

# Learning that makes sense: See, Say, Do!

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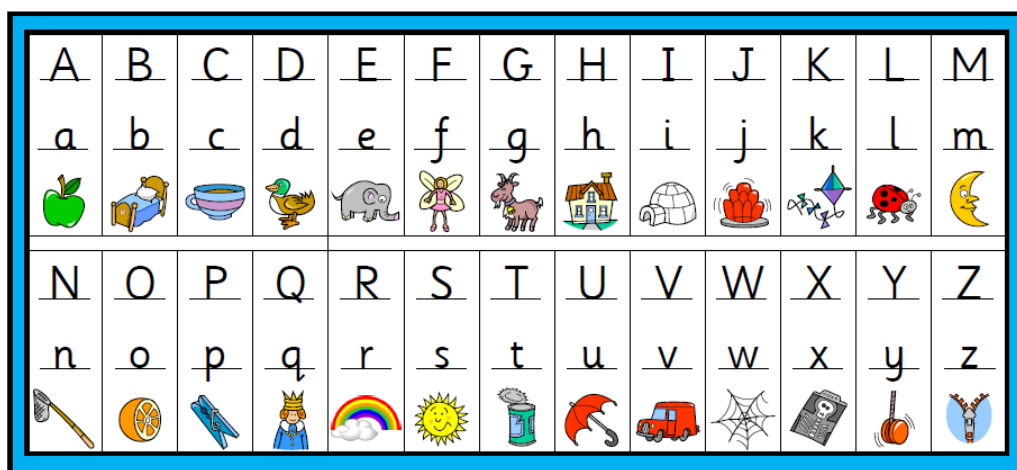
*Dyslexia Association of Singapore*

## **UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF INTERVENTION**

Listening, speaking, reading and writing, in this order; are cornerstones fundamental to early language learning. In order to effectively intervene, one must first know the strength and weakness within each stone based on knowledge of developmental milestones and pedagogy. Children with a weak grasp of spoken English, a weakness in the cornerstone of speaking, for instance, are ill-equipped to meet the demands of higher order activity such as reading meaningfully. Checking out the soundness of the first corner stone; Listening—to see if the child is able to understand age appropriate instructions spoken in English, is the first step. Is the child able to respond appropriately, either through actions, gestures or speech, indicative of comprehension, is the second step.

Language is a tool for communication, be it spoken or written. Addressing weaknesses inherent in each of these fundamental cornerstones to language learning is a task DAS Preschool Early Intervention Programme (PS EIP) undertakes with zeal, passion and results.

It is impossible to fully share the entire scope, sequence and breadth of intervention strategies and practices used during our intervention sessions in the context of this write-up. The sections to follow are some strategies, activities and potential resources that we hope parents, teachers and stakeholders would find useful in engaging and supporting children with learning difficulties. It works really well when children are allowed to use the method— ‘see-say-do-all-at-the-same-time’.



‘See’ means having something actual to look at or refer to, without having to recall from memory. It is challenging for preschoolers to remember all twenty-six letters of the alphabet. Letters are just shapes with names in the eyes of the very young. There is no real meaning attached to it. Imagine, after being taught a few times, you are expected to visually identify the letter, verbally name it, physically write it down on paper accurately and to provide the letter sound. It gets confusing when both letters share the same name in the instance of upper and lower case. E.g. “E” and “e”.

‘Say’ means speaking aloud in a normal tone of voice, at a volume that you can hear yourself without shouting. This is challenging because children are often told to “keep quiet” or “whisper only” and to “sit still, concentrate and learn”.

‘Do’ means allowing some level of physical movement, not limited to only hands-on (fine motor skills) activities; but also activities that allow the entire body (gross motor skills) to move about. This is one of the biggest challenges young children face in their journey to learning because they are often told, “Sit still, stop moving. Concentrate and learn”. Body movement is often viewed as signs of being fidgety and not concentrating on the task at hand.

