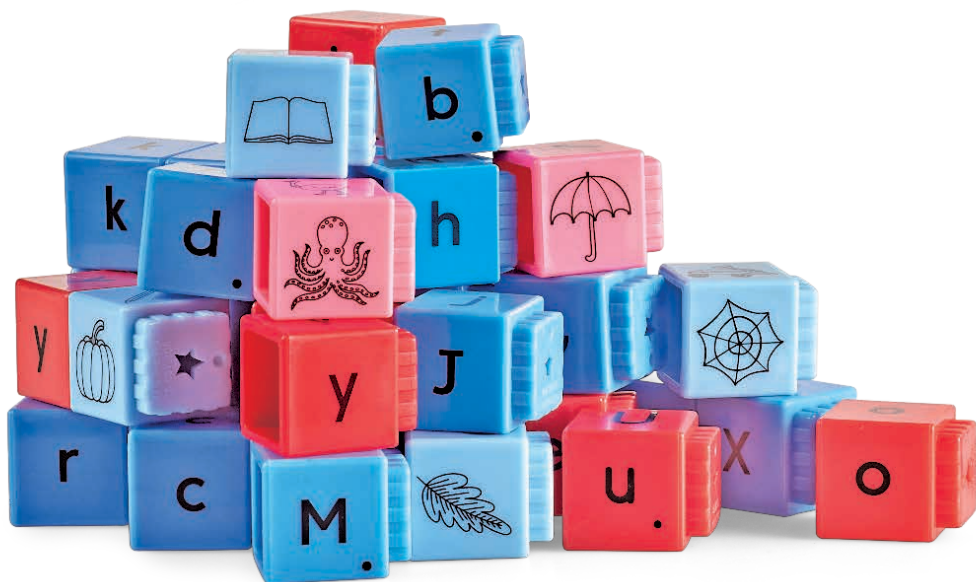


# READING RODS®

## Alphabet & Phonemic Awareness

Set para aprender el abecedario y los fonemas  
Kit de familiarisation avec l'alphabet et les phonèmes  
Alphabet-Set zur Erkennung englischer Phoneme



*A hands-on approach  
to early literacy skills!*



**WARNING:**  
CHOKING HAZARD - Small  
parts. Not for children under 3 years.



## Introduction

Prepare young learners for reading success with a color-coded visual and tactile experience! Reading Rods® are scientifically based, multisensory tools that allow children to practice, reinforce, and master essential literacy skills. These fun-to-use, interlocking rods feature familiar letters and pictures that keep children engaged in hands-on learning. As they link the various letter and picture rods, children are empowered to manipulate the reading process and build a strong foundation for academic success.

### Why Use Reading Rods?

- Hands-on learning deepens understanding and builds fine motor skills
- Color-coded system to identify letters, sounds, and more
- Rods stay fixed in position until children rearrange them, unlike cards or tiles
- Made of durable, lightweight plastic that's easy to handle and built to last
- Versatile design (letters and pictures) to meet the needs of different learners

### Reading Rods Alphabet & Phonemic Awareness

Reading Rods Alphabet & Phonemic Awareness lays the foundation for reading success and helps develop *phonemic awareness*, the ability to distinguish sounds in spoken words. The color-coded letter and picture rods in the set offer a hands-on approach to building early literacy skills by helping children explore letters and sounds and how they are related.

#### Cover Key Literacy Skills:

- Explore rhyming words
- Understand syllables
- Recognize uppercase and lowercase letters
- Make/sequence the alphabet
- Isolate beginning and ending letter sounds
- Learn about sound-symbol relationships
- Match letter sounds with pictures
- Differentiate consonants and vowels
- Build simple CVC (Consonant/Vowel/Consonant) words



See Page 11  
for a list of all  
Picture Rods  
included.

### Why Is Phonemic Awareness Important?

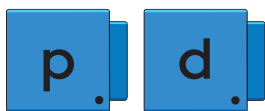
Before children can understand printed letters or words, they need to understand that printed words are symbols for spoken words. They must also understand how words can be divided into syllables, how syllables can be broken down into *rimes* (strings of letters after the beginning sound), and how rimes can be reduced to the smallest element of spoken sound, *phonemes*. A letter between two slash marks is the tangible way to show the *phoneme*, or sound, that the letter symbolizes. For example, the letter *m* represents the sound /m/. Hearing sounds and patterns that make up words helps prepare children to read.

