

Explicit Alphabet Knowledge

Using the explicit alphabet instruction routine script, you are going to teach the alphabet systematically and explicitly, both letter names and letter sounds.

Explicit Alphabet Instruction Routine
 Daily alphabet instruction with the letter of the day

Step 1 - Explanation of Objective

Today you will be learning the name, sound, and how to write the letter _____. Learning this letter will help you to read and write many words.

Step 2 - Letter Identification

Letter Name
 This is the letter _____ (use letter name). This is the uppercase letter _____ (use letter name). This is the lowercase letter _____ (use letter name). *As you talk, show or write the letters. If the student uses an alternate pencil or keyboard, demonstrate how you can find it on their writing tool as well.*

Let's practice naming this letter. What is this letter? You can say it with your mouth or you can say it in your head. *Point to uppercase and lowercase letters in different orders at least three times, reminding students to say the letter name either out loud or with their inner voice.*

Letter Sound
 This is the letter _____ (use letter name). This letter represents the sound _____ (use most common sound). *As you talk, show or write the letters. Talk about people, places or things which include that letter sound in their name and which might help the student to remember the sound.*

Let's practice saying the sound this letter represents. The letter _____ (use letter name) represents the sound _____ (use most common sound). Let's say it together - you can say it with your mouth or you can say it in your head. *Point to uppercase and lowercase letters in different orders at least three times, reminding students to say the letter sound either out loud or with their inner voice.*

Step 3 - Recognising the Letter in Text

Now, let's look for the letter _____ (use letter name). *Have some text ready to search for the letter. You can look for it in books, signs, advertising material or other print in the environment. Each time they find the letter, encourage students to say both the letter name and the letter sound - either out loud or in their head. If a student cannot point to letter, use partner assisted scanning to encourage them to find the letter in print.*

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Explicit Alphabet Instruction Routine
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Step 4 - Producing the Letter Form

Teacher Produces the Letter
 Let me show you how to write the letter _____ (use letter name). This is _____ (write upper case letter and use letter name) and this is _____ (write lower case letter and use letter name). *As you write the letters, talk about how to write them and about their shape e.g. To write uppercase A I go up and then down and then I do a separate line across. Uppercase A looks a bit like a tent - it has a point at the top.*

Student Produces the Letter
If student uses an alphabet flip chart:
 Let's practice writing the letter _____ (use letter name) together using the flip chart. *Practice finding and pointing to uppercase and lowercase forms using flip chart(s), showing the student how they would navigate to them.*

If student uses an keyboard, letter board or alphabet page in their AAC system:
 Let's practice writing the letter _____ (use letter name) together using the keyboard/letter board. *Practice finding and pointing to uppercase and lowercase forms using their writing tool.*

If student uses pencil or a marker:
 Let's practice writing the letter _____ (use letter name) together using a pencil/marker. *Practice writing uppercase and lowercase forms using a pencil or marker.*

Step 5 - Summary

Now we know the name of this letter. It is the letter _____ (use letter name). It represents the sound _____ (use most common sound). Now we can use this letter to help us read and write many words.

Thanks to Mary-Louise Bertram at Durham Road School for her input.
 Handout based on the article below and on information from the Centre for Literacy and Disability Studies.

Jones, C. D., Clark, S. K., & Reutzel, D. R. (2013). Enhancing Alphabet Knowledge Instruction: Research Implications and Practical Strategies for Early Childhood Educators. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 41(2), 81-89. doi:10.1007/s10643-012-0534-9



The script is designed to be used in 6 instructional cycles. These are:

Cycle 1	Advantage rationale	Organisation pattern of instruction	Additional considerations
Own Name Advantage	Learning advantage for initial letter in first name	Based on frequency of initial letters in class members' names, then other letters in their names and then the rest of the alphabet	Highly motivating and responsive to young students' developmental needs for constructing self-identity

This is a highly customised cycle based on your student(s).



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Cycle 2	Advantage rationale	Organisation pattern of instruction	Additional considerations
Alphabetical Order Advantage	Learning advantage for alphabet sequential order	Alphabetic order or beginning with the letter a and ending with the letter z	Possible serial effects leading to difficulty with letters in the middle of the alphabet

Alphabetic Order Advantage							
1.	A	9.	I	17.	Q	25.	Y
2.	B	10.	J	18.	R	26.	Z
3.	C	11.	K	19.	S		
4.	D	12.	L	20.	T		
5.	E	13.	M	21.	U		
6.	F	14.	N	22.	V		
7.	G	15.	O	23.	W		
8.	H	16.	P	24.	X		

Review at End of Cycle 2

- If you are working with a large group of students, continue with the cycles, covering all 26 letters in each cycle.
- If you are working with a small group or a single student, then you can take this opportunity to do a review. If you are confident that a student knows a letter because you have seen them using it consistently in reading and writing activities, then you can remove that letter from future cycles.
- If in doubt, continue to do all letters in future cycles.



