

The Alphabetic Principle

A, B, C, D, E, F, G...the alphabet song has been a hit with the preschool crowd for decades. It is but one of the tools that helps children learn about the alphabet. As well as the names of the letters, children need to understand the alphabetic principle. The alphabetic principle is the understanding that there is a systematic and predictable relationship between letters and spoken sounds. Young children need to learn about the alphabetic principle before they can use it to read and write. It is one of the core literacy skills that helps your children learn to read.

Children learn about the alphabetic principle in a predictable sequence by:

1. Learning the letter names

- sing “alphabet songs”
- recite rhymes about letters
- learn the letters in their names

2. Learning the letter shapes

- use magnetic and wooden letters to play with
- use play dough to make letters
- use alphabet books

3. Learning the letter sounds

- through rhyming and alliteration,
- through games that point out the sounds
- by direct teaching of the letter sounds

Use these ideas to encourage and support your children’s learning of the alphabetic principle. Later, when they know how to read, a good understanding of the alphabetic principle will help your children figure out how to read unknown words and to spell.