

Day 1 · 50 minutes

Meet /a/: apple and ant

Today: I can say /a/ when I see A or a, hear rhymes, and pinch my pencil.



Sound games

10 min

Hear rhymes, thumbs up or down, then stand or sit.

SAY

Rhyming words sound the same at the end. Listen: mat, sat.



Letter drill

3 min

Cards a and A, name, /a/, apple.

SAY

This is the letter a. Its sound is /a/, like the start of apple.



New skill

20 min

Hear /a/ in apple and ant, trace A a, circle /a/ pictures.

SAY

Today's new sound is /a/. Drop your jaw and smile a little: /a/.



Read together

7 min

Hello, School!, top, left to right, back and down.

SAY

Here is the front of the book. I open it and start at the top.



Handwriting

10 min

Sit tall, pinch and flip, pull-down lines, trace first name.

SAY

Sit tall, feet flat, back straight. My other hand holds the paper.

You need

Meet the Letter a

Which Start with /a/?

Handwriting: Pull Down and My Name, day 1

From the kit (print once, keep 3 weeks): Letter Cards: a m s t

Big book Hello, School!, a pencil, a highlighter

Quick check

Show card a: the child says the letter name, /a/, and apple.

Step by step?

Open Teach mode on your phone: it walks you through every step, with a timer.



Sound games: hear a rhyme

10 min

Hear whether two spoken words rhyme and show it with a thumb.

1 Show them

Rhyming words sound the same at the end. Listen: mat, sat.
Mat, sat. Both end with -at.
They rhyme! Thumbs up.
Mat, top. Different endings. No rhyme. Thumbs down.

- No pictures, no letters: just your voice. Say each pair slowly and lean on the ending.
- Show a big thumbs up or thumbs down after each pair.

2 Together

Say it with me: am, Sam. Same ending? Thumbs up together!
Sam, sun. Same ending? No. Thumbs down together.
Stand up for a rhyme, sit down for no rhyme. Ready?

- Say each pair together, then move: hat, mat (stand); map, top (sit); top, mop (stand).
- Keep it quick and bouncy: about 6 pairs.

3 Their turn

Your turn. Listen, then show me your thumb.
Sat, hat? Sun, mat? Tap, map?
You can hear rhymes! That is a reader's trick.

- Say each pair once and wait 3 seconds; mix rhymes and not-rhymes.
- Add more: sock, rock (up); sock, sun (down); man, can (up).

Stuck? Say: "My turn: sat, hat, both end -at, thumbs up. Our turn: say it with me. Your turn: rhyme?" Come back to the missed pair after two more pairs.



Letter drill: a

3 min

Say the letter name, the sound /a/ and the key picture apple for A and a.

1 Show them

This is the letter a. Its sound is /a/, like the start of apple.
Letter a, /a/, apple.
This is big A. Same sound: /a/, apple.

- Hold up card a, then card A, from Letter Cards: a m s t; touch the apple.
- Say /a/ short, jaw dropped, never 'ay' (that is the letter name).

2 Together

Say it with me: letter a, /a/, apple.
Now big A: letter A, /a/, apple.
Hand under your chin. Feel your jaw drop: /a/!

- Point under the card and say it together 3 times, a little faster each time.

3 Their turn

Your turn. What letter? What sound? What picture?

- Flash a and A in mixed order, 4 times; the child says name, sound, picture.

Stuck? If the child says 'ay' for the sound: "My turn: /a/, apple. Our turn: /a/. Your turn: what sound?"



New skill: short a /a/ (apple, ant)

20 min

Hear /a/ at the start of words and link it to the letters A and a.

1 Show them

Today's new sound is /a/. Drop your jaw and smile a little: /a/.

Apple. /a/ /a/ apple. Apple starts with /a/.

Ant. /a/ /a/ ant. Ant starts with /a/ too. The letter a says /a/.

- On Meet the Letter a, touch the apple, then the ant, as you say each one.
- Then trace big A and small a slowly with your finger, saying the We do paths aloud.

2 Together

Trace big A with me. Start at the top line. Slant down left.

Back to the top, slant down right. Slide right across the middle.

Small a: say the path in the box with me. Then /a/ alligator, /a/ astronaut!

- The child's finger traces each big letter from the green dot, right along with yours.
- Say each picture together, /a/ first: /a/ apple, /a/ ant, /a/ alligator, /a/ astronaut.

3 Their turn

Your turn. I say a picture. Does it start with /a/?

Say it first, then circle it if it starts with /a/. Ant? Dog? Alligator?

