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# letter bingo

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Play is how children learn. Through play children are able to learn many basic concepts that they need to understand more complex ideas and facts. Parents of young children should take the time to play and talk with them. Parents can guide the child to many different kinds of valuable play.

However, parents need to remember that each child is special and unique. Even though children have some characteristics in common, each is a separate individual. Every child has his or her own rate of growth and development, with different abilities in which he or she excels.

Parents are a child's first teachers. They should not wait until a child goes to school to begin teaching about language and reading. Parents can help by playing games that teach children these skills.

There are many games that can be played with children to help them learn about letters. **Letter Bingo** has long been a favorite game.

## Description

To play **Letter Bingo** you will need letters and game cards. For the letters, use one set of alphabet letters you made for the letter board game (HD591-Q).

To make the bingo game cards cut out several 4" x 6" rectangles. Use sturdy paper, poster board, card-

board, or wood. Cut enough rectangles to make a number of game cards.

With a felt-tip marker and a ruler divide the card into six squares. In each square, write a different lower case letter. Be sure to use all the letters in the alphabet and make sure each game card is different. Clear contact paper, shelving paper, or laminate can be used to cover the game cards so they will last longer.

You will also need buttons, coins, or macaroni to place on the squares when you are playing.

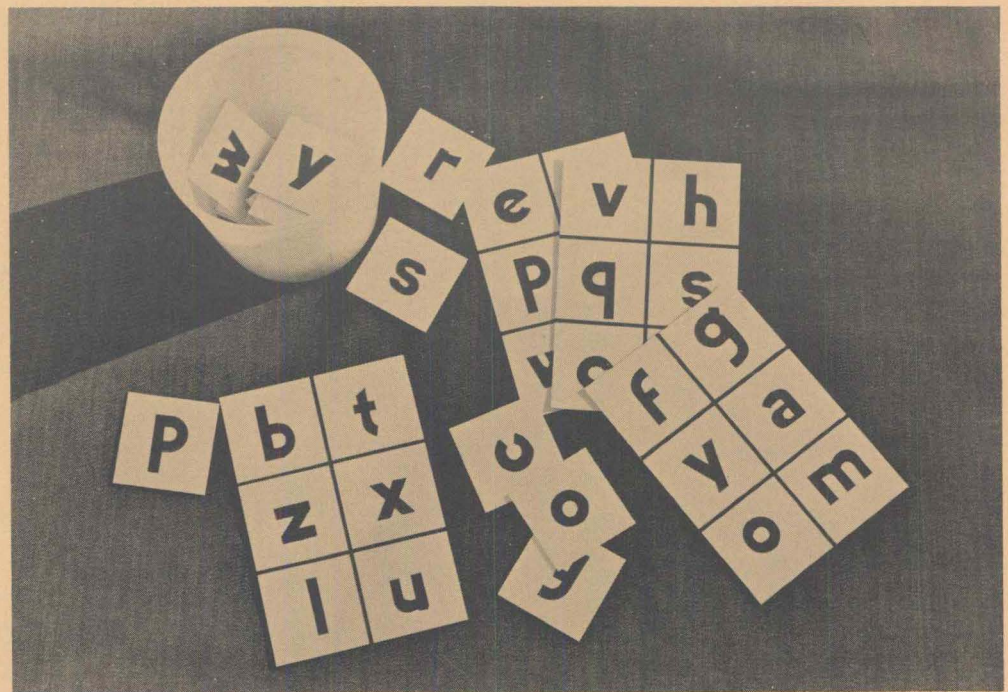
## Purpose

**Letter Bingo** provides a fun way for children to learn and practice identifying letters. It also helps the child learn to distinguish between different letters.

## Letter Bingo

Begin playing **Letter Bingo** by placing all the letters in a large bowl. Then give one game card to the child and one to yourself.

Draw out one letter from the bowl. Ask the child, "What is the letter?" If the child correctly identifies the letter say, "Yes, this is the letter *k* (or whichever



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letter you have drawn). If the child is incorrect, simply say, "This is the letter *k*."

Place the letter in front of the child. Ask, "Do you have the letter *k* on your card?" If so, the child places a button or other marker on that square. However, if the letter is not on the child's card, discard the letter and draw another from the bowl.

Play along with the child by using your game card and by following the same rules. To add variety to the game, switch roles with the child and let him or her draw letters from the bowl.

The game continues until someone has all the squares on his or her game card covered.

### Other Letter Games

There are many other games you can play with children that will help them learn about letters.

One game will teach children to match letters with specific sounds, and begin to associate these letters with words. To begin the game, have the child think of a word—for example, the word "monkey."

