Letter Recognition Games

Letter Formation Activities

Sand Boxes
Children can practice writing letters in sand boxes. Use coloured sand.

Painting a Letter
Write large letters on a sheet of paper in pencil. The children trace over the letter with tempera paint.

Wax Resist Letter
Write a letter in pencil. Children trace over the letter with an oil pastel or Crayon, and then paint over the paper with water color paint. The waxy oil pastel resists the paint, so that the name shows through. (You can also use a Q-tip dipped in oil instead of the oil pastel).

Clay Letters
Roll out small pieces of the clay and attached the pieces together to form letters. We placed them on wax paper to dry. To save money, you can roll the used clay back into a ball and put it in a tightly sealed container to be reused again.

Find the Letters in Your Name
The children really enjoy this game because they love to wander around the room. I folded a paper in half and wrote “Letters in my name” on one half and “Letters not in my name” on the other half. Children attached these to clipboards and walked around the room looking for letters in the classroom. When they found a letter, they determined which half of the paper to write it on.

Musical Letters
This is a fun game we play if the children are interested in writing letters. We place the chairs in a circle, and I place a letter and a different colored marker on each chair. While the music plays, children march around the circle holding a clipboard with paper or a dry erase board. When the music stops, they must find the closest chair, take the
letter and marker and write that letter on their paper or dry erase board. My class’s favorite music for this activity is the Madagascar soundtrack.

**Letter Rubbings**
Children clip paper on the rubbing plates with clothespins and rub over the paper with the flat side of a crayon. The letter will “magically” appear on the paper. Rubbing plates were made by writing letters on pieces of poster board and tracing over them with hot glue.

**Light Letters**
Write a letter on a piece of construction paper (I use a half sheet). Children sit on the carpet and use a toothpick to punch holes along the lines of the letters. Turn out the lights, and hold a flashlight to the back of the letter to see the light shining through (or hold the letters up to sunlight from a window).

**Shaving Cream**
Children spread shaving cream on the table or on a tray and practice writing letters with their finger. To clean up, we just rub the shaving cream on the table until it disappears.

**Letter Identification Activities**

**Alphabet Path Game**
I made these path games using stickers bought at Michael’s, and I made individual mats with about 10 letters on them. Each child gets a mat, a game piece, and some plastic chips to cover the letters on their mat. They roll the dice and count out the spaces to move their game piece. If their game piece lands on a letter that is on the mat, they cover that letter with a chip. Play continues until they have covered every letter.

Other ways we use the path games:
*Children identify the letter they land on, then find that letter somewhere in the classroom.
*Children find an object in the classroom that begins with that letter’s sound.
**ABC Sorting Box**
Label a craft storage box with letter stickers. Children sort letter manipulatives into the sections of the box.

**ABC Sorting Tray**
I found this divided tray in a kitchen outlet store. I labeled each section by writing a letter on a sticker dot and placing a letter in each section of the tray. I placed the letters in a bowl and children sorted and matched the letters into the sections of the tray. We use the Lakeshore A to Z Classroom Letter Center for this activity, so there were 6 of each letter for the children to sort into the tray (you could also use 6 sets of magnetic letters). When I want to change out the letters in the tray, I just remove the sticker dots and add new ones. I usually try to use letters that are similar, so that children are challenged and use visual discrimination skills to find the differences in the letters. For example, I might use Q, O, D, C, and G since those letters are similar in shape, or I, T, J, or W, V, U.

**Letter Hunt**
Children choose any 10 letters from the letter manipulatives. Go through a stack of shuffled letter cards, calling out each letter to the children. As the letters are called out, children look to see if they have that letter, and if they do, the letter is put back in the letter tub. We see who is first to clear all of their letters (like a bingo game). If the kids are too competitive, we play until everyone has cleared all of their letters.
*To teach letter sounds: Call out a word and have children identify the first letter of the word.

**Letter Matching Uppercase to Uppercase**
Each child chooses a colored letter box. Children work in pairs to match the letters that are the same.

**Letter Matching Uppercase to Lowercase**
Each pair of children choose a colored letter box. Children work in pairs to match the letters that are the same.
Letter Tumble
Place letter manipulatives or letter tiles in a bowl. Children toss the letters onto a mat (piece of felt), then match the letters to the letters on an alphabet chart.
*To teach letter sounds: Make individual letter sound charts by putting stickers or clipart on a large index card or card paper. Children match the letter manipulatives to the items on the sound chart.

