

Using

# *Alphabet LetterCards*

*AaAa to ZzZz*

## for Learning Activities

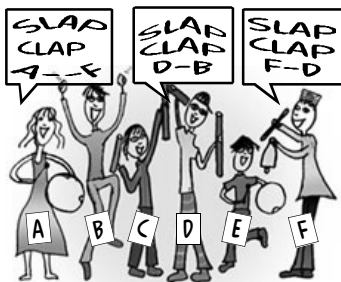
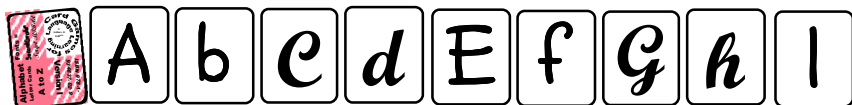
Even before they are used for motivating, cooperative, and/or competitive card games, *Alphabet LetterCard Pack Versions 1 to 5* have many pedagogical functions. Here are suggestions for ways to teach and learn the letters of the English (Roman) alphabet with *Alphabet LetterCards*:

1. ***Decide on a version to use.*** For instance, the basic *Version 1* may work best with pre-literate learners; *Version 2*, for handwriting instruction; *Version 3*, in phonics/spelling lessons; and *Version 4* or *5*, in *association* activities (letters = symbol codes) or for practicing card-game procedures. On the other hand, *any Version* can be used for any purpose at any level of language proficiency. Also, the cards of each pack can be divided into two decks *A-M* and *N-Z* or even smaller groupings—and/or they can be combined with cards from other packs in systematic or random ways.
2. ***Decide which Alphabet LetterCards to work with.*** For example, beginners might be able to handle only *a few* letters at a time, in one or two forms—and/or they might use *only* manuscript (or *only* cursive or *only* upper-case or *only* lower-case) letters—and perhaps only matching *pairs* instead of *sets of four*.

3. *Prepare the card packs* ahead of time or let participants do so as a learning or practice activity. You may want to use one pack for a whole-class demonstration before giving them all out to individuals, pairs, or small groups.

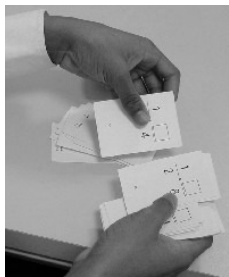
4. *Use a prepared card pack* for a simple—and perhaps quick—educational *Alphabet Activity*, such as

[a] *Alphabet Chain*: Learners name selected letters from sight—in alphabetical order, in reverse, and/or in random order—or they arrange *themselves* in order according to the card each person is holding.



[b] *Alphabet Rhythm*: Each player in a circle takes a different *alphabet letter*—to say on the first snap of a *slap, clap, snap, snap* rhythm—before saying the name of someone else's letter on the second snap.

[c] *Flash Cards*: Individuals or learners in pairs or groups look at or show *LetterCard* faces one by one. They name each letter, perhaps identifying its form (*upper- or lower-case, manuscript print or cursive*). They can also say the names of one or more letters that come *before* and/or *after* the letter. After putting a specified number of "used cards" into a stack, they can try recalling all *those* letter names. Eventually, they can use these *Flash Cards* in the traditional way, separating the ones they know from the ones they need to work on more—until they have mastered all 26 letters in their various forms.



- [d] **Speed Matching:** Individuals or teams with card packs of equal sizes "compete" with themselves or others in matching their cards to each other or one another. A "match" may be two or more *identical LetterCards* or two or more cards with the same letter in different forms. Or learners can play *Letter-Lotto* with the cards in their packs by placing them on the equivalent letters of *Alphabet-Letter Bingo Boards*.



- [e] **Alphabet-Letter Bingo:** A "complete stack" of any 13 (A-M or N-Z) or 26 (A-Z) letter-cards in any form can be used as *Caller Cards with Alphabet-Letter Grids* (9-, 16-, or 25-box grids with the same and different letters in different order in the boxes.)

