

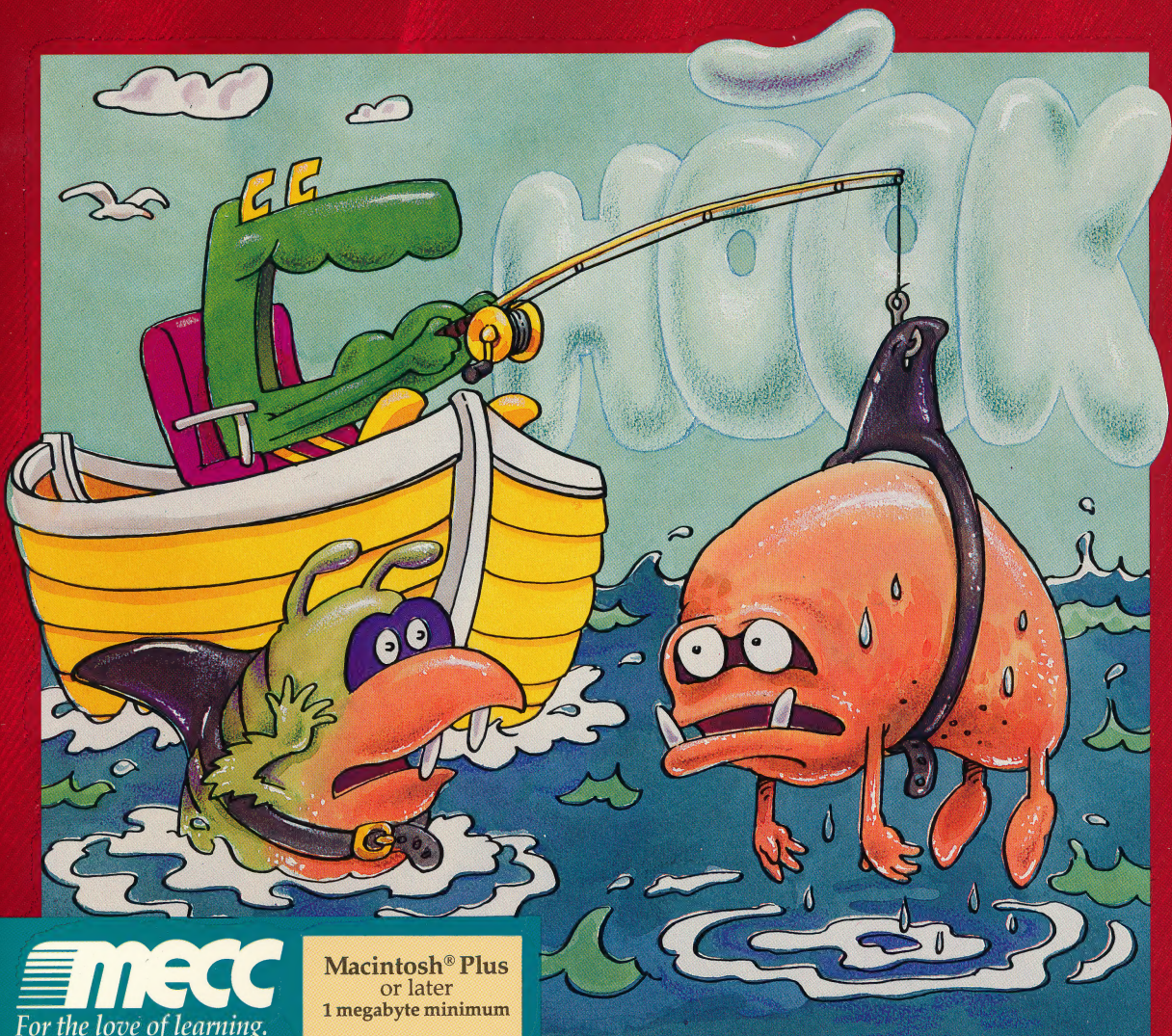


For the love of learning.



Word Munchers™

User's Guide



mecc
For the love of learning.

Macintosh® Plus
or later
1 megabyte minimum



Word Munchers User's Guide

Word Munchers[™]
Version 1.x

© MECC
3490 Lexington Avenue North
St. Paul, Minnesota 55126-8097

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Welcome to *Word Munchers*[™]

Word Munchers is an exciting, popular educational game designed to help children practice their skill at recognizing the vowel sounds in words. Players move a Word Muncher through a grid, instructing it to eat words containing a target vowel sound. To begin playing, simply follow these steps:

*A Quick
Start-up
Procedure for
People Who
Hate to Read
Manuals*

Step 1: *Word Munchers* has two disks—the Program Disk and the Color Disk. If you have two disk drives and are using a Macintosh® with color capabilities, insert both *Word Munchers* disks.

If you have just one disk drive or are using a Macintosh without color capabilities, insert the *Word Munchers* Program Disk.

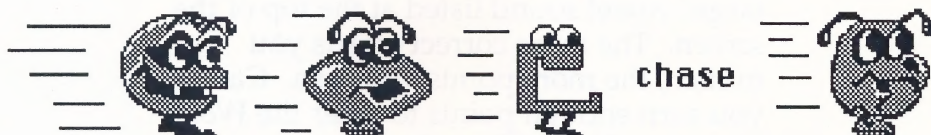
Step 2: Double-click on the *Word Munchers* icon when it appears in the Finder window.

Step 3: When the *Word Munchers* intro screen appears, click the “Play Munchers!” button in the lower-right corner of the screen or press either the Return or the Enter Key.

Step 4: You’re now ready to play the game. Here are the most important points and rules to keep in mind:

- The object of the game is to “munch” as many words as you can that contain the target vowel sound listed at the top of the screen. The more correct words you munch, the more points you earn. Can you earn enough points to enter the *Word Munchers* Hall of Fame?

- To move the Muncher, click in the cell you want it to move to.
- To eat the word in that cell, click in that cell a second time.
- You earn points every time you munch a correct word—that is, one that contains the target vowel sound listed at the top of the screen.
- If you munch an incorrect word, you lose a Muncher.
- You must avoid the Troggles when they appear. Troggles eat Munchers. If you run out of Munchers, the game ends.
- Once all the correct words have been eaten, the screen is cleared and another round of play begins.
- When you're ready to end the game, pull down the File menu and select either "End Game" or "Quit."
- You'll need to read the rest of this *User's Guide* if you want more detailed information about playing *Word Munchers* and "customizing" the game to meet your child's individual abilities and needs.