Then, in lower case letters, print the word on a piece of paper. Ask the child what the first letter of the word is. If the child is correct say, "Yes, the first letter is *m*"; if incorrect simply say, "This is the letter *m*."

Now say to the child, "The letter *m* makes the sound 'm m m m.'" Think of other words that start with *m* and print them below the original word. Show the child how each word starts with *m* and the sound "m m m m."

Continue the game with different words and letters. To add fun take turns thinking of words.

Another game to play is to identify letters in the everyday environment. Our world is full of words and letters. Letters are found in street signs, stores, mail, and even TV commercials.

When you see a street sign ask the child what letter the word starts with. When reading a story, ask the child to identify the letters in a particular word. You can even have the child find certain letters, such as *s* or *g*.

### Summary

Teaching your child about words and letters can be fun and rewarding. **Letter Bingo** is just one of many games that teaches these skills. When you use your imagination you can devise many other games from the world around us.



Written by Dan Weigel, extension human development specialist.



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# letter board

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The preschool years are very important. So much groundwork for later learning begins here. This is the time when foundations for speech, language, and reading are laid. Children learn these skills from their play and from their interaction with their parents.

Language is such a part of children's play. When parents play with their children, they are helping their children to develop and grow. Through reading stories, singing songs, and talking, children learn from their parents. They also learn about themselves and their world.

During the preschool years children learn many skills that will help them when they begin to read. They learn to identify letters and to tell one apart from another. They also realize that words are patterns of letters, and certain patterns stand for certain words.

Parents can help teach their children about letters and words. A simple **Letter Board**, which is easy to make, can help children learn to identify, name, and tell the difference between different letters and patterns of letters.

## Description

The **Letter Board** consists of a large, rectangular board and two sets of lower case alphabet letters from a to z. To make the letter board cut an 8" x 11" rectangle from sturdy paper,

poster board, cardboard, or wood. Using a felt-tip marker and a ruler, divide the rectangle in half lengthwise.

To make the letters, take the same material as above and cut enough 2" x 2" squares for 2 sets of alphabet letters (52 squares).

On each square, with a felt-tip marker, write a lower case letter. Make two squares for each letter.

For extra protection, cover the letter board and the letters with clear contact paper, clear shelving paper, or laminate.

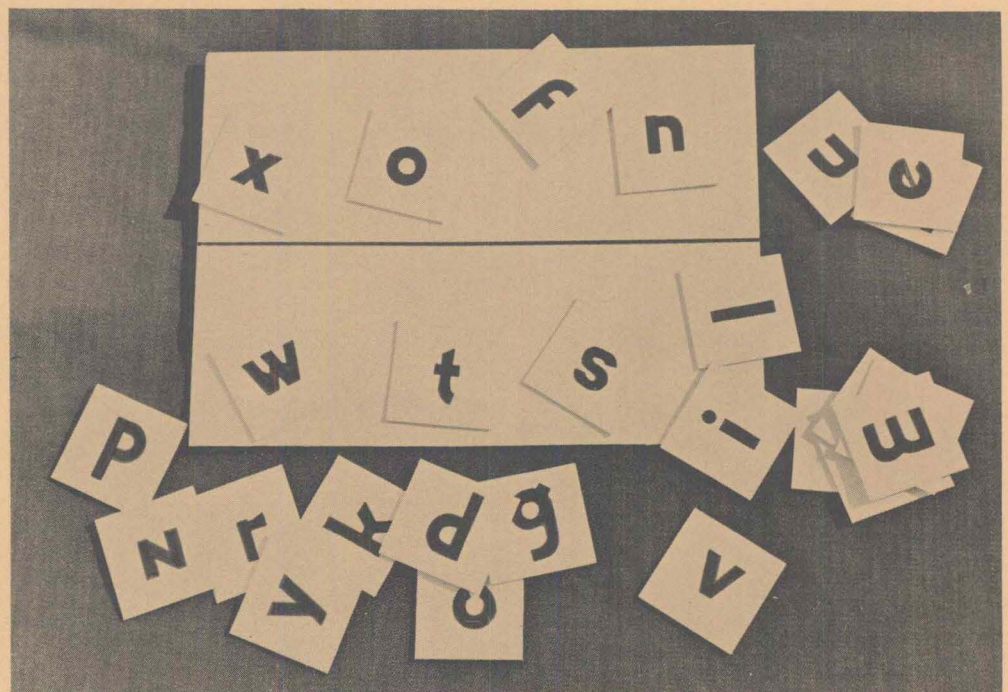
## Purpose

The **Letter Board** is designed to teach children to name and identify letters and to tell the difference between letters and series of letters.

