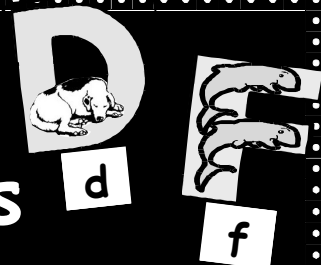


F
ěf = /ɛf/

The Sounds of Initial Consonants



In basic activities designed to teach and practice sounds produced by *initial alphabet letters*, it may be advisable to focus on the *consonants alone*—all letters *except a, e, i, o, u*. That's not only because of the *complexity* of the correlations between vowel sounds and spellings, but also because *single vowel letters* most often appear in the *CVC* (consonant-vowel-consonant) pattern. Here's phonics info to incorporate into literacy to high-beginning activities designed to teach or practice the sounds produced by initial consonants:

1. *The 18 consonant letters b, d, f, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, y, z* usually *represent* (stand for) *the same sounds* at the beginning of words before vowels: b d f h j (/dʒ/) k l m n p k r s t v w y z.
2. *The letters c- and g- in initial position* most often *produce the k and g sounds*. Rarely at the beginning of words, *x is pronounced z*.
3. *The pairs sh- and th- together represent the sounds ʃ and ð or θ*. The digraph *ch- makes two sounds: tʃ; qu- is pronounced kw/*.

For *phonemic (language-sound) awareness*, learners first need to *isolate* and *identify* sounds in specified word positions. It makes sense to start out with *initial consonants*, such as the 20 single letters and 3 two-letter sequences (*digraphs*) printed in lower-case form on the "cards" on page 21—with the basic, common corresponding word examples on page 22. (The letter *x* is too unusual in initial position to be included.) Here are some suggestions for group practice activities:

1. *Repeat initial consonants*. Although unintentional *stuttering* is considered a speech abnormality to be avoided, it might work—and be fun—to *simulate a stammer* in order to *isolate* an initial-consonant sound from the rest of the word in which it appears. For instance, each person in turn can choose a different consonant letter or two-letter pair: *b, c, ch, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, sh, t, th, v, w, y, z*. S/he repeats its sound several times before saying a complete word that begins with it, as in *b-b-b-bug, c-c-c-cook, ch-ch-ch-chop, d-d-d-doll*, etc. (The pictures on page 22 illustrate simple words appropriate for an activity of this kind.) As listeners repeat each item, they should blend its sounds at normal speed.

Slow Down or Speed Up? Multi-Level Pointers



For low-level students, review, recycle, introduce, and practice only a few initial letters per session. Limit targeted vocabulary to one-syllable words with the most common spellings.

If feasible, direct them to elementary or home-schooling websites that "talk" by audibly pronouncing initial-letter sounds and one-syllable words that begin with them. As learners click on or move letters, pictures, and words, they not only *hear* (and can repeat) the targeted sounds and items but also get *phonemic awareness* practice and feedback—such as www.scholastic.com/clifford/.



To help them *pronounce* initial consonants clearly, teach second-language learners the concept of *voicing*. The *voiced* consonants / b d g v ð z (d)ʒ m n r l w y / are said with vibration of the vocal cords. The *unvoiced* or *voiceless* sounds / p t k f θ s (t)ʃ h / are said *without voice* but with a puff or stream of air.

All voiceless consonants except /h/ have a *voiced counterpart*—a sound pronounced in exactly the same way except that the vocal cords vibrate. Compare / p t k f θ s (t)ʃ / with / b d g v ð z (d)ʒ /.

2. **Omit initial consonants.** Another way to *isolate* a sound from the rest of a word is to leave it out in pronunciation. Participants in turn can do so with familiar items like those shown on page 22. For instance, instead of doll, fun, gold, hand, jar, king, they can say ... o ll, ... u n, ... o l d, ... a n d, ... a r, ... i n g. Listeners supply the missing sounds and letters (and point to a picture).

To ensure learners connect vocabulary to *meaning*, it helps to make use of *visuals* like those on page 22. For lessons on initial letters, the pictures should illustrate simple items beginning with the consonants or two-letter pairs (*digraphs*) *b, c, ch, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, sh, t, th, v, x, w, wh, y, z*. (Words with the relatively rare beginnings *q, th, wh, x*, and/or *z* might be omitted.) Photos or drawings of (mostly) one-syllable words with regular spellings can be cut out from magazines, catalogs, discarded picture books, and worksheets—especially those designed for phonics practice. Clip art of this kind is available on disks or online—from sites like pictures.com or fotosearch.com—or helpers might make sketches of such items. Here are suggested ways to make productive use of pictures for initial-letter practice:

3. **Identify initial sounds.** For initial-sound *identification*, show two or more pictures of items beginning with the same consonant(s). Provide the names of the things with oral or printed “blanks,” as in ead, ing, ope; ip, eep, elf; est, alk, en; anks, ing, ird. To supply the missing *sound* for each pair or group of items, learners pronounce the beginning phoneme (in the above examples, *r, sh, t, th*) and then the whole words. To complete their spelling, they name the missing letter or digraph—for instance, *r, sh, t, th*.
4. **Compare initial sounds.** For *comparison*, show pairs of pictures whose names begin with *the same* or *different* first consonants—for example, van and well—which start with two *different* sounds and letters—like *v* and *w* or *y*arn and *y*es, which both start with *y*. (At first, show only the visuals; don't reveal their spelling until learners have said or repeated the names of the items.) Participants identify the initial sounds as *same* or *different*. Then they *isolate* them and tell the letters that spell them.