Millions of children across the country have enjoyed learning with the arcade-like game format of *Word Munchers*. Not only is *Word Munchers* a best-seller, but it's also a multiple award-winner, having received both the *Parents' Choice* Gold Award and *InCider Magazine's* People's Choice Award. MECC is now pleased to bring this educational game to the Macintosh computer.

Word Munchers is an exciting, challenging game that helps children Ages 6-12 (Grades 1-5) learn vowel sounds. Players move a Word Muncher through a grid, instructing it to eat words containing a target vowel sound. They earn points every time they munch a correct word. But if they munch an incorrect word, they lose a Muncher. Meanwhile, they must also avoid Troggles, who love to eat Munchers.

One of the best things about *Word Munchers* is its replayability. Children can play it again and again, literally thousands of times, without ever seeing the exact same game screen twice. And because you can customize the game to your child's individual abilities and needs, it can grow with your child, continuing to provide hours of fun for years to come!

Word Munchers requires a Macintosh Plus or later model. If you like, it can be used with a hard disk, although one is not required. *Word Munchers* comes with a Program Disk that contains an appropriate System folder. If you're using it with a hard disk, you need to be running System 6.0.2 or later. (You can obtain System software upgrades from your Apple dealer or from many user groups.)

If you're using a color monitor, *Word Munchers* is in color when you use the accompanying Color Disk.

Now—
*More Detailed
Instructions*

Minimum
Equipment
and System
Software

**What
Children
Need to Know
to Play
*Word Munchers***

Children using *Word Munchers* should already have beginning reading skills, including a knowledge of vowels. They should be able to read simple, single-syllable words and "sound them out" to distinguish their vowel sounds. For example, they should be able to read words like "hat" and "hit" and recognize the difference between their vowels. They should also know the difference between "long" and "short" vowel sounds, as in "bite" and "bit."

In order to play *Word Munchers*, children also need either basic Macintosh "mousing skills," such as clicking and double-clicking, or sufficient familiarity with the keyboard to use the Arrow Keys, Return Key, and other functional keys.

If your children aren't yet able to do these things, they probably aren't ready for *Word Munchers*. But if they *are* ready, then your kids are in for a treat!

**Learning
Objectives**

The object of the *Word Munchers* game is to munch as many correct words as possible, thereby scoring points. Children are provided with the incentive of trying to earn enough points to make it into the *Word Munchers* Hall of Fame.

From a child's perspective, *Word Munchers* is just plain fun. But it also has a very serious *educational* objective. *Word Munchers* is designed to help children develop their skill at identifying vowel sounds in single-syllable words appropriate to their grade level. In doing so, it provides children with a powerful tool for helping them practice and improve their all-important reading skills.

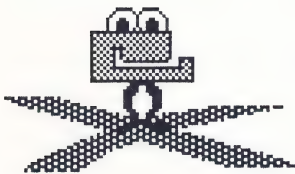
A Word About Copying

Word Munchers is not copy-protected, but it is copyrighted! This means that you may legally make *one* copy of the disks for archival purposes. As a matter of fact, we encourage you to *lock* the original disk and to play *Word Munchers* using your backup copy, while storing the original disks in a safe place. Then, should you ever have a problem with the disks, you can make another copy from your originals.

If you have a hard disk, you may copy *Word Munchers* onto the hard disk and keep the original disks in a safe place. Create a new folder called "Word Munchers." Copy the Program Disk files titled **Word Munchers** and **Word Config** onto your hard disk and put them in the "Word Munchers" folder. *Don't copy the System folder* because having more than one System folder on your hard disk can cause problems. If you're using a color monitor, also copy the file on the Color Disk titled **Word Color**.

You may not use your copy or the original disks with more than one computer at a time. See pages 35-36 of this *User's Guide* for more detailed information about the conditions for using *Word Munchers*.

Like the disks, this *User's Guide* is also copyrighted and should not be duplicated. *Word Munchers Classroom Materials*—a supplemental set of copyable student handouts and other useful materials—are available separately from MECC.



Starting the Game



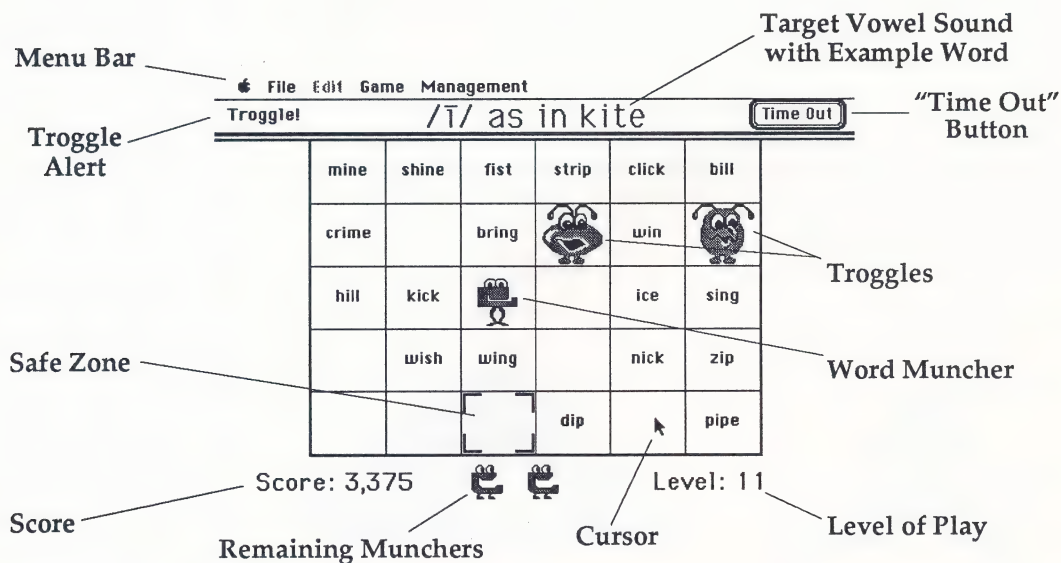
Word Munchers

To start playing *Word Munchers*, double-click on the *Word Munchers* icon on the Finder screen. Or click once on the icon and then select "Open" from the File menu. The *Word Munchers* title screen will appear.

Once the brief animated routine on the title screen is completed, a *Word Munchers* "demo" begins. This demo continues until you click one of the three buttons at the bottom of the screen, which had also appeared on the title screen.



The "Instructions" button provides you with a brief series of screens that tell you how to play *Word Munchers*. The "Practice" button allows you to play a simplified version of the game that doesn't involve scoring or Troggles. The "Play Munchers!" button allows you to start the game. The following illustration points out the various parts of the game screen.



