

EARLY LEARNING AT HOME

Getting Ready for Kindergarten: Literacy

"Reading should not be presented to children as a chore or duty. It should be offered to them as a precious gift."

— Kate DiCamillo



Preschoolers | ages 3-5 years

Early literacy skills are what kids know about reading and writing before they can actually read and write. Many early literacy skills are developed naturally when you spend time talking, singing, reading, writing and playing with your child. However, preschoolers are ready to learn more advanced literacy skills, and learning their letters is a great place to start!

Craft/Game:

For kids, learning is play and play is learning. Making a game out of learning the letters of the alphabet is a great way to introduce your child to letters. Games make learning fun, instead of feeling like a chore. One great thing about the game "Crocodile Snap" is that you can adjust it to your child, making it easier or harder as they learn. This game can be used to learn lower case letters, upper case letters, and word sounds. There are so many different ways this game can be played. You could even help your child create a version of their own! Here are a few of my favorite ways to play:

- **The Original/Group Play**—Players sit in a circle and take turns passing around the bag, pulling out a letter, and saying the name or letter sound. When the answer is correct, the letter goes in the center of the circle. If they are incorrect, they can "phone a friend" for help! If a player pulls out a "Snap" card, players put their arms out like a crocodile and say "Snap! Snap!" and all of the cards go back into the crocodile and play continues.
- **Name Game**—Kids are often motivated to learn the letters in their name first. Put only the letters of your child's name in the bag, along with a snap card. Have them pull the letters out and name which letter they have. If they draw a snap card, they have to put one of their cards back. The goal is for your child to get all of the letters for their name and then together you can spell it out with the cards. Once they have their name down, try the names of other family members.
- **Upper Case and Lower Case Challenge**—Place only the upper case letters in the bag. Take turns pulling letters out of the bag and saying which letter they are. If you get it right, you get to keep the letter and it's the next player's turn. If somebody gets a "Snap" card they have to put one of their cards back into the bag. The first person to collect 10 cards wins. Once you've mastered one case, switch it up and do the other case. When both cases are mastered, you can put all the letters in together.
- **What Sound Do I Make?**—This is the same as the Upper/Lower Case Challenge but now kids have to name the letter and say what sound it makes. Vowels are a chance to get a bonus turn, if you can make both the long and short sound you get to draw another card that turn!
- **Matching Game**—Use both upper and lower case letters for this version. Much like previous games, if the player says the correct letter name they get to keep the card. Once they collect both the lower and upper case of the same letter they can make a match. Once a match is made, those cards are safe. But watch out for the "Snap" card, you may still have to put letters back if you haven't made a match yet. First to collect 5 matches wins.
- **Word Game**—This version will be too hard for your preschooler, but once your kid starts learning to read this is a fun way to make a simple game a lot more challenging! Collect letters and as you collect them use them to make words. Once you've spelled a word, those letters are safe. First to 3 words wins. You will want to make additional copies of the letters if you decide to give this version a try.