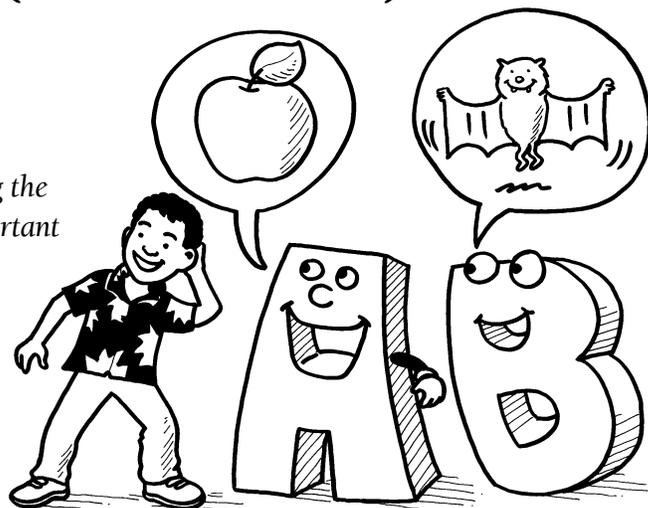


# What's That (Letter) Sound?

“J is for James!” It's exciting for your child to start connecting the letters he knows with the sounds they stand for. And it's an important early step toward reading all by himself.

The front of this guide is filled with activities and games that will help your youngster learn his letter sounds—and continue his journey toward becoming a lifelong reader. And the back features an alphabet chart with pictures to remind him of the sounds letters make.



**What are the sounds of letters?** Think of a word that ends with the letter *t*, like *bat*. The sound you hear at the end of the word is the purest sound of the letter. It sounds like “*ttt*,” not “*tee*.”

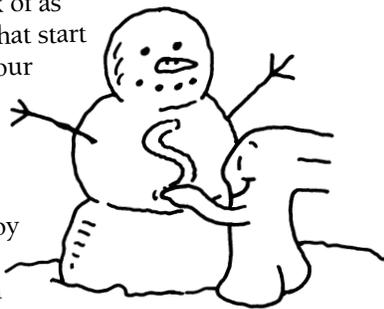
**Why use the sound of the letter, not its name?** Just knowing the alphabet letters “*c-a-t*,” for instance, won't enable your child to read the word *cat*. But hearing and saying the sounds and then putting them together will.

**When is the right time for learning the sounds of letters?** Youngsters usually learn letter sounds in kindergarten. Your child may express interest even sooner—you'll begin to hear questions like “How do you spell *house*?” or “What does that sign say?”

**How should we practice?** Share the sounds of letters with your youngster in a playful way, perhaps by singing songs or saying tongue twisters. Then, try the simple games on this page.

## Words that start with...

With your child, think of as many words as you can that start with a particular letter. Your youngster may want to say words that begin with the first letter in her name, such as *s* for *Sophie*. She'll enjoy coming up with other words that begin with an *s* sound, such as *sit*, *silly*, and *supper*.



## I Spy!

Try all three versions of this word game.

1. Start with one object at a time. Your child is playing with a hamster. You say, “I spy something you are playing with that begins with *hhh*.” Can he guess the word? Continue with different letter sounds and hints.
2. When your youngster is ready, make it a little harder. Put three objects on the table that start with different sounds. *Examples*: bowl, napkin, cup. Say, “I spy something that begins with *bbb*.” If your child picks the napkin, you can say, “Is it a *bapkin*?” He'll laugh and try again until he chooses the bowl.
3. Finally, look for an object you can both see in a room. Challenge your youngster to guess what it is. “I spy something in the kitchen that starts with *aah*.” You can give hints if he has trouble. If you're thinking of an apple, say, “It's healthy to eat” or “It's red.”

