

Family Literacy Games



Let the games begin.....

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Game Station 1

Letter Recognition

The alphabet is our basic unit of the written word in English. Singing ‘*ABCDEFG...*’ is only a starting place.

Children need to be able to recognize and label all 26 upper and lower case letters to be able to:

- talk about letters
- understand how letters connect to sounds
- understand how letters are used to spell

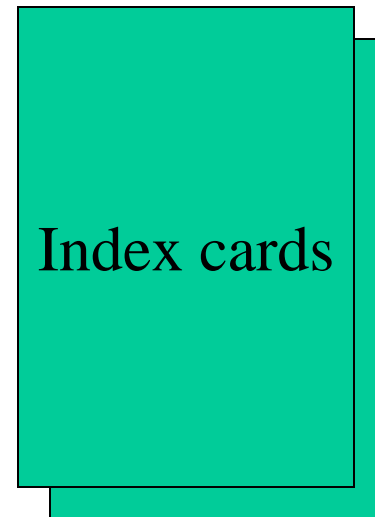
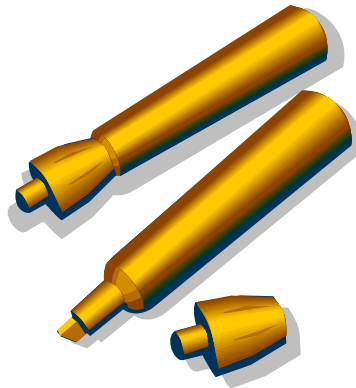
What is in a Name?

- Both of these letter recognition games (described in the next few slides) require participants to take the word that is most familiar to them – their own name – and identify its letters.
- Families work together to think up words that begin with letters of their name. As long as the first letter is correct, accept invented spellings.

- At the end of each game (Silly Sentences and Food Feast), provide an opportunity for a spokesperson from each family to share their silly sentences and food feast lists with the whole group. Participants should not, however, feel obligated to do this if they are uncomfortable speaking out in a group.

Letter Recognition Game Materials

- Index cards (one per participant)
- Markers or pens (one per participant)



Letter Recognition Game 1

Silly Sentences

How to play:

- Each person is given an index card and marker.
- Each person writes the letters of their name in a vertical pattern along the left-hand side of their card.
- Families work together to think up silly sentences for the letters in their names.

Salamanders

Under

Socks

Are

Nasty

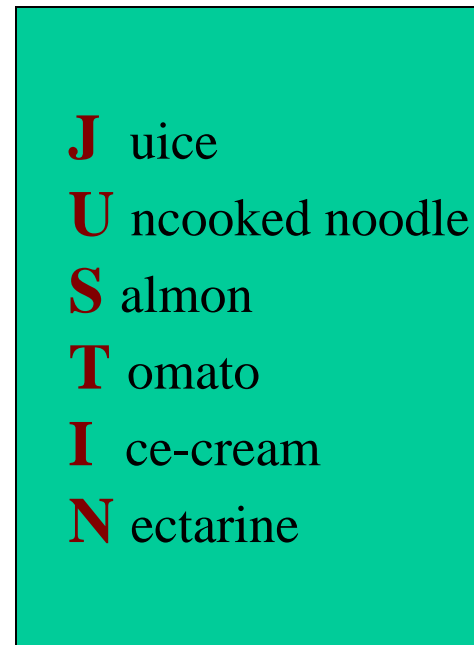
e.g. silly sentence for *Susan*

Letter Recognition Game 2

Food Feast

How to play:

- Turn index cards over and write letters of players' names down the edge of the card again.
- This time each person thinks of a food item that begins with the letters in their name.



e.g. food feast for *Justin*

Game Station 2

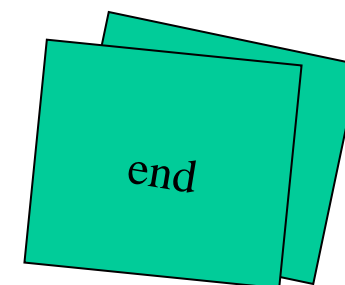
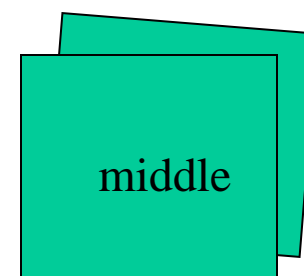
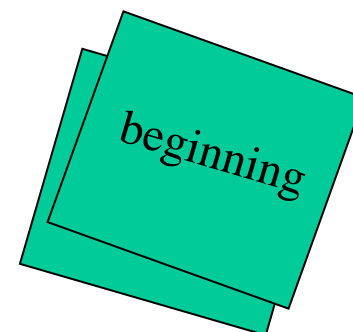
Letter-Sound Games

- Knowing the names of upper and lower case letters is only part of the alphabetic code. Letters must also be connected to the sound(s) in oral speech that they represent.
- This game helps participants see that these are two distinct skills, and helps them think about letter-sound relationships at the beginning, middle and end of words.

