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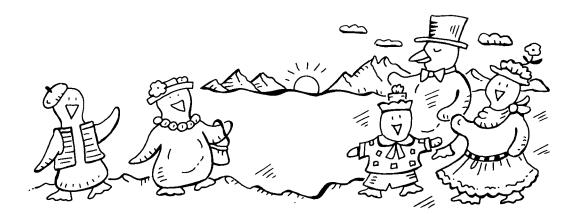
Grades 4–6

by Timothy Rasinski Kent State University

New York • Toronto • London • Auckland • Sydney Mexico City • New Delhi • Hong Kong • Buenos Aires



To my own children—Mike, Emily, Mary, and Jenny— Word Wizards in their own right. A father couldn't ask for better kids.



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Welcome to Word Ladders!

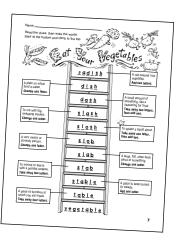
In this book you'll find 100 mini-wordstudy lessons that are also kid-pleasing games! To complete each Word Ladder takes just ten minutes but actively involves each learner in analyzing the structure and meaning of words. To play, students begin with one word and then make a series of other words by changing or rearranging the letters in the word before. With regular use, Word Ladders can go a long way toward developing your students' decoding and vocabulary skills.

How do Word Ladders work?

Let's say our first Word Ladder begins with the word *walk*. The directions will tell students to change one letter in *walk* to make a word that means "to speak." The word students will make, of course, is *talk*. The next word will then ask students to make a change in *talk* to form another word—perhaps *chalk*, or *tall*. At the top of the ladder, students will have a final word that is in some way related to the first word—for example, *run*. If students get stuck on a rung along the way, they can come back to it, because the words before and after will give them the clues they need to go on.

How do Word Ladders benefit students?

Word Ladders are great for building students' decoding, phonics, spelling, and vocabulary skills. When students add or rearrange letters to make a new word from one they have just made, they must examine sound-symbol relationships closely. This is just the kind of analysis that all children need to perform in order to learn how to decode and spell accurately. And when the puzzle adds a bit of meaning in the form of a definition (for example, "make a word that means to say something"), it helps extend students' understanding of words and concepts. All of these skills are key to students' success in learning to read and write. So even though Word Ladders will feel like a game, your students will be practicing essential literacy skills at the same time!



How do I teach a Word Ladder lesson?

Word Ladders are incredibly easy and quick to implement. Here are four simple steps:

- **1.** Choose one of the 100 Word Ladders to try. (The last three pages are the hardest ladders in the book, so avoid starting with those.)
- **2.** Make a copy of the Word Ladder for each student.
- **3.** Choose whether you want to do your Word Ladders with the class as a whole, or by having students work alone, in

pairs, or in groups. (You might do the first few together, until students are ready to work more independently.)

4. At each new word, students will see two clues: the kinds of changes they need to make to the previous word ("rearrange the letters" or "add two letters"), and a definition of or clue to the meaning of the word. Sometimes this clue will be a sentence in which the word is used in context but is left out for children to fill in. Move from word to word this way, up the whole Word Ladder.

Look for the **Bonus Boxes** with stars. These are particularly difficult words you may want to preteach. Or you can do these ladders as a group so that children will not get stuck on this rung.

That's the lesson in a nutshell! It should take no longer than ten minutes to do. Once you're done, you may wish to extend the lesson by having students sort the words into various categories. This can help them deepen their understanding of word relationships. For instance, they could sort them into:

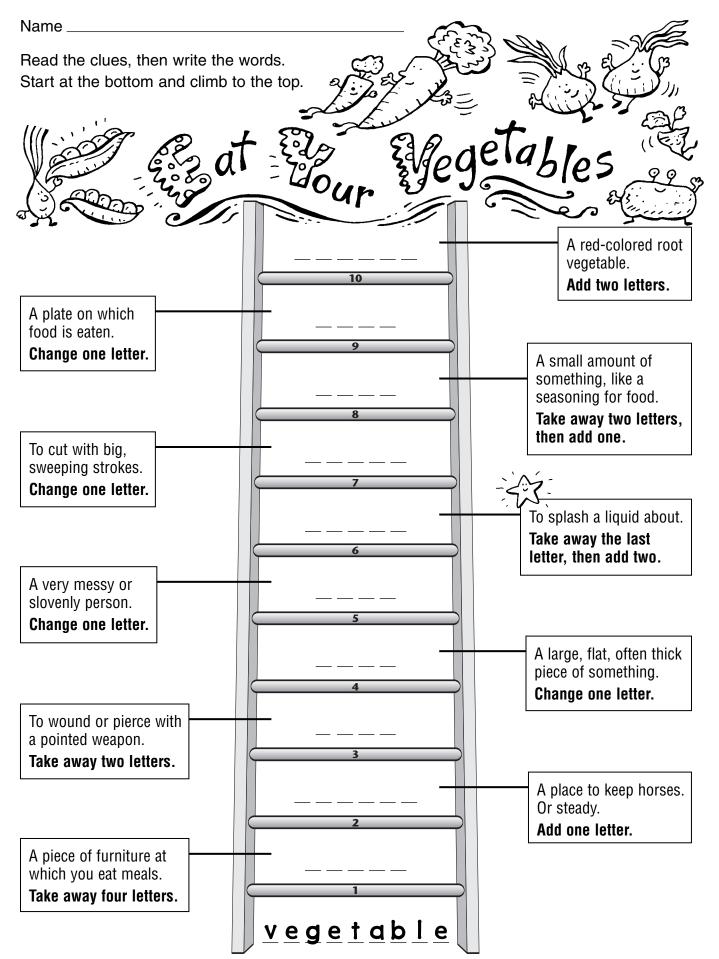
- Grammatical categories. (Which words are nouns? Verbs?)
- Word structure. (Which words have a long vowel and which don't? Which contain a consonant blend?)
- Word meaning. (Which words express what a person can do or feel? Which do not?)

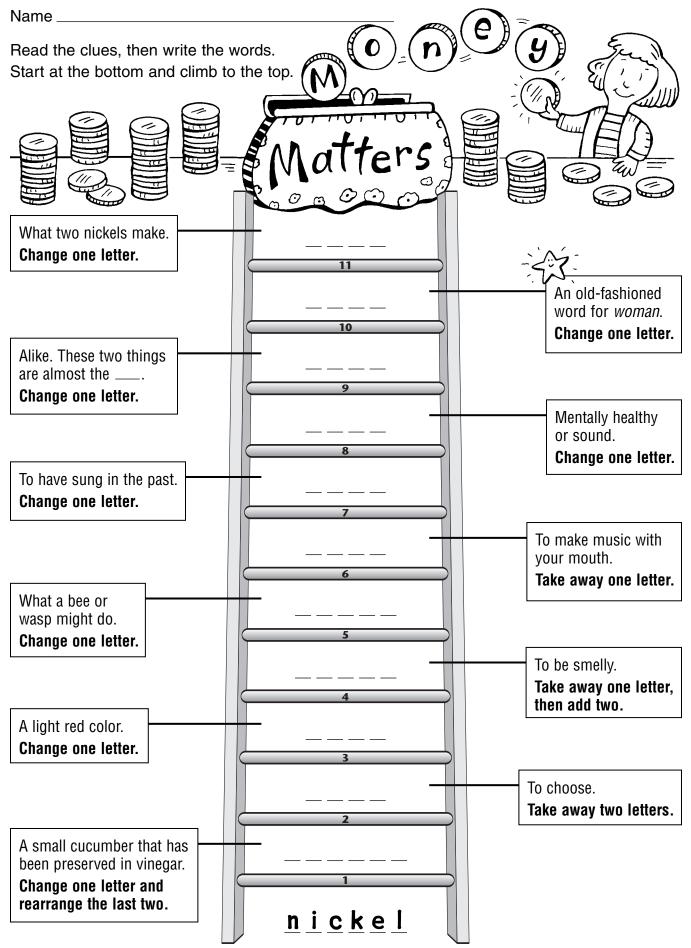
Tips for Working With Word Ladders

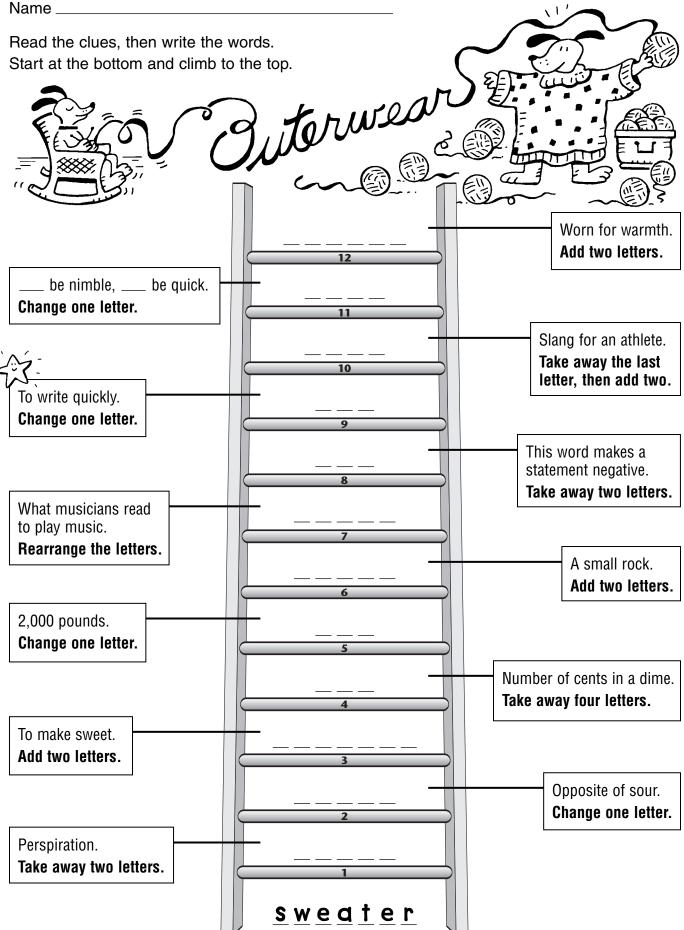
To give students extra help, mix up and write all the "answers" for the ladder (that is, the words for each rung) on the board for them to choose from as they go through the puzzle. In addition:

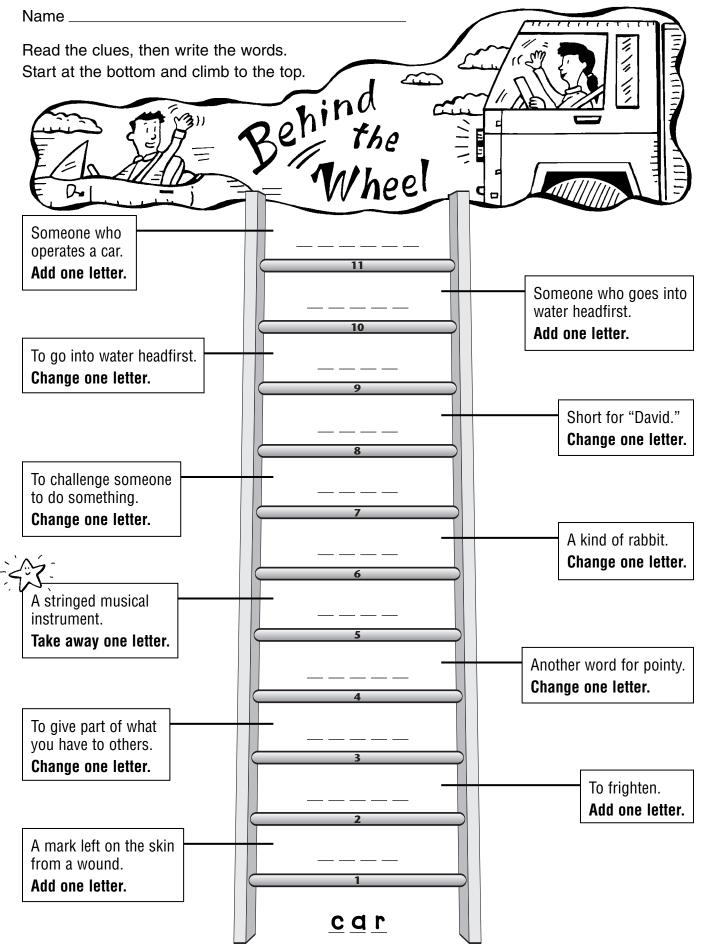
- Add your own clues to give students extra help as they work through each rung of a ladder. A recent event in your classroom or community could even inspire clues for words.
- If students are having difficulty with a particular word, you might simply say the word aloud and see if students can spell it correctly by making appropriate changes in the previous word. Elaborate on the meanings of the words as students move their way up the ladder.
- If students are stuck on a particular rung of the Word Ladder, tell them to skip it and come back to it later.
- Challenge students to come up with alternative definitions for the same words. Many words, like *lock, fall,* and *stock,* have multiple meanings.

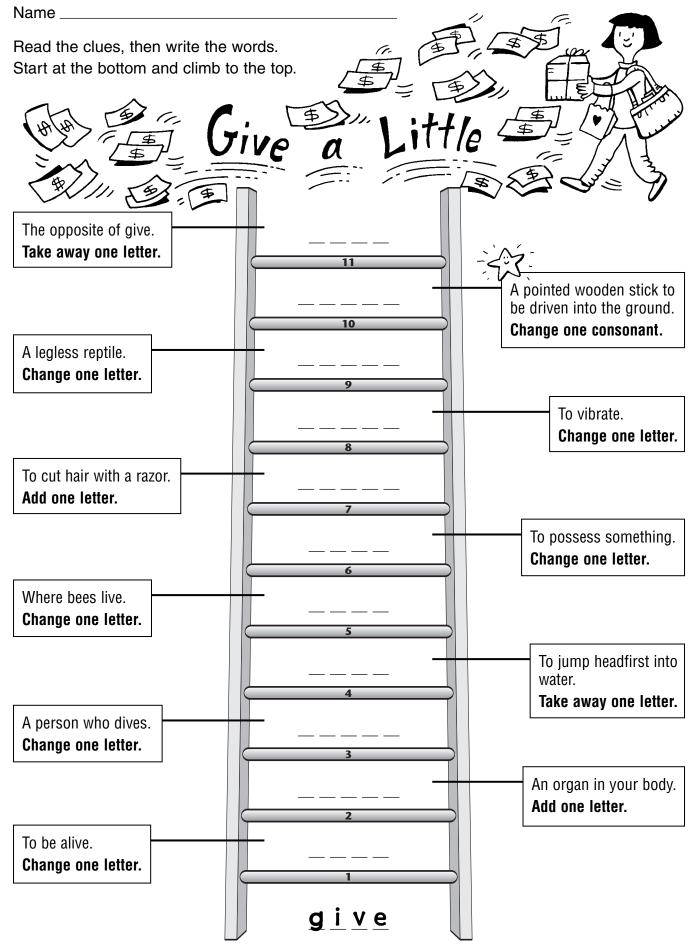
Timothy Rasinski is a professor of literacy education at Kent State University, with a special focus on young and struggling readers. Dr. Rasinski has served on the board of directors at the International Reading Association and as president of the College Reading Association. He is the author of numerous books and professional articles on effective reading instruction.