Owl Letter Tumble
This is the same game as the above Letter Tumble, just a slight variation. Choose one of each: the owl letters and the letter chart. This game can be used to practice matching uppercase to uppercase letters, lowercase to lowercase letters, or uppercase to lowercase letters. Print out a set of Owl Letters and cut them out. Also, print out one of the Letter Charts (but do not cut this one out). Children will place the owl letters in a cup or small container and “tumble” the owls onto a black felt mat (the night sky). Children will place the owls on the letter chart by matching the letters on the owls to the letters on the chart.

Stamping Game
Write about ten letters on a piece of paper for each child. Put the same ten letters in a bowl or bag, and pass it around the table. Each child has a turn to pull a letter out of the bowl/bag, and announce the letter to the group. Children find the letter on their paper and stamp it out with a rubber stamp.
Other ways we play this game:
*I put every letter of the alphabet in the bowl or bag and children determine if the letter is on their paper or not.
*I place small objects in the bowl and children identify the beginning letter (i.e. B for ball).

**Alphabet Bingo**
Each child looks for the letter the teacher calls out on their bingo card. If they have it, they cover it. Play until a card is full.

**Letter Basketball**
This is one of my class’s favorite activities. I cut copy paper or newsprint paper in half, and write letters on several pieces. I make enough papers for each child, plus one or two extra. I make a line with masking tape on the floor and place the trash can about 4 feet away. As each child has a turn, I tell them which letter to find. They pick up the letter, crumple the paper into a ball, and stand on the tape to toss it into the trash can. If they miss, they get as many chances as needed to get the “ball” in the basket and can move closer if needed. We always cheer when they make it in the basket! This game could also be played with alphabet bean bags if you have them.

**Candy Letter Match**
Write pairs of letters on sticker dots and place them on the bottom of several Hershey’s Kisses. For my Pre-K kids, I usually put out about 5-10 pairs of letters at a time. Children take turns lifting two Kisses at a time. If the letters match, they keep those Kisses. If they do not match, they have to put them back. At the end of the game, all of the Kisses are put in the middle of the table, and children can choose about 3 pieces to eat. We use this game to practice matching uppercase to uppercase letters, lowercase to lowercase, or uppercase to lowercase, depending on what we are working on.

**Alpha-Band**
Label each rhythm instrument with a letter. An easy way to make instruments is to put rice inside a plastic Easter egg, and hot glue it closed. We sing the traditional Alphabet Song, or another alphabet song, such as Dr. Jean’s “The Alphabet’s in My Mouth” or “Who Let the Letters Out” or Jack Hartmann’s “Animal Alphabet Cheer”. Children shake their letter shakers only when they hear their letter called out in the song.
Alphabet Soup
Children take turns scooping up a letter from a bowl with a spoon or soup ladle. Child identifies the letter, and walk around the room searching for the letter somewhere in the classroom.
*To teach letter sounds: Children search for an object in the room that begins with that letter.

Letter Clips
Children squeeze the clothespins and clip them to the sides of the box. I wrote letters on dot stickers and placed the dot stickers around the sides of the boxes. I wrote letters on the clothespins so the children would match the letters on the clothespins to the letters on the boxes. This is similar to activities where children clip clothespins to a paper plate or cardstock circle; however, in my experience, those were flimsy and awkward to use, which is why I like the box better. Any sturdy box could be used (shoe box, postal box). The boxes in this picture were stacking gift boxes that held chocolate covered nuts (a Christmas gift), and they worked out perfectly.

License Plate Game
Each child gets a turn to be the “driver”. A piece of paper with a letter written on it is clipped to the driver’s back. The child drives around the table, and parks in his seat. Children find the letter among their set of letter manipulatives.

Memory Game
Place about three letter manipulatives on a tray, cover them with a cloth, and take one away. When the letters are uncovered, children guess which letter is missing. Children find the letter that is missing among their own set of letter manipulatives. If the children are very interested in writing, they can write the letter that is missing on a dry erase lap board. To increase the difficulty of this game, place three letters on the tray, cover them, and ask the children to recall all three letters that were on the tray.

Erase the Sound
Draw a picture of something, for example a house. Call children up one at the time to erase something that begins with R (roof), something that begins with D (door), something that begins with W (window or wall), etc. until everything is erased.
Mystery Bag
Three objects beginning with the same letter are placed in a bag (such as ball, bug, and button for B). The leader pulls each item out of the bag, names each item, and the class guesses the mystery letter.
How to Teach Your Child to Write Their Name in Kindergarten

In kindergarten your child will learn the fundamentals of spelling, including name writing. When a child can successfully print his own name, it brings praise from the teacher and builds your child's self-esteem. You can help your child be ready for name writing in kindergarten by following a few simple measures at home.

