



**C.I.R.C.L.E.  
UT - HOUSTON**

**Encouraging Literacy Using the  
"Dollar Store"**

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## **ACTIVITY 1 TACTILE LETTERS**

Give your child the opportunity to write/make letters in various mediums.

Write in:

- shaving cream
- salt
- paint
- pudding

Make letters from:

- playdough
- pipecleaners
- blocks

Put a large letter on the floor with masking tape. Let your child

- walk it
- hop it
- crawl it
- drive a small car on it

Cut out or write a letter on construction paper. Let your child glue on items that begin with that letter.

- buttons on B
- noodles on N
- cotton balls on C

## **ACTIVITY 2 LETTER DETECTIVE**

- Give your child a magnifying glass to look for letters around the house. Tell him he is a letter detective.

## **ACTIVITY 3 "EYE" SPY**

- Give your child a pair of silly glasses (sunglasses, frames without the lens, etc.)
- Have him play "eye" spy by looking around the house for letters or words.

## **ACTIVITY 4 BURIED LETTERS**

- Fill a dishpan half full of sand.
- Bury some plastic letters in the sand

- Have your child dig for them. Have him name them as he discovers them, or dig for a specific letter.

## **ACTIVITY 5 CATCH A LETTER**

- Fill a dishpan half full of water.
- Add plastic or sponge letters
- Give your child a small fish net to catch and then name the letters.

## **ACTIVITY 6 FISHING FOR LETTERS**

- Make a fishing pole from a dowel and yarn.
- Tie a magnet on the end.
- Cut fish shapes from construction paper and let your child decorate them.
- Write a letter on each one.
- Put a paper clip on the fish where the mouth would be.
- Spread the fish on the floor.
- Let your child catch a letter and tell you what it is.

## **ACTIVITY 7 LETTER SORTING**

- Give your child a handful of plastic letters.
- Have him look to see how they are alike.
- Find: letters with straight lines / slanted lines/ curved lines/ tails/ humps/ etc.

## **ACTIVITY 8 ALPHABET HOKEY POKEY**

- Write a letter on several index cards, and spread them out on the floor.
- Call out a letter.
- Have your child find the letter and dance with it.

You put the letter "M" in.  
You put the letter "M" out.  
You put the letter "M" in,  
And you shake it all about.  
You do the Hokey Pokey and  
You turn yourself around.  
That's what it's all about.

## **ACTIVITY 9 WIGGLE WORMS**

- Write the words Wiggle Worms on a gift bag.

- Inside, put index cards cut in half with a letter printed on each one.
- Draw a worm on several cards, and add them to the bag.
- Let your child close his eyes, reach into the bag, and draw out a card.
- If it is a letter, he names it. If it is a worm, he screams wiggle worm, and you both wiggle.
- ❖ This can be done with turkey stickers at Thanksgiving (gobble, gobble), Santa stickers at Christmas (Ho, Ho, Ho), or any other item your child is interested in.

## **ACTIVITY 10 POINTERS**

There are a variety of items that your child can use as pointers. Allow him to point out letters or words in books, newspapers, magazines, etc.

Items to use for pointers:

- unsharpened pencils
- backscratchers
- wooden spoons
- magic wands
- tongue depressors with the tip dipped in glue then glitter
- dowel rods with Velcro on the end / attach any small item with velcro (a plastic insect, flower, etc.)

## **ACTIVITY 11 HIGHLIGHT IT!**

- Buy a roll of removable book covers.
- Cut out some small pieces.
- Have your child find a specific letter or word in a book, chart, etc. and highlight it.

## **ACTIVITY 12 BEAN BAG TOSS**

- Write letters in random order on a shower curtain.
- Provide your child with a beanbag.
- Have him throw the beanbag and name the letter that it lands on.

## **ACTIVITY 13 ENVIRONMENTAL PRINT**

Environmental print is the print we recognize from the colors, pictures, and shapes that surround it. This is usually the first print a child recognizes. We see it all around us (on labels on food and clothing, logos on stores and restaurants, and signs)

There are a variety of activities to do with environmental print

- Look at actual food items, store ads, coupons, etc.
- Use actual labels to match, find a specific letter, cut apart to make a puzzle, etc.
- Make books using environmental print:
  - “My Favorite Restaurants”
  - “My Favorite Cereals”
  - “My ABC Book”
- Make an “ I Can Read So Many Things” book:
  - I can read Cheetos.
  - I can read M&M's, etc.
  - Glue the logo of the item on each page.

## **ACTIVITY 14 SHAKE IT**

- Fill empty film containers with a variety of materials: beans, rice, paperclips, keys, marbles, etc.
- Glue an additional object on to an index card.
- Have your child shake the container, listen for the sound, and place the container by the correct object.
- Additional games:
  - find the loudest/softest sound
  - fill two containers with the same material, and have your child match each pair that sounds the same.

