

Welcome to the Land of Link

When you are talking about the Linkers, your child is learning some really important concepts about sounds and how letters represent those sounds in words. To them you are just story telling, however this is what they are discovering.

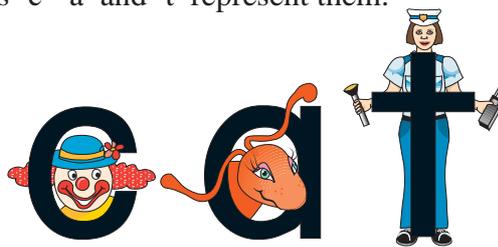


There are approximately 43 sounds in English but only 26 letters with which to represent them. Just as in maths where we use place value to make up larger or smaller numbers we do a similar thing with the alphabet.

- some sounds are represented by one letter
- some are represented by two letters like the 'l' sound in tell
- a sound can be represented by different letters. The 'a' sound in alien can be written 'ai' as in rain, 'ay' as in day and even 'ey' as in they.
- some letters represent different sounds such as the 'g' in get or in gentle
- two letters together can represent a completely new sound from the original sounds of those letters. We have 's' in sit and 'h' in hip but 'sh' in ship.

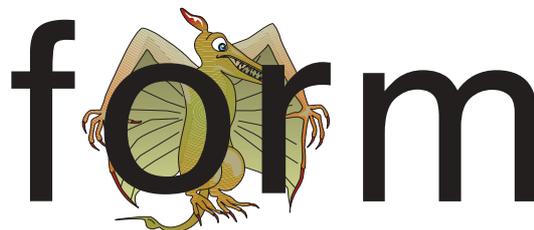
Letterlinks helps all children to absorb the way that sounds and letters work by tapping into the ways that children learn. The sounds are represented by characters who have stories explaining how they work. This story telling mode is easily picked up by children. From this base we use rhyming and alliteration, songs, acting and role play, all children's natural learning styles. Here are two examples

The word cat has three sounds c/a/t . The Linkers Corey Clown, Amber Ant and Tammy Toogood are the sounds. The letters 'c' 'a' and 't' represent them.



The word 'form' has three sounds f/or/m.

Awesome Gordon Warden the Pterosaur is the Linker to explain the vowel sound in the middle of 'form'. He is represented by 'or' in this word. Gordon's sound has lots of ways of being represented in words. Can you think of some of them?





English is a complex language so Letterlinks makes the sounds and their different spelling patterns explicit for children over time. If children expect a sound to be written more than one way almost from the beginning they will be well on the way to learning how to spell. It is well researched that skill with isolating sounds and manipulating them in words underpins later reading success.

Children are discovering how to manipulate sounds within words. You can help this process by doing lots of reading with your child and by playing with sounds by rhyming and having fun.

Try this



If you know the tune to 'The Grand old Duke of York' try this song with your child's name.

'It's time to go to bed
you need to clean your teeth,
So Peter Peter paddly Peter
go and clean your teeth.'

Keep substituting the initial sound like this;
'Peter Deter daddly deter' on different occasions.

The Linkers names are alliterative (Benny Bear, Diggle Dog) and have their sound repeated at the beginning of each word. Because we are encouraging children to associate the Linker with the sound that the letter commonly makes, we always use the Linker's name when we talk about them.

Try this

Build the Linkers into your everyday conversation. 'Benny Bear wants you to have a bath. Would you like a bubble bath. Benny Bear would.'

Oral language and a wide vocabulary are important foundations for later reading and writing so always use your everyday speech with young children. They will absorb this like a sponge and constantly surprise you with their ability to use new words. Praise all the attempts they make and encourage further discussion. Over time, they will unconsciously learn the correct grammar. Don't restrict the range of words you use with children. They can learn the subtleties of the language at an early age.

