

Home Reading Program

Infant through Preschool
One word for each phoneme

a b c

Beginning Phonograms

Alphabet Phonograms with Words Flashcards
*Phonograms are colored **black** and stand out in the words.*

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What is a phonogram and what is a phoneme?

Phonograms are alphabetical characters (the letters) that represent the sounds of speech. The sounds of speech are called *phonemes*. The phonogram depicts the phoneme. The phoneme is the sound the phonogram represents. The name of the phonogram is the sound of its phoneme. Alphabet phonograms differ from the alphabet in that the names of the phonograms are not the names of the letters. The names of the phonograms are the sounds they represent.

The first phonograms to be learned in the Home Reading Program are the Alphabet Phonograms which are the same as the alphabet in that they go from A to Z, but with phonograms we are not referring to the names of the letters. We are referring to the sounds the letters make, which sounds are called phonemes. The Intermediate Phonograms in the Home Reading Program consist of phonograms that have two or more letters combined but have only one sound, or phoneme. Advanced Phonograms have two or more letters combined and have two or more phonemes for each phonogram, for example, /ough/ in cough, bough, thou^{gh} and thro^{ugh}.

It is recommended in the Home Reading Program that the Alphabet Flashcards, which teach letter recognition by name, be presented to the baby before presenting Alphabet Phonograms, which teach the sounds the letters make. Singing the Alphabet Song often to the baby or playing it for him is highly recommended. Recite the alphabet for your baby, as well. One good reason for doing this is that by hearing and seeing the names of the letters, the child will be gaining beginning phonemic awareness besides gaining letter recognition and learning alphabetical order. The reason this is so is because the names of the letters contain most of the sounds the letters make and repetition of the letter names stimulates and reinforces the hearing of the alphabetical phonemes. Music is a powerful tool to develop a babies hearing!

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is being able to hear the sounds phonograms represent. The child can begin to gain phonemic awareness from birth, or even in the womb, when the ABC Song is sung often and parents recite the alphabet. Some experts say the alphabet should come after phonograms. I think

this is backwards. A child shouldn't have to wait until he is much older to learn the alphabet and letter recognition which are essential and easy for the baby to learn with the ABC Song and use of the alphabet flashcards. Frequent recitation and singing of the alphabet will stimulate the development of phonemic awareness and the baby will be curious about the alphabet and be eager to discover its purpose, thus gaining early interest in learning to read.

Description of Flashcards

Flashcards are all double-sided. A phonogram is shown on one side of the flashcard. On the other side is a word that contains the phonogram. The phonogram stands out because it is colored black on both sides of the flashcard, while the other letters in the words are colored grey.

How to Assemble Flashcards

Print flashcards and use card stock or poster board for backing. Match the word to the phonogram and slip the pages, back-to-back, into a sheet protector so that one side of the flashcard shows the phonogram and the other side shows the word.

Pointers

- Practice your presentation in front of a mirror until you are comfortable handling flashcards.
- Show flashcards when both you and the baby are feeling well and are in a good mood.
- Good lighting is essential.
- Eliminate noise and distractions before giving a presentation.
- Gain the child's consent to show flashcards. Pick a time when he's not doing something he enjoys, and do not interrupt him.
- Alphabet Phonograms should be shown in alphabetical order the first few times they are presented. Later mix the order and show them randomly.

- Before showing Alphabet Phonograms for the first time let the child know that letters represent sounds and that when letters are used to convey sounds, the letters are called “phonograms”.
- The first time you go through the phonograms show the phonograms only. Do not show the words.

The Most Common Phoneme

Some of the alphabet phonograms have more than one letter-sound – the vowels, for instance. You will first present phonograms that have more than one phoneme with their most common phoneme before presenting additional phonemes for those letters. Therefore, there is a flashcard for each phoneme and that is why alphabet phonograms have more than 26 flashcards. The following consonant letters each have two phonemes, or sounds: c, g, s and x. The vowels (a, e, i, o, u and sometimes y) also have two, or more, phonemes. With vowels we begin with the short vowel phonemes. When you show the long vowel flashcards tell the child that the silent "e" at the end of the word makes the vowel say its name. (at becomes ate). When showing long vowel words and giving the silent e rule, point to the silent "e" at the end of the word.

To show the most common phonemes remove flashcards with the words: ate, all, cent, eve, gem, ice, ode, to, as, use, put, xenon, cyst, cry and city. These you will give later, after presenting Alphabet Phonograms with their most common phonemes. To do this, tell the child that four of the consonant letters can make two sounds. Show the words: cent, gem, as, and xenon and compare them with their most common phoneme words. Point out that the letter “c” in “cent” sounds like /s/; the “g” in “gem” sounds like /j/; the “s” in “as” sounds like /z/ and the “x” in “xenon” sounds like /z/.] Give the vowels and show the words: ate, all, eve, ice, ode, o, use and uput. Point out that the vowels in “ate, eve, ice, ode and use” all say the name of their letter and they are called long vowels. The rule is that long vowels say the name of their letter. Point out the silent "e" at the end of the long vowel words. Remind the child that the vowel sounds he learned before are called short vowels.

