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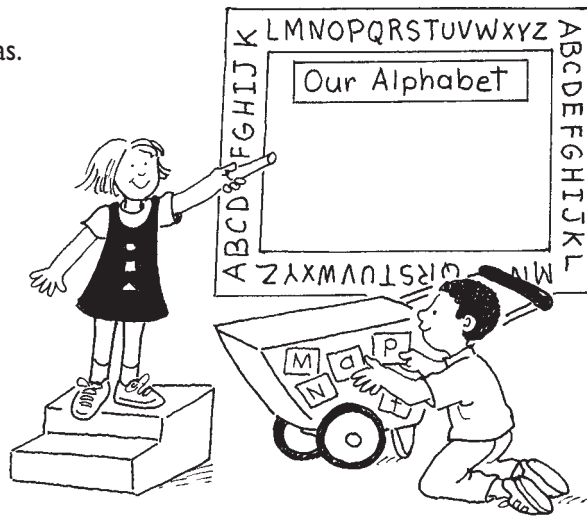
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# Introduction • • •

**A**dd new life to your classroom and curriculum with *Teachin' Smart*. This book is filled with ideas to make teaching easier, more efficient, and loads of fun for teachers and children.

**B**ecause teaching today is more demanding than ever, you need a resource that offers instant, at-a-glance ideas for

- activities in all curriculum areas.
- organization.
- learning centers.
- student-work displays.
- behavior incentives.
- self-esteem builders.
- classroom decorating.
- arts and crafts.
- classroom management.



*Teachin' Smart* gives you all this and more. This resource saves you time and money by showing you how to use easy-to-find, everyday materials to enhance your curriculum and create an exciting, well-organized learning environment.

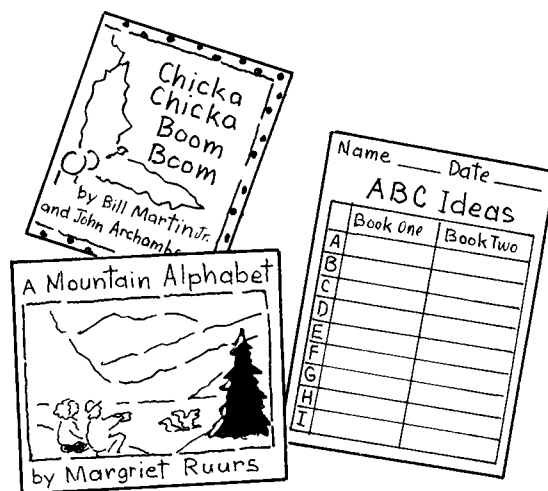
Organized in alphabetical order, the ideas presented in this book are easily referenced again and again, year after year. Reproducibles are included on pages 64–77 to make teacher preparation even easier and faster. In addition, an inspirational “word of advice” is presented for each letter of the alphabet to keep you motivated and focused on the important and rewarding career of teaching.

**C**hildren and parents will marvel at the ingenious ways you make learning meaningful and exciting when you use the ideas from this book. So get started today—it’s simply *Teachin' Smart*.

# A is for . . .

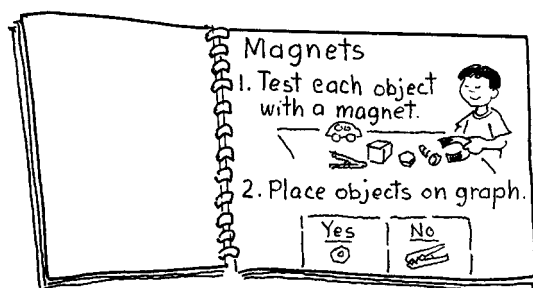
## ABC Book Graphic Organizer

Choose two alphabet books about the same subject, such as insects, and read them aloud. Divide the class into pairs, and give each pair a photocopy of the ABC Ideas reproducibles (pages 64–66). Have children write the titles of the two books at the top of the appropriate columns and use the organizer to record ideas gathered from the two books. Use the organizer again and again with any two same-subject ABC books!