## SEQUENCING THE ALPHABET

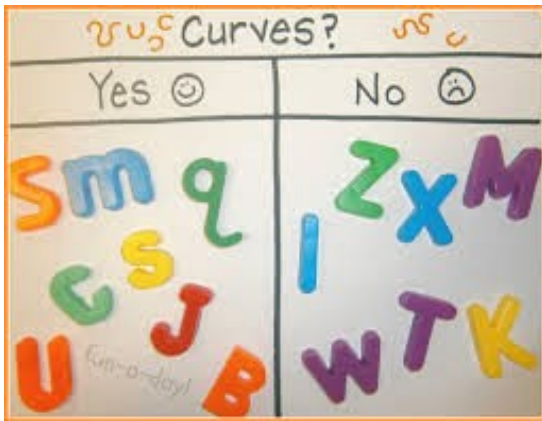
Which letter comes first? What comes next, followed by...? Imagine twenty-six letters of the alphabet as 26 different faces of friends, family or strangers arranged in a particular order.



How successfully can you get all these people to physically line up in a row, as you would, like letters of the alphabet? Sounds a bit mind boggling and daunting, isn't it? Well, may be. But may be not. Children get to play. Play is a child's job. Puzzles, wall charts, magnetic letters, wooden letters, sand letters, letter tiles, ... the list of exciting opportunities to practice getting letter sequencing right, is endless.

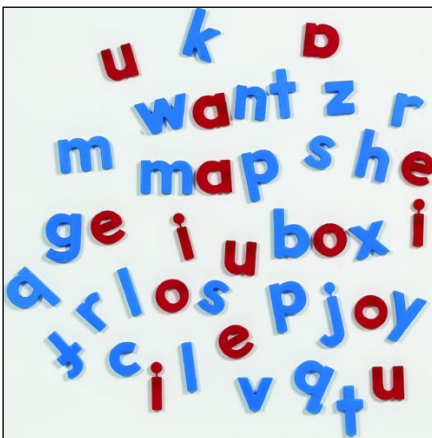


Colourful attractive magnets are a great start. Make sure you have a readily visible alphabet wall chart that you can encourage your child/student to go looking-for-answers or to do self-evaluation when they are done. It's an important by product if you seek to cultivate active knowledge seekers who are both independent, resourceful and resilient.



Invent creative and "risk-free" ways for children to make sense of letters that may or may not look the same. Other suggested categories: upper vs lower case letters; identical looking letters (e.g. C, c), letters that you can rotate (e.g. b, d, p, q), confusing letters...

Involve your child/students to come up with new categories. They will come up with ways to make sense of letters that they are having trouble with. Thereby, overcoming their own learning difficulties.



Some magnetic letters come in plain uniform colours, e.g. vowels (a, e, i, o, u) in red and consonants in blue. These are good if you want your child to remember 'letters' by their 'shape' when sequencing them, instead of using colour cues. i.e. what-colour-comes-next.

## ALPHABET GAMES

### ALPHABET BINGO

What you need:

1. A cloth bag
2. Wooden/plastic/magnetic letters
3. Bingo board (draw a board on paper)  
Use varying degrees of difficulty for the board; 2 x 2 simple, 3 x 2 average, 3 x 3 more complex and challenging



How to play:

1. Taking turns, both child and parent choose a few desired letters and put them into the bag
2. On the bingo board randomly write down some of the letters found in the cloth bag (Caution – do not write any letters that are not in the bag)
3. Roll a dice or simply to decide who goes first
4. Player 1 draws a letter out from the bag without looking, says the letter name out aloud, and match to see if the letter is in their bingo board, if so, then the letter is left on their board
5. The player with the most pieces covering the board, wins

<b>BINGO!</b>	
<b>A</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>Z</b>	<b>X</b>

<b>BINGO!</b>		
<b>b</b>	<b>c</b>	<b>f</b>
<b>e</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>t</b>

<b>BINGO!</b>		
<b>b</b>	<b>c</b>	<b>f</b>
<b>e</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>t</b>
<b>w</b>	<b>y</b>	<b>k</b>

## LETTER HUNTING



What you need:

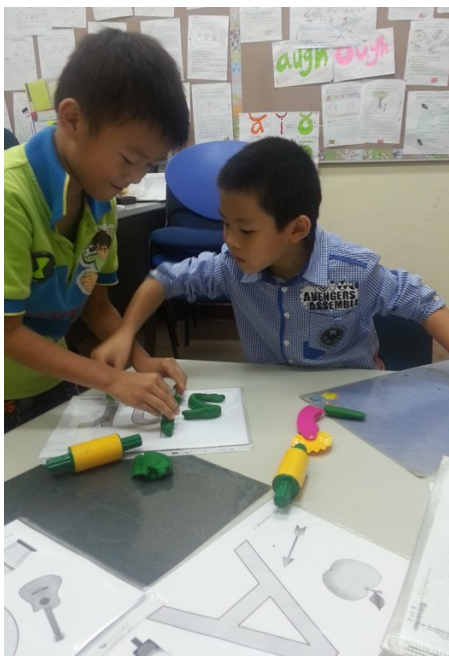
1. Any old magazine, colourful sales catalogue, classified ads from the newspaper, etc. with good font size for your child to colour or circle
2. Colour pencils, highlighters or felt pens
3. Kitchen timer or sand glass (optional)
4. Magnifying glass (optional) to be a 'letter-detective'

