



# Learning to Recognise Letter Sounds using "Linked Visual Imagery."

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## Rationale

When new information is linked in some way to information we already know the task of memorising it is made easier.

The 'Linked Visual Imagery Method' for learning letter sounds helps children to memorise the sounds of letters by teaching them how to link each letter's abstract shape to the shape of a familiar animal or object that shares the same initial sound.

When using the 'Linked Visual Imagery Method' to teach letter sounds, the child is given visual cues to make memorisation easier.

To make learning fun and easy the child goes through the following learning sequence.

The child learns:

1. To identify each picture by its correct name
2. To identify the link between a picture and a particular letters shape.
3. To identify each picture by only its initial sound.
4. To independently say the initial sound of each picture when shown it
5. To say the initial sound of each picture when simply shown the letter to which it is matched.

**By point 5 they will know the link between the letter and the most common sound it represents.**

Each of these steps builds on the one before and gives the child a rich visual context which reinforces their memory.

## The Learning Climate.

- The activities should be fun and presented as a game that you **invite them play**.
- Tell them, "These games are lots of fun and will also teach you letter sounds."
- If the child isn't interested in undertaking the activities do not force the issue.
- Short sessions of five or ten minutes are the best.
- Only a few cards have to be used at a time, this way your child will feel successful.
- Each time the child gets a task right they should be encouraged. Say such things as, "Well done. Good thinking. You're getting good at this. I like the way you try hard."
- The letters can be learnt in any order.
- Don't rush the steps. Make sure the child can confidently do one activity before moving to the next.

If a child has trouble remembering links try to strengthen them by doing more actions. For example, if they say 'water' when they look at the 'tap' card, you could touch the card and say "I am going to turn on that tap." Then immediately pretend to be getting wet and yell, "Quick, quick, turn off the tap, I am getting soaked."

After doing this a few times the child will, in all probability, have no trouble linking the tap picture with the correct response because of your strong memorable reaction.

**The more humorous, exaggerated, active or ridiculous, something is the easier it is to remember.**

That is the H.E.A.R. principle.

# Suggested Teaching Sequence.

## Activity 1: Learning the picture names.

1. Show the child the cards and point out the picture on one side and letter on the other. Tell them that letters are the shapes we use when we read and write.
2. Show the student the pictures on the cards and **tell** them what they represent saying eg. "In this game when you see this picture you say ELEPHANT." "When you see this picture you have to say JUMP." "When you see this picture you have to say ROSE." etc.
3. Once you have shown them all the cards place a few in front of them and ask them to point and name the pictures.

As the child responds sort the cards into two piles.

- Those that they correctly identified immediately. eg. "elephant, apple"
  - Those they couldn't remember, paused over or had to think about eg they might have trouble with "vase, cup, jump, rose."
- 4 Now practice the cards they were unsure of e.g. "Can you find the 'cup' card?"
  5. When they can find the cards on request ask them to direct you to find them. "Now you ask me to find a card." Here the child reverses roles and the element of game play is reinforced.

### Check out their Learning

When all the cards have been learned check that the child can quickly say all the picture names before you go to the next activity.

### REMEMBER!

**Don't do the next activity until the child feels 100% confident saying the picture names rapidly.**

Tell them how much you enjoyed playing the game with them.

## Activity 2: Learning to say what picture is represented by each letter shape.

- Choose about three or four cards
- Have the child look at the letter on a card and then the picture.  
Point out how each letter transforms into a picture eg
  - "This is the letter 'e' can you see how it has changed into the elephant's head"
  - "This is the letter 't' it has changed into a tap with water pouring out it"
  - "This is the letter 'g' it becomes a goat."

### Always refer to the letter by its sound not its name. The focus is on letter sounds.

- Now turn the cards over and ask them if they can guess which letter turns into which picture. eg. Point to the 't' and ask... "What does the letter 't' turn into?"
- After the child gives their answer have them turn over the card to see if they are right. If they are they keep it. If they are wrong they turn it back over and leave it.
- If the child says they don't know have them take a guess and then turn the card over to check. Here point out the letter's transformation. 'See the water comes out the 't' just here, it's a tap.'

Always point to the letter when asking what shape it turns into as the child hasn't yet learned the letter's sound. Begin the game with letters that might be the easiest to remember e.g. 's' for snake.

**Once again reverse roles and have them point to a card and ask you to guess what it is.** This gives you an opportunity to model your thinking. If they point to the 'e' you can say. 'That letter look a bit like a head and trunk. I think it is the elephant'

- Also challenge the child to find a letter that turns into a particular object. "Which letter turns into a house?"

