

Helping Children Learn to Recognize Their Name



As with adults, many activities in a child's typical day require the ability to recognize his or her name independently. For example, the child can function more independently in the classroom if he or she can find his/her own cubby independently upon school arrival.

In addition, name recognition is related to early reading and writing skills. For example, accomplishment of name-writing is a beginning step in developing awareness of the alphabetic principle (i.e., matching sounds with letters). Children learn that there is a difference between scribbling and letters grouped together, that words and letters have meaning.¹ It is difficult to tease apart the process of recognizing one's name and writing one's name, because these two distinct skills build on each other². Developmentally, children will be able to recognize their name before they can write it. Despite a lack of perfect handwriting, children may still benefit from practicing writing their name with the end goal being name recognition rather than signature skill.

Activities to Support Name Recognition

- Place names of children around the classroom-on cubbies, for "job" assignments, on lockers, etc.
- Encourage children to write their own names on projects. If they cannot, have an adult write while the child dictates letters. The adult may also encourage the child to trace over his name once it is written by the adult.
- Encourage children to "sign in" when arriving in the classroom. Again, tracing or dictation can easily modify this activity.
- Encourage children to connect letters they know from their names with letters in words they do not know to facilitate literacy and sound-to-letter matching.²
- Encourage children to help their peers with recognizing letters from their own names. For example, Adam identifies "A" for Ben.²

- Encourage children to use letters from their names and peers' names

Parent Activities to Support Skill Development

- Demonstrate writing your child's name.
- Have your child trace over your version. It may be fun to use multiple colors of crayons/markers for a "rainbow" effect.
- Have your child trace his name on fine-grit sandpaper using chalk or markers.
- Look at books involving different letter identification.
- Have your child play with letter blocks and encourage him/her to trace the shape of the letter following the route he would take to write the letter- i.e., top-to-bottom and counter-clockwise.
- Encourage your child to practice tracing or writing his name on a vertical surface such as an easel or chalkboard.
- Have your child form the letters of his name using rolled-out Play Doh.
- Point out letters that are in your child's name when you are driving and see letters on a billboard- make a game out of it to see if your child can recognize the letters.
- Using cards with letters on them, provide cards to your child with them scrambled and have him try to place them in the correct order to spell his name.

Resources

¹Neumann, S.B. (2006). Literacy development for infants and toddlers. In Rosenkoetter, S. E., & Knapp-Philo, J. (Eds.), *Learning to read the world: Language and literacy in the first three years*. Zero to Three Press: Washington, D.C.

²Bloodgood, J.W. (1999). What's in a name? Children's name writing and literacy acquisition. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 34(3). 342-267.