Things You'll Need:

- Pencil
- Unlined paper
- Lined paper

Instructions

Step 1

Teach your child basic writing concepts. These will help him get ready for letter formation and lined paper. Explain the directional terms of right and left, up and down, top, middle and bottom. Help your child distinguish between rounded and straight lines.

Step 2

Print the letters in your child's first and last names. Help him practice them one at a time in a fun way. For example, encourage your child to print the letters with his index finger in the air or in a sand box. Teach him that when he writes his name, the first letter is always a capital, and the remaining letters are lowercase.

Step 3

Guide letter formation. Hold your child's hand at first to demonstrate proper name writing mechanics. Emphasize that letters are formed from top to bottom. Sound out each letter in your child's name while he is writing it.
Step 4

Show your child how to hold a pencil. Use a thick writing instrument such as an oversized pencil or crayon. These afford little hands better control. Proper form is important. It is difficult to unlearn poor pencil posture.

Step 5

Introduce unlined paper. Ask your child to print his name several times. With each repetition ask him to reduce the size of the letters. This will provide practice in controlling the pencil and ready him for lined paper.

Step 6

Transition to lined paper. Ask your child to practice printing his name inside the lines. Encourage him to leave adequate space between his first and last names. In general, kindergarten teachers want children to leave a space equal to two child-sized finger widths between words.

Preschool Tracing Worksheets can be found at:
http://www.printactivities.com/Tracing.html
Helping Your Child With Spelling

Children who fall behind classmates in spelling, who forget words easily, or who mix up letters when writing, are children who need special, loving, considerate attention regularly at home to help them overcome their unique learning problems. Forcing an activity on them or making it over-demanding only serves to intensify the child’s negative feelings about it. Here are some suggestions other parents have successfully used to help their children in these areas.

Develop auditory and vocal skills. Good spellers are usually good readers and good speakers and vice versa. Using the school or local library helps your child develop some of these skills. Restrict the amount of TV he watches. Your child cannot talk back to a television set. Children need to use the language they will be writing. Give your child the opportunity to talk with you.

Experience stories. Let your child write about the things he likes. He can illustrate the stones himself or cut pictures from magazines to illustrate them. Let him write the words without assistance unless he asks for help. Misspelled words can then be used in little games you play with your child. A one-line "story" may be all that he can handle. If so, fine.

Write letters. Corresponding with a friend or relative—or a simple statement at the bottom of a letter you write to someone your child knows-offers him opportunities to spell.

Trace words. This activity helps many children. Have your child sit next to you (or, if young, sit on your lap). Sit so that you can guide his writing hand. Make sure that only his index and middle fingers are extended, and that his eyes are closed. If your child is using manuscript, use that form. Take his hand and print (or write) the word that is confusing to him.

Finger paints are messy, but ever so helpful. Use oilcloth and a large table. Have your child roll up his sleeves and wear an old apron. Let him use both hands to write letters and words, it is a marvelous activity. Just gating the feel of large movements may be sufficient without introducing formal spelling to the activity.
All kids love codes, so why not encourage your child to decode messages diet you leave for him? Let him make up his own codes for you. You make up one but make sure he has a way to decode it.

If your child is working on a class spelling list and can only remember half of the words, speak to his teacher. Teachers are more than delighted to hear how their students respond to homework. Perhaps the list can be reduced so that your child has fewer words and can learn these more efficiently and comfortably.

Don't tackle an entire spelling bar in one sitting. Take one-third for example, each evening, to work on with your child. Break the practice into small units. Try fifteen minutes of review when he gets home; fifteen minutes before supper; fifteen minutes after supper. Shorter periods given frequently are more effective than one massive review—which is also exhausting and frustrating.

Sometimes words on a spelling list can be "clustered" into similarities. For example, you might try attempting all of the five-letter words one day, all the words beginning with consonants the next day, all the words beginning with blends the next day. This kind of grouping will help your child to perceive similarities and differences in the words, and, hence, develop his recall.

An old trick that really works is to have your child practice. Write each of his words, and then draw with a black crayon around each word. Then he can lightly color the shape of the word. This is known as "studying the shape" (or configuration). Just make sure your child uses straight, not curved, lines when he outlines the word.

Before your child starts to silently study his list for that day, let him pronounce each word. Children must know how to properly pronounce a word before they attempt to spell it, if their pronunciation is not correct, they will indeed spell it as they would pronounce it in their own way. (Also make sure they know what the word means and can use it or understand it when they hear it.)

To start studying, a child should look at the word, pronounce it, spell it orally as he looks at it, cover it with his hand, and then attempt to spell it or, as he traces it on your kitchen table, letter by letter.