## After-Christmas Tree

Start your bird unit after Christmas with an after-Christmas tree. Have a child donate an “un-dressed” Christmas tree (borrow his or her stand with the tree), and have the class decorate it with strings of popcorn and cranberries, peanut-butter and bird-seed pinecones, and other bird-friendly decorations. Set the tree outside your class windows, and create your own observation area. Have children keep a bird journal that includes drawings, observations, and other related information.



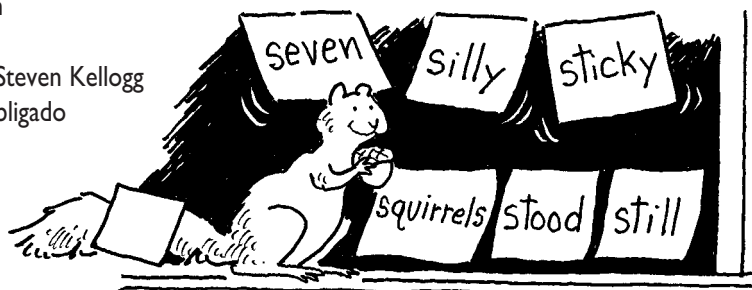
## Albums

Photo albums with plastic page covers are a great place to store and protect learning-center activity directions. For young children, prepare rebus directions, and place them in large photo albums. For older children, prepare directions on index cards, and place them in smaller albums.

## Alliteration Arranging

Read aloud an alliterative story, and then invite children to “arrange” their own alliterative sentences. Have each child choose a letter of the alphabet. Give each child half of a pad of small sticky notes. Have children write one word that begins with the letter they have chosen on each note. Ask children to spread out their notes on their desk to create an alliterative sentence. The beauty of using the sticky notes is that children do their own editing by moving the words around the desk before they write. Have children write and illustrate their sentences before placing them in a class book. Set up a reading center with books such as the following:

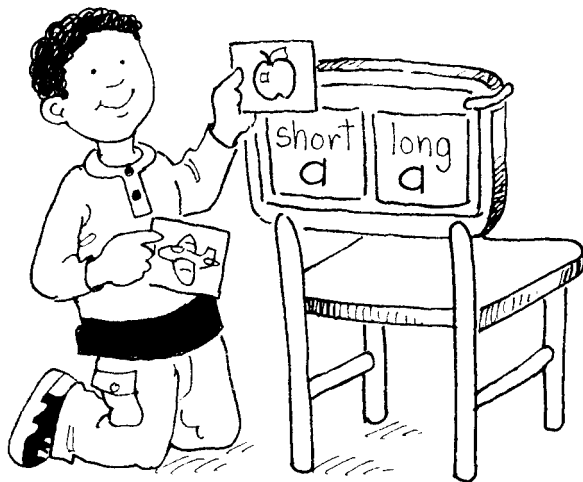
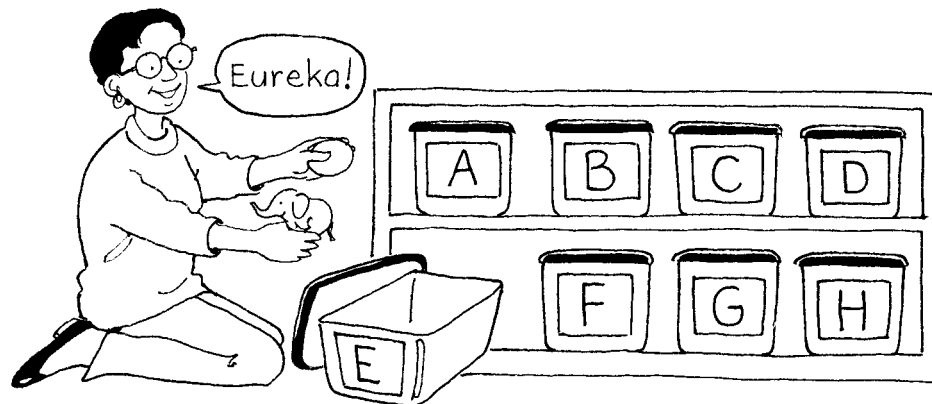
*1000 Silly Sandwiches* by Alan Benjamin  
*A My Name is Alice* by Jane Bayer  
*Aster Aardvark's Alphabet Adventure* by Steven Kellogg  
*Faint Frog's Feeling Feverish* by Lillian Obligado  
*Where is Everybody?* by Eve Merriam



