ALPHABET AT THE ZOO

User and Teacher's Guide

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Note: This user guide is in draft status. No professional editing has been done. I apologize for errors in its contents. Some page references may be incorrect.

**Alphabet At
the Zoo**

Table of Contents

Alphabet At the Zoo

Alphabet At the Zoo introduces your preschoolers to the alphabet and the concept of order and sequence.

Introduction

Engage your preschoolers in learning the letters of the alphabet with the help of animal friends. The letters are s in "big letters" (uppercase) and "little letters" (lowercase) and accompanied by animals with names beginning with the letters.

Introduces the alphabet and the concept of order and sequence. The idea that a collection of these letters can be arranged in a certain way to create a word to represent something. Lastly, an abstract concept that the same word can be written differently without changing what it represents.

Introduces the concept of counting, colors, and keyboard use.

The target audience of "Alphabet at The Zoo" are children who recently began to speak simple words. Knowing the alphabet letters (and their sounds) is a basic skill kids need when they learn to read. Build the skills to connect letters to their sounds.

This guide is divided into three main instructional sections:

1. A quick introduction to Alphabet at The Zoo
2. A detailed program description.
3. Suggestions for classroom activities and worksheets.

Alphabet At the Zoo is designed for a Macintosh Operating System.

Alphabet At the Zoo

Program Objective

Grade level: Pre-K

Time required: Five to ten minutes for exploration at the Zoo.
                      Five to ten minutes for each activity.

Objectives: To introduce children to the alphabet and the concept of sequence along with uppercase and lowercase letters. To introduce the concept of numbers and counting along with colors.

Alphabet At the Zoo

Installation

System Requirements:

Alphabet At the Zoo requires a minimum of Mac OS 10.13.

Installation:

Run the installer and drag the app icon into your application folder.

Note: If you have an antivirus program, the installation will trigger your anti-virus program to check the file prior to the first-time execution. This is normal, simply let your antivirus do its job. This is done as a precaution in case some malware has attached itself to the installer. This check will only happen once during the first time run.

The Mac operating system may also warn you that this file was downloaded from the Internet. This is also normal for the first time run.
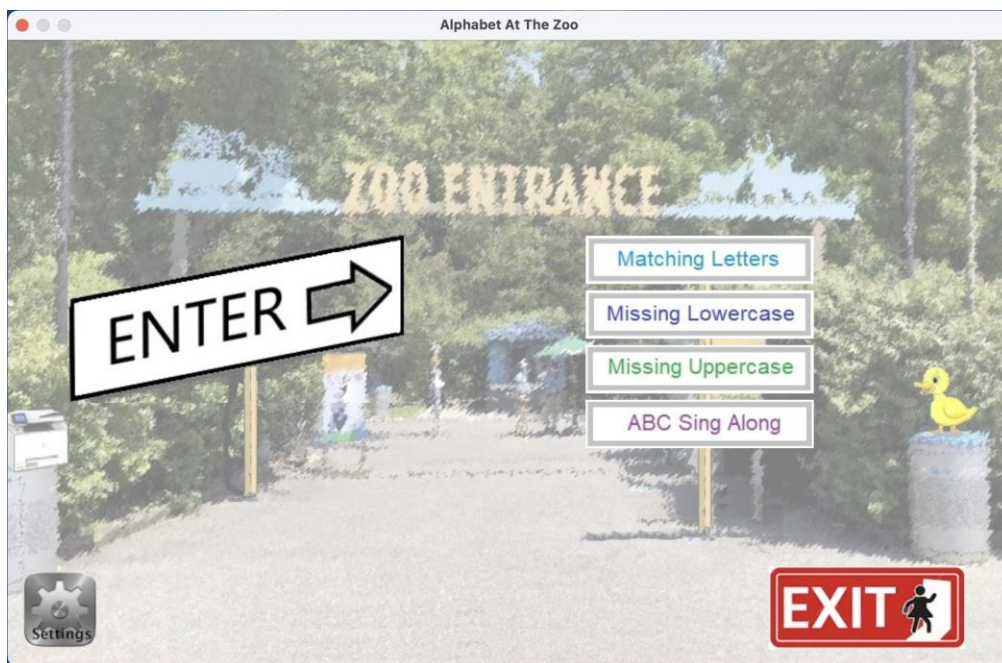
Note: If for any reason in the future you need to uninstall or remove Alphabet at the Zoo, this can be accomplished simply by:

Dragging the app into the trash.

Alphabet At the Zoo

Main Menu

From the Applications folder, locate "Alphabet at The Zoo." Once selected, the program will now run and after several seconds, the main screen will be displayed:

The following selections are available at this main menu screen:

The "Enter" button brings the children to the Zoo Stage (page 8).