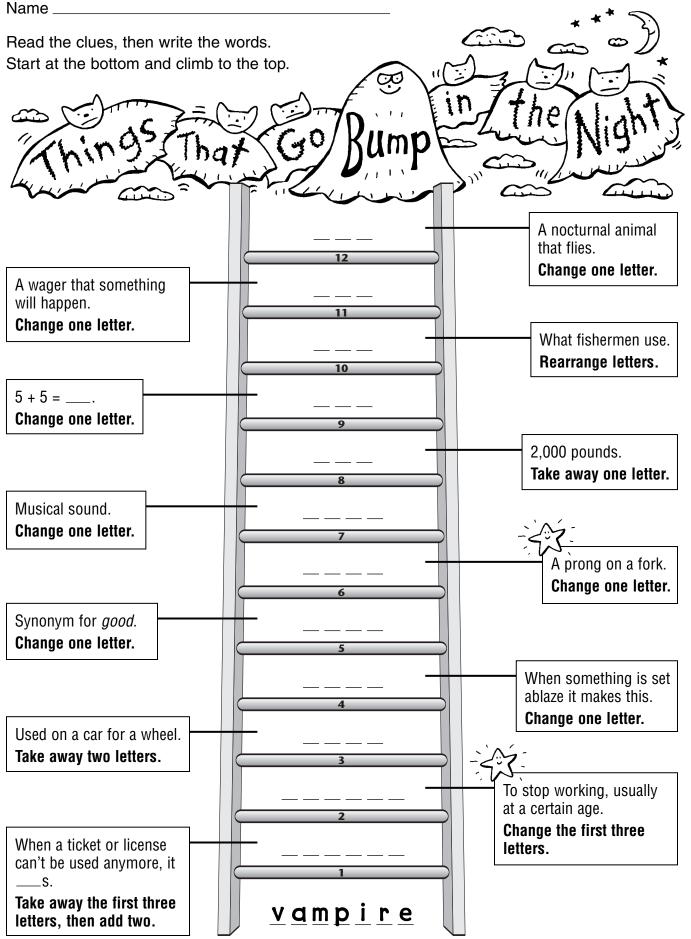


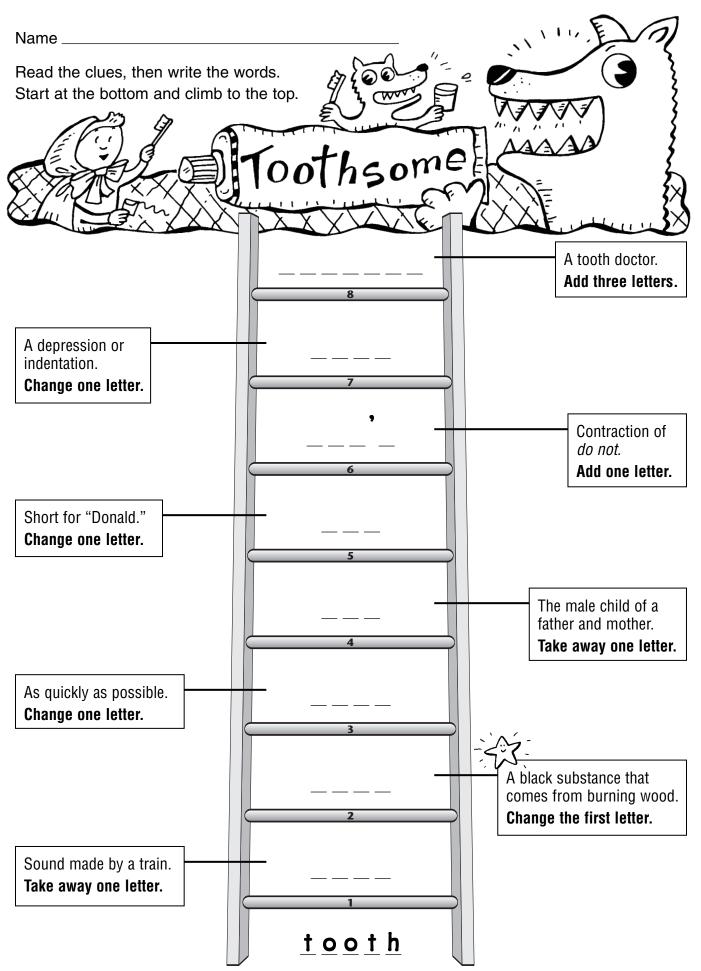


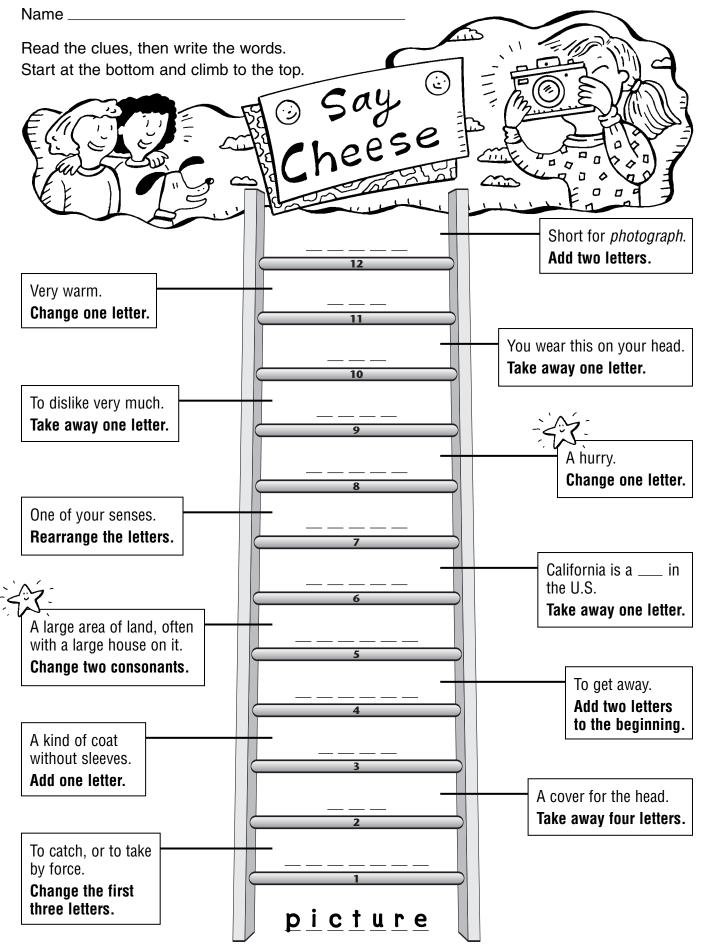


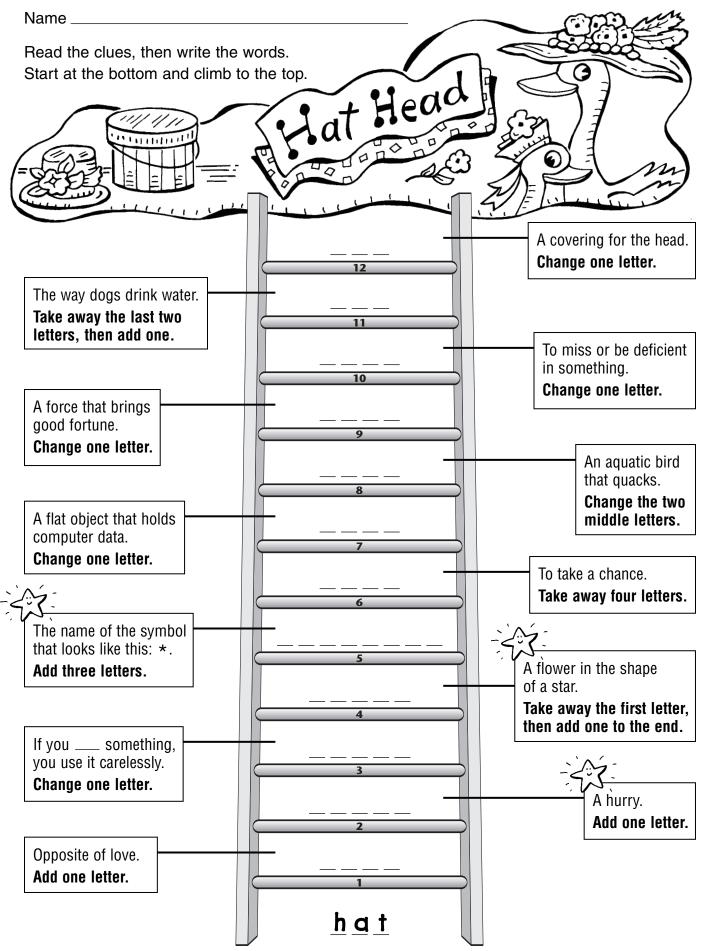


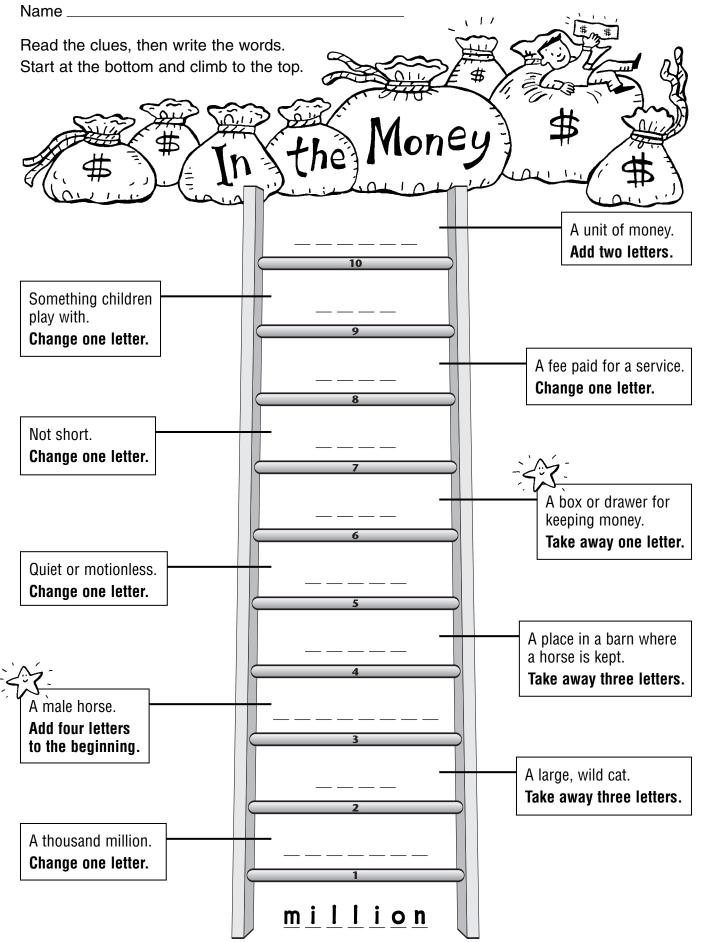


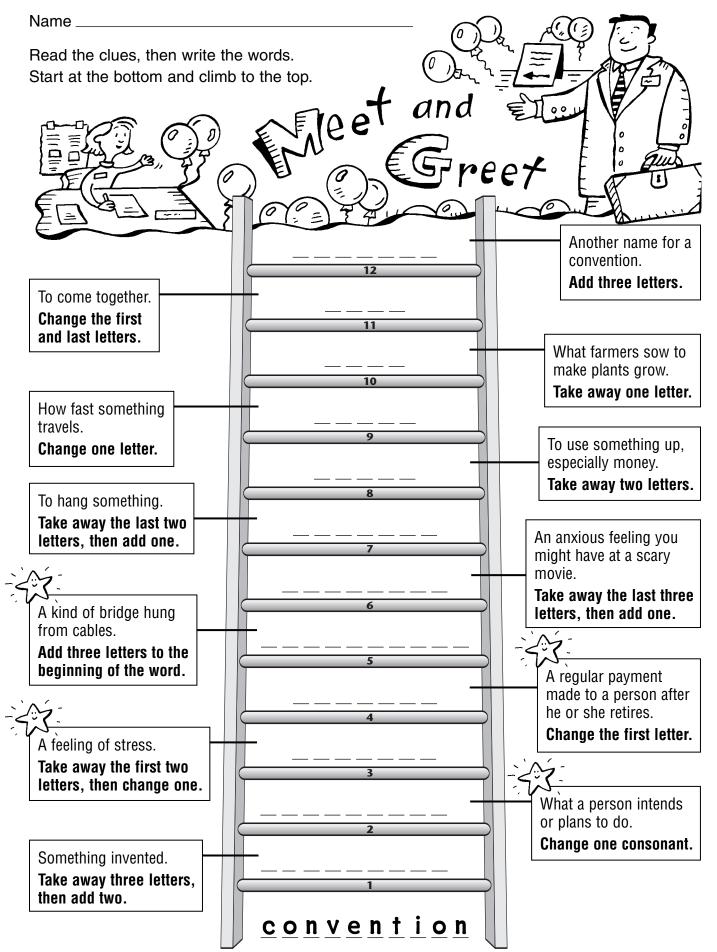


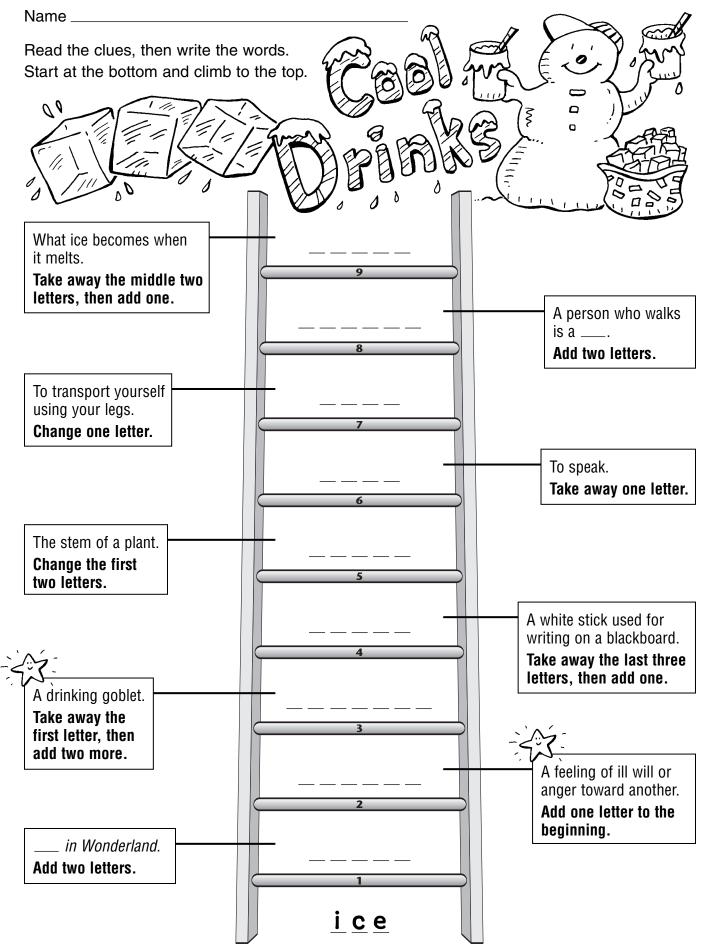


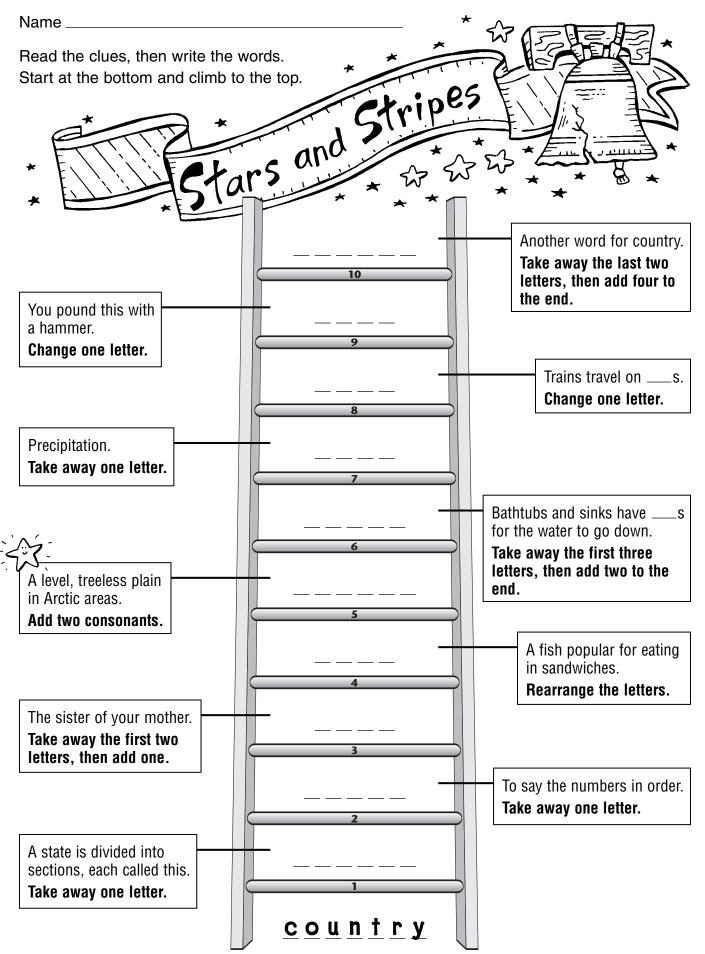


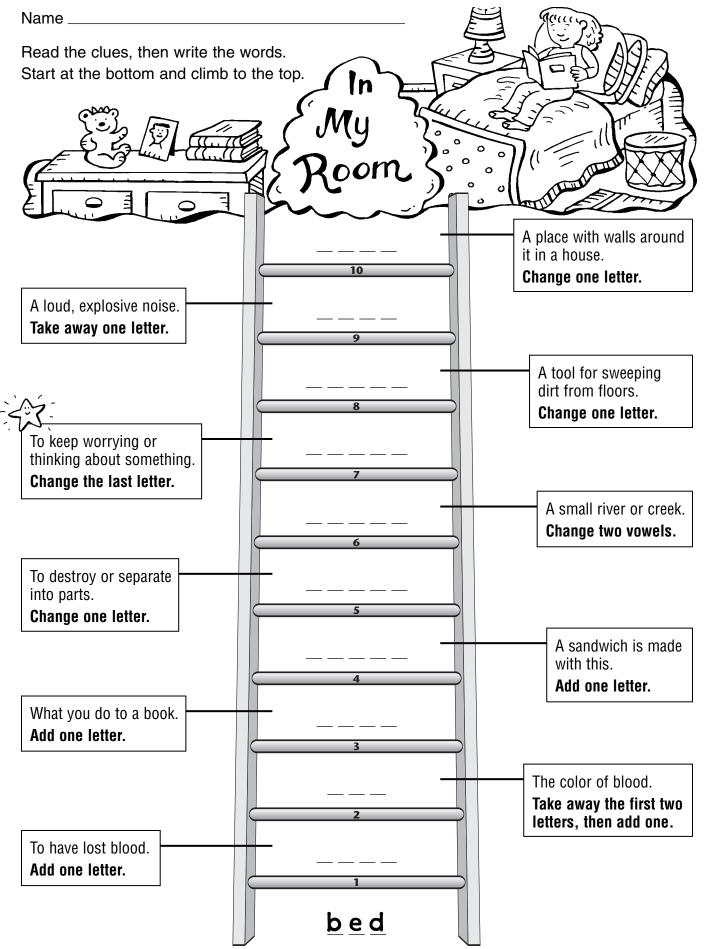


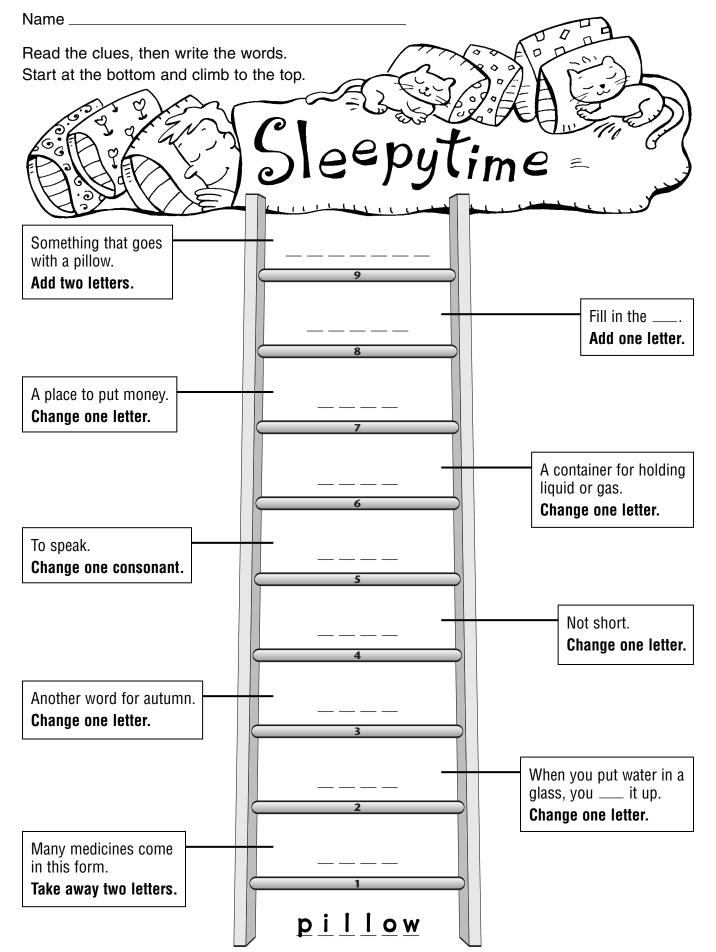


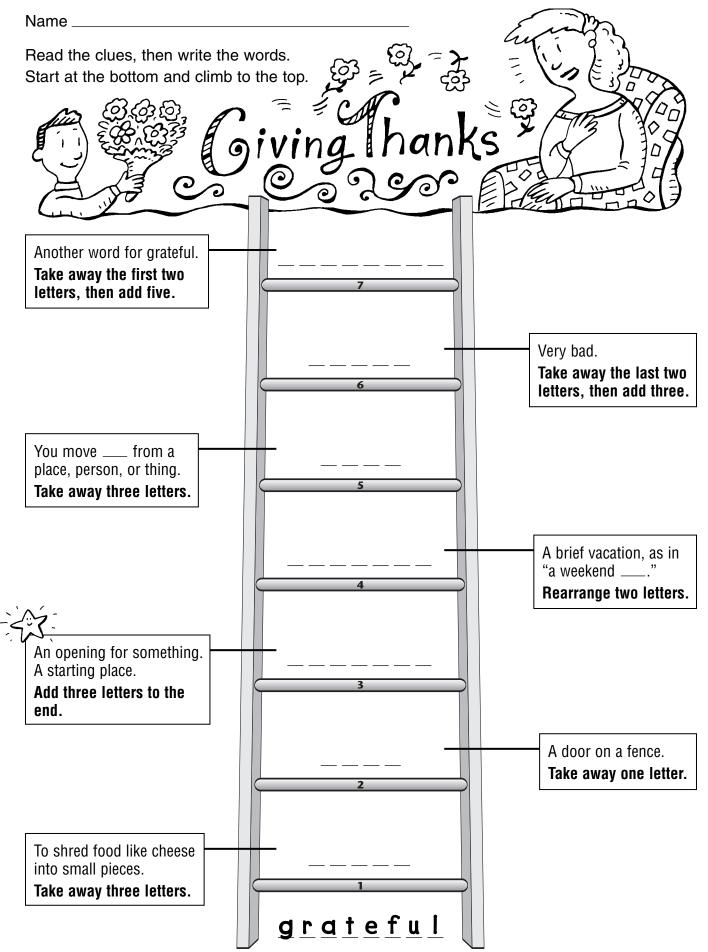


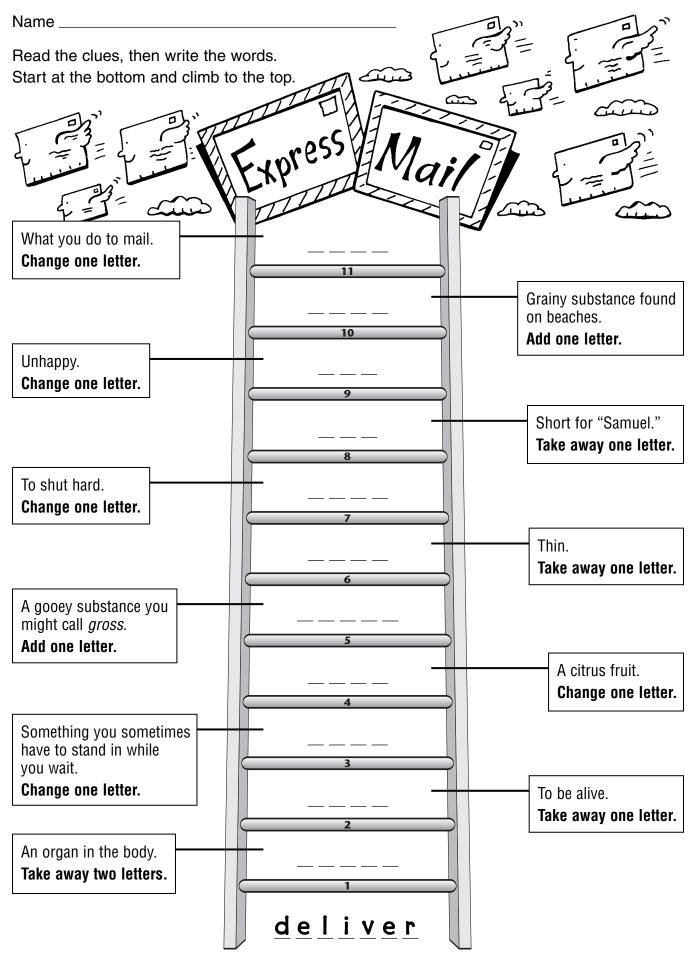


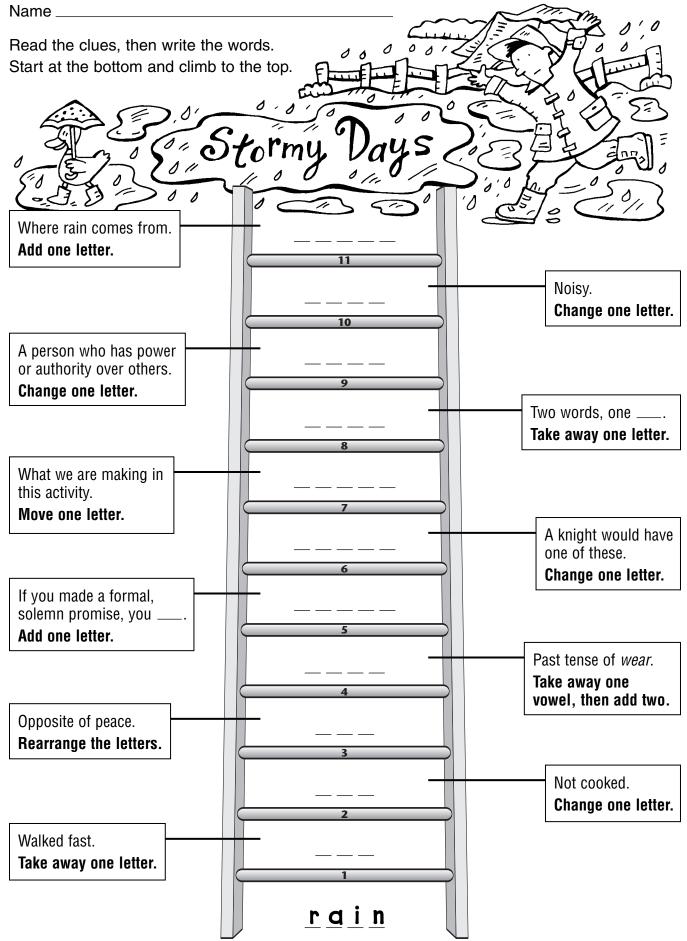


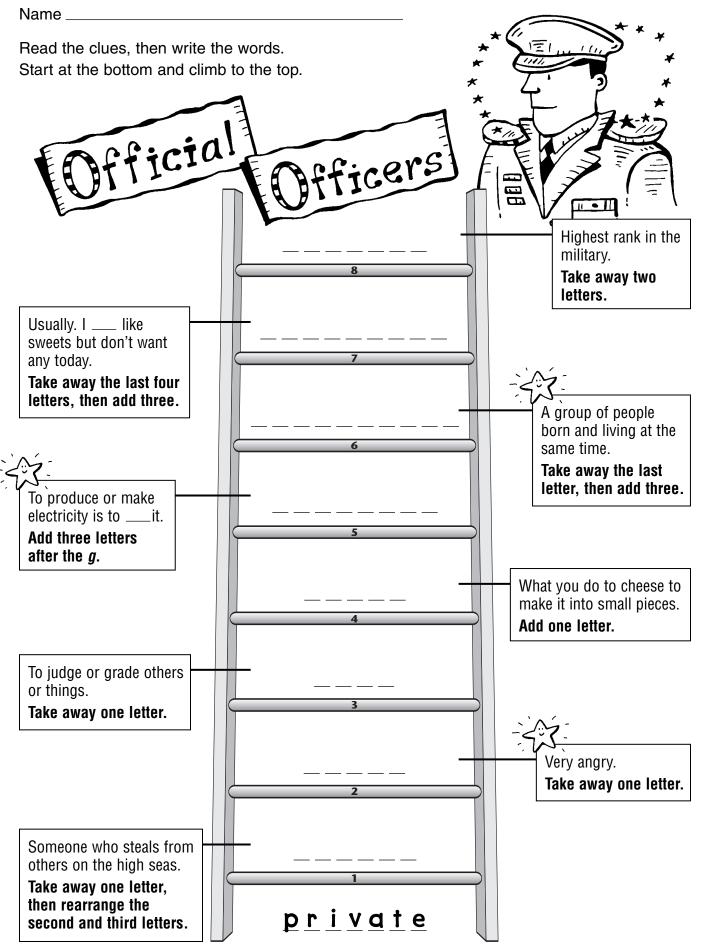


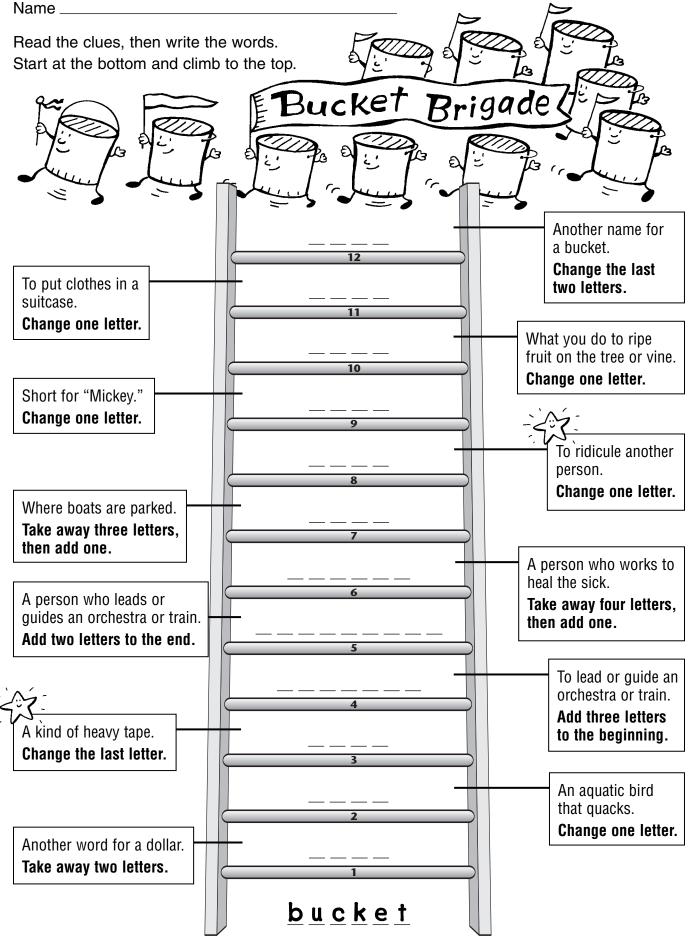