At another time, show groups of *three* or *four* pictures. Learners tell which item starts with a *different* sound and letter from the other two or three.



Slow Down or Speed Up? Multi-Level Pointers



The pronunciation features that most distinguish one consonant *sound* from another are its *point and manner of articulation*.

Faster learners with questions about possible exceptions to basic phonics/spelling patterns may appreciate “more advanced” information about single initial-consonant letters and letter pairs in words:

- [1] The letters *c-* and *g-* are usually pronounced /k/ and /g/. Only before the vowels *e, i,* or *y* might they make the /s/ and /dʒ/ sounds.
- [2] Pairs of letters that produce *one phoneme* are called “digraphs.” The sounds represented by the two-letter pairs *ch-, sh-, th-, wh-* cannot be spelled by one consonant alone. (The digraph *-ng* doesn't begin words.)
- [3] The less common initial consonant pair *ph-* (as in *phone*) stands for the /f/ sound, more often spelled by the single letter *f*.
- [4] The letter *j* and the digraph *ch* represent *two* sounds each: *j* = /dʒ/; *ch* = /tʃ/. Even so, these paired sounds may be regarded as *single phonemes*.
- [5] Initial *q-* always precedes *u;* *qu-* = /kw/. The digraph *wh-*, which spells /hw/, is pronounced /w/ by most speakers.
- [6] In the few English words starting with *Xx-* (*Xerox, Xanax, xylophone*, etc.), it is pronounced /z/. Sometimes, it stands for the *name* of the letter, as in *x-ray, x-rated, X-mas*.

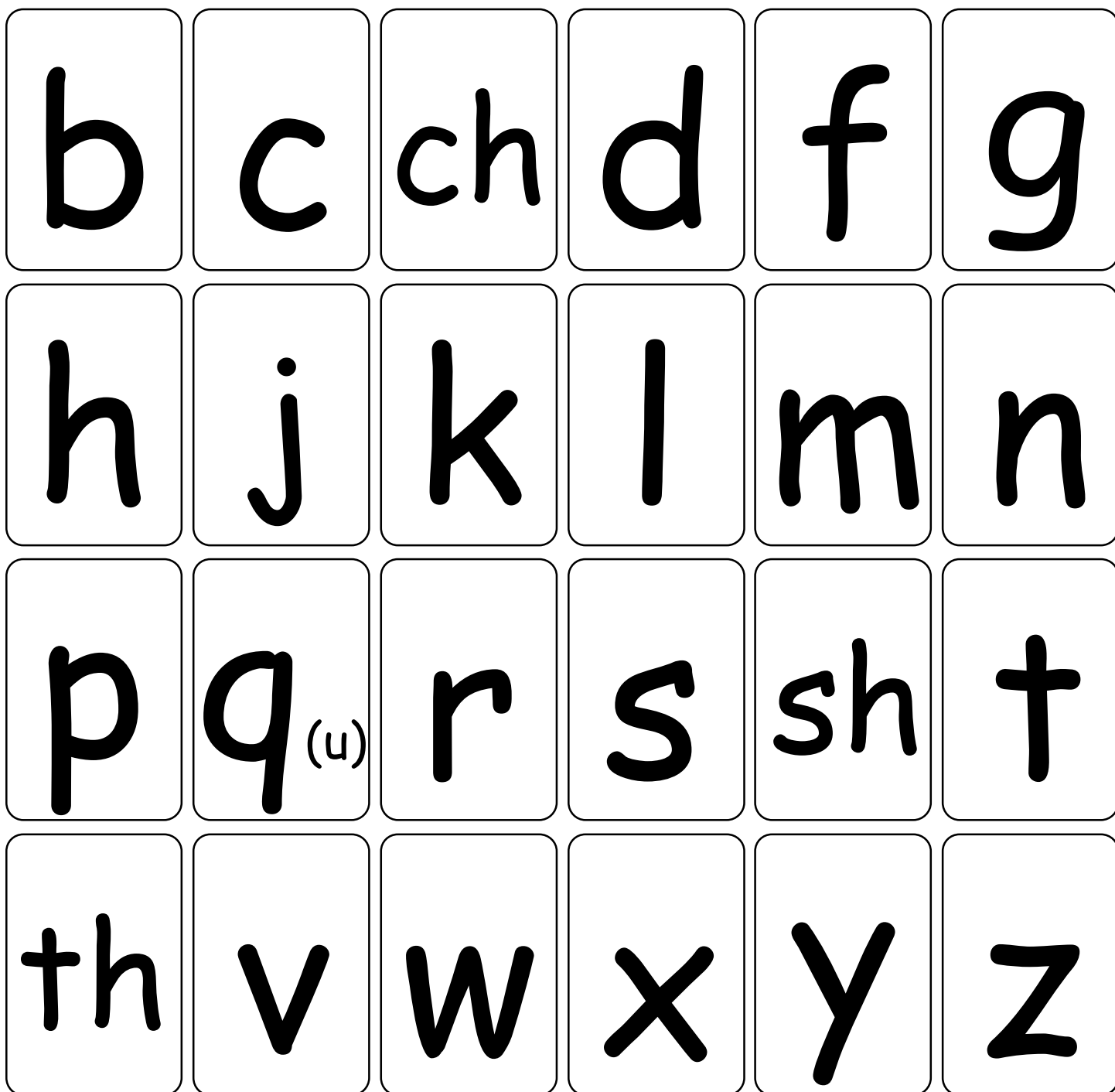
Instructions for *The Sounds of Initial Consonants*