The *Word Munchers* game has six different characters—one Muncher and five types of Troggles.

You start with four **Word Munchers** (of the species *Munchicus scripticus*)—one in the game grid and three in reserve. You earn an extra Muncher if your score reaches 1,000 points, another at 10,000 points, and another at every 10,000 points thereafter. Munchers are under your control. You choose where they move; you decide when they will eat a word. If the word eaten has the correct vowel sound, you earn points. But if the word has an incorrect vowel sound, you lose that Muncher and must call upon one of your reserve Munchers to continue the game. You also lose Munchers when they're caught by Troggles.

Reggies (*Trogglus normalus*) are the most common species of Troggle. This creature travels in straight lines. When it enters a cell containing a word, it removes that word and leaves another one—either a target or a distractor—in its place.

Helpers (*Trogglus assistus*) behave a little differently. If they enter a cell containing a word, they will remove that word without leaving a word in its place. Unlike Reggies, Helpers move in random directions.

Workers (*Trogglus laborus*) behave like Helpers, except they always leave a word behind, no matter whether or not the cell originally contained a word. Like Helpers, their movements are random.

Bashfuls (*Trogglus timidus*) behave in a manner similar to Reggies, except they tend to avoid contact with Munchers. Their movements are also random.

Smarties (*Trogglus smarticus*) travel in an unpredictable pattern until they get close to the Muncher. Then they "home in" on the Muncher and chase after it. They have no effect on words.

Characters in the Game



Controlling the Muncher



You can move the Muncher using either*the mouse or the computer keyboard.

To use the mouse, simply click once in any cell to which you want the Muncher to move. The Muncher will move to that cell.

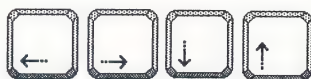
When a Muncher is *already* in a cell with a word in it, clicking once in that cell will cause the Muncher to eat that word.

Clicking twice in a cell will cause the Muncher to move to that cell and immediately eat the word in it.

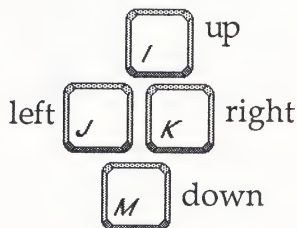
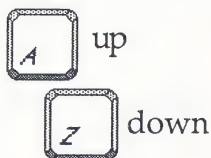
Be careful! Once you click on a word, there's no way to stop the Muncher from going to that cell. And if you click twice on a word, there's no way to stop the Muncher from eating that word—short of quitting the game.



If you choose to use the keyboard to control the Muncher, the following keys can be used:



Move the Muncher left, right, down, and up, respectively.



Causes the Muncher to eat a word.

You earn points whenever the Muncher eats a correct word—that is, a word containing the target vowel sound. The point value of the word depends upon the level of the game.

<i>Level</i>	<i>Word Value</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Word Value</i>
1-3	5 points	11	45 points
4	10	12	50
5	15	13	55
6	20	14	60
7	25	15	65
8	30	16	70
9	35	17+	75
10	40		

The current score appears in the lower-left corner of the game screen.

When a game screen has been cleared of all words that contain the target vowel sound, the screen is erased and a new level of play begins. The current level of play is indicated in the lower-right corner of the screen. Each level of play is progressively more difficult than the one before. As noted above, word values increase with higher levels. Other factors that change between levels include:

- the maximum number of Troggles that can appear on the screen at one time;
- the types of Troggles;
- the speed of the Troggles; and
- the number of safe zones—cells that a Muncher can enter safely but a Troggle cannot.

Once Level 12 is reached, these factors remain constant until the end of the game.

Scoring

Levels of Play

Sequence of Play

Each level of play presents a new vowel[®] sound and a new set of words to munch. If all vowel sounds have been selected in the Management Options as eligible for presentation (see page 13), then a different vowel sound will appear at the top of the screen for the first twenty levels of play. Beginning with Level 21, the same vowel sounds will be used again, but many of the words on the game screen will be new.

Vowel sounds are presented in random order.

Pausing Within the Game

You can pause at any time within the game by clicking on the "Time Out" button in the upper-right corner of the screen or by pressing the Return or Enter Key. Notice that when you "call a time out" in this way, not only does the game "freeze" but also the text in the button changes from "Time Out" to "Continue." This indicates that if you click on this button or press Return again, the game will resume.

Ending the Game

Play ends whenever the last Muncher is lost or when you pull down the File menu and select either the "End Game" or the "Quit" option. "End Game" ends the current game without exiting from the *Word Munchers* program, whereas "Quit" exits from the program altogether.

The Hall of Fame

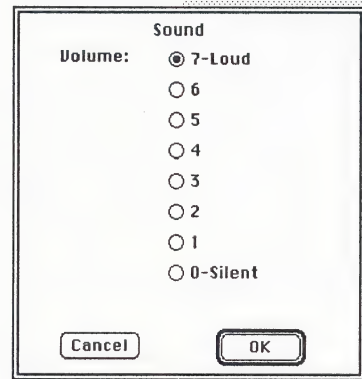
Word Munchers maintains a "Hall of Fame"—a list of the ten highest scores (with a minimum qualifying score of 50) and the names of those who achieved them. If your score is greater than the lowest score on the Hall of Fame, you can add your name to the list. Names and scores in the Hall of Fame can be erased through use of the Management Options (see page 16).

Sound

Word Munchers features two kinds of sound: *sound effects* and *instructional voice support*. Sound effects add interest and enjoyment to the game. Instructional voice support allows children to hear the target sounds, thus providing guidance and reinforcing phonics skills. Both types of sound are under your control.

If you like, you can use the standard Macintosh Control Panel (under the  menu) to adjust the sound. When you launch **Word Munchers**, the program's sound level is whatever the current setting is on the Control Panel.

Word Munchers also allows you to adjust its volume without affecting any other programs. This is done with the "Sound" command. Simply select "Sound" from the Game menu. The dialog box that appears allows you to set the volume. Setting the volume to "0 – Silent" totally eliminates sound effects and reduces instructional voice support to its lowest level. Setting the volume from 1 to 7 allows all types of sound, including the sound effects, to be heard, with 1 being a very low level of sound and 7 being the loudest.



You can also adjust the sound by pressing 0 through 7 *while holding down the Command Key* () at any time (except when dialog boxes appear). Pressing -8 or -9, however, has no effect on the program.

Instructional voice support can be completely turned off only through use of the Management Options (see pages 14-15).