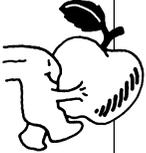
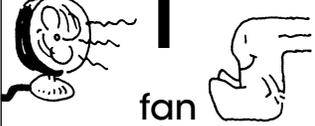
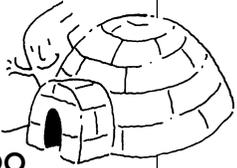
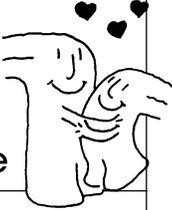
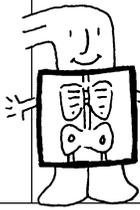
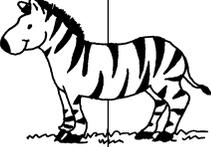


## Putting sounds together

Sound words out, and ask your child to guess what they are. For example, when you ask her to clean her room, you can say, “Guess what I see in your room. I see a *mmm-eh-sss-sss* (mess).”

Or try without giving any hints—simply say, “Guess what word I'm sounding out,” and then say the sounds in the word.

continued

<p><b>a</b> apple </p>	<p><b>b</b> bat </p>	<p><b>c</b> cat </p>	<p><b>d</b> dog </p>
<p><b>e</b> elephant </p>	<p><b>f</b> fan </p>	<p><b>g</b> gas </p>	<p><b>h</b> hat </p>
<p><b>i</b> igloo </p>	<p><b>j</b> jump </p>	<p><b>k</b> kite </p>	<p><b>l</b> love </p>
<p><b>m</b> man </p>	<p><b>n</b> no </p>	<p><b>o</b> on </p>	<p><b>p</b> pie </p>
<p><b>q</b> queen </p>	<p><b>r</b> run </p>	<p><b>s</b> sit </p>	<p><b>t</b> top </p>
<p><b>u</b> umbrella </p>	<p><b>v</b> violin </p>	<p><b>w</b> wet </p>	<p><b>x</b> x-ray </p>
<p><b>y</b> yes </p>	<p><b>z</b> zebra </p>	<p><b>IDEA</b></p> <p>Hang this poster on your refrigerator. Whenever you have a spare moment, go over each letter's alphabet name, sound, and word with your child. For example, "This is the letter <i>a</i>. It makes the sound <i>aah</i> and is the first sound in the word <i>apple</i>. What other words can you think of that start with <i>a</i>?"</p> <p><i>Note:</i> Many letters (especially the vowels <i>a</i>, <i>e</i>, <i>i</i>, <i>o</i>, and <i>u</i>) have a lot of different sounds. The common letter sounds shown will get your youngster started.</p>	

# Be a Reading Star

## 2017 EDITION

Does your child want to be a reading star? It's easy! Let him start by picking books from the list below to read together. Then, help him log the titles and authors on page 2. Idea: Make copies of the blank log, and keep reading—and recording—all year long!



### **Max the Brave** (Ed Vere)

Max is a kitten who is tired of being dressed up in bows. He wants to be brave and catch a mouse. But there's one problem: He doesn't know what a mouse looks like. Follow Max as he looks for a mouse to catch—whatever a mouse is!

### **The Quickest Kid in Clarksville** (Pat Zietlow Miller)



Alta and Charmaine are competing to be the fastest kid in town. Alta thinks Charmaine wins only because she has fancy new shoes and Alta's have holes. But when Olympic gold medalist Wilma Rudolph returns home for a parade, the girls race together to see their hero and hold a banner for her. Includes a short biography of Wilma Rudolph.

### **Subway** (Christoph Niemann)

Here's a fun and colorful look at the incredible New York City subway system. This rhyming story takes young readers on an all-day subway adventure with a dad and his two children. Along the way, they'll see numbers, letters, signs, maps, and more.

### **Book Fiesta!** (Pat Mora)

Celebrate reading and different cultures with this book in English and Spanish. Your child will learn how Children's Day/Book Day (El Día de Los Niños/El Día de Los Libros) is celebrated in Mexico—and see how reading is fun and can be enjoyed by anyone.

### **Fabulous Frogs** (Martin Jenkins)

Ribbit...ribbit...did your child know there are more than 5,000 types of frogs in the world? This nonfiction picture book follows these creatures from tadpole stage through the many fascinating varieties they grow into. Your youngster will enjoy reading froggy facts and seeing the frogs "jump" off the pages!



### **Charlie Piechart and the Case of the Missing Pizza Slice** (Eric Comstock and Marilyn Sadler)

When the pizza that Charlie's family orders is missing a slice, they must solve the mystery! In this early introduction to fractions, your child will explore math, see pie charts, and find out what happened to the missing slice. Contains a fraction guide.

