



Word Wonders Activity 19: My Name Uses the ABCs

CHILDREN ARE LEARNING TO...

- Distinguish between letters and drawing (18 to 36 months)
- Join in the Alphabet Song, all or part (learning letter sequence) (24 to 48 months)
- Produce letter approximations (shapes or scribbles that look like letters) (30 to 48 months)
- Recognize some letter names and shapes (36 to 48 months)
- Write some or all of the letters in their names (36 to 48 months)

ACTIVITY SUMMARY:

In this activity, children will have an opportunity to become familiar with the 26 upper and lowercase alphabet letters, practice saying their sounds, sing the alphabet song to learn the alphabet sequence, and work on producing the letters in their name as a fine motor/writing experience.

FOR TEACHER REFERENCE:

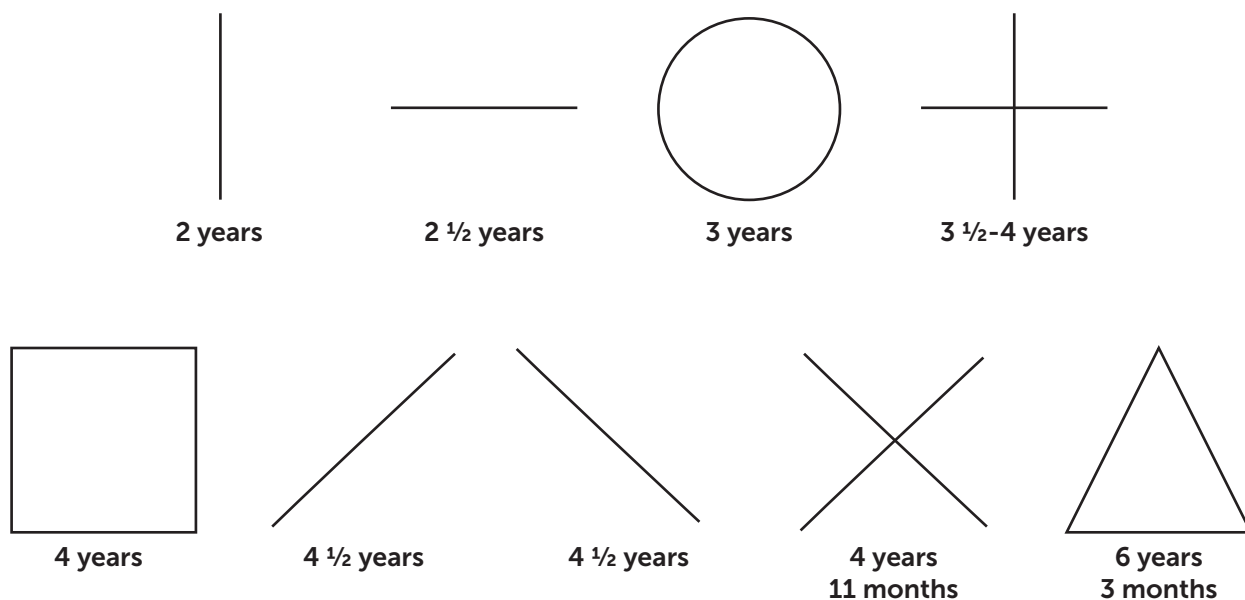
This learning experience exposes children to the sounds each letter makes. The vowel letters make more than one sound—they may have a “long” sound that is the same as the letter name, like the /a/ in “ache” and a “short” sound like the /a/ in “alligator.” Use your judgment about whether you introduce both sounds to children or just one sound (like the long sound). As you loop through the curriculum as children grow, consider introducing both sounds that a letter can make.

See below for a table outlining the target sounds associated with each letter.