## Introducing the Letters of the Alphabet

As children develop their phonemic awareness skills, it is important to simultaneously introduce them to the letters of the alphabet. Learning the names and shapes of letters and relating them to the sound each letter makes will prepare children for future reading success. Letter-sound recognition equips children with the building blocks they will need for encoding (writing letters and sounds) and decoding (pronouncing written words).

## Includes 82 Color-Coded Reading Rods®

### 42 consonant rods (2 of each consonant)



Orientation dots help distinguish letters

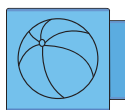


Each rod features  
1 uppercase and  
3 lowercase letters

### 12 vowel rods (2 of each vowel)

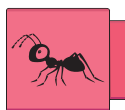


### 21 consonant picture rods



Pictures represent a consonant in a word

### 5 vowel picture rods



Pictures represent a vowel in a word

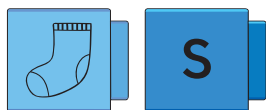
### 2 blank rods



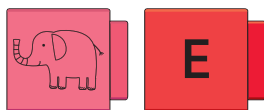
Use blank rods to represent any letter

**Picture rods feature 26 easy-to-recognize illustrations!**

**Look at the colors to find the Reading Rods you need.**

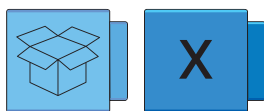


Consonant picture/Consonant



Vowel picture/Vowel

**Learn beginning, middle, and ending sounds.**



Box ends with x.

## Get Started

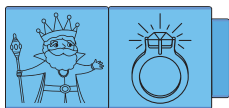
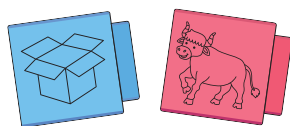
Allow children to independently explore the Reading Rods®. Then draw their attention to the various features of the rods. Encourage children to turn the rods to see the different sides and to think about the colors. Ask what they notice and what they wonder: *Why are these rods blue/red? What is the same and different about rods that are the same color? Can you name the pictures? What about the letters?* Invite children to try linking two rods together and grouping rods that seem to belong together. Take time to discuss the pictures on each side of the rods, and help children become familiar with the picture names. (See the Reading Rods Picture Key on page 11 for a list of words represented by the picture rods.) Once children are ready to use the Reading Rods, try the activities on the following pages to start building key early literacy skills.

## Activities

### Learning to Rhyme

**Skill:** Recognize rhyming words.

Read a rhyming book to children or sing a favorite rhyming song together. Guide children to recognize that some of the words sound the same. Explain that rhymes are words that sound the same, and that these words have the same ending sound. Share a few rhyming picture rods to illustrate the concept, saying the words slowly together: for example, *cat/hat* or *box/ox*. Read or sing again, this time asking children to raise their hand when they hear rhyming words.



### Rhyming Pictures

Scatter the picture rods for bat, ring, box, hat, king, and ox on a table. Invite children to identify and say the picture words. Prompt them to find the rhyming words, or words with the same ending sound: *Let's find the words that rhyme, or sound the same. Here's the word king. What sounds like king?* Encourage children to say the different picture words until they find the one that rhymes: *king, hat; king, box; king, ring!* Have them find all the rhymes and link the rhyming rods together.

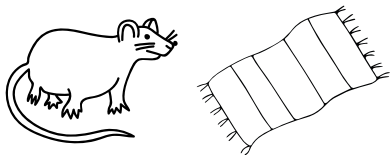
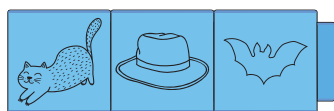
### I Spy a Rhyme

Place five picture rods in front of children, including the dog picture. Say, *"I spy something that rhymes with frog."* Guide children as they search and identify the dog picture rod. Ask them to say the rhyming words aloud: *Dog rhymes with frog. They sound the same.* Now ask, *"Do you spy something else in this room that rhymes with dog and frog?"* Have children search and say the names of objects aloud until they find a rhyme: *I see a picture of a log! Log rhymes with dog and frog.* Provide

clues or riddles to help children guess. For example: *Your word is ten. I'm holding something that rhymes with it. (pen) Your word is two. What are you wearing that rhymes with two? (shoe)* Repeat with the other picture rods, inviting children to choose either a rhyming picture rod or a rhyming object around them.