This information is researched by staff of RFECY and is adapted from:
http://prekinders.com/abc/
How to Teach Your Child to Write Their Name in Kindergarten | eHow.com
http://www.ehow.com/how_2216018_write-name-kindergarten.html
http://www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/learning/spelling.shtml

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After your child has studied, let's say five words, in the manner described, spell the words to him, in random order, and have him name the word you spelled.

Invest in a set of plastic magnetic letters that are available at many discount, toy, and variety stores. Let your child spell the word by successively placing the magnetic letters on the magnetic board. You can show him the word, then remove it. Have him name each letter as he locates it and places it on the board. This is good for developing the correct order for letters within the words.

Word lists. These can be made using paper available in the house. Print or write the words being studied. Post one copy of the list on the refrigerator, another on the door to your child's room, and another in the bathroom. Maybe another can go over the TV set. Use a different color crayon for each word or use a different color for parts of each word regularly confusing your child. For example, if he continues to write "come" as "cum," use black for the "c" and I'm but red for the "o" and "e".

Put movement into learning words. Have your child clap for each letter or take a step for each letter as he spells the word orally. This will help "lock in" the correct sequence of letters, as well as develop full recall for the word.

Let your child play teacher. Let him teach you the words he is learning to spell. Spell them orally to him. Let him correct you. Then have him dictate to you and you write them. Have him score your paper. Make a game of it. He'll know you really know how to spell them, so veil him it's a game.

Commercial dice with letters rather than numbers. Take turns with your child in tossing them and building words. List the words as they are made. The list can be saved and added to each time you play. That way you can develop a "reference list" to use over and over to reinforce his recall.

Listening skills do help spelling. "What letter does 'chart, end with?" What letter does 'piano' begin with?" Play these games just for a few moments before supper, or after breakfast to develop your child's ability to hear sounds in words.

Rhyming words is another game that can build spelling skills. "Can you think of a word that rhymes with fill?" As your child says hill, Bill, till, and so on, write them down. He'll soon notice, himself, that they have identical endings.
Remembering. This is a game to develop visual memory. Write one word on a piece of paper. Leave space underneath it. Tell your child to look at it as long as he wants, that is, until he can remember the letters, then have him fold the paper so that he cannot see the word. He is then to try to write the word from memory. Let him check it himself, and if he has misspelled, try again.

Practice in spelling can come in a variety of ways. For example, you might ask him to help you make a grocery list by looking at the advertisement for a local supermarket you could check the items you want to purchase, and you could ask him to make a list to help you out.

Find the wrong word. Write a short sentence for your child. Tell him that there is one word spelled incorrectly. Ask him to see if he can find it. To begin, make it a rather obviously misspelled word. Leave a letter out, or add an extra letter to a word. Ask him to first read the sentence, then to circle the misspelled word. Then make sure you erase it and write it correctly.

Helping your child at home with spelling requires patience and a non-school-like setting. Don't try to be a teacher. Be a parent who teaches. Your child wants to please you—he wants your honest, sincere praise. Keep the activities short-and fun, and do them regularly, with variety.
15 Fun Ways to Teach a Child the Letters of the Alphabet

As a parent, you are your child’s first, and perhaps most important, teacher. Early childhood experts agree that the influence parents have on their children, even in the very early years, will affect them greatly throughout their lives. One of the most basic educational steps you can do with your child is to teach him or her the ABC’s. If you’re looking for creative and unique ways to help him/her learn, here are 15 ideas. Have fun!

Write Letters in Whipped Cream:
Just grab some wax paper (or even a dark colored plate will do), and some whipped cream in a can (Reddi-Whip is great), and start writing away! If the child is a little older, encourage him to try to make letters as well with the whipped cream. Perhaps add some strawberries to help eat the cream up. This would be fun as a dessert!

Bake Alphabet Shaped Cookies:
This one’s a little high in calories, but hey, if they learn their ABC’s, it’s worth it! Just purchase some alphabet cookie cutters (here’s one spot online you can buy them), and bake cookies, either from a mix or your own recipe. (Ready-made cookie dough will work too!) If the child is old enough, encourage him/her to stir the mix, cut them out, etc. If you want to be really creative, allow the children to decorate them with frosting, sparkles, and more. Be sure to take pictures!

Cut Letters Out with Play-Doh:
Another idea for cookie cutters is to use them to mold play-doh into alphabet shapes. Yes, you can use the same cookie cutters, that’s what dish soap is for! Store bought play-doh works great. You can also make fun recipes such as Jello Playdough, Kool-Aid Playdough, Peanut Butter Playdough, Chocolate Scented Playdough, and Frosting Playdough.

