

Build & Learn



The Alphabet

What if you in less than two minutes could start a game that develops children's early literacy. A game that is simultaneously fun for the children, grabs their attention, and prepares them for the challenges they will meet when they begin school. Truly, is there anything more satisfying than watching a group of children playing while they don't even notice how much they are developing their language proficiency.

That is the sort of game we are offering. Zpiiel has cooperated with experts in children's early literacy in order to develop this product. Children will develop their language skills while playing with the construction toys, that can be used to build letters, numbers, shapes and figures. Included with this building set are four inspiration sheets, that have been developed specifically for this build set by experts in early literacy. When children play with this set, they will simultaneously expand their language skills and activate a variety of other senses and skills.

Early literacy in daycare institutions

While children are not expected to learn how to read and write in kindergarten, they are laying the foundation of their reading journey at that age.

Learning to read and write is far from easy. But by playing with letters children can practice skills that prepare them for the major task of learning to read. We call it early literacy and it plays a big part in preparing children for school. Early literacy includes:

1) Print awareness

What is print? What is it used for? How do texts and books work? This is all something we need to understand before we can learn to read.

2) Letter knowledge

Knowing the names of the letters of the alphabet and how they work. Let's take a look at the letter M. The shape of the letter is both M and m, its name is pronounced ɛm, and the sound it makes is mmm as in mom. When reading you need to translate the letters to the sound they make.

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3) Phonological awareness:

This is where children begin to understand when words rhyme and which sound a word starts with. This is also the ability to manipulate language sounds, e.g. removing the 's' from the word 'stop' creates the new sound 'top'.

4) The ability to write letters and your own name.

5) General language skills:

The sum of a child's language skills including their vocabulary and grammar.

It is the combination of these aspects that prepare children to read. Because of this, those are the areas that the following activities focus on. This product is meant as an easy tool that you as an educational staff member can use in your everyday work with children's early literacy.

Early literacy and Zpiiel

Play and Learn

Playing is an incredible way to get to know written language and develop strong written language skills. Children are naturally curious about letters and writing, and meeting them in their interest and reacting to it as an adult goes a long way. The Zpiiel elements can be used both in child initiated play and in planned educational activities.

Play with all senses

When you play with Zpiiel letters a lot of senses come into play: Children can touch, look at and manipulate the letters. Furthermore, when adults join actively you can include the hearing sense. One way to do that is by mentioning the name of a letter that has caught a child's attention as well as the sound it makes.

The fact that the letters can be manipulated means that they are ideal for training phonological awareness. If a child needs to figure out which sound is left if they remove 'c' from the word 'claw' it becomes a very abstract exercise. However, when they can physically remove the 'c' it becomes tremendously easier for the child to understand. By using physical letters children will understand that the letters and the sounds they make work in much the same way as building elements; you can put them together in a lot of different ways and pull them apart as well. Physically holding the letters in their hands is especially important for children who learn best when they can make use of their sense of touch. With the Zpiiel elements they can not only see the letters but use their tactile sense to feel the shape of the letters.

Your imagination is the only limitation

With this product you build the letters yourself using the building set, and you can easily involve the children in this. The elements have ball joints which means that it is easy to change the shape of the letters. Often early literacy activities for children only include the capital letters even though a majority of the letters children meet in their day to day life are small letters. With these elements you can build both capital and small letters. The focus of this material is early literacy but children can freely play with the elements and use it as an open play construction toy and build anything they want.

Activities

1. Match capital and small letters.

In this activity you work with the early literacy areas letter awareness and phonological awareness.

2. Guess a letter

Here, the children practice letter awareness.

3. Add to the letter

The activity is particularly good at developing children's skills in letter awareness and phonological awareness.