## Make a Rhyme

Have children choose a picture rod, find a rhyming picture rod, and then snap the rods together. Challenge children to say the ending sound that makes words sound the same. For example, cat, hat, and bat all end in the sound /at/. Then have children create a new word by changing the beginning sound. Help with hints as needed: *What animal has a long tail and can live underground? (rat) What do we step on when we walk in the door? (mat)* Say the rhymes together with children: cat, hat, bat, rat, mat. Try this activity with each picture rod to build children's recognition of rhyming words. Encourage children to draw their rhyming pictures.



## Exploring Sounds and Syllables

**Skill:** Develop an awareness of the different sounds in words and understand that words are broken into parts.

Explain to children that words are made up of different sounds and different parts. Hold up the cat picture rod and say the word together: *cat*. *The word cat has one syllable, or beat. It is made up of three sounds, /k/, /a/, /t/.* Tell children that they will use the Reading Rods® to listen for the different sounds and syllables in words.

## Count the Sounds

To help children begin listening for sounds in words, lay the picture rods for key, pear, hand, fish, six, and ant on a table. Ask children to identify the pictures and say the words together. Say the name of each picture again slowly, stretching out each sound: *kkk...eeey*. Guide children to count the sounds: *How many sounds do you hear in the word key? If you aren't sure, try saying the word slowly and raising a finger for each different sound you hear. How many sounds? (two)* Prompt children to draw lines on a sheet of paper to show the sounds they hear in each picture word. For example, fish has three sounds: /f/, /i/, /sh/.



## The Beats in a Word

Use the following picture rods to introduce children to syllables: robot, horse, banana, kangaroo, monkey, pumpkin, cat, umbrella, fox. Have children identify the pictures and say the words. Tell them that they will

listen for the parts, or beats, that make up each word. Say each word again slowly, pausing at each syllable: ro/bot. Guide children to identify the beats by placing their hands under their chins: *Say the word slowly. Each time your chin hits your hand, that's a beat. Now, let's try clapping the beats.* Model for children how to clap each beat: ro (clap); bot (clap)—*that's two beats!* Ask children to clap and count the beats in each word as they say it. Then guide them to link rods that have the same number of syllables. For example, robot, monkey, and pumpkin each have two beats. To reinforce learning, have children draw pictures of the rods and add dots for the number of beats under each picture.

### Beats in a Name

Download the Beats in a Name Graph. Ask children to say their names and stomp their feet for each beat. For example, José = 2 stomps or 2 beats. Invite children to draw a picture of themselves in the correct column on the graph. Have children think of more names, such as the names of family members and friends. Invite them to stomp each beat in the names, then draw a picture of each person in the correct column. Share the completed graphs and discuss how many names have the same number of syllables. For extra practice, invite children to tap out the syllables for each name on a tabletop, snap each beat with their fingers, or think of their own unique way to call out the beats in a name.



Download the Beats in a Name Graph here!

[hand2mind.com/rr-alphabet-phonemic-awareness](http://hand2mind.com/rr-alphabet-phonemic-awareness)

## Letters and the Alphabet

**Skill:** Learn to recognize and sequence letters of the alphabet.

### What's in a Name?

Start letter exploration with the letters in children's names. Write the names on a piece of paper or a whiteboard. Point to each name, encouraging children to talk about how long it is and to count how many letters it has. Invite children to trace their written name with their fingers to explore the shapes of the letters. Talk about the sounds of each letter in their name: Alex, /A/, /l/, /e/, /ks/.

Guide children to build their own names with Reading Rods®. Have children say each letter name as they match it to the written letter, then snap the letter rods together. Ask them how many red letters their name has and how many blue. Point out that names begin with an uppercase letter, followed by lowercase letters. Challenge children to take the Reading Rods apart and work together to build their names again, this time without the written clue.

