

Your Library Today



Mr. Breitsprecher's Edition

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ABC Early Literacy With Magnetic Letters

Looking for a fun way to share early literacy skills? Generations of kids have enjoyed magnetic alphabet letters. They are fun to keep on refrigerators or other metal surfaces.

Bright, colorful magnetic letters can be used to promote a variety of early literacy skills. Kids love them (print motivation). They learn the alphabet (letter knowledge).

Children see that everything we say can be written, that we read from left to right, and that text is broken into small units - words (print awareness).

They can be used as an activity that children explain or they can even be used to tell stories. All children's play makes for a wonder dialog (narrative skills).

We can use them to teach children the various sounds that each letter or letter combination stands for (phonological awareness).

When children are ready to see and form words, we can use magnetic alphabet letters to teach children new words too (enriched vocabulary).

Available in different sizes, styles, capital and lower case, and even as large, soft letters, alphabet magnets are great to use in classrooms or with groups of children. However, you can't beat the play value of manipulatives like this at home.

Want to help a child you love? Are you looking for ways to help a family support your work with their children? Then be sure to share with moms, dads, caregivers, and everyone you can the value of

More Fun With Your A B C s

Children love playing with letters and it provides an enriched fun – they are learning early literacy skills! Looking for some more fun ideas to share with a young child? Here are some low-cost or no-cost -- you can try:

- Stock up on alphabet-shaped cereals, cookies, and soups and make mealtime (or snack time) an impromptu learning experience. Children can pick out letters they already knows and maybe even spell some simple words for you. You can also use the time to practice letter sounds: as your child picks out letters to munch on, ask the name of each letter and the sound it makes.
- Be sure to begin by working with letters your child already knows, such as the first couple of letters in their name. Once you child has mastered recognizing those, move on to new letters. Don't forget to review letters already mastered, but do it in interesting and fun ways. For example, keep track with letter magnets on the fridge, or cut out letters he knows and put them on a wall or bulletin board
- There are also a lot of fun, interactive Web sites that offer games and activities to help preschoolers learn about letters. Check out the Kindergarten links at www.mylmcweb.com
- Reading alphabet books together is a good way to learn letter names and also letter/sound correspondence.
- Another thing you can do every day, show your child examples if how important reading and writing are. Be sure to point out the words and letters in grocery list, signs you see together, birthday cards or notes, or anything else that your child will recognize with words.

playing with alphabet magnets.

Here are some ideas to share that will help get families started building early literacy skills at home with magnetic letters. They can be purchased inexpensively at "dollar stores" and offer a great "bang for the buck!"

Try These Ideas

Play With Letters. Keeping a set of letters on the refrigerator or on a table encourages children to learn and manipulate letters. You can give children a set of magnetic letters and a cookie try so that they can sit and play anywhere – they'll love it.

Start With Their Name. Help a child understand that the most

important word is their name. Use letters to spell it for them and then mix the letters up. Help the child move the letters back to spell their name again. Once they can do this, write their name on a card and ask them to find the letters to spell it and arrange them in the proper sequence.

Find Look-Alikes. If you have duplicate letters, challenge students to go through all the letters and set aside the ones that match the letters in their names. Once they can comfortably do this, see if you can get letters representing different fonts. See if they can find all the letters in their name even though they don't look exactly the same.

Remember, in order to read, children need to see that we write different letters differently, but they also need to learn that we can write the same letter differently too.

Names: Family and Friends. Spell your name and repeat the three activities above. You can repeat this with each member of the family, friends, or even pets.

Building Words. Spell out colors, animals, things that children will recognize. If you have duplicate letters, ask your child to find the same letters and spell the word. You can shuffle the letters up and help the child put them back in order. When they are ready, ask them to find the letters to spell words they are learning.

Learn Your ABCs. Teach your child the name of each magnetic letter. When they have learned them all, sing the alphabet song, being careful to not rush any letters such as L, M, N, O, P and then put the magnetic letters in alphabetical order.

ABCs: Your Turn. Pick out the letter A and ask your child to find the next letter. Keep adding letters until you finish the alphabet. When your child has mastered this, then start with other letters and see if they can finish the alphabet in proper sequence.

Compare and Contrast. Letters have different shapes. Ask a child to organize the letters you have by putting them in groups based on what they share or how they differ. For example, they might notice that some letters have straight lines, others are curved, some have both types of lines, some are open shapes, and some are closed shapes.

Go Fish. Put the letters in a pile and have your child pick out letters as you call out the letter's name.

Sort By Color. If you have a set of letters with different colors, ask your child to sort by color. Use their groupings to teach them the names of colors.

Match Letters and Colors. If you have multicolored letters, ask your child to pick up one letter that is the color you call out and then ask them to tell you then name of each letter that they pick up.

Letter Chains. If you have multiple sets of letters, put a few of them together (don't worry about making words yet) and ask your child to find the same letters in the pile and put them in the same order. If you don't have multiple sets of letters, you can write down a short sequence of letters and ask the child to find them and arrange them like you have written.

BINGO! Make two cards with a grid of three boxes across and three down and trace one letter in each box. Put a pile of magnetic letters (listed on the cards and some that are not) in a bowl. Take turns taking a letter out of the bowl, say the letter and try to match to your card. The first person to fill three boxes in a row wins.

Different Types of Letters. Once they have mastered the alphabet, show your children that some letters are called VOWELS (a, e, i, o, and u). The rest are called consonants. Help your child learn to organize the letters into vowels and consonants.

Capital vrs Small. If you have upper and lower case magnetic letters, ask your child to sort them into groups of uppercase letters and lowercase letters.

Writing Letters. Have children select a few letters from your magnetic set and then write those letters down. Start with a small number of letters and increase the number as your child masters each.

Writing Words. Spell some words with your magnetic letters and ask your child to write the words down.

Drawing Words. Once your child can write some words, have them identify things that can be written with your letters (help as needed) and then ask your child to draw the word.

Writing Colors. Give your child a list of easy to spell colors (red, blue, white, etc...). Be sure to illustrate each color (write with appropriate crayon or use another object). Help your use magnetic letters to spell each color, then mix the letters up, and help them spell it again.

Spelling Numbers. Write a list of numbers for you child – use the numeral and the word. If it helps, draw dots to illustrate each number too. Help your child spell the numbers with your letters, then mix the letters up and help them spell them again.

Match Words. Using your child's favorite books, look for words that they can spell with their magnetic letters. You can ask them to spell it from the book or you can write it down together first.

Change Words. Write words together and then show your child how you can change the word by changing or adding letters. Start by changing one letter and change more as your child is ready.

Rhyming is FUN! Use your letters to spell a three-letter word (i.e. cat, dog, pig, fan, etc.). Ask your child to identify a word and then to identify a word that rhymes. Help them spell the rhyming word below the word you started with.