

Especially for practitioners working with preschoolers! 

The First Letter Is . . .

Phonological Awareness

To be able to read when they enter school, preschoolers need to be familiar with letter sounds. Making the connection between pictures and letter sounds is a great way to introduce preschoolers to the alphabet.

What is the practice?

While looking at picture books with preschoolers in your class, have them name the pictures. Repeat the name of the picture while placing emphasis on the beginning letter of the word. Have the children sound out the word or beginning letter of the word with you. Books that have pictures of the beginning letter by itself will help preschool children begin to recognize written letters.



What does the practice look like?

There are many ways to help preschool children make connections between pictures and letter sounds. Reading and sharing books with your students provides a great time for pointing out things on the page and asking about beginning letter sounds. Point out letter sounds on signs around the classroom, on labels of items, or anywhere that children see written words.

How do you do the practice?

Follow the children's interests when choosing books or other reading materials.

- If some of the children in your class like horses, read a book or share a magazine about horses with them. Point to the pictures while having them sound them out. You could point to a picture of a saddle and ask them with what sound/letter it starts. Remember to be encouraging and patient with the children.
- Play a game like 'I Spy' with the class. Instead of giving the usual clue, say "I spy something that starts with a B. Do you remember what sound the B makes? It makes a 'Buh' sound." Let the children have fun finding things in the room that start with the letter's sound.

How do you know the practice worked?

- Are the children becoming familiar with letter sounds?
- Do the children show more interest in picture books?
- Do the children make connections between letter sounds and words?

Take a look at more first letter sounds

Sounds Like Fun!

The children in Alma's preschool class enjoy playing an alphabet game. Alma calls out a letter sound and the children have to find something that begins with that sound. They can move two steps forward each time they are first to find something. The first person to reach the finish line that Alma made on the floor is the winner. Alma says, "Letter C" as she holds up a card with a large letter printed on it. "Kkk" she says to the class, pronouncing the hard C sound. "Who can find something that begins with the letter C?" "Cup!" Mia calls out excitedly as she picks up a cup in the play kitchen. Alma replies, "That's right! You can move two steps forward." With a proud smile, Mia takes two steps closer to the finish line.



Everyday Opportunity

Several children in Chris' preschool class are curious about a very large package that has been delivered to their center. They gather around to watch as Chris starts to open the package. Seeing the children's interest, Chris pauses and says aloud "Hmmm, I wonder what could be in here?" She points to the words on the side of the box. "Let's see, what does this word say?" She points at the first letter in one of the words. "That's the letter B. What sound does B make?" One of the children says "Ba." Chris repeats the sound, "Bbb." She then reads the word aloud to the children, emphasizing the first sound, "Bbb-bowls. Let's see what's in here." She removes the tape to reveal paper bowls for morning cereal. "Just what we need for breakfast!" she says.



Sign Along and Learn

Amanda teaches an inclusive preschool class, in which three of the children are deaf. She uses sign with them so they can join in the activities with the rest of the class. At circle time, Amanda chooses an alphabet book to read to the children. As she reads aloud, "A is for Airplane," she makes the sign for the letter A. She also points to the picture of the airplane on the page and signs the word. She does this for each page, so that all of the children, including those who are deaf, can learn the letter names and the corresponding words.

