

## Letter Recognition & Letter Sounds

### **Letter Recognition**

Children who are able to identify the letters of the alphabet have an easier time learning to read. Here are a few ideas for helping your child learn to recognize and name the letters in our alphabet.

1. Sing the alphabet song with your child.
2. Read alphabet books.
3. Play with alphabet blocks and magnetic letters. Help your child learn to identify the letters in alphabet books.
4. Give your child a newspaper, magazine, or advertisement and a crayon or marker. Say the name of a letter and have your child find and circle the letter. Say, "Draw a circle around letter 's'. Circle the letter 'A'." Start out by calling out the letters in your child's name. Say, "See how many letter 'p's you can find."
5. Put cornmeal or sand in the bottom of a cake pan or cookie sheet. Say a letter and have your child draw the letter in the cornmeal or sand. Variations: Go outside and use sidewalk chalk or draw letters in the dirt with a stick. Or you can write letters in a small dab of pudding on a plate.
6. Play I Spy with your child as you read to him each night. Say, "I spy the letter \_\_\_ on the cover of our book." Have your child point to the letter that you named. Variation: You can ask your child to spy a letter and have you point to it. Remember to get some wrong to make the game more fun!
7. Use playdough or clay to roll out long "snakes". Have your child use the "snakes" to form letters.
8. Play letter games on your computer. Call out a letter for your child to type and see how quickly he can find and type it. Ask your child to type the letters in the alphabet or the letters in his name.
9. Keep a set of magnetic letters on your refrigerator. Call out letters for your child to find. Have him sort the letters by their shapes. Say, "Find the letters with curvy lines. Find the letters with straight lines. Find the letters with dots." (i, j) Say, "Tell me the names of the pink letters. Tell me the names of the blue letters."

### **Letter Sounds**

Children need many opportunities to understand and use the building blocks of spoken language and print. We are helping our children learn that spoken sentences are made up of words, and words are made up of separate sounds. We are also helping them learn that these separate sounds are connected to the letters in printed words. Here are some activities that you can use to help your child connect the sounds of our language to the corresponding letters that make those sounds.

1. Play I Know Susie. Say, "I know Susie, and she likes (something that begins with letter S.)" "I know Mary, and she likes (marshmallows)." "I know Tim, and he likes (turkeys)." Continue with other names. Be sure to include your own child's name and the names of family members and friends.
2. As you read to your child each night, ask your child to look at the title on the cover of his book.

Say, "Point to the letter that makes the /t/ sound. Point to the letter that makes the /m/ sound." Continue calling out sounds in random order.

Variation: Have your child call out sounds of letters for you to find.

3. Play Name That Sound. Say, "What sound do you hear at the beginning of heart, ham, hot, hand?" Find out what letter sounds your child is working on at school, and emphasize those sounds at home. Variation: Ask your child to name the letter that makes the sound that you call out. Once your child can identify the beginning sounds in many words, help him learn to listen for the ending sounds in words. You can play this game while riding in the car or while waiting for dinner to be served at your favorite restaurant.
4. Cut a large letter m out of construction paper. Have your child look in old magazines or newspapers for pictures of things that begin with letter m. (mittens, milk, Mom, money, map, someone who is mad, mask, etc.) Have him cut out the pictures and glue them onto the large construction paper m. Post this on your refrigerator, and refer to it often. Do this with other letters, too. This can be done with both upper and lower case letters. You may want to draw pictures of things that you can't find in magazines.
5. Play Rhyme Time. Say, "I'm thinking of something that begins with the sound of letter T, and it rhymes with wreath." (teeth) "I'm thinking of something that begins with the sound of letter M, and it rhymes with house." (mouse) Do this with other letters, too. This is another great travel game.
6. Place a few magnetic letters on the table for your child to spread out. Make the sound of one of those letters, and have your child pull out the magnetic letter that makes that particular sound. Variation: Say a word that begins with the sound of one of those letters, and have your child pull out that particular letter. You can use letter cards instead of magnetic letters, or your child can type the letter on the computer.