

Alphabet Arc

The alphabet arc is a good way for children to have visual and multi-sensory support to practise blending, segmenting and auditory processing. It also allows them to practise the sequence of the alphabet. The skills below are essential for reading and spelling. If the child isn't able to 'hear' the 'sounds' in words, they will find it very difficult to access and write texts.

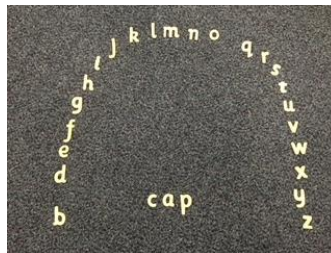
An alphabet arc can be used by children of any age but the older children may perceive it as an activity which is too young for them.

It can be used in a number of different ways:

Build the alphabet. This gives the children an opportunity to practise sequencing the alphabet. They also become familiar with the position of the letters relatively quickly when they are building words. In the long term, this may help when the children begin to use dictionaries or other alphabetical texts.



The supporting adult should say the word. The child should repeat it and then try to segment. The supporting adult may need to model this if the child is struggling to blend and segment. **Bring down letters to build different words.** These can be VC, (vowel consonant) CVC or CVCC/CCVC words.



The use of a **phoneme frame/grid** as well as the arc can help children to visually 'see' when they are missing a grapheme. The places on the phoneme grid can be pointed to by the supporting adult to help identify the sounds. **Counters** can also be used to identify the different 'sounds' within a word.

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Blending. It is a good idea to use a phoneme grid at this point. Point to the first box in the frame and say a 'sound'. The child should find the letter and place it in the box. Repeat for the rest of the frame. The child should say all of the sounds individually and then blend them together. This may need to be modelled by the supporting adult - stress and support the blending of the first two letters of a CVC word, e.g. mat – mmmmmaaaaa – ma – then add the final sound 't'.

Segmenting. This is the reverse of blending. Say the word 'cap' and ask the child to find the appropriate letters. These should be placed in the space at the bottom of the arc or in the appropriate places on a phoneme grid. Get the child to check that it is right by sounding out whilst pointing to the letters.

Building VC and CVC words. Once the child has become relatively proficient with the above activities, the alphabet arc can be used to develop skills such as auditory processing. A word can be built, such as 'cat'. The supporting adult can then ask the child to change it to 'cap'. A discussion should be had around which 'sound' is changing as many times, a child may want to put all the letters back rather than just changing one. The process of putting the letters back is important.



Full Circle Game. The alphabet arc can be used to build words but only changing one 'sound' at a time – going in a full circle. An example could be – cat, cap, cop, top, tip, tap, tat, cat. Again, when the children are more proficient, they can begin to make their own full circle word lists.

Building CVCC and CCVC words. The alphabet arc can also be used to build CVCC (consonant vowel consonant consonant) and CCVC (consonant consonant vowel consonant) words. Many children have difficulties 'hearing' adjacent consonant sounds, e.g. forming 'cap' instead of 'clap'. The use of a phoneme grid or counters to hold the place of the 'sounds' is very relevant when completing this activity so that the children have a visual clue to help with the adjacent consonant sounds.



Plastic or wooden letters can be used. If they are magnetic, they can be placed on a magnetic whiteboard which the child has on their desk at all times. This means that it can be used during writing sessions if the focus or target of the child's writing is forming CVC, CVCC and CCVC words correctly in their own work. Failing that, laminated letters can be secured with Velcro on a base board which has a phoneme grid printed in the space at the bottom.

However, having it pre-made will not give the children the opportunity to sequence the alphabet. Vowels and consonants can also be in a different colour so that the child can differentiate.

Finally, digraphs can be introduced but only when the child is proficient with the above skills.