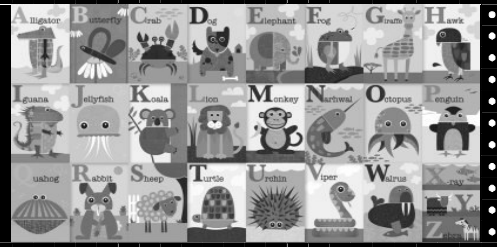


# Initial Alphabet Letters



Even before participants have “mastered” the entire English alphabet, they must grasp the distinction between the *names* of the letters and the *sounds* they represent in print—in words, phrases, and sentences. There are at least 40 different *sounds* in the spoken language, so some of the 26 letters produce or contribute to more than one sound—and some sounds can be spelled by more than one letter. Because of the complexity of English *phonics* (the correlations between letters and sounds), some beginners start out by *sight-reading* (memorizing the look of each word individually). Other learners may begin “reading” the *initial letters* in words. In fact, the alphabet letters are often presented and practiced in this manner—*A for apple, B for boy, C for cat, D for dog, E for egg, F for fan, etc.* Here are suggested activities involving *initial letters* in words:

1. Show a complete (purchased, borrowed, pasted up, downloaded, and/or self-created) alphabet poster and/or distribute a handout with pictures of 26 words beginning with each letter. (The next page of reproducible “alphabet cards” can be used for this purpose.) As they name each letter in order, the group can add an *as in* . . . phrase to name its picture—*A as in arm; B as in ball*, and so on.
2. This procedure can be performed cooperatively as an “alphabet chain,” as described in *Activity C* on page 13. Each time a full word is printed on a board or large paper, its relevant first letter should be underlined to draw attention to its initial position in the word. Later, with the underlined letters erased or covered, pronounce the words aloud (perhaps in random order). As learners match the words to their pictures, they can supply the missing initial letters.
3. *Alphabet Letter Cards* like those on page 46—and worksheets that have pictures of words with the 26 letters in initial position—are available from educational supply houses and/or at websites such as [www.first-school.ws/THEME](http://www.first-school.ws/THEME), [www.beginning-reading.com/Alphabet%20Flashcards](http://www.beginning-reading.com/Alphabet%20Flashcards); [www.jan-brett.com/alphabet/flash\\_card\\_alphabet\\_main\\_page](http://www.jan-brett.com/alphabet/flash_card_alphabet_main_page), and others. These can be used as suggested above, as directed in product instructions, and in other ways to teach, practice, and reinforce initial letters in words. Also, cards from two or more decks of this kind (with different pictures) can be used to play games like those in *Activities N to P* on pages 35, 37, and 39 to 40.

## Slow Down or Speed Up? Multi-Level Pointers

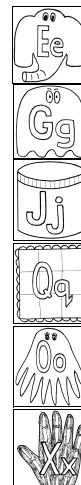
Note that the technique of associating the name of a picture with the first letter in its spelling does *not* necessarily illustrate the *sound* that letter most often makes in *phonics*. Instead, an alphabet presentation like that on the next page may be more useful as a *memory aid* or an *oral spelling alphabet*, such as those in *Activity S* on pages 49 and 50.



Even so, beginning readers and writers are likely to benefit from instruction in initial-letter sounds—as well as the introduction of new vocabulary. If the printed letters on the materials are all upper-case, however, point out that in written English, *only* the first word of a sentence and *proper nouns* are capitalized. *Pre-literate* learners might especially appreciate copies of *initial letter* worksheets designed for the very young.



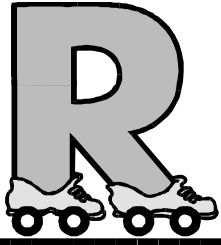
More advanced learners with large vocabularies will probably start thinking of *other* words that begin with the 26 alphabet letters. Their interest and ability may lead to *categorizing games*, in which teams compete in thinking of all the *foods, objects, animals, people's first names*, etc. that begin with any given letter. They might also try telling the first letter of the name of each item in the room, outside, in a cluttered picture, and in other places.



# Instructions for *Initial Alphabet Letters*

To use these initial-letter “cards” for alphabet activities, you can [a] duplicate the page as is, [b] glue the page on card stock and cut the cards out, and/or [c] photocopy the page in a larger size, cut the cards out, and paste each letter on a separate index card or piece of card stock.

 <b>a</b>	 <b>b</b>	 <b>c</b>	 <b>d</b>	 <b>e</b>	 <b>f</b>
 <b>g</b>	 <b>h</b>	 <b>i</b>	 <b>j</b>	 <b>k</b>	 <b>l</b>
 <b>m</b>	 <b>n</b>	 <b>o</b>	 <b>p</b>	 <b>q</b>	 <b>r</b>
 <b>s</b>	 <b>t</b>	 <b>u</b>	 <b>v</b>	 <b>w</b>	 <b>x</b>
 <b>y</b>	 <b>z</b>	<p>Here are the names of the 26 items above, each beginning with a different letter of the alphabet: <u>a</u>rm, <u>b</u>all, <u>c</u>an, <u>d</u>og, <u>e</u>lf, <u>f</u>ish, <u>g</u>oose, <u>h</u>ouse, <u>i</u>gloo, <u>J</u>ack, <u>k</u>ite, <u>l</u>eaves, <u>m</u>ouse, <u>n</u>ose, <u>o</u>wl, <u>p</u>ig, <u>q</u>ueen, <u>r</u>oller skates, <u>s</u>nake, <u>t</u>ower, <u>u</u>mbrella, <u>V</u>iking, <u>w</u>ater, <u>x</u>ylophone, <u>y</u>awn, <u>z</u>ebra.</p> <p><b>Can you pronounce the names of the items? Without looking at this page, can your listeners tell the first letter of each word? If you already have a large vocabulary, how many <u>other</u> words can you think of that begin with each letter?</b></p>			



