

25 Ways to Use Magnetic Letters at Home

- 1. MAKING WORDS** Have children make as many different words as they can. Each time they make a word have them write it on a sheet of paper. You may want to challenge them to make as many two-, three-, and four-letter words as they can.
- 2. NAME GAME** Have the children make names of friends or family. They should make each name, mix the letters, and make it again several times.
- 3. ALPHABETICAL ORDER** Have children put a set of lowercase letters in correct alphabetical order. They can do the same with uppercase letters.
- 4. MAGAZINE MATCH** Have children find and cut out large print words they can read and understand from magazines or newspapers. They glue them on a sheet of paper with plenty of space below each and make each word with magnetic letters.
- 5. MAKING NEW WORDS** Build several words and show the children how to change, add, or take away a letter or letters to make a new word. Examples are: *cat, can, man, men, met, tap, clap, claps, flaps, flips, flipped, slipped.*
- 6. RHYMING PAIRS** Use a magnetic cookie sheet. With magnetic letters, make a word such as *cut*. Say the word and have the child say a rhyming word and make it with magnetic letters below it. Sometimes rhyming words will be spelled differently, so you may need to show the child the new spellings (*new, blue; hope, soap*)
- 7. CROSSWORD LETTERS** You make a word, and then the child adds a word that starts from one of the letters. The word can go across or down.
h a t
o
p
- 8. DESCRIBING WORDS** Make a describing word (*red, thin, cold*). Then have the child make a describing word and continue taking turns, making as many describing words as you can. Keep a list and read the list together at the end.
- 9. ACTION WORDS** Make an action word (*run, play, jump*). Then have the child make an action word, continuing to take turns and making as many action words as you can. Keep a list and read the list together at the end.
- 10. ADDING ENDINGS** Make an action word such as *read, sew, plant*. Invite the child to add as many different endings as possible (*reads, reading, reader; sew, sewing, sews; plant, plants, planted, planting, planter*).
- 11. CHANGING VOWELS** Make a simple three-letter word. Ask the child to change the vowel to make a new word (for example, *cat, cut, cot; hop, hip; hat, hit, hot, hut*).
- 12. SYLLABLE GAME** Say a word and then make it with magnetic letters. Have the child say another word with the same number of syllables and make it with magnetic letters (*dog, play; cabin, rocket*).
- 13. CONSONANT COUPLETS** Make a word that begins with a consonant (all the letters except *a, e, i, o, u*). Have the child make another word that starts with the same consonant.

14. **CONSONANT CLUSTER COUPLETS** Make a simple word that begins with two consonants together. Your child's teacher will have a Consonant Cluster Linking Chart you may want to request. Have the child make a word that starts with the same cluster (*crab, cry; stop, store; chair, cheese*).
15. **HIGH FREQUENCY WORD PRACTICE** There are some words that children use many times when they read or write. Request a list of high frequency words your child needs to know. Have the child make the word, mix up the letters, and make the word again three times each.
16. **CATEGORY WORDS** Choose a category such as colors, clothing, food, furniture. Make and read a word in the category. Have the child make and read one and continue to take turns, making as many words in the category as you can. Keep a list and read the list together at the end.
17. **COMPOUND FINISH** Compound words are words formed by putting two whole words together. Make the first part of a compound word and have the child finish it. For example, if you make *sun* your child could make *sunshine* or *sunflower*; if you make *snow* your child could make *snowman*, *snowshoe*, or *snowball*. Then reverse roles. Keep a list of the words you make and read them together.
18. **BUILDING WORDS** Give your child a pile of letters and tell him to make and write as many words as he can.
19. **CONNECTING WORDS** Have your child make a word and then make another word that connects to it in some way (starts the same, ends the same, a word that means the same or opposite, a word that rhymes). Have her tell how it connects.
20. **MAKE AND MIX** Have your child make the names of the days of the week. One at a time, mix the letters and have him make them again several times. Repeat with the months of the year.
21. **FOOD FUN** Make the names of foods you had for dinner. Mix the letters and have your child remake them several times.
22. **LETTER GAME** Have each player start with six letters. The players make words with the letters they have. They take turns taking one new letter at a time from a bucket of letters (they don't look at the letters in the bucket). The first player to use all his letters wins the game. Then each player reads the words he made.
23. **SEASONS REASONS** Select a season. Make a word and tell why it goes with that season. Have your child do the same. For example if you select *winter* your child might make *hat; It is cold in the winter so you need a hat*.
24. **SYNONYM MATCH** Think of a pair of words that means the same (such as *wet* and *moist*). Make a word and have the child think of one that means the same. Make the synonym below the first word. Repeat with several synonyms. Play the game again with antonyms (words that mean the opposite, such as *hot* and *cold*).
25. **MISSING LETTERS** Make the last part of a word such as *__ick, __air, __ell* and have the child put one or two letters in the beginning to make a real word (*chick, chair, spell*). Repeat the process with one or two missing letters at the end of words.

Prompts for When a Child Is Having Difficulty Reading a Word

On the following page are prompts to consider using when a child is stuck on a word while reading. Decisions about which prompt(s) to use should be based on:

The child's development. For example, "Slide through each sound" is likely to be more appropriate for earlier readers reading short words, whereas "Break the word into parts" is likely to be more appropriate for more advanced readers reading multi-syllabic words.

The child's reading profile. In general, we should primarily use prompts related to letters and sounds. However, if a child is reading without thinking about meaning, prompting the child to "Think about what would make sense" would be appropriate (recognizing that that some children, such as those not reading in their primary language, may need additional support with sense-making). "Reread" is also a good prompt when a child has lost attention to meaning.

The text and situation. For example, sometimes a word arises in a text that a child is highly unlikely to figure out no matter what strategies the child uses. In those cases, it is best just to provide the word after the child has had a brief opportunity to give it a try. Similarly, some situations may be better than others for a child to puzzle over words.

For these reasons, although the prompts appear in list form, they should not necessarily be implemented in that order. Also, sometimes it will take multiple strategies for a child to figure out a word. If it gets to a point at which several strategies haven't worked, it's typically most appropriate to provide the word and then encourage the child to continue reading.

The goal with these prompts is to develop independence so that the prompts actually become children's internalized strategies—strategies children use when they are reading on their own and there is no adult available to support them. Also, we want to promote strategies that are likely to lead to accurate reading in the long term. For that reason, "Check the picture" should be used sparingly and only with children at the earliest stages of literacy development.

It is important to teach children what these prompts mean and how to use them. It is also useful to try to use the same prompts across contexts (for example from grade to grade, tier to tier, and in-school to out-of-school), so that children are not faced with learning several different sets of prompts/strategies.

If a child misreads a word, it is very important not to jump in immediately to prompt the child to make a correction. Rather, wait until at least the end of that sentence to give the child the opportunity to recognize the problem and try to correct it him- or herself. Monitoring and self-correction are very important behaviors of good readers. If the child does self-correct, periodically provide positive feedback on that behavior, such as, "You noticed something didn't make sense and went back to correct it. That's something good readers do when they read." If the child does not self-correct, try the prompt, "That doesn't make sense" or "That doesn't sound right," pointing to a place to start before the error, such as the beginning of the sentence, so that the child does not lose connection with the text's meaning (and provide additional support with meaning construction as needed). If the child becomes stuck on the word at that point, please see above and the following page.

Look at the word.



Slide through each sound.



Look for parts you know.



Break the word apart.



Try a different sound.

aeiou

Reread.



Think about what would make sense.



Check the picture.

