

Learning letters

Children who are familiar with the letters of the alphabet have a great advantage when they start school. Learning letters can be fun, and will give your child a lot of satisfaction. Don't try too much at once: learning one new letter a day will help your child to get them firmly established.

The following ideas are taken from the Parents' page at the Usborne Very First Reading website. At [Usborne.com/Veryfirstreading](https://www.usborne.com/Veryfirstreading) you'll also find more advice, free resources and information about the Usborne Very First Reading series.



- Look for an **alphabet book or frieze** (try to find one where the pictures begin with the most common letter-sounds, e.g. *l* for *ink* not *ice-cream*), an **alphabet puzzle or magnetic letters** to help your child become familiar with letter-shapes.
- Start with letters that have some connection for your child. Help your child to **learn the letters in their name**, and to recognise their name not just as a whole word but letter by letter.
- Very often, children start by learning the letters **s a t p i n**. These letters are quite distinct from each other, so not easily confused, and can be combined to make some of the most-used words in English (a/an, in, it, is etc).
- Choose a letter, and **make the letter-sound** (sss for s, etc - you can listen to all the letter-sounds in our guide to pronouncing the phonemes). Think of some things that begin with that sound.
- Show your child the letter written down (quite large) on paper. Then, together, try **tracing the letter on paper** with your finger; **writing it in the air**, very large; **drawing it in a box of sand or rice**; **copying it on paper** with a pencil or felt-tip pen (these are easier for your child to write with than ballpoint). Can you copy it a few times and incorporate it in patterns or pictures?
- Play "**Spot the letter**" when you're out and about, or in a book your child knows - look for all the words starting with that letter. Or cut out text from a newspaper or magazine (choose quite large type) and help your child to circle the letter. (Check that the letter form is the one your child is familiar with though - printed a's and g's can look very different from handwritten ones.)
- You could **make a letter scrapbook**: cut the letter out of bright or patterned paper and stick it in the scrapbook, then cut out pictures of things beginning with the letter-sound.
- Don't forget to go back often to **check and practise letters your child has already learned**.
- **Teach your Monster to Read**, a free game produced by the Usborne Foundation, is a great way to help children learn letters and sounds. Find out more at the [Teach Your Monster to Read](https://www.usborne.com/TeachYourMonsterToRead) website.



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