Learning to hold a pencil and make the letters



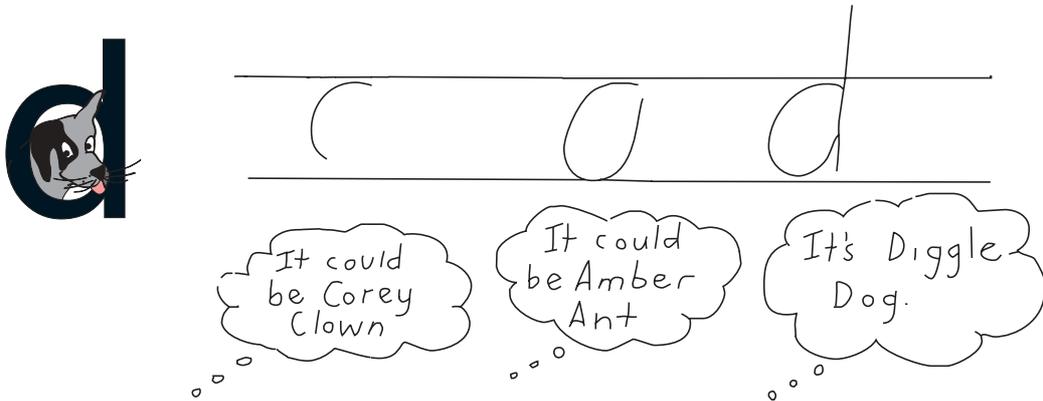
Many little children are keen to copy your example and like to try writing and drawing. Often their muscle control in their fingers is not sufficiently developed to do this easily. You can support their efforts by providing them with a vertical surface like a whiteboard on the wall. This will enable them to use their whole arm freely while they are still developing the finger control. It also makes talking about the starting points for the letters more meaningful.

(Diggle Dog likes you to start by her 'up' ear. Go over her head and around and past her droopy one.)

We want the correct motor memory to form. This short circuits the thinking process and the letter formation becomes automatic.

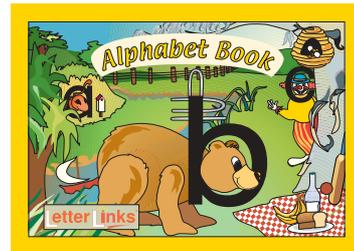
Try this

Give your child opportunities to play with correct letter formation without having to hold the pencil at the same time. Draw the Linkers with them in the dust on the car, in the steam in the shower, or on your backs. Play a guessing game. Who am I making? It could be Corey Clown no it's Diggle Dog. To start with it could be several of the letters, however as you proceed they will eliminate themselves one by one.

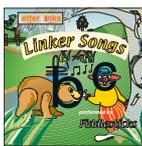
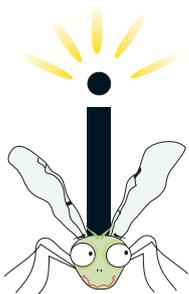


The Alphabet Book

This will become a favourite book to be read again and again. Don't just read the story but talk to the content of the pictures. Ask questions about them, particularly using the Linker sound. 'Do you think Corey Clown likes coffee and cream? Would Corey prefer a cup or a mug?'



Take some time to explore the two Linkers which are represented by the letter 'a', Amber Ant and April A. Do the same with the other vowel letters.



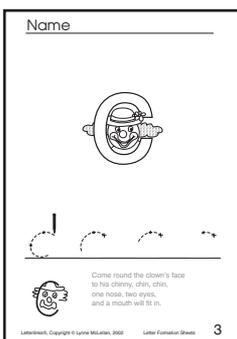
The Linker Songs CD

Make yourself familiar with the nursery rhyme tunes and sing the Linker songs spontaneously when you are doing things such as bathing your child.



The Linker Card

This card can trigger discussion about all sorts of things. 'Which Linkers have hats? Which Linkers have shoes and hats?'



The Handwriting Copymasters

These can be laminated or photocopied for your child. The instructions provide some useful ideas on using them.

The Linker Frieze

If this is on your child's bedroom wall they will look at it and think about the Linkers. It is a great way to gradually introduce the Linkers to young children, They will set the pace.