Finally, you can explain that the letter “Y” is sometimes a consonant and sometimes a vowel. Show the letter “y” with the words: cyst, cry and baby. [You can point out that the “y” in “cyst” sounds like the short-vowel “i” as in “it”; the “y” in cry sounds like the long-vowel “i” as in “ice”; and the “y” in “baby” sounds like the long-vowel “e” as in “eve”.]

Presenting Flashcards

- After you have shown the phonograms without words, one-time through, begin again by taking the first 5 flashcards (which are double-sided) in alphabetical order. Hold them in one hand with the words facing you.
- Tell the child that you have word cards for the phonograms, one word for each phoneme that the phonograms represent. Explain that a phoneme is the sound the phonogram represents.
- Hold the flashcards with the word facing you. The word is your key to the pronunciation of the phoneme.
- Hold flashcards steady at the child’s eye level, where he can see clearly without straining. For an infant this would be about 18 inches.
- Take each flashcard from behind and bring it up to the front while pronouncing the phoneme as you show the flashcard. Then turn the card around to show the word. Say the the phoneme again. Then say the word. For example, say, "/a/-at, /b/-bat, /c/-cat". Point to the phoneme in the word.
- You may want to sit and put the flashcards on your lap, instead, taking them from the top of the pile. Some people like to put the flashcards in a ring binder and use it like a flip chart.
- Presentations should be done quickly and smoothly. Ten seconds for both sides of five flashcards is ideal. Some children may want to see many more phonograms. If the child is attentive go ahead and show more.
- Leave some time between sessions and never show more flashcards than the child wants to see.

Focusing on Words instead of Flashing

Besides flashing the phonograms and words, you may work with one or two word flashcards and go over each phoneme in the word. For this you would download the Beginning Word Cards. The words have all black letters and there are no phonograms with the flashcards. Download them at:

<http://www.internationalparentingassociation.org/Materials/index.html>

- Show the word with the black phoneme and gray letters. Say the word with clear pronunciation.
- Then say the word again, more slowly, while distinctly pronouncing the sound of each phoneme in a drawn-out, segmented manner and pointing to each letter as you articulate the phoneme.
- Then blend the sounds together again saying the word slowly, with emphasis and without segmenting the phonemes.
- As you blend the phonemes, move your index finger under the word from left to right, the same direction as the eyes move in reading. All in all, the word is spoken three times.
- Then show the word, again, using the word flashcards with all black letters, and go through the same process.

Notes

1. When you present the *qu* phonogram give the rule for phonogram *qu*, which is: "u" always follows "q". It sounds like *qw*.
2. Give the silent "e" rule with long vowel flashcards *ate eve ice, ode, and use*, which is: When there is a silent "e" at the end of a word, the vowel in the word says its name.
3. When pronouncing consonant sounds go lightly on the short vowel sounds that invariably get tacked on to many consonants in order to make them more audible. Blending a consonant with an added short vowel sound is natural, but you want to have stronger emphasis on the consonant sound and not on the short vowel sound. Therefore, try to mute the short vowel sound as much as possible.

Maintaining Interest

Keep in mind that the rule is to stop before the child loses interest, so that the child will be eager to see the flashcards next time you show them. (Don't keep showing cards if he's not looking, and don't try to force his attention.) If it works better for you or the child to show fewer flashcards (or more) show the number that works best.

We hope you and your child enjoy this reading program. The gift of reading is one of the greatest gifts you can ever give your child. Early readers have all of the advantage in life, and it is never too soon (or too late) to begin to learn to read.

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Teach Babies to Read

Teaching reading to babies can be easy and fun and your child can become very interested in learning to read. The magic formula is to show the baby phonograms and give one phoneme (sound) at a time, and accompany each phonogram with a simple word the baby can decode.

Are phonograms too hard?

Phonograms are character (letter) representations of the sounds of speech. The sounds of speech are called *phonemes*. Dr. Maria Montessori discovered that the child has an absorbent mind from birth to age six. Waiting until the child begins formal schooling and is beyond the absorbent mind stage have earned phonograms the reputation of being difficult to learn. Where it can be somewhat difficult for older children to learn phonograms, especially where they have not had prior educational opportunity, babies have no problem because they absorb information like a sponge.

