



# abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz

## Alphabet Arc

Learning the alphabet is important to a pupil with literacy difficulties, but it can be hard for them to remember. Alphabetical order is used to organise and sort information in dictionaries, glossaries, registers, libraries and indexes in books.

The ALPHABET ARC is a recognised model for teaching the alphabet.

### Top Tips before you begin!

- Alphabet work is usually done at the start of an intervention lesson.
- ALWAYS use letter names and NOT sounds. As children become older they spell using letter names only.
- Ensure the child knows all the letter *names*, both upper and lower case. Upper case letters should be used first and then lowercase but letter *names* must be used at all times. There's a sheet at the end of this document to use to check this. (Make sure it's printed at a size and on a colour that the child can see clearly.)
- Ensure the child knows the alphabet before they start - if they don't, or if they're not secure with it, teach them using the 'alphabet rap' or another chunking method. The traditional alphabet song is quite fast in the middle and can cause mix-ups. The 'alphabet rap' chunks the alphabet as follows: a' b' abc' abcdefg' / h' i' hij' hijklmn' / o' p' opq' opqrstu' / vwxyz. The suggested activities below can work with the whole alphabet or chunks.
- Ideally, children should know what vowels and consonants are before you start these activities.
- When the child can recite the alphabet, you can let them copy the arc once or twice but they should be able to do this from memory.
- If letter confusion has previously occurred, take out the problem letters and discuss the differences before they start the arc. This could include feeling the shape of the letter with their eyes closed, drawing it on paper or in the air with their finger, or making it from playdoh.
- Always place out markers before the activity is started.

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## Setting out the arc



The pupil should sit in the front/middle of the arc so that the letters MN are directly in front. A variety of letter types can be used, though the wooden pre-cursive letters are preferred. Initially place the AMNZ markers out for the pupil. They must then learn to do this themselves.

The alphabet is set out this way so all the letters can be seen by facing forward without turning, it will all fit on the desk easily and the unplaced letters can be put in the gap in front of the child. The alphabet arc should be completed by placing the letters in order and when each letter is touched the name must be said. The arc can be done in numerous more challenging ways i.e. A to Z, randomly from a heap, reverse order, MN as the starting point then one left and one right.

### Arc activities

1. Time the pupil reading the letters forwards and then backwards. As they say each letter they **MUST** touch it at the same time.
2. With eyes closed:
  - Reverse some of the letters and then ask which are the wrong way around.
  - Remove a letter and then ask which one is missing.
  - Ask the child to find a particular letter.
  - When not looking at the arc, ask which letter comes before/after another one.
  - Ask them to point to where they think a certain letter is.
  - Take a few letters out and ask the child to put them back in the correct place. Make it more tricky by taking a few consecutive letters.
  - Ask them to identify a letter by feeling it.
  - Turn a letter upside down and ask the child to identify which one you've turned.
3. Ask the child to say the letter name and clap their hands if it is a consonant or snap fingers for a vowel.
4. Onset and rime exercises are a really good activity to do with the arc. An example of this would be to take the letters 'cat' out of the arc and then put the 'c' back and ask which other letter/s could be put there instead to make new words.
5. Write a word on a piece of paper in letters the size of the wooden ones and time how long it takes the child to find the correct letters from the arc to make that word. Or reverse this by presenting the letters to the child and asking them to return them to their correct place in the arc.
6. Chunk the letters in pairs, stressing the second letter. This can be done with separate cards for ease. e.g. A B/ C D/ E F etc. The learner names the letters on the card and puts them in alphabetical order.
7. Vary the location of the arc once children have reached automaticity with it in front of them e.g. they could try it in a different room or use magnetic letters on a whiteboard.

## **Putting the arc away**

When the activities are completed, the pupil **MUST** put the letters away, naming them as they do so. They could remove the vowels first and then remove the consonants alternately, or simply scramble them into a pile. Younger children like it if you use a fabric bag and make a 'monster mouth' out of the opening which the adult only opens to 'eat' the letter when the child has correctly identified it.

### **EACH ACTIVITY MUST FINISH ON SUCCESS!**

If a learner is finding something too difficult, take a step back and do something slightly easier so they finish confidently.

Reinforce alphabet work with activities such as alphabet dot-to-dot pictures, alphabet dominoes, alphabet bingo and letter tracking activities.

Name:..... Class:.....

### Letter name check

(taken from Conquering Literacy placement test, Kelly and Phillips, 2013)

(a) Say the NAME of each of these letters:

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

(b) Say the NAME of each of these letters:

f	t	k	b	p
l	z	u	s	a
m	c	i	r	q
d	g	z	e	x
o	j	w	n	v
h				