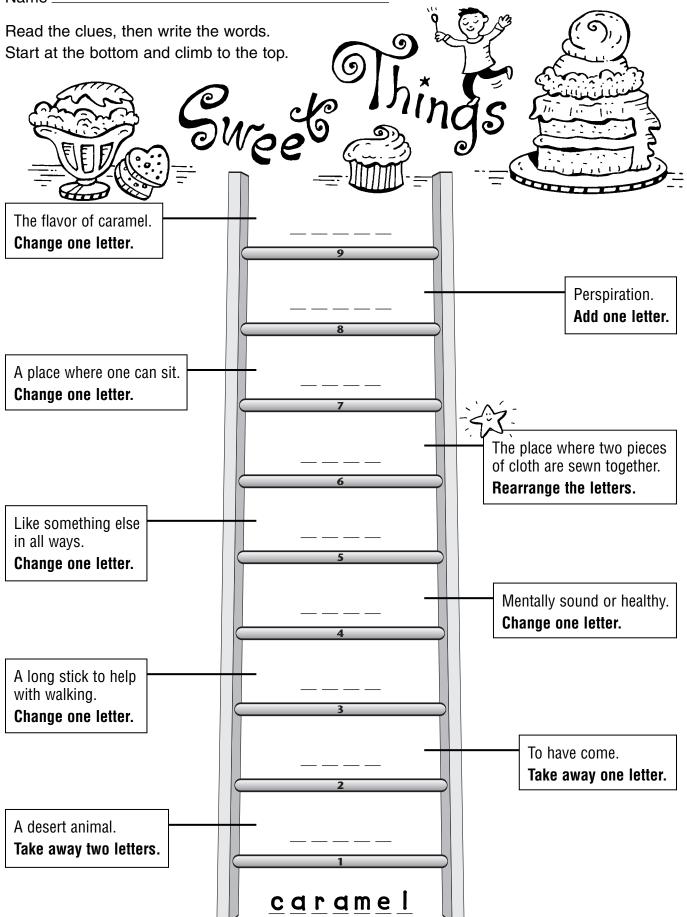


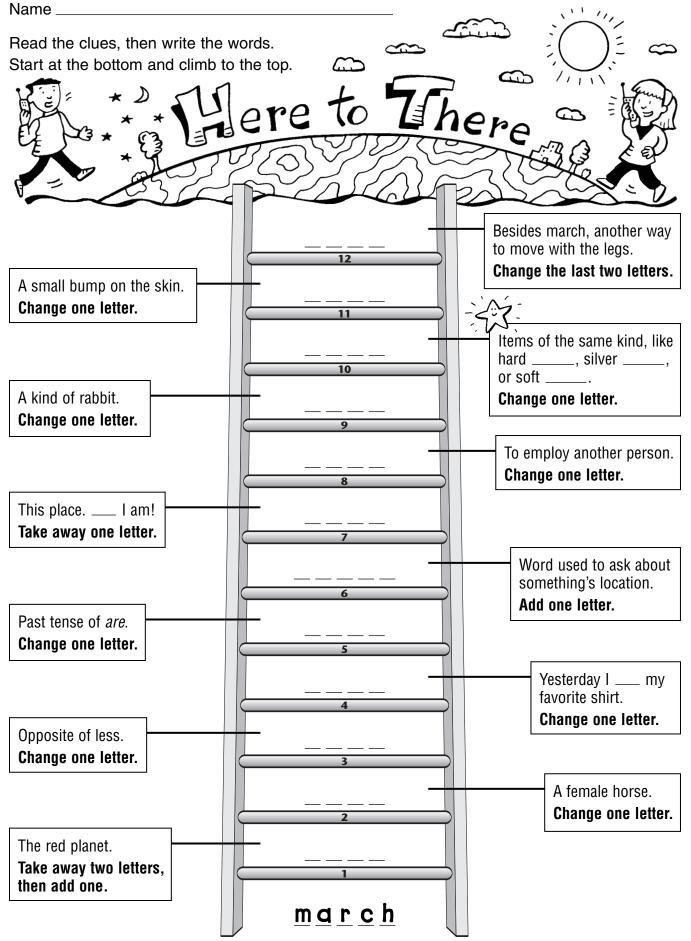


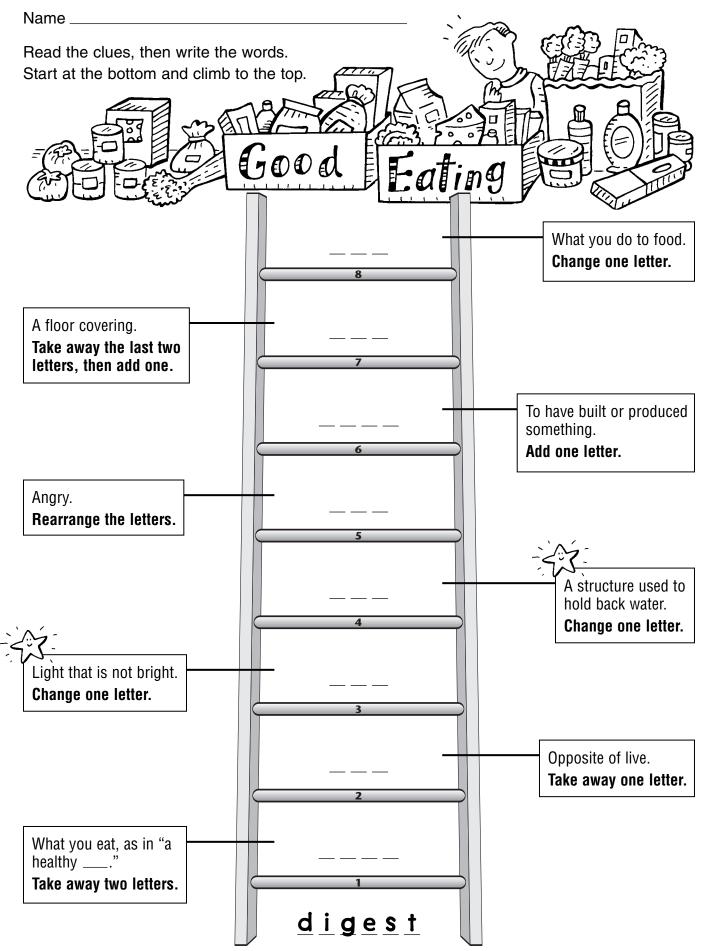


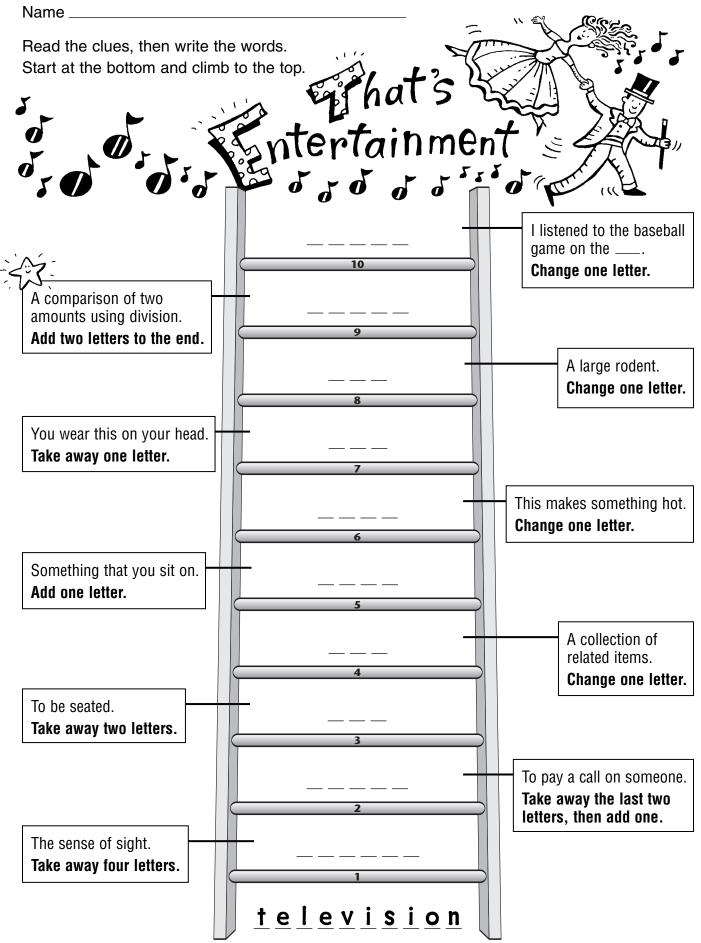


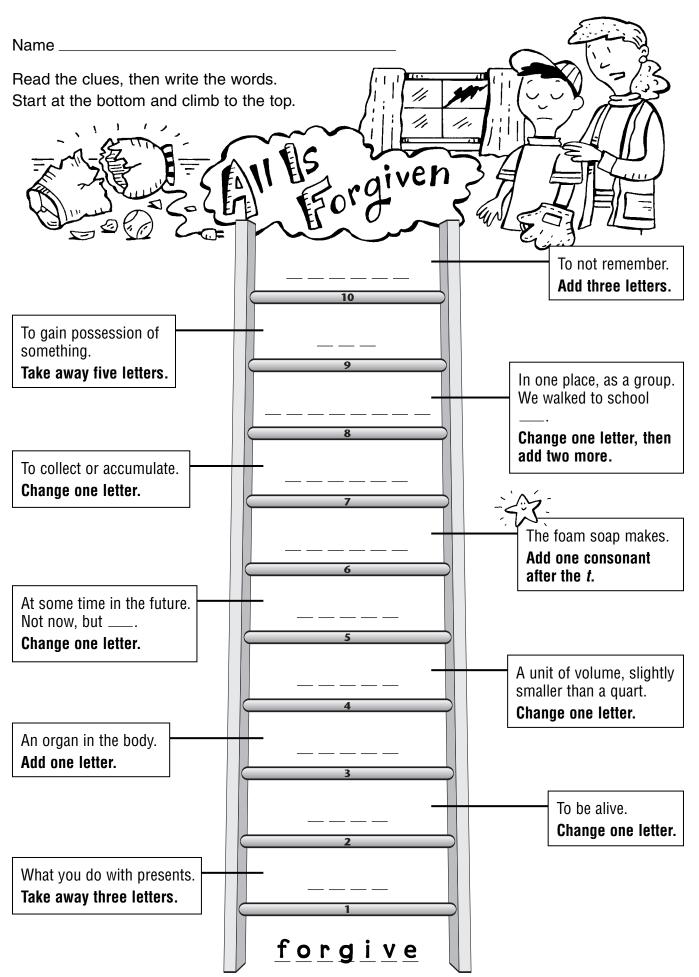


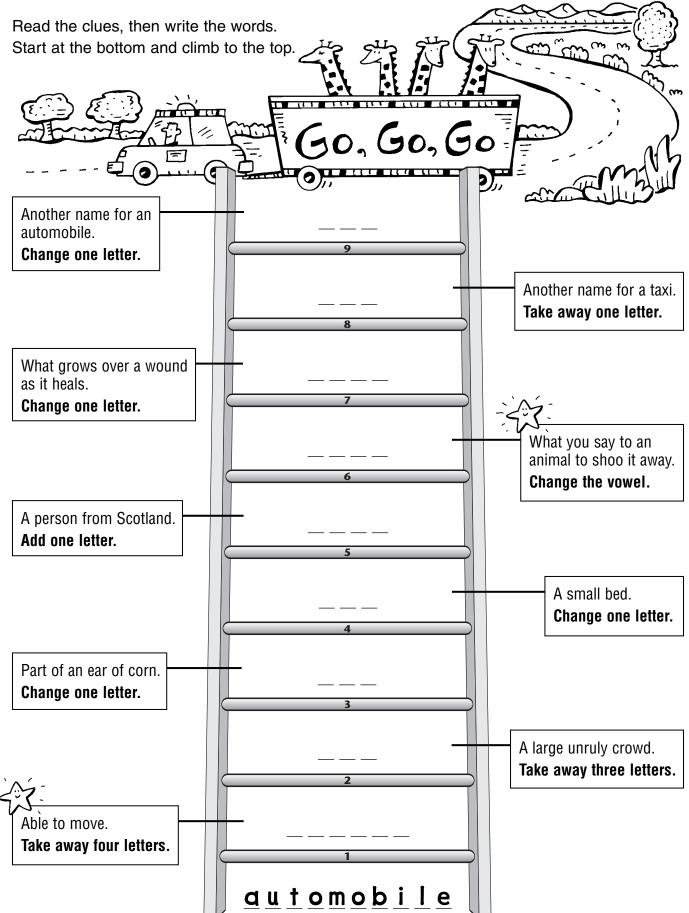


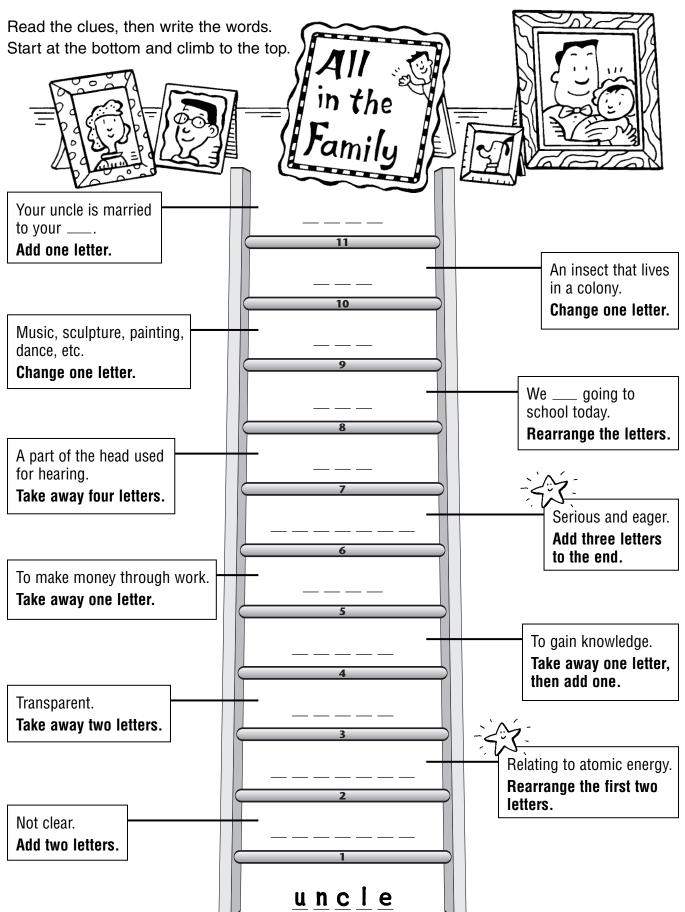


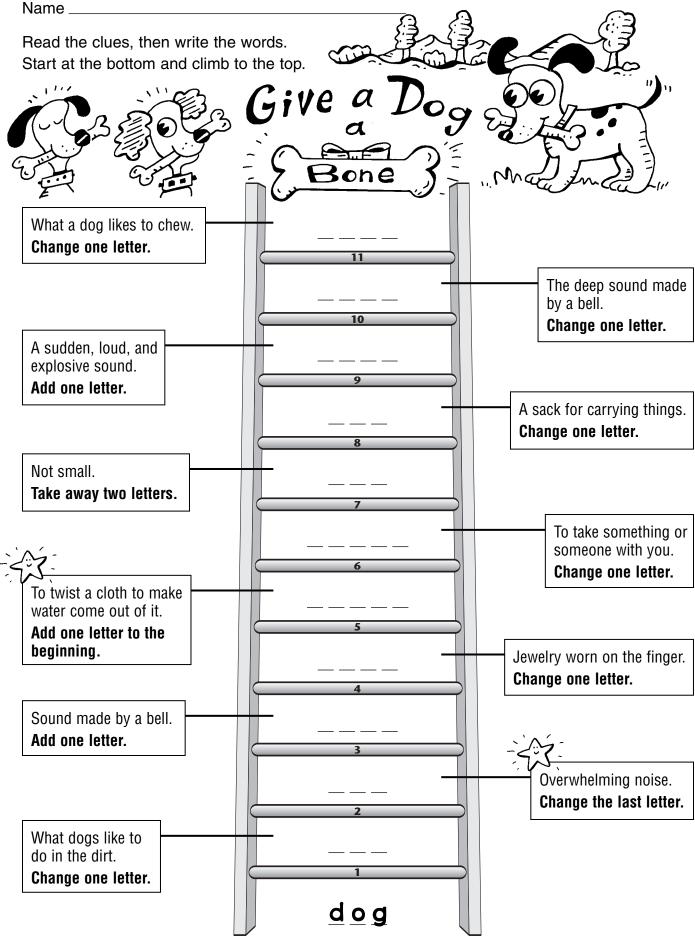


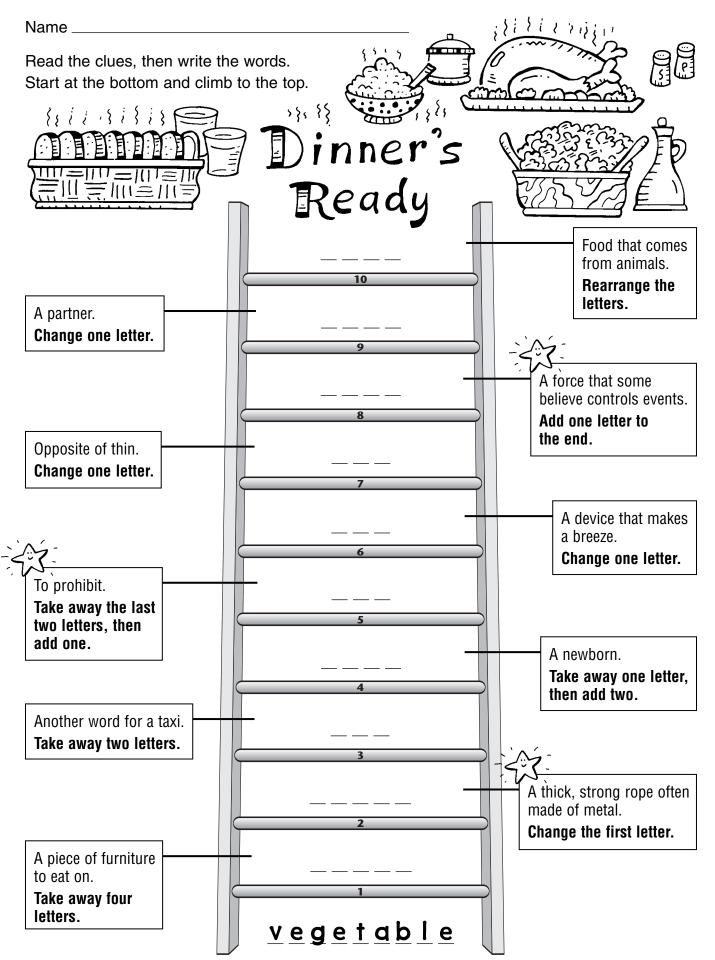


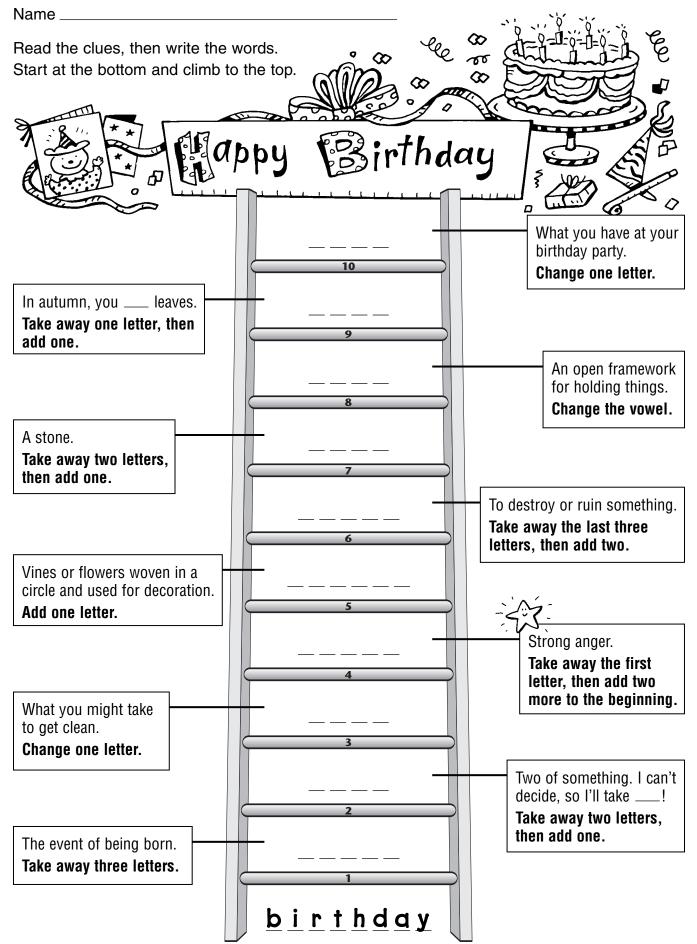


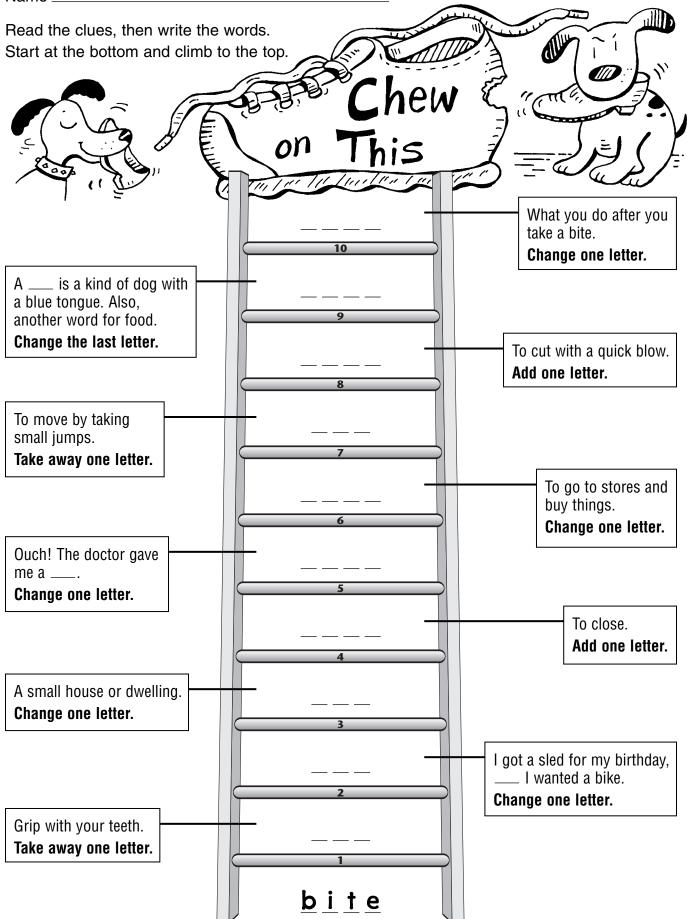


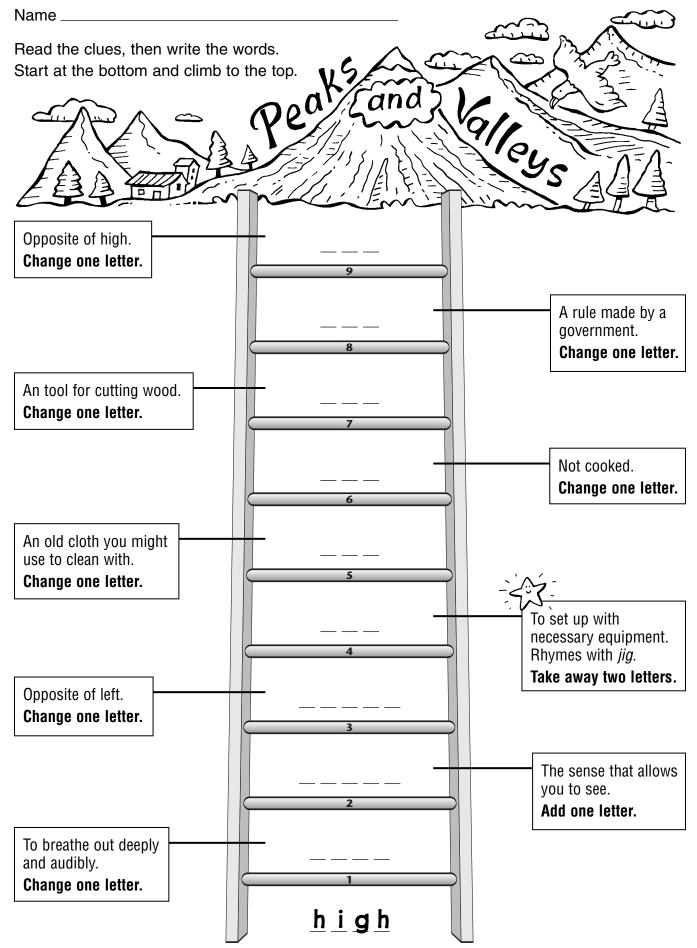


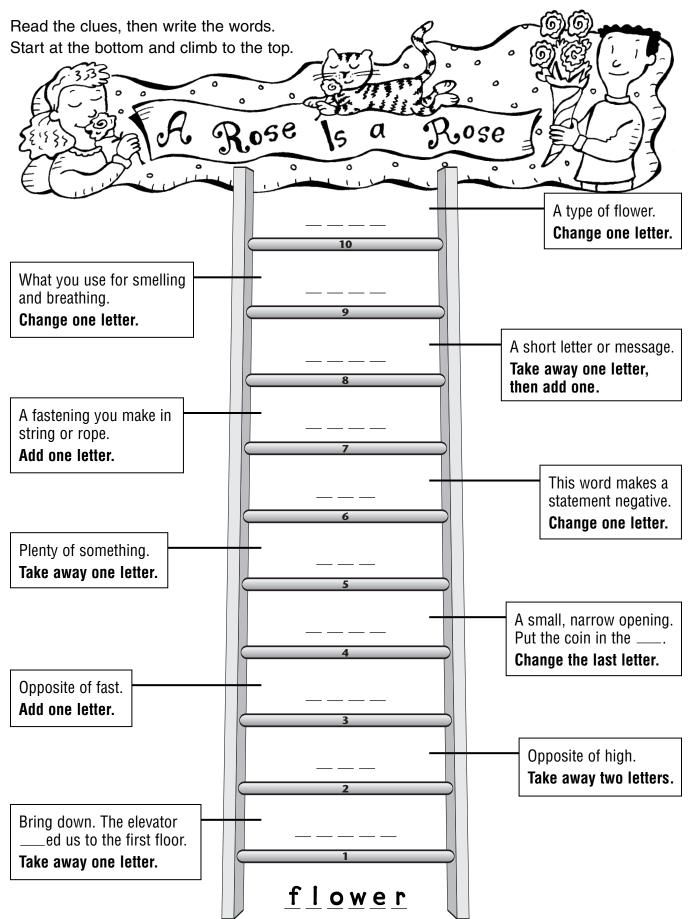


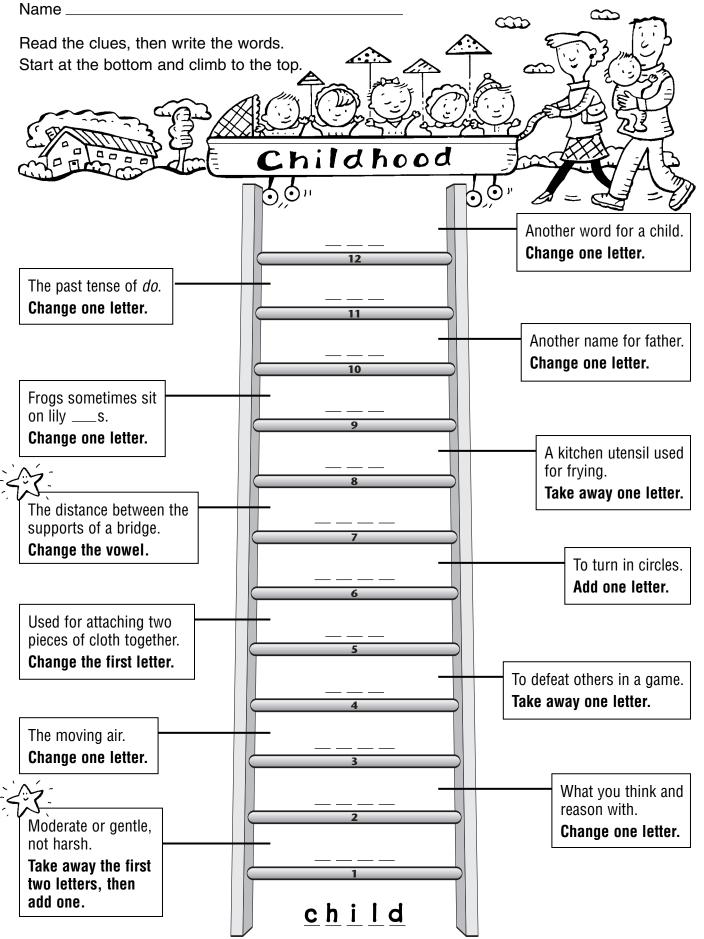


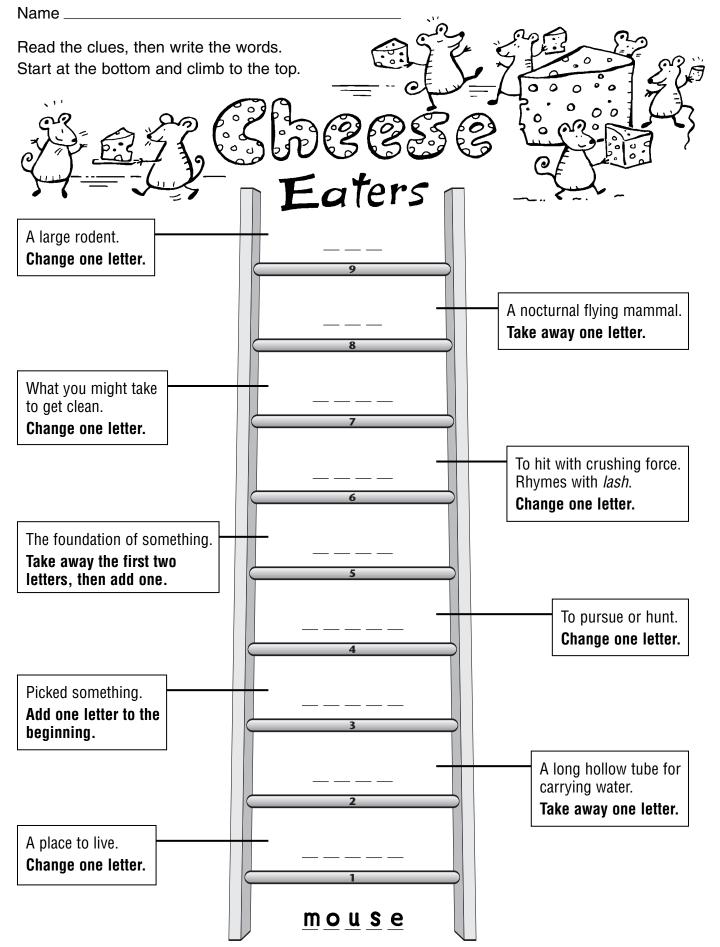


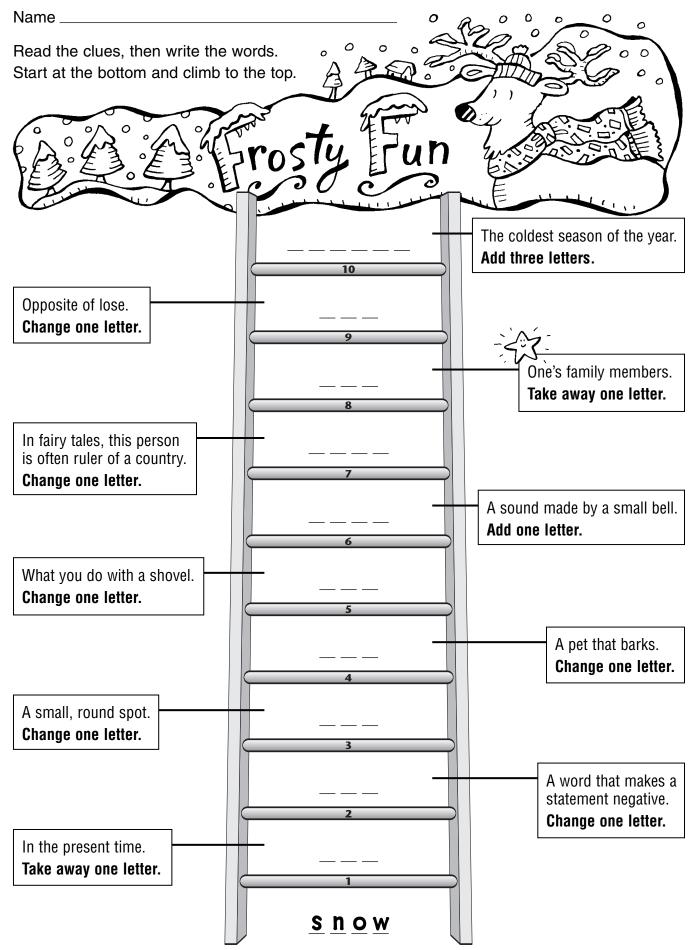


