

Beyond the Worksheets: Teaching Language and Literacy Skills Through Play!

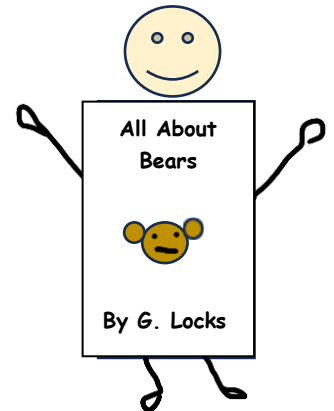
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Concepts of Print

BE the Book!

- Use a class made book model or a big book you have. Try using informational text, as well as storybooks.
- Pair up the children: One is the "Book", and one is the "Reader".
- Invite children to model how to read the book. This is a good opportunity to assess children on this skill!
- Have children take turns being the book, or the reader.



"Concepts of Print Man"

- Use one of the book models from the last activity, or a big book from your classroom library.
- Make a "Concepts of Print Man" to mark parts of a book, such as: Title, Author, Illustrator, Illustrations, Print, Beginning/End Punctuation. You can use a bit of tape on the back of him to attach him.
- Using a CPM sticky note is also an option!
- Another Idea: Use your CPM to find and fly to various types of print in the room, such as name cards, books, environmental print, labels, recipes, magazines, signs, lunchboxes, etc.



How Print Works: Beginning/Ending Punctuation

- Provide a few sentence strips, and invite children one at a time to hold one up for the group to read together. Point out that the first letter is capitalized.
- Invite three children to be the punctuation marks (. ? !). Clip a punctuation mark visual to each child. Decide on a movement to demonstrate each one.
- As each sentence is read, ask children which punctuation mark person should go at the end. That person goes to the end of the sentence strip and demonstrates what that punctuation mark does.



Environmental Print Fun

- Provide environmental print samples that you've laminated or placed in plastic sleeves. Provide also yellow highlighters and magnifying glasses (for small print). Invite children to search for, and highlight beginning and ending punctuation, familiar product names and labels, letters of the week, capital and lowercase letters, high frequency words, numbers, shapes, patterns, and more! Look for environmental print in the classroom, on backpacks, on lunchboxes, on snack packaging, signs, labels, etc.



- Another Idea: Try cutting apart a sample of environmental print and inviting children to put their puzzle together!

- See more resources for environmental print at www.teacherspayteachers.com.



Traffic Sign Fun

- Use commercially made signs or create your own. Talk about what the signs say, and what they mean. What are they for? Why are they important?
- Invite children to go outside and "be the sign" of their choice. Using sidewalk chalk to draw a path or roadway, ask children to stand along the "road". Use trikes, child-sized vehicles, "box" cars, or children can pretend to be a car, and move along the road, obeying the traffic signs.

Classroom Exploration Areas

- Create exploration areas, or centers, in your classroom. Invite children to help you make labels for the Library, Tech Corner, STEAM Center, Insect Table, Block Corner, Grocery Store, etc.
- Go on a "Sign Journey" and post the signs where they go.
- If you create an interest area with children (such as a Pet Store, with stuffed animals), determine what labels might be needed for that area and create them together.

Phonological Awareness

Compound Words and the Magic Hat

- Grab a black magician's hat. Have ready picture cards that can be combined to make a compound word. For example, sun + flower = sunflower.
- Show children the sun and flower picture cards. Say the two words separately, then combine them together. Ask children what the new word is. Place the sun and flower cards in the hat, shake it, and pull out the sunflower card!
- Other word cards to try: star/fish, cup/cake, rain/coat, lip/stick, ant/farm, ball/park, beach/ball, car/wash, cart/wheel, dog/house, eye/ball, finger/nail, lap/top, milk/shake, pony/tail, space/ship, sun/glasses, work/sheet, etc.