How to play:

1. Pick any letter that your child is struggling with. E.g. 't'. Encourage your child pick a random letter for you, too. E.g. 'w' (Fair play, you picked his, he chose one for you). Each shall attempt to circle as many 't' and 'w' as possible, on that sheet of paper before the timer pings when time runs out.
2. Count. Letter 't' versus 'w', who wins?
3. Alternatively, if your child is older, you can let keep this open-ended without using the timer. Encourage your child to hunt for all the e.g. 't' and then 'w'. Count and see which letter "wins". The same idea can also be extended to hunting for repeated sight words e.g. 'the' in a short paragraph.
4. Have Fun!



## SEE, SAY DO! LETTER FORMATION AND LETTER SOUND



Play dough and plasticine are wonderful resources to learning letter formation whilst giving intangible skills, such as fine motor skills control and on-task concentration, a good workout!

**WAYS TO LEARN SIGHT WORDS AND EVEN SPELLING WORDS AT SCHOOL**



Words formed with play dough



Rainbow writing



Writing in coloured sand trays made out of storage containers.

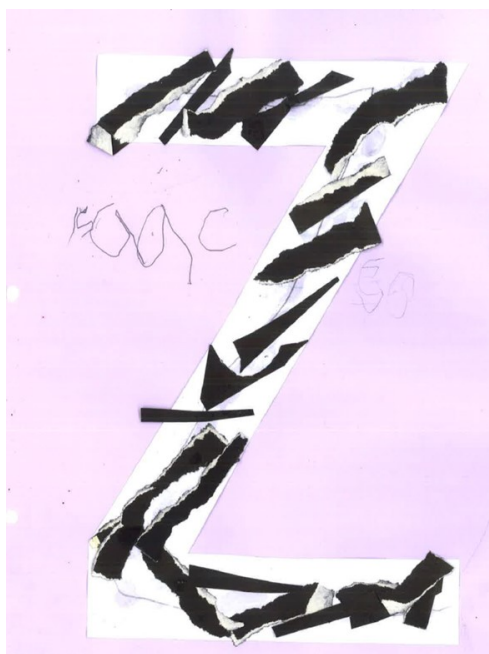
Rice grains and shaving cream make excellent substitutes, too.



Pipe cleaners! A wonderful way to learn and remember a word whilst problem-solving...how am I going to get that letter to stay in shape, looking right?

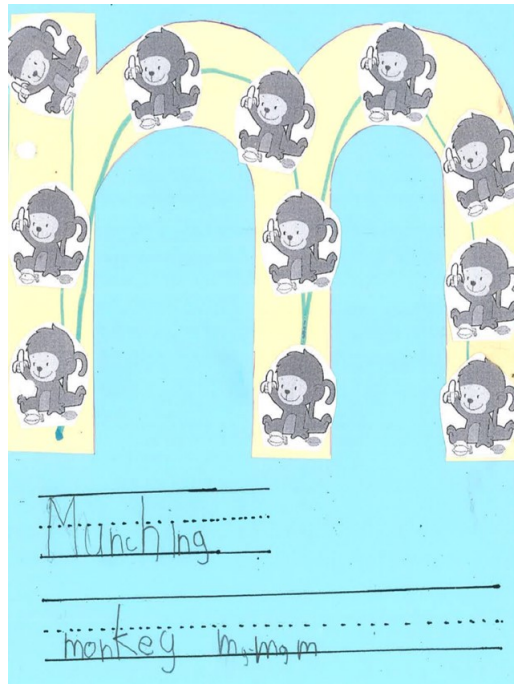
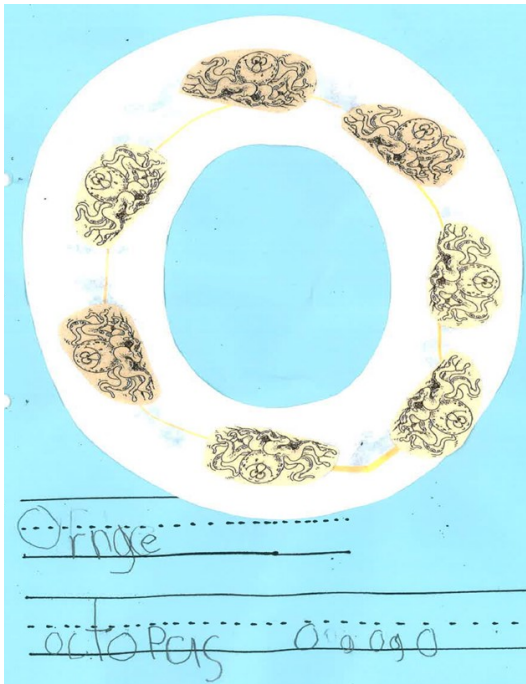
## VISUAL AND AUDIO MNEMONICS— LEARNING LETTERS AND LETTER SOUND ASSOCIATION