Letter-Sound Game Materials



- 26 separate alphabet game cards printed on letter-sized coloured card stock, laminated for durability
- 2 large foam die; one with the words (as described below) taped to each side
- 6 pieces of paper cut to fit the sides of one die (2 pieces with the word “beginning” written on it, 2 with “middle” and 2 with “end”)
- Clear packing tape



Letter-Sound Game

Human Board Game

How to play:

- Tape letters you have prepared ahead of time to the floor from A to Z in an interesting wavy line.
- Tape securely so that children who move or step on them will not slip.
- While still maintaining family units, split the entire group into two groups. (It isn't important if the number in each group is exactly the same.)
- Have each group choose one child (or parent and child) to represent their team on the game board as a human pawn.

All members of each team participate by:

- Rolling the large foam dice
- Counting out (in unison if they wish) the number on the dice and helping their pawn know how many alphabet spaces to move ahead.
- Yelling out the name of the letter their pawn has just landed on, after the dice has been rolled.

- If the alphabet space already has an action word written on it, then the whole team reads the word and acts it out (including the pawn) e.g. the pawn lands on the letter “K” which has the word “kick” written below the letter. The team helps the pawn by saying the letter name, the action word “kick” and then kicking the air where they are standing. Once the pawn has made a kicking motion on the board game as well, the other team takes a turn.

- If the pawn lands on an alphabet space with no action word written, the team must say the letter name, and then choose the sound they wish to use for this letter (e.g. for the letter “G” the team may choose a “guh” or a “juh” sound).
- Once they determine which sound they wish to use, a second dice is thrown. This second dice is the one with the words “beginning”, “middle” or “end” attached to each side of the cube. The team must think of a word with the letter sound they have chosen, in the position of the word the thrown dice indicates.
- For example, if the pawn lands on “G”, the team has chosen the letter sound “juh” and the second dice they throw lands on “beginning”, they may suggest the word “giraffe”.

- Middle sounds are more difficult than beginning and ending sounds for young children to hear. Thinking of words with specific sounds positioned in the middle of them can be tricky.
- If the team is having trouble thinking of a word:
 - ask for help from the other team or
 - suggest they throw the second dice again for a chance to think of a letter sound in a different position of the word.

- Teams may suggest words with the correct letter sound but spelled with a different letter or letter combination.
- For example, the pawn lands on “F”. The team rolls the second die showing “end”. The word the team suggests is “laugh”. Reinforce the idea that the /f/ sound in speech is represented in a variety of ways, including the one they have suggested. Ask the other team if they will accept “laugh” as an acceptable answer. If they won’t, ask them if they can help the first team by suggesting another word that ends with both the letter “f” and /f/ sound.
- **Help teams be successful so that their pawn can move forward each turn.**

- The game ends with the first pawn who lands on the letter “Z” and “Zooms” off the game board as the action word indicates. Pawns, however, must land exactly on “Z”. If they roll a number larger than the number of spaces their pawn needs to reach “Z” they must forfeit their turn.
- If the game station time is up before either team reaches “Z” declare the winner to be whichever team is closest to the end. Congratulate all team players for their clever thinking skills and team playing abilities.

Game Station 3

Visual Detail

See any clues in this picture to help you understand why the driver of the Dodge truck might be feeling anxious?



Visual clues help us understand meaning.

Visual acuity also helps us distinguish the fine details necessary to read and write.

- To be able to read well we need to be able to see differences in letters (e.g. “b” vs. “d”) and in words (e.g. “bib” vs. “bid”). Through attention to visual detail we eventually build sight word vocabulary.
- Developing this skill can be nurtured with picture books like “I Spy” and “Where’s Waldo”. It can also be nurtured through these games.