Cycle 3	Advantage rationale	Organisation pattern of instruction	Additional considerations
Letter Name-Letter Sound Relationship Advantage	Learning advantage for letters that have the letter sound pronounced in the letter name and for letters that represent one sound	Begin with consonant letters that have letter sound at beginning of name (<i>b, d, j, k, p, t, v, z</i>), then consonant letters that have the sound at the end of the letter name (<i>f, l, m, n, r, x</i>), then consonants with no letter/sound association (<i>h, q, w, y</i>), and those with more than one sound (<i>c, g, s, a, e, i, o, u</i>)	Instruction may proceed rapidly through the easier letters, allowing increased instructional time for more difficult letters

Letter Name-Letter Sound Relationship Advantage							
1.	B	9.	F	17.	W	25.	O
2.	D	10.	L	18.	Y	26.	U
3.	J	11.	M	19.	C		
4.	K	12.	N	20.	G		
5.	P	13.	R	21.	S		
6.	T	14.	X	22.	A		
7.	V	15.	H	23.	E		
8.	Z	16.	Q	24.	I		

Cycle 4	Advantage rationale	Organisation pattern of instruction	Additional considerations
Letter-Frequency Advantage	Learning advantage based upon letter frequency in environmental print and other printed materials	Begins with the letters occurring less frequently in text proceeding to the more frequently occurring letters (y, q, j, u, z, x, w, o, k, h, g, v, f, e, b, m, p, d, a, c, l, s, i, n, t, r)	Goal is to increase focus on the letters more difficult to learn due to the lack of frequency in text

Letter Frequency Advantage							
1.	Y	9.	K	17.	P	25.	T
2.	Q	10.	H	18.	D	26.	R
3.	J	11.	G	19.	A		
4.	U	12.	V	20.	C		
5.	Z	13.	F	21.	L		
6.	X	14.	E	22.	S		
7.	W	15.	B	23.	J		
8.	O	16.	M	24.	N		

Review at End of Cycle 4

- If you are working with a large group of students, continue with the cycles, covering all 26 letters in each cycle.
- If you are working with a small group or a single student, then you can take this opportunity to do a review. If you are confident that a student knows a letter because you have seen them using it consistently in reading and writing activities, then you can remove that letter from future cycles.
- If in doubt, continue to do all letters in future cycles.

Cycle 5	Advantage rationale	Organisation pattern of instruction	Additional considerations
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Consonant Phoneme Acquisition Order Advantage	Learning advantage based upon normative, developmental order of consonant phoneme acquisition	Begins with letters more frequently articulated and acquired earlier (p, m, h, n, w, b, k, g, d, t, f, y,) proceeding to letters for which children have less experience producing the sound (r, l, s, z, j, v, q, x)	Teachers can use the normative developmental pattern to identify potential reasons for difficulty with particular letters and focus on oral speech that uses the more difficult to learn letters
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Consonant Phoneme Acquisition Order ? Advantage							
1.	P	9.	D	17.	J	25.	O
2.	M	10.	T	18.	V	26.	U
3.	H	11.	F	19.	Q		
4.	N	12.	Y	20.	X		
5.	W	13.	R	21.	A		
6.	B	14.	L	22.	C		
7.	K	15.	S	23.	E		
8.	G	16.	Z	24.	I		

Please note: This cycle based on normative, developmental order of consonant phoneme acquisition. This cycle assumes that students are verbal and that they have had lots of experiences saying certain letter sounds. This is not necessarily the case for the students we work with, although they have definitely been hearing them. However, it does give us another cycle in another order and this is important for the success of this instruction, so please add this cycle in.

Review at End of Cycle 5

- If you are working with a large group of students, continue with the cycles, covering all 26 letters in each cycle.
- If you are working with a small group or a single student, then you can take this opportunity to do a review. If you are confident that a student knows a letter because you have seen them using it consistently in reading and writing activities, then you can remove that letter from future cycles.
- Some students are down to 12 or fewer letters by the time we get to the next cycle. Others still need to learn a larger number.



Cycle 6	Advantage rationale	Organisation pattern of instruction	Additional considerations
Distinctive Visual Features Writing Advantage	Learning advantage based upon the number of distinctive features in written letter forms	Letters with similar features presented in small clusters over several days or presentation of letters with fewer distinctive features over subsequent days	Emphasis is on the critical distinctive features between similar letters

This is a highly customised cycle. The purpose of the this cycle is to focus on letters that students can easily confuse. You would deliberately plan to cover two letters that are similar in upper and/or lower case and/or sounds on two consecutive days – and then do activities, such as letter sorts, which help students learn to discriminate between them. You would also pair letters that students are struggling to discriminate between in reading and writing.

Below is an example table compiled for a student.

1.	C	9.	V	17.	E
2.	O	10.	W	18.	F
3.	U	11.	X	19.	H
4.	A	12.	Z	20.	G
5.	P	13.	J	21.	K
6.	Q	14.	I	22.	R
7.	B	15.	L	23.	N
8.	D	16.	T	24.	M

For the example above:

1. The first set would be C O U and A. The student struggled discriminating between the first three in upper case and in lower case. and with all four in lower case. They are very visually similar.
2. The second set would be P and Q. The student struggled with discriminating between them in lower case.
3. The third set would be B and D. The student struggled with discriminating between them in lower case, but also struggled discrimating between their sounds.
4. The fourth set would be V and W. The student struggled with discriminating between them in both lower and upper case.
5. The fifth set would be X and Z. The student struggled with discriminating between their sounds.
6. The sixth set would be J and I. The student struggled with discriminating between them in lower case.



7. The seventh set would be I and L. The student struggled with understanding that sometimes it was a lower case l and sometimes the same shape was an upper case I.
8. The eighth set would be L and T. The student struggled with discriminating between them in lower case.
9. The ninth set would be E and F. The student struggled with discriminating between them in upper case.
10. The tenth set would be H and G. The student struggled with discriminating between their sounds.
11. The eleventh set would be K and R. The student struggled with discriminating between them in upper case.
12. The twelfth set would be N and M. The student struggled with discriminating between them in upper and lower case and between their sounds.

Review at End of Cycle 6

- At this stage, we would re-assess each student's alphabet knowledge.
- If there are any letters they are still learning (or even hesitant about), repeat the cycles focusing just on those letters.

