

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Initial sounds

DESCRIPTION

Children will create centrepieces for an alphabet party using items that start with a certain letter (i.e., a, f, k, m, p, s, t).

TARGETED SKILL(S):

Use knowledge of initial sounds. Use critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

**SUITABLE FOR**

Pairs, or small guided group

**PREP-TIME**

15-20 min.

**DURATION OF ACTIVITY**

45-60 min.

**MATERIALS**

- **We provide:** 'Centrepiece examples'; 'Alphabet cards: a, f, k, m, p, s, t'
- **You find:** Glue and/or tape; Scissors; Materials for centrepiece bases (e.g., modelling clay; foam pieces: block or wreath; plain wreaths; cardboard; containers; baskets; paper plates; clean recyclables); Materials starting with a, f, k, m, p, s, and t to decorate centrepieces (at least two options per letter – see 'Teacher tips' section)

PREPARATION

1. Print the 'Centrepiece examples' (one copy).
2. Print and cut out the 'Alphabet cards: a, f, k, m, p, s, t' (one set).
3. Decide on your groupings. If using all the activity's letters, you will need seven pairs or groups of children.
4. Gather glue, tape, scissors, and the materials for the centrepieces and centrepiece bases.
5. If you wish, sort the centrepiece materials (excluding the centrepiece base materials) according to their initial sounds beforehand. Or, sort them during the activity as a class (the activity directions will indicate when).

What will we learn?

"I wonder if we can design table decorations for an alphabet party that would make each letter of the alphabet feel welcome at the table where it will be sitting. I wonder what we could add to our decorations to make sure each letter feels special. I wonder how we could carefully select materials to use that each letter might like."

What do we know?

1. "Today we're going to make alphabet party centrepieces! What is a centrepiece?" (A decoration that we place in the centre of a table. They can be for a certain celebration or tradition, or just to have something nice to look at and make us happy.) Show the 'Centrepiece examples' and talk about their features and purposes.
2. "Let's practise the sounds for some letters that we know!" Show the 'Alphabet cards' one at a time as you ask: "What letter is this? Can you tell me the sound that ___ (a, f, k, m, p, s, t) makes?"
3. "Let's look at our materials to think about what items the letters in our groups might like." Show the materials. If you have not sorted the material per initial sound yet, do so now with the children's help.
4. "Why do you think the letters would like something made with these materials?" Guide children to understand that the material's initial sound is the same as the sound of the letter for which they will be creating the centrepiece. Select an item (e.g., feather) and ask: "Which letter do you think might like this as part of the centrepiece at its table?"; "What letter does 'feather' start with?"; "What letter do you think would like this and why?"; "Do you think the letter 'f' might like it?" Continue to discuss other objects as needed.

Watch me first!

1. Tell each group which letter they will make their centrepiece for. "How could you create a centrepiece, especially for the letter that will be sitting at your table? Let's brainstorm what kinds of materials we could use!"
2. "'Brainstorming' is when we think of ideas to solve the problem or challenge we are working on. It helps to think with friends because ideas from friends can help us think of more and new ideas."

3. "Now we'll use our ideas to create a plan in our heads or draw out on paper. When we plan, we also need to think about what materials might be best to use."
4. "First, help me make a plan. I want to create a centrepiece that will make my letter feel special at my table. What materials should I use and what should I do with them?" With the children's help, model choosing what materials to use to make a centrepiece base. Also, choose materials that begin with your chosen letter and plan how to arrange them.
5. "Now, it's your turn, with your group, to think of a plan to create a centrepiece that will make your letter feel special at your table. Plan how to make a base for your centrepiece and what materials to use. Then, plan the materials you will use to decorate it." Display each group's materials in front of them to help them plan (i.e., decorative materials and centrepiece base material options). Give each group their respective 'Alphabet card'.

Let's try it!

1. Ask the groups to begin creating their centrepieces (including the centrepiece bases) for the alphabet party using the provided materials. Remind them to think about or look at their plans to help them as they create.
NOTE: Some children may struggle to create one centrepiece as a group. If needed, help the children think of ways to create individual pieces that could be combined into one centrepiece.
2. "How can you test your centrepiece?" (We can show it to someone to see what they think and to give us ideas.)
3. "What can you do if someone suggests adding something?" (If we agree, we can change our centrepiece to make it better and to make sure it includes something for the letter that will be invited to our table.)
4. Model *effective feedback*: "Sometimes, when we're stuck, we ask friends for feedback or ideas to help us. Does a group need some feedback?" Select a group and ask what they need help with. Ask others to give feedback.
5. As the groups test and modify, ask some or all of the following questions: "Does your centrepiece include something for your letter?" "Why do you think your letter will like this centrepiece?" "Is there anything you would do differently next time?" "Is there something you missed or wished you had added?"

What did we learn?

- "What did you discover or learn while designing and creating your centrepiece for the alphabet party?"
- "Did you modify or change your centrepiece to make it better?" If so: "How did you do that?"
- "Did you get feedback to help make your centrepiece better? How did the feedback help you?"
- "How can our activity help us when we test and try new things in the future?" (We will know that it is okay to change something to make it even better and to think about what others may like when we make them something.)

Let's do more!

- Build on the understanding of positional concepts by asking the children to describe the table centrepieces to each other (e.g., the flower is in front of the feather).
- Ensure children are working together in their small groups. Have each child add one piece at a time to take turns building the centrepiece if needed.

EXTENDING THE LESSON

Less Challenging



- Provide only a couple of items for the groups to use. Discuss the letter and the sound that each item starts with.
- Use letter sounds that the children are familiar with (e.g., the first sound in their name).

More Challenging



- Use the provided 'Additional alphabet cards' to include more letters of the alphabet so that the groups can create one centrepiece suitable for more than one letter. Provide additional materials as needed.
- Ask the groups to brainstorm more items that start with their given letter(s) that could be added somehow.

TIPS



When gathering materials for the centrepieces, use as many or as few of the following suggestions as you like and include any of your own ideas as well. Items can be real or pretend.

- **a**: acorns, apples, anchors, supplies to make airplanes or angels
- **f**: feathers, fabric, foam cut-outs, felt, coffee filters, flags, flowers, things that are fuzzy or fluffy
- **k**: kite or kite-making supplies, keys, kaleidoscope, popcorn kernels, kidney beans, king's crown
- **m**: marshmallows, marbles, masks, magazines, mints, mail, money, things to make monsters

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- **p:** pom-poms, different types of paper, paper plates, puppets, pinecones, postcards, placemats, paint
 - **s:** stickers, sticks, craft sticks, sequins, stars, socks, seashells, sponges, string, straws, sparkles, seeds
 - **t:** decorative tape, tissue paper, teabags, cardboard tubes, toothpicks, paper to make mosaic tiles

NOTE: If you are unable to gather a lot of objects or materials for a particular letter, then you can print online images or colouring pages for objects or animals (e.g., **a:** airplane, alligator, ant; **k:** kangaroo, koala, kitten, king)