Fish? Astronaut? Bed? Now touch each circle and say /a/.

- Use Which Start with /a/?; check with the answer key page: ant, alligator, astronaut (3 of 3).
- Last, the child finger-traces big A and small a alone on Meet the Letter a, saying /a/.

Stuck? If dog is circled: "My turn: dog, /d/, dog. No /a/. Our turn: dog. Your turn: does dog start with /a/?" If 'ay' comes out: "My turn: /a/, apple, jaw drops. Our turn: /a/. Your turn."

Say these words as you write

- A** Start at the top line. Slant down left. Back to the top, slant down right. Slide right across the middle.
- a** Start just below the middle line. Circle back all the way around. Push up to the middle line and pull straight down.



Read together: Hello, School!

7 min

Show that we read from the top, left to right, then back and down.

1 Show them

Here is the front of the book. I open it and start at the top.

I read this way, left to right. Watch my finger.

At the end of a line, I sweep back and go down.

- Read 2 pages, sliding your finger under the words, left to right.
- At each line end, make a big swoop back to the left and down.

2 Together

Put your finger on mine. Where do we start? At the top, here.

Which way do we go? This way! Now back and down.

- Read 3 more pages; the child's finger rides on yours. The child turns each page.

3 Their turn

Your turn. Show me where I start reading on this page.

Show me which way I go. Where do I go next?

- The child points to the start and sweeps left to right, then back and down.
- Read as they point; finish the book for fun. The child does not read words.

Stuck? If the child starts at the bottom or the right: "My turn: I start at the top, here. Our turn: point with me. Your turn: where do I start?"



Handwriting: sit tall, pinch and flip, pull down, my name

10 min

Hold the pencil with pinch and flip, sit tall, pull lines down from the top line, and trace my first name.

1 Show them

Sit tall, feet flat, back straight.
My other hand holds the paper.
Pinch and flip: pinch near the point, flip it over. It rests on my middle finger.

Start at the top line, pull down.
Top to bottom, every time.

- Lay the pencil on the table pointing at you; pinch near the point and flip it up.
- Draw one pull-down line on the first row of today's handwriting page, from the green dot.

2 Together

Sit tall with me. Pinch and flip with me. Show me your pinch.
Put your pencil on the green dot. Start at the top line, pull down.

- Check the pinch: thumb and pointer near the point, pencil resting on the middle finger.
- Trace the first line together, your hand lightly over theirs if needed.

3 Their turn

Your turn. Trace three lines, then make one alone from the green dot.

Now your name. I write it; you trace it. The capital comes first.

- The child does both pull-down rows: trace 3, then 1 alone.
- Write the first name in highlighter, capital first; the child traces it.

Stuck? If the line goes bottom to top: "My turn: start at the top line, pull down. Our turn: hands together. Your turn." If a fist grip comes back, say "Pinch and flip," reset the pencil, and praise the pinch.

Quick check

1. Show card a: the child says the letter name, /a/, and apple.
2. Say ax, then moon: the child shows a thumb up only for the word that starts with /a/.
3. Say hop, pop, then fan, sun: the child shows thumb up for the rhyme and thumb down for no rhyme.

Got it

All 3 right: teach day 2 as written.

Nearly

2 right: teach day 2 as written and add 1 minute of the missed item (card a or rhyme pairs) to the warm-up.

Not yet

0 or 1 right: teach day 2, plus 3 extra minutes (in class a small group; at home just you and your child) of letter a, /a/, apple and 5 rhyme pairs with thumbs.

At home in 20 minutes

1. Rhyme thumbs (4 minutes): model mat, sat (up) and mat, top (down), then say 6 pairs for your child to judge.
2. Letter a (2 minutes): show card a, say "letter a, /a/, apple" together, then your child says it alone.
3. Meet /a/ (6 minutes): say /a/ with each picture on Meet the Letter a, finger-trace A and a, then circle the /a/ pictures on the Which Start with /a/? sheet.
4. Read together (3 minutes): read Hello, School! with your finger sliding left to right, back and down, while your child shows you where to start.
5. Handwriting (5 minutes): sit tall, pinch and flip, trace the pull-down lines from the top line, then trace the name you wrote in highlighter.

Tip: Say /a/ short, like the start of apple, never 'ay', because 'ay' is the letter name, not the sound. The night before, print today's 3 sheets and the kit once and cut the Letter Cards (about 10 minutes); keep them for all 3 weeks. Black-and-white prints: the green start dot is the big dot.