

# Q&A

## Teaching the alphabet and developing creativity in pre-schoolers.

**Q** My four-year old son has difficulty recognising the individual letters of the alphabet. Are there any strategies I can use to help him?

**Ms Karen Wong:**

Recognising and naming the letters of the alphabet is a basic step in learning the alphabetic principle. Learning letter names helps children associate sounds to different letters in the alphabet. Children may not naturally develop associations between letter symbols and their names. Teach uppercase letters to children between four and five years in small chunks. Some letter pairs may be confusing so avoid teaching these letters simultaneously (eg. C-G, D-O, B-E, I-L, M-N, M-W, E-F, V-Y, P-R). Ensure repetitive learning and allow time for the child to learn one letter before introducing another.

Model for your child how a particular letter name is read, then ask him to select the correct letter (among others) when he hears

the dictated letter name. Subsequently, exchange roles with him. Select distinctive letters with close resemblance to real objects/visual pictures/hand gestures (eg. A doughnut resembles the letter 'O', etc.) to help your child associate distinctive letter shapes. Provide letter prints made from different materials (eg. felt/styrofoam letter cut-outs, Playdoh, etc.). Let your child trace the letter with his finger and say its letter name. These strategies help promote and reinforce visual memory in letter naming.

**Q** How can I develop creative thinking through art in pre-schoolers?

**Dr Rebecca Chan:**

Creative thinking is about flexible thinking, original thinking, and thinking that generates multiple ideas and possibilities. To develop creative thinking through art in pre-schoolers, it is best to begin with a belief that children are naturally creative and for educators to be part of the



for professionals

child's art-making process. Take for example, getting a child to "paint" an apple — the educator facilitates by providing several suggestions of how an apple could be represented or re-created. The educator could voice her thoughts aloud while painting with the children, "I want to create a rainbow apple, when you bite into it you can see happy strips of colours". This kind of thought experiment demonstrates to the children that the teacher is having creative fun, taking risks and creating something. Therefore, to develop creative thinking, they need a safe classroom environment where they are free to express without being judged. This helps to encourage flexibility in thinking.

Children are keen observers. They need to see and hear comments and sincere words of appreciation from their teacher and peers. They also need a learning environment where originality in art making is respected and highly regarded. ♥

**TEACH UPPERCASE LETTERS TO CHILDREN BETWEEN FOUR AND FIVE YEARS TO MINIMISE CONFUSION. TEACH IN SMALL CHUNKS TO PREVENT OVERLOADING CHILDREN.**

//Karen Wong



for parents

## Ask The Experts!



**MS KAREN WONG** is a practitioner specialising in working with children who have dyslexia. She has over 15 years of experience in teaching literacy to pre-schoolers and primary school-aged learners with developmental needs. She is currently a Senior Learning Support Facilitator in the Department of Child Development at KKH Women's and Children's Hospital.



**DR REBECCA CHAN** is a keen researcher in the psychology of children's drawings as well as a practicing artist. She is currently a Principal Education Development Specialist with NTUC First Campus.