# Tell & Spell Name Chains



Even before English learners begin to tackle phonics or spelling for vocabulary acquisition and language skills, they usually know which of the alphabet letters appear in their own names, both capitals and lower case. “Tell & Spell Chains” with familiar letter combinations provide effective practice in the recognition and pronunciation of the letters of the alphabet, in spelling aloud, and in repeating—and writing—the letters they hear in order. They also involve beneficial participant interaction. Here are suggested steps to follow:

1. In each group, four to ten people sit in a circle. The first person pronounces and spells his/her first name aloud. As that person says each letter, everyone else in the group writes down the name.
2. From what he or she has written, the *second* participant tells the *first* person's name. That person then tells and spells his/her *own* name. Everyone else writes down the second name in his/her individual list.
3. The third person tells the names of the first two group members and then says his/her own name, spelling it aloud letter by letter. Everyone writes down the third name. The “Tell-and-Spell Name Chain” continues until everyone in the group has said his/her name and spelled it aloud. If there is time, each person tells (and spells) *everyone's* names.
4. In a large class or group, repeat *Steps 1 to 3* several times. Each time, at least half the people in each small group move to other groups and rearrange themselves in a different order in their new circles.
5. Finally, reconvene the class or large group. To give an “oral quiz,” tell something about each participant that the others should know or can see—for example, where someone is sitting, what s/he is wearing, where s/he is from, or the like. The first competitor to find that person's name in his/her list, pronounce it correctly, and spell it aloud wins a point. Continue in this way until all the names have been reviewed. The participant with the most points wins the competition.

Now that learners have gotten the idea of “Spell and Tell Chains,” repeat the activity at other times with different kinds of information—such as last, middle, or full names; the names of their streets, their hometowns, states, or countries of origin; their relatives' names; or even the first or full names of famous people, such as those offered on the reverse side of this page.

## Slow Down or Speed Up? Multi-Level Pointers

In addition to reinforcing the skills content of lessons on recognizing, naming, and writing the letters of the alphabet, *Tell & Spell Chains* help introduce the idea of the 26 *alphabet letters as symbols*—a concept vital to instruction in phonics (the correlations between letters and sounds) or spelling (putting letters into sequence to form meaningful combinations like names).



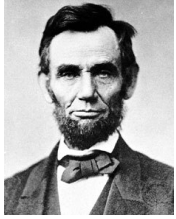
Any *Tell & Spell Chain* can be made easier by having participants [a] speak and spell slowly and distinctly, [b] limit the number of items in each chain, and/or [c] repeat the contributions of *only* the one or two previous speakers instead of all of them. It might also help to [d] repeat what participants say for the group with a clearly enunciated native-like accent, [e] allow ample time for participants to write down the letters as they are said aloud, and [f] review often and well.



More proficient, less patient participants can speed up a *Tell & Spell Chain* by repeating the contributions of *only* two to five previous speakers of their choice (or identified by the leader) before adding their own. This faster, less repetitive version can be performed by the whole class rather than in small, changing groups.

# Instructions for *Tell & Spell Name Chains*

Here are some “cards” with the first names of famous people, each beginning with a different alphabet letter. Cut each one out as is, or enlarge it to paste or glue on card stock. Then give the cards out to people to use in a *Tell-and-Spell Name Chain*.



Abe



Bill



Che



Donald



Eve



Fahd



George



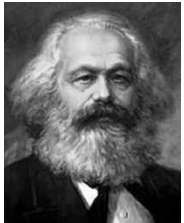
Harry



Ice Cube



Jack



Karl



Laura



Mickey



Noah



Oprah



Pablo



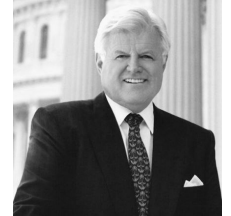
Quentin



Roy



Sammy



Ted



Uri



Victoria



Walt



Yoko



Zsa Zsa

Here are the names of the 25 famous people above: Row 1: Abe Lincoln, Bill Clinton, Che Guevara, Donald Trump, Eve (from the *Book of Genesis* of the Bible). Row 2: King Fahd, George Washington, Harry Potter, Ice Cube, Jack the Ripper. Row 3: Karl Marx, Dr. Laura Schlessinger, Mickey Mouse, Noah, Oprah Winfrey. Row 4: Pablo Picasso, Quentin Tarantino, Roy Rogers, Sammy Davis, Jr., Ted Kennedy. Row 5: Uri Geller, Queen Victoria, Walt Disney, Yoko Ono, Zsa Zsa Gabor.