The alphabet

The alphabet is one of the fundamental teaching points at primary level and needs to be frequently recycled and practised using a variety of different activities. On the LearnEnglish Kids website you will find a wide range of activities and materials for teaching and practising the alphabet.

Go to learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/category/topics/alphabet. On this page you will find ideas for using and exploiting the alphabet materials available.

Presenting the alphabet

You can use some simple activities and games to familiarise your students with the sounds and letters of the English alphabet.

At the simplest level there are two games to practise identifying sounds – ‘Sounds fun’ learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/fun-games/sounds-fun where children listen to and click on the right sound, and ‘Alphabet antics’, a similar game sounding out the letters of the alphabet learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/fun-games/alphabet-antics.

You can also play the game ‘ABC countdown’ – children must click the letters of the alphabet in order against the clock learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/fun-games/abc-countdown.

Another idea for introducing the alphabet is to use the words and visuals contained in the ‘Picture Dictionary’ worksheet. Ask children to point to the letters of the alphabet first, then give you the word when you call out a letter. You can then progress to spelling complete words. Spell out a word letter by letter while the children point to it. Write words up on the board and let the children spell them out and draw the right picture on the board next to it. You can then move on to the matching worksheet which accompanies the picture dictionary. You could make picture and /or word cards for more practice. Or you could blow up the visuals and words and put them up on the classroom wall as a reference dictionary for sounds and letters. PLEASE NOTE these worksheets are no longer available.

Another suggestion would be to make mini word and picture cards and ask children to spell them. You could do this individually, or as pair work or make a game with the children working in groups.

Or you could use dictation activities. Dictate some of the words from the worksheets letter by letter and ask the children to write them. You can then move on to other familiar vocabulary items or names. You could make a fun game by dictating a short sentence including some of the words on the worksheet e.g. I have a cat and a dog. Dictate letter by letter and ask children to find the word boundaries and tell you the sentence. Children could also dictate simple words to each other.

Spelling races are also very popular. Divide your class into two teams and call out a word from the worksheet. One child from each team should run to the board and write the word. Award a point for the first correct answer. Or have a ‘spelling quiz’, asking each team in turn to spell a word.

You could also use these visuals to play ‘Alphabet Bingo’. Ask your students to draw a simple grid (or prepare one for them). They should draw or copy six of the worksheet pictures. You can call out whole words or just initial letters of words. e.g. If you shout out A, children cross out apple.
Activities for further practice
All children love singing the alphabet and you could use the ‘Alphabet song’ to consolidate
learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/songs/the-alphabet-song. There is also a very nice follow-up
worksheet for the song where children identify animals in a jungle picture and make their own animal
alphabet. **PLEASE NOTE the follow-up worksheet for the song has since been updated.**

Other worksheets for further practice include an ‘Alphabet crossword’ which uses the same vocabulary as
the dictionary worksheets. In addition, you will find a worksheet for practising sounds and pronunciation in
the ‘Alphabet Maze’ worksheet. For this activity you will need to do some introductory work to familiarise
students with the concept of matching sounds which have different spellings. Write some pairs of words
from the worksheet on the board randomly e.g. red/head; toes/nose and ask your students to try and pair
them up according to sounds. Once they have mastered the idea, you can move on to the worksheet.
**PLEASE NOTE these worksheets are no longer available.**

Extension work/Recycling activities
One of the most ‘fun’ activities on the LearnEnglish Kids website is the ‘ABC zoo’ story. This is a flash-
animated story about a ‘Zorilla’ with lots of follow-up activities. You can find it at
learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/short-stories/abc-zoo. Play the story a few times and use the animal
flashcards to practise the animals from the story. You will need to do quite a few games and activities with
the flashcards to familiarise the students with all the weird and wonderful animal vocabulary!

As follow-up work to the story you could use the worksheet ‘ABC Zoo’ containing vocabulary matching,
quiz and animal description activities. **PLEASE NOTE the follow-up worksheet for the song has since been updated.** Or the worksheet ‘ABC animals’ – a cut and stick activity in which children make their own
alphabet zoo. **PLEASE NOTE this worksheet is no longer available.**

Extend this activity by making your own alphabet zoo for the classroom. You will probably need to simplify
the list of animals first. Write the letters of the alphabet on the board as a list and ask the children to write
in animals for each letter e.g. A = ant, B = Bear, C= Crocodile. Use the bizarre animals from the story to
complete all the letters. Make a display for the classroom, allocating one letter/animal to each student and
asking them to draw a picture of their animal, label it and write a few simple sentences. Before you put the
pictures on the wall ask the students to stand in line with their pictures in the order of the alphabet.

There are also some really fun follow-up games for the ABC Zoo story. Try ‘Animal Countdown’
learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/fun-games/animal-countdown a game in which children must click on
the animals in alphabetical order against the clock. There is also a squash the monkey hangman type
game practising the animal vocabulary from the story: learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/word-
games/hangman/abc-zoo Finally there is a gap-filling activity completing information about the ‘Zorilla’
learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/word-games/fill-the-gap/zorilla. If your students are at a slightly
higher level you could ask them to invent another bizarre animal by mixing two or three animals together,
then drawing and writing about their crazy animal.

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