your focus is the short U families: *ug, ump, unk*. To reinforce the spelling of the patterns, as well as to have students notice the differences in the sound and spelling of the patterns, you decide to do five minutes of Look Touch Say. Here is a routine for the activity.

Have the students place the patterns in a row on their desks. Pick a pattern, such as *ump*, and say, “Look for *ump*.” Follow that command with “Touch it.” At this point, the students should only be scanning for the word part and then touching it with their index finger. Monitor their touches and guide and correct anyone who has made an error. After two to five seconds, depending on the age and ability of your students, the number of manipulatives on their desks, and how much monitoring and correcting you are doing, give the command, “Say it!” At this point, the students should say the word part. After praising their attentiveness, go to the next pattern.

The routine is merely a repeated cycle of commands, which sounds like this:

**Teacher**: Look for *ock*. Touch it. [Pause] Say it.

**Students**: *Ock*!

**Teacher**: Look for *unk*. Touch it. [Pause] Say it.

**Students**: *Unk*!

**Teacher**: Look for *ump*. Touch it. [Pause] Say it.

**Students**: *Ump*!

The Look For and Touch It commands give children think time. As you scan the room, wait until every child as found the word. Only then say, “Say it!”

You can mix in the command “Spell it” to create a routine that sounds like this:

Teacher: Look for *ock*. Touch it. [Pause] Say it.

Students: *Ock*!

Teacher: Spell it.

Students: *O, c, k*!

Teacher: Look for *unk*. Touch it. [Pause] Say it.

Students: *Unk*!

Teacher: Spell it.

Students: *U, n, k*!

Another variation is Look, Touch, See, Say, Spell. In this variation, you incorporate the all-important strategy of seeing the word (or in this case the pattern) in your head. But be careful: this sequence might be too much for young students.

Teacher: Look for *ock*. Touch it. [Pause]

Teacher: See it. [Pause while students close their eyes]. Say it.

Students [Still with their eyes closed]: *Ock*!

Teacher: Spell it.

Students [Still with their eyes closed]: *O, c, k*!

You can also work in commands that are more open ended. For example, you might say, “Look for a pattern with the /u/ sound.” In this case, when you give the “Say it” command, some students might say *unk*, some might say *ug*, and some might say *ump*. This variation is not for teachers who like orderly responses, but it you’re okay with a bit of chaos, try it out.

I have found that students learn the Look Touch Say routine quickly. Soon they will be ready to mimic it back to you. When this is the case, ask for a volunteer to lead others using a word he or she has picked.

Let’s now consider doing Look Touch Say with a word list. First, pull a subset of words from your master list, print the subset as a list, and give the list to the large group or small group of students you are working with. It might look like Figure 6.6.

[Insert Figure 6.6]

Next, review the words by simply saying, “Look for *fruit*.” Quickly follow that with “Touch it” and after a pause, “Say it.” Next might be “Look for *nephew*.” “Touch it.” [Pause] “Say it.” This type of direct and explicit review, cycled over and over again, can be especially helpful to ESL students who need practice and repetition in seeing and saying words.

Next, move to noticing patterns. For example, you might say, “Look for a word with the *ing* pattern.” “Touch it.” “Say it!” Here all the children would say, “bruising.” But if you were to say, “Look for a word with the vowel-consonant-e pattern,” then different children would touch and say different words. You might follow up their response with “Very good! I heard some say *huge*, some say *flute*, and others say *suitcase*. Those are all correct. Each has the vowel-consonant-e pattern.”

Add a bit more by saying and asking the following: “Look at *huge* and *flute*. How are they alike? What long vowel sound is produced in those words? How is it spelled? Look at *suitcase*. Is that word similar to *huge* and *flute* in any way? How is it different? How many long vowel sounds are in that word? How are those sounds spelled?”

You can also think in terms of syllable types rather than patterns. For example, you might say, “I’m thinking of a word with an open syllable. Look.” After the students look over their spelling list, say, “Touch.” Students then touch a word with appropriate syllable, in this case *produce*. Or you might say, “Look for a word with a vowel-consonant-e syllable,” which leads to students pointing to and saying either *suitcase* or, more subtly, *produced*.

Finally, try bringing meaning into this routine. Start with a simple word definition routine, such as “Look for the word that means discolored skin that comes from an injury” (*bruise*) or “Look for a word that means the son of one’s brother or sister” (*nephew*). Next, move to something more conceptual in nature, such as inflectional endings. A command for an inflectional ending might be “Look for a word that happened in the past.” “Touch it.” [Pause] “Say it.” Here the students would respond, “*Produced*.” This might be followed with a quick review of the inflectional ending, its meaning, and the principle for spelling it. This might be something like, “What spelling ending tells us an action happened in the past?” After the children respond with “*ed*,” you might say, “And what is our rule for adding an ending like *ed* to word that already ends with e?” To this the students would respond, “Drop the e and add the ending.”