

Flash Card Exercises to Teach Basic Literacy Skills to Pre-Literate Students

1. Oral Vocabulary

Students learn initially by listening and repeating. Very quickly they will need to respond to simple questions. These exercises assume that they will be learning basic conversational or survival English while they are learning basic literacy skills. These exercises are focused on teaching the literacy skills they need.

2. Letter Recognition and Distinction

A. Name the Letters of the Alphabet

A - 1. Flashcard exercises to teach the names of the letters:

Use the flash cards to show one capital letter at a time.

- a. Show and Tell: Instructor, "This is A. This is B." etc.
- b. Tell and Repeat: Instructor, "This is A." Student, "This is A." etc.
- c. Ask and Answer: Instructor, "What is this?" Student, "A" etc.
- d. Student Pairs: Have students test each other's ability to name the letters.

A - 2. Have the alphabet posted on a classroom wall and review the names of the letters each class session.

A - 3. Choose the best student to lead the class in reading and repeating the letters of the alphabet. That student can also quiz the other students.

A- 4. Student Pairs: Give out sets of letters to pairs of students and have them quiz each other.

B. Recognize the Graphic Forms of Capital and Lower Case Letters

B - 1. Flashcard exercises to teach capital and lower case letter recognition:

- a. Repeat exercises from "A" using the lower case alphabet.
- b. Lay out 4 or 5 pairs of capital and lower case letters from the same font. Mix up the letters and demonstrate returning them to matching pairs. Mix them up again and ask students to return them to matching pairs.
- c. Repeat above exercise "b" using a different group of letters.
- d. Student Pairs: Have students test each other's ability to match upper and lower case letters in the same font.

B - 2. Use flash cards to play a memory game, by finding matching capital and lower case letters.

B - 3. Play alphabet bingo with upper and lower case letters.

C. Alphabetical Order

C - 1. Use 6 to 8 sequential letters from the upper case alphabet. Lay them out in alphabetical order. Once students learn a group, introduce a new group until students have learned the entire alphabet in order.

- a. Show and Tell: Instructor, "This is A. B is next. C is next."
- b. Tell and Repeat: Instructor, "B is next." Student, "B is next."
- c. Ask and Answer: Instructor, "This is B. What letter is next?" Student, "C."
- d. Student Pairs: Have students test each other's ability to put the letters in alphabetical order.

e. Put in Order: Mix up the letters and demonstrate how to put them in order. Mix them up again and ask students to return them to alphabetical order.

C - 2. Have the alphabet posted on a wall in the classroom, and review alphabetical order each class session.

C - 3. Choose the best student to lead the class in reading and repeating the letters of the alphabet. That student can also quiz the other students.

D. Recognize the Same Letter in Different Fonts

For these practice exercises, 4 versions of the flash cards in different fonts are used. Since it can't be assumed that pre-literate students will be able to recognize variations of the letters, it's necessary to give them practice recognizing letters in different fonts.

Times is a serif font and looks like this.

Helvetica is sans serif and looks like this.

Benguiat Frisky is similar to hand printing and looks like this.

Coronet is similar to handwriting and looks like this.

D - 1. Flash card exercises to teach recognition of different versions of the same letter in different fonts:

- a. Repeat exercises from "A" using different fonts, to reinforce letter recognition.
- b. Lay out a group of capital letters from one font and the same letters in another font. Mix up the letters and demonstrate returning them to matching pairs. Mix them up again and ask a student to return them to matching pairs.
- c. Repeat exercise "b" using a different group of letters.
- d. Student Pairs: Have students test each other's ability to match the letters.

D - 2. Use flash cards to play a memory game, by finding matching letters in different fonts.

3. Number Recognition and Distinction

While teaching numbers we must orally teach the meaning of the number words before they can make sense. Numbers can all be considered sight words, in the sense that "1, 2, 3" give no pronunciation clues. The actual word forms of the numbers are often sight words as well, i.e. "two." We also have to teach that "one" and "1" represent the same idea.

A. Name the Numbers from 1 to 100

A - 1. Flash card exercises to teach names of the numbers: Use the flash cards to show one number at a time. Start with groups of 10 and add larger numbers as the students learn them.