# A is for . . .

## Alphabetical Order

Almost every supply can be organized in alphabetical order for easy reference. Obtain stacking containers with pullout drawers, one for each letter of the alphabet. (For “popular” letters, obtain two or more containers.) Alphabetize the supplies, and place each one in a drawer labeled with a letter. For example, place all balloons, buttons, beans, and bubbles in a B drawer. Remember to categorize items in a logical way so you will know where to look for them. For example, put all candy in a C drawer, rather than placing each kind in a separate drawer.



## Aprons

Aprons with multiple pockets make great learning centers. Hang an apron over a chair, and use it to store books and materials for a learning center. To make an apron interactive, place self-stick Velcro on the outside center of each pocket. Choose a sorting activity, such as sorting shapes or beginning sounds. Make an index-card label for each sorting category, and attach a label to each pocket with Velcro. Have children sort objects or cards in the pockets.

## A Word of Advice ATTITUDE

Enthusiasm is contagious—and so is lack of it. —Anonymous

Attitude is one of a teacher's greatest tools in the classroom. As you try new ideas, materials, and techniques, remember that your attitude will be reflected in the attitude of your children.

If you're enthusiastic, your children will be, too!

# B is for . . .

## Baby Wipes

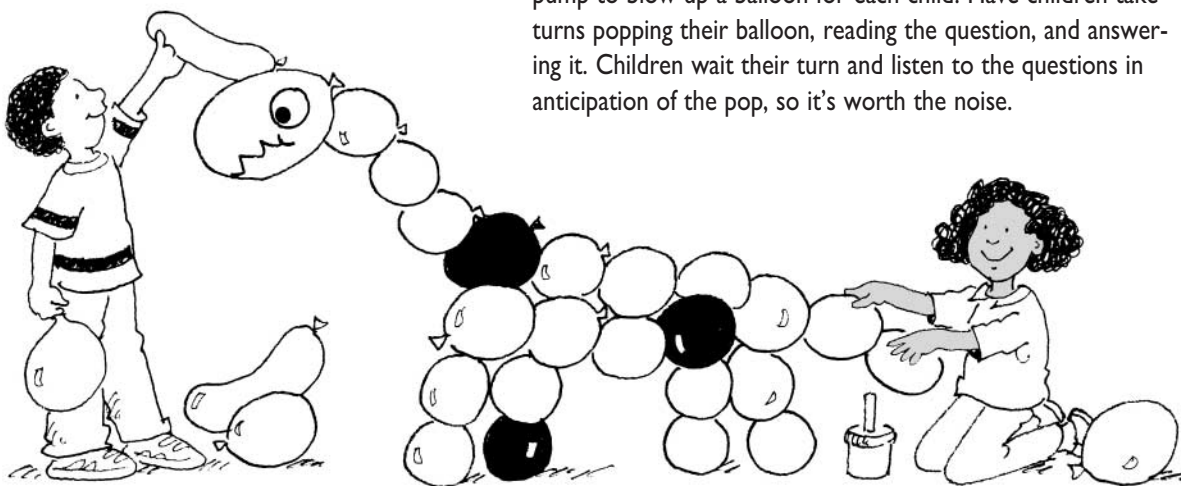
Use baby wipes for cleaning desktops, chalk ledges, overhead transparencies, and sticky hands. They make the room smell good, too.



