

Offering a variety of ways to explore letters will engage the interest of learners and develop early literacy skills. The Alphabet Stamping Stones provide an accessible, playful, visual and tactile way to have fun exploring letter shapes, names and sounds, and creating simple words. The letters on top of the stones are painted to help children see which way up they should go, with consonants in red and vowels in blue. The straight sides and engraved dots on the side facing the child will enable them to position the stones the right way round alongside each other.



Put your stamp on it

Allow plenty of opportunity for children to play with the Stamping Stones and dough independently:



- As they stamp the different letter shapes, children will be developing important fine motor skills, learning how much pressure they need to apply to create a clear letter.
- Offer a variety of substrates for children to stamp letters into – as well as dough, you could use clay, sand dough or cloud dough.
- Encourage children to run their finger over the letter shapes on the Stamping Stones and in the dough, and talk about what they feel like. You might like to model correct letter formation by running your finger around the letter shape and encourage children to do the same.

- Can the children find the Stamping Stones for the letters in their name?
- When children are using dough for modelling, offer the Stamping Stones alongside for them to make labels for their creations. If they make an animal or vehicle, they might like to stamp its name or simply the initial letter on a separate piece of dough.
- Focus on a single letter using one Stamping Stone as part of a collection of wooden letters, Alphabet Pebbles, foam letters, etc., as well as items beginning with that letter such as animal figures, toys or items from the home corner.
- Add a few Stamping Stones and some dough to a themed play table. For example, on a pets-themed table you might like to offer the letters p, e, t and s, on a bee-themed table the letters b, e and s, and on a woodland table w, o and d.



Letter play

Playing with a small selection of Stamping Stones is ideal for cementing children's knowledge of letters and their sounds:

- Put small blank stickers on a dice with letters written on them that the children have recently learnt (such as s, a, t, p, i and n). Roll the dice, then encourage children to find the corresponding Stamping Stone and stamp it into some dough.
- Give a small group of children a Stamping Stone and a small blob of dough each. Ask them to stamp their letter, then find pictures or objects from a tray that begin with the same letter – or collect items from around the setting.

- Share a small number of Stamping Stones among a group of children (maybe three each). Say a letter sound and ask the children to see if they have the Stamping Stone showing the sound – if so, they can stamp it onto their dough, or onto a larger shared piece. Alternatively, you might like to pull a picture or object beginning with that letter from a bag.
- Pass an attractive bag or box containing a small selection of Stamping Stones around a group of children, and ask them to take turns to pull one out and stamp it onto some dough. What sound does the letter make? If you stamp onto small blobs of dough, you could place these onto a printed sheet showing a number of letters to mark off the ones you have found, and keep going until the sheet is full.

Put it into words

With consonants painted red and vowels blue, the Stamping Stones are great for building simple words:

- Use a selection of Stamping Stones showing familiar letters (such as s, a, t, p, i and n) to stamp letters onto small blobs of dough. Together, use these to explore building words. How many can you make?
- Stamp a word with one letter missing (perhaps with a line under the gap). This might be an initial letter in a longer word or the middle letter in a CVC word. Encourage children to think about what the missing letter is, find it from a selection of Stamping Stones and fill in the gap. You might like to show a picture or figure as a prompt.
- In an attractive bag or box, place objects or pictures representing CVC words comprising letters the children are familiar with. Ask a child to pull out an object or picture, then together work out what the initial sound is. Can they find the corresponding Stamping Stone and stamp it into the dough? Repeat for the middle and final sounds to complete the word. Check it's correct by sounding out the stamped word.
- Place a selection of Stamping Stones showing consonants the children have learnt in one container and vowels in another. Take turns to pull out two consonants and a vowel. Can the children make a real or nonsense word with them? Stamp the word into dough to keep a record of the word you've made and return the stones to the containers for the next child's turn. This helps children develop their understanding of the letter sounds. They will enjoy making nonsense words!



- Place a piece of rolled dough on a board or tray. Offer a selection of Stamping Stones with familiar letters on them and challenge the children to see how many CVC words they can stamp on the dough in five minutes. A sand timer will allow the children to time themselves and see how long they have left, and working in pairs will allow them to support one another. When the time is up, keep the piece of dough showing the words, so you can record their score and discuss the words they made.
- Stamp a CVC word on some dough. Can you change one of the letters by stamping a new one over the top to make a new word? Allow children time to investigate this for themselves, encouraging them to sound the words out to see if they are real or nonsense. You might like to show them how to turn a dog into a cat! (d-o-g > c-o-g > c-o-t > c-a-t) Playing in this way will also allow children to investigate rhyming words when they change the initial letter.

Get talking – useful words

Stamp, press harder, groove, letter name, letter sound, word.

Books about letters

Tim Hopgood's ABC by Tim Hopgood

The Usborne Big Book of ABC by Felicity Brooks

Animalphabet by Julia Donaldson