When they choose the “h” have them turn it over and say. “You’re right the ‘h’ looks like a little house with a chimney. Continually reinforce the transformation of the letter. Then congratulate them on being successful.

### **Check Out their learning.**

When the child can say the name of the picture, when simply shown the letter, they have mastered this task. When the child sees the “t” they should respond by saying “tap.”

### **Activity 3. Identifying each picture only by its initial sound.**

Initially many children find it challenging to identifying the initial sound at the beginning of a word so this process may take longer than the other tasks. Only do about three or four sounds at a time.

Tell them the first sound in a word might be a stretchy sound, because it can stretched out, or a bouncy sound because it can be repeated.

- Hold up a card, eg the snake picture card, and as you show it to your child say the name of the picture emphasising the first sound eg "Ssssssssss - nake, can you hear the first sound in snake? The sound is Ssss. It's a stretchy sound.
- Now hold up the tap picture and say, 'ttttttttttt - ap. Repeating the 't' over and over again before saying the word completely. Ask, 'Can you hear the bouncy 't' sound?

Now put out three cards, picture side up and tell them that to win this game they have to grab the correct picture before you finish saying the stretchy or bouncy part of the word because once you have said the whole word you will grab it yourself. Demonstrate how this is done before the game begins.

- Show how to do this by saying “Mmmmmmmmm - ouse” and then you grab the mouse picture as you finish the word.
- Now do this again with the same card so they can grab it while you are still saying “Mmmmm”

Repeat this demonstration for each picture card you put out before the game begins.

Each time they correctly grab the card before you finish saying the initial sound congratulate them and reinforce the concept by saying something like, "That's right, 'Mouse, Mmmmm for mouse,' now you say "Mmmmm for mouse." Once they have said "Mmmmm for mouse," have them try to identify another card.

If they choose an incorrectly picture, eg they might point to the fishing rod as you say "dddddddddd" respond by saying "That's "fffffishing rod, fishing rod start with the ffff sound. Try again, ddddddd for...."

Keep narrowing down the choices until they find the right card.

### **Check out their learning.**

You will know when they have mastered this skills if, when you say a particular sound eg. "Mmmmm" they can quickly find the correct picture and say the phrase, "Mmmmm for mouse."

### **Activity 4. Learning to independently say the initial sound each picture represents.**

Once the child can identify the pictures by hearing their initial sounds it is time for them to independently say the initial sound themselves when they see the picture.

Once again start with a few cards. Those they find easy to remember.

Model what you want them to do by pointing to the mouse picture and say the phrase "Mmmmm – ouse. 'm' for mouse." Then have them do it.

Once they have practiced about four cards, have them try to say the sentence when they point to a card of their choice. Once they can do this play "Touch" with them.

## Touch

Have the child say a sound, just a sound eg "Mmmm" and then you both race to touch it first. The winner gets to keep it in their pile.

### Of course you will be slower than them!

But not all the time they have to feel it's a real contest.

They should now be able to point to the picture and just say the initial sound.

### Check out their learning

They have mastered a picture card when they can point to a picture and say the initial sound and what it stands for eg "Mmmmmm for mouse"

### Activity 5: Saying the initial sound of each picture when simply shown the letter to which it is matched.

After the child masters the pervious activity tell them the next game is even trickier and ask them to do exactly the same task as before but only with the letter as their clue instead of the whole picture.

Once more model the process for the child. eg point to the letter 'S' and say "Ssssss – nake, 's' for snake."

Turn the card over to check it is correct.

Using a few cards at a time have your child learn to do this.

Once they can do this ask them to try to just say the sound when they see the letter and not the picture name first.

**They now know their  
letter sounds.  
Have a Celebration !**

## Why use this process?

The advantage of using this process lies in the fact that it creates visual links in the child's memory, so if later they see the letter "M" and can't remember what sound it represents you can ask them a series of questions to assist them to remember the answer independently.

### This sequence of questions reinforces their learning:

- "What picture does the letter turn into?  
Answer: "A mouse"
- "What sound does mouse start with?  
Answer: "Mmmmm"
- "Then what is the letter sound?"  
Answer "Mmmmm"

If at any stage they can't answer a question you can work out what activity they need to continue to practice.

### I hope you enjoy undertaking these activities with your child.

#### The next step.

After your child can identify the letters they can to learn to write them.

Once more having picture shapes as a clue to each letter makes this task easier.

