



# Learning to Recognise Letter Sounds using "Linked Visual Imagery."

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## Rationale

When new information is linked in some way to information we already know the task of memorising it is made easier.

The "Linked Visual Imagery Method" for learning letter sounds helps children to memorise the sounds of letters by teaching them how to link each letter's abstract shape to the shape of a familiar animal or object that shares the same initial sound.

Using the Linked Visual Imagery Method to teach letter sounds the student is given visual cues to make memorisation easier and is not expected to immediately memorise letter shapes as a sound.

Instead the student goes through the following learning sequence:

The student learns:

- the picture's name
- to say what picture is represented by each letter.
- to identify each picture by the initial sound only
- to independently say the initial sound of each picture when shown it
- to say the initial sound of each picture when simply shown the letter to which it is matched.

**At this point they will know the link between the letter and the sound/s it represents.**

Each of these steps builds on the one before and gives the child a rich visual context which reinforces their memory.

## The Learning Climate.

- The activities suggested should be fun and presented as a game.
- If your child is not interested in undertaking the activity do not force the issue.
- Short sessions of five or ten minutes are the best
- Only a few cards have to be used at a time, this way your child will feel successful.
- Each time your child gets a task right they should be encouraged by saying such things as, "Well done. That's clever. That's good thinking. You're a fast learner."
- The letters can be learnt in any order.
- If they find it hard to make a correct link try to find stronger clues to help them memorise the sound or letter.

For example if a child has trouble remembering "tap" when they see the tap picture (they might say water instead) You could say "Touch the card and make out to turn on the tap" Once they do you can start jumping up and down yelling "Quick, quick, turn off the tap, water is going every where"

After doing this a few times the student will, in all probability, have no trouble linking the tap picture with the correct response because you have given them a strong memorable response.

**The more humorous, exaggerated, active or ridiculous, something is the easier it is to remember.**

# Suggested Teaching Sequence.

## Activity 1:

Learning the picture names.

- Show the student the cards and point out that there is a picture on one side and a letter on the other side. Tell them that letters are the shapes we use when we read and write.
- Show the student the pictures on the cards and **tell** them what they represent saying eg. "When you see this picture you have to say ELEPHANT" "When you see this picture you have to say JUMP" "When you see this picture you have to say ROSE" etc.
- Once you have shown them all the cards ask them to try and respond to the pictures on the cards  
As the child responds sort the cards into two piles.
  - Those that they could correctly say immediately. eg. "Elephant, apple"
  - those they couldn't remember, paused over or had to think about eg they might have trouble with "vampire, cup, jump, rose."
- Now practice the cards they were unsure of e.g. "Can you find the cup card?" or "You ask me to find a card" here the child reverses roles and the element of game play is reinforced.

## Check out their Learning

- When flipping through the cards they should be able to instantly say the word the picture represents.

### **STOP HERE!**

Don't do the next activity until this one has been practiced a few times and your child feels 100% confident.

Reinforce how clever they were learning to remember what they have.

**Activity 2:** Learning to say what picture is represented by each letter.

- Choose about four or five cards at a time.
- Have the child look at the letter on a card and then turn the card over. Point out how each letter transforms into a picture eg
  - "The "e" has changed into the elephant's head"
  - "The "t" has changed into a tap with water pouring out it"
  - "The "V" is a vampire's eyebrows."

**Note: Always refer to the letter by its sound not its name.**

- Now turn the cards over and ask if they can guess which letter turns into which picture eg. Point to the "t" and ask
  - "What does this letter turn into?"
  - If the child doesn't know have them turn it over and see.

Then point out again the letters transformation "See the water comes out the "t" just here, its a tap."

- Play this game firstly with letters that are easy to remember like "s" for snake and "m" for mouse.

## Play some guessing games.

- Put down three cards with the letter facing up and ask your child to guess which one turns into a particular picture, eg "Which one turns into elephant?"
- If your child reaches for the "f" card say "That letter doesn't change into an elephant's trunk, it changes into a fishing rod. Can you find the letter that has an elephants trunk? Choose another one."

When they choose the “e” have them turn it over and ask “Where is the trunk?” to reinforce the transformation of the letter. Then congratulate them on finding it successfully.

### **Check Out their learning.**

When your child can say the name of the picture, when simply shown the letter, they have mastered this task. When your child sees the “t” they should respond by saying “tap.”

**Activity 3.** Identifying each picture only by the initial sound.

Some students have real difficulty identifying the initial sound at the beginning of a word so this process may take longer than the other tasks. Only do about three or four sounds at a time.

Hold up a card eg the snake card, and as you show it to your child say the name of the picture emphasising the first sound eg “Ssssssnake, can you hear the first sound in snake? The sound is Ssss. You say Ssss for snake.”

Go through about three cards like this identifying the initial sound for the child. Next place the picture cards face up and tell your child you will now only make the first sound and they have to guess what picture it goes with.

Demonstrate how to do this by saying “Mmmmm for mouse” and then pointing to the mouse picture.

Now just say “Mmmmm” and ask them to touch the picture you are thinking of.

If they get it right say to them “That’s right, ‘Mouse, Mmmmm for mouse,’ now you say “Mmmmm for mouse.” Once they have said “Mmmmm for mouse” have them try another card.

If they can't identify a pictures initial sound correctly eg they might point to the fishing

rod as you say “Mmmmm” respond by saying “That’s “Fffffffishing rod, Fishing rod start with the Ffff sound. Try again, Mmmmmmm for...””  
Keep going until they find the right card.

### **Check out their learning**

When you say a sound eg. “Mmmmmmm” they can find the correct picture and say the sentence “Mmmmm for mouse.”

**Activity 4.** Learning to independently say the initial sound each picture represents.

Once your child can identify the pictures by hearing their initial sounds it is time for them to learn to independently say the sound when they see the picture.

Once again start with a few cards. Those they find easy to remember.

Model what you want them to do. eg point to the mouse picture and say “ Mouse, Mmmmm for mouse” Then have them do it. Once they have practiced about four cards, have them try to say the sentence when they point to a card of their choice. Once they can do this play “Touch” with them.

### **Touch**

Have your child say a sound just a sound eg “Mmmm” and then you both race to touch it first. The winner gets to keep it in their pile.

They should now be able to point to the picture and just say the initial sound.

### **Check out their learning**

They have mastered a card when they can point to a picture and say the initial sound and what it stands for eg “Mmmmmmm for mouse”

### Activity 5:

Saying the initial sound of each picture when simply shown the letter to which it is matched.

After you child masters the pervious activity you tell them you are going to get even trickier and ask them to do exactly the same task as before but with the letter as their clue instead of the whole picture.

Once more model the process for you child. eg point to the letter "S" and say "Ssssss for snake."

Turn the card over to check it is correct.

Using a few cards at a time have your child learn to do this.

Once they can do this ask them to try to just say the sound when they see the letter and not the picture name first.

## They now know their letter sounds. Have a Celebration !

### Why use this process?

The good thing about going through this process is that, if for example, your child later sees the letter "M" and can't remember what sound it represents you can ask them a series of questions to assist them to remember the answer independently.

### This sequence of questions reinforces their learning

- "What picture does the letter turn into?  
Answer: "A mouse"
- "What sound does mouse start with?  
Answer: "Mmmmm"

- "Then what is the letter?"  
Answer "Mmmmm"

If at any stage they can't answer a question you can work out what activity they need to go back and practice.

### I hope you enjoy undertaking these activities with your child.

### The next step.

After your child can identify the letters they have to learn to write them.

Once more having picture shapes as a clue to each letter makes this task easier.

