

Phonics

Bean Bags

Consonants and Vowels

Phonics Bean Bags are a fun, active way to encourage young learners' beginning reading skills, especially the ability to distinguish letter sounds. Before you begin using the bean bags, you may wish to make sure that children can name the objects pictured on each bean bag: *a* (apple/ape), *b* (butterfly), *c* (cow/circle), *d* (dog), *e* (elephant/eagle), *f* (fish), *g* (goat/giraffe), *h* (heart), *i* (igloo/ice cream), *j* (jam), *k* (kite), *l* (ladybug), *m* (motorcycle), *n* (net), *o* (octopus/oval), *p* (pencil), *q* (queen), *r* (rabbit), *s* (sun), *t* (turtle), *u* (umbrella/unicorn), *v* (van), *w* (watermelon), *x* (x-ray), *y* (yarn), *z* (zebra).

Toss and Say

Divide children into pairs or small groups. Give each team a pile of bean bags. Depending on the age and ability of your students, have children stand three to six (or more) feet from one another. Have the children take turns tossing the bean bags to one another, exaggerating the beginning letter sound of each pictured object on the bean bag, for example: "/a/ apple," "/b/ butterfly," "/c/ cow," etc.

Variation: Have children also identify the letter that makes the sound, for example: "/j/, jam, j."

Bean Bags in Action

Place the bean bags in a container. Without looking, a child chooses a bean bag from the container. The child identifies the picture and its beginning letter sound, for example, /f/ fish. The child then places the bean bag on a part of her body and pantomimes swimming like a fish. Continue the game with children taking turns choosing a bean bag, identifying the beginning letter sound of the pictured object, and pantomiming an action associated with that object: hopping like a rabbit (for *r*), opening an umbrella (for *u*), etc.

Pass and Say

Have a small group of three to five children sit in a circle. Give one of the children a bean bag. The child identifies the picture and its beginning sound, for example: "/m/ motorcycle," and then passes it to the child on the right. That child names something else that begins with the same sound, for example, "/m/ man," and passes the bean bag to the next child. The game continues with children naming things that begin with the target letter until children are stumped or you want to introduce a new letter.

Bean Bag "Hot Potato"

Have children sit in a circle. Depending on the age and experience of your group, give three to five of the children bean bags. Play some music and direct children to pass their bean bags around the circle as the music plays. When the music stops, the children who have bean bags stand up and identify the picture, its beginning sound, and, if you wish, the letter that makes that sound.

“I Spy” Letter Sounds

Place several of the bean bags in a bag or other container. Have a child reach inside the container without looking and choose a bean bag, for example the bean bag with the picture of the dog. Then have her locate something in the room that begins with the same letter sound. When she has found something, have her say, “I spy something that begins with /d/ like *dog*.” She then places the bean bag on her head, shoulder, arm, or any other part of her body she chooses and, while balancing the bean bag, walks over to the object and identifies it by saying, “I spy something that begins with /d/. It’s a *desk*.”

Variation: Have children identify the letter that makes the sound, too.

More “I Spy” Letter Sounds

Describe an object in the room that you have “spied.” For example, say, “I spy with my little eye, something that begins with /b/ like *butterfly*. I post your pictures and stories on it.” The first child that correctly guesses what you are describing (the bulletin board) takes the bean bag with the butterfly on it, balances it on his head, hand, or other chosen body part, and walks over to the object saying, “I spy with my little eye, something that begins with /b/. It’s the bulletin board.”

Variation: Have children identify the letter that makes the sound, too.

Alpha Toss

Make a giant alphabet game board from a plastic shower curtain or tablecloth. Draw lines with a permanent marker, dividing the game board into 26 sections. Cut out pictures from magazines or have children draw pictures of objects or animals for each letter of the alphabet on large index cards. Tape the pictures to the game board. You may wish to show two pictures in one section for the long and short sound of each of the vowels and for the hard and soft sounds of the letters *c* and *g*. Have children take turns tossing the bean bags onto the pictures that begin with the same sound.

Variation: Write the uppercase and lowercase letter form for each letter on a large index card. Tape the letters to the game board. Have children take turns tossing the bean bags onto the letter that begins each picture’s name.

Spell and Tell

Set out three bean bags whose beginning letters spell a simple consonant-vowel-consonant (c-v-c) word. For example, to spell the word *bat*, use the butterfly, the apple, and the turtle. Tell students that you are thinking of a “mystery word” and that the bean bags are “clues” to help them guess the word. Then give them hints such as these:

The mystery word begins with /b/ like *butterfly*.

Its middle sound is /a/ like *apple*.

Its ending sound is /t/ like *turtle*.

Help students blend the sounds to make the mystery word – *bat*.

For more active toss and learn fun, look for these additional bean bag sets:

EI-3045 Alphabet Bean Bags

EI-3047 Number Bean Bags

EI-3046 Color Bean Bags

EI-3048 Shapes Bean Bags

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