Here are 21 single consonant letters and 3 two-letter pairs for distinct, individual sounds at the beginning of words: *b, c, ch, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, sh, t, th, v, w, x, y, z.*

You may want to copy, enlarge, and/or paste up the 24 letter boxes to use as phonic/spelling *Flash Cards*. If you cut them out from the page or a two-sided copy printed on card stock, each “card” will have an illustrated word-example on the back.



The cards have many uses. For instance, they can be matched with example words beginning with these letters—and/or with *phonetic-symbol* cards showing *sounds* the letters produce in initial word position. In games, they can be used as *Caller Cards*.




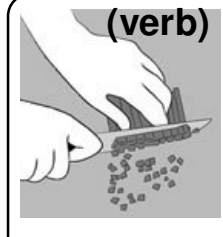
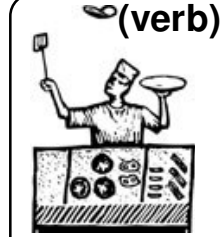
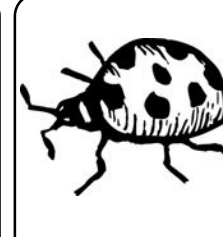
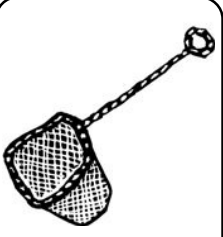

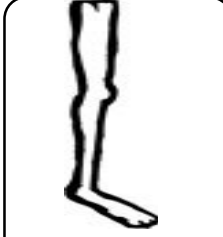

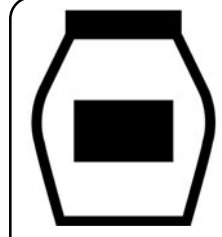
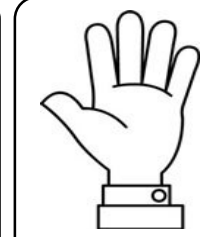
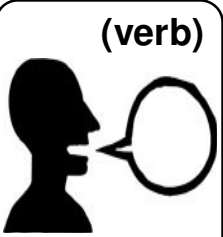

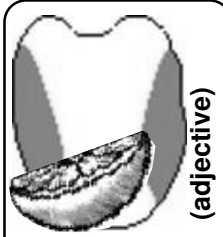





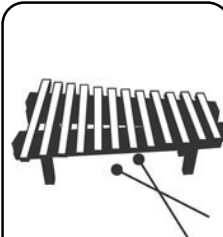
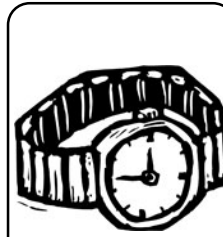

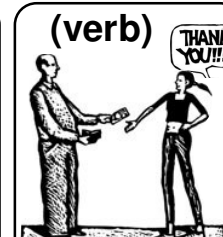


Instructions for *The Sounds of Initial Consonants*

Depending on how you plan to make use of these *phonicspelling Cards*, you can fill in the 21 missing initial consonant letters and 3 two-letter pairs: *b, c, ch, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, sh, t, th, v, w, x, y, z*. Or—to provide repetitive oral practice in initial-consonant sounds while challenging your memory, you can leave the lines blank.

You may want to copy, enlarge, and/or paste up the 24 picture boxes to use as phonicspelling *Flash Cards*. If you cut them out from the page itself or a two-sided copy, each “card” will have the missing letter or letters on the back.

With the initial consonant letters underlined, here are the names of the 24 items above: bug, cook, chop, doll, fin, gold; hand, jar, king, leg, man, net; pull, quick, read, sick, ship, talk; thank, voice, watch, xray, yip.

| | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|---|---|
|  __old |  __un |  __oll |  (verb) __op |  (verb) __ook |  __ug |
|  __et |  __an |  __eg |  __ing |  __ar |  __and |
|  (verb) __alk |  __ip |  (adjective) __our |  (verb) __ead |  (adjective) __uick |  (verb) __ull |
|  (verb) __ip |  __ard |  __ylophone |  __atch |  __oice |  (verb) __ank |