

Phonics

Information booklet

Why begin Teaching Reading through Games?

It is vital that early reading experiences are happy and positive. The aim should be not just for the children to learn to read, but to enjoy reading. Whilst games may appear to be an indirect approach, they do protect a child from the feeling of failure. By 'playing together' both parent and child are relaxed. Where a child could feel pressured in a formal teaching situation they will usually enjoy reading activities in a 'play' situation. This leaflet aims to give you simple ideas to try.

The Sounds of Letters

Tips for teaching your child the sounds:

- It is important for a child to learn lower case letters rather than capital letters at first. Most early books and games use lower case letters and your child will learn these first at school. Obviously you should use a capital letter when required, such as at the beginning of the child's name, e.g. **Paul**.
- When you talk about letters to your child, remember to use the letter sounds: **a buh cuh duh e ...** rather than the alphabet names of the letters: **ay bee see dee ee**. The reason for this is that sounding out words is practically impossible if you use the alphabet names. E.g. **cat, would sound like: see ay tee**.
- When saying the sounds of **b, d, g, j and w** you will notice the 'uh' sound which follows each, for example buh, duh... You cannot say the sound without it, however, try to emphasise the main letter sound.

Sound games to play at home

Common objects

Collect objects that begin with the same sound and make a card with this letter sound on it. Make a second group of objects beginning with a different sounds and a card to with those.

Discuss the sounds of the letters on the two cards with your child and shuffle the objects. Separate the cards on the floor and ask you child to put each object near the sound that it starts with. This activity can help your child to 'hear' the first sound of a word.

Odd-one out

Say a number of words, all but one of which begin with the same sound. See if your child can pick out the odd one. It can be helpful to have the corresponding objects there for the child to look at.

I-Spy

For small children the usual way of playing that starts “I spy with my little eye something beginning with...” can be too difficult. You can make this easier by provoking a clue. “I spy with my little eye something that barks and begins with d.”

Sounds Scrapbook

Write a letter at the top of a scrapbook. Concentrating on a few letters at a time, collect pictures of objects that begin with those letters. Do not use words where the first sound does not make its normal sound, such as giraffe, ship, cheese, thumb. Stick pictures on the appropriate pages.

Games for Recognising Letter Shapes

Fishing for sounds

You will need a few cards with individual letters. Attach a paper clip to each card. Using a small stick with a string and magnet, your child fishes for letter sounds. If your child can say the sound of the letter they win the card, otherwise you win it.



Sequencing the Letters in your Child's Name

Proving the individual letter cards for each of your child's name can be a useful way to teach the sequence of letters. Remember you will need to write a capital for the first letter and lower case for the rest.

If you want to print out the cards using a word processor use a font such as Comic Sans (which has a 'a' not a 'ā') in at least a font size 36. Show your child how to make the name first, before shuffling the cards for them to have a try. For a very long name work with the first few and build up a letter at a time.

'What does it start with box?' Box

You will need:

- A box
- Several items each beginning with the same sound (e.g. if the sound was *b*, you could use a ball, a banana, a balloon and a biscuit)
- Corresponding letter cards

This game is similar to the common objects game on the previous page, but the emphasis is now on recognising the sounds the letters make. Ask your child to choose an object from the box, to think what the first sound is (remember it is the sound you are looking at rather than the alphabet name) and then to match the object with the relevant card.



Sensory Tray or Finger Painting

Children enjoy writing letters with their fingers in a sensory tray (this can be sand, shaving foam, oats, paint etc). This can provide a good opportunities to teach correct letter formation.

Sentence Games

This activity is quite useful when your child has been given an early reading book. Quite often parents say "They're not reading the book. They're just remembering the story off by heart". This can happen. Some children become over-dependent on the pictures for clues and do not look for clues from the words.

Making Sentences

Read the book with your child so they become familiar with the story. Then simply use the first sentence from the reading book and copy it out onto a strip of paper (or print it from the computer using a font like Comic Sans in at least font size 36). Leave a double space in-between each word. Now cut up the sentence into the individual words. For example:



Ask your child to make the sentence. "This is a dog", using the individual words. At first you will probably need to help. When they have made the sentence ask your child to read it to you and encourage them to point to each word with their finger.

Retain interest by only spending a few minutes a day on the activity. If your child makes a mistake do not say "That is wrong" immediately, because negative comments discourage. Ask your child to read the sentence and mistakes will often be self-corrected. If not, you can give clues such as, "What sound does **dog** start with?" If your child is still unable to read it, say positive comments such as "What a good try. You got all these right and only this part wrong. Well done." Then show our child the correct order.

If you require any further information or advice please do not hesitate to contact your child's class teacher.