## Balloons

Balloons are inexpensive, are readily available, and come in a variety of colors. Caution children to keep the balloons out of their mouths except when inflating them. Try these fun learning activities:

- Have groups of children blow up several high-quality balloons and use rubber cement to attach the balloons to make giant sculptures.
- Give each child a balloon. Read aloud *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst. Each time something terrible happens to Alexander, have children blow into their balloon once and hold it shut. By the end of the story, Alexander and the balloons will be ready to pop! Have children slowly deflate their balloon. Lead a discussion about feelings and positive ways to “let the air out of the balloon.” Record children’s responses on a large butcher-paper “balloon.” When a child is having a bad day, have him or her refer to the balloon for ways to deal with his or her feelings. (You can use the balloon, too!)
- Cut small strips of paper, and write questions on them. Fold up each paper, and place it inside a balloon. Use a pump to blow up a balloon for each child. Have children take turns popping their balloon, reading the question, and answering it. Children wait their turn and listen to the questions in anticipation of the pop, so it’s worth the noise.



## Balls

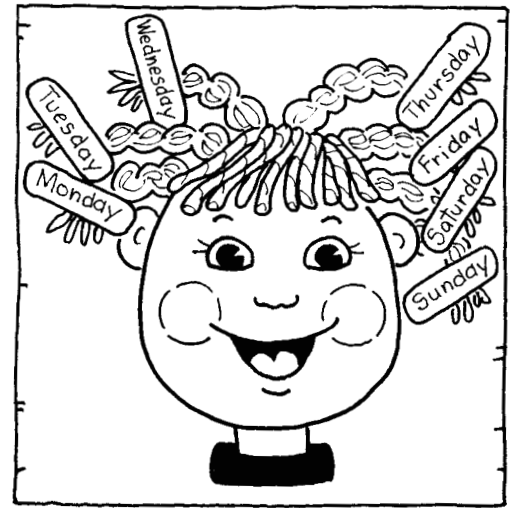
Use a large ball to represent hundreds, a medium-sized ball to represent tens, and a small ball to represent ones. Have three children stand in a row. One at a time, have children bounce their ball to indicate a number. Ask the class to write down the number “bounced.” Check for correct responses. For informal assessment, say a number and have children bounce the ball the correct number of times.



# B is for . . .

## Barrettes

Here's a cute idea for a learning center that provides children with the opportunity to practice the correct sequence of days of the week! Buy days-of-the-week barrettes at a discount or drug store. Draw a face on construction paper, and laminate it. Glue on "braids" made from yarn. Have children clip the barrettes on the braids in the correct sequence. You can also use metallic silver or gold permanent markers to label plain barrettes with the days of the week.



## Big Book "Pockets"

Glue a large manila envelope to the inside back cover of a big book. Place sentence strips with sentences and words from the story in the envelope. Have children look through the book to find matches for each sentence and word on the strips. Or, challenge children to arrange the sentences on the strips in the order they appear in the book.



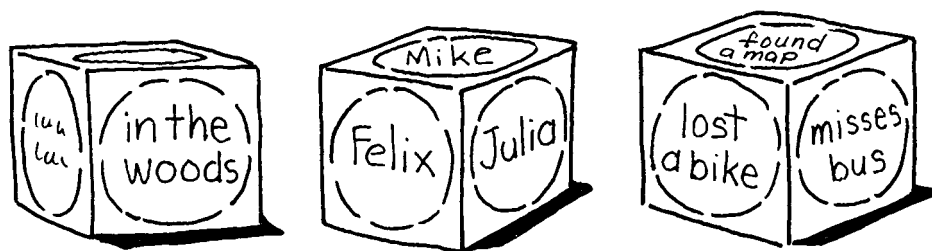
## Birthdays

During the summer, write or stamp *Happy Birthday* on white lunch bags and add some decorations to make "birthday bags." Add a new pencil, stickers, a box of raisins or another snack package, and anything else appropriate for a birthday goodie. Store the bags in a "birthday box" and you are ready! Always make extra to allow for children who join your class. Celebrate summer birthdays as "half-birthdays." (June, July, and August birthdays are celebrated in December, January, and February.)