The buttons on the right-side bring children to several activities:

"Matching Letters" activity allows children to match lowercase letters to its uppercase letters (page 10)

"Missing Lowercase" activity challenges children to find the missing letter to complete the animal's name (page 12)

"Missing Uppercase" activity challenges children to find the uppercase letters to complete the animal's name (page 14)

"ABC Sing Along" lets children sing along to the ABC song.

The Settings button (the gear icon in the lower left) will bring up the preferences section where you can customize the program (page 16).

The printer icon on the left pedestal will bring up printed activities where you can print and distribute copies of the worksheet for classroom paper activities.

Finally, the "Exit" button quits the program.

Alphabet At the Zoo

Main Menu

Using the mouse, click on the button of your choice.
Note for educators:

At the main menu children are introduced to some required computer skills. Show them how to maneuver the mouse and how to click to select. Be patient since a mouse is an abstract concept for young children. They must associate their hand's movements to an arrow symbol floating on the screen.

Alphabet At the Zoo

The Zoo Stage

Selecting "Enter" from the main menu brings children to the Zoo Stage where animals big and small are on the stage with the corresponding first letter of their names displayed underneath them in upper and lowercase.
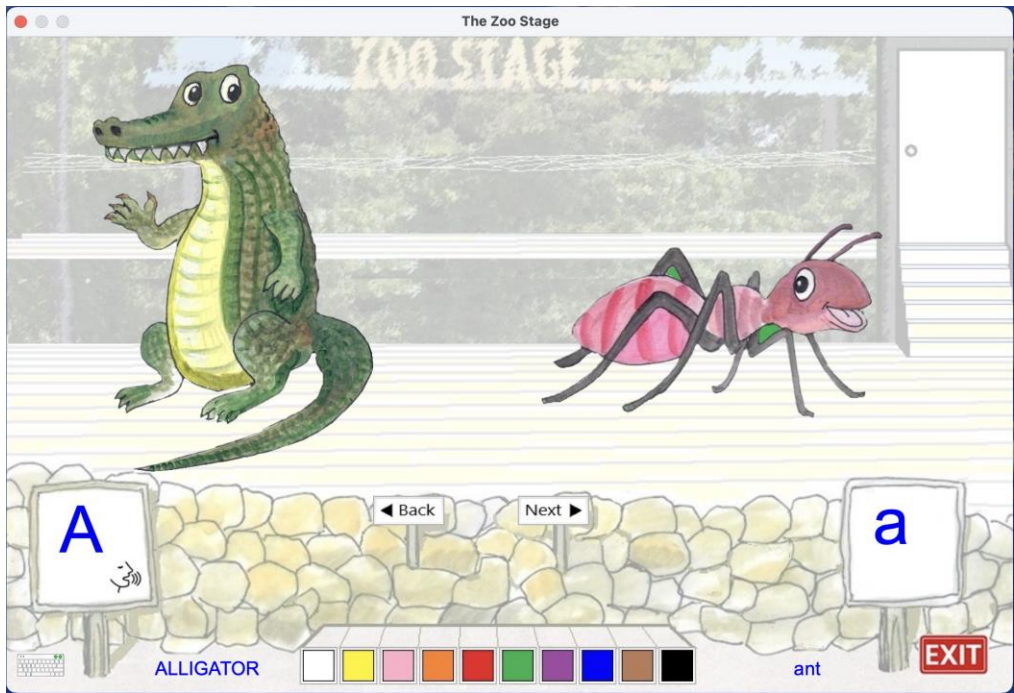
Depending on the preferences settings, the letters displayed could be sequential or random (see Preferences on page 16)

The screen above is the first screen displayed if sequential has been selected in preferences. The alphabet will be displayed from A through Z in order,

The speak icon, when clicked, allows children to hear the letter or number.

Next ▶

The "Next" button will bring the next set of animals to the stage. If random has been selected in preferences, then the next set of animals can be anything from A to Z.

◀ Back

The "Back" button will bring the previous set of animals to the stage.

