



Activities for Parents

Set the Table

Preparation: Put 10–15 small objects into a paper bag. Put an identical set of objects in a second paper bag. Each bag should contain one of each object. (Examples: crayon, spool of thread, eraser, paper clip, plastic spoon, baseball card, penny)

Directions: Sit side-by-side with your child at a table. Take out 3–4 objects from one bag and arrange them in a design. Ask your child to take out the same objects from the other bag and copy your design. When he is finished, ask, “Is your design the same as mine?” If not, ask him to make it the same. Then change roles. Let your child arrange a design using 3 or 4 objects from his bag, and then you copy it.

More challenging: Arrange a design with 5 or 6 objects.

Still more challenging: Arrange a design with 3 or more objects and let your child look at it. Next, tell your child to close his eyes while you make one or two changes. Then have him open his eyes. Tell him how many changes you made and let him tell you what they are. Change roles.

First Sound, Last Sound

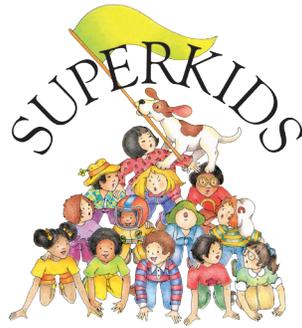
Directions: Draw the grid below on a sheet of paper and label the columns *First* and *Last*. Give your child the grid and about 6 small objects to use as markers. (Examples: raisins, peanuts, buttons) Say a word and then say the first or last sound in that word. Ask your child to put a marker under *First* if the sound is heard at the beginning of the word or under *Last* if the sound is heard at the end of the word.

First	Last

Examples: pudding, /p/ mouse, /s/ child, /ch/
 safe, /f/ pocket, /t/ kangaroo, /k/

Variation: Draw a three-column grid and label the columns *First*, *Middle*, and *Last*.

Examples: notebook, /b/ morning, /m/ cover /v/
 green /ee/ sharp /p/ table /t/



Alphabet Games

Letter Hop: Using chalk, draw a large circle on your sidewalk or driveway. Then write letters—alphabetically or randomly—inside the circle. Tell your child to hop on a letter and have her name the letter. **Variation:** Form a hopscotch pattern with one letter in each box. Have your child name the letter as she hops on a box. Or have her toss a beanbag and then name the letter in the box it lands on.

Big Voice, Little Voice: Hide a pair of capital and lowercase letters behind your back. Show one of the letters. Tell your child that if the letter you show is a capital letter, she should say its name in a big, loud voice. If it is a lowercase letter, she should softly whisper its name.

Letter Hunt: Name a letter and have your child point out places where she sees the letter in books, on calendars, on notes, and so on. You can give her a pointer or laser light as a “letter finder.”

Letter Concentration: Gather or make cards for pairs of capital and lowercase letters. Mix up the cards and spread them out facedown on a table. Have your child choose two cards, name the letters they show, and tell if they “match” (are capital and lowercase forms of the same letter). If so, she keeps the pair. If not, she returns the cards facedown. Play until all letters are matched.

Same and Different

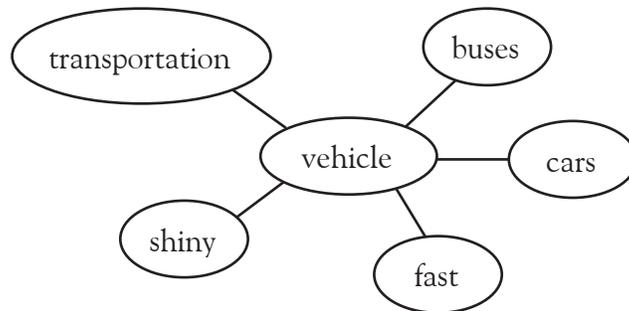
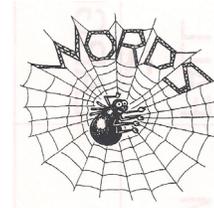
Directions: Cut a sheet of paper into strips. Draw a line down the middle of each strip to separate it into two sides. Write a word (nonsense word, actual word, spelling word) on each side of the strips. For some strips, write the same word on both sides. For other strips, write a different word on each side. Or write a word on one side and then scramble the letters and write the scrambled version on the other side. For each strip, ask your child, “Are the letters on each side the same or different?”