## Blocks

Purchase blocks at a craft store for a language center, and try these activities:

- Invite children to use blocks to create simple sentences, practice alphabetical order, and identify parts of speech. Buy the largest blocks available and large round stickers. Write words on the stickers, and place one on each side of a block. Place stickers with new words on the blocks as children progress.
- Label each of three blocks *character*, *problem*, and *setting*. Write characters, problems, and settings on large round stickers, and place one on each side of the appropriate block. Encourage children to roll the blocks to help them generate story ideas.

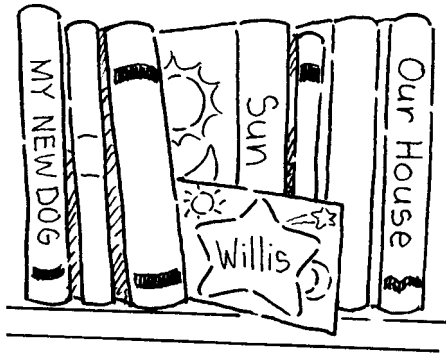
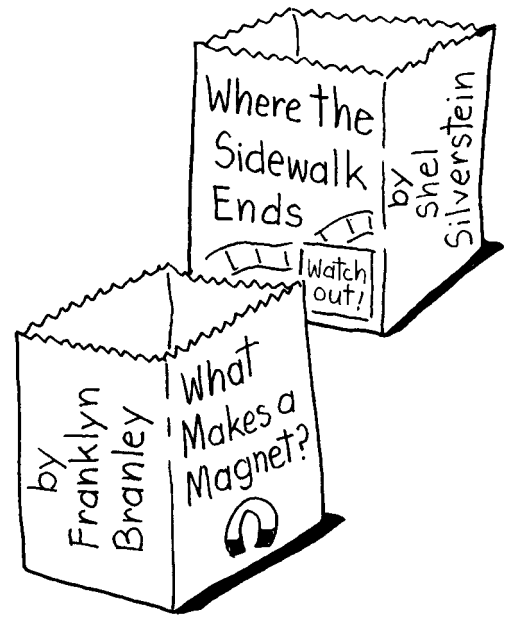




# B is for . . .

## Book Talk

Give each child a white lunch bag, and have him or her write on the front and sides of the bag information about a book he or she has read (e.g., the title, the author, and an illustration of a favorite part of the story). On the back, have children write a summary of the book, including why they did or didn't like the story. While children work on their bags, pop some popcorn. Fill the bags, and have children meet in a circle to talk about their book and enjoy their snack. Give each child a chance to talk about what is on his or her bag, and invite the class to ask questions and discuss the stories. Don't forget to make one, too!



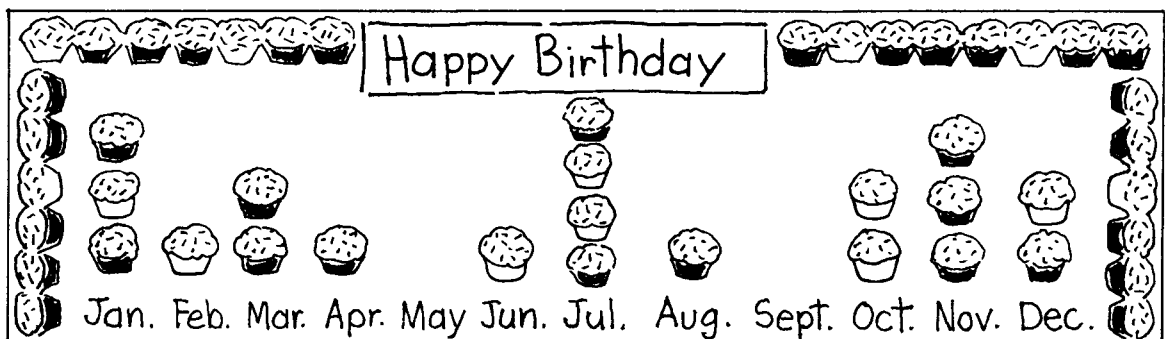
## Bookmarks

Fold a 12" x 18" (30.5 cm x 46 cm) piece of construction paper lengthwise into thirds, and cut it apart at the folds to make three bookmarks. Make several bookmarks in this way. Have each child write his or her name on a bookmark and decorate it. Then, laminate each one. Place the bookmarks in a can at a classroom library/reading center. When children choose a book from a shelf or tub, have them place their own bookmark in the space so they know exactly where to return the book when they are finished.