## Game I

A game that uses the **Letter Board** to help children identify and name letters is called letter for sale. In letter for sale the child gathers letters by correctly identifying them.

You are a vendor and the child is a buyer. Begin with one set of letters. For young children, start with just five or six letters. You can add new letters once the child has learned these.



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Place a letter on the top half of the letter board and say, "Letter for sale. Letter for sale. Will you buy my letter?" The child answers, "Yes. I will buy your letter *d*" (or whichever letter you placed on the board).

If the answer is correct the child gets the letter. If the answer is wrong say, "This is the letter *d*." Place it back in your pile to try again.

The game continues until the child has gathered all the letters or until the child becomes bored. If the child loses interest, drop the game until another day. To add variety, change the roles and have the child be the vendor and you be the buyer.

## Game II

This game is planned to help children identify and match letters. Since learning to identify letters is difficult and takes time, select five or six pairs of letters to begin with. Once the child has learned these letters you can gradually add new letter sets.

Start the game by placing a letter on the top half of the letter board. Say to the child, "What is this letter?" If the child is correct say, "Yes, this is the letter *c*." If the child is incorrect simply say, "This is the letter *c*."

Next, place four letters on the bottom half of the board, making sure one of the letters matches the letter on top. Have the child find the letter on the bottom that matches the one on top. If the child has difficulty, go through

each letter on the board and compare them until the child can match the same letters. Continue this game using the other letters to match.

## Game III

Another game is designed to help the child match patterns and series of letters. Again, use only five or six pairs of letters to begin with. You can add sets when the child is ready.

Place a series of three letters on the top half of the letter board. For example, you can place *t*, *c*, and *a* on the board.

Now ask the child to take his or her letters and make the same pattern as yours. If the child is unable to copy

the pattern, say "First put down the *t*, then the *c*, then the *a*."

If the child is able to copy the pattern, make another one using other letters.

This game can continue using various patterns of letters. You can even have the child match simple words, like cat, saw, up, or frog. The child may also develop patterns and combinations and ask you to match them.

## Summary

Recognizing letters and combinations of letters is not easy for the child. It takes time and a lot of practice. The **Letter Board** is a fun way for you to help teach your children about letters.



Written by Dan Weigel, extension human development specialist.



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# equality shapes

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Preschool children are learning constantly. They learn by exploring the world around them—by touching, feeling, doing, playing. Children have an enthusiasm for discovering new ideas and information about their environment.

Parents help their children by finding the time to play with them. By sharing in the play, parents can help their children keep their enthusiasm for learning. Equally important, they have a chance to get to know how their children think and feel.

Through their play, children begin to understand and organize the world. They learn new skills that form the foundations for later learning. By playing, they learn about concepts like same, different, more, less, and equal. For instance, children soon learn when they have fewer trucks than the other children. These concepts are basic to the child's later understanding of math and science.

A game that can be used to teach a child the concepts of more than, less than, and equal to is **Equality Shapes**.

## Description

**Equality Shapes** are four sets of cut out shapes. To make the comparison shapes use a sturdy paper, poster board, cardboard, or wood.

Cut out five hearts, five diamonds, five circles, and five triangles. Cover the

shapes with clear contact paper, shelf paper, or laminate for longer protection.

## Purpose

Several games in which different numbers of shapes are compared follow. These games are designed to promote parent-child interaction and to teach the child relationships of same, more than, less than, and equal to.

## Game I

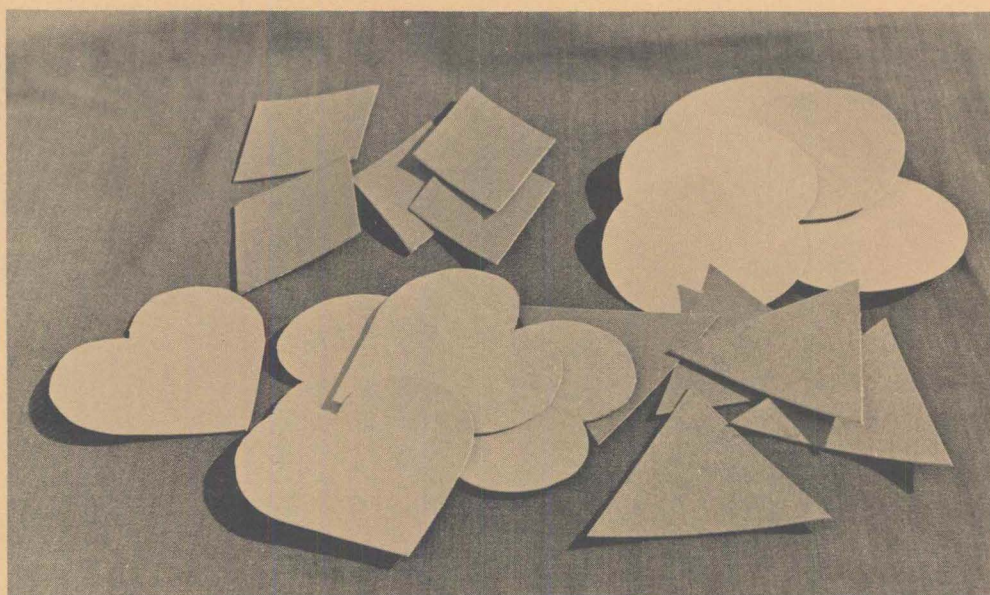
Begin the first game by placing two groups of shapes in front of the child. Put four hearts in one group and two diamonds in the other group. Ask the child to first count the number of hearts, then the number of diamonds. Ask the child, "Are there more hearts or diamonds?"

