

Letters & Literacy



Additional Literacy Experiences for
the Unit,
"Let's Make a Mess"



Important Information

The following experiences are designed to complement the Gee Whiz teaching unit, “Let’s Make a Mess.” These experiences are not required! Instead, they are a tool you can use to integrate an exposure of letter names, letter sounds and creative writing into the curriculum IF you feel your children are ready. This website has great information on print and alphabet knowledge. There are four sections to explore: KNOW, SEE, DO, IMPROVE. Check it out: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/school-readiness/effective-practice-guides/print-alphabet-knowledge>

Keep in mind that children develop at their own rates. Many four and even five-year-olds may not be ready to identify letters and this is OK. You need to think about each individual child and his/her level of development. These activities and experiences should only be used with those children who you feel are ready to explore letter concepts.

Additionally, to make sure that you are exposing children to letter names, letters sounds and writing in a meaningful way, this document provides suggested times when we feel it would be meaningful to do so.



Letter Exposure Activities for “Let’s Make a Mess”

Activity Title	Page #	Letter(s) to Integrate	How?
Recycle It!	5	Letters in the words <i>paper</i> and <i>plastic</i>	<p>During this experience, the children will work together to create two recycling bins ... one for paper and one for plastic. As part of this experience, you can expose children who are ready to the letters that make up the words <i>paper</i> and <i>plastic</i>. As you write these words, name each letter. Talk about the sounds the children hear at the beginning of these words. Do they hear the same sound? Do any of the children have a name that begins with the same sound? Next, have each child print a large letter P on a sheet of paper. Then, have the children tear paper (recyclables) in small pieces. They can then put glue on their large letter Ps and put torn pieces of paper in the wet glue. As the children create, challenge them to think of other words that begin with the same sound as the word <i>paper</i>.</p>
Water & Paint	7	Letters children choose	<p>During this experience, the children will create using watercolors. This provides a great opportunity for the children to also practice writing letters, their names, etc. Provide the children with crayons they can use for writing. They can write whatever they want on white paper and then paint over their writing with watercolor paints. What happens? The children should see the letters (or words) they wrote appear through the paint. Why do the children think this happens? As the children create and explore, be sure to engage them in conversations. Then, when they finish painting, involve them in the process of cleaning up the brushes, painting area and paints.</p>
Creating with Chalk	9	Many different letters	<p>For this experience, you will need a set of alphabet stencils. These are usually easy to find online or at craft/discount department stores. As part of this experience, set out the alphabet stencils. The children can then use these with the chalk. As they do so, encourage the children to talk about the letter stencils they choose to use. Do they choose any letters that are a part of their names? How are the letters they choose to use the same? How are the different? This would be an excellent time to record an anecdotal note about each child and his/her level of letter recognition skills. Be sure to also take time to name the letters as children choose to use them. This will expose them to the names of letters they may not yet be able to name. Also, be sure to include the children in the clean up process. That is a big part of this unit! Encourage them to decide what cleaning tools they need to clean up the work area as well as their hands.</p>

Letter Exposure Activities for “Let’s Make a Mess”

Activity Title	Page #	Letter(s) to Integrate	How?
Colorful Glue Designs	11	Letters in each child’s name	During this experience, the children will be creating designs with colored glue. As part of this experience, with children who are ready, reinforce each child’s name. Your most advanced children can print their names on large sheets of white paper with a black marker (large letters). For those children who are not yet ready to write on their own, you can write their names for them. Just be sure to name each letter as you write it. Then, the children can squeeze colored glue on the letters. This will require fine motor control and coordination! As the children put glue on the letters in their names, talk with them about how their names are the same and how they are different. Allow the glue to dry completely and then each child will have a tactile name to take home.
Writing in Bread Crumbs and Cornstarch	13	Letters children choose + any you want to reinforce	During this experience, the children will be writing and drawing in trays of cornstarch and bread crumbs. As the children do this, be sure to encourage those children who are developmentally ready to identify the letters, or words, they choose to write. This will help you evaluate each child’s level of knowledge of letters. Your most advanced children may even choose to write their names as they play. As an extension of this experience, provide these children with paintbrushes they can use to “write” letters or words in the cornstarch or bread crumbs. As the children use the paintbrushes, note how they hold them. Do they hold the paintbrushes like a pencil or other writing tool? Now would be an excellent time to record an anecdotal note about fine motor skills/control.
Experimentation Station	19	Many different letters	During this experience, the children will be experimenting as they pretend to be scientists. While this experience may get messy, it is also a perfect one for helping children who are ready to use written communication to share discoveries. Provide the children with notebooks and writing tools. Invite these children to draw pictures of what they do as they experiment. For instance, if the children mix water and sand together, they can draw a picture to represent this and then dictate the steps they took when experimenting. You can write down exactly what they say, talking about letters, words and sentences in the process. This is a very meaningful way for children to understand that everything they say can be written down. It also provides a very meaningful time to reinforce letters, letter sounds, words, sentences and punctuation. Plan at time for the children to present their “experiments” to the group once all have had time to write down their ideas.