If keyboard interaction is allowed in the preferences or settings, children can press a letter key on the keyboard. If they hold down Shift, they will get the uppercase animals on the stage. If they press the number key, the number of animals on the stage will reflect the number selected. A little keyboard icon is present in the lower left of the screen if keyboard interaction is allowed.
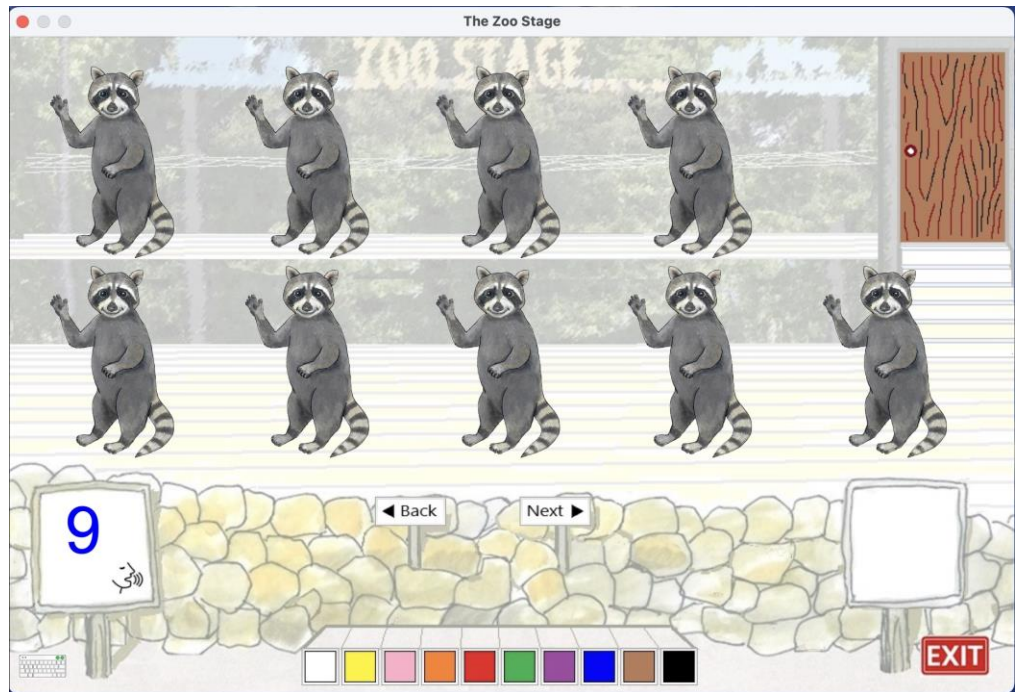
The color buttons will change the color of the door to the selected color.

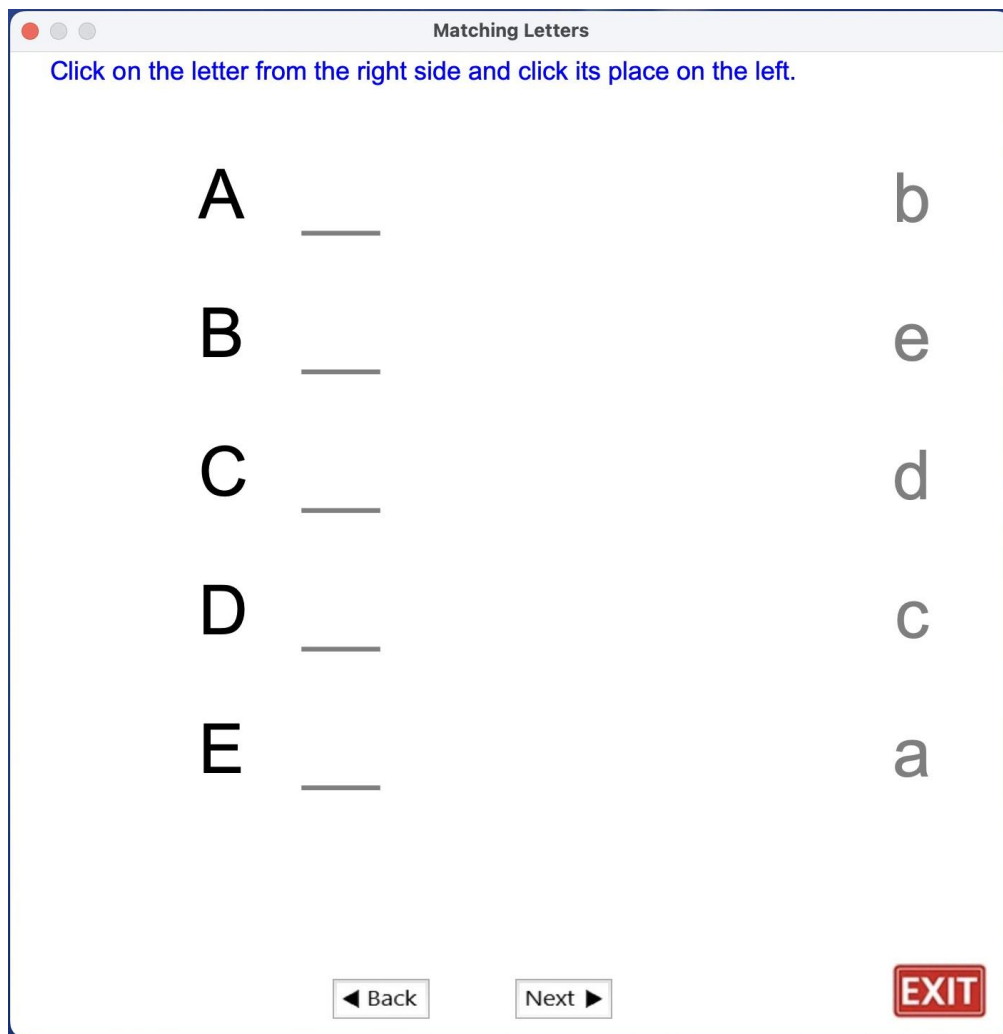You can spend as long as you want browsing the alphabet.

