



Alphabetic Principle

The alphabet is comprised of letters that represent sounds (or phonemes) in speech. It's the code upon which our language is based. Many educational settings fail to teach this code adequately. In order to be a proficient reader and writer, kids must have a strong knowledge of the letters and the sounds they represent.

Singing the ABC song is a great way to promote knowledge of letter names. As you sing the song, point to the letters as you make your way through the alphabet, and then have your child do it. When your child has mastered that, try mixing the letters up and singing the song while pointing to each letter as you name it. (Bananagram tiles and magnetic letters are great for this kind of practice.)

I recommend watching *Have Fun Teaching's ABC Rap on YouTube*. It's free, it makes the sounds one time for each letter (not three- ~~buh, buh, buh~~), and it shows upper and lower case letters. It's the best video I've seen.

When teaching letter names, avoid introducing letters similar in configuration at the same time (b/d, p/q).

When teaching letter sounds, avoid introducing letters similar in sound at the same time (f/v – top teeth on lower lip, ch/t – teeth together and puffing out)

See the letter formation guide to assist in handwriting practice. All letters begin at the top.

To distinguish b and d, hold up pointer fingers like "We're number one!" Turn wrists so that the insides of your wrists face one another. Note that the left hand makes a b while the right one makes a d. Sing **a, b** (tap left hand on leg)- **c, d**- (tap right hand on leg). Is the hand you write with your **b** or **d** hand?

Following are the letters whose lower case letters look very much like the upper case letters: c, f, j, k, o, p, s, t, u, v, w, x, y, z

Following are the letters whose lower case letters look very much different from the upper case letters: a, d, e, g, h, i, l, m, n, q, r

Knowing letter names can help kids to recall letter sounds. Some letters make their sounds at the beginnings of their names: b, d, j, k, p, t, v, z. (These are often easiest to recall.) Some letters make their sounds at the ends of their names: f, l, m, n, r, s, x. Some letter sounds are not represented at all in the letter name: *a, #c, *e, #g, *i, *o, q, *u, w, y.

*The vowels say their names when making their long sounds. Teachers want students to make short sounds for beginning reading assessments.

#*Soft* c and g make the sounds at the beginning of their names. Teachers want students to make the *hard* sounds for beginning reading assessments. c=/k/ as in cat & g= /g/ as in goat.

When beginning to teach kids to slide sounds together to make words, beginning with letters containing continuous sounds is recommended as these letters are more easily blended together for word recognition. (a e, f, i, m, n, o, r, s, u, v, x, z)

e.g. a-m, f-a-n, r-i-m, s-u-n, m-o-m, etc.

These letters have stop sounds (not slide): b, c, d, g, h, j, k, p, q, t, w, y. They are more difficult to blend, unless they are located only at the ends of the words. e.g. r - i - p, f - a - t

Things to do at home to promote alphabetic knowledge:

- Make letters (3-D) with clay.
- Use letter stamps and stamp pads or just stamps on play-doh.
- Read alphabet books and/or make your own alphabet books.
- Write letters in sugar (or pudding, shaving cream, finger paints, etc.) on a colorful plate or tray.
- Hide letters around the house and play hide-and-go-seek with them.
- Notice, together, various fonts in books, magazines, signs, etc.
- Play with magnetic letters and/or letters from Scrabble, Boggle, or Banagrams.
- Associate a meaningful image with letters to encourage kids' memories of letters and sounds. (That looks like a snake, and when we see one, we make the sound a snake makes!)

There are 294 word family rimes (onset and rime). There are about 44 sounds. Book Bums embraces synthetic phonics (explicit) approach, and uses analytic phonics (implicit) sparingly- for words that do not follow phonics "rules". We discourage the use of sight words, word families, and flashcards outside of true sight words— words that do not follow phonics rules.

Emphasizing that the order in which letters are seen is very important. *Tin* and *nit* are not the same word. When reading words, make the sounds you see, in order, from left to right. This is a **no guess zone!** We do not look at the picture and guess. We don't look at the first letter and ask, "What makes sense?" We **say what we see**. The most important clues we need are within the word. Accuracy improves when we point to the letters/words, sliding from left to right.

Praise, praise, praise your child's efforts. Smile a lot. Note the smart (even if they're incorrect) attempts. Remember, we're teaching-not just quizzing.

Begin with letters that are meaningful to your child. (Today, let's notice the letters in your brother's name. Let's make a placemat for him, with his name on it, for a surprise!--- Hey, I wrote *karate* on the refrigerator with magnetic letters. What letters do you see?)