A a	Short: Alligator Long: Ape	N n	Nest Pronounce as nnnnn, not “nuh.”
B b	Bee Keep it short—say /b/, not “buh.”	O o	Short: Octopus Long: Open
C c	Hard: Cake Soft: City	P p	Pop Keep it short—say /p/, not “puh.”
D d	Dog Keep it short—say /d/, not “duh.”	Q q	Quick Pronounce as /k/, not “kuh.” In English, Q usually is combined with U (pronounced as /w/). Together, QU is pronounced as “kwuh.”
E e	Short: Egg Long: Eat	R R	Rain Pronounce /r/ as “er” instead of “ruh.”
F f	Fox	S s	Sock
G g	Hard: Ghost Soft: Giant	T t	Toe Keep it short—say /t/, not “tuh.”
H h	Hand	U u	Short: Under Long: Unicorn

I i	Short: It Long: Ice	V v	Van Keep it short—say /v/, not “vuh.”
J j	Jump	W w	Water Keep it short—say /w/, not “wuh.”
K k	Kite Keep it short—say /k/ and not “kuh.”	X x	Xray Pronounce as “ks.” X can also be pronounced as a /z/ in xylophone.
L l	Love Keep it short—say /l/, not “luh.”	Y y	Yell Keep it short—avoid saying “yuh.”
M m	Mommy Keep it short—say mmm and not muh.	Z z	Zoo Pronounce as “zzzz.”

This activity also explores early writing skills. For young toddlers, children will have an opportunity to attempt basic strokes that later are used to write letters (specifically vertical and horizontal lines and circles). For reference, please see the chart below that provides guidance on the (typical) age at which children can form specific shapes/strokes:



MATERIALS NEEDED:

Book: *Oops Pounce Quick Run! An Alphabet Caper* by Mike Twohy, or another alphabet story book.

For Activity 1 (Engage):

- Set of alphabet cards (one card per letter, A–Z)
- Bells, shakers, or rattles, 1 per child
- Basket to hold the musical instruments above
- A pointer or “magic wand” from the pretend play area (for children aged 30 to 48 months)

For Activity 2 (Expand):**For children 18 to 30 months old:**

- Chunky, toddler-safe crayons, at least 2 per child
- Chunky sidewalk chalk, at least 2 per child
- Dot markers, at least 1 per child
- 5-10 large pieces of butcher paper or flipchart paper
- Black construction paper, at least 2-3 pages per child
- 3 baskets to hold writing tools
- 8 ½ x 11" white paper with three-holes punched along the left side, 1 page per child
- Thin binder

For children 30 to 48 months old:

- Mix of regular crayons, at least 2 per child
- Short, skinny pencils (like golf pencils), at least 1 per child
- Erasers, 1 for every 2 children
- Washable markers, at least 2 per child
- 5-10 large pieces of butcher paper or flipchart paper
- 3 baskets to hold writing tools
- 8 ½ x 11" white paper with three-holes punched along the left side, 1 page per child
- Thin binder
- *Optional:* Photos of each child

PREPARATION:**For Activity 1 (Engage):**

- Keep the alphabet cards in order until needed.
- Place the musical instruments in the basket and keep them aside until needed.

For Activity 2 (Expand):

- Identify three areas in the classroom where children can rotate through writing activities. You can use tables or a mix of tables and a floor area (like the circle time area).
- Cover tables or floor in these three areas with butcher paper or flipchart paper. *If you are using chalk, place pieces of black construction paper at one of the tables.
- **For the younger children:** Place a basket of chalk at one area, a basket of toddler crayons at the second area, and a basket of dot markers at the third area.
- **For older children:** Place a basket of crayons at one area, a basket of pencils at the second area, and a basket of markers at the third area.

- Prepare the autograph pages. For each child, print their name at the top of the page. If time allows, add a photo of the child. Hold on to these pages until you begin the autograph activity.

Activity Instructions

EXPLORE

Share the following book and extension activity with children as an opportunity to help children begin to recognize letters, letter sounds, and the alphabet sequence.