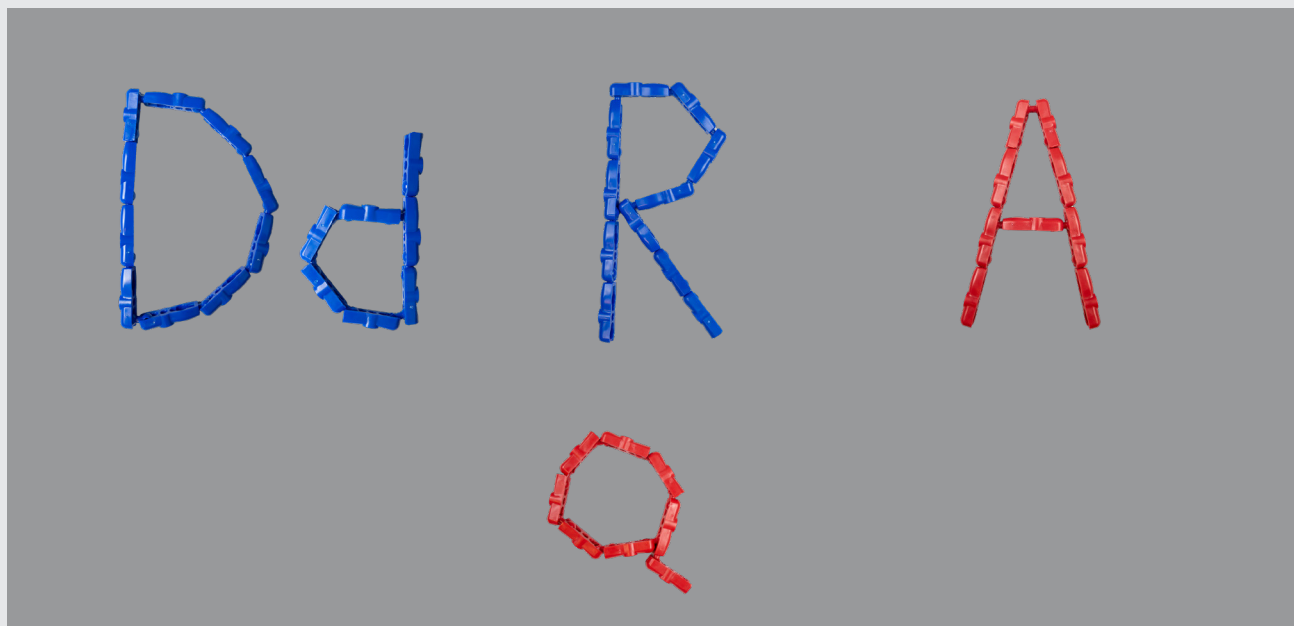
4. Build the missing letters

Here you will focus on letter awareness and phonological awareness.

Match capital and small letters

1.

Activity



Competency: Letter awareness and phonological awareness

Materials: Zpiiel elements and a blanket (or something similar)

Age group: 3-6 years. If the participating children are young, use only a few letters, such as the first letters of the children's names.

Number of children: Maximum 5 to avoid too much waiting.

Preparation

1. Using the elements build matching sets of capital- and small letters (e.g. D and d)
2. Spread out the capital letters on the floor or on a table.
3. Lay down the small letters in another pile and cover them up (e.g. using a blanket).

How to play

1. The children take turns picking a small letter from under the cover.
2. The child tells the name of the letter.
3. Ask the child to match the chosen small letter with the correct capital letter.

Tips

When a child has said the name of a letter, repeat the name and add the sound it makes, e.g. "Yes, that is an *es*, *sss*". Once the small and capital letters have been matched, ask the group of children if anyone has that letter in their name. You can also ask them to see if anything in the room begins with that letter.

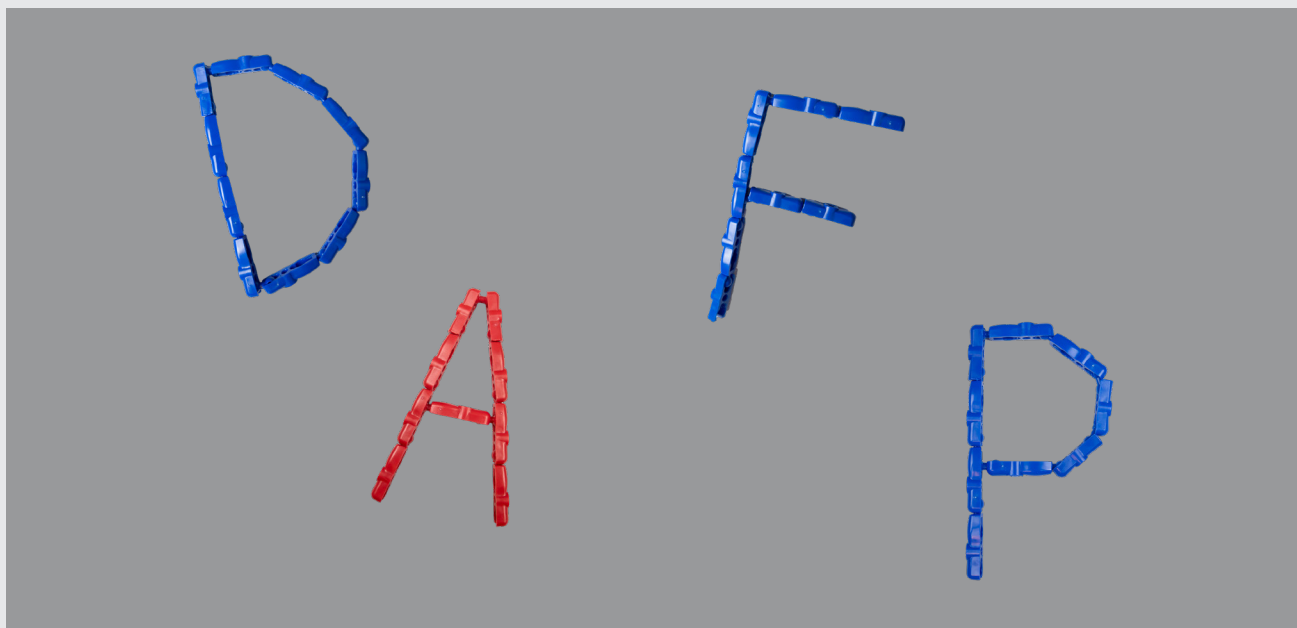
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Guess the letter