### **Lola Plants a Garden** (Anna McQuinn)

After Lola reads her favorite poems about gardens, she decides she wants to grow her own. She researches how to grow flowers, and her mommy takes her to buy seeds. Lola plants seeds, tends to her sprouting plants, and patiently waits for her garden to bloom so she can share it with her friends. (Also available in Spanish.)

### **The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind: Picture Book Edition** (William Kamkwamba and Bryan Mealer)

William's village in Malawi is facing a drought, his family can have only one meal a day, and he has to stop going to school because there is no money. Inspired to help his people, William builds a windmill from scraps of trash to bring electricity to the village. Based on a true story.



### **Amazing Places**

(Poems selected by Lee Bennett Hopkins)

Your youngster can visit Chinatown in San Francisco, the Grand Canyon in Arizona, and the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia without ever leaving her couch. This book is a collection of poetry and pictures about special places in the United States. Plus, a map shows your child where these places are located.

continued



# My Reading Log



<b>1</b>	_____	_____
	Title	Author
<b>2</b>	_____	_____
	Title	Author
<b>3</b>	_____	_____
	Title	Author
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\_\_\_\_\_ is a  
**Name**



# From Scribbles to Stories

The path from scribbling to writing is made up of exciting stepping-stones as your youngster learns to form letters, print words, compose sentences, and, eventually, write stories. Use the ideas in this guide to support your little writer every step of the way.



## Scribbles and letters

Those scribbles underneath your child's drawing look kind of like letters. What's going on? Your youngster has noticed that the books you read to her have letters as well as pictures, and she wants to add them to her own drawings! These activities will encourage her earliest writing efforts.

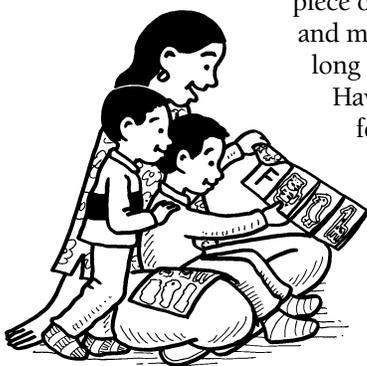
### Story pictures

When your child draws or paints a picture, ask her to tell you a story about it. Perhaps she drew a snake who wishes for wings so he can fly. Suggest that she write her story under her drawing or on another sheet of paper. She might just make a row of lines and circles or write a string of random letters—that's the first step toward writing words! Or she may write letters for the sounds she hears like "sk" for *snake* and "ws" for *wings*.

### Sticker book

Kids love stickers—why not use them to let yours practice writing letters? Help him create a "flap book" by folding a piece of paper in half horizontally and making several cuts from one long edge of the paper to the fold. Have your youngster put a different sticker on top of each flap. Then, he can write the first letter of the word underneath the flap (*H* for a heart sticker, *T* for a tiger). Encourage him to "read" his book to you. He might point to the tiger, lift the flap, and say, "*T* is for *tiger*."

This reinforces the idea that letters and pictures can go together to tell a story.



## Words

As your child moves from recognizing letters to reading words, his interest in writing words will grow, too. Keep him writing with these tips.

### Word bank

You've just returned from the aquarium, and your youngster is excited about all the sea creatures he saw. Use his enthusiasm to encourage him to write words. Together, make a "word bank" from your trip—a list of animals like *shark*, *octopus*, and *crab*. He can write the words as you spell them, or you could help him sound them out. Save the list so he can use it to write a story about his adventure! *Idea:* Create more word banks after different outings. A trip to the dentist might inspire a list that includes *brush*, *checkup*, and *chair*, for example.