Book: *Oops Pounce Quick Run! An Alphabet Caper* by Mike Twohy

As You Read:

- **Introduce the book and its key ideas.** Tell children that with this book they'll need to listen to the words and look at the pictures to understand the story. Each page of the book tells the story by using just one word and moving through the alphabet.
- **Define new words and phrases.** When you read the title, explain that a *caper* is an adventure. Ask the children what capers or adventures they think will happen in this book? Explain that a *pounce* is when a person or animal suddenly jumps or springs up in order to grab something. Can the children practice *pouncing*? On the X page, we see "XOXO"—can the children say these letters with you? Explain that XOXO is a way of saying "kisses (the X) and hugs (the O)." This is the dog's way of saying "thank you."
- **Support phonemic awareness.** Point to the capital letter being introduced on each page. For example, on the B page, say the letter's name ("B") and then model the sound of the letter ("B says /b/"). Prompt children to repeat the sound after you. Then say the "B" word, emphasizing the starting sound: "Bbbball." Continue using this approach of saying the letter, letter sound, and target word through the remaining story.
- **Encourage Prediction.** Pause to ask the children what is happening in the story on each page. On the U page ("unwrap"), what do children think is inside the mouse's present to the dog?
- **Use pictures and text to support observation and reasoning.** On the A page, the word is *Asleep*. Ask children: *Who is asleep in our story?* (The mouse.) On the B page, ask: *What is happening here?* (The ball is waking up the mouse.) On the "Missing (M)" page, what or who is missing? (The mouse.) On the Y page, the dog and mouse are holding hands. Do the children think the two animals are friends now? What makes them think that?
- **Identify and explore emotions.** On the V and W pages, ask children: *"Is the dog happy about his present? What is your clue in the pictures?"* (On the W page, we see the dog's tail is *wagging*. Also, the dog is smiling in the illustration.) *What makes you happy?*
- **Make connections to children's lives.** Ask children what the letter is for their name (usually they will state the initial letter in their name). Do they remember what that letter is doing in the book? Turn to that page in the book and have the child describe or come and trace the letter on the page.

ENGAGE – ACTIVITY 1

Introduce the activity: *This book tells the story of a mouse and a dog using each letter of the alphabet. Let's say the letters again.* Open the book and go through each page, pointing to the letters and saying them in sequence: A, B, C, D, E, F...and so on...X, Y, Z. Encourage children to join in saying the letters if they know the alphabet sequence. *Now we're going to sing the Alphabet Song and practice saying our letters with some music!*

Place the alphabet cards on the floor in the order below (following the song lyrics). As you lay each card down, say the letter name: A, B, C, D, E, F...and so on...X, Y, Z.

Encourage children to join in if they know the alphabet sequence.

Introduce the alphabet song (lyrics below). Sing it through *without* children the first time. As you sing, point to the appropriate letter on the floor as you sing its name.

A B C D
E F G
H I J K
L M N O P
Q R S
T U V
W X
Y and Z

Now I know my ABCs

Next time, won't you sing with me?

Explain: *Now it's time for you to join in!* Prompt children to join in as they are able. Sing the song through 1-2 more times.

Distribute shakers, rattles, or bells to each child.

Sing the song another 1-2 more times with the children shaking their instruments along with the melody while you point to each letter as it is sung.

For children aged 30 to 48 months:

Choose a child to hold the pointer. Sing the song again, with the child using the pointer to cue their peers for each letter in the song.

Give several other children the chance to be "pointers." Repeat this activity several times across the week so all children can experience this leadership role.

Summarize: *Our book today used all the alphabet letters to tell us a story about the dog and the mouse and their adventures. Then we looked at the letters and said them in order, and we sang the alphabet song. The alphabet song says all the letters in order too!*

EXPAND – ACTIVITY 2

For children 18 to 30 months old:

Explain: *We are going to practice writing today! We are going to make BIG shapes that are parts of alphabet letters.*

Note: While there are instructions for this activity below, the real focus of this activity is on developing fine motor (hand/finger) skills. If young toddlers prefer to simply explore the materials, allow them to do so. As they play, you can model some of the strokes and shapes described below. Some children may want to imitate you, while others may not yet be ready.