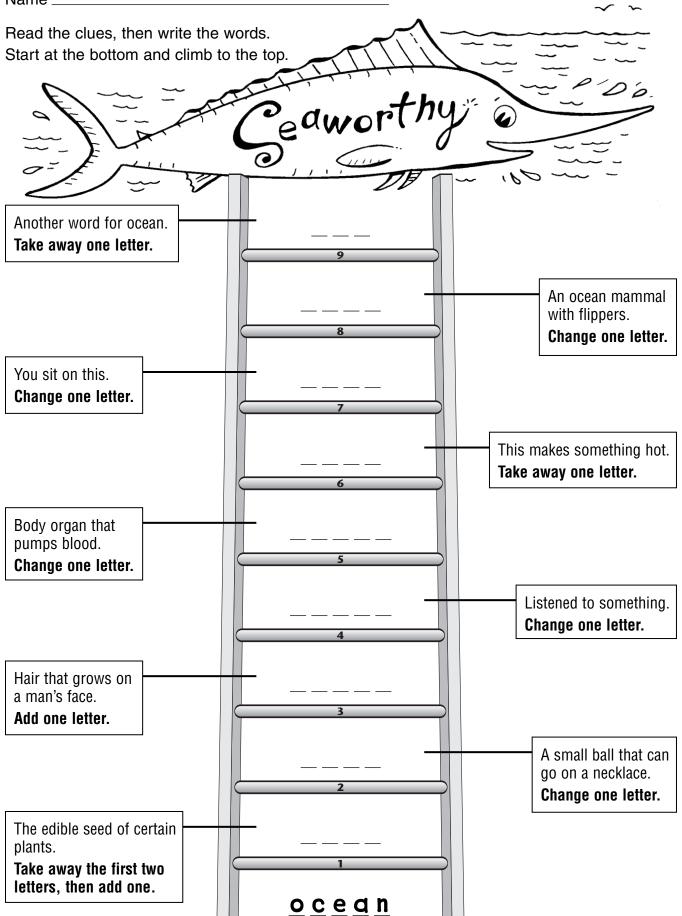


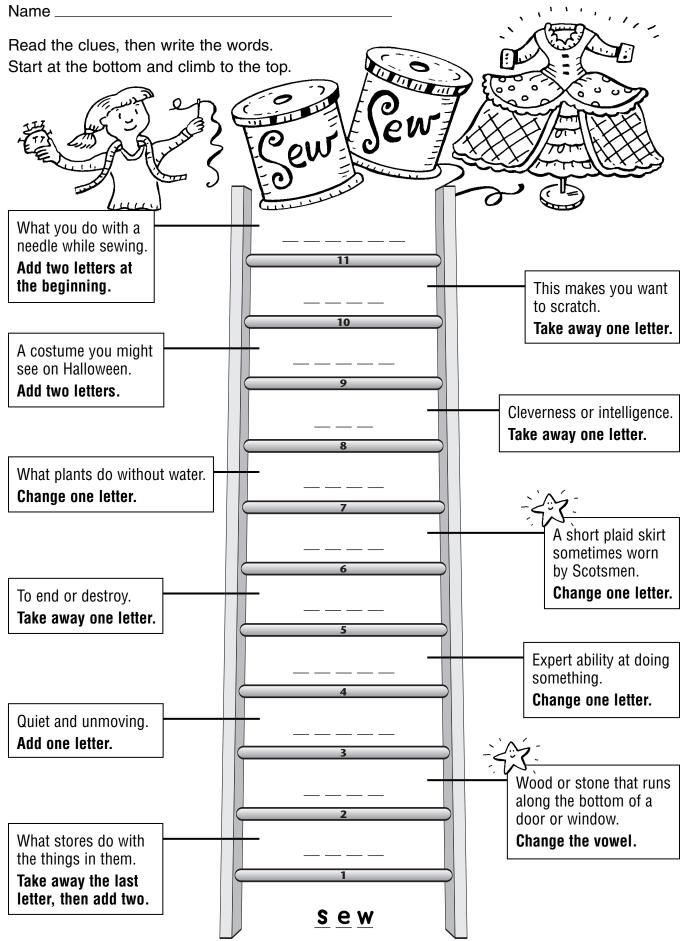


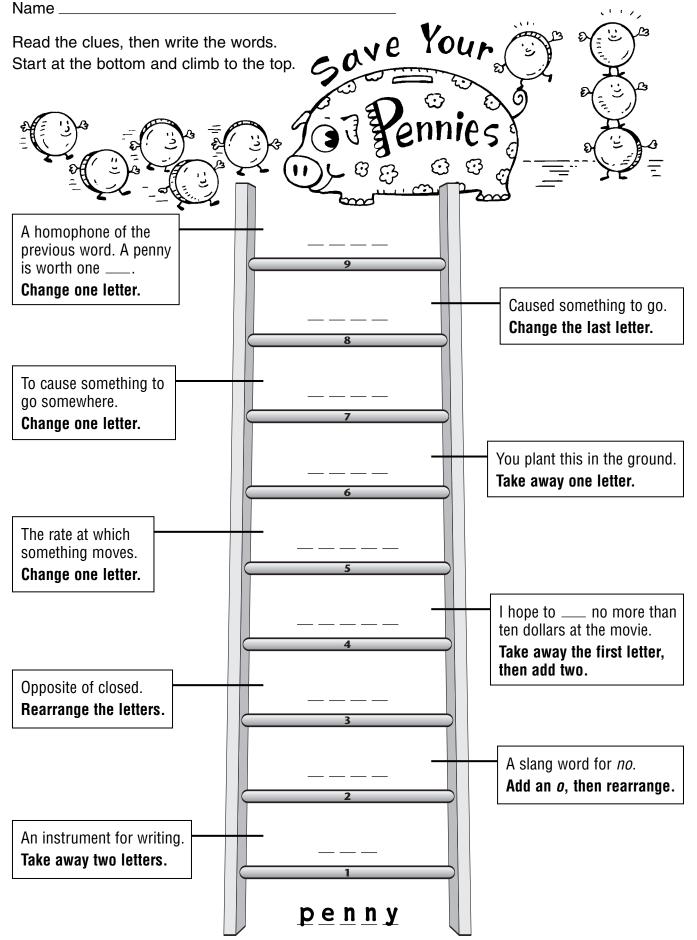


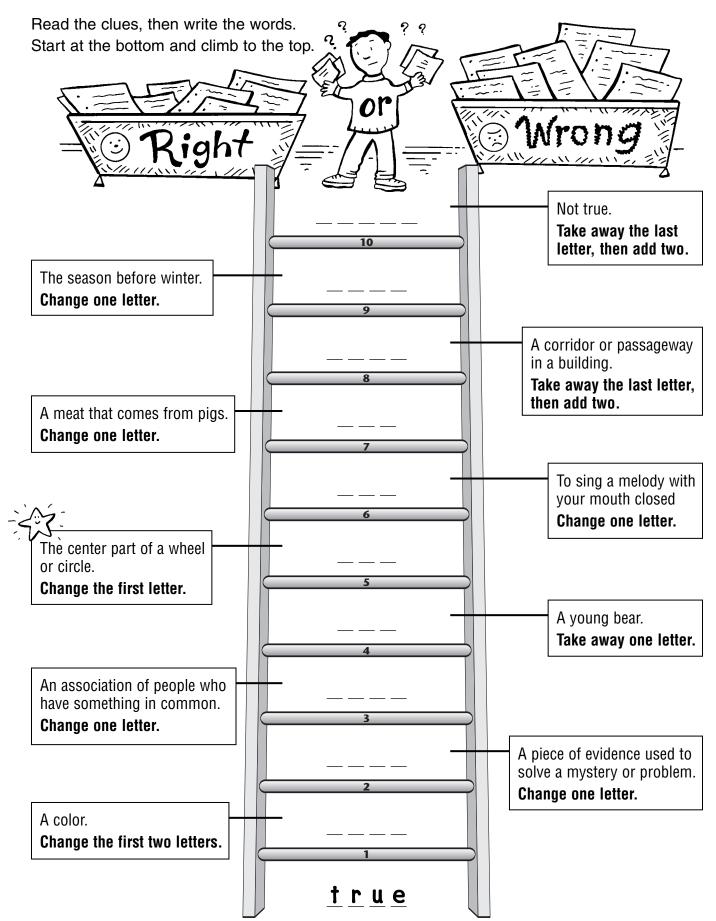


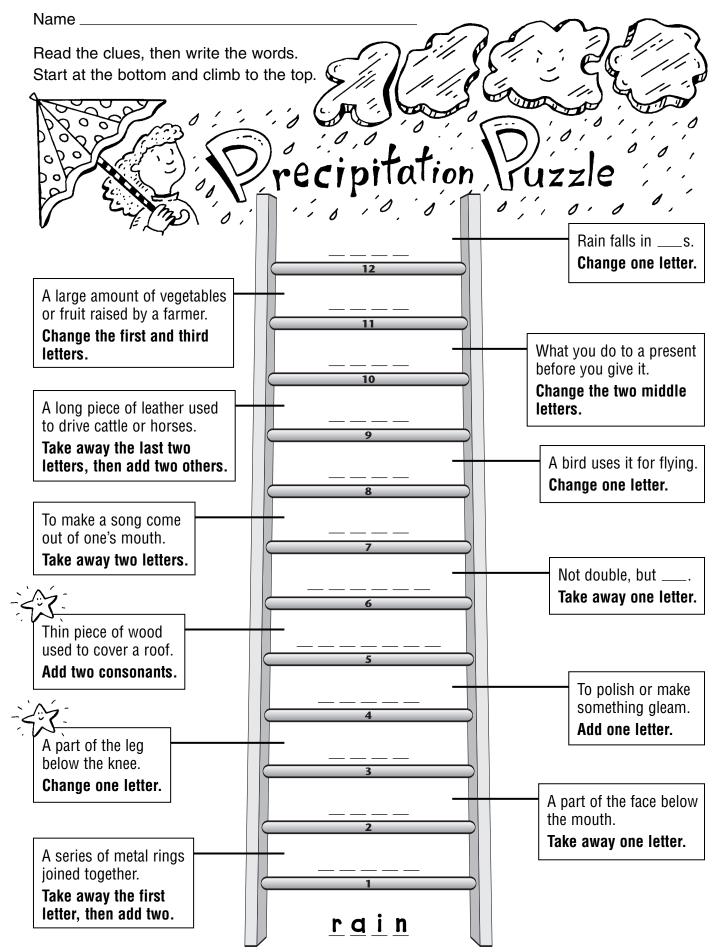


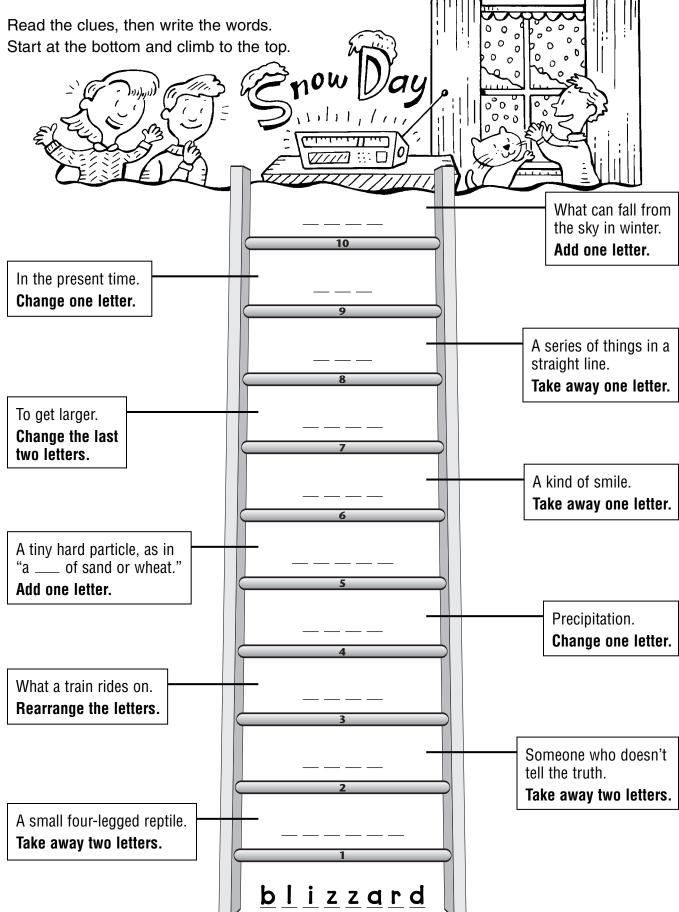


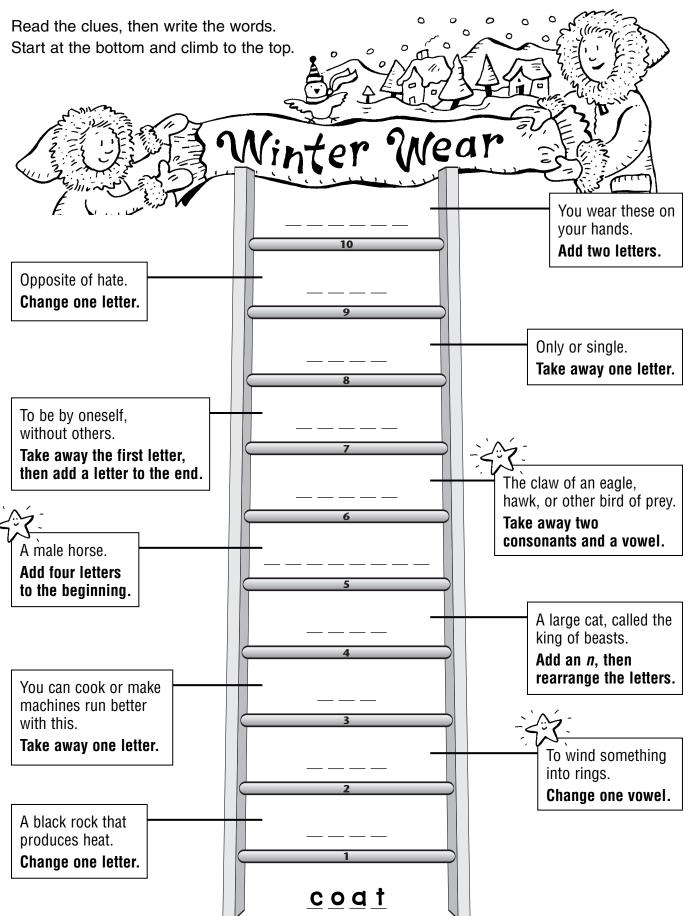


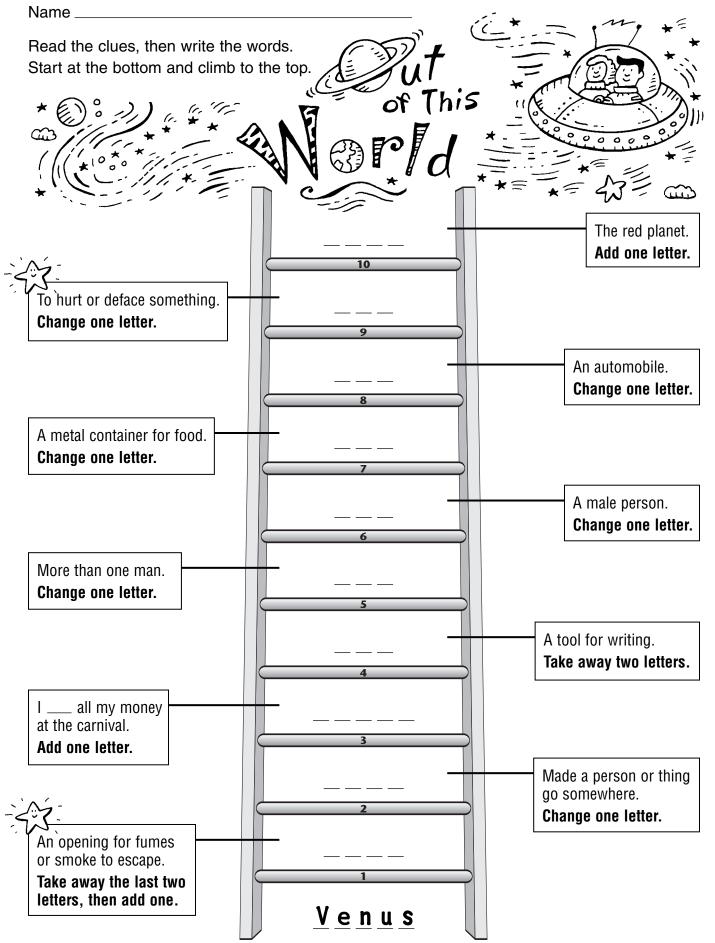


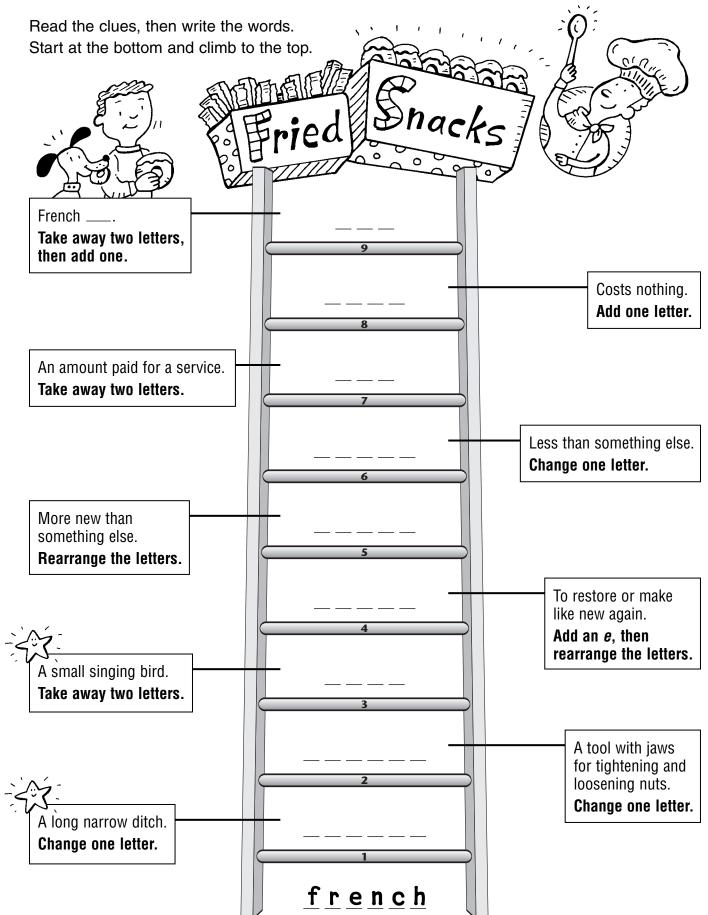


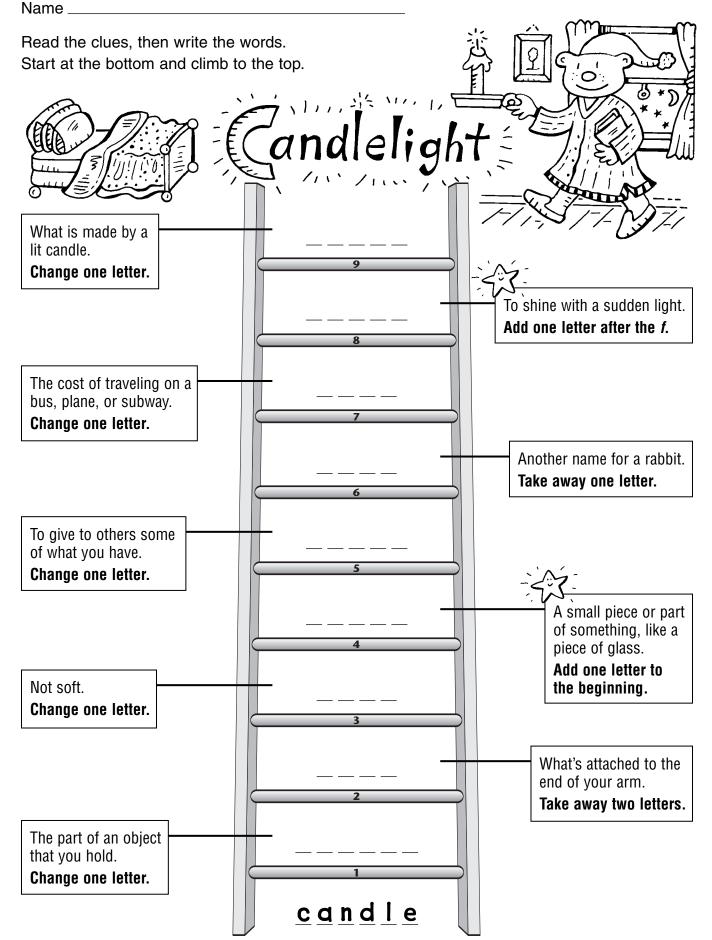


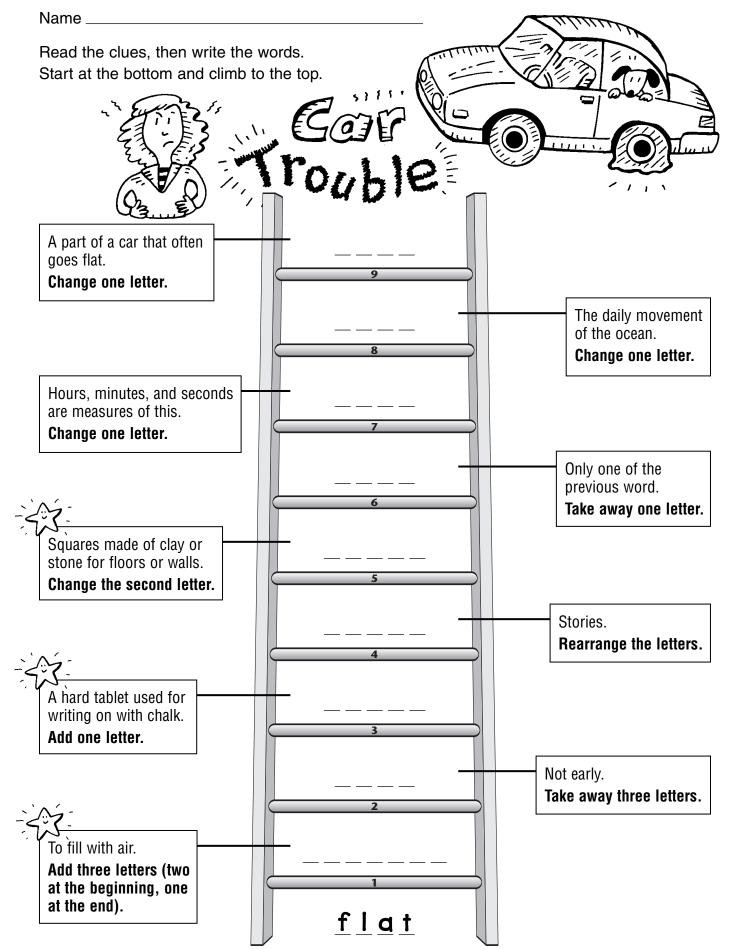


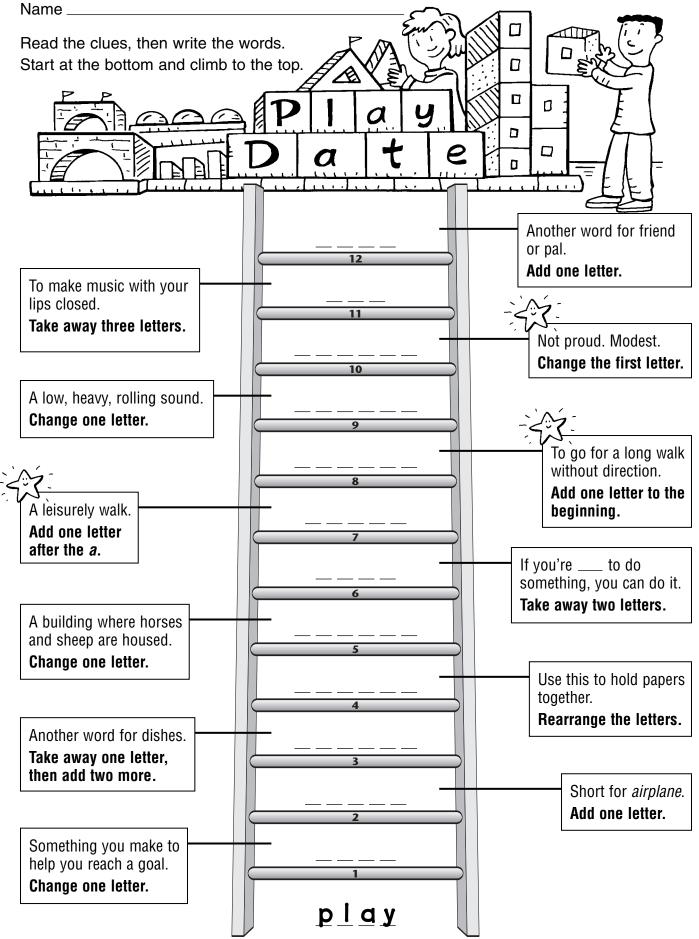


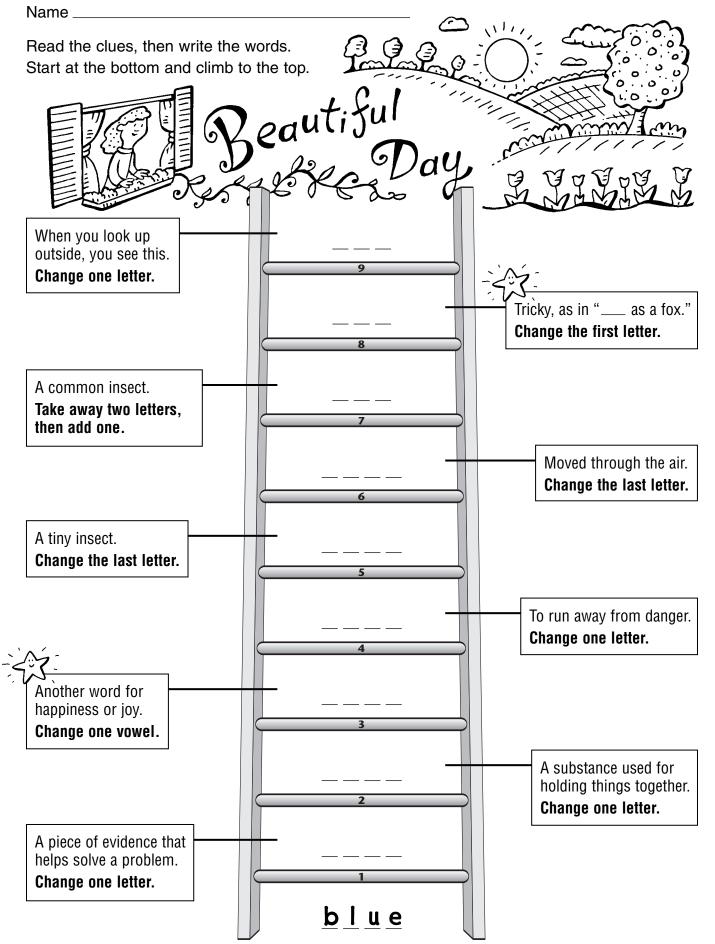


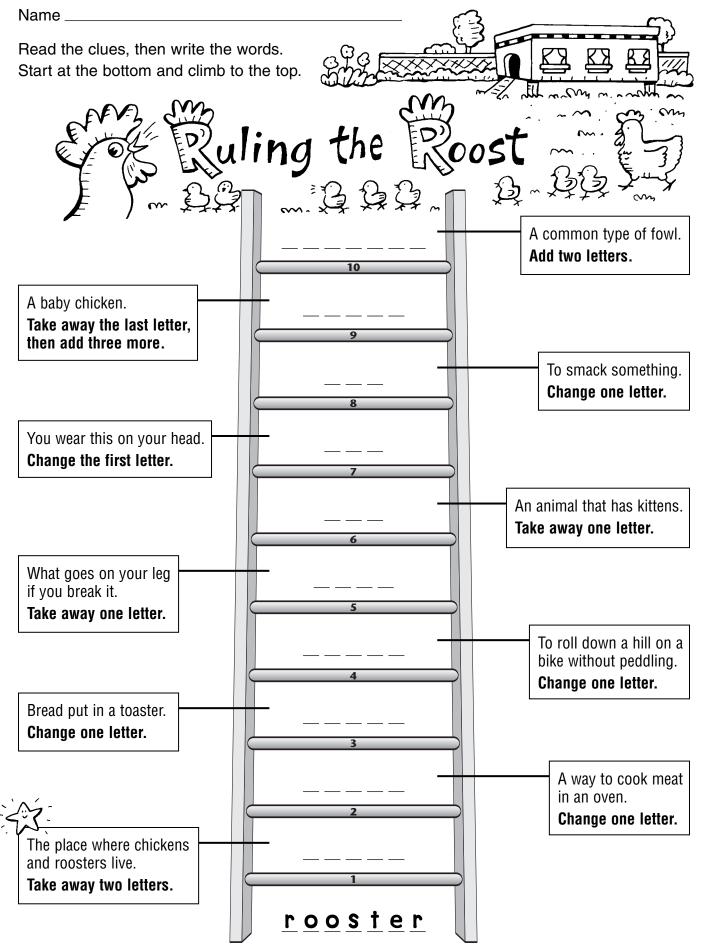


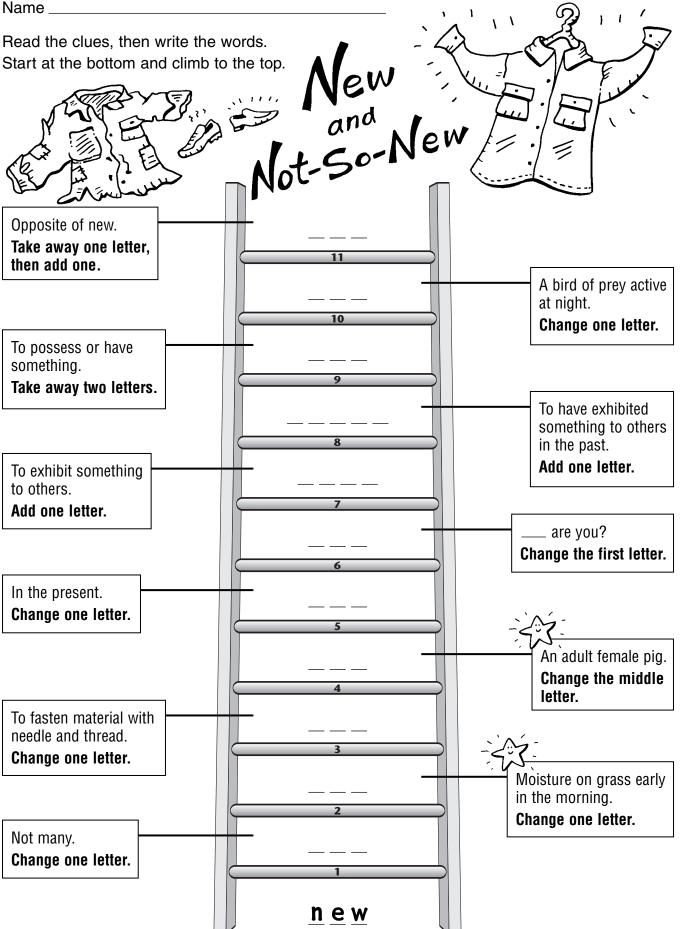


