The Learning Staircase Ltd
P O Box 582
Rangiora 7440
Ph: 0800 701 107
Fax: 0800 000 703
info@learningstaircase.co.nz

The Alphabet Set

The Alphabet Set provides a variety of resources which enable a wide range of teaching games and activities. The Set is appropriate for school and home use.

Contents

The Set contains two alphabet picture card sets and a set each of lower and upper case letters. The letter cards have vowels in red and consonants in blue ('y' is in purple, as it can be used as a consonant or as a vowel).

There are also four bingo boards, which are used for letter recognition. On the reverse of these boards, there are blank bingo boards, which can be customized for your own game ideas. Some ideas are given below.

All materials are laminated and a wipe-clean pen is provided, so that you can write letters in on the blank bingo boards. See the insert card for instructions on caring for your materials.

The set also includes four sets of counters for the bingo games.

Picture Lists

Yellow Set		Blue Set	
apple	nest	ambulance	needle
ball	orange	bell	octopus
cap	parrot	cup	pencil
duck	queen	donkey	quack
elephant	rabbit	egg	robot
finger	soap	fish	sausages
gate	tap	goose	tiger
house	umbrella	hand	udder
igloo	vet	insect	vase
juggle	wave	jar	watch
kangaroo	axe	kiwi	box
lion	yo-yo	ladybird	yacht
mushroom	zebra	mask	zip

Having two picture sets and two letter sets enables a wide variety of games, including matching, memory/concentration and Happy Families.

Individual packs can be used to develop alphabet knowledge, sequencing ability and phonological awareness.

The Alphabet Set cards can be used with other game materials and can be used alone in the games described below.

Remember that the cards can be used for many other activities. The following suggestions are all useful for teaching letter names and sounds and for teaching learners to identify the initial sound in a word. You can, of course, use them for other things, particularly if you have other picture sets (rhyme sets, syllabification sets, short and long vowel sets).

Alphabet Set Instructions

The first stage is to teach the learner to sequence the alphabet correctly (say the alphabet out loud). Alphabet songs are particularly useful with this and the letter or picture cards can be laid out in the correct order for visual reinforcement.

When teaching alphabet letters, teach lower case letters first. Only introduce upper case letters (capitals) when the learner is completely confident with lower case letters.

Always make a distinction between the letter **names** and the letter **sounds** (the sound which the letter makes in most words – refer to the pictures if you are unsure). When your learners can say the alphabet reasonably correctly and can recognise each letter, you can start to teach letter sounds. Explain that each letter has a name **and** a sound. Teach letter names first then letter sounds. Don't mix letter names and letter sounds in the same session.

Encourage the learner to say the word out loud and listen for the first sound. This helps to build phonemic awareness (awareness of individual sounds in words), which is an important aspect of phonological awareness (ability to process the sounds in language). You may have to cover only a few letters at a time and your learner is likely to need plenty of reinforcement to remember both letter names and letter sounds. The following games are useful.

Game Suggestions

1. Use a laminated wipe-clean gameboard (see selection available from The Learning Staircase), counters and a dice. Put the alphabet cards (or whichever ones you are teaching/practising) face downwards in a pack. Each player throws the dice, moves their counter to the appropriate space and turns over one card. They have to give the letter name/sound of that card in order to stay on that place. If not they have to move back to the previous space.

2. Variation using wipe-clean gameboard. Write the letters into the gameboard spaces in random order and spread the letter cards face upwards around the gameboard. When the player lands on a space, they have to find the correct card. They keep that card. The winner is the one with the most cards at the end of the game.

3. Use two packs of cards. Spread one pack face upwards on a table and the other pack downwards in the middle. Each player takes turns to turn one card from the pack in the middle. If they can find the matching card, they keep that card pair. If the player is not correct, the card goes back to the bottom of the pack.

4. Play alphabet dominoes. Share out the cards (shuffled) equally between players, keeping the 'm' card back. Place the 'm' card in the centre of the table. The aim is to build the alphabet in order from this central point ('m' is the middle letter of the alphabet). The first player looks at their cards. If they have the next card (forwards or backwards), they place it before or after the 'm' and play moves on to the next player. If a player cannot go, they miss a turn. The winner is the one who gets rid of all their cards first. This game is quite advanced and should only be played when learners are reasonably confident with alphabet sequencing.