Show children the three stations you have set up. For each, **explain:**

- *Here is our chalk station. You can write with chalk. We will explore making our TALL, up-and-down lines, like this! (Demonstrate writing a vertical line using chalk.) We can also make a line with our*

NOTE FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

Children who aren't yet talking will enjoy the rhythm of this song and exploring the instruments to join in.

As children become familiar with the song, you might want to pause at letters ("A," "P," or "Z") to see if children will fill in the blanks.

Listen to hear if young toddlers are trying to join in by approximating the sounds of some of the letters.

Sing the song more slowly to allow younger children to join in and anticipate the next letter/sound. Older children who know this song well might enjoy if you increased the tempo to do a "super-fast" version.

pointer finger, like this! (Demonstrate making a vertical line by extending your arm and moving your pointer finger in the air from top to bottom in a straight line). *Make an up-and-down line with me, using your pointer finger!*

- *Here is our crayon station. You can write with crayons too. We will explore making wide, side-to-side lines, like this!* (Demonstrate writing a horizontal line using a crayon.) *We can also make a line with our pointer finger, like this!* (Demonstrate making a horizontal line by extending your arm and pointing your finger to the right and then sweeping your finger across your body to the left in a straight line). *Make a side-to-side line with me, using your pointer finger!*
- *Here is our dot marker station. We will use these markers to make circles, like this.* (Demonstrate making a circle and narrate as you work: *I am starting at the top and pulling my marker around to where I started in order to make a circle.*) *We can also make a circle with our pointer finger, like this* (demonstrate making a circle with your pointer finger extended; begin at the top to draw the circle in the air). *Make a circle with me, using your pointer finger!*

WHEN ARE CHILDREN READY TO WRITE THEIR NAMES?

1. When they understand that letters are *symbols* that stand for sounds
2. When they understand letters can be combined to make a *word*, like a name
3. When they are developmentally able to hold a writing utensil and form letters (this requires fine motor skills—or hand/finger muscle strength and coordination)

Rotate children through the three stations, refreshing paper as needed. Focus less on perfect strokes, but on the ability to grasp the writing utensils, make a mark, and/or attempt a line or scribble.

Transition to the “autograph” activity once children have fully explored the writing stations.

Explain: *There is a special word called an “autograph.” Our autograph is when we sign our name on paper. Now you have a chance to make your mark on a piece of paper, and we will make an autograph book!*

Give each child their page and let them choose a crayon to make the page. Once again, do not focus on producing letters or approximations of letters. Instead, focus on the act of mark-making on the page.

Collect all autograph pages. At another time, combine the pages into a small binder. Take time to “read” the autograph book one day, turning to each page, pointing to the photo and then to the marks on the page: *This is Maggie’s autograph.* Leave the book in your reading/writing center for children to look at if they wish.

For children 30 to 48 months old:

Explain: *Today, you will have a chance to make shapes and write your name using different writing tools! I’m so curious to know which writing tool is your favorite! Let me show you our three stations:*

- **Here is our pencil station.** *You can write your name with a pencil. If you don’t like it, just cross it out and try again. You can also practice making a special kind of line—a slanted or diagonal line! Watch me write a slanted line.* (Demonstrate how to draw a diagonal line with a pencil.)
- *We can also make a slanted line with our pointer finger, like this* (demonstrate making a diagonal line by extending your arm and moving your pointer finger from the top right side of your body to your lower left in a straight line). *Make a slanted line with me, using your pointer finger!*
- **Here is our crayon station.** *You can write with crayons too. We will try making a criss-cross shape, like this!”* (Demonstrate writing a cross—a vertical and then an intersecting horizontal line—using a crayon.)
- *We can also make a criss-cross shape with our pointer finger, like this* (demonstrate making a cross. Make a vertical line with your pointer finger, starting at the top, and then a horizontal line, going left to right). *Make a criss-cross shape with me, using your pointer finger!*