“See, say, hear-yourself-saying-it, do!” Alliteration makes letter learning more engaging and can be meaningful. Below: Red ribbons, r, r, r Pink pig, p, p, p Zig, zag, zebra, z, z, z Up umbrella, u, u, u





Orange octopus, o, o, o    Munching monkey m, m, m    Fluffy feather f, f, f  
Green grass, g, g, g



**MNEMONICS—VISUAL AND AUDITORY—LEARNING SIGHT WORDS AND SPELLING WORDS**

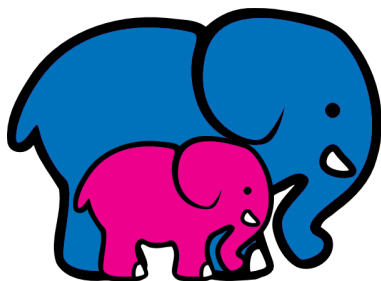


Socks **a**re **i**n **d**emand



**FAMILY**

Father **a**nd **m**other **I** love **y**ou



**BECAUSE**

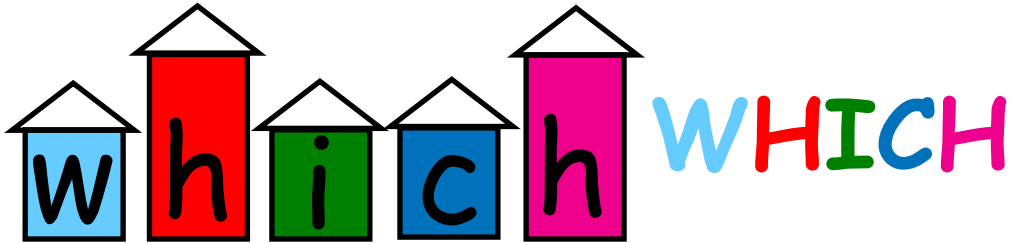
Big **e**lephants **c**an **a**lways **u**nderstand **s**mall **e**lephants



**RHYTHM**

Rhythm **h**elps **y**our **t**wo **h**ips **m**ove.

'which' and 'witch'?



Which house is Charlie's house?



**WITCH**

Watch it, the caldron's hot!

**VISUAL AND AUDIO MNEMONICS—LETTER REVERSALS, TELLING LETTERS APART**



## **READING—AUDIO BOOKS**

There are many good, structured and levelled readers available in the market that parents and educators can choose from. As such, we shall not go into details of selecting appropriate graded readers and ways of engaging in pre-reading activities.

Instead, we would like to bring your attention to another resource, audio books. Audio books are interactive and engaging for children - children can listen to audio books - this models expressive reading and intonation. Some audio book with apps allow children to record and playback their own recording. Children get a thrill out of listening to their own voices reading back to them. It's a self-fulfilling and self-satisfying experience, entirely sustainable on its own!

Books can be extended by asking open-ended or inferential questions to motivate children to engage in speaking and critical thinking. Repeated exposure to the same book develops reading fluency, build vocabulary and sight word knowledge. Audio books also introduce new genres that children might not otherwise consider. Imagine, what if you are a 4 to 5 year old, and reading is entirely dependent on your ability to decode and make sense of printed text, what would your reading options be? Hmm, your book options just shrank. However, you can solve that problem if you can interest an adult to read to/with/ for you, satisfying your innate curiosity and active, intelligent mind.