Additional Graphics

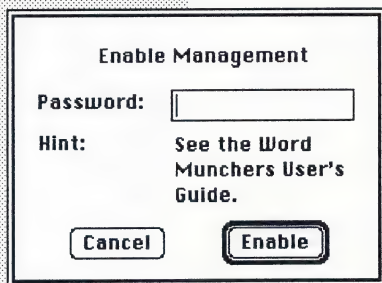
After you successfully complete three levels of play, a brief cartoon-like "graphic interlude" appears. Other interludes appear after every three additional levels of play. There are five different interludes.

Management Options

In *Word Munchers*, Management Options allow you to select the vowel sounds that children will work with in playing the game and to set their difficulty level. You can also perform other tasks, such as erasing the “Hall of Fame” names and scores, and determining whether the instructional voice support feature is active. In short, Management Options enable you to customize *Word Munchers* to your particular educational needs.

Gaining Access to Management Options

Because of the types of control Management Options offer, access to them is restricted. If you pull down the Management menu, you’ll notice that most of its options are dimmed or “grayed out,” indicating that they’re currently inactive. This prevents children who are using *Word Munchers* from simply modifying the program whenever they wish—that is, not unless they know the secret *password* that provides access to the Management Options.



To gain access to the Management Options, select “Enable Management” from the Management menu. You’ll then see a dialog box that asks for the password. *Unless you enter the correct password, you cannot use the Management Options.*

The Password



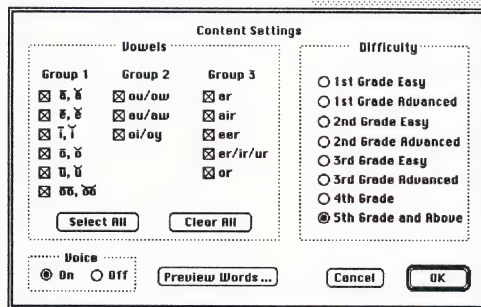
When *Word Munchers* is first used, the password is *logos* (Greek for “word”). But later, if you wish, you can change the password to something else of your own choice (see pages 19-20).

Enter the password and click OK. If you pull down the Management menu again, you’ll notice that the options that previously were dimmed are now fully active.

The first Management Option is “Content,” which gives you control over the content of the *Word Munchers* game.

Controlling Game Content

When you select “Content” from the Management menu, the “Content Settings” dialog box appears. It allows you to determine which vowels will be used as targets and distractors in *Word Munchers*. It also lets you set the difficulty level of the words used in the game.



When *Word Munchers* is first used, the content is set to its broadest level: all vowel sounds are permitted and the potential difficulty of the words used is at its highest setting. If you wish, you can change this.

Let's say you have a very young child who is able to work with only a few vowel sounds and a few simple words. You would use this dialog box to restrict the vowels to the ones your child is comfortable with—for instance, long A and short A. Simply “de-select” all of the *other* vowels by clicking in their check boxes, thus removing the x's. Only the upper-left box, the one for long and short A, should remain checked. (Alternatively, you can get rid of *all* the x's by clicking the “Clear All” button, after which you can re-select long and short A.) Then move over to the right-hand side of the screen and click on the top radio button, “1st Grade Easy.” Lastly, click OK.

And that's all you have to do to customize *Word Munchers* for your child. When it appears that your child has mastered a certain level and the game has become too easy, simply raise the difficulty level to provide a new challenge. Or if the game should ever prove too difficult, simply use Management Options to make it a little easier.

Notes on Modifying Game Content

There are some things you need to keep in mind when modifying game content:

- At the “1st Grade Easy” difficulty level, only the vowels in Group 1 can be selected. The vowels in Groups 2 and 3 are dimmed out, indicating they’re inactive. At the “1st Grade Advanced” level, all of the vowel sounds are active except the “OI/OY” diphthong. At both first-grade levels, if long and short U is selected, long U words will appear only as distractors for short U target words. At all other levels, all vowel sounds are fully functional.
- In Groups 2 and 3, the program will not let you set *just one* vowel sound as active. If *any* vowel sounds are active in either group, then *at least two* must be active in order to provide distractor sounds as well as targets.
- Any changes you make to game content don’t take effect until the start of a *new* game.

“Preview Words”

The “Content Settings” dialog box provides other features that you may find helpful. One is “Preview Words.” When you click on the “Preview Words” button, you’ll see a list of all the words that can appear in the *Word Munchers* game, given the current vowel and difficulty settings. If you feel that the list of words is too difficult for your child or isn’t challenging enough, go back to the “Content Settings” dialog (by clicking the “Done” button) and make appropriate changes.

Controlling Instructional Voice Support

As noted earlier (page 11), you can control the *volume* of the instructional voice support feature using the Game menu’s “Sound” command. But to turn the voice off altogether—or, if it’s already turned off, to turn it back on again—you must use special controls in the “Content Settings” dialog box.

In the lower-left corner of the “Content Settings” dialog box you’ll notice an area labeled “Voice.” A pair of radio buttons indicates whether the instructional voice support feature is currently turned on or off. If this setting is already the way you want it, do nothing. If, however, you want to change the current setting, click the radio button for the *other* setting. Click OK when you’re sure that everything else in the “Content Settings” box is also set the way you wish.

This voice setting is saved to the disk so that any time the *Word Munchers* program is used, the voice will be turned on or off, whichever way you set it, until you use Management Options to change it again.

When the instructional voice support feature is turned on, students are always given the option to *hear* the target vowel sound any time they munch an incorrect word. They can also hear the target vowel sound at any time during the game by clicking on the target phrase near the top of the screen (“/ou/as in mouse,” for example) or by selecting “Hear Vowel” from the Game menu. If, however, the voice feature is turned off, students are never given that option.

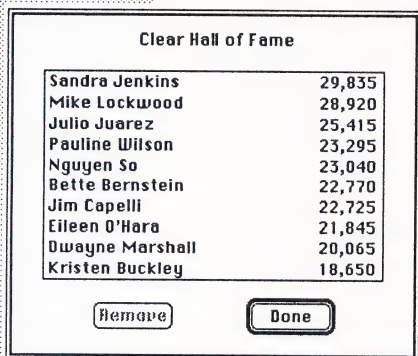
The other types of sound in *Word Munchers*—the game’s “sound effects”—are controlled through use of the Game menu’s “Sound” command. In other words, you don’t need a password to adjust the volume of the sound effects.

To summarize, the “Content” Management Option allows you to “individualize” *Word Munchers* so that it meets the educational needs of your child. As your child grows and learns, *Word Munchers* can grow, too, as you modify the game to keep up with your child’s ever-developing reading and phonics skills.