- **Here is our marker station.** We will use these markers to make squares, like this. Squares have four straight sides and four corners. (Demonstrate making a square and narrate as you work: *I am making one line. Then, starting at the corner, I'll make another. And starting at that corner, I'll make another. And then I'll make my last line to end up where I started!*)
- We can also make a square with our pointer finger, like this. (Demonstrate making a square with your pointer finger extended; begin at the top left, going left to right, then down to lower right, then across to lower left, and back up to upper left.) *Make a square with me, using your pointer finger!*

ARE SQUARES TOO HARD FOR YOUR STUDENTS?

Substitute the circle shape (described in the 18 to 30 month old instructions) if your students aren't yet ready to draw a square.

Distribute paper to each child: *When you visit our three stations, you can practice making a slanted line, the criss-cross shape, and the square. You can also practice writing your name too! I will be here to help.*

Rotate children through the three stations, refreshing paper as needed. Focus less on perfect strokes. Instead, observe their growing ability to grasp the writing utensil with their fingers. You will begin to see children moving away from holding writing utensils with their fists. See if they attempt the shape and provide coaching if needed. You may need to model drawing the shape/line or point on the paper to show where their strokes should go. You can also make dotted lines for children to follow the first time if they find it tricky.

Transition to the "autograph" activity once children have fully explored the writing stations.

Ask: *Does anyone know what an autograph is? (Take children's ideas.) An autograph is when you sign your name and give it to someone else. Giving someone an autograph is a great way to remember our friends! We are going to make an autograph book today!*

Give each child the page with their name on the top and let them choose a writing utensil.

Explain: *Now you can sign your name to your own autograph page. If you aren't sure what letters are in your name, you can look at the top of the page. If you want, you can also draw a picture.* Avoid focusing too much on children producing "perfect" letters. Instead, notice children's approximations and point out their ability to form some letters, use up-and-down lines, side-to-side lines, criss-cross shapes, and circles in their writing.

Collect all autograph pages. At another time, combine the pages into a small binder. Take time to "read" the autograph book one day, turning to each page, pointing to the photo and then to the marks/printed names on the page: *This is Maggie's autograph.* Leave the book in your reading/writing center for children to look at if they wish. You can also make additional copies to send a copy of the book home with each child.

MAKING MATH CONNECTIONS

Have children place counters (small blocks or pompoms) on each letter of their names. They can count how many letters they have.

Create a poster where each child's name is listed. Ask children to put a small sticker above each letter in their name.

Help children count the letters in each student's name. Pay attention to the length of the names and the quantity of stickers for each name. Identify who has the name with the *most* letters, the *least* letters, and the *same* number of letters.

This type of activity builds early counting, cardinality (quantity), and comparison skills.

REFLECT:

Return to a gathering area with the children.

Say: *Today, we learned about all of the alphabet letters and practiced printing and making shapes we use in writing letters. We made a class autograph book to show all of our friends our writing.*

Ask: *What was your favorite writing tool today? What made you like that tool?*

SUMMARIZE: *Today, we learned about the names of each letter and sang a song to learn the order of the alphabet. We also practiced writing shapes and letters in our names. When we combine letters, we can write and say our names and other words too!*

Individualizing the Activity

Make it more challenging:

- In Activity 1, you can have individual children point/say the alphabet themselves as they step from letter to letter (adding movement to the activity as well). You can also give individual children a chance to sing the alphabet song on their own.
- In Activity 1, for children who are ready, they can pull out the letter cards that form their name. Or you can shuffle the cards and invite children to put the cards in alphabet order starting with "A."
- In Activity 1, you can create a set of alphabet cards using lower-case letters. Do the activity with the lower-case cards to help children recognize this form of the alphabet letters.
- In Activity 2, you can model how to write more challenging shapes, such as an X or a triangle. You can also introduce/reinforce the math skill of shape awareness by focusing on drawing and discussing the attributes of circles, triangles, and squares. Be sure to have cut-outs of these shapes so children can touch, trace, and count the sides and corners of each shape.
- In Activity 2, you can have children dictate a sentence to you about themselves (their pet, their favorite food, etc.). Write down their words and let them practice printing their sentence onto their autograph page.