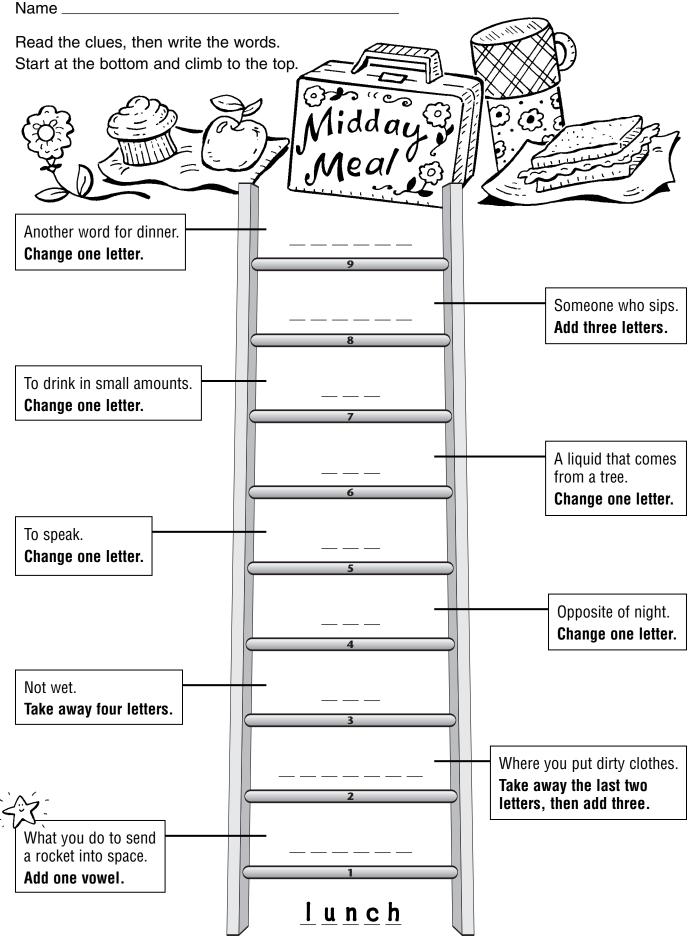


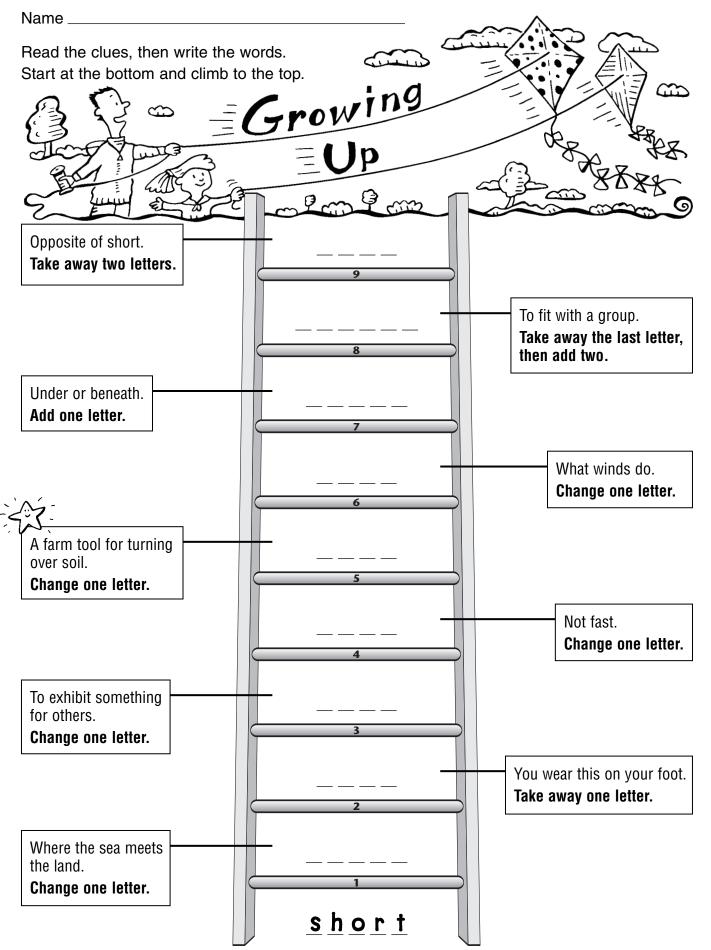


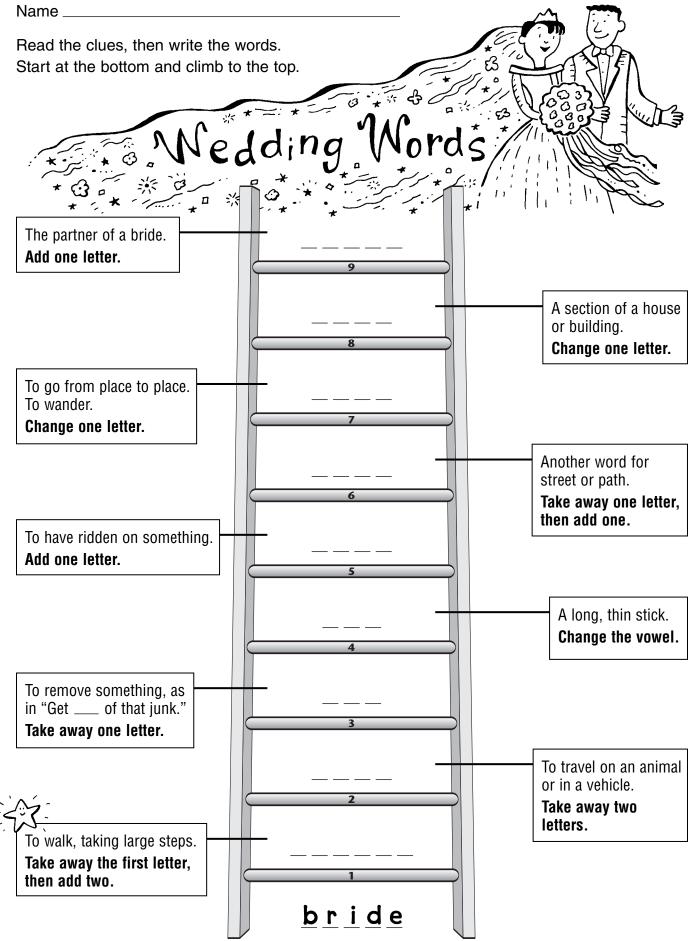


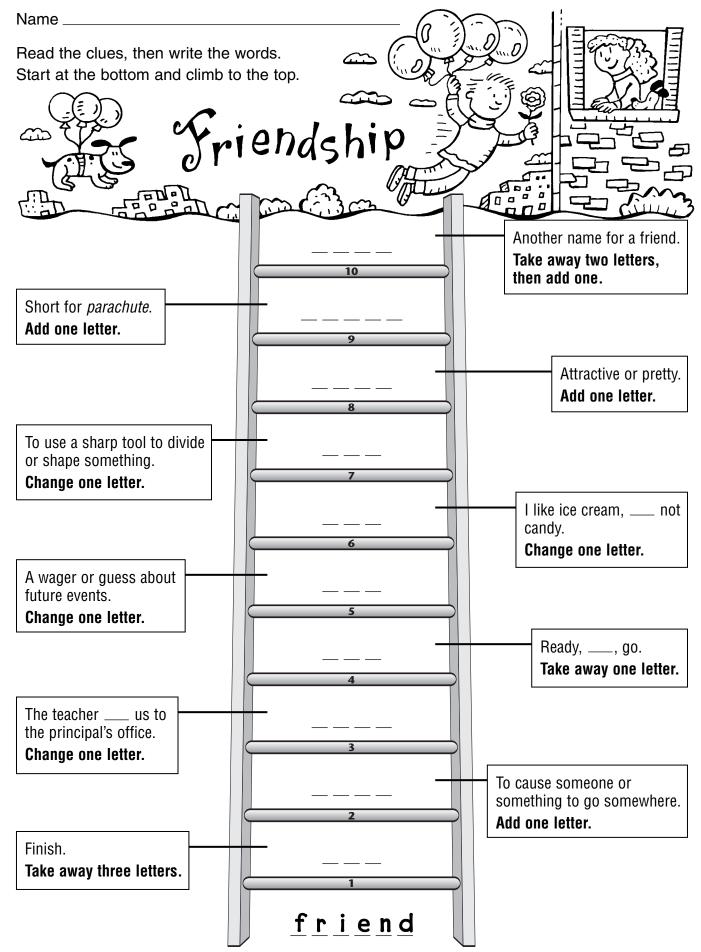


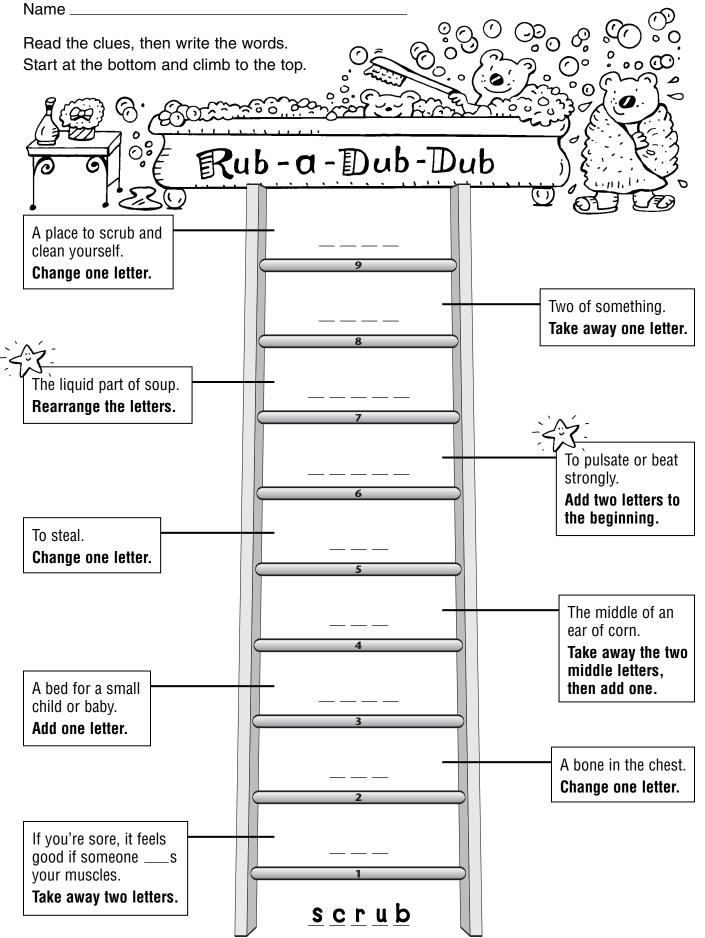


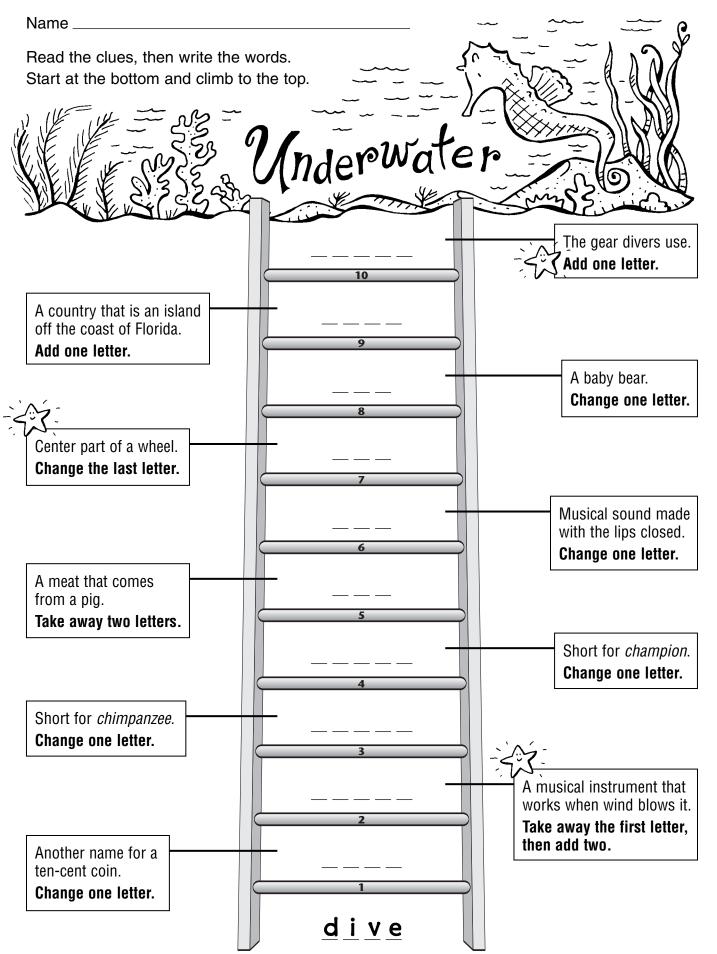


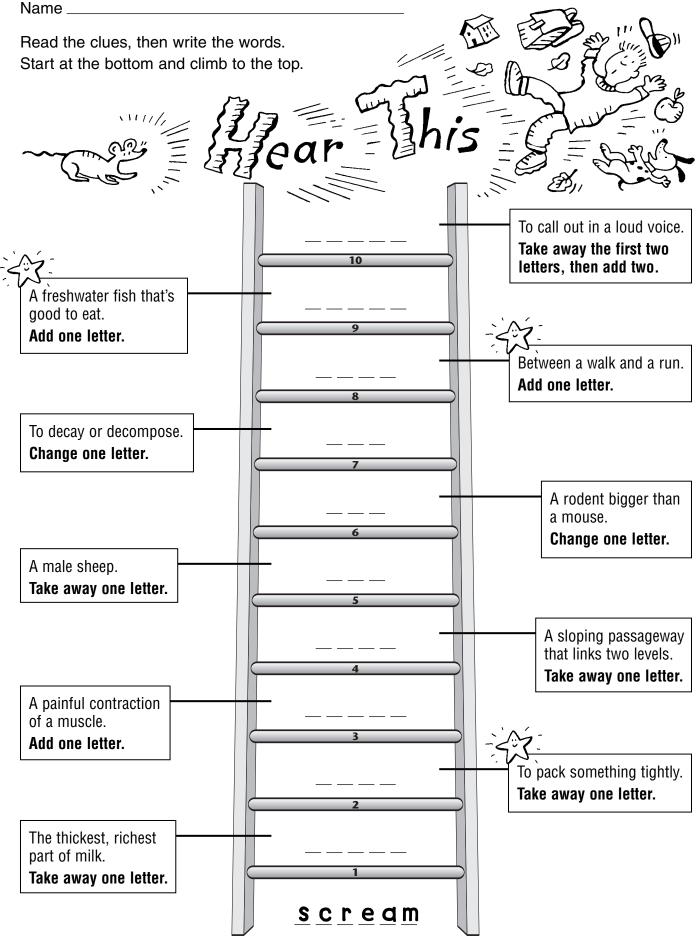


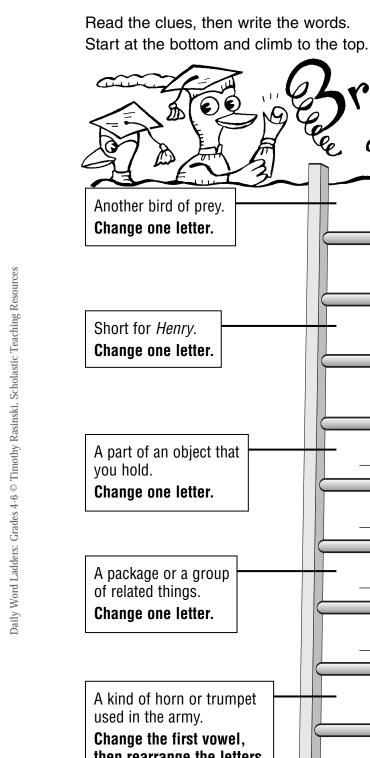




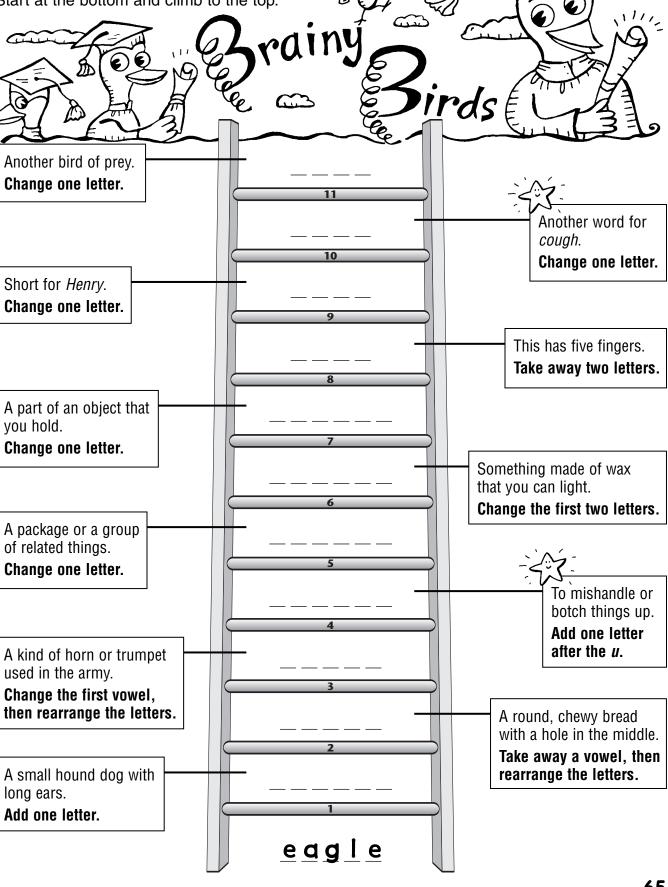


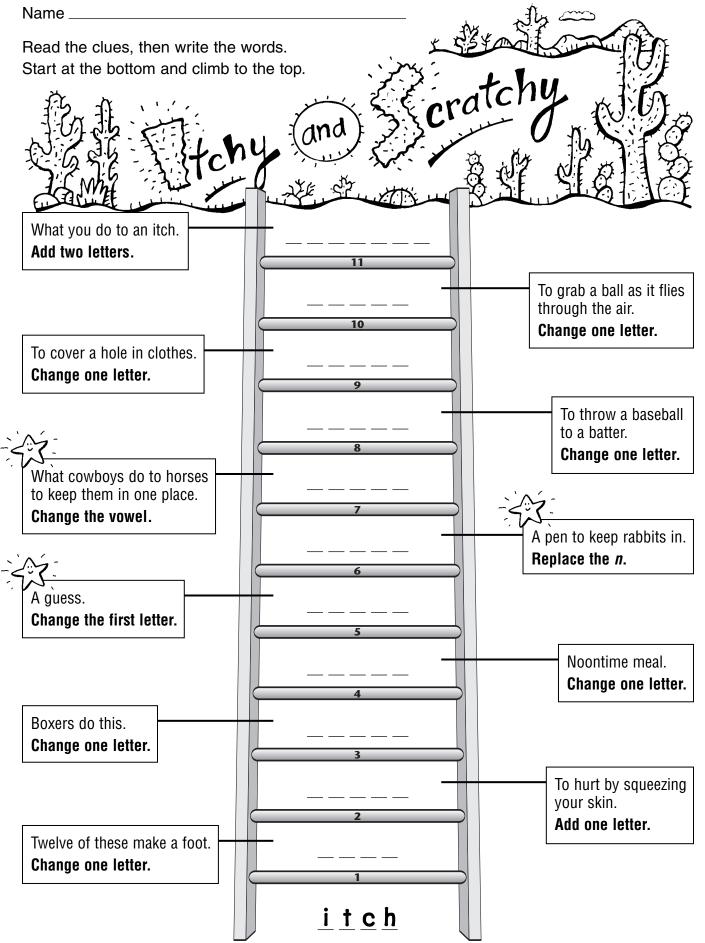


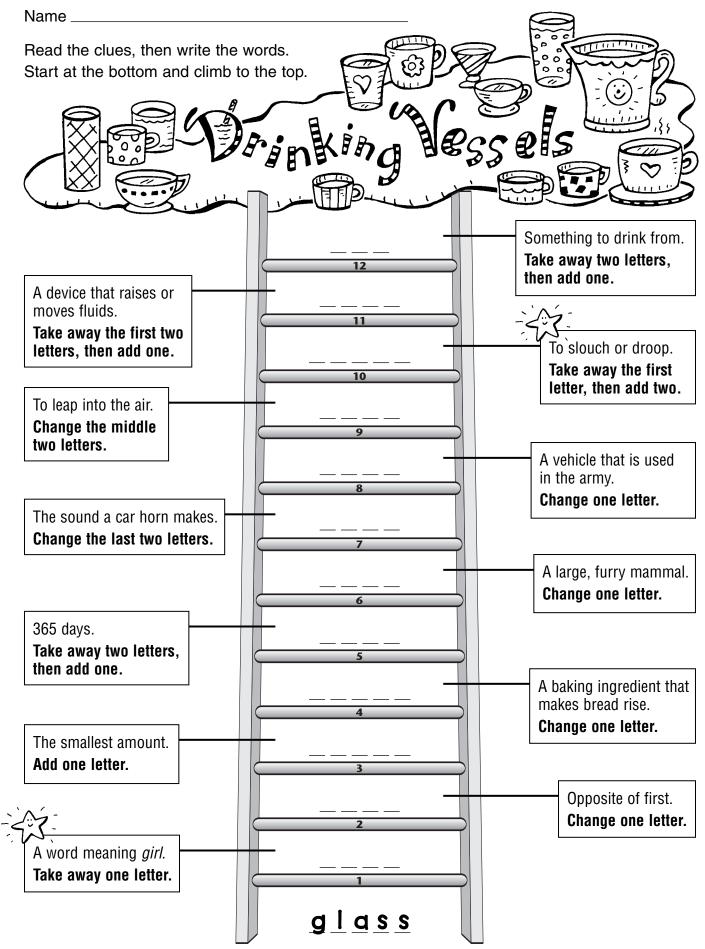


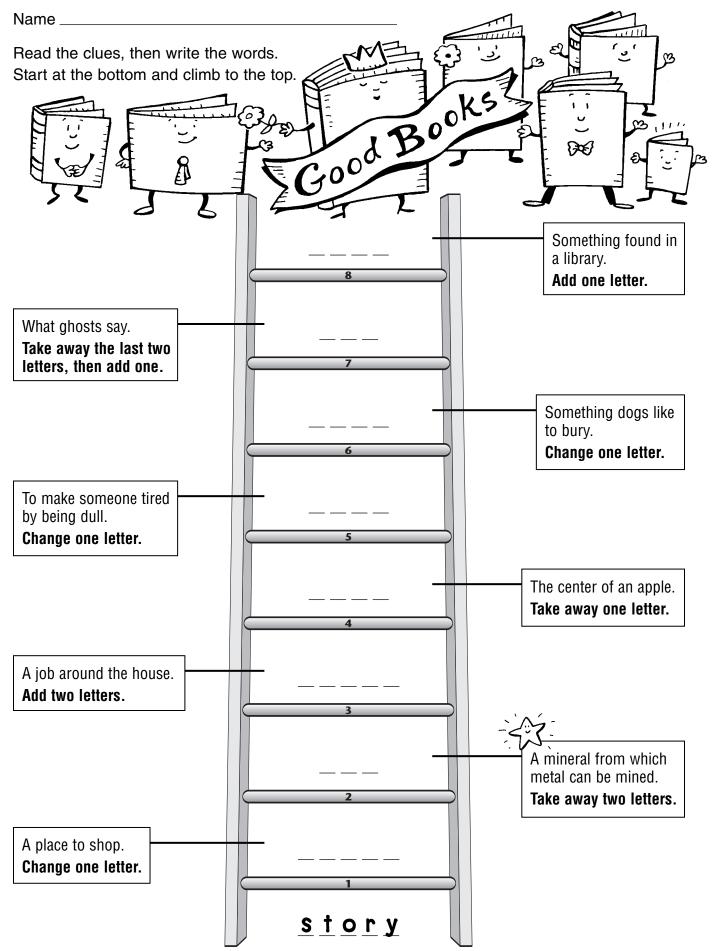


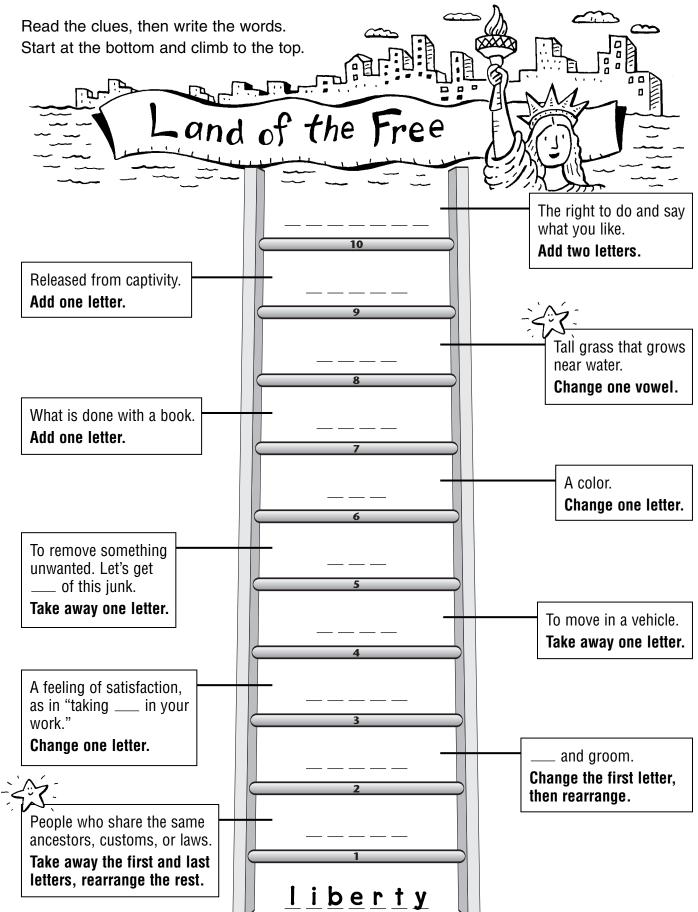
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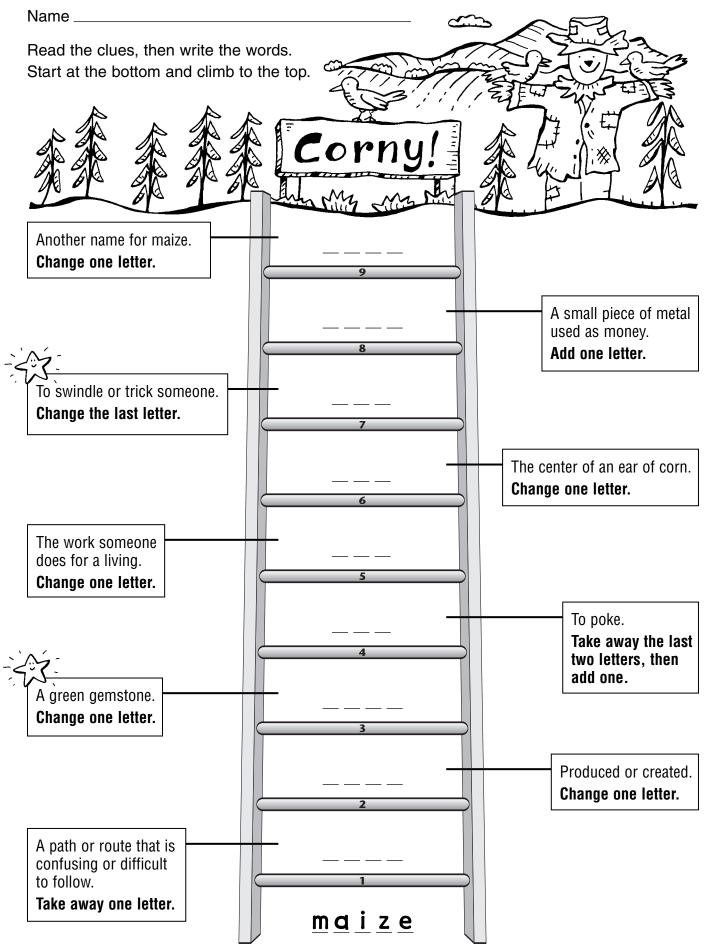