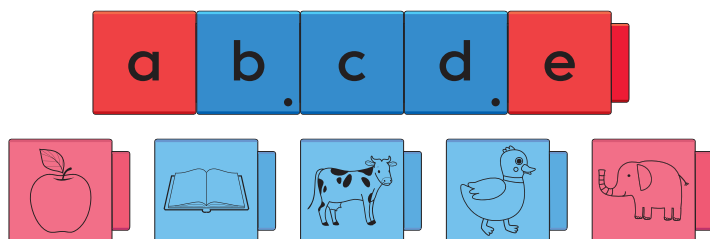
### Letter Shapes

Place letter rods on a table to form a familiar word, such as *dog*, *tree*, or *star*. Describe the shape of a letter in the word: *It has a round body (o); it has a line with a round body (d); it has a tall line with a line crossing through it (t); etc.* Children should pick out the letter you are describing. Encourage children to look for the orientation dots on rods like p, d, and b, and to trace letters with their fingers. After children collect all the

letters, have them name the letters as they connect the rods to re-form the familiar word and draw a picture of it. If children are ready, have them try to write the letters of the word under their picture in the correct order.

## ABC Train

Display five letter or picture rods in alphabetical order, such as a, b, c, d, e or apple, book, cow, duck, elephant. Ask children to read the letter names and say the picture words. Explain that the rods are in order, like cars on a train. Replace a letter or picture with a blank rod. Encourage children to identify the missing letter: *Let's read or say the names together: a, b, c, \_\_\_, e or apple, book, cow, \_\_\_, elephant. Who knows what's missing?* Say children's suggestions together as part of the sequence and confirm the correct answer. As children's skills grow, challenge them to sequence more letters and the entire alphabet.



## Beginning and Ending Sounds

**Skill:** Identify beginning and ending sounds in words.

### Match Beginning Sounds

Present a picture rod, such as duck, to children. Ask children to name the first sound heard in duck (/d/). Help them find the d rod and connect it to the duck rod. Have children hold the rods as they walk around the room to find an object with the same beginning sound. Remind them that the object needs to begin with the /d/ sound, such as door. Encourage children to say words together and listen for their beginning sound: duck, door, desk, /d/.

### What's the Word?

Place all picture rods starting with the letters f, l, w, s, and d in a row. Say the picture words together and guide children to listen for the beginning sounds by saying:

*Listen carefully to my sentence: A rose is my favorite /f/ \_\_\_\_\_. Look at your picture rods. Can you figure out the word? Who can tell me the first sound of the word? (/f/) Could the word be watch? Why or why not? Could it be dice?*

Allow time for children to share their thinking. Draw attention to the initial letter sounds in the picture words watch and dice. Repeat the sentence and stretch out the /f/ sound, saying: *Could the missing word be fish? Does it begin with the /f/ sound? (Yes.) The word fish begins with the /f/ sound, but does it make sense? Let's check. A rose is my favorite fish. (No!)*



Guide children to turn the /f/ picture rod to find a word that makes sense. Say the names of each picture that begins with the /f/ sound. (flower, fish, fan, frog) Say the sentence again. Allow time to discuss why flower is the best choice.

### Match Ending Sounds

Scatter the letter and picture rods for k, t, book, cat, milk, and ant on a table. Prompt children to say the picture words and listen for the ending sound: *This is a book. What is the sound you hear at the end of book? (/k/)* Redirect children who say the beginning sound (/b/) instead: *Yes, book starts with /b/. Can you say the word again and hear where it stops? What's the sound there? (/k/)* That's the ending sound. Have children link the book and k rods and continue linking ending letter sounds with picture words. Ask if they can find something around the room that ends with the same sound: book, cake, bike.

### Guess the Secret Word

Display 10 picture rods and invite children to guess their beginning and ending sounds. Prompt children by saying: *I'm thinking of a word that starts with /f/ and ends with /g/. What's my secret word? (frog)* Continue providing clues and asking children to guess. Challenge children to think of clues for the next game!



