Third Letter Detectives

Use the third letter to check ABC order.

3.2.C "alphabetize a series of words to the third letter; and"

NAME _____ DATE _____

IN ABC ORDER

The words are in ABC order. If the first two letters match, look at the third letters.

cub, cup, cut

NOT IN ABC ORDER

The words are not in ABC order. Check the first place where the letters are different, including the third letter.

fan, fat, far

1 SORT

8 items

For each word list, circle ORDERED or MIXED, then pick two lists and explain which letters helped you decide.

1.	cap, can, cat	ORDERED	MIXED
2.	pig, pin, pit	ORDERED	MIXED
3.	bed, bee, bell	ORDERED	MIXED
4.	run, rub, rug	ORDERED	MIXED
5.	map, man, mat	ORDERED	MIXED
6.	fog, font, fox	ORDERED	MIXED
7.	hot, hop, how	ORDERED	MIXED
8.	lip, lid, lie	ORDERED	MIXED

2 PROVE IT

Explain your thinking

Pick two items from Part 1. For each one, tell how you knew where it belonged.

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

ITEM # _____ **HOW I KNEW** _____

3 MAKE YOUR OWN

One of each

Write one new ORDERED word list and one new MIXED word list. Use three words in each list that have the same first two letters.

ORDERED

MIXED

CHALLENGE

Write four words that begin with sp. Put them in ABC order by the third letter.

ANSWER KEY

Third Letter Detectives

GRADE 3 · TEKS 3.2.C

PART 1 · SORT

#	ITEM	CATEGORY	WHY
1	cap, can, cat	**MIXED**	The third letters are p, n, t, so can should come before cap.
2	pig, pin, pit	**ORDERED**	The third letters are g, n, t in ABC order.
3	bed, bee, bell	**ORDERED**	The third letters are d, e, l in ABC order.
4	run, rub, rug	**MIXED**	The third letters are n, b, g, so rub should come first.
5	map, man, mat	**MIXED**	The third letters are p, n, t, so man should come before map.
6	fog, font, fox	**ORDERED**	The third letters are g, n, x in ABC order.
7	hot, hop, how	**MIXED**	The third letters are t, p, w, so hop should come before hot.
8	lip, lid, lie	**MIXED**	The third letters are p, d, e, so lid should come first.

PART 2 · PROVE IT

Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item.

PART 3 · MAKE YOUR OWN (SAMPLE ANSWERS)

- **ORDERED**: bag, bat, bay
- **MIXED**: jot, job, jog

Challenge: speak, spice, spoon, spun

Accept any explanation that names the deciding feature from the rule box for the chosen item. For PROVE IT, students should name the third letters and tell whether they are in ABC order. Accept different correct word lists in Part 3 and the challenge. In the MIXED sample, all three words begin with jo; their third letters t, b, g are not in ABC order.