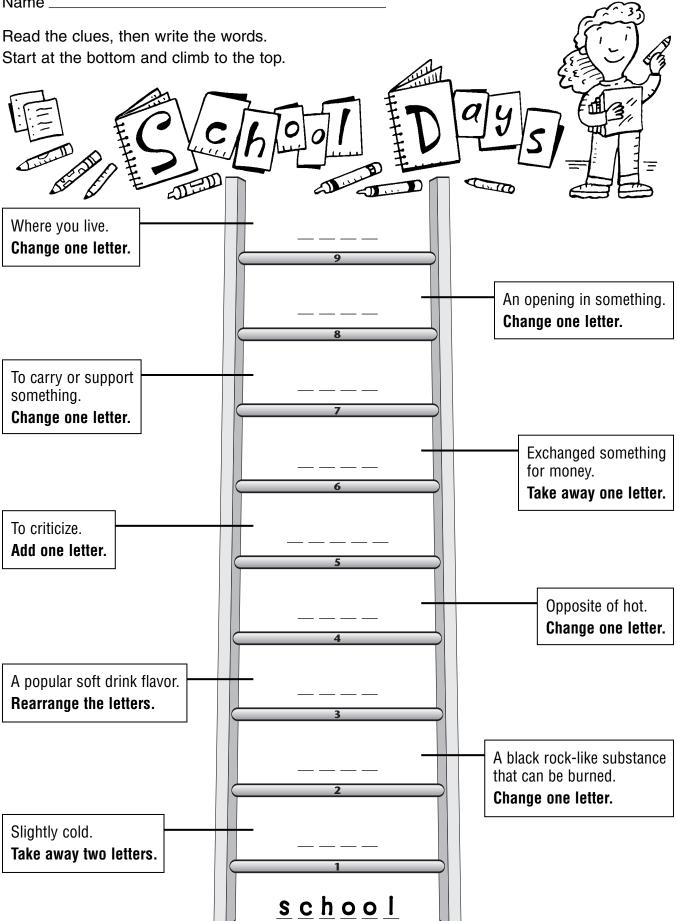


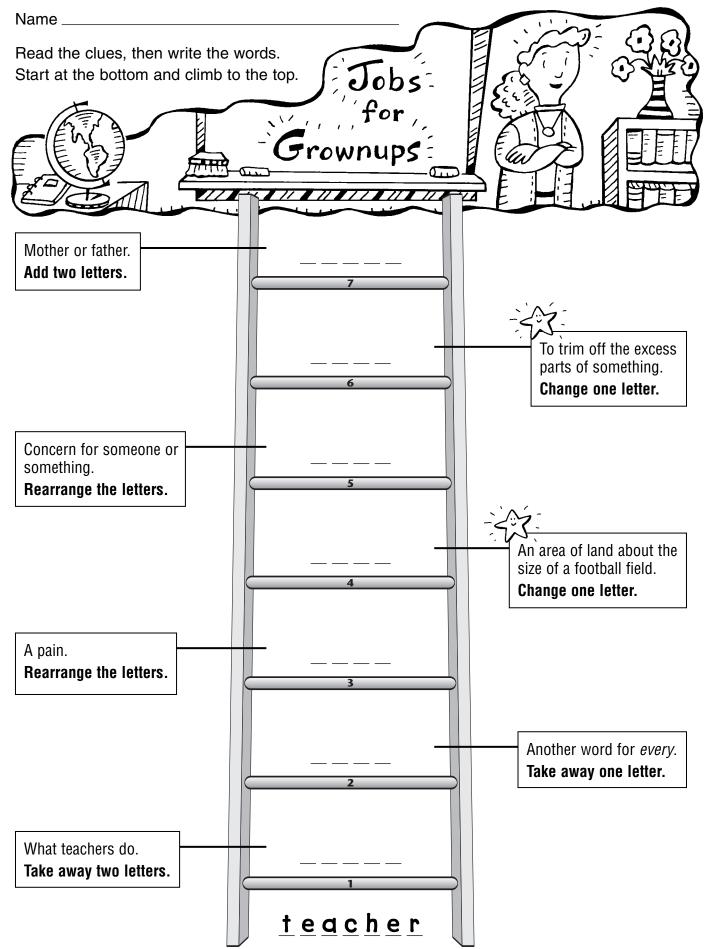


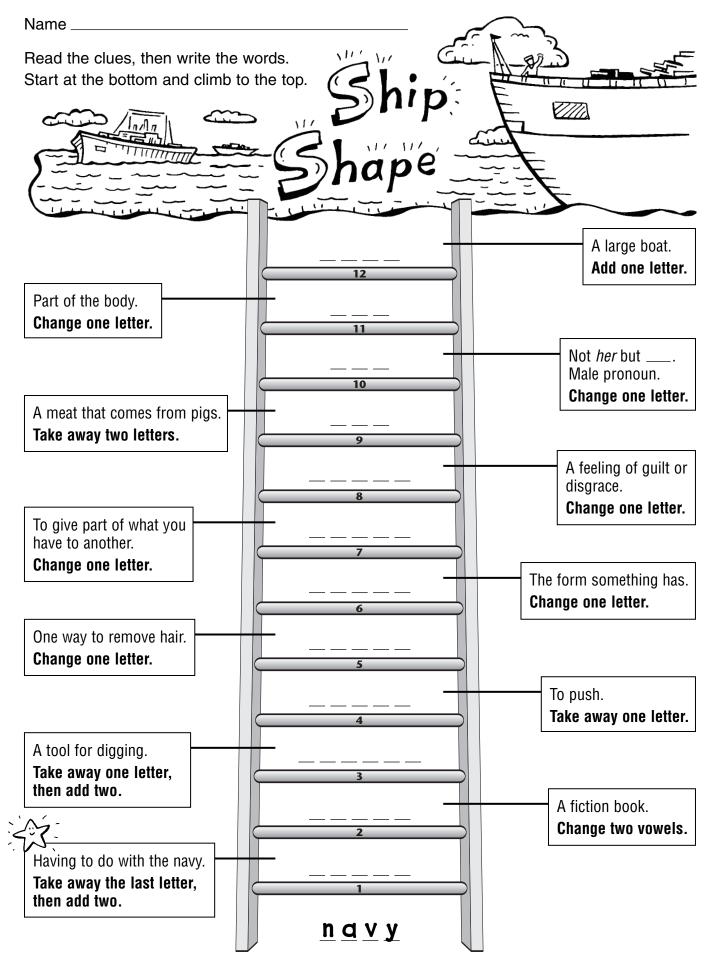


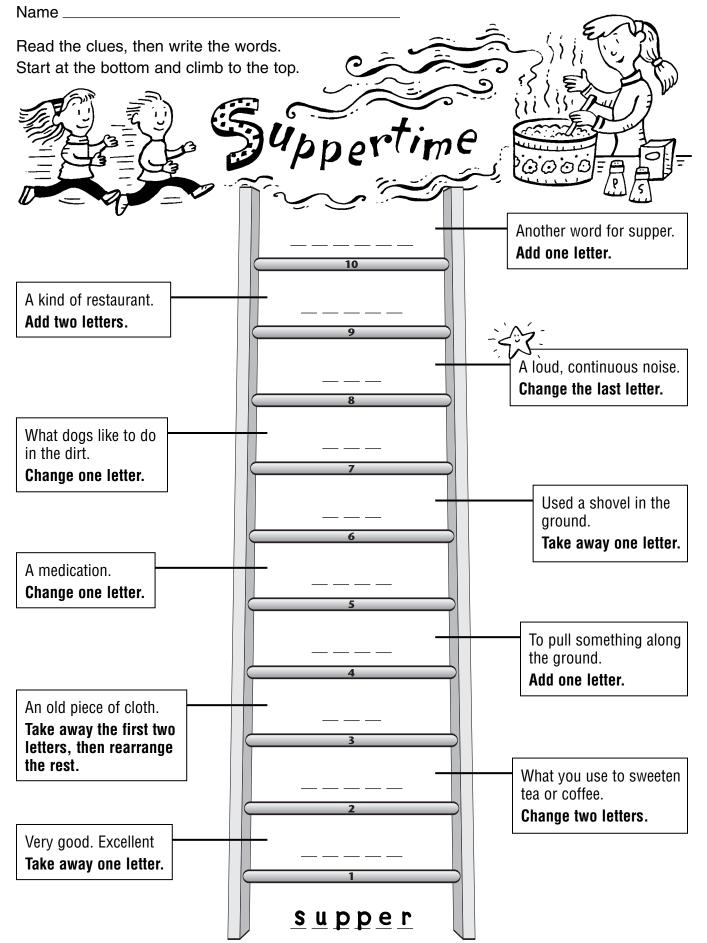


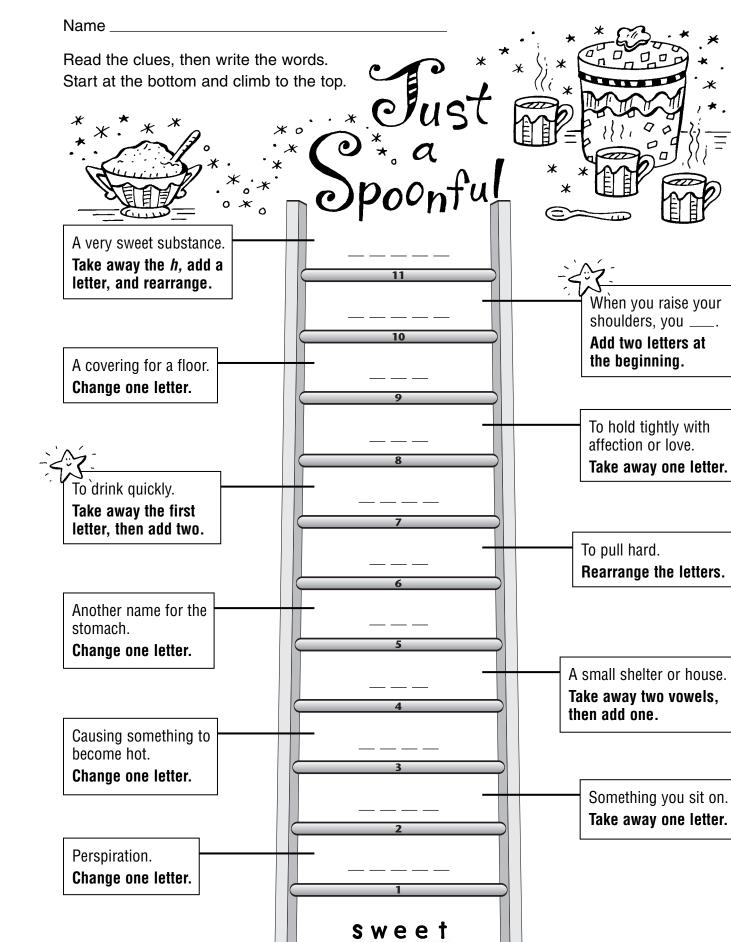


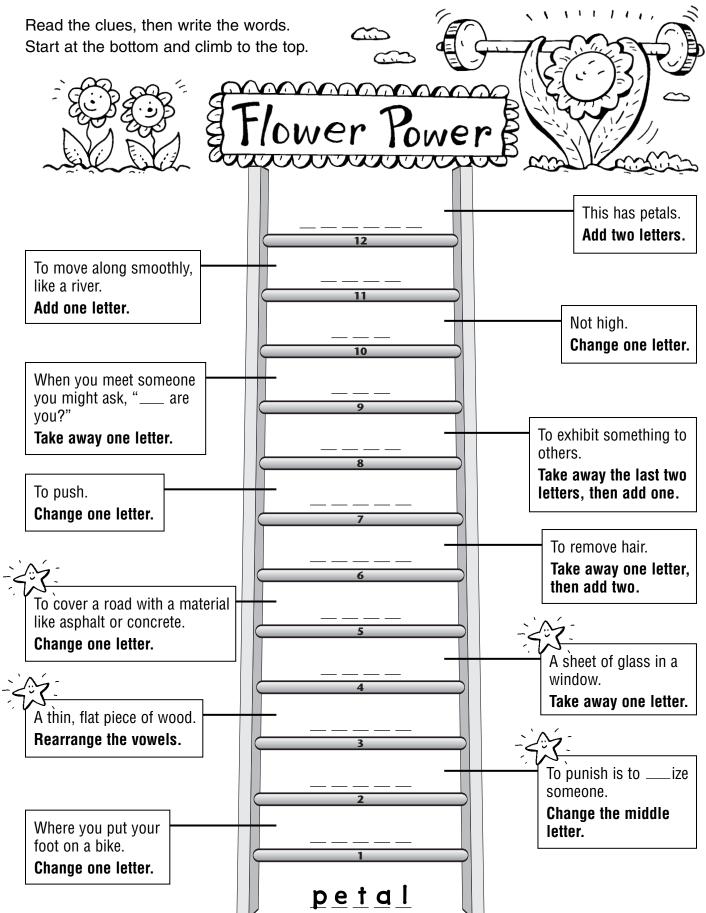


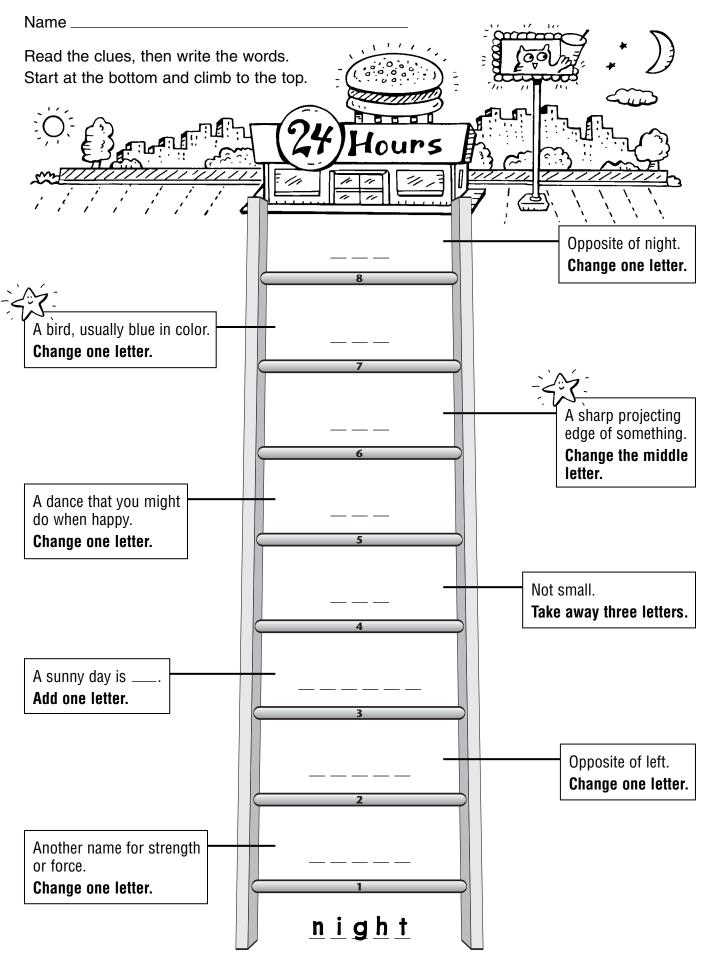


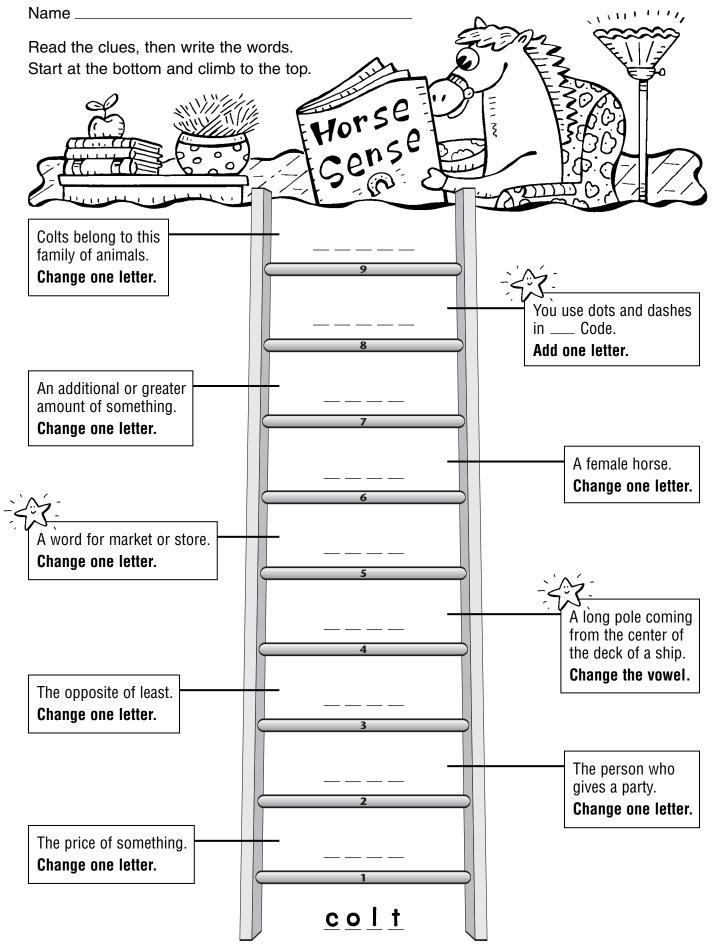


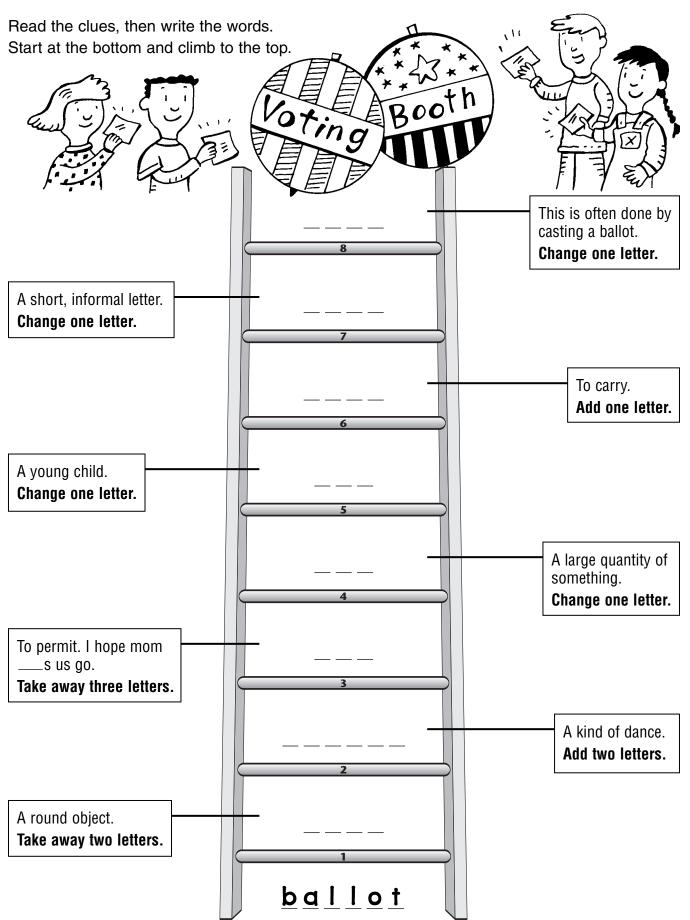


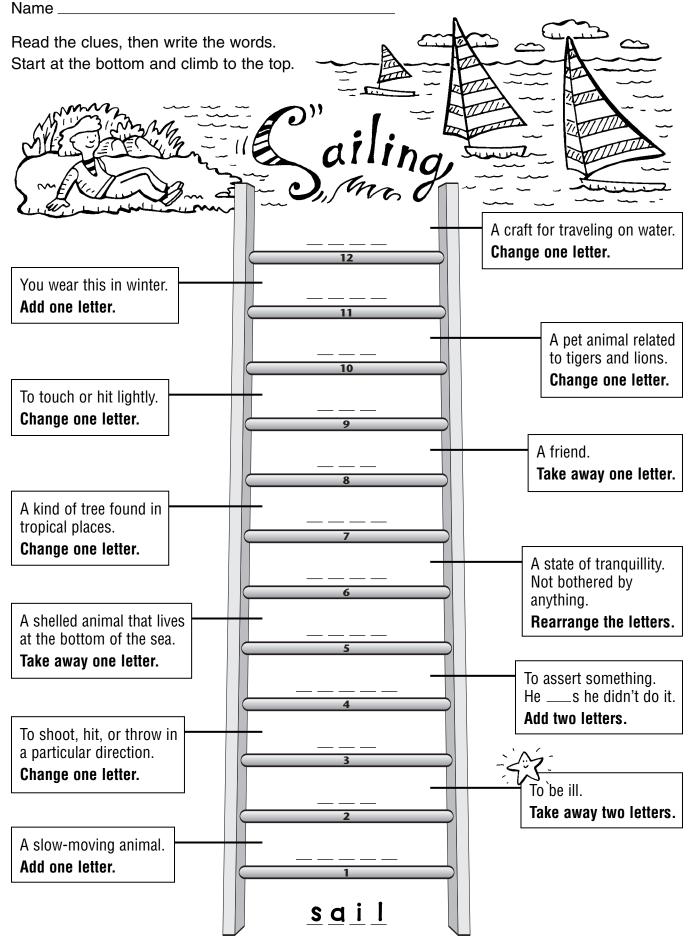


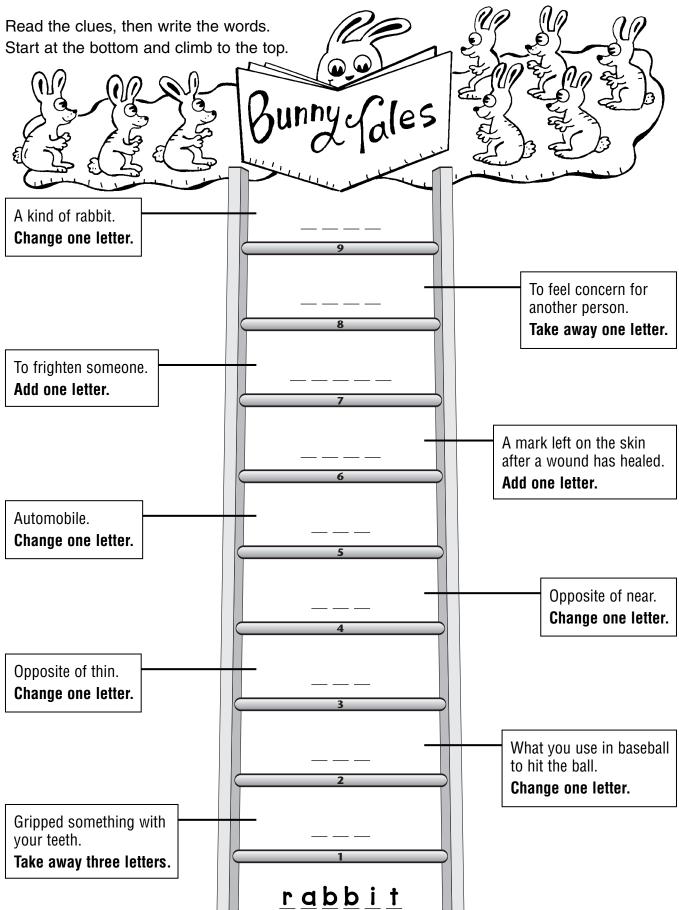


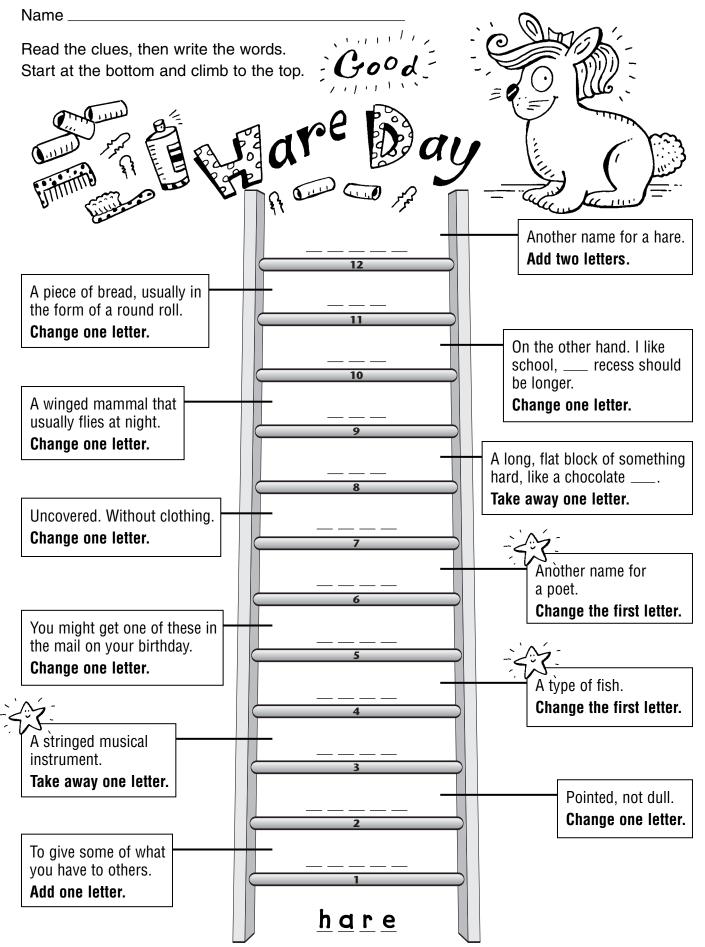


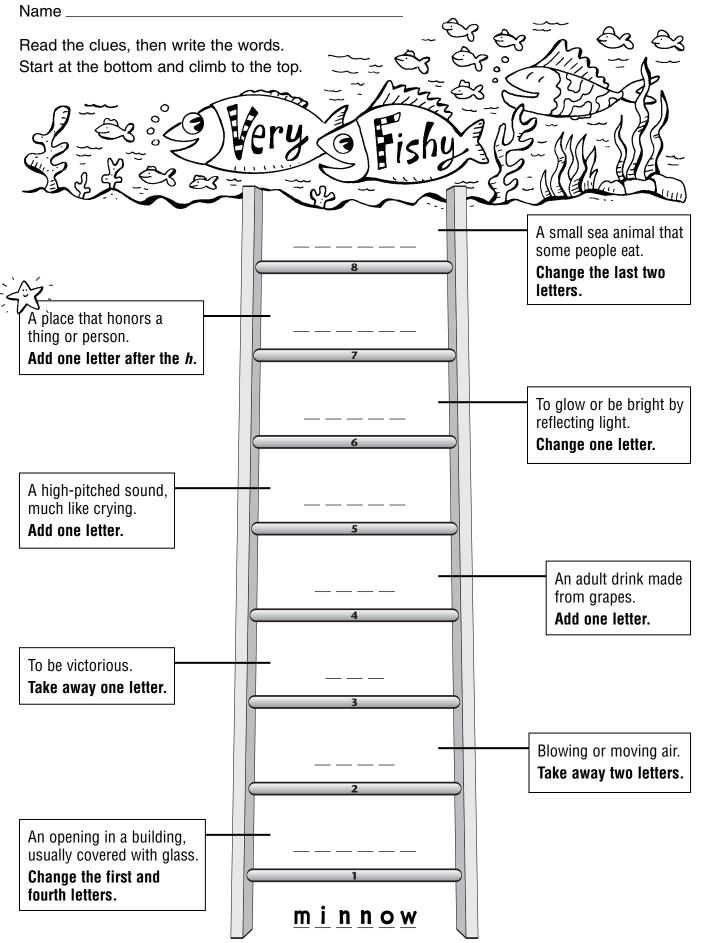


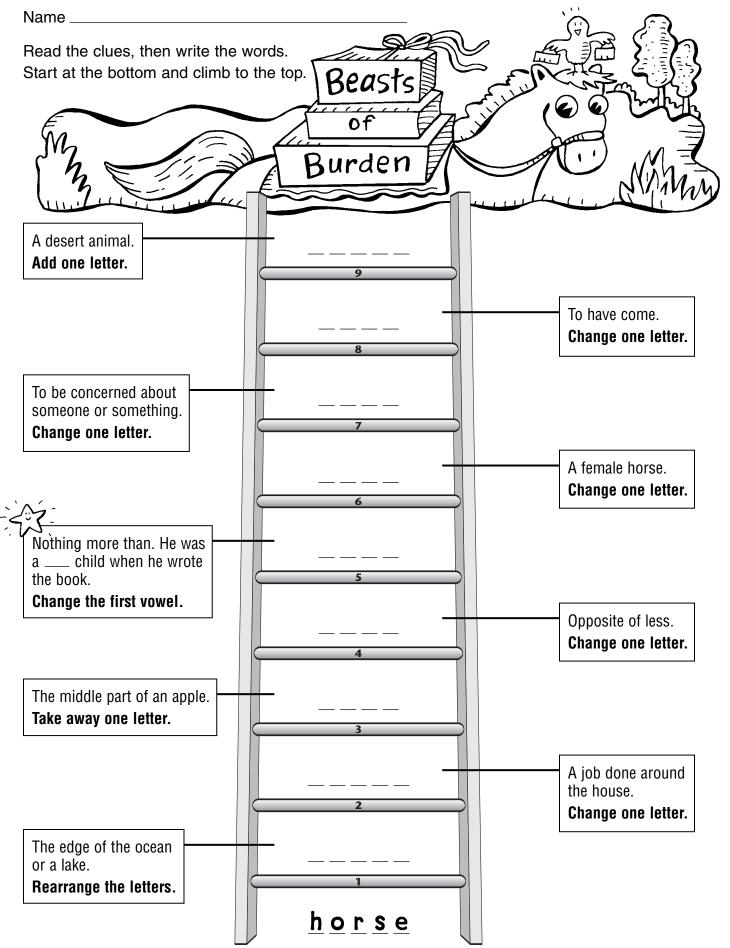


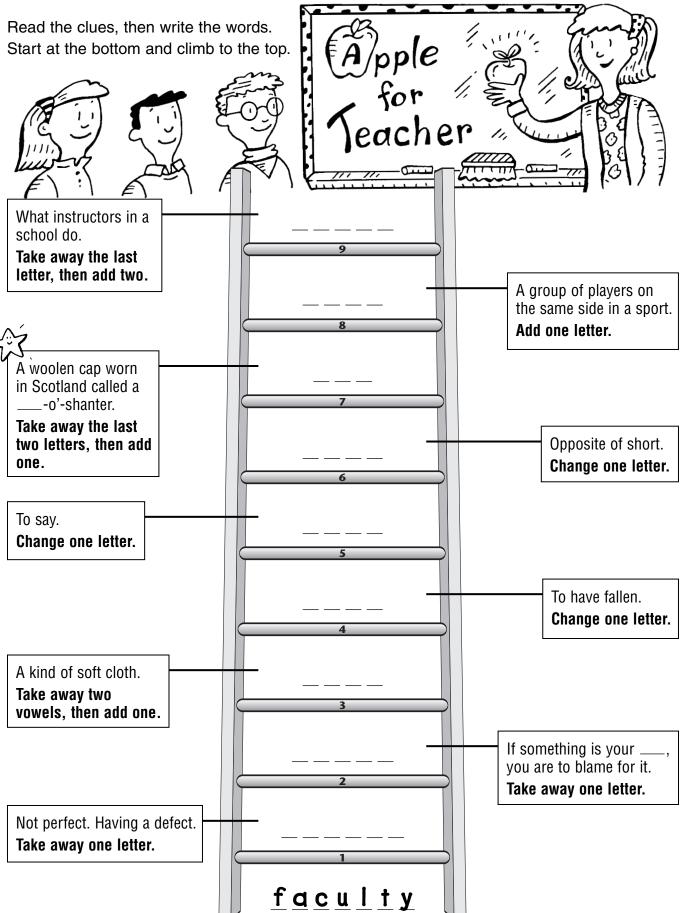


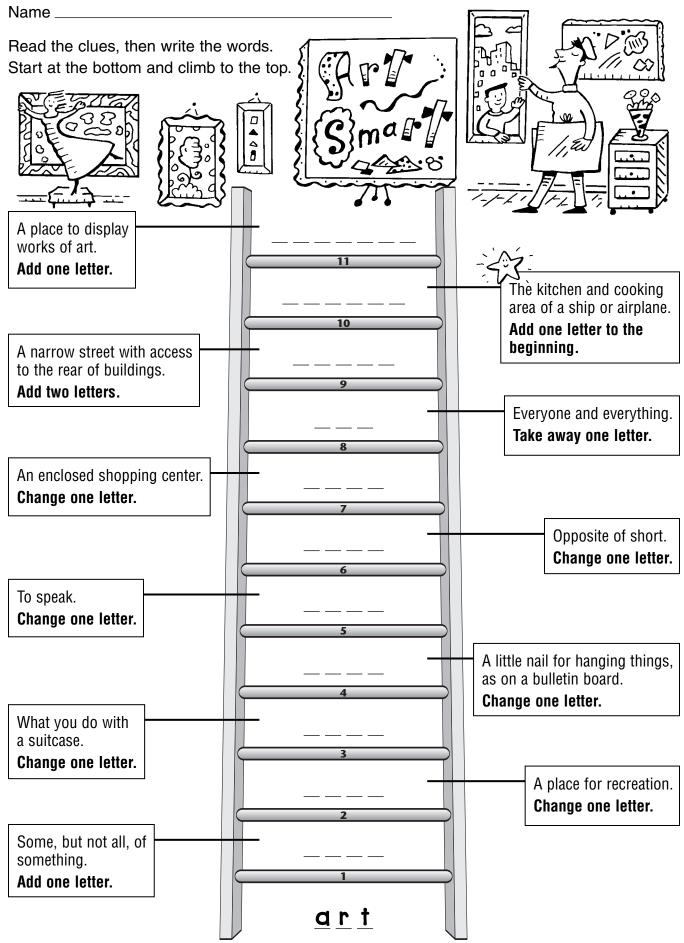


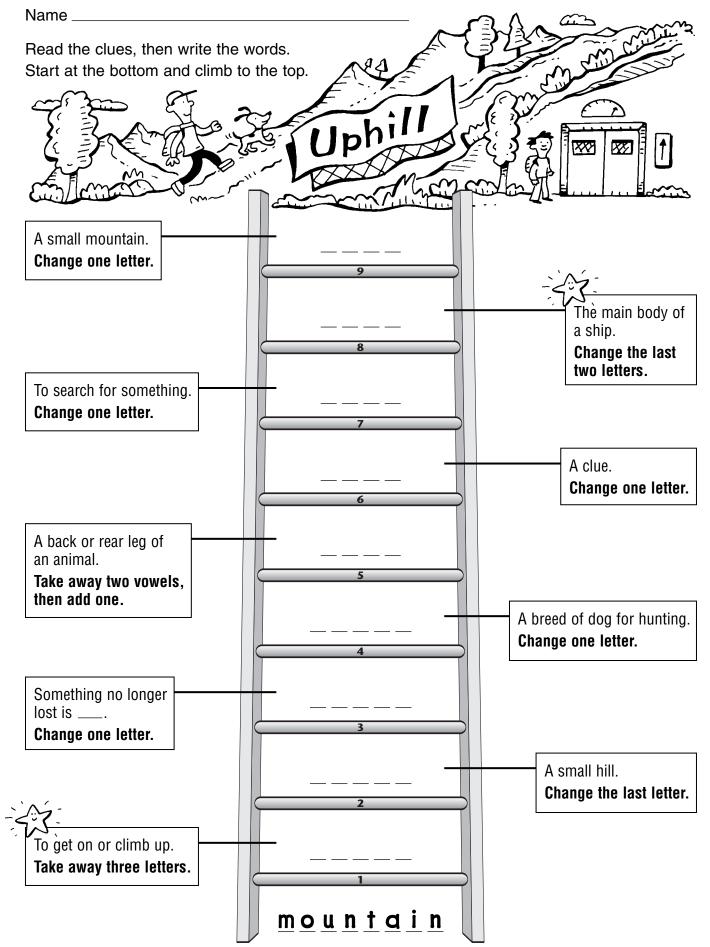


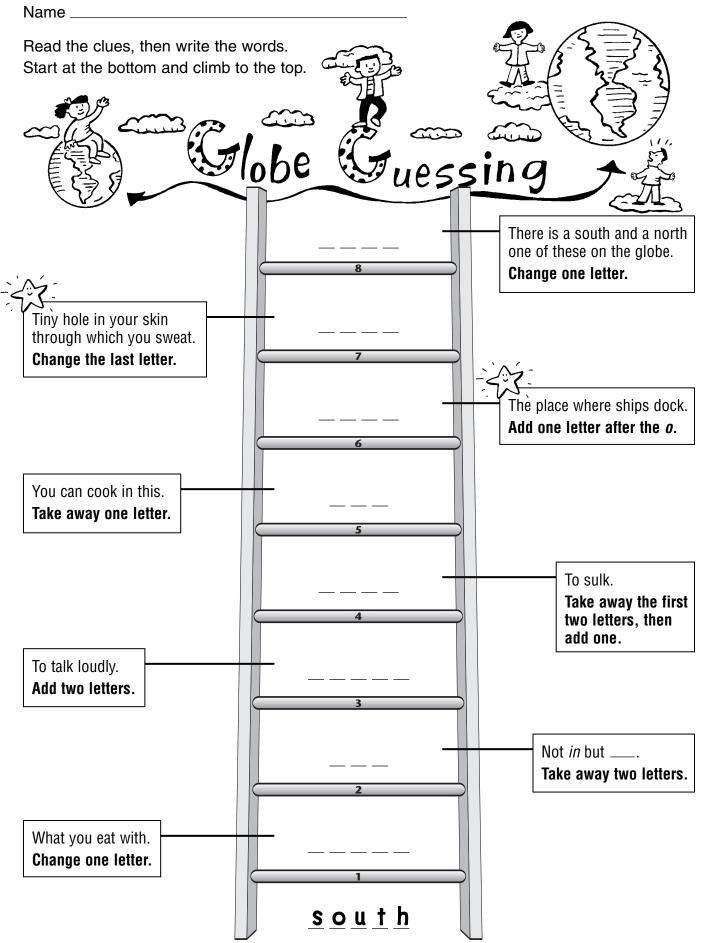


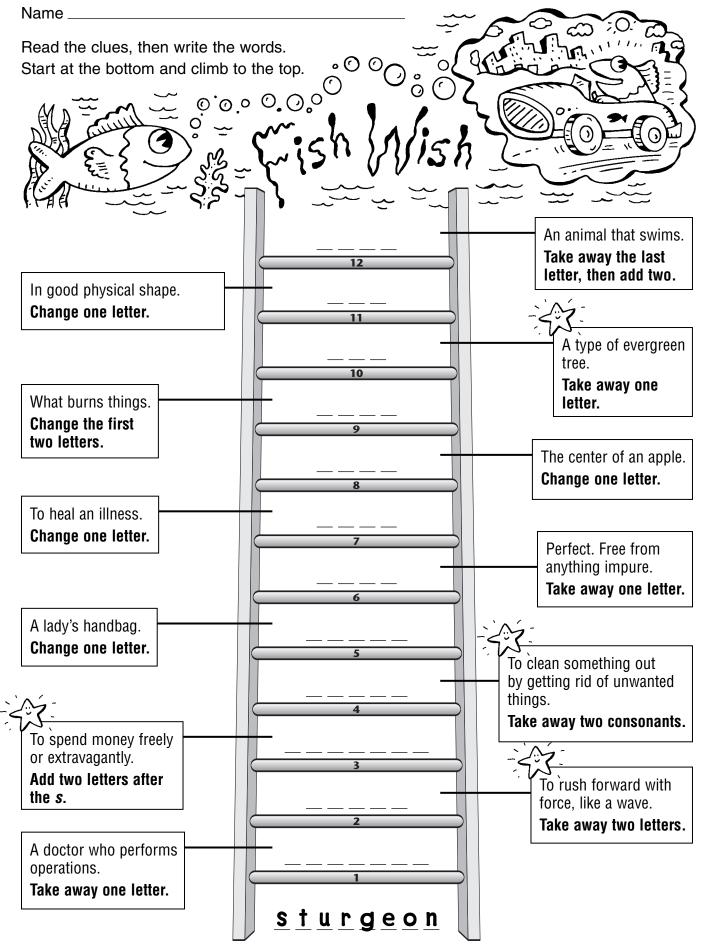


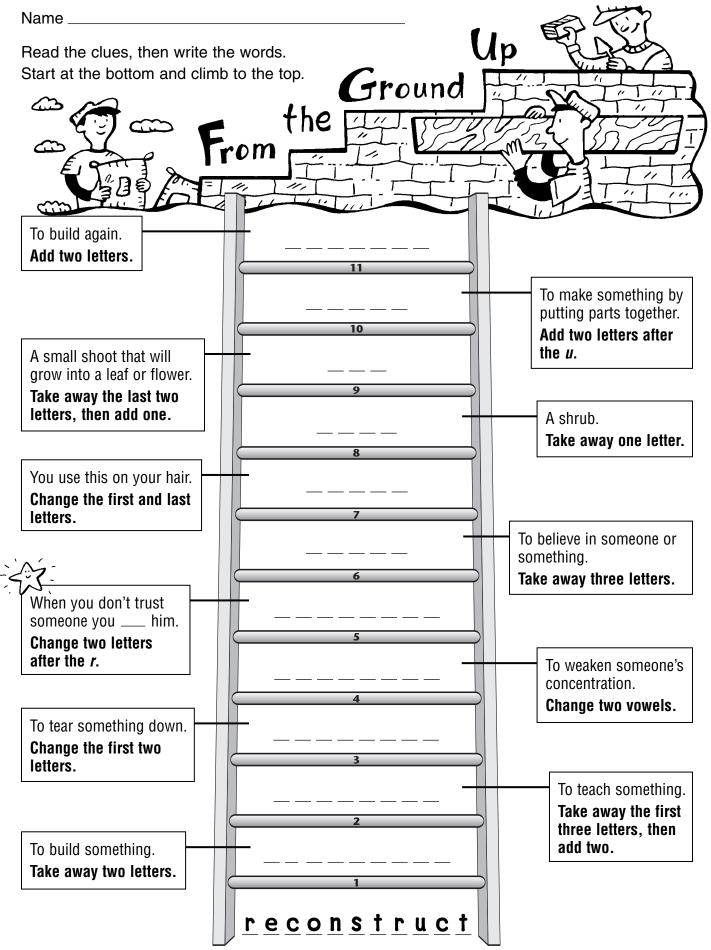


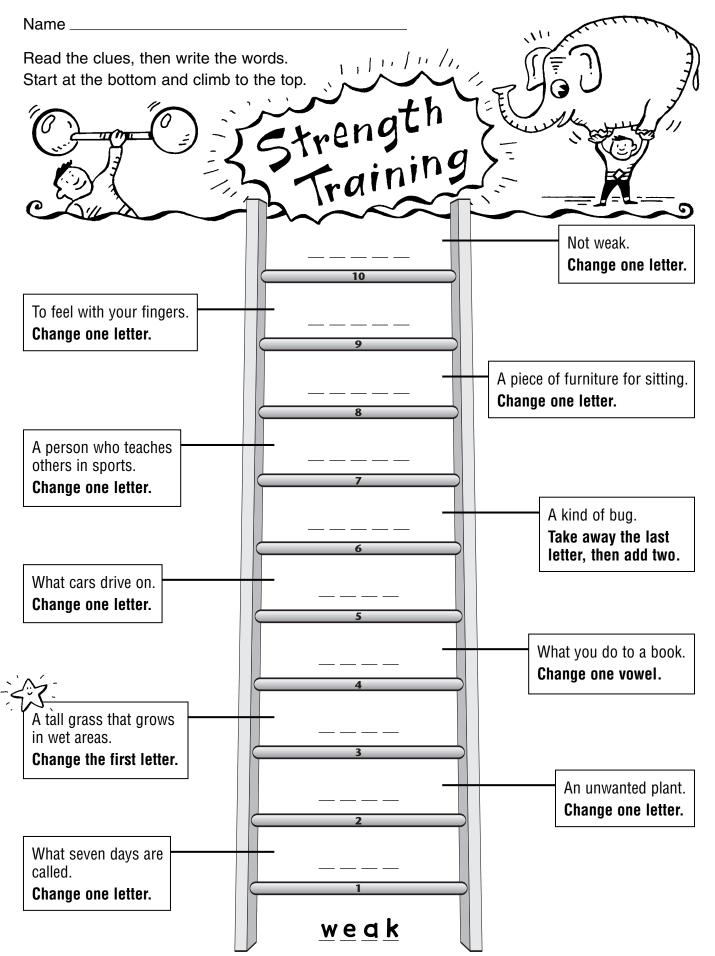


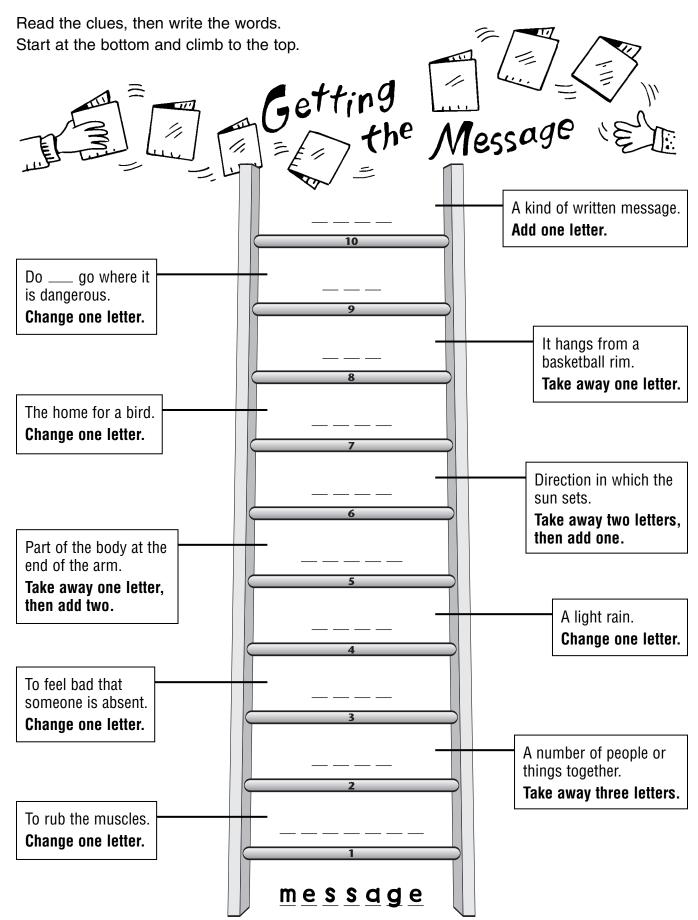


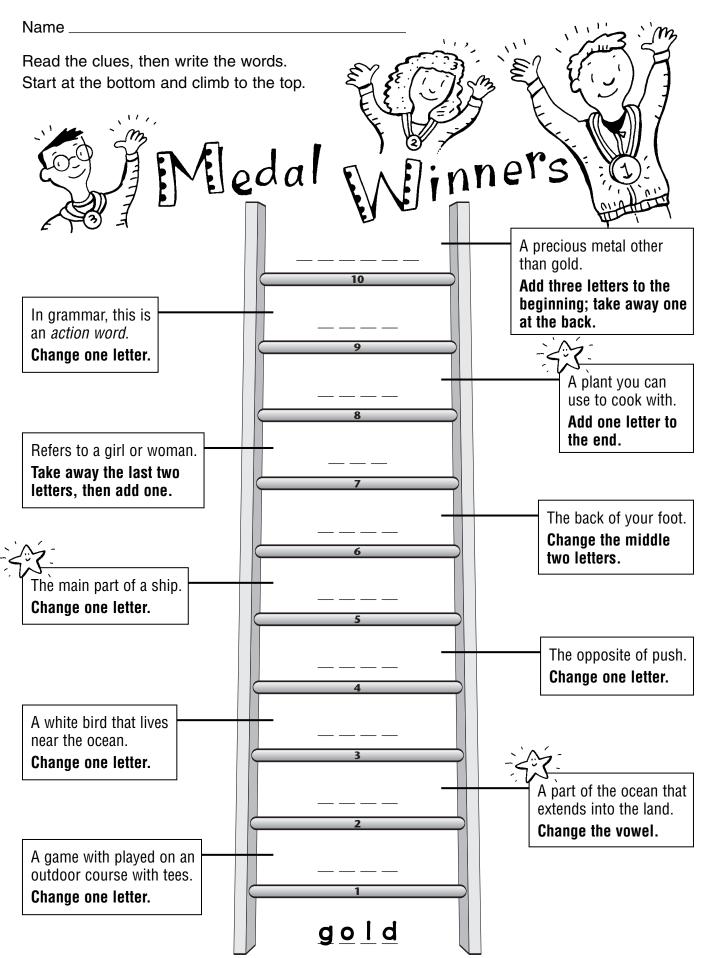


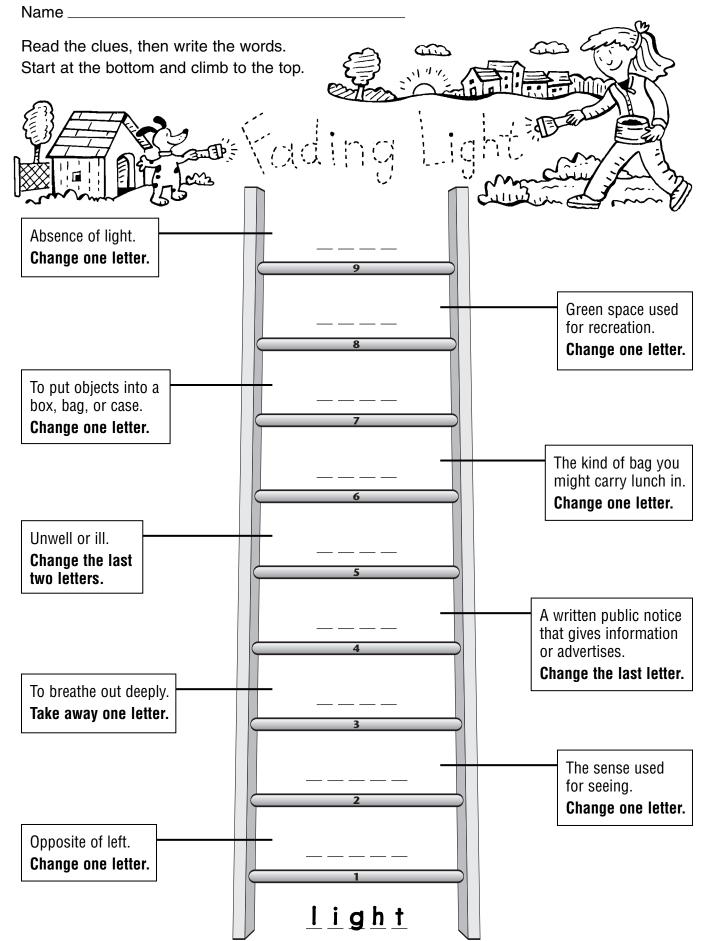


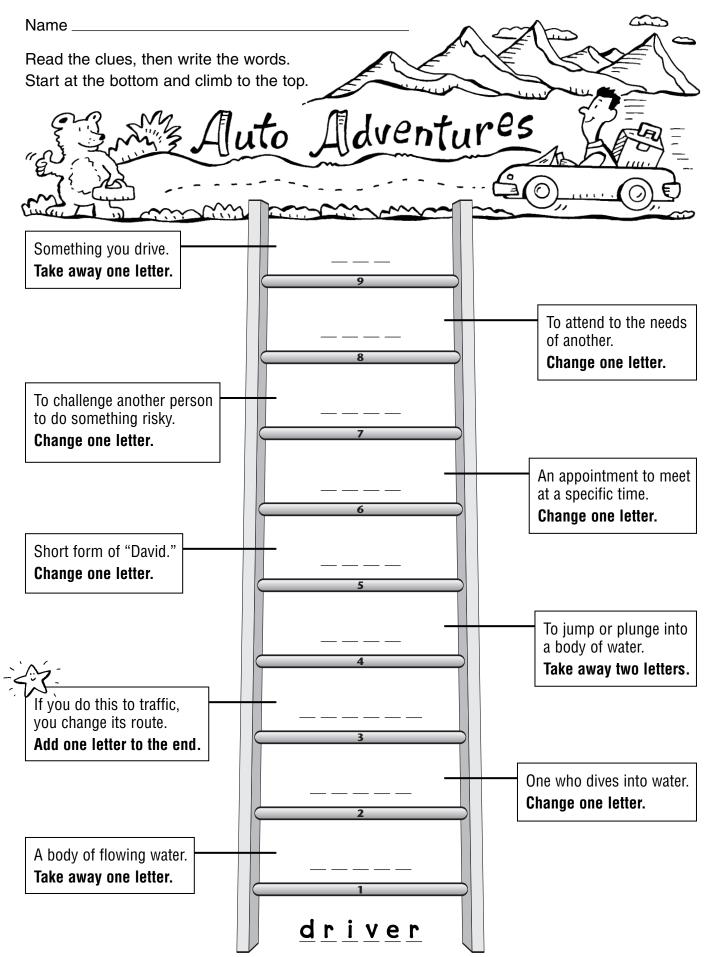


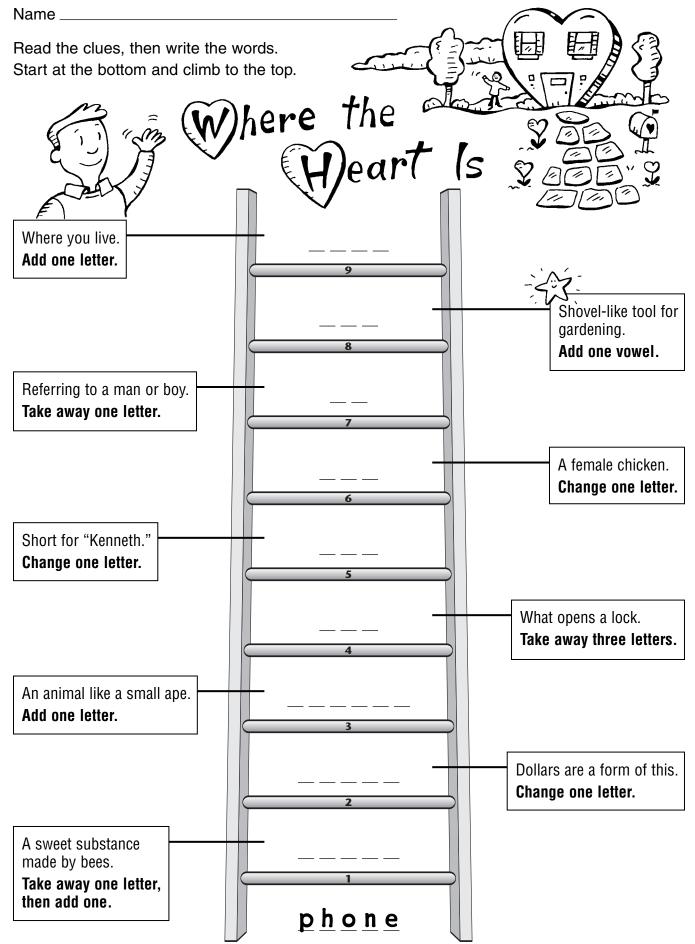


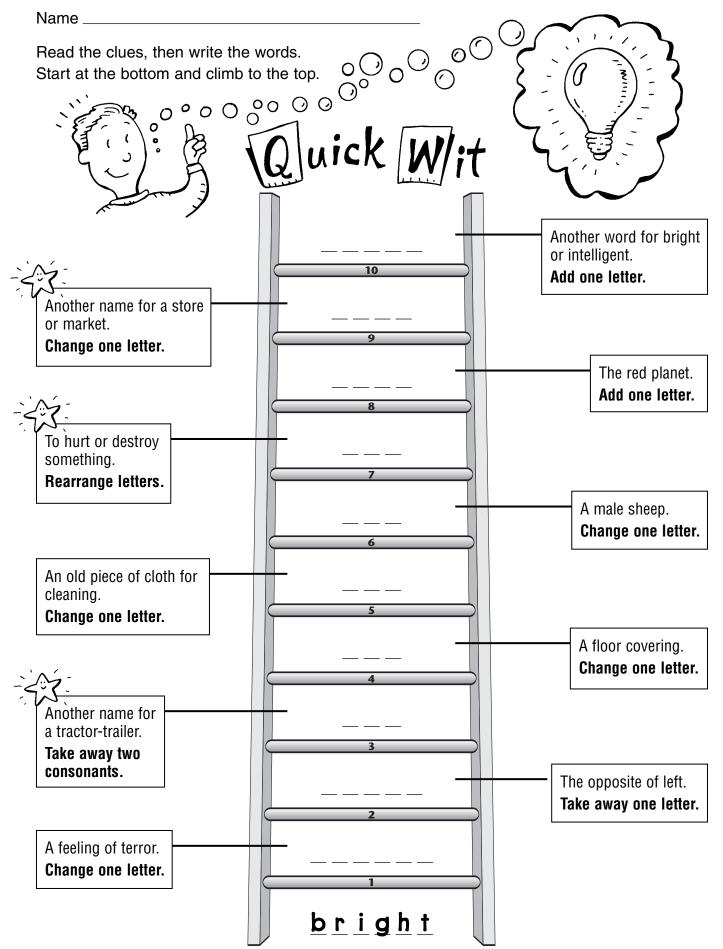


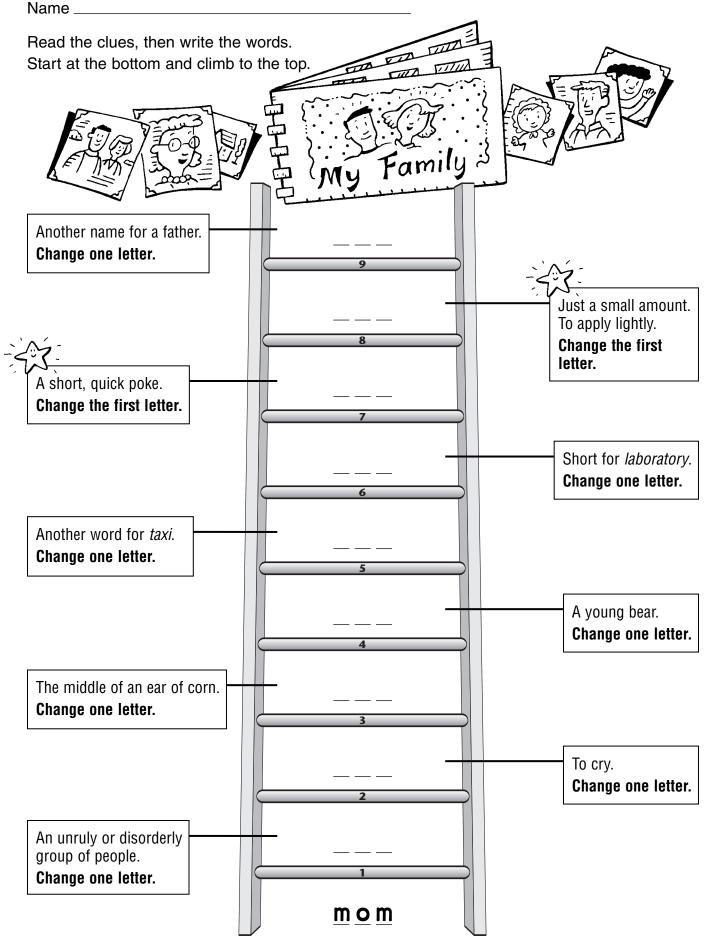


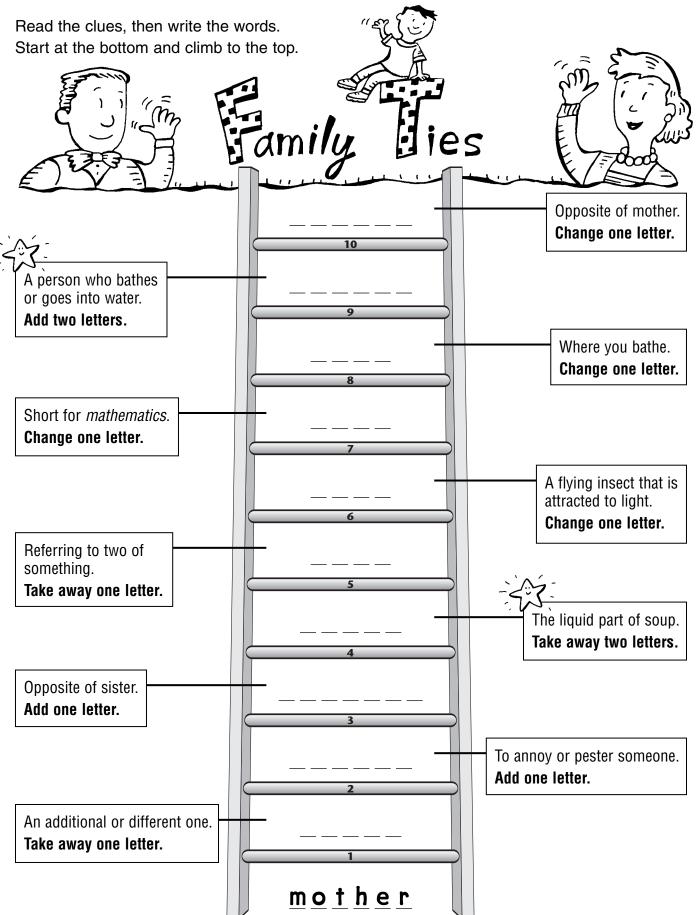


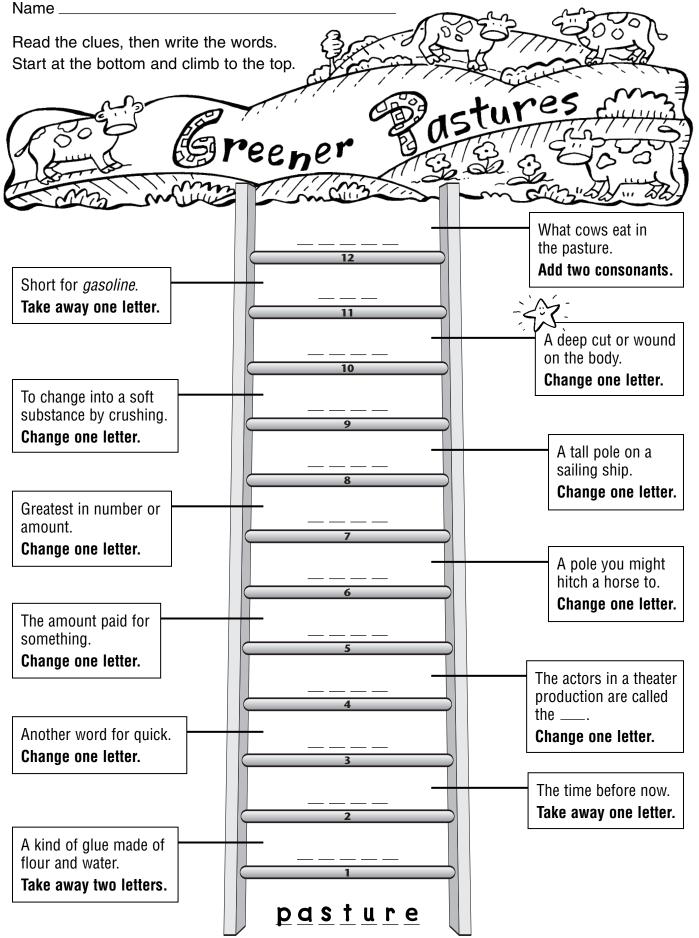


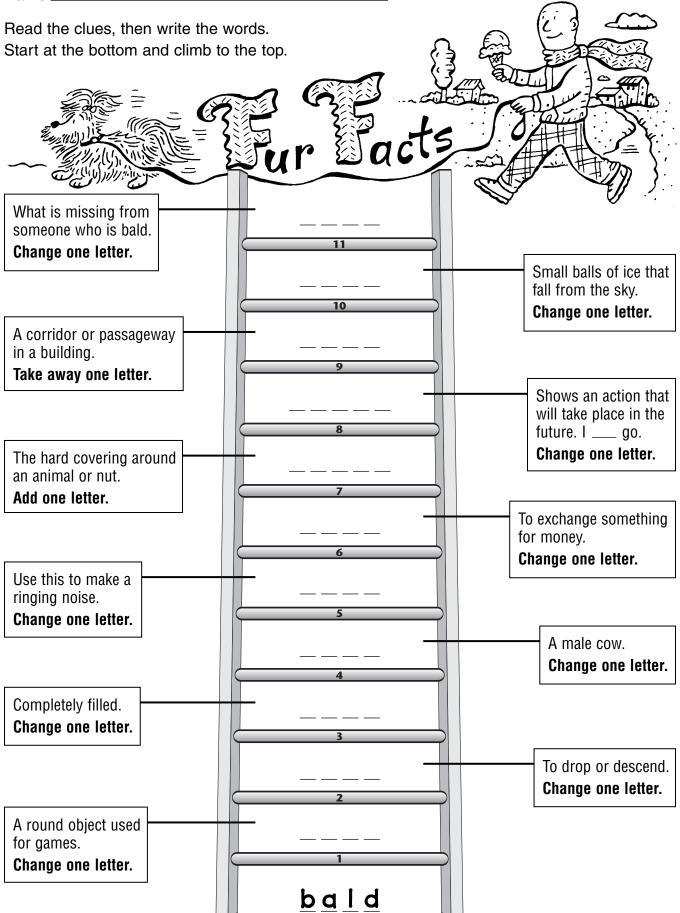


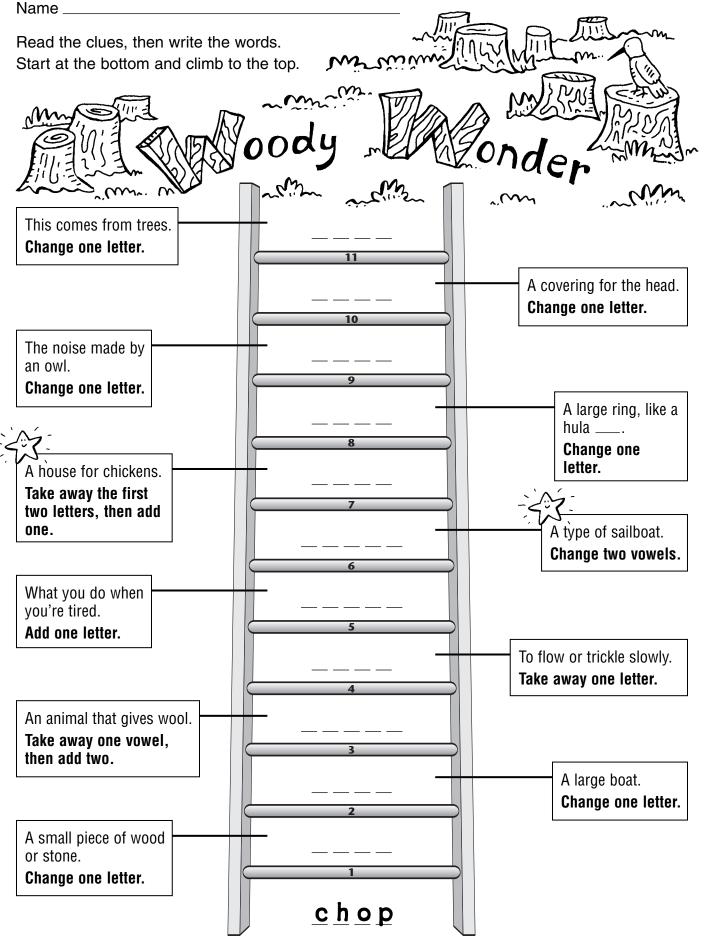


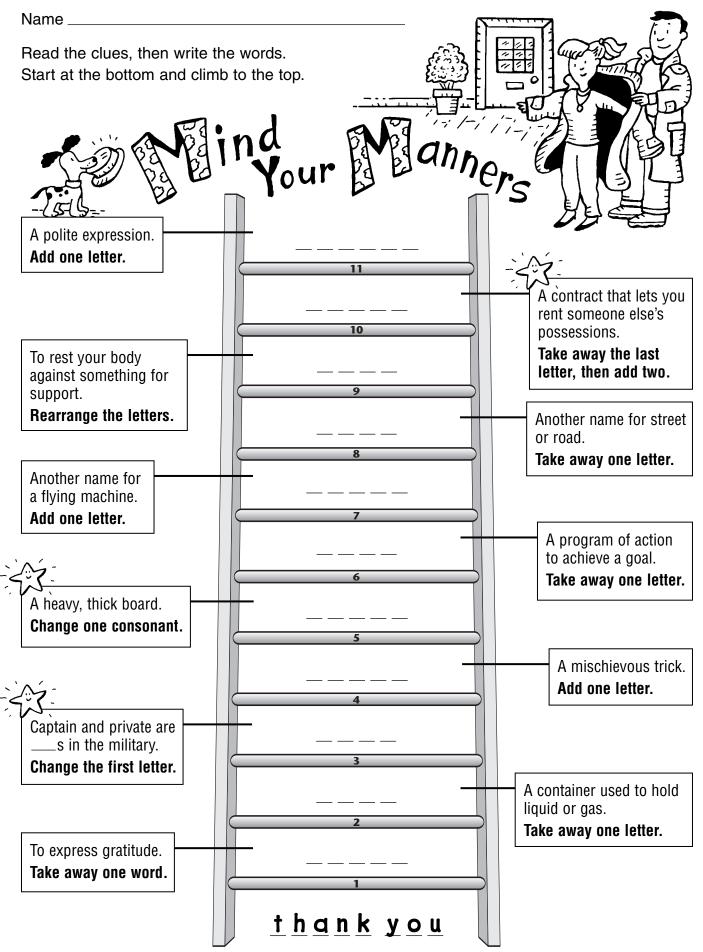


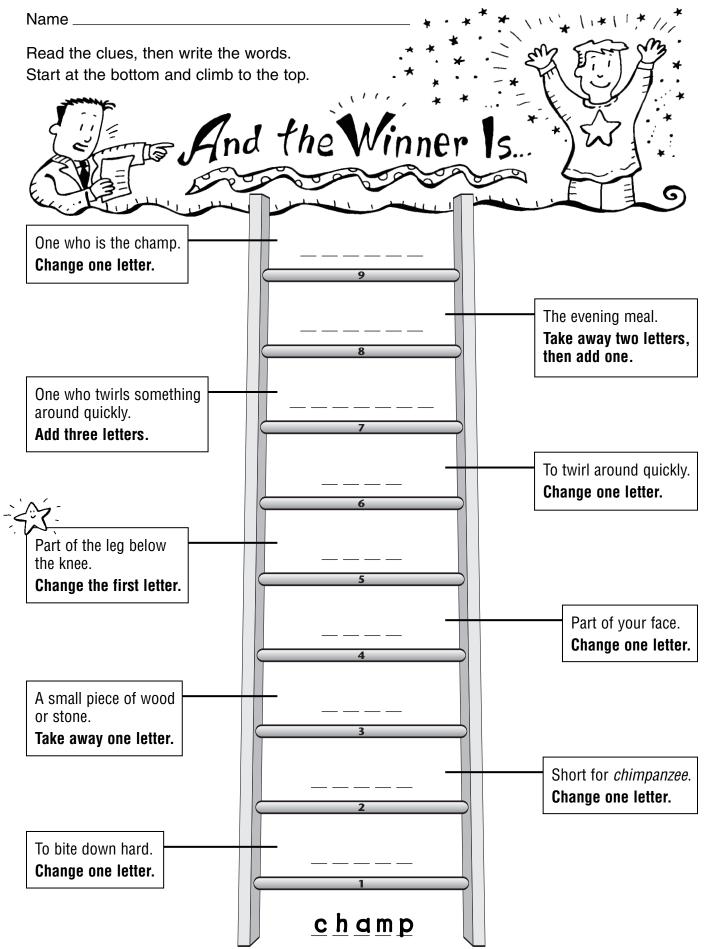


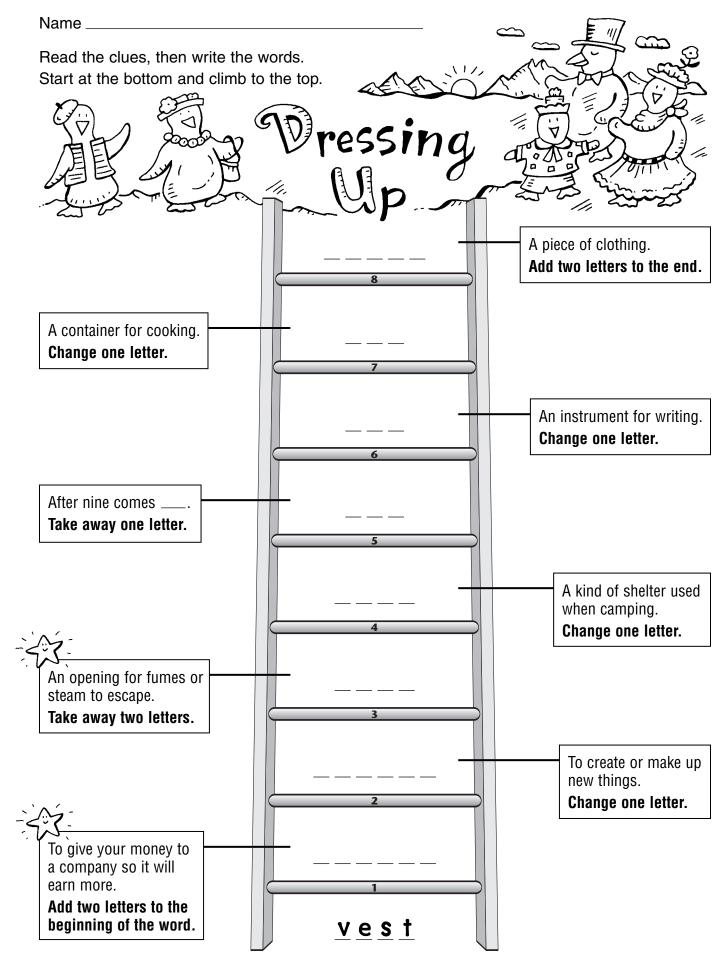


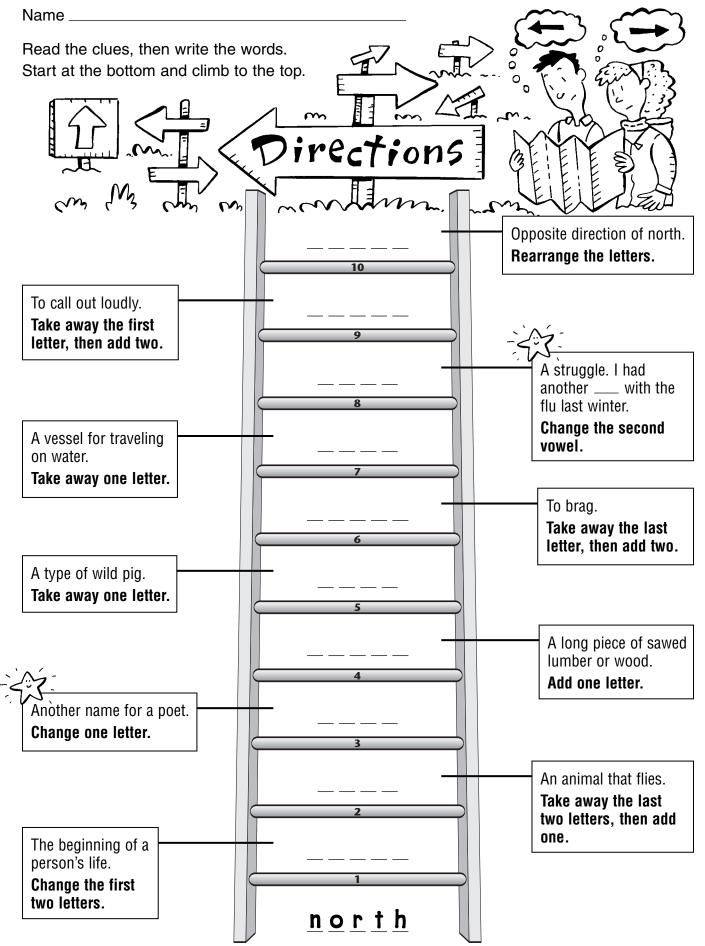


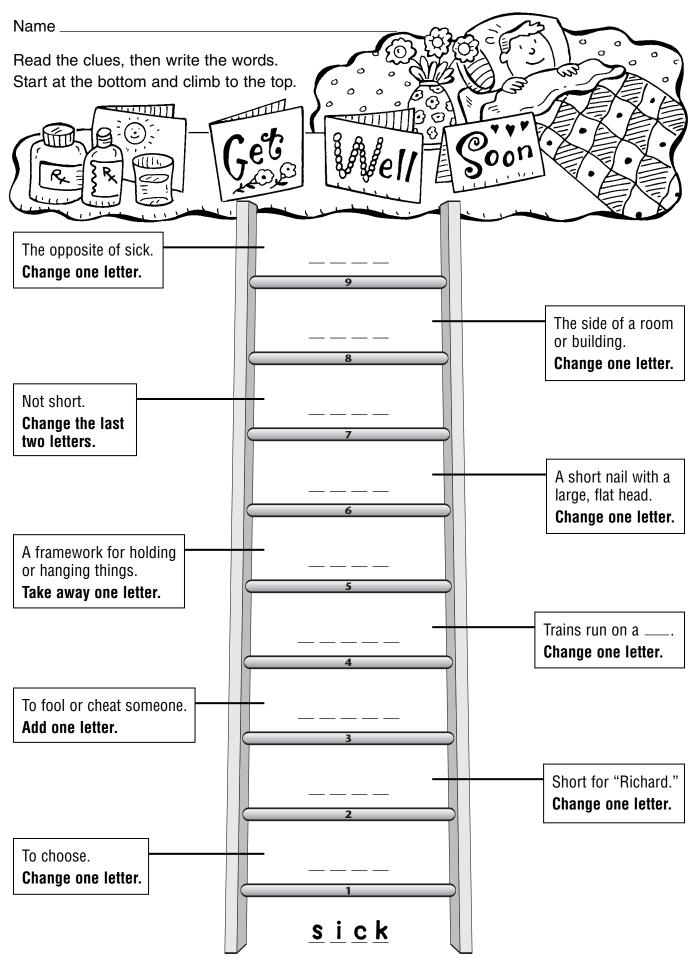














Eat Your Vegetables, page 7

vegetable, table, stable, stab, slab, slob, slosh, slash, dash, dish, radish

Money Matters, page 8

nickel, pickle, pick, pink, stink, sting, sing, sang, sane, same, dame, dime

Outerwear, page 9

sweater, sweat, sweet, sweeten, ten, ton, stone, notes, not, jot, jock, Jack, jacket

Behind the Wheel, page 10

car, scar, scare, share, sharp, harp, hare, dare, Dave, dive, diver, driver

Give a Little, page 11

give, live, liver, diver, dive, hive, have, shave, shake, snake, stake, take

Things That Go Bump in the Night, page 12

vampire, expire, retire, tire, fire, fine, tine, tone, ton, ten, net, bet, bat

Toothsome, page 13

tooth, toot, soot, soon, son, Don, don't, dent, dentist

Say Cheese, page 14

picture, capture, cap, cape, escape, estate, state, taste, haste, hate, hat, hot, photo

Hat Head, page 15

hat, hate, haste, waste, aster, asterisk, risk, disk, duck, luck, lack, lap, cap

In the Money, page 16

million, billion, lion, stallion, stall, still, till, tall, toll, doll, dollar

Meet and Greet, page 17

convention, invention, intention, tension, pension, suspension, suspense, suspend, spend, speed, seed, meet, meeting

Cool Drinks, page 18

ice, Alice, malice, chalice, chalk, stalk, talk, walk, walker, water

Stars and Stripes, page 19

country, county, count, aunt, tuna, tundra, drain, rain, rail, nail, nation

In My Room, page 20

bed, bled, red, read, bread, break, brook, brood, broom, boom, room

Sleepytime, page 21

pillow, pill, fill, fall, tall, talk, tank, bank, blank, blanket

Giving Thanks, page 22

grateful, grate, gate, gateway, getaway, away, awful, thankful

Express Mail, page 23

deliver, liver, live, line, lime, slime, slim, slam, Sam, sad, sand, send

Stormy Days, page 24

rain, ran, raw, war, wore, swore, sword, words, word, lord, loud, cloud

Official Officers, page 25

private, pirate, irate, rate, grate, generate, generation, generally, general

Bucket Brigade, page 26

bucket, buck, duck, duct, conduct, conductor, doctor, dock, mock, Mick, pick, pack, pail

Sweet Things, page 27

