



Welcome to Foundations for Literacy I!

Following, you will find easy-to-follow directions along with clarifying images that will guide you through each Foundations 1 lesson. Remember that the essential ingredient is the connection you make with your students. Look into their eyes. Smile. Share with them what they're doing well. Most important... Have fun! Know that you are providing the foundation upon which your students' reading and spelling skills are being built.

Note: When a letter or word is written between two forward slanted lines, it indicates that the *sound* of the letter(s) is being used rather than the *name* of the letter(s). The name of this letter is b or /bee/. The associated sound is /b/. (Strive to eliminate any short u sound from the end of this sound.)

*Please read the **Alphabetic Principle information sheet** (found in the resources for this section) before beginning these lessons. It provides some basic information that might be helpful.*

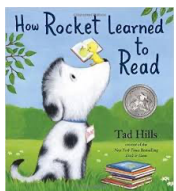
**Please be sure your classroom pencils are kept in excellent condition. If we want sharp writers, we must have sharp pencil tips and erasers at the ready so students can adjust as they strive to encode words accurately.*

You will need: dry erase board, dry erase marker and eraser, school glue, pencils, handwriting paper, wipes

Alphabetic Principle

As you share this foundational lesson, make the first lesson “official” by inviting all students to write their names on name tags. Make one for yourself, too. Wear the name tags throughout this lesson. As you write your names, make note of each letter. It could be quite impactful to have students write their names one at a time so everyone can notice the letters used. Remind your students that the first letters of names are written with uppercase letters and the rest are lowercase. Encourage your students to make the sounds as they write their names. We will be promoting *sound* spelling from here on out. Discuss the letters that some of your names have in common and anything else that seems the least bit remarkable. Encourage your students to notice things that are similar and things that are different such as numbers of letters, shapes of letters, tall and small letters, letters that hang down, etc.

**Save these name tags by adhering each group's name tags to a piece of copy paper. Just stick it in your plans, and when you pull it out in about 3 weeks, you'll be so glad you did!*



Read: How Rocket Learned to Read, by Tad Hills

materials include: name tags

As you read this book, notice the image where Rocket is wearing a nametag just like yours!



Alphabet Banner

materials include: sentence strips, 2" lowercase alphabet letters, glue

Go back to the two-page-spread in the book that features the little yellow bird's "wondrous, mighty, gorgeous alphabet" banner, and explain that you, too, have a banner. It just needs to be assembled.

- Make an alphabet banner with your group by gluing the letters, in order, on the single line side of the sentence strips. Depending on your students' letter knowledge, you may introduce each letter one by one and have the kids take turns placing them on the banner or you may mix them on the table and have kids take turns searching, finding, and adhering the letters on the banner.

As you place the letters onto the banner, share that some letters are tall, some letters are small, and some letters hang down low. Be sure that the following letters are placed on the line with *tails* hanging below the line: g, j, p, q, and y. The bottoms of the other letters should sit on the line. Discuss similarities and differences among letters. Acknowledge that the u and n are the same shapes, but one's upside down and flipped. The d and q have the same shapes, too, but one's upside down. Talk about the sounds, the letters in your names, and even familiar words that include the letters as you work together. *You* place the glue onto each letter -just a tiny bit- (so you can be sure that it is put on the *backs* of the letters), and assist as your students take turns affixing each letter onto the banner in a-b-c order, just like the little yellow bird's alphabet banner. When you've finished, you can:

- Practice naming each letter with 1-1 correspondence, singing the a-b-c song.
- Practice making the sounds for each letter. Press the letters and make the sounds across the alphabet banner.
- Hang the banner in a prominent place (for a few weeks only) and review letters and sounds often.
- Try having the kids seek and find letters that you name. Have them make the associated sound.
- You can also make a sound, and have your kids press the associated letter.

Kids can make their own take home alphabet banners, too. You can use stickers, use 2" letter cut outs, or have the kids write their letters. (This could also be a great "before" sample of students' handwriting.)