Compound Words Hand Game

- Invite children to play along with you. Place two "words", one in each hand, that when you put them together will make a compound word. As you look at your hands, say the "word" in each hand separately, then put your hands together to say the compound word. Try this with a variety of words. You can delete words and substitute words from your compound word, and even form silly words that aren't really compound words at all! (e.g., "hotdog" becomes "fishdog", or "fishman", etc.).
- Another Idea: Invite one child to stand a little apart from another child. One child acts out the word "hot", the other child the word "dog". Ask the children to come together, to act out their compound word, "hotdog". Great for vocabulary building!

Syllable Stomps and Claps

- Ask each child in turn to stomp, while saying their syllable. After each child has stomped their syllable, ask all the "syllables" to jump together while chanting the complete word.
- Another Idea: Invite children to clap with you the syllables in a variety of words, such as children's names, etc. Try different movements: hop, turn, jump, wiggle. Do this as a transition activity, while waiting in line, traveling to lunch, etc.

Onset and Rime Activities

- Onset and Rime Hand Game: Using the same idea as the Compound Words Hand Game above, place instead an "onset" in one hand, and a "rime" in the other.

- Onset and Rime Playdough Squishers: Place a small ball of playdough (to represent the "onset" of a word) in your left hand, and a larger ball of playdough (to emphasize the "rime") in your right hand. Looking at your hands, grasping the playdough balls and spaced out a bit, say the onset and then the rime, and then squish the playdough balls together as you say the word.
- Onset and Rime Bunny Jumps: If the word is CAT: Clip a "C" card to a child, and an "at" card to another child. Ask them to be bunnies that will jump closer together until they make the word. Ask them to begin by standing a distance apart, then each will say their word part as they jump sideways, approaching each other. When both parts are together they can jump together and say the complete word.

Beginning Sound Basket Sorting

- Provide baskets, one for each letter sound you want children to practice. Label your baskets with the appropriate letter for that sound. Provide picture cards, mixed up in a tub, box, hat or bag.
- Invite children to choose a picture card, say the picture name, and identify the beginning sound they hear. Children then sort the picture card (or you can use objects) into the correct basket.

Beginning Sound Roundup

- Using a clothespin or necklace with a picture card attached, give one to each child. The picture cards should feature beginning sounds that you'd like to reinforce.
- Invite children to stand around the room, and get ready for the "roundup".
- Invite one child to wear a cowboy hat, and be the "wrangler" that rounds up his strays.
- Hold up a letter card for Mm, for example, or just say the target beginning sound. The cowboy then gallops over to cards whose pictures begin with that sound, and rounds them up into a group. Those children can then hold a jump rope loosely around their group. One person can then hold that beginning sound card. They have now been "branded"!
- The cowboy continues to "round up" other picture cards that go together, with the same beginning sound, as before. Continue until all stray picture cards have been "rounded up" and "branded" with their letter.
- Another Idea: Give children uppercase letter cards, and lowercase letter cards for letters you want to target. Ask the wrangler to round up each uppercase letter and its

lowercase partner, and “rope them together”. Children can say their letter sound as they move around, before they’re “rounded up” by the wrangler.

Bingo Games

- Beginning Sounds Bingo:



<https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/browse?search=beginning%20sounds%20bingo>

- Animal Sounds Bingo:

<https://www.lessonsense.com/game/animal-sound-bingo/>



(another version is also available on www.teacherspayteachers.com)

- Household Sounds Bingo:



<https://www.thedyslexiashop.co.uk/products/household-sounds-bingo>

(another version is also available on www.teacherspayteachers.com)

Bounce and Roll Vowels

- Use quick, and sustained movements to demonstrate short and long vowel sounds. For example, bounce a ball as you say the short /a/ sound; roll the ball as you say the long /a/ sound.
- Brainstorm with children other quick and sustained movements we could do to show short and long vowel sounds. Such as, blink rapidly for short sounds and slowly open our eyes wide for long sounds. Try snapping a thick rubber band for short sounds, and stretching it for long sounds.

Word Squats and Slinky Sound Outs

- Use a slinky to stretch out a word. Listen to the sounds as you slowly stretch the slinky, higher and higher.

- When you're done, say the word again, and quickly collapse the slinky back down. Try this with your name, the longest or shortest word you can think of, etc.