caramel, camel, came, cane, sane, same, seam, seat, sweat, sweet

Here to There, page 28

march, Mars, mare, more, wore, were, where, here, hire, hare, ware, wart, walk



Good Eating, page 29 digest, diet, die, dim, dam, mad, made, mat, eat

That's Entertainment, page 30 television, vision, visit, sit, set, seat, heat, hat, rat, ratio, radio

All Is Forgiven, page 31 forgive, give, live, liver, liter, later, lather, gather, together, get, forget

Go, Go, Go, page 32 automobile, mobile, mob, cob, cot, Scot, scat, scab, cab, car

All in the Family, page 33 uncle, unclear, nuclear, clear, learn, earn, earnest, ear, are, art, ant, aunt

Give a Dog a Bone, page 34 dog, dig, din, ding, ring, wring, bring, big, bag, bang, bong, bone

Dinner's Ready, page 35 vegetable, table, cable, cab, baby, ban, fan, fat, fate, mate, meat

Happy Birthday, page 36 birthday, birth, both, bath, wrath, wreath, wreck, rock, rack, rake, cake

Chew on This, page 37 bite, bit, but, hut, shut, shot, shop, hop, chop, chow, chew

Peaks and Valleys, page 38 high, sigh, sight, right, rig, rag, raw, saw, law, low

A Rose Is a Rose, page 39 flower, lower, low, slow, slot, lot, not, knot, note, nose, rose **Childhood, page 40** child, mild, mind, wind, win, pin, spin, span, pan, pad, dad, did, kid

Cheese Eaters, page 41 mouse, house, hose, chose, chase, base, bash, bath, bat, rat

Frosty Fun, page 42 snow, now, not, dot, dog, dig, ding, king, kin, win, winter

Seaworthy, page 43 ocean, bean, bead, beard, heard, heart, heat, seat, seal, sea

Sew Sew, page 44 sew, sell, sill, still, skill, kill, kilt, wilt, wit, witch, itch, stitch

Save Your Pennies, page 45 penny, pen, nope, open, spend, speed, seed, send, sent, cent

Right or Wrong, page 46 true, blue, clue, club, cub, hub, hum, ham, hall, fall, false

Precipitation Puzzle, page 47 rain, chain, chin, shin, shine, shingle, single, sing, wing, whip, wrap, crop, drop

Snow Day, page 48 blizzard, lizard, liar, rail, rain, grain, grin, grow, row, now, snow

Winter Wear, page 49 coat, coal, coil, oil, lion, stallion, talon, alone, lone, love, gloves

Out of This World, page 50 Venus, vent, sent, spent, pen, men, man, can, car, mar, Mars

Fried Snacks, page 51 french, trench, wrench, wren, renew, newer, fewer, fee, free, fry

Candlelight, page 52 candle, handle, hand, hard, shard, share, hare, fare, flare, flame

Car Trouble, page 53 flat, inflate, late, slate, tales, tiles, tile, time, tide, tire

Play Date, page 54 play, plan, plane, plates, staple, stable, able, amble, ramble, rumble, humble, hum, chum

Beautiful Day, page 55 blue, clue, glue, glee, flee, flea, flew, fly, sly, sky

Ruling the Roost, page 56 rooster, roost, roast, toast, coast, cast, cat, hat, hit, chick, chicken

New and Not-So-New, page 57

new, few, dew, sew, sow, now, how, show, shown, own, owl, old

Midday Meal, page 58 lunch, launch, laundry, dry, day, say, sap, sip, sipper, supper

Growing Up, page 59 short, shore, shoe, show, slow, plow, blow, below, belong, long

Wedding Words, page 60 bride, stride, ride, rid, rod, rode, road, roam, room, groom

Friendship, page 61 friend, end, send, sent, set, bet, but, cut, cute, chute, chum Rub-a-Dub-Dub, page 62

scrub, rub, rib, crib, cob, rob, throb, broth, both, bath

Underwater, page 63

dive, dime, chime, chimp, champ, ham, hum, hub, cub, Cuba, scuba

Hear This, page 64

scream, cream, cram, cramp, ramp, ram, rat, rot, trot, trout, shout

Brainy Bird, page 65

eagle, beagle, bagel, bugle, bungle, bundle, candle, handle, hand, Hank, hack, hawk

Itchy and Scratchy, page 66

itch, inch, pinch, punch, lunch, hunch, hutch, hitch, pitch, patch, catch, scratch

Drinking Vessels, page 67

glass, lass, last, least, yeast, year, bear, beep, jeep, jump, slump, pump, cup