Making available to young children, a wide range of both fiction and nonfiction levelled books in accordance to their reading level, is akin to putting children in their own driver's seat.

Information books build general knowledge. Each destination or choice of books may differ, but they are driving their own reading. Exhilarating and self-driven. Subsequent reading of textbooks or academic text materials will just be another natural reading activity... a walk in the park.

## **WRITING – FONTS MATTER, SPACING BETWEEN WORDS HELPS A LOT, TOO!!**

Looking through the eyes of young children, letters are simply shapes with names. Fonts matter! The following are some fonts that help young children who are just starting to learn reading and writing.

Different fonts can create potential barriers to reading. It confuses some young children when letters having the same letter name looks different with different fonts. e.g. 'a' 'à' , and difference between l (l), l (L) and 1 (number). It will be

less confusing if letters like 'l' and 'q' have a flick at the bottom like this 'l' 'q' will accentuate the letter shape. Therefore, fonts are important and finding an ideal font to minimise these confusions will significantly reduce additional stress during reading. It needs to be based on the natural style of handwriting.

OpenDyslexic is a new open source font created to increase readability for readers with dyslexia. It is being updated continually and improved based on input from dyslexic users. There are no restrictions on using OpenDyslexic outside of attribution. [www.opendyslexic.org](http://www.opendyslexic.org). Please note that Fonts are very personal, not everyone will like the font that you like, however, the basic principle is to use a font that reflects the letters you are teaching your student. Avoid serif fonts where letters are not typical like the letter 'a' and 'g' (Times New Roman 'a' and 'g')

Spacing between letters and words are just as important, for example 'rn' vs 'm'. The combination of spacing, weight and type of font makes a world of difference for early readers and writers. Below are three sample text justification.

Wherever possible **LEFT JUSTIFIED TEXT** should be used for learners with reading differences, the predictable spacing between words and letters helps with fluent reading, you should **AVOID FULLY JUSTIFIED TEXT**

### **AVOID FULLY JUSTIFIED TEXT**

This is an example of FULLY justified text where each line is blocked and starts and finishes at the same place. When text is fully justified it creates gaps, cracks and rivers between the text and inconsistent spacing can reduce reading fluency.



### **AVOID FULLY JUSTIFIED TEXT WITH HYPHENATION**

Hyphenation should always be turned off as it makes text very difficult to read. When text is hyphenated on fully justified text the gaps, between the text reduces however, inconsistent spacing still occurs and can affect reading fluency.



### **USE LEFT JUSTIFIED TEXT**

This is an example of left justified text. Left justifying text leaves a 'ragged' edge on the right side of the page. Hyphenation should not be used at all for children. When text is left justified it is easier for a child to read and can increase their fluency.



Listed over the page are a number of fonts that our teachers use in their teaching resources. All fonts are 100% free to use. Explore fonts and keep your

Sans Serif Font	Example
Comic Sans 11 Pt	ABCDEF GHIJ KLMNOP QRSTUV WXYZ abcde fghij klmnop qrstu vwx yz 0123456789
Century Gothic 11pt	ABCDEF GHIJ KLMNOP QRSTUV WXYZ abcde fghij klmnop qrstu vwx yz 0123456789
Print Clearly 14pt	ABCDEF GHIJ KLMNOP QRSTUV WXYZ abcde fghij klmnop qrstu vwx yz 0123456789
Print Clearly Dashed 14pt	ABCDEF GHIJ KLMNOP QRSTUV WXYZ abcde fghij klmnop qrstu vwx yz 0123456789
OpenDyslexic 11pt	ABCDEF GHIJ KLMNOP QRSTUV WXYZ abcde fghij klmnop qrstu vwx yz 0123456789
Fibel Nord 11pt	ABCDEF GHIJ KLMNOP QRSTUV WXYZ abcde fghij klmnop qrstu vwx yz 0123456789
TeXGyre Adventor 11pt	ABCDEF GHIJ KLMNOP QRSTUV WXYZ abcde fghij klmnop qrstu vwx yz 0123456789
KG Primary Penmanship 14pt	ABCDEF GHIJ KLMNOP QRSTUV WXYZ abcde fghij klmnop qrstu vwx yz 0123456789
<del>KG Primary Penmanship 14pt</del>	<del>ABCDEF GHIJ KLMNOP QRSTUV WXYZ abcde fghij klmnop qrstu vwx yz 0123456789</del>
KB Bubblegum 11pt	ABCDEF GHIJ KLMNOP QRSTUV WXYZ abcde fghij klmnop qrstu vwx yz 0123456789
Short Stack 11pt	ABCDEF GHIJ KLMNOP QRSTUV WXYZ abcde fghij klmnop qrstu vwx yz 0123456789
Quicksand 11pt	ABCDEF GHIJ KLMNOP QRSTUV WXYZ abcde fghij klmnop qrstu vwx yz 0123456789
Quicksand Dash 11pt	ABCDEF GHIJ KLMNOP QRSTUV WXYZ abcde fghij klmnop qrstu vwx yz 0123456789
Vag Rounded Light 11pt	ABCDEF GHIJ KLMNOP QRSTUV WXYZ abcde fghij klmnop qrstu vwx yz 0123456789

