

Play with Words: A Pretend Bakery Game

Tie on that apron. Break out the mixing bowls. If your child loves to play pretend, and needs practice with letters and the sounds they make, get cooking with this activity! Not only is it playful fun, but it builds key reading skills.

What You Need:

- 1 toy blender or large mixing bowl and spoon
- Markers
- 2-3 foam sheets (can be found at any craft store)
- Safety scissors
- Construction paper
- Paper or plastic plate
- Pretend money

What You Do:

1. **Set it Up.** Using the foam sheets, help your child write each of the 26 letters of the alphabet on the foam, leaving two finger spaces between each letter. Make at least one extra for each of the vowels in the alphabet (A, E, I, O, U). As she's writing the letters, have your child say each letter name aloud and remind her of the sound(s) it makes. Now get out those safety scissors! Ask them to cut the letters into squares. (They should look like Scrabble game pieces.)
2. **Make a Menu:** In this game, your child will pretend to run their own bakery, but instead of cooking with flour and sugar, they'll be mixing letters together the blender or bowl to make words. No bakery would be complete without menus. Give your child some construction paper and markers, and ask them to write down the items they have available, so that the customers can order what they want. They should use the following list:
 - cat
 - hat
 - tip
 - sip
 - bed
 - red
 - hop
 - top
 - hut
 - cut
3. **Mix it Up!:** Have your little chef get out the toy blender (or a large mixing bowl and spoon) and put all of the letter tiles inside. As the customer, it's your job to shout out your "order." When they hear the word, your chef should mix the ingredients, then look inside the bowl for the letters in the item you've ordered. For example, if you order "cat", they should search for the letters "C" "A" and "T", then lay them out on the plate and tell you your order's ready. If you arrive at the counter to find that they have spelled the word correctly, pay for your purchase and thank the chef. If the word has mistakes, tell them, "That's not exactly what I ordered" and help them figure out how to correct it.
4. **Stay Hungry:** Reading takes practice, so make sure to build on what your child has learned so far, rather than just doing one word at a time. Place another order, sticking to something in the same word family. For example, if you've just tried "cat," move on to "hat". Repeat this process for each word on the menu. Once your child has mastered everything on the list, help them dream up new words to add to the menu, for example, "bat" or "mat".



This is a really fun way to help kids practice their letters and sounds. So get those ingredients ready, and cook up a good reader!