

Using your Cardstock Phonetic Reading Cards

Before you begin

This work lets children discover that they know how to read. We prepare them for this discovery by enriching their vocabulary, helping them to hear the individual sounds in words, and then teaching them the sound of each letter in the alphabet, the shape of each letter, and the sequence of letters (from left to right). Using movable letters (like the Montessori movable alphabet or even refrigerator magnet letters), we can show them how to put sounds together to make words (e.g., sound out and spell c-a-t or k-a-t; spelling doesn't count at this stage). Keep in mind that this process of building a word (encoding) is much easier than the process of reading a word (decoding) and, thus, should always come first. Once this preparation is complete, we wait. Introduce the phonetic reading material when you first see a child trying to sound out a word.

Reading the Cards

This activity can be done with one or several children. Begin by using the picture-only cards alone in a vocabulary lesson (*see reverse side.*) The child must know all vocabulary before s/he will be able to succeed with this work. Divide the reading cards into smaller groups of six to eight cards, depending on the child (*see reverse side for suggestions.*) We adults like to organize this by short vowel sound but that is not what works best for most children. They are ready to work with all vowels right away.



1. Find a clean workspace that is free from distractions. Say, "These cards are so special. They are made from cardstock. We need to wash and dry our hands before we use them." Go together to do so. Make this part of your routine every time you use cardstock materials.
2. Place the control cards in a face-down stack on the workspace.
3. Lay out the first picture-only cards face-up on the top, left side of the workspace. Say, "Let's see if we can remember what this is." Let the child name the item pictured and then repeat the name carefully.
4. Guide the child to continue in this fashion until all of the picture-cards are in a column (leave two fingers width space between each card in the column).
5. Say, "I'm going to write you a secret. I wonder if you can figure out what I want!" Write the name of one picture on a slip of paper. Formulate your letters carefully so they are easy for the children to identify (if you have taught them lowercase print letters, write in lowercase print; if they have learned cursive, write in cursive). Let them see you write.
6. Help them pronounce the word (if needed) and place it below the corresponding picture on the workspace. Continue with all of the pictures.
7. Say, "Close your eyes, I'm going to mix them up!" Mix the words (leave the pictures alone) and have the child match them again. Then, mix the pictures (leave the words alone). Finally, mix them both up.
8. Say, "What does this one say?" Help the child read and match.
9. After the child has done this a few times, you can introduce the control cards. Say, "Let me show you a way to check and see if you're right!" Layout the control cards to the right of the matching pictures/words. Let the child discover his/her own errors and fix them independently. If s/he can't see the errors, s/he may not be ready for this work. Back-up and review the preparatory work.
10. Show him/her the printed word slips and say, "Next time you can do this work by yourself or with a friend. Just use these special printed slips." Read the words together and match them to the pictures.
11. Say, "Let's clean these up so nicely so they'll be ready for us to use next time." Help the child to clean the work up beautifully.

Notes

- Always give the child the opportunity to repeat the work. You, the child, or another child can mix up the cards for him/her so she can start over.
- As the child masters each group of 6 to 8 cards, introduce a new group. Change the groups often enough to maintain the child's interest. When s/he has read all of the groups, try mixing the cards into new groups to increase the level of difficulty. When they have mastered the words in Level 1, move on to Level 2. When Level 2 is mastered, move on to Level 3, Traditional Phonograms and then Level 3, Other Phonograms. When those are mastered, move on to Level 4. Once Level 4 is completed, you should introduce non-phonetic words via 3-Part Reading Cards. At the same time that the child is mastering phonetic reading, you can introduce puzzle/sight words via the 3-period lesson. (*See www.maitrilearning.com for these and more Montessori materials.*)
- If the child is also able to write letters, you may want to extend the phonetic reading card work by having him/her copy the words (with the movable alphabet or a pencil) or write them from memory. (Either you or another child can read the words on each card to the child. The child then writes them down without looking. If the child wants to, s/he can check the work with the control cards.) Be careful not to stress accurate spellings too early (spelling doesn't count before age six) – this may lead to frustration and resistance to doing the work in the future. Phonetic spellings (e.g., kat) are fine in the beginning.

Contents of Level 1: Simplest Phonetic Words

We recommend that you divide the cards into groups of six or 8 images each. Then, present them one group at a time. As the child masters one group, exchange it for the next one. This will maintain their interest and provide continual opportunities for them to practice their new reading skills independently. Once they have completed all of the groups, mix the contents to increase the difficulty. Then, proceed to Level 2.

Teaching Vocabulary

Before asking the child to read the cards, be sure s/he knows the vocabulary involved. This should happen separately from the reading activity. Pick up a picture-only card and place it in front of the child (making sure it faces him/her from the correct perspective) and say: "Tell me if you know what this is." If the child knows the name of the card, place it in a pile facing up. If the child doesn't know the name, place it in a separate pile face down. Continue with more cards until you have three or four that the child does not know. Use these in a 3-Period Lesson as follows:

1. Layout 3 or 4 picture-only cards face up in a row on a clean workspace. Touch and name the first card. Say, "This is a hut, hut." Encourage the child to repeat the word. Repeat this for the other pictures.
2. Move your hands away and say, "Show me the hut." The child should point to, pick up, or touch the hut card. If s/he cannot or points to the wrong card, simply use your own hand to point to the correct card and repeat step 1. "Put the hut here," and point to a new spot on the workspace where the child can put the card (keeping it in the right perspective). Continue to ask the child to "show you" the other pictures. Keep it lively by asking them to put the cards in different locations. Have fun!
3. Point to a card and say, "What is this?" If the child does not say the name, give him/her a hint like the first sound of the word. Do whatever you can to help the child succeed! If s/he still cannot name the object, return to step 2. When the child grows confident with the vocabulary, have fun by mixing up the cards before asking the child to name them. Add an element of mystery by asking the child to close his/her eyes while you or some other children mix up the cards.