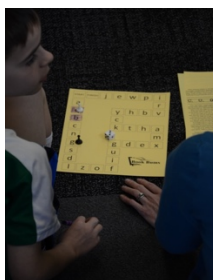
ABC Rap- Watch It!

Watch: Have Fun Teaching, Alphabet Song/ABC Rap

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=36IBDpTRVNE>

Presently, this is the ONLY alphabet video that I recommend. The sounds are produced correctly- and only one time. Tools that produce the sounds multiple times in succession can actually hinder children when they are trying to “make the sounds they see” to decode words. Saying /k/, /k/, /k/, /a/, /a/, /a/, /t/, /t/, /t/ can make it quite difficult to read the word *cat*.

There is a good timing in this abc video, too. It allows time for kids to repeat the sounds while observing the corresponding letter images in both upper- and lowercase forms.



Alphabet Board Game

materials include: alphabet board games, movers, a die, crayons (Allow your students to choose their favorite colors.)

The students will place their movers on the start space of their own, personal game boards. They'll take turns rolling the die and moving the shown number of spaces on their own boards. If the reader lands on a letter, can name the letter, and produce the correct corresponding sound, s/he can color that space in. Once a letter is colored in, that space is no longer in play. The students will land upon uncolored spaces only as they play. This ensures that they're practicing only the letters for which your students have not, yet, demonstrated mastery. Proceed until all letters have been colored, though that may be across a couple of days. When kids are unsure about a letter sound, you provide the sound as well as some kind of cueing that will help them remember it the next time. If the letter is m, for instance, you could say,

“Oh. Let me teach you . . . This is m and it says /m/. I always remember this one because there's an m on M&M's, and when I eat those I always say, “Mm!”

or

“Let me share how I remember this one. It's a y. When we see a y, we often say /y/. I remember this because it reminds me of the sounds I make when I do karate chops. I make my hand do two chops that resemble the letter y shape and I make the sound like a karate guy.”

With each cue, you're providing a story, a sound, and a motion that will help kids to remember the letter name and its most commonly associated sound.

* c = /c/ as in cat, g = /g/ as in go

If kids make the other sounds for these letters (/s/ & /j/), say, "You're right. This letter can make that sound, however, most of the time it makes the sound is--." Make the sound for the corresponding letter and give the students a tip or trick or something to which they can relate.

**s = /z/ as in is

Let's share with our students, more deliberately, that s can make the /z/ sound. Note that when we make either sound, there's a tiny stream of air pushing out between our teeth and tongues. The only difference between them is that one is a puffy, snake sound, and one is a buzzy, bee sound that makes our chins and necks vibrate. We can transition from one sound to the other without changing a single thing our mouths are doing. Try it!



Alphabet Handwriting

materials include: handwriting guide sheet, lined paper

There is plentiful research supporting the idea that explicitly teaching kids how to form letters using tidy, efficient formations is an outstanding way to support kids' letter naming and proper sound production. If for no other reason, and I have plenty of other reasons, I want you, the specialist, to care enough about your students' alphabetic knowledge that you're willing to invest some time into handwriting instruction.

The kids we are serving are often those who have the very lowest of low self-esteem. They know they are being pulled out of regular programming to receive help because they're kids who are slower to catch on to this reading thing. I want to persuade you to begin sharing with kids what they are capable of when they decide to invest some renewed energy into working hard and an absolute dedication to improving. The BEST way I've found to teach this kind of grit is through handwriting. It's crazy, but kids see, so quickly, the benefits of deliberate practice using a systematic approach for learning a skill, that they begin to see what they're capable of. So many of our kids have lost their confidence. We can make our students so very proud of themselves through their improved handwriting AND their improved letter knowledge that they begin to see themselves in a fresh, new light.

Foundational Information-

Handwriting should not be an artistic endeavor. It should be a sense-making system that makes automatic letter formation simple. The process often begins as a cumbersome changing of habits, but it transforms students' handwriting with confident, fluent, and automatic letter formation that frees up their brains to focus on actual encoding/spelling as they work to express their ideas.

