

Initial Consonants

Activity & Idea Book

Why use *Initial-Consonants Word & Picture Cards*?

TO TEACH AND LEARN LANGUAGE: The study of *phonics* and *spelling*—which presents, practices, and anchors basic skills for reading and vocabulary success, becomes inviting with attractive educational materials. In place of—or with—traditional pages for instruction in *relationships between alphabet letters and the sounds they represent*, language-learners can use effectively designed *card decks* to acquire or strengthen their word-level reading and spelling abilities. Interactive activity with materials of this kind “lowers the affective filter” to learning success.

TO HAVE FUN: Just about everyone enjoys interesting, productive pastimes—especially the cooperative or competitive *card games* that have endured for centuries. So why not apply the appealing motivation of *distributing, arranging, strategizing, and playing with classically designed 52-card decks* to the teaching and learning of useful language skills? There are many smooth—not effortless, but pleasurable—ways to do so.

What makes *Initial-Consonants Cards* effective?

THE CONTENT: At any level of study, *initial consonant sounds* and *letters* constitute a significant area of *phonics/spelling* instruction. All 26 *letters* of the English alphabet can *begin* words (or syllables). Also, the sounds made by the *consonants* b, d, f, j, k, l, m, n, p, r, s, t, v, w, y, z are generally *predictable* in initial position. The letter-sound correlations for c, g, h, q, x are easily taught and learned. Instruction in *initial consonants* can provide a painlessly effective and efficient introduction to *phonics/spelling* in minimally stressful contexts.

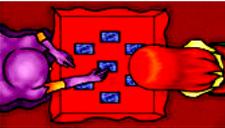
THE BENEFITS THEY OFFER: *Initial Consonants Word & Picture Cards* activities and games are *efficient* because all players/learners can actively participate at the same time. Meeting time is well utilized. The materials are *effective* because they foster *phonemic awareness*—recognition of the meaningful sounds that make up speech. Their *printed* words reinforce “sound-symbol connections” in the mind’s ear. They fit well into elementary reading lessons. And card-users get to connect each word to an illustrated *context*, acquiring useful vocabulary *in meaning categories*, an effective motivator/promoter of language acquisition.

THEIR DESIGN: *Initial Consonants Word & Picture Cards* work in the classroom, in learning labs, and for home study because they encourage users to apply phonics principles to oral reading and to spelling. There’s no way to complete an activity—or to play (or win) a card game without correlating initial letters with the sounds they make. Card users also get or have to compare the spelling or pronunciation of *contrasting items*.

How might "playing cards" reinforce and improve language teaching and learning?



THEY HAVE MANY USES. There are many reasons why *playing cards* exist in world cultures—and why *playing cards* (*card play*) has engaged, entertained, and motivated people of all ages for centuries! Because they're readily available, *playing cards* may be used for a variety of solitary and/or social purposes—including "building a house of cards," lining up "card dominoes," throwing or flipping cards, doing "magic tricks," fortune telling, gaming, and more.



IT BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER. Except for *Solitaire* (single-player games also called—and requiring—*Patience*), the activity of *playing cards* can connect people as partners or helpers, encourage coping behaviors, provide opportunity to display competitive abilities, stimulate creative or strategic thinking, promote concentration, and occupy the mind with pleasant activity in (hopefully) productive ways.



IT PROMOTES LEARNING SKILLS. While viewing the uniquely distinguishing markings on the *faces* of *playing cards* (uniformly sized pieces of stiff paper or thin plastic), card-users improve their visual perception by *recognizing, identifying, remembering, naming, interpreting, and differentiating among* (confusing) symbols and/or images.



Associating relevant card-face features with one another helps increase users' classification skills. Handling—shuffling, dealing out, arranging, picking up, discarding—(groups of) cards reinforces accurate vision and small motor skills.



THEY'RE USEABLE FOR A MAJOR ACTIVITY OF UNIVERSAL RECREATIONAL CULTURE.

Whether participants are using traditional decks of four *suits* (♠♣♥♦) of 13 *ranks* (*Ace through King*) each—or specially designed packs with educational content, knowing card-playing *terms* and mastering its *skills* will add to their benefits:



- ◆ A *pack* or *deck* of cards is a complete collection designed or compiled for specific activities or procedures of particular games.

A full 52-card *deck* contains 13 sets-of-four that *match* (go together) in some way. During *game play*, cards may be arranged in *face-up* and/or *face-down stacks* or *piles*—or *spread out* on a *playing surface* (desk or table).



- ◆ A *hand* is the cards held at one time by a *player* during a *round* or *game*, who may *arrange*, *play*, *add to*, and *discard* them.



- ◆ The *face* of a card displays a *unique image* revealing its *value* and/or other useful info. The *card backs*, identical for all cards in *that deck*, identify them as belonging together.

- ◆ *Cutting* and *shuffling* a deck randomizes the *order* of its cards. *Dealing* distributes them. Cards are *collected* after each *game*.



What preparation activities enhance the use of *Initial-Consonants Word & Picture Cards*?

To play competitive card *games* effectively with *Basic/Beginning Initial Consonants Word & Picture 52- and 72-Card Decks*, novice language learners may need or appreciate preparation activities. Such instructional additions may also enhance or reinforce the learning of phonics and spelling principles and patterns. Here are ideas to try, adapt, shorten, and/or expand:



SHOW THE CARDS. Hold up an appropriate number of card faces one by one. (They can be enlarged and/or projected onto a screen.) Beginners may learn more quickly if cards are shown in logical sequence—perhaps the four with the *same* initial consonants one after another—and the sets in alphabetical order of their initial letter(s).



In regard to *meaning* at this stage, it may suffice to simply “define” each vocabulary item by its category: 1. *a Person / an Animal*, 2. *a Place*, 3. *a Thing*, or 4. *an Action*. The pictures can serve as more precise “definitions.” At *Basic/Beginning Levels* (except that the letter c spells /k/), the underlined letters of words look about the same as the dictionary sound-symbols printed between lines / / after the categories.

PRONOUNCE THE WORDS. Tell the item names and have learners repeat. Show the cards again so they can “read” the words aloud. Then cover the initial consonants and show the word endings (*rimes*) with the illustrations. Can learners say their names?

GIVE "ORAL VOCABULARY QUIZZES." For more reading and vocabulary practice, print the relevant items on a board, in initial-consonant or mixed-up order. Say "meaning clues." For instance, here are simple sample explanations to elicit four words beginning with d (= /d/): dad, dock, dot, dig.

- ◆ He's a father.
- ◆ It's a place for boats.
- ◆ It's perfectly round.
- ◆ You do it with a shovel.



For learners at low language-proficiency levels, it may help to give cues to the items in the order they are listed on the board. The group or individuals can simply read aloud the printed words as you point to them. At the same time, they can look at, handle, arrange, and/or refer to the corresponding (sets of) *Basic/Beginning Initial Consonants Cards* laid out face-up on a surface.



Students needing more challenge might prefer to hear cues in *random sequence*—so they have to *locate* or *recall* each appropriate word before saying it aloud. If they hesitate in responding—or to boost memory, (enlarged) illustrations may help. This activity becomes more difficult as (groups of) items are added to the list—especially words with sound or spelling similarities—and/or initial consonant contrasts.