This information is researched by staff of RFECY and is adapted from:
http://prekinders.com/alphabet/#ixzz0utlXf5HA
How to Teach Your Child to Write Their Name in Kindergarten | eHow.com
http://www.ehow.com/how_2216018_write-name-kindergarten.html#ixzz0uQqbGUaU
http://www.childdevelopmentinfo.com/learning/spelling.shtml

This documentation is provided for information purposes only and does not imply that Resources for Exceptional Children and Youth – Durham Region recommends, condones or supports the implementation of this information.
Serve Your Tot Alphabet Pasta:
Looking for a good meal with an educational twist? Serve your child alphabet pasta! You buy it here on Amazon.com. It's also available in a can at stores such as Wal-Mart. Persuade your child to say the names of each letter before he/she eats them.

Play with Flashcards:
There are many flashcards available that have pictures of objects that start with letters, along with the letter. This will increase your child’s vocabulary, as well as help him/her master the alphabet. They can be bought from stores such as a Wal-Mart and Target, or you can order some online here. You can also create some your own. Just purchase some note cards and glue photos (or cut pictures from magazines) on the cards, and write the first letter of the word.

Provide toys that teach ABC’s:
There are a plethora of toys available that have an ABC theme. Playing with these toys will not only be amusing to your youngster, the increased exposure to the letters of the alphabet will help him/her learn the letters. A few toys to consider are: alphabet pal, alphabet drum, alphabet train, alphabet discovery ball, and alphabet puzzle. You can also use a doodle pro (or even a dry erase board will do) to write letters and teach your child the names, etc.

Decorate the Bedroom with ABC Art:
There are many different alphabet-themed children’s room decor available. The constant exposure to the alphabet will help them in memorizing letters. You don’t have to spend a fortune, you just create your own pictures and signs as well. Just grab some construction paper, cut out pictures of different words and label them. For example “A – Apple”, “B – Boat”, etc.

Read Books Often that Promote the Alphabet:
Reading is the basic key to learning. It will promote cognitive growth and can help children master the alphabet. Just visit your local library and check out some books. Some books to consider are Dr. Suess’s ABC: An Amazing Alphabet Book, Chicka Chicka ABC, The A to Z Book, and Ocean Alphabet Book.
Write a Letter on Child’s hand:
Choose a letter that the child needs to learn and write it on their hand with a magic marker in the morning. Throughout the day ask the child what the letter is and talk about it. Children may enjoy showing off their temporary body art to their friends!

Create artwork with Alphabet Stickers, Stamps and Sponges:
Most youngsters love playing with stickers and stamping stamps. You can purchase alphabet stickers/stamps at Wal-Mart or a craft store. You can purchase alphabet shaped sponges online here. So, just grab some construction paper and let their creativity run loose! Be sure to ask the child what the letter is, encourage him/her to repeat, etc.

Make a Collage:
Creating an alphabet collage will help your child remember letters. Perhaps make a separate collage for each letter. For an “A” collage – add pictures of items such as an apple, picture of child’s aunt, acorn, etc. You can find pictures online and print them out, or cut them from magazines. An alphabet collage will be a fun activity for your child!

Make an Alphabet Beads Necklace or Bracelet:
This is more for older children as well. Younger children can help, but might not have the dexterity to do it completely. Go to a craft store (or an online store like this one) and purchase alphabet beads and string, along with some other beads for decoration. Help the child string the letters onto the bracelet or necklace, and – voila! – You’ve got an excellent teaching tool that can also be a piece of jewelry. For younger children, you might just let them watch you make it, and then they can enjoy wearing it.

Color Alphabet Pages:
Purchase an alphabet coloring book and encourage him/her to color each picture. Hang the pictures up proudly on the fridge or a bulletin board. Be sure to ask the children what letter they colored. You can also print alphabet coloring pages from online sites such as this one.
Play Educational Computer Games:
There is a variety of computer software available that will teach your child the ABC’s. Some that you might try are Giggles Computer Fun Time for Baby – ABC’s and 123’s and Blue’s Clues ABC Time Activities.

Have a letter of the day:
This activity could be combined with many of the steps above. Choose a letter of the day, or even a group of days, and complete activities (collage, write it on child’s hand, etc.) throughout the day. The repetition will (hopefully) help him/her memorize each letter.

These are just a few ideas to help you teach your son or daughter. Remember that all children learn at different rates, and try not to get frustrated if it takes awhile. Happy Playing and Learning!