

Name Games

Supplies: vary according to chosen activity

When your child seems ready to learn the ABCs, you might wonder, “Where do I start?” The best letters to begin with are those that have the most meaning for your child. Begin with the letters in their first name. You can work on middle and last names, after some mastery of the first name has been accomplished.

Try a few of the activities listed below with your child. Repeat the activities until he or she can do them independently. Then, create a “Name Games” folder for storing the games. When making dinner or during your child’s “down time,” encourage your youngster to play some name games!

Hint: Preschoolers LOVE getting “homework,” especially if they have an older sibling or friend who has homework. Tell your preschooler that this is his homework, and he will feel very mature with his new responsibility!

- Trace It! On a strip of file folder (or tag board), write your child’s name. Have him trace his name with a highlighter.
- Recognize It! Write your child’s name and several other names on separate index cards. Emphasizing the sounds in his name, help him practice identifying and selecting his name card from the group.
- Color It! Write his name in bubble letters on tag board. Have your child color in the letters.
- Puzzle It! Write your child’s name on a file folder. Cut apart the letters (using different zigzag cuts). Let your child put together his name puzzle daily.
- Dot It! Write your child’s name on manuscript paper in dots. In other words, instead of writing the letters without lifting your pencil, you will write the letters with tiny dots. The dots should be fairly close together. Your child will trace these letters from dot to dot until the letter is written. I like to make copies of this paper so I don’t have to recreate it each time.
- Sing It! Pick a familiar childhood song (like Bing-o) and sing using the letters of your child’s name.
- Picture It! Use a photo of your child and glue it to a folder. Write his full name under the photograph and use the folder to hold all Name Games.
- Glue It! Write your child’s name with puffy or glitter glue. After it dries, have him move his finger over the letters so he can get used to the direction of the writing movements.
- Write It! When the opportunity presents itself, let your child write his name during real life activities (thank you notes, letters, on pictures he’s drawn, etc.) If he’s unable to write his whole name, have him write the first letter. You can finish writing it so he can see what his entire name looks like.

- Outline It! Write your child's name and ask him to outline it with a marker or highlighter. Seeing the outlined shape in color gives his mind a visual approximation of the dimensions his writing should mimic. When he appears ready, draw only the name outline and encourage him to write his name inside.
- Dash It! Write your child's name in its entirety. Under that, write his name omitting the first letter (put a dash/line there instead.) Next, write his name omitting the first two letters (again substituting with dashes). Repeat this until the writing of his name is all dashes. Encourage your little learner to fill in the missing letters.

Eventually you will want to introduce the spelling of your child's middle and last names too. Don't rush it or you'll risk overwhelming him! Keep in mind that learning to spell nicknames is okay; however, every child should always learn the proper spelling of his or her given name.