If the child has difficulty have him or her count each group again. Say to the child, "There are four hearts and two diamonds. There are more hearts than diamonds."

Make two new groups using different shapes. Again ask the child to count the number of shapes in each group. Then ask which group has more.

Continue the game by using different numbers and different groups of shapes. Also, change the rules occasionally and ask which group has fewer.

From time to time put the same number of shapes in each group. Have the child count and then ask which group has more. If the child



Equality Shapes

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says the groups are the same say, "Yes, there are the same number of shapes in each group. We say that the groups are equal."

### Game II

A second game using the **Equality Shapes** has the child make groups that are more than, less than, or equal to groups you have made. This game is more difficult than the first game. To play this game first have the child choose one set of shapes, for example the hearts. Then select another set for yourself, such as the circles.

Start the game by making a group of three circles in front of the child. Say to the child, "Can you make a group that is the same as mine?" If correct, the child should make a group of three hearts.

If the child has difficulty say, "My group has three circles. Can you put out three hearts?" When the child makes this group say, "There are three hearts in your group and three circles in my group. There are the same number in each group."

Once the child can make groups that are equal to yours have him or her make groups that are more than or less than yours. For example, make a group of five circles. Next ask the child, "Can you make a group that is less than mine?" Continue playing using the concepts of less than and more than.

### Game III

A third game is designed to help the child recognize and match patterns of shapes. Start with two sets of shapes—diamonds and triangles.

Make a row by placing a diamond, a triangle, then a diamond in front of the child.

Now ask the child to take his or her shapes and put them in a row like your row. If the child is unable to copy your pattern say, "First put down a diamond, then a triangle, then a diamond."

Once the child is able to match patterns using just two sets of shapes, make another pattern using three sets

of shapes—diamonds, triangles, and hearts. Say to the child, "Put the shapes in a row so that they look like this."

When the child can match patterns using three different shapes, begin making patterns using all four shapes. The child may also want to develop his or her own patterns and ask you to make them.

### Summary

The use of **Equality Shapes** is an easy way of teaching the concepts of more than, less than, and equal to. These skills are needed to understand more advanced math concepts like addition and subtraction.



Written by Dan Weigel, extension human development specialist.



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# number cards

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Children love to play—and they love to learn. For preschool children, play is the main way they learn and come to understand their environment. The skills that are learned through play are needed to expand a child's knowledge of the world.

One skill children learn through play is the concept of numbers. Children learn about numerals, quantity, and counting. Understanding numbers is an important skill that is necessary to succeed in school.

Many parents help their children learn about numbers by talking with them about what they see and by playing games with them. Using **Number Cards** is one way parents can play with their children.

## Description

The **Number Cards** are 10 durable cards with the numerals 1 through 10 on them. To make **Number Cards**, use either poster board or cardboard. Masonite or plywood works well too.

Cut out ten, 4" x 5" rectangles. With a felt-tip marker write a numeral from 1 to 10 on each rectangular card. The **Number Cards** can be used to play many different number games.

To make the **Number Cards** last longer, cover them with clear contact paper, clear shelving paper, or laminate.