## Isolating Sounds

**Skill:** Isolate the sounds in words.

### Listen for the Sound



A *phoneme* is a unit of sound in a word. Write two-phoneme words—such as *day*, *bee*, *pie*, *go*, and *we*—on cards. As you read a word aloud, ask children to listen carefully to the number of sounds in the word. Say the word *day*. Repeat the word with a pause between the two phonemes (/d/ and /ay/). Place a blank rod in front of you as you say each phoneme (use two blank rods). Draw attention to the two sounds heard in the word *day*. Repeat the activity with the word *bee*.

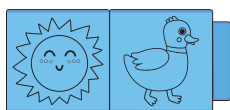
### Vowel Sounds

Display Reading Rods® vowel pictures. Allow time for children to look at the pictures on each side of the rods. Invite children to share how these rods are different from the others. Draw attention to the pink color. Let children know that these pictures begin with vowels a, e, i, o, and u.

Ask children to find the rods with pictures whose names have the same beginning sound as *octagon*. Model how to put the rod on the left index finger. Rotate the rod so the picture of the octopus faces children. Say the names of the pictures together: *octopus*, *ostrich*, *ox*. Ask children to watch your mouth as you repeat the words. Say the words slowly to exaggerate the movement of your mouth at the beginning of each word.



Encourage children to share what they notice. Have them close their eyes and repeat the words *octopus*, *ostrich*, and *ox*. Have them say the words with their hands under their chins.



### What's in the Middle?

Use the picture rods for sun, leaf, duck, jet, frog and letter rods for u, o, e to practice identifying middle sounds. Have children say a picture word and listen for the sound in the middle of the word.

Prompt them to say a few words together and listen for matching middle sounds: sun, leaf, duck, frog. *Sun doesn't sound like leaf or frog. Sun and duck both have the /u/ sound. Can you tell me which letter makes that sound?* Ask children to link the sun and duck rods. Write the words *sun* and *duck* on the board and have children find the u letter rod. Then challenge them to find more letters to build the words on their own.

### Find the Sound

Display a picture rod for words starting with the consonant b. Invite children to say the picture words with you as you turn the rod to show all four sides: *ball*, *banana*, *bat*, *book*. Have children repeat the name of each picture, emphasizing the initial sound. Point out that picture words all begin with the same sound. Display the pictures again as you turn the rod and say the picture names. Isolate the initial sound as you say the words: /b/ *ball*, /b/ *banana*, /b/ *bat*, and /b/ *book*.

Explain to children that most consonant sounds can be anywhere in a word: the beginning, middle, or end. Repeat the activity with the x picture rod. Point out that the /ks/ sound of x is in the middle or end of words, not at the beginning. For example: *X-ray starts with the letter x, but the sound is not the /ks/ sound we hear in box*. Say the picture words slowly with children as you turn the rod: *exit*, *box*, *fox*, *six*. Say each word slowly again, isolating the x sound: *box /ks/, fox /ks/, six /ks/, ex /ks/ it*. Ask where the x sound is in each word: *at the end in box, in the middle in exit, etc.*



### Building CVC Words

**Skill:** Develop an understanding of segmenting and blending sounds to create simple words.

### Decoding and Blending

To start building words with children, start with simple consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words. Model how to segment and then blend the sounds. For instance, use the c, a, and t letter rods to spell *cat*. Say the sounds: /k/, /a/, /t/. Then model stretching out the sounds and blending them together: *caaat*. Finally, model saying the word quickly and fluently: *cat*. Point out how the rods look when creating a CVC word and how there must be a red vowel rod in the middle, with blue consonant rods at the beginning and end.

## Word Families

Download the Word Families Mat. Choose the middle and ending of a CVC word family, such as “ug,” and model building it with letter rods: /u/, /g/ = ug. Model building the first word on the mat, bug, by adding a b rod to the ug rods. Lay out the consonant rods and ask children to work together to find a letter, place it on the mat in an empty circle, and sound it out with the word family on the mat. Nonsense words are OK! Children will practice letter sounds and blending with any word they build. For example: rug, /r/, /u/, /g/; pug, /p/, /u/, /g/; mug, /m/, /u/, /g/; and even sug, /s/, /u/, /g/. Repeat the activity with other CVC word families: at, un, in, etc.



Download the Word Families Mat here!