Letting
*Word
Munchers*
“Grow” with
Your Child

Clearing the Hall of Fame

Another Management Option allows you to clear all or part of the Hall of Fame. You may, for example, wish to clear the entire list at the end of a unit or a school year, or you may wish occasionally to give children a “fresh start.” On the other hand, children may sometimes make entries on the Hall of Fame that you’d just as soon see erased! To do any of these things, select “Clear Hall of Fame” from the Management menu.



The dialog box that now appears allows you to select all or some of the entries in the Hall of Fame for removal. If you wish to remove just one entry, simply click on that item to select it and then click the “Remove” button. That entry is deleted. Then click the “Done” button to indicate that you have finished. The dialog box disappears and the Hall of Fame is immediately modified.

If you wish to remove more than one entry or even all of them (thus completely clearing the Hall of Fame), click on the first item that you wish to delete and then use shift-clicking (for contiguous selections) or command-clicking (for non-contiguous selections) to select the additional items that you want to delete. (To shift- or command-click, simply hold down the Shift or Command Key as you click the mouse.) Click “Remove” to delete those items. Then click “Done.”

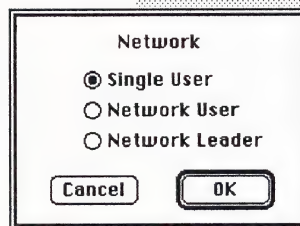


Before you delete items from the Hall of Fame, be very sure that you really want to do this. Once an item is deleted from the Hall of Fame, it's gone for good. There's no way to restore a deleted entry.

Word Munchers can be used on an *AppleTalk*® network. If you select "Network" from the Management menu, a dialog box appears that allows you to designate whether you're a "Single User" (that is, not using a network to play *Word Munchers*), a "Network User," or a "Network Leader."

Using *Word Munchers* on a Network

If your computer isn't on a network, or even if your computer *is* on a network but you won't be running *Word Munchers* on that network, then "Single User" should be the item selected in this dialog box. "Single User" is, in fact, the initial setting when *Word Munchers* is first used.



Now, let's say you're running *Word Munchers* on a number of computers that are connected on a network. Each computer has its own copy of *Word Munchers*. You can then designate one computer as the Network Leader and all the other computers as Network Users. This means that the User computers will look to the Leader computer for their Management settings and Hall of Fame.

For example, if you want a large group of students to use *Word Munchers* with identical content settings, just set the content the way you wish on a single computer (see pages 13-15), designate that computer as the Network Leader, and then designate all the other computers as Network Users. So you don't have to set the content dialog in exactly the same way on every single computer—perhaps dozens of them. The "Network" command can save you a great deal of work.

Incidentally, if you pull down the Management menu after having set a computer as either a Network Leader or User, you'll note that the "Network" command text is automatically modified to reflect that change. This lets you know at a glance a particular computer's setting.

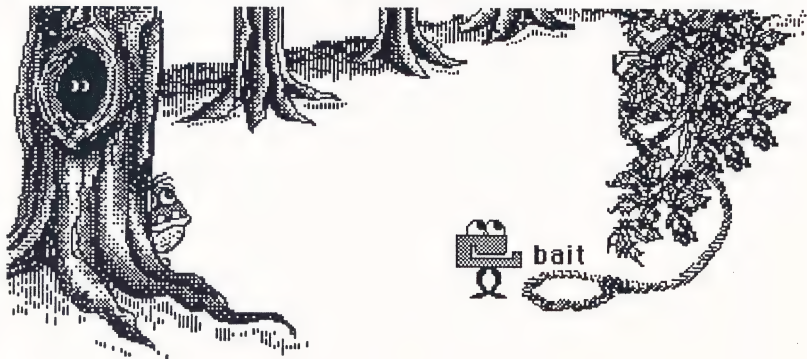
There's another way in which you can use *Word Munchers* on a network. If you have the program installed on an *AppleShare*® file server, other computers on that network can then run *Word Munchers* from the file server without their own copies of the program. The "Network" setting of *Word Munchers* on the file server must in this case be "Single User."



Yes, you *can* run *Word Munchers* in this way. But *should* you? We don't recommend it, and here's why. When you run any relatively large program like *Word Munchers* from a network file server, the speed and efficiency of the program often decreases dramatically—*especially* if a number of people are trying to use the program simultaneously. Using *Word Munchers* in this way can be a frustrating experience. This is not a flaw in the program. Rather, it's in the nature of this type of network.



To summarize, the most efficient way to use *Word Munchers* on a network is for every computer to have its own copy of the program and for you to designate one computer as the network leader and the other computers as network followers. Of course, if you're not concerned about every copy of the program having its own Management Option settings and Hall of Fame, you really don't need to worry about network settings.



Once you've finished using the Management Options to modify and customize *Word Munchers*, you need to *disable* Management, just as you had previously *enabled* it (see page 12). That way, nobody (but you) would be able to go back into the Management Options and undo all of your plans and hard work.

Disabling Management

Notice that, after having used "Enable Management" to activate the Management Options, the command that had previously read "Enable Management" changes to "Disable Management." This means that all you have to do to prevent unauthorized access to Management is to select that option. Go ahead and do that.

After selecting "Disable Management," the text of that command changes back to "Enable Management." Note that most of the Management commands are also once again dimmed. They cannot be accessed until you use the "Enable Management" command to activate them—an action that, if you recall, requires the use of a secret password.

Quitting *Word Munchers* (by selecting "Quit" from the File menu) *automatically* disables Management. In other words, every time you open *Word Munchers* from the Finder, the Management Options start out disabled.

As noted earlier (page 12), you cannot gain access to or use the Management Options unless you know the secret password, which initially is the Greek word for "word," *logos*. But you may not like that as a password. Perhaps you'd prefer something else that would be easier for you to remember or more difficult for other users to discover. If desirable, change the password to something more to your liking.

Changing the Password

Change Password

Old Password:

New Password:

Hint (optional):

Select “Change Password” from the Management menu. When the dialog box appears, you must first enter the *old* password. Then you can enter a *new* password of up to ten letters—assuming, of course, that you had entered the correct old password.



When you enter your new password, *check to be sure you haven't made any typographical errors before clicking the “Change” button.* It would be terrible to *want* to enter, say, “Washington” as your new password, but to have *actually* typed “WashingtoB” and clicked “Change” before noticing your error. Later, when you try to use WASHINGTON as your password, the program would refuse to accept it, leaving you frustrated and confused.



