

Learning about Letters



Where do you see letters in our room? What do you think those words say on the cereal box? Learning about letters is a skill children develop through hands-on, meaningful experiences. Best practices for early childhood education stresses that letters should not be taught in isolation but instead an exposure to letters should be a part of everyday experiences. So, what does this mean for you, as a parent or guardian? It means that you will not necessarily see your child bringing home “worksheets” about letters. Instead, during the day, your child might attempt to write letters in sand or fingerpaint. He or she might be exposed to the letter B while learning about butterflies. You will not necessarily see a piece of paper coming home that demonstrates that your child is learning about letters but rest assured...he or she is! The benefit of learning about letters in this fashion is that it will be meaningful to your child and much more likely to “stick.”

WHAT DOES HANDS-ON EXPOSURE TO LETTERS AND LETTER SOUNDS LOOK LIKE?

- Adult writes down words during activities related to concepts the children are exploring (e.g., printing the word caterpillar on an index card and talking about the letters that make up the word. For advanced children, focus also on the beginning letter and sound.
- Playing with plastic alphabet letters in sand or water or even pressing in wet paint
- Looking for, and naming, letters in print on food boxes, signs, etc.
- Exploring writing in a writing center - at first, just scribbling (which is “writing” to a young child) and eventually advancing to writing real letters
- Playing a game to see how many different places the children can find letters. This activity can be made more advanced for children by asking them to locate a specific letter.