## TECHNOLOGY

Technology can level the playing field for a child with learning differences. Being able to support their learning with online dictionaries, thesaurus', spell-checkers, text to speech and speech to text can make a significant difference to a child's learning journey.



### TOUCH TYPING

Teach children to touch type, it is a valuable skill that will last them a lifetime!

FREE application—[www.typingclub.com](http://www.typingclub.com)

## IPADS

There are many free educational applications available for children to play and learn. iPad's are simple to use, have touch screens and are easier to transport than a laptop.



## LEARNING SOFTWARE

There are many, many good software applications that support all aspects of learning. At DAS we use the NESSY LEARNING Software to supplement our lessons. The kids love it and learn at the same time!



## GOOGLE APPLICATIONS

Google Chrome applications and extensions are useful in helping a dyslexic learner in and out of the classroom. Parents, you can now use different ways to get children interested in reading and revising their work by using different applications or apps from Google Chrome. Go to the Google Chrome Web Store to find many more applications, or apps in short, for you to help your children at home.



### Study Stack

*SKILLS: Flash Cards, Vocabulary and Revision Games*

Has many ways that the child can learn. Present it to the child in the form of flash cards. Has interesting revision games for the child to practice with. Has many topics e.g. morphology, sight words and many more.



### MeeGenius

*SKILLS: Reading and Comprehension*

Highlights the word as the dictator reads it. Useful for parents because we might have to point and read at the same time.



### Photofit Me

*SKILLS: Writing, Description of a person*

To allow children to create a face using a description. Emphasises the importance of describing a character well in writing.



### Hangman

*SKILLS: Vocabulary*

Hangman is categorised into different subjects and also has a section on commonly misspelt words.



### The Dolch Sight Words and Learn Elementary Sight Words

*SKILL: Sight words & high frequency words*

Delivered in flashcard style, a good avenue to learn and review.





A wide range of interesting apps are available to support your child's reading needs. We have researched, played and experimented with a variety of apps, to create the list below. This list details 11 highly interactive apps that encourage learning and a fun-filled experience for your child.

The apps listed target a wide age group. Apps such as 'Hairy Letters', 'Read with Biff, Chip & Kipper' target younger readers, while 'Spelling City' & '4 Pics. 1 Word' assists in vocabulary expansion and word retrieval. For older learners, 'Story Maker', 'Brain Pop', 'Jumbled Sentences' and 'Fizzy's Lab Lunch' promote essential comprehension skills, which include sentence structure, sequencing and problem solving.

To build up your child's confidence in creative story-telling, 'Toontastic' is a great app that allows for much amusement and experimentation with comic strips, whilst familiarising the creator with the story mountain format.

### APP GAMES FOR IOS AND ANDROID

There are many educational apps, like the ones below, that will help teach reading, spelling, and much more in a fun way and the best thing is they are free. These games give a student with learning differences the opportunity to practice their word skills in an enjoyable way.



#### Draw Something

Draw Something is a virtual Pictionary-type game that gives you a word to draw out for other players to guess. You get multiple colors and tools to draw with, but there's a time limit, so draw fast!



#### Hang with Friends

Hanging With Friends is a creative Hangman-type game. Build mystery words to confuse or impress other players, and wait for the complicated words they send back to you.



#### Scramble with Friends

It's a scramble to find the words in a jumbled grid! Form words frontwards, backwards, sideways, and any way possible.



