

The Fatama Fata Celebration

The Fatama Fata Celebration has been practised by many people all over the world to celebrate the coming together of letter-sounds to make words! For many, many years it has been thought that special sounds and actions bring good luck to all who practise these sounds and actions together!

These actions and sounds have been passed down to me from a very old, very wise teacher and I believe you are all ready to hear and know the word-making secrets!

Look around to ensure no one from outside is listening as though you are about to share a very important secret, then whisper...“You must all stand.”

There are four different actions you must first be able to do. I hope you are ready to learn them.

The first action is called the **fierce cat**. The **fierce cat** action was used to tell others that there was an enemy close by. If the action is paired with the noise ‘**fff**’ you need to be very, very cautious.

Practise the action and the sound a few times.

The next action used in the Fatama Fata Celebration is the **tree**. Legend has it that if you saw someone using this action, you automatically had to

stand still, like a **tree**. Some warriors were so good at this that Teetee birds would land on their arms thinking they were branches. When birds landed on their outstretched arms they would make a '**ttt**' sound with their tongue in their beaks.

Let's try the **tree** action. Make sure your arms are very, very still. I will quietly make the '**ttt**' sound and you can join me when you feel you are still enough.

Ask the children to stand with arms outstretched to practise being still and make the '**ttt**' sound. Some **trees** have two trunks (both legs) while others only have one trunk (stand on one leg).

The third Fatama Fata Celebration action you must know is called the **surprise**. This action was often seen and used when friends and families would see each other in unusual places causing both people to be very **surprised!** This would often occur in the dark which is what made it a **surprise** encounter.

Let's try the **surprise**. Your feet need to stay still while you raise both of your arms at the same time. Let's try it without the sound first.

Have the children practise the action a few times without the sound. When ready, add the **short /ă /** sound: '**ahhh**'.

Okay, we are almost ready to put our Fatama Fata celebration moves together, but we must learn one more. This action is very special and will seem familiar to most of us as it is a very common sign for **yummy**.

As our celebrations often include food, we needed an action that we could share without using lots of words because our mouths were often full of food. Are you ready for the last one? It is often said that this is the easiest one as even very young children, sometimes babies can make this sound. Only now are we able to share this sound and action with you!

Stand up and make sure your legs are shoulder-width apart. Place one hand on your stomach. Now with that hand on your stomach, you can make little circles. Let's try!

Model the action without the sound first, then add the /m/ sound: 'mmm'.

Great! We are now ready to make it a little harder. Are you ready? ...Are you sure?

When I hold up the letter 'f', make the **fierce cat** action and sound.

When I hold up the letter 'a', make the **surprise** action and sound.

Model this a few times.

When I hold up the 'f' and 'a', let's do the **fierce cat** and **surprise** sounds and actions.

f + a =



Now let's try the **yummy** and **surprise** sounds and actions.

Practise these two together a few times.

m + a =



The celebration is getting closer. I can feel that you are all ready!

Sometimes a long, long time ago, before we had many words, people used actions. When people were **surprised**, they would have to freeze and hold out their arms in order to look like a **tree** and have the birds sit on them. They would do this to calm down and get over their **surprise**.

Let's try that. Ready! /f/ (**fierce cat**), /ă/ (**surprise**), /t/ (**tree**)

f a t



Practise a variety of actions and movements until it is automatic: **mfa, fta, faf, ama, taf, mta**

The Fatama Fata Celebration started happening as the ancient people realised that it was easier to speak words than it was to make actions all the time. Can anyone think of any words we know of that may be created by the /m/, /f/, /t/, and **short /ă/** sounds?

m + a + t = mat

Yes! Wow, you are ready! You are ready for the Fatama Fata Celebration!

m + a + t = mat

t + a + m = tam

a + m = am

a + t = at

t + a = ta

f + a + t + a = fata

f + a + t + a + m + a = fatama

*Use the actions repeated three times to create the first celebration dance (i.e., for **mat**). Try moving around the room while you do it! Create different dances with each real word combo.*

We celebrated with these traditional dances and actions when we were ready to start combining letter sounds into words. This special skill of combining letter sounds and actions into words allowed more people to communicate with one another even when their hands were full! The Fatama Fata Celebration has been forgotten by many, but continues to remain one of our oldest and most important celebrations. This celebration marks the beginning of words, which led to writing and then to books to retell the stories of our forefathers. We learned that each sound feels different in our mouths and sounds different to our ears.