Two Methods

Experts do not agree on what is the best way to teach children to read. Two commonly known methods for teaching reading are widely divergent. One method uses *words only*, and phonograms are never taught. The other uses *phonograms first*, and words come much, much later. Combining the two methods makes teaching reading most effective. Offer the child phonograms *and* words that he* can decode.

Phonograms are the keys to decoding words

Reading is the process of decoding letter characters called phonograms. Phonograms represent sounds called phonemes. A child that memorizes words without learning phonograms does not know how to decode words and so his activity is not true reading. Some proponents for the words only method say that if you show children enough words they will subconsciously figure out the phonetic code.

Nevertheless, illiteracy has skyrocketed among school children because of this approach. With babies, however, this approach may work because the baby's right brain is dominant and the left brain is dormant, which means babies consciously take in whatever is in their environment and it gets stored in the subconscious mind. They absorb their environment and can figure things out subconsciously, where many older children may not be willing or able to process what may be regarded by them as tedious information, since they are no longer in the absorbent mind stage of development and are functioning largely from the left brain hemisphere. One problem with showing words without the child being shown

*Because gender-neutral language can be cumbersome, we have often used he or him to refer to the individual. These terms are used for readability and are not intended to exclude girls or women.

phonograms is that babies will need to be shown many more word flashcards in order to figure out the phonetic code than if you show them phonograms and teach them the letter sounds (phonemes) which are relatively few in number. Still another problem is that word only flashcards involve memorization, not reading, and so the flashcards may be boring for the child and he may not even look at them.

Children can read books at an early age when they are taught phonograms with accompanying words. And children will figure out new words on their own, as knowing phonograms empowers the child to read. The words only approach is a longer road for a child to take in order to learn to read. It is less interesting and can be difficult and frustrating, especially to an older child. Whole word advocates, such as Glenn Doman, who claim that phonograms do not make sense to a baby should consider that babies do not speak whole words at first. Instead they babble and learn to make the sounds the phonograms represent. Therefore we ought to consider that teaching phonograms will aid the child in speech development. Furthermore, when the baby is shown a word that he is able to decode because he has been shown the phonograms for that word, phonograms make supreme sense to the child.

Teaching phonograms without presenting words postpones understanding, is uninteresting, and delays reading.

There are 70 phonograms with one hundred and eleven sounds represented by the 70 phonograms. The sounds do not mean anything in and by themselves. If the giving of words is postponed until every phonogram has been learned this, too, is a long road to travel before a child can gain some understanding of what he is learning, and can have the satisfaction of reading.

For example, if you take a simple word like “cats” and show it to a child that has learned phonogram sounds without supporting words, the child will say that the word “cats” is pronounced: /k/ - /s/ - /a/(short vowel) - /a/ (long vowel) - /a/ (as in almond) and /uh/ as in banana) - /t/ - /s/ - /z/, with all these sounds running together. Teaching phonograms without words is complex and makes reading incomprehensible. Giving words with each sound gets the idea across that the phonogram has only one sound in a given word. And it doesn't take masters degree in education or special training for a parent to be able to do it!

Phonograms have been made too difficult

Giving a string of multiple phonemes, at a time, for one phonogram, instead of giving one phoneme at a time with a simple word the child can decode, has made learning and teaching phonograms difficult. When the whole gamut of phonograms must be learned in the absence of words, the instructor is faced with the challenge of teaching the child (and the child has the challenge of learning) that in order to read a word like “cats”, for example, he must first choose between the /k/ and the /s/ phonemes, then choose between the four /a/ phonemes. The /t/ does not require a choice and, finally, he must choose between the phonemes /s/ and /z/.

In order to help him decide what to do, there are any number of rules, rules, rules. It's no wonder teachers and students, alike, have recoiled from phonograms when phonograms are taught without words!

Sound-to-Symbol Relationship

Phonograms first proponents fear that offering words with phonograms will interfere with the child's ability to grasp the concept of the sound-to-symbol relationship. This is only so if the child is given words that it can't decode. By starting with the alphabet phonograms with, and the most common phoneme, many simple words can be learned that will reinforce the sound-to-symbol relationship because they can all be decoded.

In the Home Reading Program, for phonograms with multiple sounds, each phoneme is learned separately with a word that uses that specific phoneme. The parent informs the child that some phonograms have more than one phoneme and lets the child know if he is learning a phonogram that has multiple phonemes. The child knows that he will be learning the phonemes, one sound at a time.

The phonograms are broken up into three sets – beginning, intermediate and advanced. The child begins with Alphabet phonograms, then the intermediate phonograms, which are comprised of more than one letter but have only one sound. Lastly, the child works through the advanced phonograms, which are also comprised of more than one letter, but the phonograms have two or more sounds. There are separate words for each phoneme in all three sets.