### Fill-in-the-blank favorites

Give your child a small notebook where she can write opinions of her favorite things. Have her pick a topic (say, strawberries), and write four or five fill-in-the-blank sentences for her. *Example:* "My favorite fruit is \_\_\_\_\_. I love them because they are \_\_\_\_\_. You can eat them with \_\_\_\_\_." Together, read the sentences, and help her fill in the blanks ("strawberries," "juicy," "waffles"). She can draw a picture to go with each one. Then, start a new page, and let her choose another favorite topic to write about.



continued

## Sentences

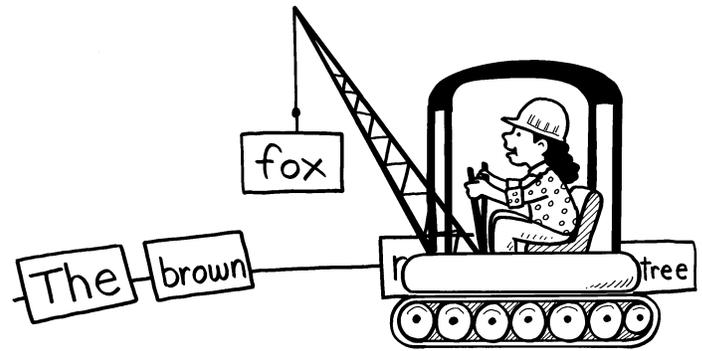
When your youngster graduates to writing whole sentences, he takes a huge step in becoming an independent writer. Here are a few ways to help him make that leap.

### Action-packed directions

This active idea lets your child work on capitalizing words and punctuating sentences. Write a sentence that includes an action for him to do. For example, write, “Josh crawls under the table,” and he would read it and crawl under the table. Next, have him write an action sentence for you. Remind him to start the sentence with a capital letter and add punctuation at the end. (“Dad is doing a funny dance.”) Your youngster can also practice writing questions, and act out the answers to what he asks. (“Can you wink your left eye?”)

### Construction zone

Rebuilding mixed-up sentences teaches your child to put words in order so they make sense. Try this: Think of a sentence (“The brown fox ran around the tree”), and write each



word on a separate index card. Then, mix up the cards. It’s your youngster’s job to put them back in sequence. Once she has the sentence, give her a card with a new detail (*tall*). Can she add it to make a longer sentence? (“The brown fox ran around the tall tree” or “The tall brown fox ran around the tree.”) Now, let her think of a sentence and write the words on cards for you to unscramble.

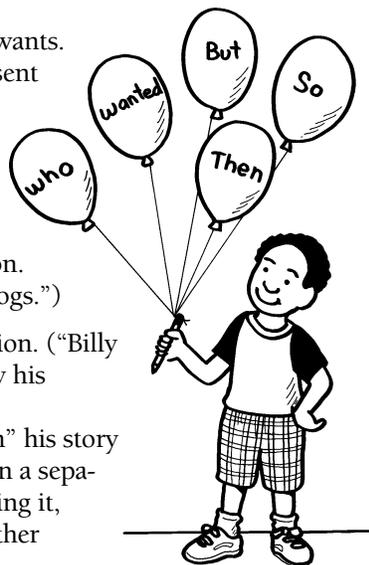
## Stories

String a few sentences together, and *pow!* Your child has written a story. Consider these suggestions for inspiring your young author.

### Five-sentence tales

Let your youngster use this strategy to plan and write stories with simple plots that flow logically. Ask him to write “Who,” “Wanted,” “But,” “So,” and “Then” down the side of a sheet of paper. He can add a sentence for each.

1. “Who”: Introduce the character. (“There once was a little boy named Billy.”)
2. “Wanted”: Tell what he wants. (“Billy wanted to buy a present for his mommy.”)
3. “But”: Present a problem. (“But he didn’t have any money.”)
4. “So”: Explain the solution. (“So he got a job walking dogs.”)
5. “Then”: Write a conclusion. (“Billy made enough money to buy his mommy a necklace.”)



Have your child “publish” his story by copying each sentence on a separate sheet of paper, illustrating it, and stapling the pages together into his very own book.



### Live performances

Suggest that your youngster put on a costume, get props, and act out a story while you take photos of the action. She might have siblings, friends, or toys fill in as costars. After you get the photos printed, she can glue them to cardboard in order. Then, have her write about each picture, telling what the characters are doing, thinking, or feeling. *Tip:* Ask questions to prompt her. You might say, “How did Sabrina feel when she was on the white horse?” and she could write, “Sabrina felt like a princess when she rode her white horse.” When her story is complete, display it for everyone to see.