Note that it doesn't matter whether or not you use capital letters. Also, any letter, number, or punctuation mark is allowed in passwords. Spaces, tabs, and “function keys” (such as the arrows and “Control”), however, are not.

Giving Yourself a Password “Hint”

Do you sometimes forget your password—even one that you created yourself? **Word Munchers** allows you to enter a *hint* when you create your new password. The purpose of the hint feature is to provide you with a “clue” that would help you to remember your password. You could enter as your hint “Mother’s maiden name,” “Birthday,” or “Social security number”—depending, of course, on your actual password. Then, if you use the “Enable Management” option but can’t remember your password, all you have to do is look at the hint in the “Enable Management” dialog box. When you see the hint, you—but probably not most other people—should know your password.

One of the files on the *Word Munchers* Program Disk is called **Word Config**. "Config" is short for "configurations," which refers to information relevant to your use of the program. You can put this "config file" to work for you in a very powerful way.

If double-click on *either* the **Word Config** icon *or* on the original *Word Munchers* program icon, you enter *Word Munchers* with a certain set of configurations—Hall of Fame, Management Option settings, and so on. Those settings are stored in the **Word Config** file.

If you use the Finder program to change the name of this file from **Word Config** to something else—say, "Ms. A's Config"—and then double-click on the *original Word Munchers* icon, the program would create a *new* config file using the original *Word Munchers* settings. You could use Management Options to modify the program somewhat and then exit *Word Munchers* to change the name of that second config file—perhaps to "Mr. B's Config."

You now have two config files, not only with different names but also with different contents. If you double-click on one config file, you'll get *Word Munchers* with one set of configurations. If you double-click on the other config file, you'll get *Word Munchers* with your second set of configurations. This offers tremendous advantages, especially if you're using *Word Munchers* with two or more children with different learning needs.

Let's say Johnny's in the first grade. Customize the program for him (see pages 13-15) and create a config file named "Johnny's Game." Next, Susie's in the third grade, so customize the program for her and create another config file named "Susie's Game." And Leslie's in the fifth grade, so customize the program a third time and create a config file called "Leslie's Game."

Putting Config Files to Work



Word Config



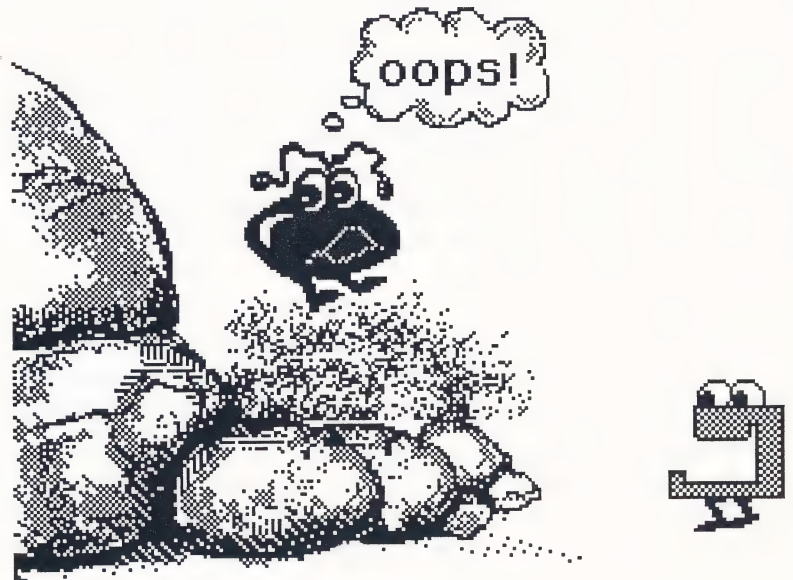
Ms. A's Config



Mr. B's Config

Now, all each child has to do is double-click on "his" or "her" icon to play *Word Munchers* at an appropriate level of difficulty. And whenever the child is ready to advance to a more difficult level, simply enter the appropriate configuration of the program and use Management Options to modify it.

Whether you're using *Word Munchers* with two kids at home or thirty-two in a computer lab, modified config files can save you a great deal of work and make the game more enjoyable and beneficial to children.



As you use *Word Munchers*, you may encounter error messages or other signs of technical problems. For instance, if you have trouble just *starting up* the *Word Munchers* program, check to be sure you're using System 6.0.2 or greater. *Word Munchers* won't work with a Macintosh System file previous to version 6.0.2.

If you find that *Word Munchers* frequently "crashes" or fails to function correctly, you should consider the possibility of incompatibilities with INITs, CDEVs, or desk accessories that may be installed in your System. This is often a source of difficulties with software.

If the program crashes and, in so doing, provides an error I.D. number, you should write that number down and record the steps you took that led up to the crash. Then you can call MECC and perhaps find a solution to your problem. (See the bottom of page 24 for information about contacting the MECC Help Line.)

Most of the error messages you may see while using *Word Munchers* are self-explanatory and provide suggestions for solving the problem. For example, you may receive a message stating that **"Memory is running low. Please close any desk accessories that you might have open."** You should do just that. If you don't, you shouldn't be surprised if the program crashes shortly afterward. By the same token, you should follow the suggestions provided by other error messages of this type.

One very important error message you may receive is **"This program is damaged. Please make a new copy from your backup disk."** This means that some type of damage (such as a computer "virus") has occurred to your disk or to the program code contained on it. Simply use your archival copy of *Word Munchers* to create a new disk. *You do have an archival copy, don't you?* If not, see page 5 for important information about making and storing a backup copy of *Word Munchers*.

If you're using *Word Munchers* with a Macintosh Plus on an *AppleTalk* network, the program may inform you that **"You must be using *AppleTalk* version 48 or greater to be a Network Leader."** You must find the file called *AppleTalk* in the System folder of the *Word Munchers* Program Disk and copy it into the System folder of your start-up disk.

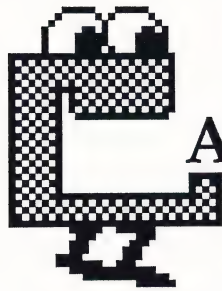
If you encounter a "fatal error" or an "out of memory error," write down the error number and the part of the program in which the error occurred—information that the error message should provide—and, again, record the steps you took that led up to the problem.