fan	afn	went	want
tiger	tiger	tires	tires



Word Web

Directions: Choose a word, such as *vehicle*, and write it in the center of a sheet of paper. Then ask your child to think of other words that tell more about it. For the word *vehicle*, your child might think of words for other types of vehicles (*buses, cars, trucks, boats*), words for uses of vehicles (*transportation, recreation*), and words that describe how vehicles look and move (*huge, fast, shiny*). Then ask your child to write the words on the sheet and connect them to the main word. This will show your child how the words are linked to the main word and form a “word web.”



Synonym Bingo

pick	cut	buy	slide
slim	fall	jump	ring
old	large	quiet	penny
clean	tell	cause	power

Clues: For words in row 1—select, sever, purchase, glide; row 2—slender, plummet, leap, encircle; row 3—ancient, humungous, silent, currency; row 4—tidy, inform, instigate, brawn

Variations: Synonym Matching, Antonym Bingo



Storybook Dice

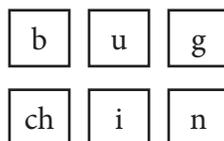
Directions: Each player takes a turn rolling two dice. The player who rolled the dice answers the numbered comprehension question(s) below that corresponds to the number he rolled. Let children look at the book or story to answer questions. Many of the questions don't have a specific right or wrong answer. Play is complete when all the questions have been answered.

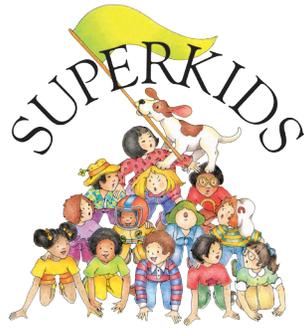
1. What is the title (name) of the story or book?
2. Who wrote the story?
3. What do you think is the most important part of the story?
4. What part of the story did you like best?
5. What was the mood of the story: funny or serious, happy or sad, scary or comforting? Explain your answer or give an example from the story.
6. What is the setting of the story? (When and where did it happen?)
7. Why do you think _____ did _____? (Another player makes up a why question.)
8. What kind of person was _____ at the beginning of the story and at the end? (Another player chooses a character.)
9. Would you like a friend to hear or read this story? Why or why not?
10. Did you learn anything new from this story? What did you learn?
11. Which character did you like best? Which character did you like the least?
12. Did you like the way the story ended? If not, can you think of a better ending?

