



TEACHING TOOLS AND ACTIVITIES

LEARNING LETTERS

Communication

Communication skills ranging from basics like learning letters and words to expanding their ability to engage in conversations are fundamentally important for supporting both academic and eventual career success [9]. Activities that encourage kids to physically create letters help promote reading and writing skills[10], and parent-child conversation during shared activities can lead to vocabulary growth[11]. The alphabet is a big part of the educational curriculum, and sometimes it can be difficult to make the concept of writing fun and engaging. This activity does away with tricky writing utensils and the permanency of marks on paper by allowing kids to practice their ABCs with a more freeform, hands-on approach using Play-Doh compound. During the activity, talking can help develop a young child's vocabulary and stimulate conversational skills like turn-taking and sharing ideas[12].



WHAT YOU'LL NEED

CLEAR VISUALS OF LETTERS AND/OR WORDS

- For example, write some letters on a piece of paper, or find something in the house that clearly shows large letters or words

DOG

PLAY-DOH COMPOUND



FLAT WORK SURFACE

WHAT TO DO

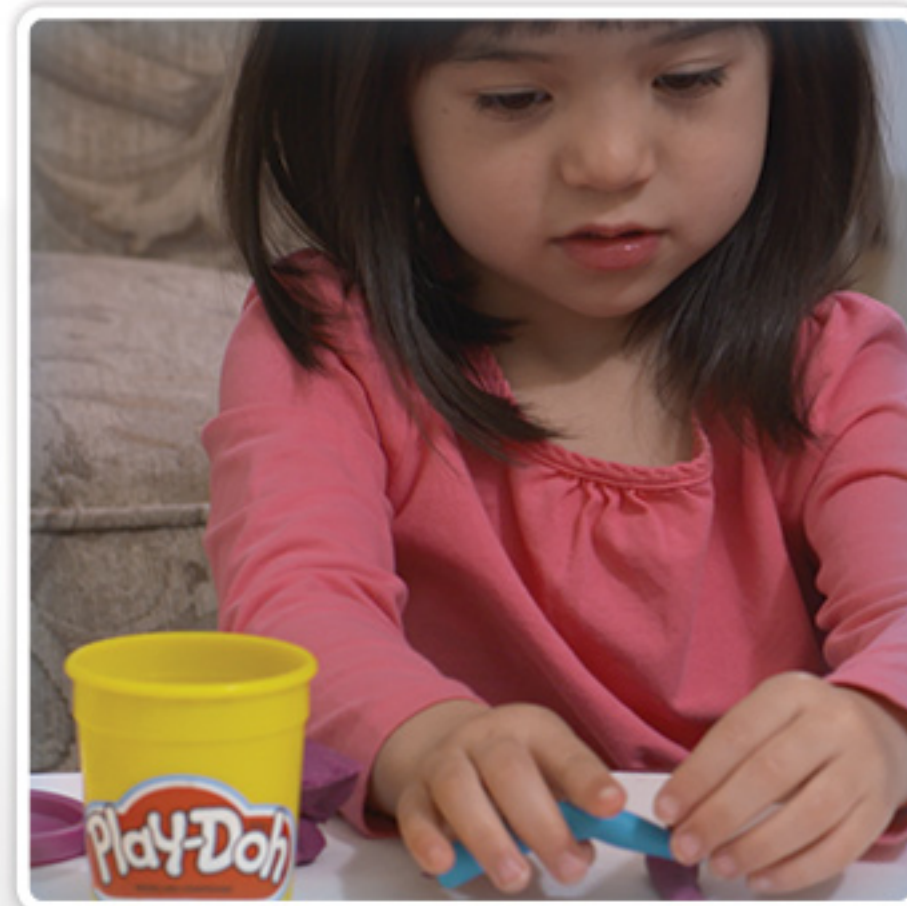
STEP 1

Provide the visual to your child and decide together which letter to explore.



STEP 2

Encourage them to recreate the lines in the letter using their favorite Play-Doh color.



STEP 3

Try building familiar words or making their name. Make sure to talk through the activity as they go; see below for some conversation starters.





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FUN TIPS

Talk a lot and use “adult” words to help your child expand their understanding of new words. Encourage conversational skills by talking through the different colors, textures, and shapes that make up the letters. Engage kids by providing positive commentary and asking questions to prompt further thinking, such as:

- Does the letter have curvy or straight lines?
- Which letters have holes and which ones do not?
- "Look! There's red, blue, yellow, and white!"
- "Wow! You made a circle!"
- "Hey! That looks like a snake!"

Try making meaningful connections by personalizing your child's exploration of letters. Link your activity to their names, favorite things to do, or family members.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THIS ACTIVITY

With your participation and incorporating the “Fun Tips,” this activity can give kids opportunities to explore a variety of concepts and work on valuable skills, including:

Essential Communication Skills

- Holding an engaged conversation with a parent during a joint activity

Vocabulary

- Listening to child-directed talk by a parent can build understanding of new words
- Practicing using new words discovered by listening to a parent

Reading

- Recognizing letters of the alphabet
- Identifying the letters in their own names and in sight words

Writing

- Forming and imitating familiar letters

References

- [9] S P Morreale & J C Pearson. 2008. Why Communication Education is Important: The Centrality of the Discipline in the 21st Century. *Communication Education*, 57, 224-240.
- [10] K H James, L Engelhardt. 2012. The Effects of Handwriting Experience on Functional Brain Development in Pre-literate Children. *Trends in Neuroscience and Education*, 1, 32-42.
- [11] M L Rowe. 2012. A Longitudinal Investigation of the Role of Quantity and Quality of Child-Directed Speech in Vocabulary Development. *Child Development*, 83, 1762-1774.
- [12] L B Adamson et al. 2014. From Interaction to Conversations: The Development of Joint Engagement During Early Childhood. *Child Development*, 85, 941-945.