

I.P.A. Home Reading Program

Alphabet Phonograms
Infant through Preschool



Beginning Phonograms
& Word Flashcards

Alphabet Phonograms with Words Flashcards

Beginning Phonograms

What is a Phonogram?

Phonograms are alphabetical characters, or symbols, that represent the sounds of speech. The first phonograms to be learned are the letters of the alphabet. Here we are not talking about the *names* of the letters. Alphabet Phonograms go from A to Z but represent the *sounds* the letters make, which sounds are called *phonemes*. (Intermediate phonograms in this program consist of phonograms composed of more than one letter. Advanced phonograms have more than one letter and more than one sound.)

It is recommended that Alphabet Flashcards (which teach letter recognition by name) be presented before presenting Alphabet Phonograms and that the Alphabet Song be sung often to the child as well as recitation of the alphabet. Besides the child learning letter recognition and alphabetical order, the child will begin to gain phonemic awareness, as the names of the letters contain the most common phoneme with few exceptions.

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. We think this is backwards. A child shouldn't have to wait until he is older to learn the alphabet, letter recognition and alphabetical order, which are all essential and easy for the young child to learn—especially when learning the names of the letters of the alphabet with the ABC Song and frequent

recitation will trigger phonemic awareness and 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 magenta on both sides of the flashcard.

How to Assemble Flashcards

Print flashcards on index paper (card stock) or use card stock or poster board for backing if you print on standard weight paper. Match the word to the phonogram and slip the pages, back-to-back, into a loose-leaf page 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 doesn't mind being interrupted.)
- 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 are called “phonograms” when they represent sounds.
- The first time you go through the phonograms show the phonograms only. Do not show the words.

The Most Common Phoneme

Some phonograms have more than one sound. You will first present the phonograms with their most common sounds (phonemes) before presenting additional phonemes. There is a flashcard for each phoneme. (That is why there are 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 “y” also have two, or more, phonemes. It is recommended that you begin with the most common phoneme for the consonants and begin with the short vowel phonemes for the vowels.

To show the most common phonemes remove flashcards with the words: ate, all, cent, he, gem, ice, go, to, as, unit, put, Xerox, cyst, cry and city. These you will give later, after presenting Alphabet Phonograms with their most common phonemes.

Next, tell the child that 4 of the consonant letters can make 2 sounds. You can show the phonograms with words: cent, gem, as, and Xerox. [You may 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 “Xerox” sounds like /z/.] You can do the same for the vowels and show the phonograms with the words: ate, all, ice, go, to, unit and put. [You can point out that the vowels in “ate, he, ice, go and unit” all say the name of their letter and are called long vowels. Inform 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, holding 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. (Explain that a phoneme is a sound represented by the phonogram.)
- Hold the flashcards with the word facing you. (The word is your pronunciation key to the pronunciation of the phoneme.)
- Hold the flashcards steady, at the child’s level, where he can see clearly without straining. (For an infant this would be about 18”.)
- 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 and say the word. Or you may want to sit the child next to you on the couch and put the flashcards on your lap to show them, taking them from the top of the pile.
- 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 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 phonograms and words, work with fewer flashcards and go over each phoneme in the word. For this you may want to download the word cards that do not have magenta colored phonemes.

- Show the word card and say the word with precise pronunciation.
- Then say the word again more slowly, pronouncing the sound of each phoneme (letter sound) in a drawn-out, segmented manner while pointing to each letter as you articulate the phoneme.
- Then blend the sounds together again and say the word as you would speak it normally, using some emphasis.
- As you blend the phonemes, move your index finger under the word from left to right in the same direction as the eyes would move in reading the word. (All in all, the word is spoken three times.)

Notes

1. Give the rule for phonogram “qu”. “U” always follows “Q”. It sounds like “qw”.
2. Give the silent “e” rule with flashcards “ate” and “ice”. If there is a silent “e” at the end of a word, the vowel says its name.
3. When pronouncing consonant sounds do not add a heavy sound (like “uh” after “b”). The

emphasis belongs on the /b/. Carefully form the lips to make a strong /b/ sound and make the sound coming from the throat as light as possible.

Maintaining Interest

Keep in mind that the rule is to stop before the child loses interest, so the child will be eager to see the flashcards next time you show them. 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 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 they 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 difficult for an older child to learn phonograms, 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. The two most 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. There is something to be said for both methods. Combining the two methods makes teaching reading most effective.