BE the Word!

- Stretch out a word, saying the sounds. As children stretch out the word, ask them to slowly get into an action pose that relates to that word. For example, if the word is *cat*, children can slowly raise their claws and get in a position that shows they are ready to pounce on their prey (a mouse). At that point, ask them to freeze.
- Then, ask children to say the target word. That becomes the signal for everyone to "unfreeze" and pantomime actions to show the word's meaning.
- Try this activity with a variety of words, such as *dinosaur*, *rocket*, *dancer*, *angry*, *confused*, *happy*, and more!

Rhyming Buddies

- Have children hold picture cards and stand in the room.
- Invite one child at a time to hold a picture card that rhymes with one of the other cards.
- Match the rhyming cards (invite them to find their rhyming buddies, and stand by them).

Fun Rhyming Resources

- Willoughby, Wallaby, Woo (Raffi)
- The Rhyming Song (The Wiggles)
- Nothing Rhymes With Orange (Adam Rex)
- Learn Animals with Rhyming Poems: Sing-Learn-Memorize Land Animals (Oliver Gibbs)
- The Rhyme Bible Storybook (L.J. Sattgast)
- Rhyming Bingo
- The Odd One Out - Rhyming Pairs!: A Fun Spot the Difference Game for 3-5 Year Olds (Books for Little Ones)
- I Spy With My Little Eye Rhyming Words! (Tootsie Taradiddle)

Alphabets and Word/Print Recognition

Move and Groove With the Alphabet and Friends

- Use whatever alphabet letters and corresponding pictures you have, or that your reading program provides.
- Brainstorm with children what movement could go with a letter's sound.
- Resources to try: *Alphabet Action* (Heidi Butkus, on www.amazon.com); *A to Z Action Words* (free printable on www.yourtherapysource.com); *Animal Alphabet Chart* (available on www.teacherspayteachers.com); *Bible Alphabet Charts* (free printable on <https://biblestoryprintables.com/sunday-school-printables/bible-alphabet-charts/>).

I Spy Letter Hunt

- First, practice the letter name and sound of your "Letter of the Week", talk about things that begin with that letter, and write it in the air with your "magic writing finger".
- Next, invite children to find and touch or point to the target letter in the room, as you say: "I spy the letter Bb". Encourage children to say the /b/ sound as they travel in the room to find the letter on walls, as part of a chart, on a name tag, etc.

Letter Magician

- Give each child an alphabet letter card, and invite them to stand around the room. Choose a child to be the "Letter Magician", with a black hat and magic wand.
- As children help determine what letter comes next in the alphabet sequence, the Letter Magician taps that letter person and directs them to join the ABC line. Continue until you have the whole alphabet lined up, Aa-Zz. If you don't have enough children, you can invite a few stuffed animals to play, as well.
- Next, sing *The ABC Rock* by Greg and Steve as your Letter Magician points to each letter.
- Another Idea: Invite children to hold upper and lowercase letter cards for letters you're studying. Invite upper and lowercase letters to find their partners! You can also put the letter partners in ABC order, too.

Clues and a Word Hunt

- After introducing the letter name and sound for your "Letter of the Week", place picture cards around the room for words that begin with that letter.
- Give clues for one of the cards (for example, "milk" as a letter Mm word: "I spy something white that you drink. It's (milk)."
- Invite children to go find the picture card and stand by it. Remove the card, and continue the game until all the cards are gone.

Fun With My First Name

- Post children's names on cards around the room.
- Call out a child's name, and invite children to chant with you: "Emma, Emma, where can you be? I see Emma's name looking at me!" Ask that child to find their name and add it to your word wall, under the beginning sound.
- You might use names that start with the Letter of the Week, or just choose several names at one time. Continue the activity on other days until everyone's name is on the wall. As you talk about children's names, emphasize the beginning sound, sounds you hear, or say the letters in their name.

