



### **Activities to develop alphabet and letter sounds knowledge**

The written English language is an alphabetic language — it is made up of letters that are codes or symbols for the various sounds in words. Learning the letters of the alphabet and the sounds that are associated with them are the crucial first steps in reading.

Children who can recognise the letters of the alphabet in print and know at least the most common sounds associated with each letter (some letters have more than one sound in words, especially the vowels), will have an advantage when they begin school.

Knowing the alphabet and understanding that words are made up of letters in a way that is mostly predictable is an essential concept for children to grasp. Although children have a natural in-born capacity for speech, making sense of written language is a highly complex skill.

For some children, learning the alphabet is easy. Others will take much longer and will need more exposure, more repetition, and more practice.

Learning the alphabet is vital but it can also be fun. Here are some activities to get you started!

- There are many alphabet books available in bookstores, op-shops and libraries at a wide range of price and quality. Look for books that have interesting pictures that you can talk about and ask your child to name. Books that use alliteration such as Dr Seuss' *ABC* are enjoyable to read aloud.
- Point to letters on the page as you are reading any book with your child and ask them to point to the letters they know.
- Teach your child the letters in their name. Ask them to point out other words with those letters as you are reading.
- Help your child to practice writing and making letters with a variety of materials. For example, writing letters in sand or with finger paints, or making letter shapes out of pipe-cleaners or modelling clay.
- Give your child an old magazine and a felt-tip pen or highlighter and ask them to circle all the words that start with a particular letter.

- Play alphabet bingo: Make small cards with a letter written or printed on each one and place them in a box or bag. Draw a 4 x 4 square on a piece of paper and write a letter in each square. Say the name or letter sound for each card as you draw them from the box or bag and your child can cover the letter on their card with a marker or token. This game can be played with one or more children.
- Play alphabet memory: Make two identical sets of cards with a letter written or printed on each one. Shuffle them together and place them face down. Take turns to turn over two cards at a time to find matching pairs.
- Make your own alphabet book with scrap paper or an exercise book. Write a letter on each page and ask your child to collect or draw pictures of things beginning with that letter.
- Purchase alphabet magnets or make individual alphabet letters using card, felt or foam. Take turns to arrange the letters into simple words, spelling the word or sounding it out as you do. Practice placing them in alphabetical order.
- Teach your child the alphabet song. Sing it to them but pause and leave out a letter. Ask them which letter you left out.

The FIVE from FIVE website provides tips and activities parents can use to help children learn the alphabet and letter sounds, as well as links to videos, games and apps. They have been carefully selected to reflect research on how children develop reading skills, and can be adapted for children of all ages from babies to the first few years of school.

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