

FACILITATORS GUIDE FOR A ONE HOUR MEETING

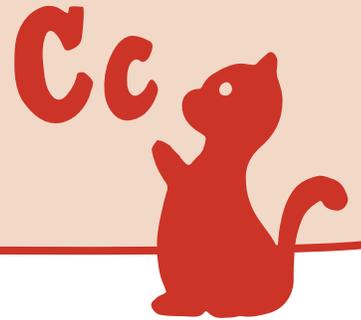
TALKING IS TEACHING: TALK, READ, SING



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This parent/caregiver meeting is designed to illustrate how important it is to help young children learn about the letters of the alphabet. Facilitators need to know and help Participants understand:

- What is Alphabet Knowledge? “Alphabet Knowledge is the ability to name, distinguish shapes, write and identify the sounds of the alphabet.”
- Why Alphabet Knowledge is so important. “A child’s ability to identify the letters of the alphabet by name is one of the best predictors of how readily he or she will learn to read.”
- The steps to achieving Alphabet Knowledge, and how to support each step.
 - Recite the alphabet
 - Learn the letter names
 - Identify the letter shapes that match the letter names
 - Identify the letter sounds
- How to use fun materials given to them to build Alphabet Knowledge.



PRE MEETING DETAILS:

- Have tables/chairs arranged in a way to promote discussion. A “U” shaped configuration is ideal. A table is a must for this meeting.
- Have handouts ready and enough books for each participant to choose three books. Make sure that each participant chooses one Alphabet Book.
- Have magnetic letters, crayons, construction paper ready to distribute or at each seat.

FACILITATING THE MEETING, GETTING STARTED:

- Welcome participants as they arrive and have them sign in. Give them the handouts provided to you. (Note – sign in sheet will also be used to verify books and materials distributed).
- Have a pie tin and container of salt as well as a package of magnetic letters at each seat.
- To begin the meeting, introduce yourself and give a one or two sentence (keep it short) description of the young child in your life. Go around the table and ask participants to do the same. This is a very important first step as it gets everyone’s voice in the room and makes involvement in discussion during the meeting more natural.
- In your own words, thank people for joining you and give a short, enthusiastic description of what the meeting will entail. Points to consider making:
 - A child’s ability to identify the letters of the alphabet by name is one of the best predictors of how readily he or she will learn to read.
 - We can all learn together how to have fun learning about shapes and letters through everyday activities.

FACILITATING THE MEETING WITH SKILL BUILDING ACTIVITIES

- You have heard over and over again that reading aloud to young children is key to their becoming readers. Let's talk about why that is. **Ask parents** "What are some of the reasons that reading aloud to young children is important? (There are no wrong answers)

Answers may include:

- Learn that stories have a beginning, middle, end
 - Learning that we read books from top to bottom, left to right.
 - Learning that there are print and pictures in books
 - Learning that we read the print which is made up of words which are made up of letters.
- The other aspect that is key to young children becoming good readers is Alphabet Knowledge – it is the tool they will use to decode the written word so they can be fluent readers. Let's learn more about Alphabet Knowledge.

LET'S TALK MORE ABOUT ALPHABET KNOWLEDGE!

It all starts with a song. – **Sing ABC's as a group.** Then talk about how it is "Just a fun song" to share with little ones, but over time, children learn that it is about individual symbols called letters.

It's typical for young children to think "LMNOP" is one letter! Just like it is typical for young children to make a mess when they first start feeding themselves with a spoon! Enjoy and support their learning process. The alphabet song is a first introduction to letters.

- Start by noticing and naming shapes.
 - Shapes are simpler forms than letters
 - It is the beginning of noticing same/different.
 - Letters are made of shapes
 - Let's play with shapes! **Everyone, use pie plate and salt to draw and name shapes.**
 - **Ask participants how else they could play with shapes with their children.** Answers could include things like:
 - Sidewalk chalk
 - Writing on each other's' backs
 - Writing in the air
 - Playing with blocks or other shape toys
 - Noticing shapes of things at home (cans, boxes, windows, cookies...)
 - TV shows or apps about shapes



LET'S PLAY WITH LETTERS!

- As with all learning, a meaningful connection matters. The first letter your child will be interested in learning is the first letter of his/her name!
 - Write it in your pie pan!
 - Find it in your magnetic letters!
 - Notice it in the environment! (signs, packages, books...)
 - Pick it out of a group of letters!
- The next letters your child will be interested in are the first letters of "Mom, Dad, or brothers and sisters."
 - Let's play with those!
 - Write them, find them!
- Let's talk about letter shapes (circles, sticks, points...) Begin with the letters that are meaningful to your child.
- Let's find letters and words in books! Start with noticing letters in the titles of books, so as not to distract from the actual story.
- Let's talk about letter sounds! Letters are symbols that represent sounds.
 - Keep it fun, no drills
 - Start with familiar letters, those that are already meaningful to your child.
 - Find other words that start the same way. (Your name starts with S and sounds like ssssss. "Stop" starts with the same sound as your name!



TO CLOSE THE MEETING:

- Ask parents to think about and share something new they learned during this meeting.
- Ask parents to talk to the person next to them about one thing they will each do when they get home as a result of this meeting.
- Ask two – four parents to tell the group something they heard and said while sharing with the person next to them.
- Have parents complete their feedback form.
- Invite parents to choose 3 – 4 books to take home (include alphabet books in choices).

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Reading aloud to children is the best way to teach them to love books and to learn how books work.

What are some of the reasons that reading aloud to young children is important?

The other aspect key to young children growing into good readers is Alphabet Knowledge. Alphabet Knowledge is the ability to name, distinguish shapes of, write and identify the sounds of the alphabet.

We start with knowing the ABC's and knowing how to identify different letters and name them. A child's ability to identify the letters of the alphabet by name is one of the best predictors of how readily he or she will learn to read.

Shape recognition is an important first step to letter recognition.



What letter do I start with?

What letters come next?

How do I help my children learn to identify more letters?

When do I talk about the sound that letters make?

How can I help my child learn to write letters?

What is one thing I can do with my child now that I know about Alphabet Knowledge?
