

## Word Ladders

This is a great activity to teach children letter sounds. The tutor begins by writing the names of five animals on a dry erase board or piece of paper:

*cat    hen    pig    fox    bug*

The tutor and learner say the words together, stretching out each word and talking about the beginning, middle and ending sounds. Particular attention is given to the middle sound—the vowel sound—in each word. Next, the tutor asks the learner,

*Can you change a hen into a fox?*

The tutor says that if the learner will follow her directions and think about the letters and sounds, they will be able to do this. The learner takes a sheet of paper and the tutor gives these directions:

“Write *hen*.” [The tutor points to the word *hen* on the dry erase board and the learner copies onto his or her paper]

“Now change the *hen* to *pen*.” [The tutor and learner decide they have to change the first letter from an *h* to a *p* and write *pen* under *hen*.]

“Now change your *pen* to *pet*.” [The learner decides to change the *n* into a *t* and writes *pet* under *pen*.]

“Can you change your *pet* to *pit*?” [The tutor helps the learner stretch out *pit* and decides it is the vowel he or she needs to change and this vowel has the same sound as *ig*.]

“Now change *pit* to *sit*.”

“Next change *sit* to *six*.”

“Then change *six* to *fix*.”

“Finally, change *fix* to *fox*.”

Here are seven other Word Ladders lessons:

pig	bug	pig	cat	fox	bug	cat
rig	dug	big	bat	box	hug	hat
rid	dig	wig	hat	bop	dug	rat
rib	pig	win	rat	top	dig	rag
rob	pin	fin	pat	mop	big	bag
Bob	pen	fit	pet	map	bag	big
box	ten	fat	pen	mat	bat	dig
fox	hen	cat	hen	cat	cat	pig

From Cunningham, P. M. (2005). *Phonics they use: Words for reading and writing*, (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.). New York: Allyn & Bacon.