When you are ready to exit the zoo, click the exit button.

Alphabet At the Zoo

Matching Letters

Selecting "Matching Letters" from the main menu will bring up the activity to match the lowercase letters to its uppercase counterpart.

```
  ● ○ ○                      Matching Letters
    Click on the letter from the right side and click its place on the left.


        A    __                                      b


        B    __                                      e


        C    __                                      d


        D    __                                      c


        E    __                                      a



                    ◄ Back        Next ►              EXIT
```

Depending on the preferences settings, the letters displayed could be sequential or random (see Preferences on page 16).

The screen above is the first screen displayed if sequential has been selected in preferences. The alphabet will be displayed from A through Z in order,

Next ►

The "Next" button will bring the next set of letters. If random has been selected in preferences, then the next set of letters can be anything from A to Z.

◄ Back

The "Back" button will bring the previous set of letters.
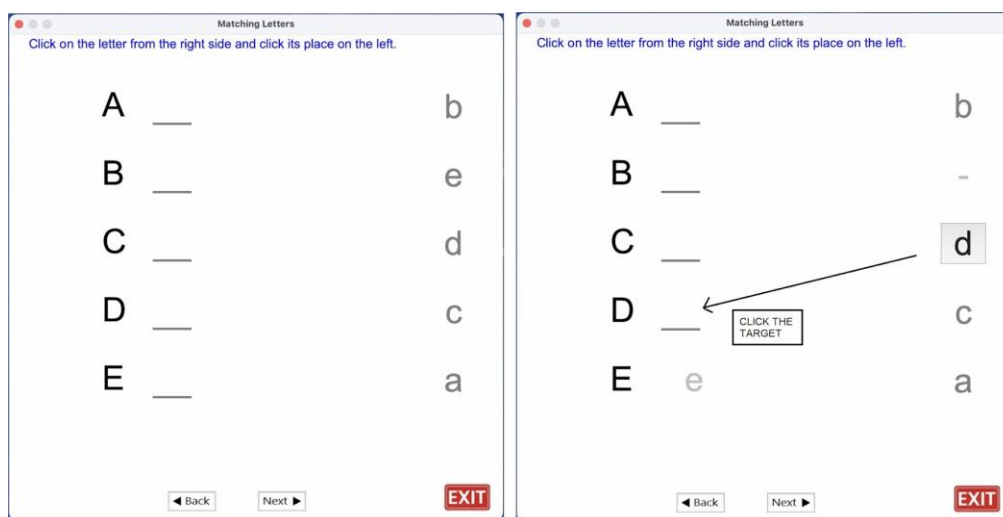
Alphabet At the Zoo

Matching Letters

Note to educators:

In this activity, children are introduced to the concept of matching. Children will select a letter from the right or a blank from the left and click the selection that will match.

To match the letters, click on the letter from the right side and click on the appropriate counterpart on the left side.

If the letter is clicked in the correct location, a confirmation tone will be heard or else the children will be told to "try again."

You can spend as long as you want going through the pages of activities.