I wonder if we can figure out any of our other ancient traditional letter-sound actions.

sound

/f/

Bite your lip a bit and make the 'fff' sound by blowing out.

action

fierce cat



/m/

Rub your tummy and say 'mmm'.

yummy



/t/

Tap your tongue to the back of your teeth and say 'ttt'.

tree



/ä/

Open wide and say 'ahhh'.

surprise

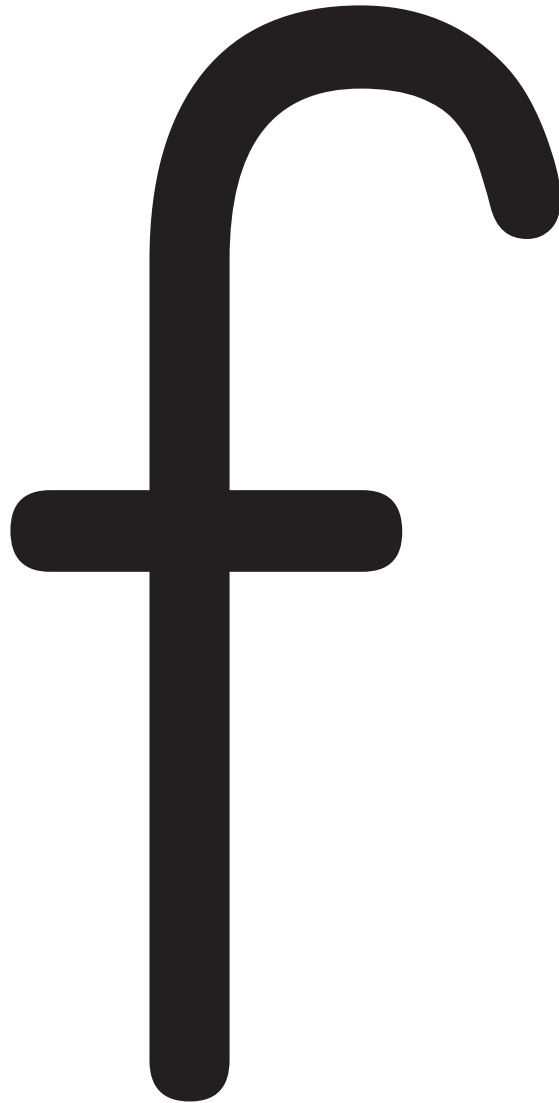


f

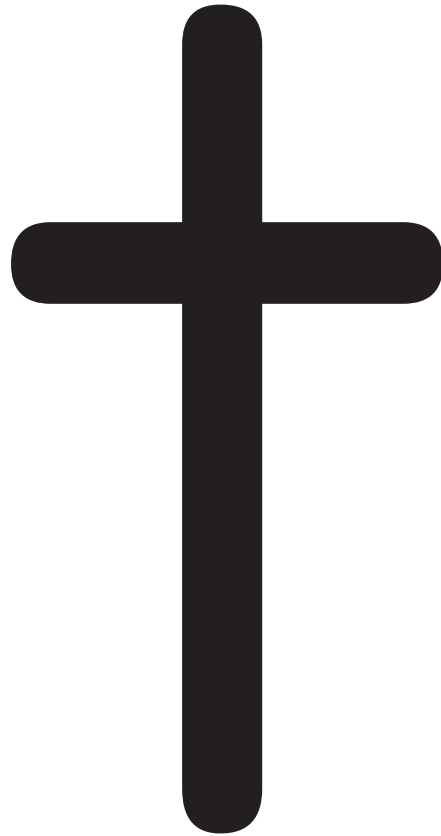
a

t

m



a



m





Modelling Action Cards
Fatama Fata Celebration





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