The MECC Help Line

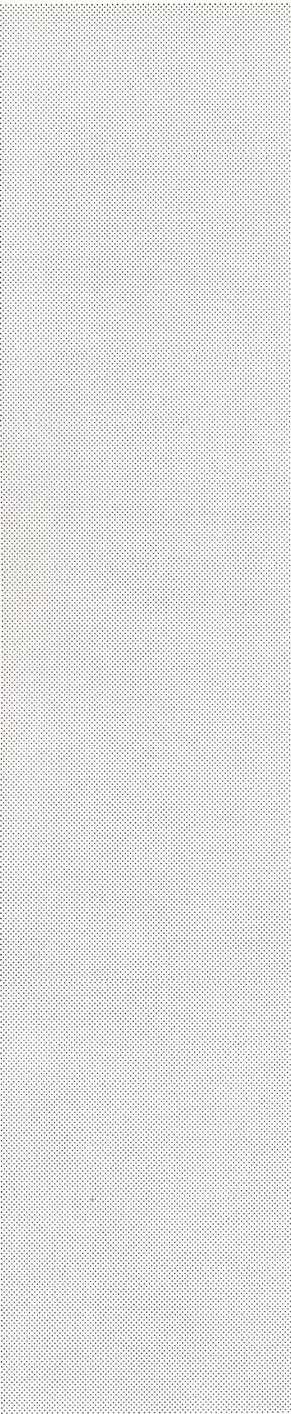
If you do encounter one of the serious errors previously mentioned, or if all else fails in your efforts to deal with some other kind of difficulty, you can call the MECC Help Line at (612) 481-3500. Be prepared to provide detailed information about the problem. Make note of the name (in this case, *Word Munchers*) and version number of the product (located in "About *Word Munchers*" under the  menu) as well as the version number of the System file and the type of Macintosh you're using. All of this information may prove vital to the MECC Help Line staff as they try to help you solve your problem. Or, if you prefer, you can write to the MECC Help Line at the following address:

MECC Help Line
3490 Lexington Avenue North
St. Paul, MN 55126-8097

Also, if you have access to *AppleLink*®, you can contact the MECC Help Line electronically using the address **MECC.TECH.**



Appendices



Credits

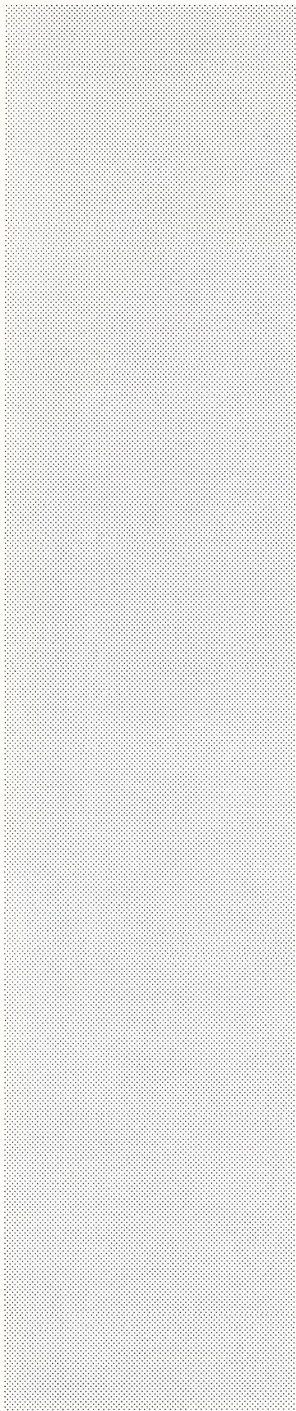
This Macintosh version of *Word Munchers* was produced by a MECC development team consisting of Sean Callahan, Craig Copley, Paul Davis, Hassan Kaganda, Charolyn Kapplinger, Wayne Studer, James L. Thompson, and Paul Wenker. (Special thanks to Larry Phenow of the MECC staff for composing the original melodies heard during the animated graphic interludes.) The program is based upon MECC's original version of *Word Munchers*, which was created for the Apple II series of computers.

MECC greatly appreciates the valuable contribution of the staff of Plymouth Creek Elementary School of the Wayzata (MN) Public School System—in particular, Instructional Computer Coordinator Robert Meyers and teachers Michelle Burniece, Jim Hebeisen, Nancy Johnson, Kent Levine, and Carol Lindblom, among others—for taking part in the classroom testing of the Macintosh version of *Word Munchers*. These educators and their students did much to help ensure the quality of the program and its support materials.

TO THE READER:

MECC has made every effort to ensure the instructional and technical quality of this software package. Your comments—as user or reviewer—are valued and will be considered for inclusion in any future version of the product. Please address comments to:

MECC Software Development
3490 Lexington Avenue North
St. Paul, MN 55126-8097



An understanding of phonics is recognized by many educators as essential to learning how to read. Phonics is the study of the various sounds we make when we speak. In English, there are approximately forty phonemes—simple, distinct sounds that, when put together, make up words. (We say “approximately” because some dialects of English have phonetic variations that result in a slightly higher or lower number than forty.) About a third of these English phonemes are vowels. These vowel sounds are the focus of *Word Munchers*.

Background Information

The order in which vowel sounds should be taught and their relationship to consonants are subject to a wide range of teaching practices. The designers of *Word Munchers* have strived to provide a program with the flexibility to meet a variety of approaches to teaching vowel sounds. Also, early in the development of *Word Munchers*, we recognized that regional dialects would affect the pronunciation of certain vowel sounds. We believe it is important that you be aware of the phonetic rules and guidelines that we have employed.

The reference used in determining the classification of words in *Word Munchers* was *The American Heritage Dictionary*, Second College Edition (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1983).

Pronunciation Authority

Vowel sounds have been classified into three groups in *Word Munchers* (see page 30). These groups determine the order in which the vowel sounds are presented during the game (see page 10) and which “distractors” will be used. You can determine which vowel sounds will be used in the game through use of the Management Options (see pages 13-15).