#### Words with Friends

Much like Scrabble, Words with Friends is one of the most popular apps available today. Try to spell out the most complex words for the most points!

<b>App Name</b>	<b>Developer</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Price (SGD)</b>
Hairy Letters	Nessy Learning	Multi-sensory and fun approach to learning phonics	\$3.98
Spelling City	Spelling City	Fun and interactive way learn spelling and build vocabulary	Free
StoryMaker	Super Duper Publications	Practice Sequencing, Vocabulary, Sentence Structure and more as you form interactive stories <a href="http://www.superduperinc.com/apps/apple.aspx">www.superduperinc.com/apps/apple.aspx</a>	Free
BrainPOP/ BrainPOP Jr	BrainPOP	Learn various subjects with videos and interactive activities	Free
Read with Biff, Chip and Kipper	Gazoob Limited	Build up your child's reading ability through leveled e-books (Oxford Reading Tree Series)	Per book
4 Pics. 1 Word	LOTUM gmbH	Fun puzzle game to guess the word based on commonality between 4 pictures you see	Free
Grammaropolis	Grammaropolis Inc.	Making learning grammar fun and exciting!	Free
Toontastic	Toontastic Inc	Get to create interesting comic strips using story mountain format	Free
Jumbled Sentences 1, 2, 3	Innovative Net Learning Ltd	Sequence sentences in the correct order	Free
Fizzy's Lab Lunch: Fresh Pick	PBS Kids	Fun problem-solving activities	Free



## REVIEW

- ✓ Pastel Paper instead of white for reading and writing
- ✓ Pencil Grips to help correct hand position on the pencil
- ✓ Coloured Overlays or clear rulers for reading
- ✓ Only use fonts that look like the letters that are taught to preschoolers
- ✓ Include technology in the classroom
- ✓ Teach multisensory—See, say, (hear), do!
- ✓ Play games to reinforce learning
- ✓ Repetition is ESSENTIAL

## A CALL FOR ACTION

Children are smart even though they may be only 4 or 5 years old. They can sense, and know, if they are falling behind their friends when it comes to certain activities. E.g. remembering the sequence of the alphabet, difficulty with number sense, pre-writing, reading and so on.

ALL preschoolers aim to please and they want to earn praises from teachers and parents, their nearest and dearest. However, if they get criticised or scolded overly much when it comes to tasks associated with reading, writing and spelling, may be they need specialised help.

Seek advice for early intervention.

Imagine the gap I need to bridge before they reach Primary 1?

**SAMPLE FROM CHILD A**

Q b c b e f k h o k  
m o p l a c o y w x s  
A B C D E F H I J K L  
M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

**SAMPLE FROM CHILD B**

I like Singapore.  
I like chicken rice.  
in like Singapore.

**SAMPLE FROM CHILD C**

It is not box. It is an ambulance  
Well done!!

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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*Preschool Early Intervention Programme Manager*

*Wong Kah Lai is the Preschool Programme Manager at DAS. An enthusiastic and passionate educator with more than twenty years' experience in the field of early childhood education, Kah Lai taught young children, mentored teachers, supported parents and caregivers in a wide range of setting, from within the classroom to community outreach, while juggling her Diploma in Early Childhood Education from Wheelock College, and subsequent Bachelor of Education in ECCE from the University of South Australia. She completed her Masters in Teaching English to Young Learners from the University of York through distance learning whilst working full time as head teacher of a bilingual kindergarten in China.*



### **THILAKAM RENGANATHAN**

*Educational Therapist*

*Thila is an Educational Therapist with DAS. She holds a Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Education from University of South Australia and a Post Graduate Diploma in Special Needs Teaching. Thila is a core member of the DAS Preschool Early Intervention programme. She has been working in the preschool industry over 10 years and enjoys developing curriculum and training new teachers. She believes in creating joyful learning experiences through hands on activities and conducive learning environment for her students. She hopes to reach out to many preschoolers who are in need for intervention in the early years.*



### **SUTHASHA KELLY BIJAY**

*Educational Therapist*

*Kelly holds an honours degree in Early Childhood Education from the University of South Australia and has completed her Post Graduate Certificate in Special Educational Needs. As a core member of the DAS Preschool Early Intervention programme, Kelly is involved in curriculum development, early intervention and preschool teacher training at DAS Preschool Intervention programme. Kelly has 15 years of working experience with both local and international preschool in Singapore.*