Visual Detail Game Materials

Game 1: What's Different?

- Sense of humour



Game 2: Museum Statue

- Index cards made into labels for the body
(*See Body Labels template*)
- Masking tape to stick labels to “statue”
- Medal for each family’s statue
(*See Statue Medal template*)
- “Dem Bones” by Bob Barner
(*If book is unavailable, see “Dem Bones Song”*)

Visual Detail Game 1

What's Different?

How to Play:

- Stand facing one another in pairs. Take a minute to study each other's appearance.
- Turn around so that each pair is back to back. In this position, ask each person to change one thing about his or her appearance (e.g. untie a shoelace, remove one earring, part hair on the opposite side, pull up shirt sleeves).
- Face one another again. Guess what has changed in the other's appearance.

Visual Detail Game 2

Museum Statue

How to Play:

- Begin the game with this explanation:

There will always be new words that we have never read before. Some words we see so frequently, however, that they become part of our sight word vocabulary. We know them automatically. This game focuses on word recognition.

- Give identical sets of body labels to each family team.
- Look at the labels together and go through them together. Talk about how some words look like you'd expect and are easy to sound out (e.g. leg) but some words (e.g. knee) are not so logical.
- Ask each family to choose one person to become their 'statue'.

- Ask families to shuffle their own deck of body label cards and spread them randomly on the floor face-down in front of their ‘statue’.
- Instruct the families that they are each going to label their statue for a museum. They may turn over one card at a time when they hear that particular body word sung.

- Leader begins singing, “The foot bone’s connected to the leg bone” and pauses for team players to turn over one card at a time and tape the body labels they hear sung to the corresponding body part of their statue, in this case “foot” “leg”.
- This game may be enhanced by reading/singing the book “Dem Bones” by Bob Barner before the game begins.
- The game does not have to be sung in an expected order from foot to head. (*See “Dem Bones Song”*)

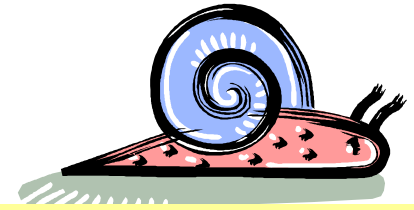
- When the song is finished, pin a medal onto each correctly labeled statue.
- The game and song may be repeated with someone else taking a turn as the statue.
- If time permits, ask each family to combine their index cards and spread them face-down on the floor for a game of memory.

Game Station 4

Prior Knowledge

Introduce these games with an explanation about prior knowledge:

In order to understand what we read, we need to have a good general knowledge about all kinds of things. Talking and discovering new things together have an enormous impact on children's ability to understand what they read.



Reading “He was as slow as a snail.” makes a whole lot more sense if we have seen a snail, held it in our hand or watched it move.

Prior Knowledge Game Materials

Dordock:

- Piece of paper for each participant
- Markers, crayons or pencil crayons

Story Character Jeopardy:

- Story character questions
- Chart paper and marker
- Musical instruments or noise maker (one per team)

Dordock

How to play:

- Give each participant a piece of paper and tell them you would like them to draw a picture of a dordock. Ask if anyone has ever seen a dordock before. For those who haven't, tell them not to be concerned because you will describe what a dordock looks like.

- *See Dordock Activity Guide.*
- Describe *dordock* one feature at a time. Pause after each description for participants to draw what they think you said.
- When their drawings are complete, ask them to show their drawings to other members of their family.
- Emphasize to the group that there is no right or wrong way to draw a Dordock, but that the activity does demonstrate how we interpret words based on our own experiences. Use questions and discussion ideas suggested in the Dordock Activity Guide.
- Go through the description again, explaining the meanings of words that parents and children may not have understood when they first heard them.

Story Character Jeopardy

How to play:

- This is a guessing game based on fairy tale, nursery rhyme or storybook characters. (See Story Character Jeopardy Questions.)
- Clues are given to one team at a time.
- Teams have a limited time to respond.
- Create teams according to family units. This game can be played with 2, 3 or 4 teams. If there are more than 4 families at this game station, add more family units to each team. (It is not necessary to have the same number of players on each team.)
- Give one musical instrument or sound maker (each with a distinctive sound from the others) to each team.

- Teams are given two points for a correct answer. They lose one point for an incorrect response.
- Emphasize to the teams that parents and children are to decide on the answer together, rather than one person shouting out the answer immediately.
- Record scores on a sheet of chart paper.

