The Movable Alphabet

Twenty-six letters to cut out that your child moves with their fingers to spell words long before they can write them with a pencil.

4-6 years | Language | 6 sheets to cut out | Heavy paper recommended

What your child practices

Spelling a word means hearing the sounds it is made of, then finding the letter that matches each sound. As long as your child is writing by hand, both efforts pile onto the pencil stroke and wear them out. With movable letters, the hand is free: only listening and choosing the letter are left, one difficulty at a time.

Prepare the material

1. Print the six sheets on heavy paper, at least 160 g/m² cardstock.
2. Cut out square by square. Glue onto thin cardboard if your child handles the letters a lot.
3. Store the letters in a compartment box, or failing that, two envelopes, one blue and one red.
4. Set out only the letters of the words your child is going to spell, not all twenty-six.

Show once, then step back

1. Sit next to your child, never across from them, so they see the letters facing the right way.
2. Choose a short, regular word where every letter is heard: sun, mom, fan, mug.
3. Say the word slowly, then repeat only the first sound: "sss-un".
4. Find the letter together, set it on the table, and move on to the next sound without commenting.
5. Let your child continue on their own. Stay quiet, even if they hesitate for a long time.

> **The built-in control of error.** Your child rereads the word by following the letters with a finger, with the written model beside it if there is one. The adult helps with the rereading if needed, never says it is wrong and never removes a letter.

Once your child feels confident

- Spell a word the adult has written on paper, as a model set beside it.
- Move on to capital letters, for family first names. There is only one of each capital: print the capital-letter sheets again if a letter repeats (ANNA, EMMA).
- Spell two words that look alike and compare them: map and mop, sun and run.

> **Safety.** These pieces are small once cut out. They are not right for a child who still puts objects in their mouth. The adult does the cutting, keeps the pieces out of reach between sessions, and stays present during the activity.

Cut out square by square. The vowels are blue, the consonants red.

a	b	c	d
e	f	g	h
i	j	k	l
m	n	o	p

Extra letters for the double consonants many English words need, as in rabbit, coffee, egg, and buzz.

q	r	s	t
u	v	w	x
y	z	b	f
g	z	k	v

The same letters in several copies: a word often needs one of them twice.

a	a	e	e
e	i	i	o
o	u	u	n
n	s	s	t

The same letters in several copies: a word often needs one of them twice.

t	t	r	r
l	l	m	m
p	p	d	d
c	c	b	f

Capital letters are for names. Print the capital-letter sheets again if a letter repeats.

A	B	C	D
E	F	G	H
I	J	K	L
M	N	O	P

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