Vowel Sounds Used

Distractor Groups

The object of *Word Munchers* is to distinguish words that contain a particular target vowel sound from those that do not. The words that do not contain the target vowel sound are called "distractors." If the game is to prove challenging, the distractors must appear plausible. For example, it takes little skill to distinguish between words that contain the "long A" sound (like "cake") and those that contain the "long O" sound (like "boat"). Both the visual differences and the phonetic differences would make such distinctions too easy. Therefore, each vowel sound has been grouped with one or more distractor vowel sounds of the same or similar letter(s) and/or sound(s). The following table describes the vowel sounds used in *Word Munchers* along with their associated distractors:

Vowel Groups and Distractors

Group 1 (basic vowels)

<i>vowel</i>	<i>example</i>	<i>distractor(s)</i>
long A	cake	short A
short A	hat	long A
long E	tree	short E
short E	red	long E
long I ¹	kite	short I
short I	fish	long I
long O	boat	short O
short O	fox	long O
long U ²	use	short U
short U	duck	long U
long OO ²	boot	short OO
short OO	book	long OO

Group 2 (diphthongs)

OI (OY)	voice	OU, AU
OU (OW)	mouse	OI, AU
AU (AW) ³	draw	OI, OU

Group 3 (r-controlled vowels)

AIR	chair	AR, EER, ER/IR/UR, OR
AR	car	AIR, EER, ER/IR/UR, OR
EER	deer	AIR, AR, ER/IR/UR, OR
ER/IR/UR	bird	AIR, AR, EER, OR
OR	corn	AIR, AR, EER, ER/IR/UR

Word Difficulty

Eight levels of word difficulty are available in *Word Munchers*. These levels are subject to your control through use of the Management Options (see pages 13-15). All of the words, regardless of level, consist of one syllable and are five letters or less in length. Once set, the level of word difficulty will remain constant throughout the game. These levels of difficulty are based upon the grade levels at which children are most often introduced to various words in several of the most popular reading textbook series used in elementary schools today.

The eight difficulty levels in *Word Munchers* are as follows:

- 1st Grade Easy
- 1st Grade Advanced
- 2nd Grade Easy
- 2nd Grade Advanced
- 3rd Grade Easy
- 3rd Grade Advanced
- 4th Grade
- 5th Grade and Above

Notes to the "Vowel Groups and Distractors" table on page 30:

¹Some linguists consider the "long I" vowel sound to be a diphthong (a very close blending of two vowel sounds, in this case of the short O and the long E). Traditionally, however, the long I is taught as one of the basic vowel sounds (probably because it is usually expressed with a single letter), and this is how *Word Munchers* treats it.

²Most elementary reading texts treat the "long U" and the "long OO" as two separate basic vowel sounds. Phonetically, however, they are the same basic vowel sound, except the "long U" starts with the Y consonantal glide, taking on a diphthong-like quality. In most dialects of American English, the difference between these two sounds can be heard in words like "moo" (with the "long OO") and "mew" (with the "long U," so that it sounds like "myoo"). In some dialects, words like "do" and "dew" share a similar distinction ("doo" as opposed to "dyoo"), whereas in others they are pronounced in exactly the same way ("doo"). Since "long OO" and "long U" words never appear on the same game screen in *Word Munchers*, potential difficulties arising from any disagreements as to the "correct" pronunciation of these words are avoided.

³Phonetically, the AU/AW sound (sometimes called "broad A") is not a diphthong at all, but rather a simple, basic vowel sound. However, because it is usually expressed with a combination of letters (AU or AW) in most dialects of American English, it is usually treated as though it were a combination of sounds—that is, as a diphthong.

**A Note to
Users Familiar
with the
Original
Apple II
Version**

If you're familiar with the original Apple II version of *Word Munchers*, you'll notice that the concept of word difficulty level has changed with this new Macintosh version of the program. Originally, the difficulty level of each word was determined by the consonant structure of that word and how closely its vowels followed various pronunciation "rules." It has been found, however, that these things often have little to do with the grade level at which children are introduced to words in their elementary reading curriculum.

For example, the word "bear" was considered to be a difficult word in the original *Word Munchers* because it's a "rule breaker"—that is, it doesn't follow the general rules for how it "should" be pronounced. "Bear" is, however, usually among the *first* words young children learn to recognize in their reading exercises. The same is true of many other typical first-grade words, such as "do," "from," "have," "one," "they," "to," "two," and "want."

On the other hand, many words that were considered "easy" in the original *Word Munchers* because they adhere to basic pronunciation rules are nevertheless conceptually difficult for young children. Therefore they rarely if ever appear in early reading exercises. Examples include such words as "bail," "fuse," "gear," "jowl," "maul," "norm," and "void."

This new version of *Word Munchers* avoids potential confusion for young readers by reassigning difficulty levels to words according to the actual grade levels at which they are most commonly introduced in popular reading textbooks.

How Difficulty Levels Work

When you select a level of difficulty through use of the Management Options (see pages 13-15), you will determine which words will appear in the game. Selecting "First Grade Easy" will restrict the game to the words that fall into that category. Selecting "First Grade Advanced" will expand the pool of words to include *both* first-grade levels. Each difficulty level expands the pool of words to embrace that level *plus* all preceding levels. Selecting the most difficult level, "Fifth Grade and Above," will therefore allow the *entire* pool of words in *Word Munchers*—more than 2,100 of them—to appear in the game (assuming that all vowel groups are selected as well).

Words That Are Not Used

Word Munchers includes most single-syllable words of five letters or less in the English language. The pronunciations used are those generally recognized as conforming to standard American English. A number of single-syllable words of five or fewer letters have, however, been left out. *Word Munchers* does *not* include words that fit any of the following criteria:

- Words that have more than one widely accepted standard pronunciation. For example, *Word Munchers* does not include "aunt" because many people pronounce it to rhyme with "haunt" while many others pronounce it exactly like the word "ant." Both pronunciations are equally correct—it's just that they're typical of different dialects.
- *Homographs* (different words that are spelled the same) with different pronunciations. For instance, *Word Munchers* does not include "tear" because it can be pronounced, in one sense, to rhyme with "fear" (referring to a drop of moisture shed while crying) or, in another sense, to rhyme with "care" (meaning "rip").

- Words that end in *ong*, *og*, *oss*, *off*, and *oft*. These words tend to be pronounced by some people with a short O sound and by others with the AU sound (among those who distinguish between the two sounds). The one exception is the word “gross,” which is included because it has just one standard pronunciation (rhyming with “dose”).
- Words that end in *ank* and *ang*. These words tend to be pronounced with a long A sound by some people rather than with a short A sound.
- Vulgarities and words that were deemed too obscure in meaning and/or usage to be of interest or relevance to most children.

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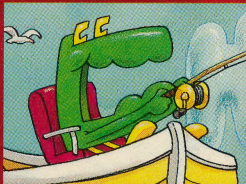


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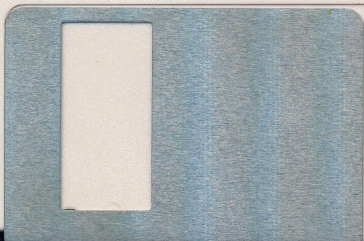


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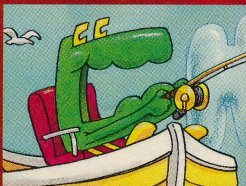
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