

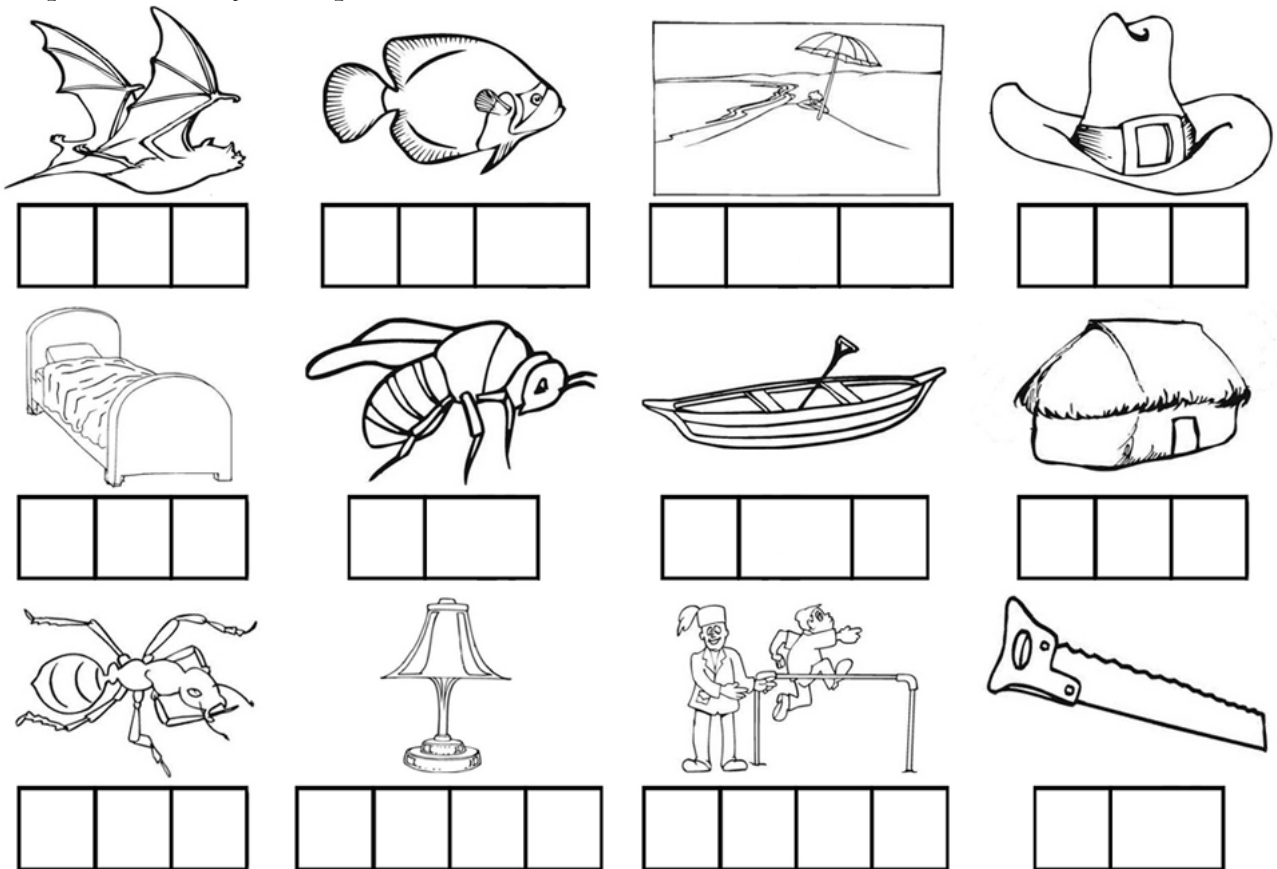
Elkonin Boxes

Pictured at right, Daniil El'konin (1904-84), a Marxist and Russian psychologist, studied youngsters (5-6 years old) and learned that teaching them to segment words into individual speech sounds was a useful strategy to improve student reading. The current emphasis on phonemic awareness finds its roots in the work that he and others like him conducted in the 1960's. Elkonin boxes in their various forms are named after El'konin, who pioneered their use.



El'konin's original boxes were squares drawn on a piece of paper, with one box for each phoneme. The student listened to a word and moved a token into a box for each phoneme in the word.

While El'konin's original boxes are valuable, a wide variety of spinoffs have been developed from his original concept as well. Some are used to segment a word into phonemes, but others have been used to segment syllables in longer words. Many in current use include a picture. Some instructors use tokens of two colors, one for consonants and the other for vowels. Louisa Moats has suggested that the boxes representing letter clusters (consonant digraphs or vowel teams) should be larger than the boxes that represent only one sound. Examples of this style are provided here:



Boggle's World (bogglesworldesl.com/elkonin_boxes.htm), an educational website designed for ESL students, has the Elkonin cards included on this page in addition to a number of others. Teachers can design their own using pictures they draw or find in magazines. Others are available for purchase.