Emma

Character Move and Groove

- Make a chart with familiar characters. Choose characters by theme; for example, Bible characters, super heroes, animated characters, animals, costumes, community helpers, etc. Or, use pictures that include characters and important parts of a story. Look for beginning sounds and picture cues to help recognize words.
- Choose a child to hold a pointer and point to various pictures/words, as you play instrumental music. Move like that character. How would you move? What letters/sounds do the pictures start with?

Letter Formation

How Will You Write Letters Today?

- Use a tray or Ziploc bag and your magic writing finger to write letters. Try using: Coffee grounds, shaving cream, salt, pudding, finger paints, and more!

- Another Idea: Provide a template for a letter, and manipulatives to form the letter. Try using manipulatives that start with that letter, such as "tiles" for Tt. Emphasize correct letter formation.
- And More: Use *The Letter Snake* to form letters. Your "snake" could be something you've made, or just use a jump rope. Talk about the shape, and form of letters, along with the letter name and sound. Try also making letters with your body, or in the air with your "magic writing finger" (or nose, elbow, foot, etc.).



ABC, Play With Me!

- Use a variety of recycled materials, manipulatives, or other materials you have on hand to make the first letter of your name. Do you need curved shapes, straight lines, slanted lines? Which materials will work best?
- Try making tactile letters by gluing cotton balls to the shape of the letter Cc, for example. After it dries, close your eyes and feel the letter. Can you identify the letter by feel?

Phonics and Word Recognition: Decoding VC and CVC Words

Word Stretchers

- Choose VC (vowel-consonant) or CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words for this activity. Using letter cards you have, clip one to each child (you'll need 2 children for VC words, 3 for CVC words). For the word AT, for example, have the child who has the "a" card join hands with the child who has the "t" card. Ask them to stand close together as you say the whole word, "at". Then, slowly sound out the word as the children stretch out, still holding hands. Say the word again, and the children move back together. If you'd like, you can have one child on either side of the ones with letter cards be the "word pullers" that gently stretch the word apart and put it back together.



Decoding VC and CVC Words

- Try this! Set up a writing center in your classroom. Encourage children to write, using invented spelling, VC and CVC words, high frequency words, environmental print, etc. Provide a variety of resources and materials.
- Other Ways to Encourage Writing: Vary your dramatic play area and include appropriate opportunities for writing. Ideas may include: A pet store, doctor's office, grocery store, shoe store, restaurant, repair shop, and more!

Spelling With Pop-Its

- Try this! Using Pop-Its, invite children to spell VC and CVC words, their name, count syllables in a word, spell high frequency words, say words that rhyme, count words in a sentence, name words in a certain category, say the letters of the alphabet, count to a certain number, and more!



Reading High Frequency Words

High Frequency Word Hunt

- Create tactile high frequency words with any materials you have. Post them to create a word wall that children can access.
- Invite children to use a clipboard with high frequency words listed. Ask them to find as many words as they can, and check them off their list!



Fishing for High Frequency Words

- Write high frequency words on small cards to which you've attached a paper clip. Place the words in a tub (preferably blue, for the ocean).
- Create a "fishing rod" with a stick or pencil, string, and a magnet at the end. Fish for words! How many words can you recognize?

High Frequency Words Chant: THE

- Get children up and moving to see, spell, and move to the word, "THE":

(Clap) "T-H-E, THE!" (2x)
(Hands down low, wiggle fingers) "THE",
(Hands toward the middle, wiggle fingers) "THE",
(Jump up high and cheer) "THE"!

High Frequency Words Song: THE (Tune: BINGO)

- There is a sight word that I know,
And the is its name, oh!
T-H-E, the,
T-H-E, the,
T-H-E, the,
And the is its name, oh!

Use this song for any high frequency words you're working on. Just substitute the new word!

Sentence Magician

- Choose a sentence to use, such as "I see (child's name)." Give each child a word in the sentence to hold. Ask the child whose name you're using to hold their own name card. Appoint a "Sentence Magician" to put together the sentence, by tapping one child at a time to join the sentence group. Once the sentence is formed correctly, point to each word and say your sentence.



Jump and Track Sentences

- Use sidewalk chalk to write a sight word sentence. Then invite one child at a time to jump and track each word as you read the sentence together.

Notes: