

Introduction

Dear Teacher,

Several thoughts come to my mind as I think about this book. The first relates to the way we teach children: "If it's not fun, why do it?" Children are spontaneous, eager, and action-oriented. *Highway Letters, Numbers, and Shapes* will have them learning and they won't even know it because they'll be having so much fun!

My second thought came from a teacher who commented, "Teachers harvest ideas from other teachers." It is true, indeed, that we are all masters of acquisition and adaptation. Ashlyn Norris of Copperas Cove, Texas, first introduced me to this concept, and I thank her for sparking my interest in this wonderful strategy for creating effective learning aids.

My final thought is from a workshop years ago where a teacher said, "Dr. Jean, you just get a simple idea and milk it for all its worth." If you can find one strategy that will engage children's attention, then you can extend that activity in many different ways. That's the magic of the cards in this book. They are easy to use and can be adapted for different skill levels and learning goals.

Highway Letters, Numbers, and Shapes is all good, all fun, and all yours!

Dr. Jean
😊

Getting Started

WHY USE HIGHWAY CARDS?

The brain likes anything that is unique and original. *Highway Letters, Numbers, and Shapes* cards provide a novel approach to learning that is sure to capture children's attention! Highway cards can aid students' early learning and development in the following ways:

- Reinforce literacy skills, math concepts, and small motor skills
- Motivate children to practice basic writing skills
- Nurture cooperation and social development
- Activate children's senses when working with the cards and engaging the use of their eyes, ears, and hands
- Encourage students to want to repeat the fun learning activities and games over and over again

WAYS TO USE HIGHWAY CARDS

- Make letter vests by punching two holes at the top of the letter. Tie on string so children can wear these around their necks like a vest to use in games and activities suggested in this book.
- Use Highway cards for large groups, small groups, or independent learning.
- Use the cards for a variety of activities and games to engage children in learning basic skills.

TEACHER TIPS

- Laminate the cards for durability and to expand their use.
- Store the cards in a magazine file box for easy access, or insert the cards into clear sheet protectors and store them in a 3-ring binder.
- Before making cards available to students, model the steps for forming the letters, numbers, and shapes.
 - Remind students to always begin at the green traffic light.
 - Demonstrate how to follow the numbered highway signs and directional arrows to complete each step in forming the letters, numbers, and shapes.
 - Explain that the red dots located on the letters, numbers, and shapes signal students to stop and begin a new stroke or change direction.
 - Tell students that if they have followed all of directions correctly they will end at the red traffic light.

Teacher Note: The beginning and ending points labeled on the letter and number cards correspond to those commonly associated with traditional manuscript. Although the shapes included in this set can be drawn in various ways, the numbered arrows provided for the shapes follow a fluid counter-clockwise circular motion, similar to the strokes students use when forming many letters and numerals.

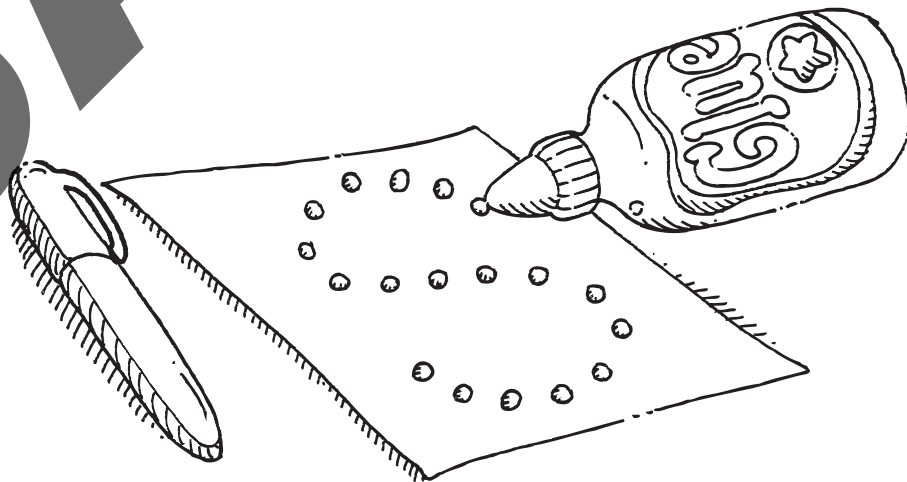
Activities and Games

SMALL MOTOR DEVELOPMENT

- Have children use toy cars, trucks, small animals, and action figures to “drive” or “walk” on the highway letter, number, and shape cards to learn the correct formation by following the numbered steps on the cards.
- Have children mold play dough on their highway cards to form the letter, number, or shape.
- Have children bend and mold pipe cleaners or Wikki Stix to place on the cards to form the letters, numbers, or shapes.
- Provide small blocks, beans, buttons, and other manipulatives for children to use in forming the letters, numbers, or shapes on the cards.
- Make copies of the letter cards and pass one out to each child. Have each child create a collage by attaching images and objects whose names begin with that letter.