Phonograms are the keys to decoding words

Reading is the process of decoding letter characters called phonograms. A child that memorizes words without learning phonograms does not know how to decode words and his activity is not true reading. Some proponents for 'words only' 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 this approach may succeed because they have an absorbent mind and will take in what they see and may subconsciously figure it out, where many older children may not be willing or able to process the information since they are no longer in the absorbent mind stage of development.

One problem with the 'words only' approach 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 which are relatively few in number. Parents don't have time to make and show thousands of flashcards, and the few that they do provide should be the ones that will bring the most benefit.

Another problem is that word flashcards may be boring for the child and she may not even look at them.

Children can read books at an early age when they are taught phonograms with accompanying words. 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 and is less interesting.

Whole word advocates who claim that phonograms do not make sense to a baby should consider that babies do not speak whole words at first. First they babble and learn to make all the sounds that the phonograms represent. Furthermore, when a word the baby is able to decode is given with the phonogram, phonograms make supreme sense.

Teaching phonograms without presenting words postpones understanding 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) - /ah/ - /t/ - /s/ - /z/, with all these sounds running together. This is very 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.

Phonograms have been made too difficult

Running together multiple phonemes of a phonogram instead of giving one phoneme at a time with a word the child can decode have made learning and teaching phonograms difficult. After the whole gamut of phonograms are 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 the word “cats”, for example, he must first choose between the /k/ and the /s/ phonemes, then choose between the short vowel /a/ phoneme, the long vowel /a/ phoneme and the /ah/ phoneme. The /t/ does not require a choice and, finally, he must choose between the phonemes /s/ and /z/. In order to help him decide there are any

number of rules, rules, rules. (Rules are much nicer to learn about when we already know how to keep them, which is the case when the child learns phonograms with words.) It's no wonder teachers and students, alike, have recoiled from phonograms in the past.

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 giving the alphabet phonograms with short-vowels and the most common phoneme, many words can be learned that will reinforce the sound-to- symbol relationship because they can all be decoded.

For a particular phonogram with multiple sounds each phoneme is learned separately with a word that uses that specific phoneme. Inform the child that some phonograms have more than one phoneme. Let the child know if he is learning a phonogram that has multiple phonemes. And let the child know that he will be learning the phonemes, one sound at a time.

In the I.P.A. 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 their key to pronunciation.

Easy Recognition

Because the phonogram is colored magenta on both sides of the flashcard, the child can easily identify the phonogram in the word because it stands out and the child can see that the same phonogram is on both sides of the flashcard.

The child also hears the phoneme as the parent shows the child the phonogram and pronounces the phoneme. The parent then turns the flashcard around and shows the child the word, slowly pronouncing it, while emphasizing the new phoneme.

Here is how to do it. 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 cat). 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 word.

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 hearing the phonemes that are definitely contained within the names of the letters.

The first phonograms children learn in the I.P.A. 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. Work with alphabet phonograms is based on the child’s familiarity with the alphabet and 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 make up your own tune if you don't know it. Recite the Alphabet for the baby every chance you get.

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 phonemic awareness, which is the ability to hear the specific and distinct sounds of speech. Phonemic awareness is necessary if the child is to become a successful reader.

When giving phonograms, many consonant letters are difficult to pronounce without adding a vowel sound, and more importantly, are difficult for the untrained ear of a baby to hear, even when pronounced skillfully by the parent. That is why repetition is necessary and babies need their parents to speak to them distinctly. Singing and reciting the alphabet to the infant trains the infant ear to hear the alphabet phonemes and makes up for shortcomings that a parent may have in his ability to articulate certain consonant sounds. Since the names of the letters contain these phonemes this is yet another good reason why parents ought to sing and recite the alphabet over and over again for the baby.

The child is reading words practically from the beginning. The I.P.A. Home Reading Program incorporates words into the flashcard sessions after one or two presentations of alphabet phonograms. From the very first word shown with the very first phonogram, the child is able to decode all words given with the flashcards. The child is illuminated from the beginning. He knows what letters and phonograms are all about. He is decoding words and it is easy. He becomes very interested and wants to know more. He is not puzzled by the process or bored with myriad words that he can't decode. He is not inundated by seemingly endless rounds of sounds that have no further meaning than the sound itself.

Download everything you need for free

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.

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 two or three times before presenting phonograms should be sufficient with periodic review. Sing the Alphabet Song for the baby until the child learns to sing it herself; then sing it with her and, finally, ask her to sing it for you when you are certain that she knows it. Then ask her to sing it for you from time to time.

Child brain specialist Glenn Doman 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. If you teach the child to read, the child will know how to read by the time the child is speaking.