## Border Fun

Borders aren't just for bulletin boards anymore! Use strips and pieces of colorful borders in the following exciting ways:

- Cut apart borders with individual images to create math manipulatives, game pieces, and graph markers.
- Write directions on individual cut-apart border images for instant task cards.
- Use an ABC border to assess children's knowledge of beginning, middle, and ending sounds. Give each child an ABC border strip and a clothespin. Say a word or show a picture that has the beginning, middle, or ending sound of a letter on the strip. Have children clip the clothespin on the appropriate letter on the strip.
- Cut a border strip to fit around each child's head. Tape each strip into a closed loop to make a "crown."

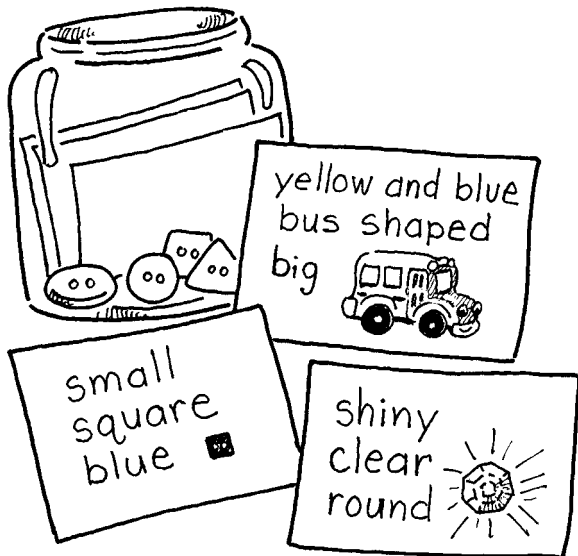
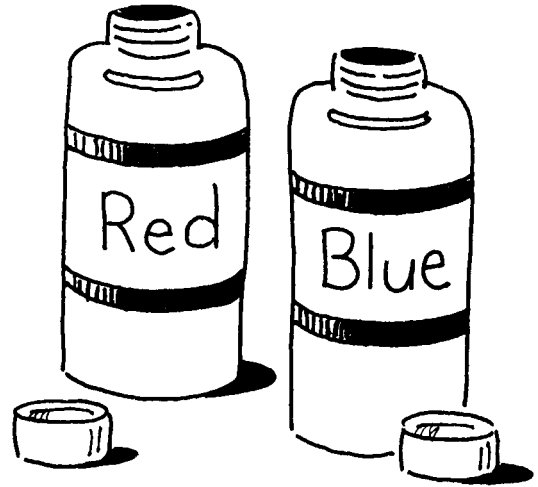




# B is for . . .

## Bottled Ink Bingo Markers

Bingo markers are large round bottles of ink that make a bright circular stamp of color on the page. They are available in the school supplies section of most general stores. Have children use bingo markers to stamp patterns; combinations for specific numbers; and fact families for addition, subtraction, multiplication, or division.



## Buttons

Fill a resealable plastic bag with 20 to 30 buttons for each child. Keep the buttons in a central location. Use buttons all year long for activities such as the following:

- For math, have children use buttons to practice sorting, patterning, and place value.
- To introduce or review adjectives, give each child a unique button and an index card. Have children list on the card as many adjectives as possible to describe their button. Place the index cards in a container, and place the container and buttons in a learning center. Have children visit the center to match buttons to their descriptions.

## A Word of Advice

BLESSED

Blessed are the flexible for they shall not be bent out of shape! —Anonymous

Take each day one day at a time. Try to be flexible with your children. They have their timetable and it doesn't always fit with our plans, the school day, or the weather! Flexible teachers are open to possibilities, ready to take advantage of any opportunity to teach, even if it presents itself as a praying mantis in the hands of a child.