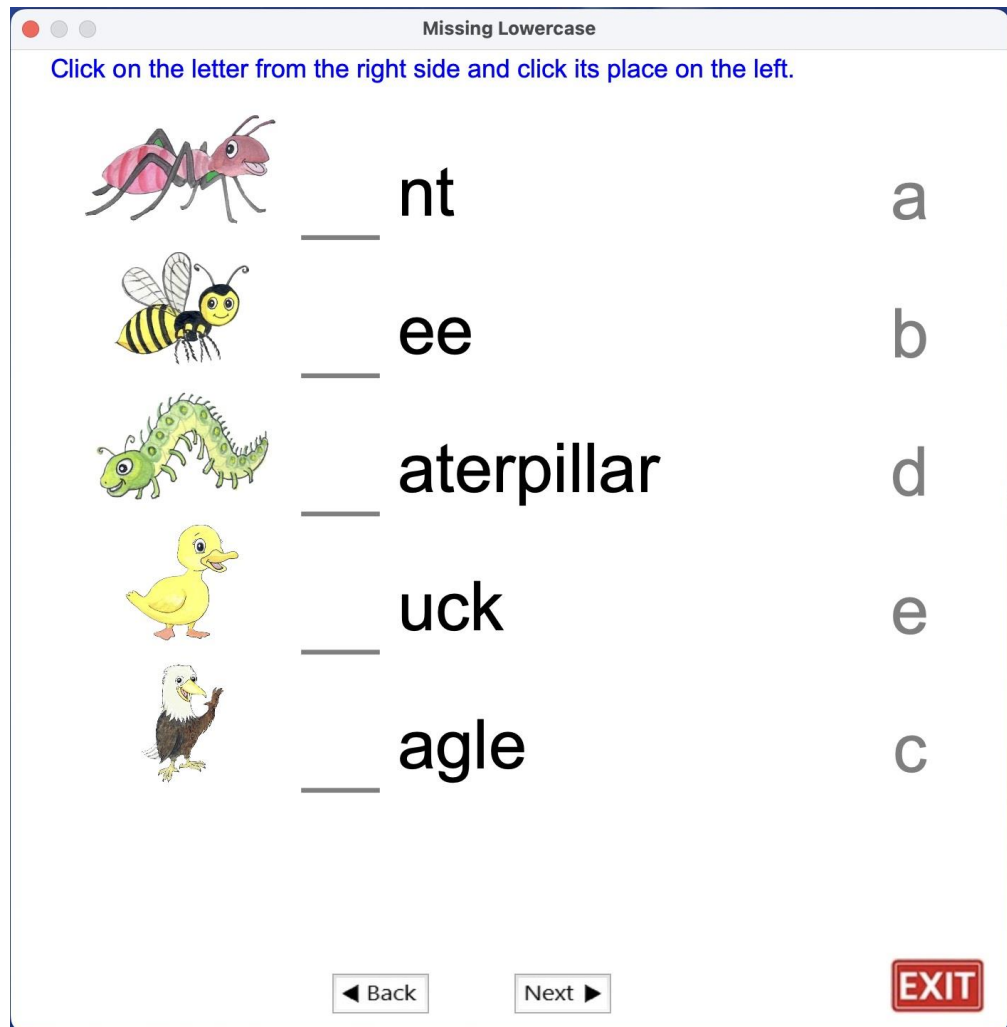When you are ready to go back to the main menu, click the exit button.

Note to educators:

If you prefer to do this activity on paper, you can print the worksheets from the printer at the zoo entrance (see page 17).

Selecting "Missing Lowercase" from the main menu will bring up the activity to match the lowercase letters to fill in the first letter of the animal's name.

Depending on the preferences settings, the letters displayed could be sequential or random (see Preferences on page 16).

The screen above is the first screen displayed if sequential has been selected in preferences. The alphabet will be displayed from A through Z in order,

Next ▶

The "Next" button will bring the next set of letters. If random has been selected in preferences, then the next set of letters can be anything from A to Z.
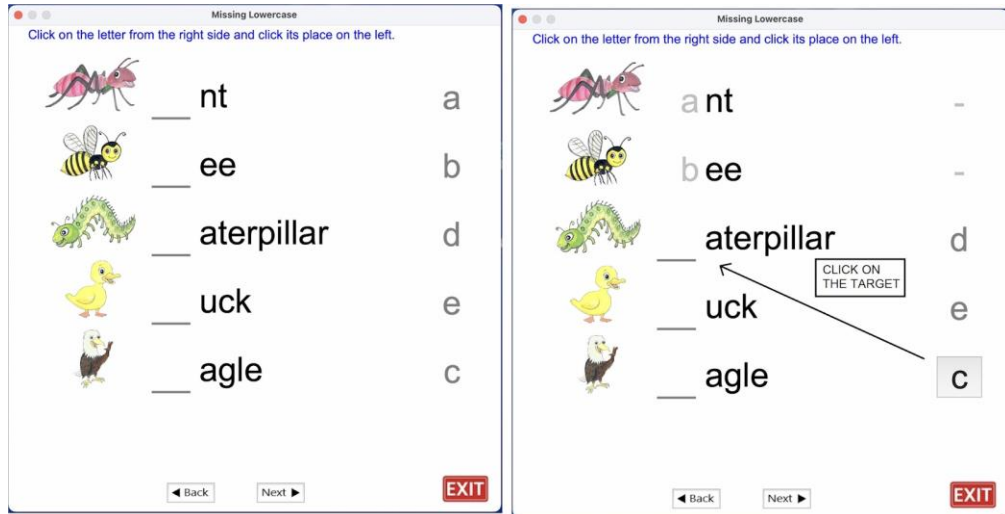
◀ Back

The "Back" button will bring the previous set of letters.