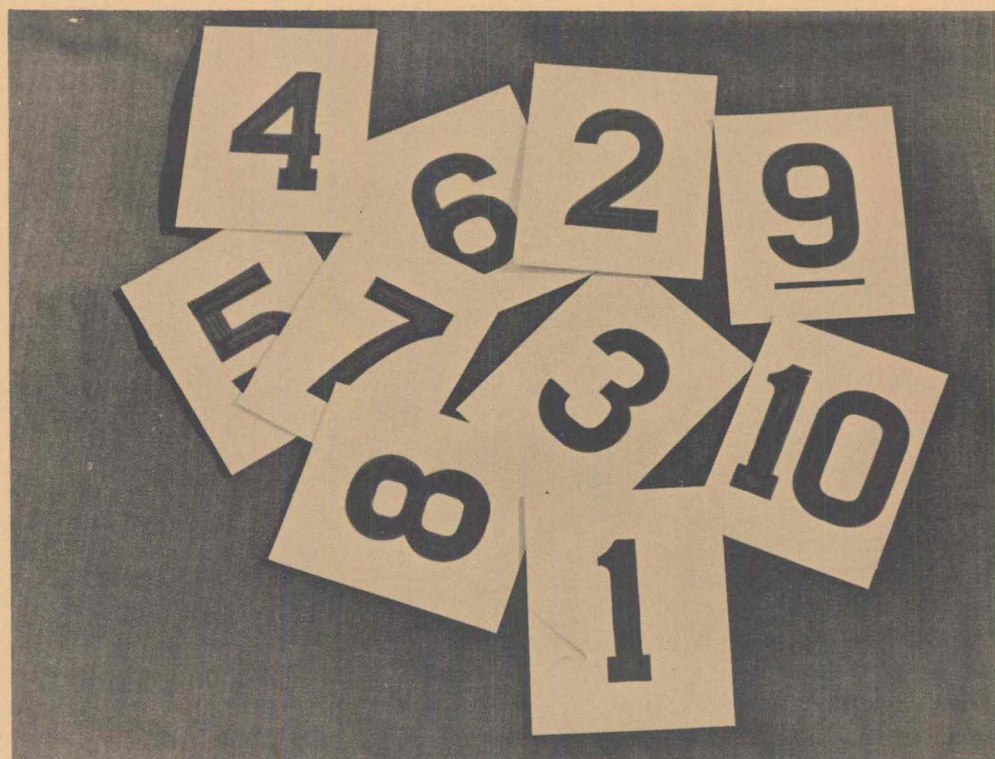
## Purpose

The **Number Cards** help the child learn to identify, name, and count numbers from 1 to 10. They also help the child begin to match numerals with the quantities they represent.

## Game 1

To help the child learn to identify numerals, use the **Number Cards** in a game called number baseball. In number baseball, the child moves around the bases by correctly identifying numerals.

To play number baseball first designate home, first, second, and third bases. These may be a table, sack, chair, block, or anything that is convenient. Begin the game with you being the pitcher and the child the batter. Take the number cards and mix them up. Show a card and have the child tell you what it is. If the answer is correct, the child moves to first base. Show another card and if the child is correct again the child moves to second base. The game continues until the child misses a card or



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reaches home base. When a card is missed, the child starts again from home.

If the child misses a card, rather than saying, "No that is wrong," it is more helpful to say, "This is the number seven." And when the child correctly identifies a numeral say, "Yes, this is the number seven."

## Game II

**Number Cards** can also be used to teach number sequence. Try playing a game called scrambled numbers. Using the number cards, first have the child practice counting the numerals from 1 to 10. Once the child knows the correct sequence, scramble the order of the numbers. First, tell the child you are going to mix up the numbers. Next, have the child close his or her eyes and then switch two numbers, for example, 7 with the 3. Have the child put the numbers back into the correct order. If the child has difficulty, point to one of the numbers out of sequence and say, "This is the number 3. Which number should it follow?"

As the child gets better at this game make it more difficult by scrambling up more and more numbers.

## Game III

Another game helps children match numerals with the quantity they represent. This is more difficult and involves more thinking than the first two games. For this game you will need to have 10 of the same item, for instance, 10 buttons or 10 pennies.

To begin the game, give the number cards to the child. Put out three buttons (or whichever items you are using). Ask the child, "How many buttons are there in the group?" Have the child count the buttons and then place the corresponding numeral, 3, on top of the group.

The game progresses by making other groups with different numbers of buttons. Be sure to make groups for each number between 1 and 10. You can extend the game by changing the items you are counting. Try using forks, rocks, nuts, socks, just about anything you have 10 of.

Another variation of the game is for you to begin by placing a numeral down. The child must tell you what the

numeral is and then put out that many buttons. For example, put out the numeral 5. The child has to tell you five and then put out five buttons.

## Summary

Learning about numbers is difficult. Don't be discouraged if it takes a long time for your child to understand. Be patient. Look for opportunities for teaching numbers in your daily activities. For example, say, "There are four glasses on the table," "You have three nails in your hand," or "How many peas are left on your plate?"

Children are eager to learn. Parents can help children gain knowledge about themselves and the world around them.



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