

Literacy Activities for Learning Mats using the town, house, camping, alphabet, and rhyming mats

Three important literacy skill areas that help children prepare for kindergarten are:

- vocabulary and language,
- sound awareness (or phonological awareness),
- and print awareness.

The following activities, using the interactive learning mats, support your child's growth in these areas. Have FUN with your child by adjusting and expanding these activities as needed, while you help your child build both literacy and social skills. Don't make the activities too difficult or your child will not want to engage. You want to gradually build these skills. The more success your child feels, the more your child will want to use the mats. In fact, to get started, just let your child play with the materials for a while.

Vocabulary and Language:

Vocabulary and language development are related to later reading skills, and school success in general. Children need these skills to communicate – both to comprehend what they hear and to express themselves. The following activities will help your child build those skills.

- **Describe a Scene:** Have your child choose a mat and take turns describing things on the mat. For example, if you are describing the camping mat you might say, "There is a red tent and a long, green canoe (pointing at these objects). What do you see?" When you describe things you see, use words to extend your child's vocabulary such as "This canoe is narrow. That means it is not very wide and big like the table. It is skinny or thin. The tree trunk is also narrow, compared to the wide tent."
- **Tell a Story:** Use a mat to start a story that you and your child create together. For example, on the house mat there is a dog. You might start with: "Once upon a time there was a cute, brown dog named Fred. He wanted..." Help your child use this story starter to invent a story with a beginning, middle, and end. The story can either be oral or you can write it down. Have fun being creative! Here are other story starter examples:
 - One beautiful, sunny day a little frog name Miguel was sitting on a log. He decided to go on a grand adventure. So, he...
 - Yesterday morning, three naughty squirrels got together and hatched a plan. The first one said...
 - Early one lazy, summer morning, a sleek, black cat appeared on my doorstep. She wanted...
- **Guess the Picture** Give your child descriptive word clues for an item pictured on the mat. For example, "I see something that is tall, leafy, and gives shade." (a tree)
- **Vocabulary:** Use prepositions such as: *in, on, over, under, next to, beside, above, below*. On the house mat, you might have your child use a frog and place it above the mailbox, under the tree, over the fence, on the dog, next to the tree, beside the bike, below the flowers, in the

yard, etc. Tell a story in which the frog goes on an adventure all over the mat using these words.

Sound Awareness:

Sound awareness, also known as phonological awareness, is one of the strongest predictors of later reading success. It is the ability to recognize the sounds in spoken language. Rhyming, clapping syllables, and identifying sounds you hear in words are all part of phonological awareness.

- **Counting Syllables:** Have fun counting syllables of the things you see on the mat with your child. For example, say the word “mailbox” and clap as you say it: mail-box. Try clapping all things on the mat. Then challenge your child to find other words with one, two, or three syllables. Examples: dog (one syllable), sidewalk (two syllables), library (three syllables).
- **Fish on a Dish:** The directions for this game are printed on the rhyming mat.
- **Rhyming:** Explain to your child that rhyming words sound *almost* the same, and give many examples using words that rhyme with pictures on the mat. For example, log and dog. Then using a mat, play “I Spy.” Take turns saying, “I spy something that rhymes with log” (or whatever picture you are targeting). Help your child find something that rhymes with log (dog). Here are suggestions to get started: bee (tree), mouse (house), toad (road), bat (cat), run (sun), tall (ball). You can even use made-up words. For example, I see something that rhymes with shmouse (house).
- **Beginning sounds:** Point to a picture on the mat and exaggerate the beginning sound as you say it. (example: ssssssslide) Have your child point to different pictures and say the words, emphasizing the beginning sound. Then point to two pictures as you say the names of the pictures, such as “bicycle” and “ball,” while exaggerating the beginning sound of each word. Ask your child to give you a “thumbs up” if the words start with the same sound or a “thumbs down” if they don’t. You can also play a game in which you say a word and have your child find a picture of something that begins with the same sound. Eventually do the same with ending sounds or middle sounds (example: house ends with the sound ssssssssssss).

Print Awareness:

To learn to read, children need to be able to recognize that letters and print have meaning. These activities help with letter naming and writing. **There are many games already listed on the ABC mat!**

- **Signs:** Point and read the signs on the town mat to your child. Ask your child if all signs use letters. Talk about signs you have seen and using Post-it notes make signs with your child for the mats, using pictures and/or letters and symbols. Example: Make a “No swimming” sign for the pond or “Ducks welcome.”
- **“Race Car Game:”** On the back of the house mat is a game board. Using a dry erase marker, write a letter from your child’s name in each box on one side, and the letters of your name on the other. Say each letter as you write it. Then ask your child to point to a letter as you say it.



Make it into a game with a die and game marker (old marker lids work well or use a frog). Roll the die and move to that space, saying each letter as you pass it. For example, if you roll a 3, you read 3 letters. Add more letters as your child learns them. For added challenge, say the name of the letter and the sound it makes. The first one to the stop sign gets to stand up and shout “yippee” and then the other person gets to go first. 😊

If your child can read simple words, you can add simple words to the spaces instead of letters.

- Alphabet Card Match/Beginning Sounds: Make some cards with an alphabet letter on each card. Mix them up and make a stack. Have your child draw a card from the stack, say the name of the letter and/or the sound the letter makes, and then find a picture on the mat that starts with the letter/sound. If there is not a picture on the mat for a letter, have your child draw a picture of something that starts with that letter that could be added to the mat. For example, if the child picks a card with the letter **a** on it and there is no picture on the mat to match, have your child draw something that starts with **a**, such as an apple.
 - Make it easier by starting out with letters easily found on that mat. For example, d, h, t, g, f, c, b, s, m have a corresponding picture on the house mat.
 - To make it much more challenging, match the card to the ending sound for each picture (e.g. dog ends with g).
- Letter Writing: Use a dry erase marker and show your child how to write the beginning letter next to each picture. For example, write the letter **h** on the house. Eventually, have your child try a picture or two. To make it much more challenging, you can do the same with ending sounds or write the beginning and ending sound. For example, write the letter **d** and **g** next to the dog. Your child might even be able to write the whole word for simple words such as dog, cat, sun, and box! At this stage of writing development, you want to encourage your child to write the sounds they hear. For example, a child might write “sci or ski” for the word sky, showing you that your child knows the sounds in the word. Celebrate this! Your child has not learned all the formal spellings yet. That will come!

For more supplies for the learning mats, please visit: <https://www.lakeshorelearning.com/>

For more ideas: Scan this QR code or visit the link <https://youtu.be/zz16UbiamKA>