Good Books, page 68

story, store, ore, chore, core, bore, bone, boo, book

Land of the Free, page 69

liberty, tribe, bride, pride, ride, rid, red, read, reed, freed, freedom

Corny!, page 70 maize, maze, made, jade, jab, job, cob, con, coin, corn

School Days, page 71 school cool coal cola cold s

school, cool, coal, cola, cold, scold, sold, hold, hole, home

Jobs for Grownups, page 72 teacher, teach, each, ache, acre, care, pare, parent



Ship Shape, page 73 navy, naval, novel, shovel, shove, shave, shape, share, shame, ham, him, hip, ship

Suppertime, page 74 supper, super, sugar, rag, drag, drug, dug, dig, din, diner, dinner

Just a Spoonful, page 75 sweet, sweat, seat, heat, hut, gut, tug, chug, hug, rug, shrug, sugar

Flower Power, page 76 petal, pedal, penal, panel, pane, pave, shave, shove, show, how, low, flow, flower

24 Hours, page 77 night, might, right, bright, big, jig, jag, jay, day

Horse Sense, page 78 colt, cost, host, most, mast, mart, mare, more, Morse, horse

Voting Booth, page 79 ballot, ball, ballet, let, lot, tot, tote, note, vote

Sailing, page 80 sail, snail, ail, aim, claim, clam, calm, palm, pal, pat, cat, coat, boat

Bunny Tales, page 81 rabbit, bit, bat, fat, far, car, scar, scare, care, hare

Good Hare Day, page 82 hare, share, sharp, harp, carp, card, bard, bare, bar, bat, but, bun, bunny

Very Fishy, page 83 minnow, window, wind, win, wine, whine, shine, shrine, shrimp

Beasts of Burden, page 84

horse, shore, chore, core, more, mere, mare, care, came, camel

Apple for Teacher, page 85

faculty, faulty, fault, felt, fell, tell, tall, tam, team, teach

Art Smart, page 86

art, part, park, pack, tack, talk, tall, mall, all, alley, galley, gallery

Uphill, page 87 mountain, mount, mound, found, hound, hind, hint, hunt, hull, hill

Globe Guessing, page 88 south, mouth, out, shout, pout, pot, port, pore, pole

Fish Wish, page 89 sturgeon, surgeon, surge, splurge, purge, purse, pure, cure, core, fire, fir, fit, fish

From the Ground Up, page 90

reconstruct, construct, instruct, destruct, distract, distrust, trust, brush, bush, bud, build, rebuild

Strength Training, page 91 weak, week, weed, reed, read, road, roach, coach, couch, touch, tough

Getting the Message, page 92 message, massage, mass, miss, mist, wrist, west, nest, net, not, note

Medal Winners, page 93 gold, golf, gulf, gull, pull, hull, heel, her, herb, verb, silver

Fading Light, page 94 light, right, sight, sigh, sign, sick, sack, pack, park, dark



Auto Adventures, page 95 driver, river, diver, diver, dive, Dave, date, dare, care, car

Where the Heart Is, page 96 phone, honey, money, monkey, key, Ken, hen, he, hoe, home

Quick Wit, page 97 bright, fright, right, rig, rug, rag, ram, mar, Mars, mart, smart

My Family, page 98 mom, mob, sob, cob, cub, cab, lab, jab, dab, dad

Family Ties, page 99

mother, other, bother, brother, broth, both, moth, math, bath, bather, father

Greener Pastures, page 100 pasture, paste, past, fast, cast, cost, post, most, mast, mash, gash, gas, grass

Fur Facts, page 101 bald, ball, fall, full, bull, bell, sell, shell, shall, hall, hail, hair

Woody Wonder, page 102

chop, chip, ship, sheep, seep, sleep, sloop, coop, hoop, hoot, hood, wood

Mind Your Manners, page 103

thank you, thank, tank, rank, prank, plank, plane, lane, lean, lease, please

And the Winner Is . . . , page 104

champ, chomp, chimp, chip, chin, shin, spin, spinner, dinner, winner

Dressing Up, page 105

vest, invest, invent, vent, tent, ten, pen, pan, pants

Directions, page 106

north, birth, bird, bard, board, boar, boast, boat, bout, shout, south

Get Well Soon, page 107

sick, pick, Rick, trick, track, rack, tack, tall, wall, well