Make it less challenging:

- In Activity 1, focus on simply exposing children to the song (and the letter names in the song), rather than expecting them to sing and/or recognize the letters. You can prompt children with certain target letters (like A, P, and Z) by modeling and then pausing for children to fill in. Over time, children will begin to participate with a letter/phrase here and there.
- In Activity 2, ensure that you are using writing utensils that are appropriate for children's ages/abilities.
- In Activity 2, feel free to allow open-ended exploration of the writing tools. Remember that scribbling is an important early literacy activity! Children may not be ready to approximate letters or may confuse writing with drawing. For children under 30 months, that is developmentally typical. You can reinforce the difference between writing and drawing during story-times: *Here is the writing. Those are the words I am reading. Here is the picture. It shows what's happening in the story.*
- If needed, provide modified materials to encourage children's full participation (see suggestions in the *Teacher's Guide*) for children with developmental delays or disabilities. Some children may also prefer to stand or lie on the floor on their stomachs to write. Allow these different positions as you are able, given your learning environment.

MAKING CONNECTIONS ACROSS THE DAY:

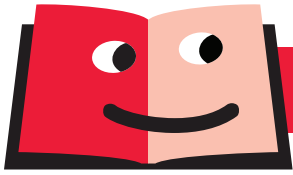
- Sing the alphabet song during other daily routines—such as lining up, heading out to the playground, naptime transitions, and other times.
- Encourage writing during playtime, such as having children dictate letters to their loved ones or “writing” notes to their friends in the classroom. Place writing materials (pads, pencils, crayons) in the pretend play area and model how they can be used to write shopping lists or take orders at a pretend restaurant.
- Point out alphabet letters in signs. For example, you can point to an “exit” sign and tell children it says “exit.” Then you can explain that the word exit is made up of the letters E, X, I, and T. Emphasize that letters can be combined to make words.
- Offer writing utensils in unexpected places—like sidewalk chalk on the playground or easels set up outside with markers.
- If you are not already labeling children’s names on hooks, chairs, and circle time cushions, consider adding this text. Seeing their names in print helps children to recognize their written name. Having these printed names visible also invites naming the letters and “reading” them with children. Children also, over time, will begin to “read”/recognize their friends’ names as well.
- Share a variety of alphabet stories so that children are exposed to letter names and sounds featuring a range of examples. Across the next few years, this story-sharing routine will help them recognize letters and letter sounds, and also expand their vocabulary with new and novel words.
- For older children (30 to 48 months), consider having a morning sign-in routine where children can sign (or approximate) their name as they enter the classroom. Make sure the sign-in sheet has each student’s name printed, with space underneath for children to write. Offer a variety of writing utensils to accommodate different developmental stages (like chunky crayons *and* pencils). Let parents know it’s okay if letters aren’t perfect! You can use this sign-in sheet during morning circle as a way of taking attendance and reinforcing how we use writing. These sign-in sheets, observed across several months, can also be an important artifact to document children’s growth and development.

Song: *Learning Letter Sounds*

Directions: This song helps children connect letters with the sounds they make. Model the movements the musician makes for each target word in the alphabet. Repeat the song over a few weeks so children become familiar with both the sounds and the movements.