[hand2mind.com/rr-alphabet-phonemic-awareness](http://hand2mind.com/rr-alphabet-phonemic-awareness)

## Silly Spelling

Select a CVC picture rod such as bat and build the word with letter rods—this time using one incorrect letter. Ask children to say the picture word and then sound out the letters: *bat*, /b/, /o/, /t/. *Is that right?* Guide children to isolate the letter sounds and decide which one is wrong. As they try different letter switches, encourage them to say the sounds and see if they make sense. As children become more confident in identifying the incorrect letter, invite them to try silly spelling for a word of their own and have a partner fix it.

## Say, Build, and Read

Display the picture rods for up, ten, and dog, along with letter rods u, t, d, p, o, e, g, and n. Say the picture words: *up*, *ten*, *dog*. Work with children to find and say letter sounds that build each picture word. Build the first word and sound it out together: /u/, /p/; *u and p together spell the word up*. Then allow children to explore sounds and build words on their own. Challenge them to write the words on a piece of paper.



## Shake & Spill Words

Choose picture rods for CVC words like cat and van. Have children say the picture words with you and isolate the sounds: *cat*, /c/, /a/, /t/; *van*, /v/, /a/, /n/. Select the letter rods and connect them to spell the CVC words: cat, van. Then take the rods apart and place them each in a cup (only one word per cup). Tell *children* to work with a partner and take turns shaking a cup. Have them spill out the rods and put them together to spell a word. If needed, give them a clue about their word: *This word rhymes with bat and starts with the /k/ sound. This word is a type of car*. See the Reading Rods® Picture Key on page 11 for a list of CVC words to try.

## Reading Rods® Picture Key

The picture rods in this kit are designed (and child-tested!) to be easy to recognize. Children will, however, interpret pictures differently (lizard vs. iguana, number vs. two or seven). This is a natural part of the learning process. The pictures serve as visual tools to isolate and identify letter sounds, and whatever words children come up with can be applied to build literacy skills. The activities in this guide are flexible so words can be substituted or added with the same result. For example, if children say “number” instead of “seven,” say: *Yes, that’s a number. Can you hear the ending sound in number? (/r/) Which number is it? (seven) Now, what is the ending sound in the word seven? (/n/)*

- CVC words
- 2-syllable words
- 3-syllable words

### Consonant Picture Rods

Bb	Cc	Dd	Ff	Gg
ball ● banana ● bat book	● camel ● cat cow crab	dice ● dog door duck	● flower fish ● fan frog	grapes game goat ● gorilla
Hh	Jj	Kk	Ll	Mm
hand ● hat horse ● happy	jar ● jet juice ● jellyfish	● kangaroo key king kite	lamp leaf ● lemon ● lion	milk ● monkey moon ● mad
Nn	Pp	Qq	Rr	Ss
● necklace nest nine nose	● pan pear ● pumpkin ● pencil	queen ● question quail quilt	● robot ring rake rain	● sad ● seven sock ● sun
Tt	Vv	Ww	Xx	Yy
two ● ten ● tiger ● turtle	● volcano ● van ● violin ● vacuum	● wagon watch whale ● web	● exit ● box ● fox ● six	● yo-yo yarn ● yoga
Zz				
● zebra ● zipper ● zero				

### Vowel Picture Rods

Aa	Ee	Ii	Oo	Uu
ant ● apple ● anchor	● elephant elf ● envelope	● iguana ● insect in	● octopus ● ostrich ox	● umbrella up ● under

# Discover more ways to learn with Reading Rods®

High-Frequency Words/Sight Words  
Advanced Phonics Skills (variant vowels)  
Prefixes and Suffixes (multisyllabic words)  
Sentence Construction  
Word Families  
Short and Long Vowels  
CVC Words  
Sound Isolation  
Beginning/Ending Sounds  
Alphabet/Letter Recognition  
Rhyming  
Syllables

Alphabet & Phonemic Awareness	●	●	●	●	●	●													
Alphabet & CVC Words			●	●	●	●													
Building Sight Words							●												
Phonics Word-Building								●	●										
Prefixes & Suffixes											●	●							
Sentence Construction																		●	



Scan for more Reading Rods resources!

[hand2mind.com/reading-rods](http://hand2mind.com/reading-rods)

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