Spelling Scramble

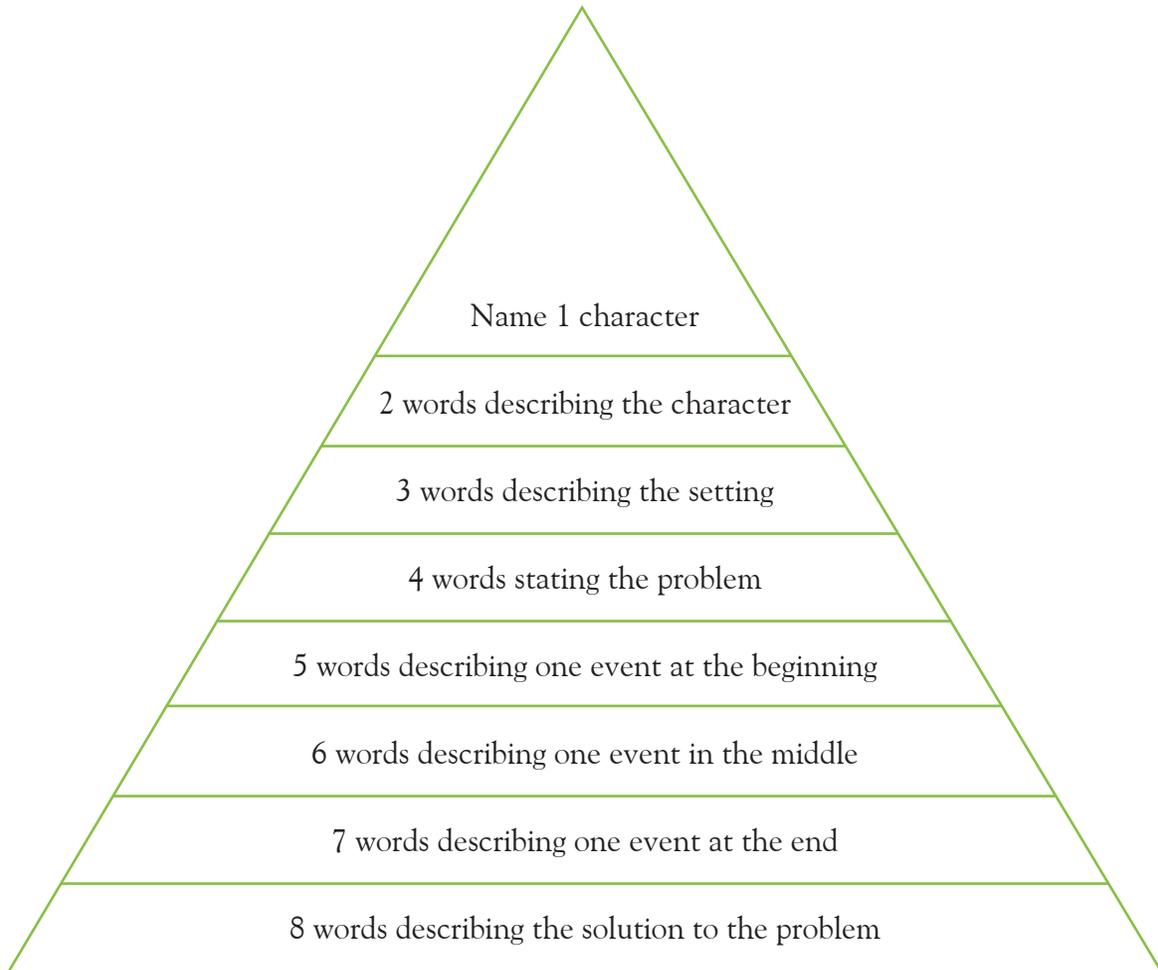
Directions: Write a word on a sheet of paper and cut the letters apart. Mix the letters and have your child spell the word by putting the letters in order.

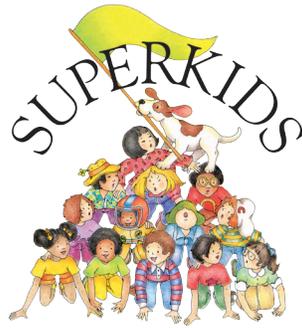
Variation: Use plastic, foam, or magnetic letters. Or use letters from a Scrabble® game.





Story Pyramid





Labels, Labels Everywhere

Purpose: For a pre-kindergartner or a kindergartner, the parent does the writing to help the child understand that print represents language. For a first or second grader, the child can write the letter-sounds she knows to help her learn letter-sounds and spelling.

Label the House: Put labels all over your house. Start in the kitchen—sink, oven, refrigerator, cupboard, and so on. Don't be surprised if your child wants to label everything in your house. From time to time, take a reading tour of your home.

Photo Labels: Choose a photograph from a magazine or calendar, such as a photo from an ad. Talk with your child for a while about the details of the picture. Then label as many things in the picture as possible, such as items of clothing, colors you see, background, and so on.

Variation: See It, Name It: Take turns naming aloud all the objects you can see from wherever you are sitting (at home, from your car, and so on). This is “mentally labeling” objects.