Share this song with children: <https://bit.ly/4sdWMJt>

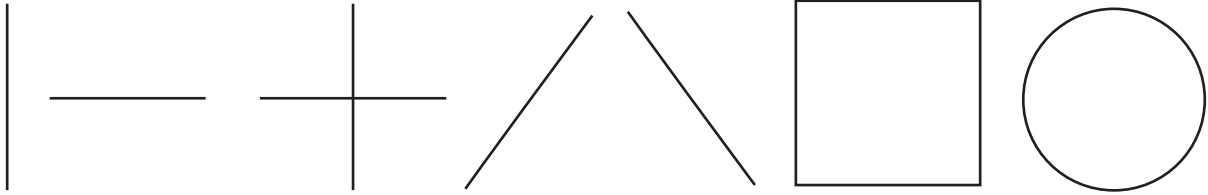
To support children’s ability to recognize their name in print, print each child’s name onto a large index card. Pause the song at three different points and choose 2-3 “movement leaders” for that section of the song. Select 3 name cards and place each one on the floor. Give children a chance to recognize and “read” their names, and join you in the front to lead the movements. Over time, they will be able to recognize their friends’ printed names as well.



Just for Families

Words Are Made of Letters

This week, children practiced singing the alphabet song to begin learning the order of the letters. Children also worked on making some of the shapes that form letters using tools like markers and crayons. They practiced shapes like:



This early experience with writing will help them form “real” letters later on!

Here’s how you can help children build writing and alphabet skills at home:

Sing the alphabet song. Make the alphabet song a part of daily routines. Sing it while your child is in the bathtub or while you are in the car driving to child care.

Let your child explore writing tools. With your supervision, let your child experiment with crayons and (washable) markers. This helps them practice making marks on paper and develop strong hand and finger skills they need to write.

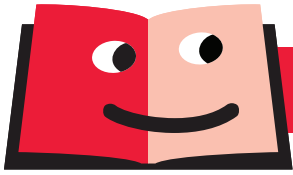
Point out words in the world around you.

Notice words on signs (like “enter” and “exit”).

Talk about how we combine letters to make

words, and point to each letter and say its name: *E, X, I, T* spells *EXIT*.

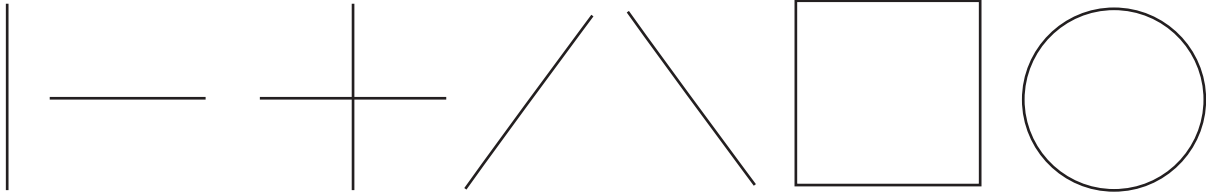




Solo para familias

Las palabras están formadas por letras

Esta semana, los niños practicaron la canción del alfabeto para empezar a aprender el orden de las letras. Los niños también se ocuparon de hacer algunas de las formas que componen las letras con objetos como marcadores y creyones. Practicaron con formas como:



¡Esta primera experiencia con la escritura los ayudará a escribir las letras “verdaderas” más adelante!

Estas son algunas ideas de cómo puede ayudar a los niños a desarrollar destrezas para escribir y aprender el alfabeto en casa:

Cante la canción del alfabeto. Haga que la canción del alfabeto se convierta en parte de las rutinas diarias. Cante cuando su niño está en la bañera o mientras van en el automóvil camino a la guardería.

Deje que su niño explore con los objetos para escribir. Bajo su supervisión, deje que su niño experimente con creyones y marcadores lavables. Esto lo ayudará a practicar cómo se hacen marcas en un papel y a mejorar la fuerza de las manos y la destreza de los dedos necesarias para escribir.



Mencione palabras del mundo que los rodea.

Destaque las palabras de los signos (como “entrada” y “salida”). Hable de la manera en que combinamos las letras para formar palabras y señale cada letra mientras menciona la palabra completa: *S, A, L, I, D, A se lee SALIDA.*