2.

Activity



Competency: Letter awareness

Materials: Zpiiel elements and a blanket (or something similar)

Age group: 5-6 years

Number of children: Maximum 5, to avoid too much waiting.

Preparation

1. Using the elements build the capital letters of the alphabet.
2. Lay out a blanket on a table and hide the first letter underneath.

How to play

1. The children take turns finding a letter under the blanket.
2. Without pulling the letter out from under the blanket the child must guess the name of the letter by touching it.
3. Once the child has guessed which letter they are holding, lift the blanket to show the letter.

Tips

When a letter is revealed, say the name of the letter and the sound it makes: "Yes, that is a [bi], bbb" (make a fish sound). You can also talk about the shape of the letter, for instance that B is a line with two half circles on it. If a child guesses correctly, you can ask the child how they knew it was that letter.

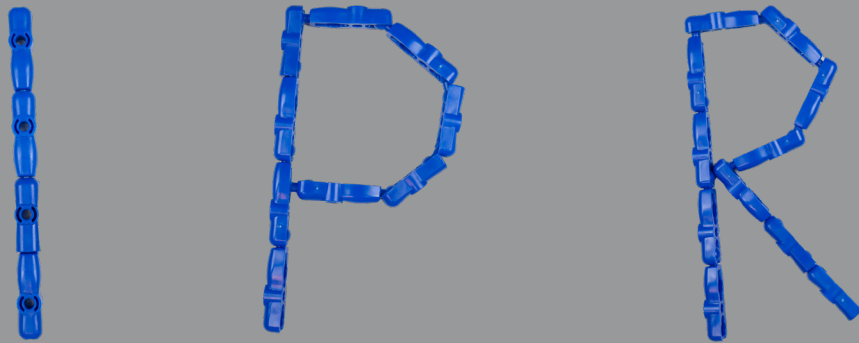
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Add to the letter

3.

Activity



Competency: Letter awareness

Materials: Zpiiel elements

Age group: 5-6 years

Number of children: 1-5

Preparation

1. Simply get out the elements.

How to play

1. Ask the children to build an I.
2. When the I is build, ask them to keep building on that same letter to turn it into a P.
3. Once the P is build ask them, if they can now turn it into an R.

Tips

While the children are building talk to them about how the lettes are constructed. You can talk about how P is a line with a semicircle on the top half. You can continue the game by building an I, then turning it into first an L and then an E. Then talk about how you could turn the E into an F.

Build the missing letters

4.

Activity



Competency: Letter awareness and phonological awareness (first sounds and rhyme).

Materials: Zpiiel elements, a picture of a hat, a picture of a cat, and a picture of a bat.

Age group: 4-6 years

Number of children: 1-5

Preparation

1. Put the three pictures and the letters A and T on a table.
2. Get out the box of Zpiiel elements and put it on the table for the children.

How to play

1. Explain to the children that the first letters of the three words have gone missing so only the last part AT is left.
2. Ask the children to help build the missing letters.

Tips

Talk about the first sound of the three words, e.g. bbbat. Talk about the fact that the words rhyme or sound alike because they end in the same two letters AT. Then ask if the children can find other words that rhyme.

You can also continue the game by finding other words that rhyme and use them in the same way as bat, cat and hat. You can try with words like free, bee and see.