- a. Show and Tell: Instructor, "This is 1. This is 2."
- b. Tell and Repeat: Instructor, "This is 1." Student, "This is 1."
- c. Ask and Answer: Instructor, "What is this?" Student, "1."
- d. Student Pairs: Have students test each other's ability to name the numbers.

A - 2. Have numbers posted on the classroom wall and review the names of the numbers each class session.

A - 3. Choose the best student to lead the class in reading and repeating the numbers. That student can also quiz the other students.

B. Count and Use Numerical Order

- B - 1. Use 6 to 8 sequential numbers. Lay flash cards out in numerical order.
- a. Show and Tell: Instructor, "This is 5. 6 is next. 7 is next."
 - b. Tell and Repeat: Instructor, "6 is next." Student, "6 is next."
 - c. Ask and Answer: Instructor, "This is 5. What number is next?" Student, "6."
 - d. Put in Order: Mix up the numbers and demonstrate returning them to numerical order. Mix them up again and ask a student to return them to numerical order.
 - e. Student Pairs: Have students quiz each other's ability to put mixed up numbers back in order.
- B - 2. Have numbers posted on a wall in the classroom, and mix up the order before every class. Each day ask a different student to put them back in the correct order.
- B - 3. Give out decks of cards to students and have them sort each suit in numerical order.

C. Recognize the Graphic Forms of Time and Price

Time

- C - 1. Exercise to teach how to read time: Bring a clock to show the time, and write the corresponding time on the board. As you change the time on the clock change the time on the board. Say each time and have students repeat it.
- C - 2. Flash card exercises to teach how to read times: Time flash cards have the numerical time on one side, and a clock face showing the same time on the other side.

- a. Show and Tell: Show students the 1:00 flash card, with numbers on the front and the clock face showing the same time on the back of the flash card.
Instructor, "This is 1:00, and this is 1:00." etc.
- b. Tell and Repeat: Instructor, "This is 1:00." Student, "This is 1:00." etc.
- c. Ask and Answer: Instructor, "What time is it?" Student, "1:00." etc.
- d. Student Pairs: Have students test each other's ability to name the correct time on the clock face side of the card.

C - 3. Have one student act as the teacher quizzing the other students.

C - 4. Put one Time flash card on the board next to the "a.m." card, and another Time flash card on the board next to the "p.m." card.

- a. Show and Tell: Instructor, "6:00 a.m. means 6 in the morning."
"7:00 p.m means 7 in the evening." etc.
- b. Tell and Repeat: Instructor, "It's 6 a.m. It's 6 in the morning."
Student, "It's 6 a.m. It's 6 in the morning." etc.
- c. Ask and Answer: Instructor, "What time is it?" Student, "It's 6 a.m. It's 6 in the morning." etc.

C - 5. Give students a schedule with class times listed.

- a. Quiz students on what time morning class starts, what time evening class ends, etc.
- b. Give students a bus schedule, or other schedule which lists times for both days and evenings. Quiz students.

Price

C - 6. Flash card exercises to teach how to read prices in dollars: (As an alternative, have class practice with cash or Monopoly money.)

- a. Show and Tell: Show student the \$1.00 flash card, and the picture of the one dollar bill on the back. Instructor, "This is \$1.00, and this is \$1.00." etc.
- b. Tell and Repeat: Instructor, "This is \$1.00." Student, "This is \$1.00."
- c. Ask and Answer: Instructor, "How much is this?" Student, "\$1.00."
- d. Student Pairs: Have one student show the numerical price on the flash cards and ask, "How much is this?" Later, have him show the money pictured on the back of the cards and ask, "How much is this?" Have students take turns asking and answering these questions.

C - 7. Give students Monopoly money and property cards. Have them figure out how much rent to pay, and have them count out the correct amount of money.

C - 8. Flash card exercises to teach students how to read prices in dollars and cents:
(As an alternative, have class practice with cash or Monopoly money.)