WRITING

- With the highway cards in plastic page protectors, provide children with dry-erase markers, and have them trace the letters, numbers, and shapes. Supply an old sock or used dryer sheet for them to use as an eraser.
- Make copies of the cards on card stock. Create a tactile surface on each of the cards by putting a drop of school glue on each dash line on the letters, numbers, or shapes. Allow the dots to completely dry. Have children use their index and middle fingers to trace over the dots as they name the item on the card.
- Post the highway cards near a sand table. Have children each choose a letter, numeral, or shape and try to write it in the sand using their index fingers.
- Have children practice writing letters, numbers, and shapes outside on a paved surface using chalk. Post the cards nearby for easy reference.



ALPHABET KNOWLEDGE

Alphabetical Order

Pass out the letters. Have the children hold the cards in front of them and line up in the correct order from A to Z.

Memory Game

Make two copies of each card to use for a giant memory game. To keep the size of the game manageable, choose about 6 to 8 pairs of cards and place them facedown on the floor. Have children flip two cards at a time to find each matching pair.

Find and Match the Letter Game

Hand out a letter card to each child, and have him or her match the letter with classroom print found on such things as signs, labels, and books.

Pick Up Game

Divide the class into two teams. Have each team stand facing each other in parallel lines on opposite sides of the classroom or outdoor space. Spread the letter cards along the floor, halfway between the two team lines. Then have one child from each team listen carefully as you call out a letter. The child who can pick up the corresponding card first scores a point for his or her team.

Funny Face Game

Draw a silly face on a 3" circle. Have the children sit on the floor in a circle. Place some highway cards on the floor. Tell children to cover their eyes while one student places the "funny face" under a highway card. Then have the others open their eyes and take turns guessing where the face is hiding by asking questions such as *Is the silly face hiding under the letter A?* Invite the child who guesses correctly to hide the face in the next round.

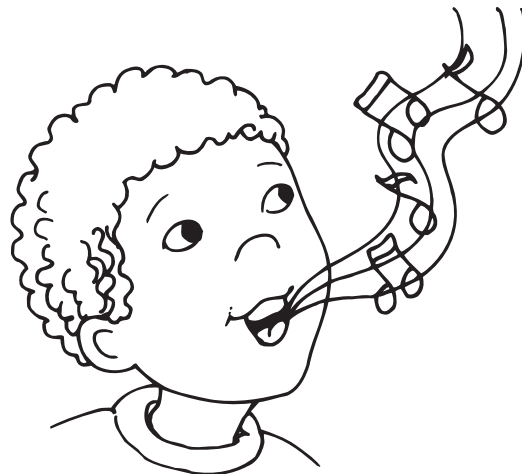
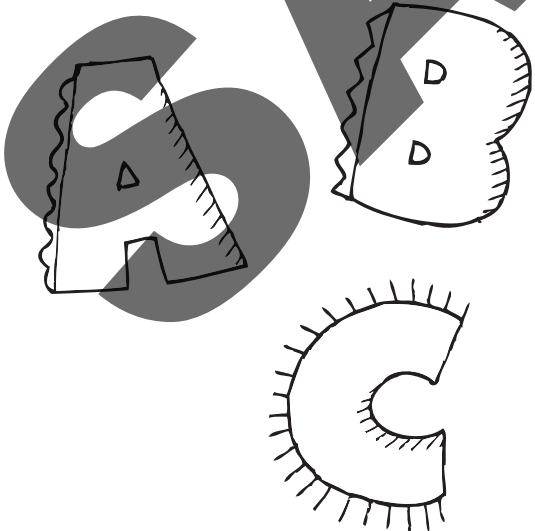
SINGING LETTERS AND SOUNDS

ABC Groove

Hand out the letter cards as you sing alphabet songs, and have children hold up the appropriate letter and do a little dance when it is sung.

Forward and Backward

Distribute the letter cards to students. Sing the traditional "Alphabet Song" slowly. Have children stand with their letters when they are sung. Say *Can you sing it backward?* End the backward version by singing, *Now, I've sung my ZYX's. Bet that's not what you expected!*



Alphabet Farm

Replace animal names with letters in the song "Old MacDonald Had a Farm."

(Teacher's name) **had an alphabet.**
She loved letters so.
And in her alphabet there was an H.
And it would always go,
/h/ /h/ here,
And a /h/ /h/ there,
Here a /h/, there a /h/,
Everywhere a /h/ /h/.
(Teacher's name) **had an H.**
She loved letters so.

Continue by using other letters and sounds in the song.

In My Hand

Hand out letter cards to students. Sing the following song to the tune of "He's Got the Whole World in His Hands." Have children stand up with their letter as it is named in the song.

We've got the whole alphabet
in our hands.
We've got the whole alphabet
in our hands.
We've got the whole alphabet
in our hands.
And we're ready to read!
I've got "A" — /a/ /a/
— in my mouth.
I've got "B" — /b/ /b/
— in my mouth.
I've got "C" — /c/ /c/
— in my mouth,
And we're ready to read!

Hokey Pokey Letters

Have children make the motions as you sing the following song:

You put your *(name letter)* **in.**
You take your *(letter)* **out.**
You put your *(letter)* **in**
and you shake it all about.
You make the letter sound
(make sound).
And then you turn around.
That is the letter *(letter).*

Where Is A?