### Letter Caller Cards

b bee = b	A ay = äääü	Cc see = ks	wye = y y	zee = z z	ar = r r
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### Alphabet Bingo Grids

English (Roman) 9-Box Alphabet Bingo / Lotto Capital Block Letters A-I [Grid 6]			English (Roman) 16-Box Alphabet Bingo / Lotto Grid (L-Z) [Grid 7]			
C	F	H	B	M	P	W
B	D	I	G	J	Q	V
A	E	J	C	N	R	U
			D	I	O	Z

- [f] **Speed Sequencing:** Individuals or teams with equal-sized card packs "compete" with themselves or others in putting their cards into alphabetical order—or in reverse order. Then they combine their sequencing with other peoples' arrangements, putting duplicates and different forms of the same letters together and noting (which forms of) which letters are missing.



For these ideas—and in other alphabetic system learning activities, participants will need to be able to understand and pronounce the names of the 26 letters in (American) English. Here—below each of the letters in its four forms—is the English spelling for its name. After an equals (=) sign come American dictionary phonetic symbols for the *sounds* most often produced by the letter in the *spelling* of words. These are useful in preparing for *phonics* instruction.

<b>Aa</b> <i>Aa</i>	<b>Bb</b> <i>Bb</i>	<b>Cc</b> <i>Cc</i>	<b>Dd</b> <i>Dd</i>
ay = ääōä	bee = b	see = k s	dee = d
<b>Ee</b> <i>Ee</i>	<b>Ff</b> <i>Ff</i>	<b>Gg</b> <i>Gg</i>	<b>Hh</b> <i>Hh</i>
ee = ě ē	ef = f	jee = g j	aitch = h
<b>Ii</b> <i>Ii</i>	<b>Jj</b> <i>Jj</i>	<b>Kk</b> <i>Kk</i>	<b>Ll</b> <i>Ll</i>
I = ĭ ī	jay = j	kay = k	el = l
<b>Mm</b> <i>Mm</i>	<b>Nn</b> <i>Nn</i>	<b>Oo</b> <i>Oa</i>	<b>Pp</b> <i>Pp</i>
em = m	en = n	oh = öäō	pee = p
<b>Qq</b> <i>Qq</i>	<b>Rr</b> <i>rr</i>	<b>Ss</b> <i>Ss</i>	<b>Tt</b> <i>Tt</i>
cue = kw	ar = r	es = s z	tee = t
<b>Uu</b> <i>Uu</i>	<b>Vv</b> <i>Vu</i>	<b>Ww</b> <i>Wu</i>	<b>Xx</b> <i>Xx</i>
yoo = ŭ öō ū	vee = v	doubleyoo = w	ex = ks gz
		<b>Yy</b> <i>Yy</i>	<b>Zz</b> <i>Zz</i>
		wye = y ĩē	zee = z

In contrast to *pages of text*, *Alphabet LetterCards* tend to motivate and enhance language acquisition regardless of participants' dominant learning styles—*tactile*, *visual*, and *auditory*. When cards are used in cooperative and/or competitive *games with rules*, moreover, they work even better because they also engage and stimulate players' minds and emotions. Even if educational goals *seem* to fall away in the excitement, learners are still benefiting from the activity—in many ways other than the apparent.

# Alphabet LetterCard Matching Games

In comparison to the simplest flash cards with letters printed on them, prepared *52-card decks* or *104-card packs* of letters in different forms offer several advantages. That's because they mirror the design of *traditional card decks*.

For games with procedures that include *matching*, the four kinds of letters—*upper-* and *lower-case manuscript* and *cursive*—can represent the four *suits*—*spades ♠, clubs ♣, hearts ♥, diamonds ♦*.

For games with *sequencing*, the letters *A* to *M* or *N* to *Z* in alphabetical order can correspond to the 13 ranks *Ace, 1-10, Jack, Queen, King*. In this format, packs of 26, 52, or 104 letter-cards serve as motivating materials for competitive card games.

Here are a few ideas for stimulating educational games to be played with an *Alphabet LetterCard Pack* consisting of pairs or sets of matching cards (four different forms of the same letter).

1. *The Game of "Same Letters."* Based on a popular children's card game called *Snap*, the simple rules of this matching competition motivate learners to focus on letter recognition or discrimination while playing. Adapt the size of each pack (the number of cards) to the size of the group and the time available for one or more games. The pack must consist of matching pairs or sets of four-of-a-kind letters.



