

Letter Identification

What the skill is: Knowing the names of the UPPER (capital) and lower case alphabet letters.

What it's not: Being able to sing the ABC song or learning how to hold a pencil and print each letter, although it can be helpful for your child to print the letters as you teach the letter names and to use the song to remember the order of the letters.

Why it's important: While we use letter SOUNDS to read words, knowing the letter names makes learning to read easier. It's difficult to say 'that curvy letter' instead of saying 's' when working with your child.

Tools that are helpful when teaching letter names:

- Alphabet chart
- Alphabet cards for UPPER and lower case letters
- Dry erase board and markers
- Books, books, books, and more books!

Ways to help your child: Build in many opportunities throughout the day to notice letters of the alphabet and talk about them. Use your school's approved printing style, whether Zaner-Blozer, Peterson, or Handwriting Without Tears, when teaching children to PRINT the letters, but use a variety of letter shapes for teaching READING. Ask your child's teacher for a guide to how letters should be formed and the words you should use to help your child form it correctly.

Name Game – The letters in your child's name is the best place to start. Put your child's name in logical places – a sign over their bed, on their favorite cup, on the handle of their toothbrush, on the tag of their coat – and take the opportunity to talk about the letters often.

Use the letter cards to make your child's name, then mix them up and see how fast they can fix it. Repeat with family member names.

Letter Sorts - Sorting letters and finding matches is one of the earliest steps in building a visual memory for letters. You can have your child find all the letter ___ or match each upper and lower case letter (M and m).



Letter Matching – This is a sample lesson for a child who knows very few letters. The letters in your child’s first and last name are a great place to start.

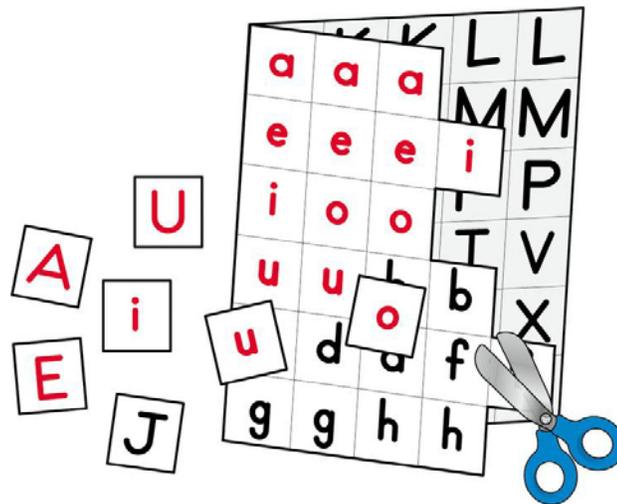
Introduce an unknown letter (S in this example) and tell the name of the letter. Have your child repeat. Place 10 letters, 5 of which are S, on the table in front of your child. Ask your child to find the letter S. If successful, have them find the others, giving feedback and asking your child to repeat the letter name each time.

If your child points to a letter other than S, pick up the mistaken letter and hold it close to one of the S letters on the table. If your child points to an S, give positive feedback, and move the mistaken letter farther away as you encourage your child to find yet another S.

If your child chooses incorrectly, slide all of the letters out of the way and place one S and one other letter in front of the child. Show the target letter, say “S, look, find another S” and hold the target letter over each choice. If your child is still unsuccessful, the concept of “same” needs to be taught.

After successfully finding all of the S letters, add the second target letter. Place ten letters, five of which are the new letter (M), three S letters and two others, on the table. Tell the name of the target letter and have your child repeat.

Each time you refer to the letter, differentiate between sounds and names. For example, “the letter S says /S/. Tell me that letter’s name. Tell me the sound that letter makes.”



3-Dimensional Letters – Use playdough, left over wet spaghetti without sauce, pipe-cleaners, tin foil strips, sticky-wicky wax sticks, etc. to make letter shapes. Changing the materials can make the activity more interesting to children. While making three-dimensional letters can be fun, it is essential that an adult is there to say the letter name (and sound) frequently with your child as they do the activity.



Concentration – Play concentration with letter cards. Place a set of pairs face down. Turn over two, looking for matches. If you turn over two cards and they match, you keep that set. If they don't match, you turn them back over and it is the next person's turn.

I Spy – Spot letters in the environment. Play I Spy to give your child lots of practice finding the letters that are a challenge for them to remember.



Build Words – Use the letter tiles or cards to build words. Help your child with the spelling.



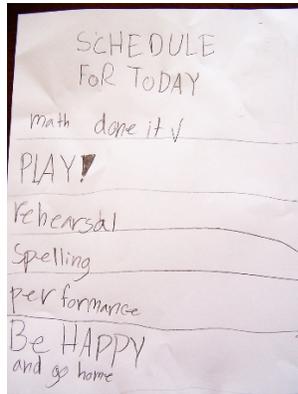
Writing – Collect a variety of tools and surfaces on which your child can write. Find legitimate reasons for your child to write throughout the day. Remember to use the chart from your child's teacher for what to say as you help them form the letters. Offer help with spelling.

Reasons for your Child to Write:

- Write family member names on cards.
- Write a grocery list if they want certain foods.
- Write "save" notes to keep the LEGO structure they built until tomorrow.
- Make 'do not disturb' notes.
- Create a wish list of things they want to do as a family.
- Write thank you notes.
- Leave a note for a family member who missed something and tell them about it.
- Make a book with pattern sentences. For example, each page might say "Taylor is . . ." followed by words such as "a boy" "a good swimmer" "always laughing." Personalize it for your child.

Things to Write On or With:

- Plain paper or junk mail
- Inside of a paper grocery bag
- MagnaDoodle
- Sand or salt on a cookie sheet, "write" with your finger
- Several layers of heavy-duty tin foil folded together (very cool to write on but pricey.)
- Plain paper on top of a piece of sandpaper or plastic canvas or burlap (anything with texture.) Changing the way it FEELS to write can help.
- Make it more fun - try finger paint, sidewalk chalk, crayons, colored pencils, pens, paintbrushes dipped in water on the sidewalk, and more.



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✂ Cut apart and use to learn letter names and to build words

A

a

B

b

C

c

D

d

E

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F

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G

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