

GRANDPARENTS AS TEACHERS

Mindy writes:

I have been using information from your site since last year and am very appreciative. I am guilty that I didn't take the time to explore the site more thoroughly until this afternoon. I am having preschool lesson time with my 4 ½ year old grandson during the week while his parents are at work/school. I love having him during the day and working with him, but I get flustered at times.

I'm working on a lot of skills I know are necessary and have purchased books and gotten things off line. I've been working on many concepts. I am focusing on teaching him the alphabet but I have also been working with him on shapes, opposites, sequencing, counting, etc. So many children go to preschool now days, I don't want him to be behind when he enters kindergarten.

At first, I was doing a letter a day. I realized real quick he had fun, but didn't remember that letter the next day. I can easily find things for one day, but wonder what I'll do the next day. I love your craft ideas and have used many of your ideas, but I realize he needs to be seeing the letter and not only hearing about it. I've printed off some pages that have the letter on it, with space to write the letter.

My question is how long do I spend on one letter. I don't want to confuse him and am not sure how to spread things out through the week. Do you have any suggestions?

Jean replies:

There are a number of theories out there about the proper way to teach letters. Some say to just teach letter recognition in preschool, others say it is ok to teach both letter recognition and letter sounds. Some say teach one letter a week, while others say that letters should only be taught when they have meaning to the individual child. They prefer teaching letters that are important to the child first, such as the letters in his name, or letters he recognizes from signs, etc.

Most teachers agree that the easier letters for children to learn are the consonants, B, C, D, G, H, L, M, N, P, R, S and T.

Personally, I feel that the best way for children to learn letters is to teach through play and leave all the worksheet type of learning for Kindergarten. Of course, learning to write letters is appropriate at this age.

Letter Recognition Activities

- Fish for fish with certain letters on them.
- Make bracelets with Letter charms on them.
- Hunt for eggs with the letter "E" on them.

- Play matching games with letter cards.
- Make letter pretzels.
- Look for letters in alphabet soup.
- Circle a certain letter on a sheet of newspaper or a magazine page.
- Glue small objects on a large cardboard letter cutout.
- Put envelopes in mail slots (cut in a box), matching letters on box and envelope.

Letter Sound Activities

- Fill the basket with objects that start with letter “D” sound.
- Find an object that starts with the same sound as the first letter of your name.
- Find words that rhyme; - words that have the same letter sound at the end.
- Bounce a ball and recite other words that start with the “B” sound.

Also, remember when teaching preschoolers, to have them use all of their senses with learning to recognize letters.

Sight – recognizing letters by sight.

Hearing – Listen to sound of the letters, sing about the letters

Touch – Feel sandpaper letters, make the letter with your body

Smelling and Tasting – provide opportunities for your child to smell and taste items that start with a certain letter.

I hope this helps, I would do the “letter each week” but I would constantly do letter review with all of the letters learned thus far. There are lots of multi- letter games that you can play to review the letters.

There are many letter activities at the Alphabet Station on Preschool Express.

Sincerely, Jean Warren, Preschool Express