## **ACTIVITY 15 THUMBS UP**

- Glue two pictures on an index card.
- Make some of the cards with rhyming pictures and some without.
- Show them to your child and say the two words.
- If the words rhyme, your child puts his thumb up.
- If the words do not rhyme, your child puts his thumb down.

## **ACTIVITY 16 RHYMING BASKETS**

- Find a variety of objects that rhyme:
  - van/fan
  - chime/dime
  - cat/hat
  - bone/phone
  - rock/sock
  - car/star

Have your child choose an object from the basket, say the name, and then search for the one that rhymes.

## **ACTIVITY 17 ALLITERATION FUN**

- Choose a small stuffed animal, and help your child give it a name to match its beginning sound (Peggy Pig).
- Assist your child in making up a story about the animal using as many of the same letter sounds as possible.

This is Peggy Pig. She likes to eat pizza, popcorn, pickles, and peaches. Her favorite colors are purple and pink.

## **ACTIVITY 18 SOUND SURPRISE**

- Put several objects starting with the same sound in a "surprise bag".
- Have your child take an item out of the bag and name it.
- Have him do this with each item, and try to guess the beginning sound.

## **ACTIVITY 19 MARACA MUSIC**

- Glue two pictures onto an index card.
- Put some pictures with the same beginning sound, and some with different sounds.
- Say the two words and have your child shake the maracas if the words begin with the same sound.
- He will keep it "silent" if the beginning sounds are different.

## **ACTIVITY 20 PASS THE PAIL**

- Put a variety of objects in a sand pail.
- Have your child choose an object, say its name. And listen for the beats or syllables.
- Help your child clap the beats or syllables for each word.

sun glass es (3)

flow er(2)

pen cil(2)

dog(1)

din o saur(3)

ap ple(2)

## **ACTIVITY 21 HOW MANY WORDS?**

- Give your child 4-5 poker chips or small blocks.

Say a short sentence such as, "I like pizza."

Have your child repeat the sentence, moving a chip for each word.

## ACTIVITY 22 MYSTERY WORDS

- Put several plastic animals into a bag.
- Tell your child they must listen carefully for the mystery word.
- Say the word stretching out the sounds:  
/c/ /a/ /t/  
/d/ /o/ /g/  
/d/ /u/ /ck/  
/p/ /i/ /g/
- After you say each word, give your child an opportunity to figure out the "mystery".
- When he guesses the word, pull out the animal and let him see if he is correct.

## ACTIVITY 23 WRITING CORNER

Give your child many opportunities to write. Change materials as needed to increase his motivation.

Things to write on:

- variety of colored paper
- stationary
- receipts
- post it notes
- clipboards with paper
- old forms

Things to write with:

- markers
- pens
- pencils
- crayons
- chalk (white and colored)
- "squiggle" pens

Accessories:

- envelopes
- tape
- ruler
- hole punch
- scissors
- junk mail
- catalogs

## **ACTIVITY 24 JOURNAL WRITING**

- Allow your child to purchase a special notebook/folder.
- Put your child's name on the front (John's Journal).
- Allow him to write and draw about his experiences.
- You may want to write what he says about his page.

## **ACTIVITY 25 MESSAGE BOARD**

- Provide a dry erase board for your child to leave family members important messages.
- Encourage him to "read" the messages to them.

## **ACTIVITY 26 My Very Own Words**

As your child begins to write and ask questions about spelling, have him make a collection of his own special words.

- Your child requests a word.
- You write the word on a 3X5 index card.
- Your child may draw or glue on a picture to illustrate the word.
- Words can be placed on a metal ring and kept in a special place.
- Your child may refer to these words for reading or writing.
- Label the front with his name (Justin's Very Own Words).

## **ACTIVITY 27 MAKING BOOKS**

Make a variety of books with your child:

### **Baggie book**

- Cut construction paper to fit in the bag.
- Allow your child to draw pictures on the pages.
- You may want to write what he tells you about each picture on the page.
- Attach 4-6 bags together to create a book.
- Encourage your child to "read" the book.

### **Lunch Sack Book**

- Take 4-6 lunch sacks and fold over the bottom of each sack.
- Lift the bottom and glue or draw a picture so it is hidden under the bottom flap.
- Write the word on the left side of the sack.
- Place the sacks on top of each other and attach with a stapler, brads, etc.



### **Tag Along Book**

- Fold several sheets of paper together and staple to make a book.
- Let your child write or draw pictures in the book.
- Encourage them to write a title and their name as the "author" on the front.
- Punch two holes near the staples and attach a pipe cleaner for the handle.
- This book can "tag along" with your child.

### **ACTIVITY 28 Picture Box**

- Place cut outs of interesting pictures from magazines.
- Have your child glue pictures on paper and write and or dictate about the picture.

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