

**Decoding-** This includes your child's understanding of the alphabetic principle, that is that each letter of the alphabet represents a sound, and those letters are put together to form words. A good knowledge base about the sounds that letters make can help children to sound out or decode the meaning of unfamiliar words. Children can use their knowledge of sound patterns and letter combinations when trying to decode.

Ways you can help with decoding are included:

- Play the game "I Spy" In the game "I spy" you pick something that you see and don't tell the child what it is. The child has to guess what you see. Here is how you can use "I Spy" to teach letter sounds (phonics):

Let's say you see a book in the room: You can say: I spy something that starts with the letter B or I spy something that ends with the letter K. After your child guesses what "you spy" have them tell you the sound the letter makes. If your child cannot guess what "you spy" or does not know the letter sound, provide them with assistance.

You can also do the same thing using letter sounds. For example, if you see a book, you can say "I spy something that starts with (make the sound for b)" or "I spy something that ends with (make the sound for k). After your child finds the object, have them tell you what the first letter (or last letter) of the object is. Alternate turns with your child. First you spy, then they spy, or vice versa.

- Put letters on flash cards and turn it into an activity. Put one letter on each card (create upper case and lower case cards). Here is a sample activity:

Pick three to four letter words and scramble them up. For example, if the word is pig, put the letters out-of-order (e.g., ipg) on the table in front of your child. Put the letters one to two feet in front of your child so she has room to work. Next, give her a sheet of paper with three (or four) lines on it, like so \_\_\_\_\_. Then tell her the word or show a picture of the word and give the instruction (e.g., "I want you to make the word pig on the lines below, using the letters above).

- If you have Magnetic Letters, you can use these as well. You can also encourage your child to write the letters in with a pen or pencil. You can do word families to help your child understand that many words are spelled the same way, with only the first letter different. So after pig, try big, wig, and rig. Rhyming practice is another helpful strategy when teaching kids about letter sounds.

- Play letter-sound Go Fish..Make doubles of flash cards. Each player gets five cards and the rest of the cards go in a pile in the center of the table. Player 1 calls out a letter-sound and asks if player 2 has a match. If they don't have a match, tell them to "go fish" which means to choose from the pile.
- Make flash cards with a picture on one side and the letter the picture starts with (or ends with) on the other side (You can draw the pictures yourself or make flash cards using pictures from [Google Images](#)).To make a flash card from [Google Images](#), go to the Image, copy it, "right-click" on it and click copy or hit "control c." Then go to a word document and paste (right-click and click paste or "hit control v."). Then print out the pages, cut out the picture, and write the corresponding letter on the back. If you know how to insert tables, you can put several pictures on the page in table boxes, print the page, cut out all the pictures and put the letters on the back. Show your child a picture and ask her to tell you the letter (or letter sound) it starts with (or ends with). If she is correct, let her know and show her the back of the card. If she is not correct, give her two more tries. If she does not get the letter or sound, show her the back of the card and tell her the letter and sound (then enunciate the sound as you say the word), have her say the letter/sound back to you twice, and shuffle the card back in the pile. Repeat.
- For children who have a lot of energy, turn a phonics lesson into a movement activity. Tape four letters onto the wall as shown in the image below:



Call out a letter sound and tell your child to run to the letter that makes that sound, touch it and run back. Spice it up. Here are some examples: Hop to the letter that makes the sound Skip to the letter that makes the sound Tip Toe to the letter that makes the sound.