Alphabet At the Zoo

Missing Lowercase

To match the letters, click on the letter from the right side and click on the appropriate position on the left side.

If the letter is clicked in the correct location, a confirmation tone will be heard. If incorrect the children will be told to "try again."

You can spend as long as you want going through the pages of activities.
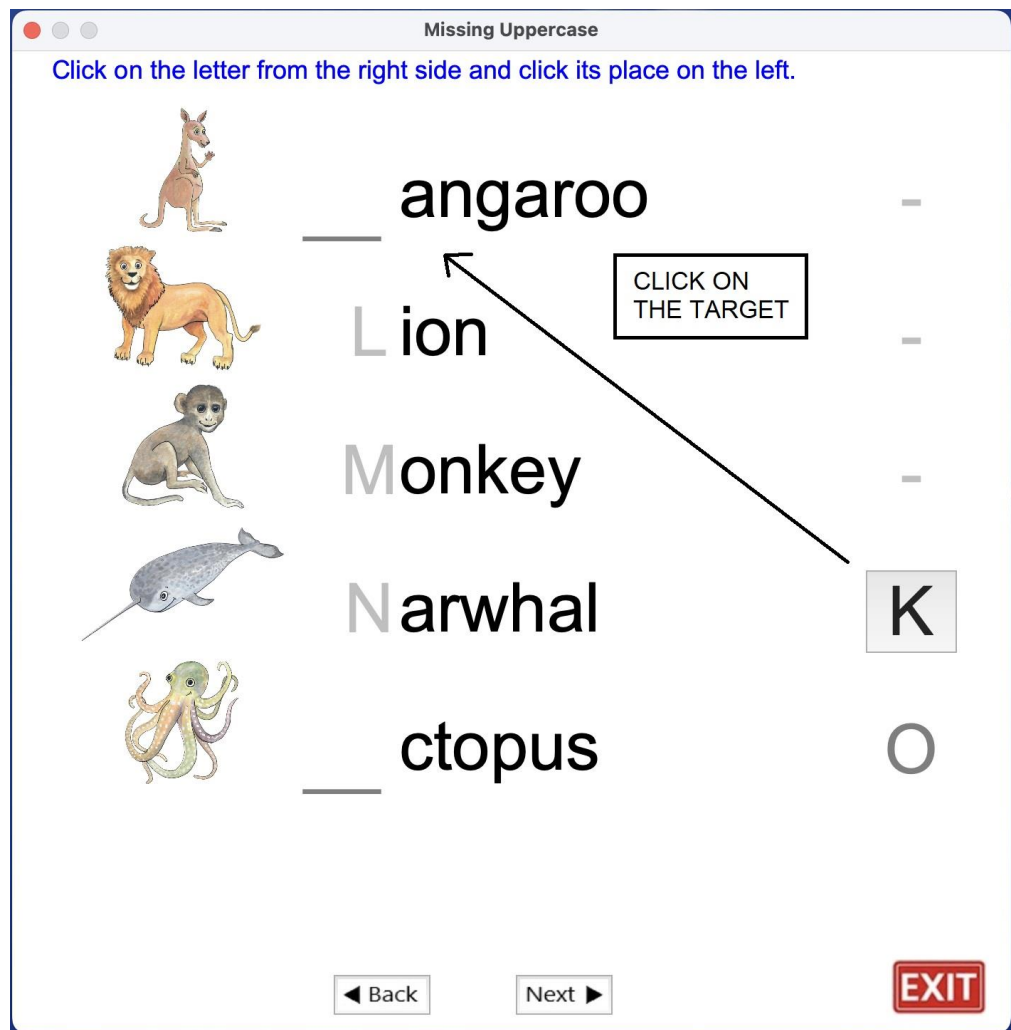
EXIT

When you are ready to go back to the main menu, click the exit button.

Alphabet At the Zoo

Missing Uppercase

Selecting "Missing Uppercase" from the main menu will bring up the activity to match the uppercase letters to fill in the first letter of the animal's name.

Depending on the preferences settings, the letters displayed could be sequential or random (see Preferences on page 16).

The screen above is the first screen displayed if sequential has been selected in preferences. The alphabet will be displayed from A through Z in order,

Next ▶

The "Next" button will bring the next set of letters. If random has been selected in preferences, then the next set of letters can be anything from A to Z.

◀ Back

The "Back" button will bring the previous set of letters.

Alphabet At the Zoo

The behavior of this activity is identical to that of the missing lowercase activity.

Missing Uppercase

To match the letters, click on the letter from the right side and click the appropriate position on the left side.

If the letter is clicked in the correct location, a confirmation tone will be heard. If incorrect the children will be told to "try again."