In the Home Reading Program every phoneme for every phonogram has its own flashcard and has a carefully selected word on the other side of the flashcard. Parents will not find it difficult to say the phoneme, as there is only one sound to pronounce, and all they need do is look at the word shown on the other side of the flashcard, which is the key to the pronunciation of the phoneme being presented.

Easy Recognition

Because the phonogram is colored magenta on both sides of the flashcard, the child can easily identify the phonogram being learned with the word because it stands out, and the child can see that the same phonogram is on both sides of the flashcard. The parent pronounces the phoneme and then turns the flashcard around and shows the child the word. The word is slowly articulated with emphasis placed on the new phoneme.

Here is how to do it.

After going through the entire alphabet and giving the most common phoneme, without showing words, you begin again with the “a” flashcard and hold it up for the child to see. With slow, precise pronunciation, the parent identifies the phonogram by making the sound /a/ (as in at). On the other side of the flashcard is the word “at”, which you will show the baby next. (The child has just

been reminded that “a” says /a/ and he has already been told in a previous session that “t” says /t/.) Holding the flashcard steady and at the child’s eye level, say the word “at” with precise pronunciation. Then say the word again more slowly, pronouncing the two phonemes in a drawn-out, segmented manner (/a/ —/t/) while pointing to the letters as you say them. Then blend the sounds together again and say the word “at” as one word. As you blend the two phonemes, move your index finger under the word from left to right in the same direction as the eyes would move in reading.

The words demonstrate for the child the phonograms in action, thus, reinforcing phonograms and their phonemes. All words are carefully selected so that the child can pick out the phonogram and hear the phoneme and decode each word.

The alphabet is learned first, not last

Any number of reading experts say that the child ought not to be introduced to the alphabet until the child is much older.

They reason that the child cannot understand the alphabet and therefore it ought not to be taught. This is a fallacy!

Learning the alphabet is a simple step, and learning the alphabet first will help children to learn to read phonetically, because in learning the names of the letters, the child is definitely using his ears and hearing the phonemes that are contained within the names of the letters. My knowing the alphabet was what enabled me to learn to read phonetically even though I was not taught phonograms.

The first phonograms children learn in the Home Reading Program are the letters of the alphabet. The child first needs to be given the names of the letters before beginning with alphabet phonograms. This is best accomplished with the Alphabet Song and the Alphabet flashcards. Work with alphabet phonograms is based on the child’s familiarity with the alphabet and his prior knowledge of the names of the letters.

The Alphabet Song sparks the baby’s interest in the alphabet, and when you show the alphabet flashcards the baby will be attentive because he wants to know what A, B, C, etc. is all about. If you know the Alphabet Song, sing it often or get a recording to play for the child. Sing or recite the Alphabet for the baby every chance you get. When you next teach the phonograms, another piece of the puzzle will be put in place for the baby. And when you show the words to the baby the mystery will be solved and the child will know that it is all about reading.

Phonemic Awareness

Dr. Maria Montessori points out that infants need parents to speak slowly and with precise pronunciation, and in a pleasant tone of voice. A baby is very intent on watching a parent’s mouth and lips whenever the parent speaks to him. Speaking to

the baby slowly, and taking care to articulate each sound, is essential to the child's development of speech and phonemic awareness, which is the ability to hear the specific sounds of speech and to distinguish between them. Phonemic awareness is necessary for the child to become a successful reader.

Download Free Learning Materials

<http://www.internationalparentingassociation.org/Materials/index.html>

Because the alphabet is learned before beginning with alphabet phonograms, you may want to download free alphabet flashcards and instructions. Both upper and lower case letters (capital and small letters) are shown with these flashcards. Upper case is on one side of the flashcard and lower case is on the other. The child learns both upper and lower case letters from the start. Included is also a lesson in vowels and consonants.

It doesn't take long for a child to be ready for phonograms

You may wonder when a baby has learned the alphabet well enough to begin with phonograms. Presenting the alphabet three times each (3x upper-case, 3x lower-case and 3x both sides) before presenting phonograms may be sufficient with periodic review. You can gauge reviews by whether the child is interested in your showing and naming the alphabet flashcards.

Sing the Alphabet Song for the baby, often, until the child grows and learns to sing it himself. Then sing it with him and, finally, when you are certain that he knows it ask him to sing it for you. From time to time sing it with him or ask him to sing it for you.

Note

Child brain specialist Glenn Doman of the Institutes For The Achievement Of Human Potential says that the center for reading and speech is in the same area of the brain and that children can learn to both read and speak simultaneously. Doman has proven this and demonstrated it many times. If you teach a baby to read, the child will know how to read by the time the child is speaking, and from there on out the child can make rapid strides and advancement.

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