

# "Every Letter Makes a Sound..."

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It seems like everywhere I turn in my home, I can hear this \*lovely\* song: "B says /b/, B says, /b/. Every letter makes a sound..." Oh, do I have you singing it now? I'm so sorry. 😊 Believe me, I know every verse; as I'm sure you do too, if you have little ones in the home.

Learning letter sounds. While there's probably not a "wrong" way to do it (okay, I guess there *could* be), I believe there is a more developmentally appropriate way than starting with the /a/ sound and working your way through in order to the /z/ sound. I like to introduce letter sounds in a different order, which can help to minimize confusion.

Much of the confusion over letter sounds occurs at the **point of articulation**. Letter sounds are produced or articulated in different places of the mouth. For example, the /m/ sound is produced by placing both lips together (bilabial) while the /k/ sound is made at the back of the throat. (*Hang in there. I do have a point in all this jargon.*)

Some sounds require the voice to be used /v/, while others do not /f/. There are continuant sounds, meaning they can be elongated naturally /ssssss/, while there are other letter sounds that cannot be elongated (stops), like the /b/ sound. Some letters are very similar in their articulation, such as /t/ and /d/. And because they are so similar, they have the potential to confuse young children if introduced close together. *Whew...now, take a deep breath.*

*The interesting part about all the above info is that even though I studied a lot of this stuff when getting my M.Ed. in Reading, I initially learned most of it while getting my undergrad in music! I was a voice major and we had to take five diction classes,*

*learning the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), in order to know how to pronounce words in several different languages. Little did I know that this information would serve me far beyond singing Clair de Lune! I think it's so cool how God prepared me to be a teacher before I even knew it was in His plan!*

**Here is the order in which I typically introduce consonant letter sounds:** (I do not follow this exactly in every situation\*)

m, s, r, b, t, g, n, p, c, h, f, d, l, k, j, w, y, z, v, x, & q- (both x and q produce two sounds /ks/ for x and /kw/ for q)

By introducing sounds in this approximate order, the letters that have similar articulation points are separated enough so that confusion is minimal. And an added bonus: the letters that are similar in print features (b, d, p, & q) are also spaced further apart from each other.

### **\*OTHER SITUATIONS**

**1. If you are introducing the letter sounds to a younger child** (for example, NJoy is 2) **or a child with speech delays**, it may help to adapt the order a bit so that some of the “easier” sounds are introduced first. Here are two links about articulation development, if you want to read them: [Developmental Articulation Chart](#) & [full research article](#). (Thank you, Tiffany!)

Here's the main idea of these resources: The letter sounds that have the potential of being more difficult to articulate are generally: /f/, /l/, /r/, /s/, /v/, /y/ & /z/. It may work best to postpone them, so the order may look more like:

m, b, t, g, n, p, c, h, d, k, w, j, f, y, s, v, z, l, r, x, & q

**2. If you are introducing these sounds to an older child** (let's say a Kindergartner), I do not feel it is necessary to get through all 21 consonants before you introduce a short vowel sound (like short *a*). If a short vowel is mixed in there, the child can begin working on simple word families and reading words sooner. You can see how I started doing this with ALuv [here](#).

**3. Some reading philosophies (Montessori, for example) choose to teach letter sounds before letter names.** Because of this, the letter order must differ to facilitate reading words. [Here](#) is a post that does a good job explaining this. (*I will post more on this topic at a later time.*)

#### **LETTER SOUNDS AND BEYOND...**

**One of the reasons that articulation interests me is that it helps to explain the interesting invented spellings of young children.** What seems like a random spelling begins to make sense. Take for example, PK for pig. From an articulation stand-point, *k* is a great substitution for *g* because they are both pronounced in a similar spot: a guttural sound in the back of the tongue and throat. And if a child is stretching out the sounds in a classroom or in a setting where they need to do so quietly, /k/ is the sound that *g* makes when the voice is not used. Pretty cool!

And just in case you are just dying for another round, here you go: “D says /d/, D says /d/...” Happy singing!

No related posts.