- a. Show and Tell: Show students the \$1.25 flash card, and the picture of a dollar bill and a quarter on the back. Instructor, "This is \$1.25, and this is \$1.25." etc.
- b. Tell and Repeat: Instructor, "This is \$1.25." Student, "This is \$1.25." etc.
- c. Ask and Answer: Instructor, "How much is this?" Student, "\$1.25." etc.
- d. Student Pairs: Have one student show the numerical price on the flash cards and ask, "How much is this?" Later, have him show the dollars and coins pictured on the back of the cards and ask, "How much is this?" Have students take turns asking and answering these questions.

D. Recognize Ordinal Numbers

D - 1. Flash card exercises to teach ordinal numbers: (Use the ordinal number cards from the "Calendar Flash Card Set.")

- a. Show and Tell: Write students names in a list on the board. Show students the "1" and the "st" flash cards and then point to the first name on the list.

Instructor, "John is 1st. Mary is 2nd." etc.

b. Tell and Repeat: Instructor, "John is 1st." Student, "John is 1st."

Instructor, "Mary is 2nd." Student "Mary is 2nd." etc.

c. Ask and Answer: Instructor, "Who is 1st?" Student, "John."

Instructor, "Who is 3rd?" Student, "Bill." etc.

D - 2. Have a calendar posted on a wall in the classroom and review ordinal numbers for the dates of the month each class session.

D - 3. Put a numbered list on the board. Have one student act as the teacher and quiz the other students.

D - 4. Play ordinal number bingo, using numbers from 1st to the 31st.

E. Recognize Numbers and Words Used in Dates

Even though the focus here is on learning dates, an integral part of that is learning days of the week and months of the year, so this vocabulary must be taught. Remind students that the names of days and months, just like people's names, always begin with a capital letter.

E - 1. Create a calendar for the current month using flash cards. Ask students to help if they are able.

E - 2. Review the the order of the numbers and the days of the week. Introduce sight words for "today," "tomorrow," etc.

Teach the patterns. "What date is today?" "It is March 5th."

"What date is tomorrow?" "It is March 6th."

"What date was yesterday?" "It was March 4th." etc.

E - 3. Mix up the numbers for the days of the month on the calendar, and have students put them back in the correct order.

E - 4. Have students create a new calendar from flash cards when a new month begins.

4. Writing

The standard pattern used to print letters should be modeled. Have students practice printing the standard way. If you see a student forming letters in an unconventional manner, encourage them to use the standard strokes. The use of unconventional patterns while writing letters usually makes them more difficult for other people to recognize. Once writing habits are formed they are hard to break, so teaching this early is essential.

A. Print Capital Letters

A - 1. Flash card exercises to teach how to print capital letters:

a. Show and Tell: Instructor, "This is 'A.' You write 'A' like this." etc.

Demonstrate how to write the letter. Write on the board, on paper, or in the air, but demonstrate the three strokes we use to print a capital "A." etc.

b. Tell and Write: Instructor, "This is A. Write A." Student copies "A." If a student has any problems copying the letter, model the correct style again. Ask the student to copy each letter three or four times.

A - 2. Before each lesson, have letters already on the board for students to copy. Or, hand out paper with letters already printed and have students copy them.

A - 3. Have the capital letter flash cards on the board in alphabetical order. Remove 2

or 3 letters and ask a student to write in the missing letters. Then, remove 2 or 3 more and ask another student to write in those missing letters. Keep going until the flash card alphabet is replaced with a hand printed alphabet.

A - 4. Have one student copy on the board, while the others copy in their notebooks. Choose a different student each time.

B. Print Lower Case Letters

B - 1. Use all of the exercises from "A," substituting lower case letters.

B - 2. Lay out 4 or 5 pairs of capital and lower case letters (from the same font). Have students copy both the capital and the matching lower case letter. Continue with other groups of letters.

C. Print Name

C - 1. Exercises to teach students to write their names and other proper names:

a. Instructor: "I'm writing my name on the board. I start my first name with a capital letter. I start my last name with a capital letter. Copy my name." Have students copy the name.

b. Have each student in turn write their name on the board. Correct any mistakes. Have the other students copy it.

C - 2. Every time work sheets are handed out, have students write their names on them.

C - 3. Have students sign in, with their first and last name, each day in class.

C - 4. Ask students to copy only the names from stories or other materials you use.