You can spend as long as you want going through the pages of activities.

EXIT

When you are ready to go back to the main menu, click the exit button. Selecting the gear icon from the main menu will bring up the preferences dialog. Here you can set the program's behavior.

Alphabet At the Zoo

Preferences

In each group, you can select each section's behavior when it comes to displaying the alphabet. In the beginning the program defaults to displaying letters sequentially. As the children progress to a more advanced stage and have pretty much mastered the sequence, it can be set to a more challenging random and unpredictable sequences.

Once you are satisfied with the settings, click "Save Changes" button to save your preferences and exit the dialog.

Alphabet At the Zoo

Paper Activities

Clicking on the printer icon on top of the left pedestal on the zoo entrance screen will bring up a workspace where you can display and print individual worksheets. This can be used for reproduction and use in classroom paper activities.
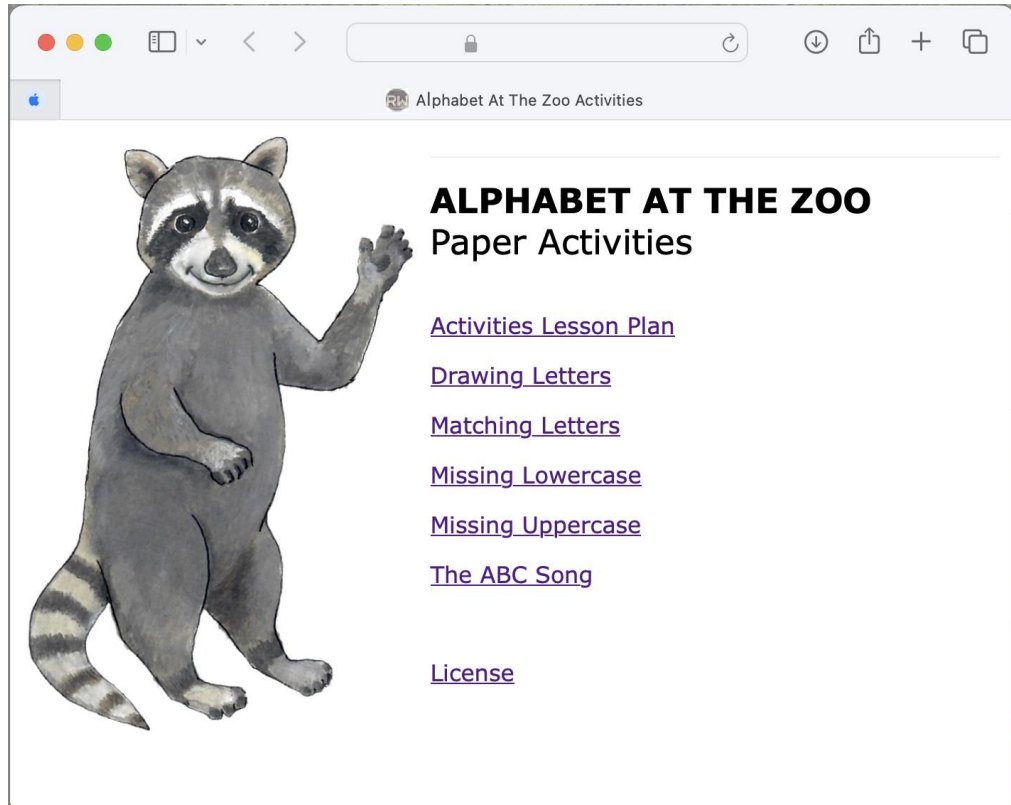
There are four worksheets associated with the activities described here:

"Drawing Letters", "Matching Letters", "Missing Lowercase", and "Missing Uppercase."

Children as young as 18 months understand the concept of identifiers and labeling. They also can understand abstract concepts, such as those requiring multiple deductive steps before arriving at the final answer. For example, they may have two dogs named "Bill" and "Sam." And while the two dogs may almost look identical, the child knows that verbally the two are identified as "Bill" and "Sam." Another abstract concept is finger pointing. When you point at one of the dogs, there is nothing on your arm and nothing on your finger. Nor is your hand holding anything. So having to look at your finger and create an imaginary line extending from your finger straight to a target requires quite a bit of thought process.

While the worksheets were designed for ages 3 through 5, it does not mean that a younger child will not understand the content or concepts. It is just that some of the worksheet activities require a finer motor skill than they may have. However, the activities can still be done if you help them. Instead of drawing a line between letters, you can ask the child to just point where the letter belongs. Next, you can place a crayon in their preferred hand, and while holding their hand, draw the line. When you do this to help them draw letters, the child understands that there needs to be more precise control and that the movements of their hand by you are also part of motor skill exercise.

