

Using the Black Alphabet

This alphabet is meant to be used alongside the Phonogram Alphabet. By offering the children all of the letters in our alphabet along with all of the key sounds of our language, children have the possibility of writing anything they want to write well before their hand can hold a pencil. This alphabet is meant to help children refine their writing ability after using the traditional pink and blue movable alphabet.

Before you Begin

Before introducing the black alphabet to a child, be sure the child has had ample practice with the traditional (pink/blue) movable alphabet and the green phonogram sandpaper letters. In general, we don't worry about the accuracy of the spelling until around age 6. However, using this alphabet alongside the phonogram alphabet starts to ease children into the many illogical spellings of English. Some children show an early facility with language. They may seek out spelling corrections at an early age. We must meet the child at her developmental stage. If she wants correct spellings, we give them to her, but if she is satisfied with phonetic spellings, that is just fine. Spelling is something that the child will naturally refine as her reading abilities grow. It is not our focus at this stage of development.

Preparing the Alphabet

The alphabet needs to be contained in a box that easily displays each collection of letters and is usable by the young child. A lid is preferred to keep the letters dust free. If you purchased our craft box, set up the dividers as shown in the photo above. Store the alphabet where the child can get it without help. The child should have ample practice in carrying the box (from using the traditional alphabet) and in finding/replacing letters. However, if necessary, repeat these lessons (as described in the pink/blue Movable Alphabet lesson plan) the first time you use this alphabet.

I. Writing the First Words

1. Find a clean workspace that is free from distractions. Place the black and phonogram alphabet boxes next to each other in the top left corner of your work rug.
2. Say, "I'm going to write the word fish." Slowly articulate each sound in the word. Sound out the word again and isolate the "sh" sound. Look at the alphabets slowly, discover the green 'sh' cards, and place one on the work rug just below the alphabet box (see photo). Continue for the other letters using the black letters. Be careful to proceed slowly enough that the child is able to step in but quickly enough to maintain attention.
3. Say, "Oh, I liked doing that. Let's do some more and we'll always use the green 'sh.' Let's try ship."
4. Continue and help the child step in as soon as possible. Encourage her to make a long list of words with the 'sh' sound. Continue to write as many words as the child would like but be sure to stop before fatigue sets in. You want to leave her loving this work and wanting more. When you're done, celebrate the accomplishment. Say, "Look at how many words we've written!"
5. Clean up by saying, "Which sound is your favorite sound? Let's put all of those away first." Do this for each letter/phonogram.
6. Say, "You could do this again tomorrow and write even more words with any of the phonograms. I wonder what you'll write..." If the child is not ready to work independently, work with her again until she is able to do it alone. Slowly make your presence less and less necessary.

