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Twist and Spell Exercise



Move, stretch and twist your way through the ABC's! Learn the letters of the alphabet with simple exercises that engage both mind and body. Combine kinesthetic learning with literacy to get the whole class moving! Each letter has its own unique letter pose. Follow the poses modeled by the adorable kids in each large size letter card. Vowel and consonant cards are color coded. Play group word games or simply add a new twist to daily exercise routines!

Start with exercises to warm up. Talk with students about the importance of stretching their limbs before they Twist and Spell. In order to keep the body from injuring itself, the muscles need to be "awake" before starting a physical activity.

Dancers, actors, singers and musicians all learn to practice certain stretches that help them perform better during their shows. As a result, their performances look effortless. As the saying goes, practice makes perfect. Prepare your body for exercise! Begin each session with the following stretches before starting the Twist and Spell Exercise.

1). Take deep breaths. Start by placing one hand on your stomach and one hand on your chest. Close your eyes and breathe in through your nose, then breathe out through your mouth to "push" the air out. What do you notice about your breathing? Did you "breathe into" your stomach or your chest? When you "breathe into" your stomach or your chest, it means that either the hand on your chest or the hand on your stomach move as you inhale. There is an important difference. Deep breathing with your stomach encourages greater oxygen intake. Notice that when you breathe in through your chest, you can only hold in one small breath. When you breathe into your stomach, you not only have room for one deep breath, but for a chest breath as well! Try it!

2). March on the spot while combining breathing exercises. Start gently marching your feet and swinging your arms. As you march, count 1-2-3-4 out loud. Breathe in for the first count making sure to fill your entire respiratory area with oxygen. On the next count, breathe out loudly through your mouth. Keep marching as you breathe in and out. Do this for a set of 10-15 repetitions! Tip: Instead of repeating the numbers 1, 2, 3 and 4, try singing the alphabet or counting off the numbers from 1 to 100.

3). Stand straight with feet planted a short distance apart. Rest your arms at your sides. Take a deep breath. As you inhale, slowly raise your arms above your head, pointing arms straight up. Imagine yourself as a tall tree. Your arms are the boughs. Reach as far up as you can to feel your arm muscles stretch. When you have filled your lungs completely, expel the air through your mouth while gently bringing your arms back down to rest at your sides. Tip: The next time you raise your arms as you inhale, try extending your whole body by standing on your tip-toes!

4). Sit on the floor and place your feet together in front of you, legs straight. Make sure your back is straight. Hold your arms straight out, and point your fingers in the direction of your toes. Arms should be parallel to the floor. As you deep breathe

in, gently stretch forward to touch the tip of your toes. Hold your position as you hold your breath for 4 seconds. Tip: Bend your neck and lower your head to your knees. Note: Some children aren't as flexible as others. Suggest that they stretch as far as they can without straining, then rest their hands on their shins. Close your eyes to keep your mind focused on your body's stretches. Then after the 4 second count, slowly exhale through your mouth as you pull back up to the starting position. Keep your arms stretched out in front to repeat the exercise.

Your students should now feel ready to take on the daily Twist and Spell exercise! Use exercises to "wake up" tired muscles, flood oxygen to the brain and increase overall health.

Start "twisting and spelling"! Allot a time frame of about 5 minutes per day for pre-exercise stretches and for practicing the Twist and Spell alphabet poses. The provided cards are color coded. Each vowel letter card is signified by red while each consonant letter card is signified by blue.

Hold up each card before starting the exercise. Ask children to identify which letter of the alphabet you are holding up. Tip: Start from the letter A and continue through the alphabet to the letter Z. Learn 1-2 letters per day. Some learning systems suggest that all vowels and consonants be learned separately or that letters be learned by phonetic similarities. Choose the teaching style that best suits your students' learning and development.

Talk about each specific letter and the phonetic sound it makes. List some words that contain that letter. Underline that letter in each word. Ask children to sound out the word, paying special attention to how the letter sounds like within the word. Note: Tips for teaching long and short vowels and combination consonants (digraphs) are included in the following pages.

Start your twists with proper feet placement. Observe the pose on the card. How are the child's feet positioned? If the model is lying down, then start in that position. Alternatively, if the model is standing and the feet are placed far apart, then start in that position. Bend your body in the appropriate direction, and adjust arm and hand positions. Pose slowly and remind students to breathe deeply as they move! As a guideline, every exercise that consists of moving into a stretch should be accompanied with a deep intake of breath. Hold the pose for the length of one breath and exhale slowly. Warning: Never rush through an exercise.

Once students have achieved their poses, instruct them to carefully lower their arms, straighten their bodies and return to their starting positions. Continue deep breathing and try to refrain from standing up right away. Instead, shake arms and legs to refresh and maintain circulation.

As you consistently move through the alphabet, your students will find it easier to try new poses. Not only will children enjoy this unique method to learning the alphabet, but they will complete their exercises feeling refreshed—both academically **and** physically!

