

Alphabet Loose Parts

Learning to write is not only about holding and using a pencil.

Many other skills are needed to be supported before children are ready to begin to write in Kindergarten. Some of these are the development of core strength, exercising the hands and fingers and having fun with sounds, shapes and letters.

Playing with open ended materials (or loose parts) is a creative learning experience most children love. Offering a framework to help them create letters, numbers and shapes is one of many ways to help them discover how these symbols are made up.

How to Do It

Gather small items that can be used for this experience. You could consider a treasure hunt, nature walks or work with your child over the coming days and weeks to gather, recycle and collect items e.g. bottle lids.

Write your child's first name on the paper with a thick felt pen. Use a capital letter for their initial and then lowercase letters for the remainder of their name. Also make sure there is a little bit of space between each letter.

Demonstrate and talk about how they could place the beads or objects over the letters of their name.

Look at and talk about the letter names, the sounds of the letters and how the letters sitting alongside one another make a word or a name.

What Learning is Occurring?

- Early literacy skills alphabet awareness/ recognition of their own name
- Language development
- Fine motor skills
- These materials lend themselves to many play experiences that support numeracy learning too. *How many beads did we use? Let's count them, sort them, share them etc.*

Age Considerations and further Ideas

- Toddler: make some large salt dough beads for your child to string on to a thick piece of wool or string or make some decorations to hang in the window or as a mobile in their bedroom. This threading is great for the development of those finger and hand muscles too!
- Preschool: create a pattern with beads and ask your child to copy the pattern on their own string. Can they make their own?
- Transition to school: create your own beads at home out of airdry clay or salt dough. Once dried, paint or use a permanent marker to write the letters of the names of the people in your house. These could make fantastic bag tags for lunch bags or school /preschool bags or even a gift for a special person.

Things you will need

- A large piece of paper and a thick pen
- Beads or any loose parts
Some suggestions to try are buttons, pebbles, gumnuts, little plastic lids or cotton balls
- Glue (optional). If you don't glue these down, they can be used time and time again for this experience and in other play

Tips

- Start with one name (likely their own) and in time add other words for your child to create such as their full name or other words that mean something to them, e.g. Mum, Dad or siblings' names.
- Ask your child what words, or numbers or symbols are important to them.
- Another option for extending this experience is to add glue so that beads are permanently fixed on the page. This would make a lovely piece of art for the wall or a bedroom door name sign.
- Be aware of small beads or objects as potential choking

