

## Using your Phonetic Reading Cards!

### Before you begin

Magic—it happens the moment a child reads his/her first word. It is the discovery that communication can occur through the right combination of those little printed characters called letters. This discovery is not something we as adults can make happen. It will occur on its own time table and for reasons that will remain mysterious. We can only prepare the child to make the discovery. What we can do is enrich the child's vocabulary and then teach the child the sound of each letter in the alphabet, the shape of each letter, and the sequence of letters (from left to right). Using moveable letters (like the Montessori moveable 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 Level 1 of this material when you feel the child is ripe for the discovery. Introduce Levels 2, 3, and then 4 in order. Use the presentation below when introducing the earliest packets. Repeat it as you introduce each new packet only until the child is comfortable using the 3-part card format. At that point, s/he can be free to initiate new packets without a new presentation.

### 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. The child must know all vocabulary before s/he will be able to succeed with this work. Obviously, the child must also know the sounds associated with each letter included in the cards (see note above on preparation for this work).

1. Find a clean workspace that is free from distractions.
2. Place the control cards upside-down on the workspace.
3. Place the picture-only cards right side up in a column on the left side of the workspace.
4. Say, "Look at each picture and tell me what it is." Repeat the name carefully.
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 photo 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 and place it below the corresponding picture on the workspace. Continue with all of the photos.
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?" and 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 next to the matching pictures. 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 letter sounds/symbols.
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 or another child can mix up the cards for him/her so she can start over.
- As the child masters each packet, introduce a new packet. Change the packets often enough to maintain the child's interest. When s/he has read all of the packets in a level, try mixing the packets to increase the difficulty. When they have mastered the words in Level 4, 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](http://www.maitrilearning.com) for free downloads of puzzle words ready to print and put on your shelf.)
- 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 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 6)—this may lead to frustration and resistance to doing the work in the future.