Distribute letter cards to students. Sing the following song to the tune of "Are You Sleeping?" Have children hold up their letters as they are named in the song.

Where is A?
Where is A? *(Children repeat.)*
Here I am! *(Child holds up letter.)*
Here I am!
What do you say A?
What do you say A? *(Children repeat.)*
/a/ /a/ /a/ *(All make the sound together.)*
/a/ /a/ /a/
Where is B?...

Driving On Letters

Record the children singing the song below to the tune of "She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain."

We'll be driving down the road
on the A
(or other letter).
We'll be driving down the road
on the A.
/a/ /a/ /a/ *(Make sound.)*
is what we'll say.
We'll be driving down the road
on the A.

Put the letters in a 3-ring notebook or magnetic photo album, place the collection in a listening center with the recording, and have the children take turns tracing over the letters with a finger, pointer, or small car as they listen along.

This Is a Tale

Hand out letter cards to students. Sing the following song to the tune of "Gilligan's Island." Have children stand up with their letters as they are named in the song.

This is a tale about the letter A.
It makes a special sound
/a/ /a/ /a/ /a/ A!
Let's learn another sound...

PHONICS

Have children wear letters vests or just hold up highway letters for the following phonics activities.

Blending Sounds

Ask children to stand and make the sound of the letter on their vest. Then have them move around the class and group together to make words. Have each group hold hands, blend the sounds, and say the word.

Onset and Rime (*Chunking*)

Start by asking children who are wearing *a* and *t* to stand next to each other in front of the class to form *at*. Ask, *What does that say?* Then ask, *m* to go stand next to *at*. *What does that say?* Tell *m* to sit back down and have *r* stand next to *at*. Have children suggest other letters to stand next to *at*. Then change the rime to reinforce other word families.

Touch the Object

Have children each touch objects in the room that begin with the sound of the letters they are wearing.

CVC Words

Distribute letter vests to students. Have students practice blending CVC words (consonant, vowel, consonant) in front of the classroom.

Silent E

Children will never forget “silent e” when you act out this story. Explain that “silent e” is a magic letter. When *e* is at the end of a word, it touches the vowel in the middle with an invisible wand and makes it say its name. Invite children wearing *h*, *o*, and *p* to come to the front of the room. Ask, *What does that say?* Invite *e* to stand at the end and take an imaginary wand and tap the *o*. Then ask, *What does the word say now?*

Digraph Scramble

Distribute the letter vests: *s*, *h*, *c*, *w*, and *p* to five children. Have each child demonstrate for the class what sound his or her letter makes on its own. Then pair each child with the student wearing the *h* vest. Have them say the new sound together. Discuss what children noticed (for example: *h* is paired with lots of letters to make digraphs, letters have to be placed in the correct order, etc.). Repeat the process with consonant blends.

WORDS

- Hand out letter vests for students to wear and have them stand in the front of the classroom. Slowly call out word wall words by stretching out the sound of each letter in the words. Have children move into position and make the word. Variation: Use spelling or vocabulary words.
- Have children place letter cards on the floor to spell out their names or other words. Next, invite them to drive over the letters in the words with a toy vehicle as they blend the sounds and say the words.
- Pass out letter cards to the children. Have children stand as you say their letters in a word cheer. Encourage them to work together to form the word.

Word Cheer

.....
The teacher says: Give me a “T.”
Children respond: “T”
Teacher says: Give me an “H.”
Children respond: “H”
The teacher says: Give me an “E”
Children respond: “E”
Teacher says: What’s that spell?
Children shout: “THE”
Teacher says: One more time.
Children shout: “THE”

MATH

Make number vests similar to letter vests, and use them for the following hands-on math activities:

- Have children stand in numerical order according to the number vests they are wearing.
- Call out a 2-digit number, and have the children wearing the correct numerals come up and form the number.
- Distribute number and shape cards, and have children match their cards with numbers or objects found in the classroom.
- Have five children wear number vests 1 through 5 as you sing "Five Little Monkeys," or vests 0 through 9 for "Ten in the Bed." Use the vests similarly for other number songs and rhymes.

Crocodile Inequalities

Play this game to help reinforce the math concept of inequalities. Put up two number cards on an easel or board, and have children hold their arms straight out in front of them like crocodile mouths. Have children imagine the inequality sign is a crocodile's mouth, either " $<$ " or " $>$ ". Tell them that the crocodile will only "eat" the larger of the two numbers. Have them pretend to snap at whichever number is larger.

Addition and Subtraction

Follow the instructions for making letter vests to make math operation symbols ($+$, $-$, $=$) and additional number vests with markers, card stock, and string. Have children wear the operation symbols and numbers to form number sentences by moving around and grouping together. As an extension, have students form fact families.

Word Problems

Slowly read a word problem out loud, and have children wearing number vests and operation symbols form the number sentence to help solve the word problem.

Dot to Dot

Make a giant pencil for this activity by covering a paper towel roll with yellow paper. Wrap orange paper around the bottom for the "eraser" and insert a black cone in the other end for the "point." Pass out the number cards, and have children scatter around the room. Then invite one child to take the pencil and point to the numbers from 0 through 9 to "connect the dots."