- a. All the cards are dealt out, one at a time to all the players. Without looking at the card faces, everyone places his/her cards in a face-down stack in front of him-/herself on the playing surface—probably a table, desk, or floor.
- b. The first player turns over the top card of his/her stack, says the letter name, and places the card face up on the surface—away from him/her—so everyone can see it easily. The next person does the same, and so on around the group.



When play returns to the first player, s/he places the next card face up on top of the previous card—as do all players in turn. Soon, everyone will have a separate face-down stack and a face-up stack.

- c. As each card is turned face up, everyone looks around quickly to see if there are any matching pairs on top of two stacks. If there *is* a pair, the first player to recognize it and say "Same!" with the name of the letter wins all the cards on *both* stacks. If there are three or more matching



cards, the person that says "Same-Same (-Same)" first wins all the stacks. That player puts the newly-won cards at the bottom of his/her face-down stack.

- d. If two players say "Same" simultaneously, they divide the "winnings." (To prevent players from shouting out carelessly, there can be a penalty point for mistakes—and 3 penalty points can put a player out of the game.)

Alternatively, if there is a tie in recognizing two or more matching cards, their stacks can be placed in a face-up center pile to be claimed by calling out "Same as Center."

- c. The game ends when one player has all the cards. Or set a time limit: when time is called, the player with the most cards wins and may shuffle and deal for the next game.



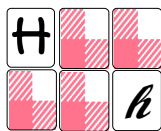
2. **The Game of Concentration (Memory).** Each group uses a pack of cards of appropriate size for the allotted time—at least 16 but no more than 52 cards. The pack should contain *only* matching pairs or sets of four.

- a. After shuffling the deck, each group arranges the cards face down on a playing surface—either neatly in rows and columns or randomly.



- b. The first player turns one card face up and tells the name of the letter. That person then turns over another card and reads it aloud. Are the two cards a match? If so, the player keeps the pair and gets another turn. If not, s/he turns the cards face down again. Play passes to the next player.

- c. As non-matching cards are exposed and turned face down again, players try to remember their location—so that they can make matches more easily when they turn up the corresponding cards.



- d. The game ends when all the cards have been matched and removed from the surface. The player with the most card pairs is the winner.

3. **Pass the Card, Please.** This matching game is played with a card pack containing sets-of-four equal to the number of players. For example, a group of four gets a 16-card deck (four sets of four matching cards), six players need a 24-card deck, etc.

- a. The cards of a shuffled deck are dealt out equally. Each player arranges his/her four cards in his/her hand, putting any matching cards together.



- b. The object of each round of the game is to collect a set of four-of-a-kind matching cards—4 A's, B's, E's, G's, J's, etc. At a signal, each person "discards" one unwanted card from his/her hand by placing it face down in front of the player to his/her left. As quickly as possible, everyone picks up the card s/he has been given and places it in his/her hand.



c. If no one has four-of-a-kind, the card-passing continues until someone can "play out" by placing the four cards of a set face up on the playing surface. After telling the name of the letter, that player receives the most points—equal to the number of players minus one. Everyone else continues to play. The next winner receives one point fewer than the previous one, and so on until all the cards have been placed on the table in sets of four. For another game, each group trades their card pack for one with different letter sets.

d. **Game Variations.** For variety or challenge, the group can add procedures from the traditional children's game of "P-I-G." As soon as one player has a four-of-a-kind set, instead of announcing it s/he quietly puts a finger to his/her nose and stops passing cards.

So do the others. The last player to realize the round has ended, however, gets a "P" as a penalty letter. The next time the *same* player loses a round, the penalty letter is "I." The third time, it is "G." Anyone that "earns" all three letters P-I-G is eliminated.



In a game variation called "Spoon," objects—one fewer than the number of players—are placed in the middle of the table or floor. The first person to collect a set of four letter cards takes one of them—as does everyone else. The player left without an object earns a penalty letter in order, perhaps S-P-O-O-N. Whoever gets all 5 letters has to leave the game.

A "more advanced" way to play *Pass the Card* is to use a (much) larger four-of-a-kind card pack. After the cards are dealt out four to each participant, the remaining cards are stacked face down on the playing surface near the dealer, who draws them from the stack while the person to his/her right puts unwanted cards on a face-down discard pile—for the dealer to use when the stack is gone.

Other procedures are the same: players never hold more than four cards at a time, they get cards from the right and discard them to the left, place completed sets of four on the playing surface, etc.