C - 5. Teach students the names of the city and state. Have students practice writing them. Explain that, just like people's names, the names for a city or a state begin with a capital letter.

D. Print Numbers

D - 1. Flash card exercises to teach how to print numbers:

a. Show and Tell: Instructor, "This is 1. You write '1' like this." etc.

Demonstrate how to write the number. Write on the board, on paper, or in the air, but demonstrate the one stroke we use to print a "1." etc.

b. Tell and Write: Instructor, "This is 1. Write 1." If a student has problems copying the number, model the correct style again. Ask students to copy each number three or four times.

D - 2. Before each lesson, have numbers already on the board for students to copy. Or, hand out paper with numbers already printed and have students copy them.

D - 3. Have number flash cards on the board in numerical order. Remove 2 or 3 numbers and ask a student to write in the missing numbers. Then remove 2 or 3 more and ask another student to write in those missing numbers. Keep going until all of the flash card numbers are replaced with hand printed numbers.

D - 4. Have one student copy on the board, while the others copy in their notebooks. Choose a different student each time.

5. Sight Words

There are several categories of sight word flash cards that have been provided, including the words needed to teach time, money, and the calendar. In addition, sets of sight word flash cards are available to teach the 210 most common words, and many of the basic words one needs to know to fill out simple forms. The sight words can all be taught using the following exercise patterns.

A. Calendar Sight Words

A - 1. Flash card exercises to teach the names of the days of the week, one at a time:

- a. Show and Tell: Instructor, "This is Monday. This is Tuesday."
- b. Tell and Repeat: Instructor, "This is Monday." Student, "This is Monday."
- c. Ask and Answer: Instructor, "What day is this?" Student, "Monday."
- d. Copy: Instructor, "This is Monday. Copy Monday."

A - 2. Flash card exercises to teach the order of the days of the week:

- a. Show and Tell: Instructor: "This is Monday. Tuesday is next." etc.
- b. Tell and Repeat: Instructor, "Tuesday is next." Student, "Tuesday is next."
- c. Ask and Answer: Instructor, "This is Monday. What day is next?" Student, "Tuesday."
- d. Put in Order: Mix up the order of the days and demonstrate returning them to the correct order. Mix them up again and ask a student to return them to the correct order.

A - 3. Flash card exercises to teach the names of the months, one at a time:

- a. Show and Tell: Instructor, "This is January. This is February."
- b. Tell and Repeat: Instructor, "This is January." Student, "This is January."

- c. Ask and Answer: Instructor, "What is this?" Student, "January."
- d. Copy the months: Instructor, "This is January. Copy January."

A - 4. Flash card exercises to teach the order of the months of the year:

- a. Show and Tell: Instructor, "This in January. February is next. March is next."
- b. Tell and Repeat: Instructor, "February is next." Student, "February is next."
- c. Ask and Answer: Instructor, "This is January. What month is next?" Student, "February."
- d. Put in Order: Mix up the months of the year and demonstrate returning them to the correct order. Mix them up again and the ask a student to return them to the correct order.

A- 5. Have flash cards for the months of the year on the board. Mix them up before each class and have students put them back in the correct order.

A - 6. Use flash cards to create a calendar on the classroom wall.

- a. On the calendar, mix up the cards for the days of the week and have students put them back in the correct order.
- b. Remove 2 or 3 cards (words and numbers) from the calendar and ask a student to write in the missing words and numbers. Then remove 2 or 3 more cards and ask another student to write in those missing words and numbers. Keep going until all of the flash cards are replaced with hand printed words and numbers.

B. Printing Personal Information

Use the pattern described above to teach the "Form Flash Cards" as sight words. Once students can recognize "first name," "address," etc., begin teaching them to print their personal information and to fill out simple forms.

B - 1. Flash card exercises to teach how to write personal information: Create a simple “form” on the board using the Form flash cards.

- a. Have students, one at a time, write their personal information on the board in the appropriate position, relative to the flash cards you have chosen.
- b. Erase that information, rearrange the flash cards in a different format, and again have students write their information in the appropriate position.
- c. As students gain confidence, add additional categories of personal information to the “form” you create on the board, such as date of birth, etc.