Please use the handwriting paper (included) to practice handwriting. Practice, during one-on-one tutoring, for about 10 minutes of every thirty-minute session, across about 5-6 sessions. In the regular classroom, when I dedicated all of our Writing block time to handwriting (which my students looked forward to each and every day), it took about 7-10 days or so before most every student was consistently forming letters correctly and really taking pride in his/her handwriting. It's best to do this at the beginning of the school year, but it's not to begin with early childhood students.

It was through handwriting that I convinced my students that I had what it took to make their school year one of extraordinary progress. In ten days, my students observed their own *before*s and *after*s,

curves and hangs out of the bottom), two 1" wiggle eyes (to be placed above the top slot), glue dots (two to affix the eyes and two to affix the tongue to the inside of the bag), alphabet flip cards (See images, above.)

For best results, kids should hold the letter cards facing outward with the tops of the cards near the top slot. They tip the card into the slot, and out slides the flipped card revealing the same letter in a different case (upper or lower). This is a fun way to review letter sounds and to practice identifying both upper- and lowercase letters.



Two Sounds For s

materials include: Kisses information sheet

Because one very commonly used word is . . . is, I thought it would be helpful to share with our kids that s usually sounds like a snake, /s/, but there are times when s actually sounds like a z, /z/. To make this a really **sweet** lesson, please invite your soon-to-be readers to enjoy two kisses. Explain that when we decode words, if we make the usual /s/ sound, we usually recognize the word. When it comes time to *spell* words, however, it can be really confusing if we don't acknowledge that s sometimes says /z/.

/u/

is, as, was, his, has

**We'll share this lesson, formally, with the o-r lesson, but it'll be helpful to acknowledge the two sounds for s, here.*

ABC Cover-Ups

materials include: alphabet papers with a variety of fonts, 10 pennies

Invite your readers to join you in a game. Place one of the alphabet cover-up sheets in front of you. Place ten coins so they are each covering a letter on your sheet. Invite one child to sing the alphabet song to determine which letters you've covered up. As they make their way through, they can remove the coin to ensure accuracy and promote recall. Also encourage the students to produce the sound we make when we see each of those letters. This is a fun way to reinforce the accurate naming of letters and for your kids to grow comfortable with a variety of fonts. In these Foundations lessons, we are very deliberate about introducing a variety of fonts. Don't let it throw you. We're simply providing opportunities for you to clarify what our kids are seeing. After they name all of the mystery letters, invite them to cover ten letters for you to name. Use this time to give tips and tricks for recalling letter names and sounds.

Letter Name/Sound Recognition Check

materials include: Letter Name/Sound Recognition Check Sheet

When you've made your way through each of these lessons, check to see which letters your kids can quickly and accurately name and for which letters they can produce the most expected sound. Acknowledging kids' progress is a great way to keep kids enthused! They love seeing their skills improve! Remember to limit rewards. The fun-focused work that you're doing together IS the

reward. Too often, extrinsic rewards (toys, treats) backfire. Avoid them, please. Your undivided attention and encouragement is the reward your kids are longing for.

Note: Students who are English Learners may have letter knowledge in another language and though the letters look the same or similar, they may represent different sounds. Acknowledge that this is true, and say, “In English, this letter represents the sound /__ /.” If you know the child’s primary language and you can make a connection with and for the child, please do so. For example, with a Spanish-speaking student, it may be appropriate to say, “In English, when we see a letter i, we say, /i/ as in *icky*. In Spanish, the same letter represents the sound /ee/. That can be tricky, so look at the letter, make the sound, and do the motion with me to help you remember that in English the i says /i/ like in *icky*.”

Additional Ideas:

There’s a kind of dorky video (Okay. It’s really dorky...), but it could be fun for your kids. You know your students. If you think it might help, play it! I love that it’s got a lot of movement including marching in place, and kids are up and at ‘em. The students are to produce the letter names, one at a time, when provided the sounds in random order. It’s a low-cost investment. Who doesn’t have a few minutes that kids might actually get a kick out of?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qwOOvh_mJ4w