

PLAY AND LEARN AT HOME



January 2021

Letter Knowledge and Letter Sounds

Children need to know and identify all the individual letters in the alphabet when they learn to read. It's also important to visually know the difference between individual letters. Visual discrimination can start with seeing the differences in letters' shapes. Children also need to identify the sounds letters make to sound out new words as they read.

Singing is a particularly effective way to slow down language and highlight smaller sounds. Whole body movement, which studies have shown can improve a child's memory, focus and motivation, can help develop letter knowledge, too!

This month's activities are designed to help your children develop letter knowledge while singing, flexing large and small motor skills and building impulse control!

LITTLE EXPLORERS: SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING AND MATH

Make it: Use pipe cleaners, straws, craft sticks or snacks to make shapes. What did they make? *That's a triangle. How could we turn it into a square?*



Name it: Use paper and a thick marker to draw outlines of large shapes. Write your child's name in large capital letters. Give your child stickers and encourage them to outline the shapes and letters.

Create it: Children can roll, pinch, and manipulate playdough or clay to make two or more shapes. Then they can combine their creations to make new shapes.

Play it: Ask your child to find specific shapes on walks, while driving or at the store. *I spy a green oval...* Talk about the attributes of the shapes when you find the shape together. *An oval has no sides and no corners. It's like a flat circle!*

READY, SET, KINDERGARTEN!: SOCIALLY AND EMOTIONALLY READY FOR SCHOOL

Point and sing: Write each letter on a sheet of paper or use foam or magnetic alphabet sets. Sing "The Alphabet Song" and point to each letter as you sing it.

Groove to a new tune: Sing "The Alphabet Song" in a new way! It's typically sung to the tune of "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star", but what happens when you sing it to "Mary Had a Little Lamb" or "Five Little Ducks"?

"The ABC Stop Song": Sing "The Alphabet Song" and clap each letter. Tell your children to freeze when they hear, "Stop!" For example, "A, B, C, D, E, F, G, STOP!" Sing again and change where you stop. Your child will learn how to control their bodies as they try to freeze.

The child takes a letter: To the tune of "The Farmer in the Dell", pick a letter and sing about it. "M says 'Mmm,' / M says 'Mmm,' / Hi, ho, the derry-oh / M says 'Mmm.'"

FAMILY PLACE PLAY AND LEARN: LEARNING THROUGH PLAY



Sensory: Encourage your toddler to draw shapes in sand, salt, rice (or even snow!) with their fingers. If your child does not like sensory experiences, they can draw with a stick. Children 3+ can start writing letters and flex their fine motor skills by using tongs. Babies will love just playing with the rice!

Letter dig: Hide plastic or foam letters under rice. Encourage your child to find them and describe what they have found. Talk about the straight and curved lines in shapes and point out the same on the letters.

Shaving cream: Draw shapes and letters in shaving cream during bath time. Bonus: easy cleanup!

Air drawing: The physical act of air-writing letters (or drawing shapes) combined with saying the letters out loud helps cement letter learning. If you model how to draw a letter, point with your index finger and be sure to face the same direction as your child, otherwise, the letters will appear backwards.



LEARNING ON THE GO: BUILDING EARLY LITERACY SKILLS

Body letters: Sing the alphabet song, and while you do it, try to make the letter with your body.

Letter hop: Write each letter of the alphabet on a sheet of paper and place them on the floor. Shout out a letter and your child must find it and hop on it! As your child gets older, you can do this with the letter sounds, and, later, with sight words.

Alphabet exercise: Write a letter and a movement that starts with the same letter on a card. When your child picks a letter, talk about what's on the card, make the letter sound and do the exercise together!

Letter swat: Just like the letter hop, make large letters and post them on your walls. Shout out a letter or letter sound, and your child must find it and SWAT it with a fly swatter, spatula, their hand or other tool (that won't damage your walls). This is another activity that can also be done with sight words!

Alphabet musical "chairs": Put letters on the floor using tape or on sheets of paper. Play music, and when the music stops, hold up a card with a letter on it. Your child must find the letter and stand on it. When the music starts again, your child can DANCE until it stops and then they must find the next letter! If you're playing with more than one child, it can be a race to see who can get there first!

FIND OUT MORE!

If you'd like to know more about letter knowledge or any early literacy topic, we're happy to help! Visit arapahoelibraries.org, click on **Services** and select **Educator and Parent Support**. Tell us what you'd like to know and we'll help you find the answers!

Did you know that many of these ideas are also videos? It's true! Visit us at arapahoelibraries.org/0-5. Once you're there, click **Watch and Learn** and look for the Play and Learn videos and posts. You'll even see your favorite early literacy librarians, Betsy, Mary, Lauren and Mollie!