Now they are to embark on a new skill. While they understand verbal labels or identifiers, now they are to be introduced that an unfamiliar assortment of symbols that can be used to form words to represent something, and which can be used as identifiers! So, the first step is to point at the child, say their name, and immediately write with big letters their name on paper. Go back and forth a couple of times pointing at the paper while saying their name and the child will understand that your verbal reference to them is also drawn on a piece of paper using these weird looking symbols.

Alphabet At the Zoo

Lesson Plan

Make each session brief.

Use only the speed that the child is willing to do.

While it's ok for the child to look through the entire "Zoo Stage" to see the fun animals, try to do no more than 4 letters per session unless the child insists on continuing.

Below is a sample workplan. The activities below should not be viewed as a mandatory timeline; proceed only at the speed that the child is willing to do. Don't make it a chore but keep it fun. The timeframe of the activities below should not be set in stone. Let the child take their time whether it be weeks or months. Do not attempt to overfeed information.

Week 1

Introduce order and sequencing by using a tool to help the child remember the sequence of the alphabet. The ABC song would be a good start to begin each session. Don't worry too much about the child knowing the song immediately. Sing it just to have fun.

Talk about the first four letters and point out how each animal has a name beginning with the letter.

Week 2

Incorporate phonics. Explain that the name of the letter does not necessarily sound the same when incorporated into a word. Use "cat" as an example. Teaching children to blend the sounds of letters together helps them decode unfamiliar or unknown words by sounding them out.

Continue with the alphabet remembering to keep each session very brief. Every now and then, take out the piece of paper with the child's name, say it, and point to one letter they have learned and say the name of the letter.

Use a cumulative method. If the session was for the letters "F", "G", "H", and "I", for example, don't forget to go back and review "A", "B", "C", "D", and "E". This enforces the sequence and ordering and helps in memorizing the alphabet.

Add a post-session discussion. Talk about the animals, the family, the size and don't forget to mention that while they may appear friendly in the picture, that some animals may not be a cuddly subject and can be dangerous.

Alphabet At the Zoo

Lesson Plan

Week 3

Print out the "Drawing Letters" worksheet. Using the worksheet, this time, slow down the tempo of the ABC song and point to the letters on the pages as you sing.

Don't forget to continue to incorporate phonics. Once the alphabet is completed, introduce the concept of lowercase letters. Just as there are big animals (usually on the left side of the page), there are also smaller animals. So do we have "big" and "small" letters.

Point out that the small letters may look totally different. Point out letters which look the same in lowercase and those which do not. Use the "Drawing Letters" worksheet and encourage the child to trace and draw the letters. If need be, use a crayon and hold the child's hand to help.

Start with uppercase only with the easy one stroke such as the letter "I", "U", "S" and drawing a circle for "O." Proceed with a two stroke easy letters such as "X", "T", and "Q."

Week 4

Continue pointing to the letters while you sing the ABC song at a slower tempo. Continue with "Drawing Letters" but move to more complex shapes requiring multiple strokes. Once the alphabet is completed in lower case, continue with "Drawing Letters," and do the lowercase letters. Use the same strategy by starting with the easy one stroke prior to doing the more complex multiple strokes letters.

Week 5

Print out the "Matching Letters" work sheet and let the child find and match the corresponding upper and lowercase letters. Let the child utilize the book to help them compare the letters while doing the matching activity.

Week 6

Print out the "Missing Lowercase" worksheet and try not to do more than one page a day. Again, let the child use the book to compare the letters.

Week 7

Print out the "Missing Uppercase" worksheet. Except this time introduce a more abstract concept, such as that uppercase letters can also be mixed with lowercase letters. This is a good time to introduce capitalization. Show them

children's books or newspaper headlines where they can see proper capitalization.

Week 8

Review "A" through "Z." Make the review fun by talking about the animal subjects, such as where they are natively from, their special unique traits, or what they eat. Talk about animals that are not in the book and see if the child can figure out the letter of their names just by hearing the pronunciation.

Week 9

Reprint the worksheets and see if the child can complete them without your help, but allow them to use the book for reference. Focus on letters that are problematic or cause confusion.

Week 10

Continue to guide the child to build their confidence until they are totally comfortable with all letters. Introduce an assortment of letter styles, such as different fonts, explaining that while the letters are the same "A" through "Z," depending on the style used they may look different. Show them the worksheets they have been using and show them a newspaper. Focus their attention to sans serif font used in the worksheets vs serif font used in the newspapers. Point out the decorative letter legs in serif fonts such as Times New Roman that are absent in sans serif such as Helvetica or Arial. Surprise them by showing the letter "g" vs "g"—a letter notoriously confusing for children.

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