

## Make a Name Puzzle

Preschoolers are the kings and queens of scribble scrabble. While their “words” don’t quite make sense yet, all that scribbling means that they’re starting to understand that written letters have meaning. You can help your child make the leap to the next level—understanding that letters put together in a certain order make words—by working with a sure-to-be favorite: your child’s own name.



### What You Need:

- An envelope
- Two strips of paper (about 9-12 inches in length)
- Scissors
- A red magic marker, and a black magic marker

### What You Do:

1. Use the black marker to write your child’s first name neatly in big bold letters on the first strip of paper. Do the same thing in red on the second strip. You’ll want to leave about a finger-width of space between each letter so that you can cut them apart later.
2. Show the black strip to your child and tell him that this is his name. Run your finger under the name from left to right as you say it aloud. Have your child do the same. Now point to each letter, one at a time, and say the letter name aloud. Ask your child to copy you.
3. Leaving the first strip intact, pick up the second strip with the red letters and cut the letters apart into individual pieces. As you make each cut, say the name of the letter that you are cutting off the strip.
4. Mix up the pieces.
5. It’s time to get puzzling! Ask your child to help you put the red name puzzle back together, using the black strip as a guide. This provides him with lots of support as he matches letters to their mates.
6. Speaking the names of the letter aloud helps kids make connections between what they see and what they hear. So for the best practice, nudge your child to say the name of each letter aloud, as he puts it into place. He should also try to put the pieces together in order, so he gets used to the sequence of the letters. You can help him along with hints. (For example, to complete a name puzzle for “John,” you might ask your child to look for the letter “J” first, rather than picking up a random piece and putting it in its place.)
7. After he’s successfully matched the red letters to the black ones to build his name, it’s time to fly solo! Ask him to build his name from memory, without looking at the black strip.
8. Finally, when clean-up time comes, slide all those reds and blacks into the envelope, and help your child write her name on the outside of it, saying each letter aloud as he writes.

Store the puzzle pieces and the name strip for later practice. And there you have it—a super easy way to make learning letters fun!