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

- Exercise gross motor skills
- Promote literacy through exercise
- Enhance overall body health with daily exercises
- Use physical education to help students visualize letter strokes through body placement
- Enhance body-mind coordination
- Inspire creativity and encourage constructive role-play
- Build kinesthetic awareness and help children gain confidence in their bodies
- Promote memory skills with choreographed Twist and Spell exercises

Though there are many ways to teach the alphabet, one unique aspect of the Twist and Spell Exercise program is the chance it gives children to visualize the letter they are posing. Children will not only learn to recognize letters as they develop literacy skills, but will also learn to write with confidence. Strokes, loops, dots and crosses will be easier to remember and more accurately printed.

As you explore the phonetics of each letter, you will encounter differences between long and short vowels as well as combination consonants.

The different pronunciation of vowels occur due to their placement between consonants. Depending which consonants and other vowels are used, and in which order the consonants surround the vowels, the sound of the vowel changes very slightly. For example, the use of the vowel “a” in the word “cat” is pronounced differently than when it occurs in the word “made.”

Generate simple vocabulary lists to help children understand the different vowel placements. These will usually consist of words that are between 3 and 4 letters long. Make sets of words that contain the same vowel in the same placement. Alternate with another set of the same vowel, but this time with an addition of one more vowel. Repeat with other vowel combinations. Below is an example:

<u>(Short a)</u>	<u>(Long a)</u>	<u>(AY-)</u>	<u>(AI-)</u>
C <u>a</u> t	C <u>a</u> ke	P <u>a</u> in	B <u>a</u> r
B <u>a</u> g	S <u>a</u> nake	C <u>a</u> rayon	T <u>a</u> ir
S <u>a</u> d	G <u>a</u> ve	S <u>a</u> y	H <u>a</u> ir
G <u>a</u> p	S <u>a</u> le	R <u>a</u> il	F <u>a</u> ir
F <u>a</u> n	M <u>a</u> ne	B <u>a</u> it	

Sound out each word and pay attention to the vowel placements to note the differences. As children work their way through the various vowel poses, talk about the sounds that each vowel produces. Encourage children to search through their reading books and find the words that can be classified in your vocabulary lists (i.e. words with short vowel sounds, words with long vowel sounds, etc.) Look for patterns in the words. Repetition is key when teaching children phonetics and literacy skills!

Combined consonants produce sounds that are not featured in the English alphabet, but are present in many words. The sounds ch, sh, -igh, st, -ck and th are some of the basic combined consonant sounds. Once you have talked about the

various types of combined consonants (or **digraphs**) and have worked through the pronunciations for each, brainstorm as many words as possible for each digraph. Find the corresponding words throughout students’ reading books, classroom charts, posters and magazines. Exercise the use of these digraphs through basic words such as “thanks,” “she” and “phone.”

The Twist and Spell Exercise program helps coordinate body and mind through literacy and physical activity while instilling proper breathing skills. Deep breathing is essential for improving the body’s overall health. Greater levels of oxygen molecules in the lungs diffuse through the lung capillaries and are attracted to blood cells. These oxygenated blood cells are then pumped through the bloodstream as the heart rate goes up, and the most important parts—such as muscles and organs—receive greater nourishment and support. Stronger muscles and stronger organs result in better health for growing bodies!

Exercise encourages the brain to release special chemicals, called **endomorphins**, that emit a “feel good” vibe throughout the entire body. Help instill exercise as a way of life. Children who exercise regularly not only grow up to be fit, but perform well on academic tests and qualify well in leadership roles. For a shot of confidence before a test, encourage children to stretch 5 minutes before start time.

Once your students have completed all of the alphabet poses, play simple word games with Twist and Spell! Construct a list of 5-10 grade-appropriate vocabulary words for students to pose through each day. Write the list on a sheet of paper, then find the cards that represent each letter for every word and lay them out on your desk. Note: We’ve provided multiple copies of popular letters in the English language. Use for multiple words. For instance, if you select several vocabulary words from the example list provided, you may run into at least 2 words that have the same vowels or consonants.

Use the cards (and card doubles) provided to spell out the words. Prepare a new set every day. Sort through the cards to get the matching letters to spell out your word list. Before spelling out the words, tell your students to begin morning exercises with the recommended stretches. Once students have limbered up, say the first word on your list aloud. Ask students to spell the word back. Once they have spelled the letters correctly, ask them to pose as the first letter. Hold up each letter card as you go. Tip: Remember, slowly! Once every student has completed their pose, ask the class to pose as the second letter. Show the card, then wait for everyone to complete the pose. Continue until the entire word is finished.

Repeat this version of the Twist and Spell game until children are confident with spelling and are efficient at their Twist and Spell poses!

Challenge your students’ alphabet smarts with mystery words! Spell out your word list with the letter cards on your desk. Instead of saying each word and allowing children to spell out the word, keep silent and hold up the first letter card of the first word and have children pose as that letter. When students have completed the pose, bring up the second card and let them pose again. Each time your students pose, encourage them to think and reflect on the letter they are posing as. Once your students have spelled all the letters with their bodies, ask them to guess what the mystery word is. An excellent exercise for combining both literacy and physical education!

Use letter poses as creative ways to spell out words during an important school event, such as a graduation ceremony, Christmas school play or for your school team. Surprise birthday kids with personalized Happy Birthday messages! Spell out the words "Happy Birthday" with at least 13 students for each letter, and arrange the remaining students to spell out the birthday person's first name!