5. Use two packs of cards. Select a number of letters (between 4 and 10), and take those letter cards form each pack (so that you have matching pairs. Shuffle the cards and spread them face downwards on the table. Play Memory/Concentration using the cards. Each player turns over two cards. If the cards match, they keep the pair and have another go. If not, the cards are turned over again (face downwards) and the next player has a turn. This develops visual memory and spatial awareness, as well as alphabet skills.

6. Select 3 cards at random from a pack and spread them in a line on the table. The learner has to re-arrange them in alphabetical order. This is a useful activity to develop awareness of alphabet sequencing and will help the learner develop dictionary skills later on. When the learner is quite confident with three cards, increase to 4, 5 or 6.

7. Place a selection of cards face upwards on the table. Allow the learner to study the cards for a few minutes, telling them to remember which cards are there. Then ask the learner to close their eyes and you remove a card, rearranging the others slightly to disguise the 'gap'. Ask the learner to open their eyes and tell you which card is missing. Good for visual memory. Encourage the child to say the items out loud (reinforces auditory strategies).

8. Use a small box or bag. Place several cards into it, one at a time, showing the learner each card and saying its letter (or naming the picture). When all the cards are in the box/bag, ask the learner to tell you which ones are inside. Start with one 3 or 4 and build up as the learner's memory improves.

9. Spread all the cards face upwards on the table. Explain that you want the learner to remember which cards you touched. Then touch 3 cards at random, saying the letter/picture name out loud. Ask the learner to touch the same cards, in the same order. Increase the number touched as the learner becomes more confident.

10. Vary the above activity by asking the learner to touch the cards in reverse order. This builds working memory and develops concentration. Be careful, though. It is **much** more difficult than Activity 9.

11. Use a wipe-clean gameboard. Write the letters at random in the spaces. Place a pack of cards face downwards in the centre of the table. Take turns to turn over one card and move to that space. You can vary the rules to suit yourself. i.e. you can specify that players only need to move forwards. If the letter on their card is not in front of them, they stay put.

12. Use a wipe-clean gameboard. Write the numbers 1-3 at random in spaces and place the cards face downwards in a pack. Players move, and then turn over a card. To stay on that space, they have to give 1, 2 or 3 words which start with the same sound as he card(depending on the number on the space).

13. Using both sets of picture cards, place 3 cards in a row (i.e. 2 starting with 'b' and one starting with a different letter sound) and ask the learner to identify which starts with a different sound. Vary this by placing four cards with two starting with the same sound. Ask the learner to identify two cards which start with the same sound.

Other game/activity ideas for language development

Verbal reasoning
Choose picture cards in a particular category (living things, furniture, things you can eat, things with four legs). Place several cards in a row, with one which does not belong to that category. The learner has to identify which is the odd one out.

Sight vocabulary
Use a non-permanent pen and write the names of objects beneath the picture to help develop a sight vocabulary. You can also order a set of word cards to match any picture set.
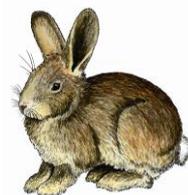
This enables you to play matching games where the learner has to match a picture and a word.

Memory activity

A useful (and fun) memory challenge, which develops auditory sequential memory, working memory, word retrieval and sequencing:

Place 3 or 4 picture cards face up in a row, saying the name of the picture out loud as you do it. Then get your learner to go through them with you, saying the name again out loud.

Go through the row, turning each card face down as you both say the name again out loud. Then ask your learner to name each card from the beginning of the row before you turn it face up to check. If your learner gets to the end of the row with all the pictures correct, add another card, saying the name aloud.
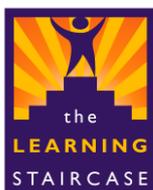
Each time you turn the cards face down, you both say the words (this develops auditory memory). Then the learner goes through independently, saying the word before you turn the picture over to check. Each time the learner gets it correct, you add a new picture card at the end of the row. The challenge is to see how many pictures you can do.

Variation: It is very useful to vary this from time to time. After your learner has done a couple of correct 'recitals', challenge them to recite the pictures backwards (turning the pictures over from the end!).

Additional materials

There is an extensive range of computer activities and printable resources covering alphabet knowledge and skills on the Steps software program. A 15-day free trial can be downloaded from the website.

Have fun!

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