Jeopardy Team Scores			
Team A	Team B	Team C	Team D
		++++	

- After each clue is given, hum the tune from the TV show *Jeopardy* or a well-known tune like *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*. When the musical phrase is finished, the team being posed the question (Team A) must respond with their guess.
- If Team A responds incorrectly, they lose a point and the first of the other teams (B,C or D) to shake their musical instrument gets a chance to guess the answer. If this team answers correctly they get 2 points. If they answer incorrectly, they lose one point (yes they can receive a negative score) and the second clue for the story character is posed again to Team A. (Remember to hum a musical phrase for Team A to have time to decide on their answer together.)
- If Team A answers incorrectly again, they lose one point and the other teams have a chance to indicate that they wish to guess the answer using their musical shakers.

- Clues continue in this manner until Team A or one of the other teams guesses the correct answer. If no one guesses the correct answer after all 3 clues have been given, the leader tells everyone the name of the story character.
- The game continues with clues for the second story character given to Team B.
- Again, give Team B time to consider their answer by humming a musical tune.
- Incorrect answers by Team B can now be answered by whichever team (A, C or D) shakes their musical instrument first.

- Continue game until all the story characters have been guessed (or the game station time is up).
- Add up each team's score. All teams are winners. Create a cheer to celebrate their efforts.



1st place: “Know it all” status
2nd place: “Know a lot” status
3rd place: “Learning lots” status
4th place: “I’ll know more tomorrow”
status

Game Station 5

Reading Clues from Speech

- Learning to read and write develops simultaneously and is based on oral language.
- Word order and syntax, experienced through oral language, help us know if we are decoding written language correctly.

What word would you expect to decode as the last word in a sentence that reads:

“I eat the mashed potatoes **with** my...”

Would you expect a different word if the sentence read:

“I eat the mashed potatoes **on** my....”



Prepositions and other forms of grammar can help us read unfamiliar words.

Reading Clues from Speech Game Materials



- “That’s Good That’s Bad”
by Margery Cuyler and David Cartow (optional)
- Story stick : This can be made inexpensively using a piece of dowel or stick decorated with feathers, stickers or markers.
- Chart paper and marker (optional)

Unfortunately/Fortunately Game

How to play:

- Introduce the idea of how sentence structure and patterns of words can provide reading and storytelling clues. (Use previous example using different prepositions to illustrate what you mean.)
- (Optional) Read *That's Good That's Bad* by Margery Cuyler to further illustrate this point.
- This story will also help you introduce the Fortunately/Unfortunately Game. *That's Good That's Bad* shows events in a boy's life from different perspectives. Things that seem good can suddenly seem terrible; things that seem bad can turn out great.

- Direct the group to sit in one large circle and tell them that together they are going to tell a never-been-told-before adventure.
- The game leader or helper becomes scribe and writes the story on large chart paper as it is being told by game players. (This is optional. Though writing the story is especially valuable to those who are visual learners, it also slows the pace of the game. If the group is large, you may prefer to play this game without the step of recording their story on chart paper. For a smaller group, writing the story as it is told may give players more time and confidence in adding their ideas to the storyline.)

- Once the group is in a large circle, the game station leader begins a story with something like “Once upon a time there lived a.....” The introduction to this never-been-told-before adventure can be as brief as a single sentence. The leader (who has been holding a story stick) finishes with “Unfortunately” and passes the story stick to the person beside him or her in the circle.
- The person now holding the story stick continues the story from where the leader left off. This second storyteller ends with “Fortunately” and passes the story stick to the person next to him or her.

- The story stick continues to be passed from one person to the next indicating whose turn it is to speak. (In keeping with many cultures, the story stick/talking stick is used as a sign of respect and reminder for others in the circle to listen and appreciate the words and ideas of whoever is speaking.)
- Each time the story stick is passed, the story teller ends with either “Fortunately” or “Unfortunately” as a clue to what story idea may come next.
- Players holding the story stick may always ask others in the circle for ideas if they are feeling stumped about what to add next.

- If the story telling needs to wrap up, the leader can end with “Unfortunately, our story has come to an end.” or “Fortunately, it is time to switch to the next game station.”
- Establish a few ground rules with the group before the story telling begins. You may want to ask for the group’s input. You or the group may suggest:
 - Respectful listening when someone is speaking
 - No use of swear words