



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# Education Assistant Guide

Zazi iZandi 1.0 *English*



This guide, and the accompanying games and activities, have been developed by The Binding Constraints Lab, Masinyusane and Funda Wandé. They draw on the generously shared work of a number of organisations including Wordworks, Shine Literacy, Year Beyond and Molteno's Vula Bula.



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## Introduction

Only half of the learners in South Africa complete Grade 1 knowing how to identify and sound out all the letters of the alphabet in their home language.

We are here to change that. Zazi iZandi aims to dramatically improve each learner's letter sound knowledge. Without this foundation, they cannot learn to read.

You will be trained and supported to identify and help struggling learners to learn their letters and letter sounds through fun games and activities, and to track their progress. Your role is very important in making sure we keep the learners interested in learning and having fun!

## Creating a learning environment

The main thing we remember about our teachers is how they make us feel. Children who feel happy, safe, valued and connected with their peers and teachers will learn more easily.

It is also very important that you have a good working relationship with your class teacher. When working with a group of learners, make sure you do not disturb the rest of the class.

**Here are practical tips for creating a positive environment for your learners' development and learning:**

- Call the learners by their names, and say their names often.
- Praise and encourage the learners as much as you can. (Rather than clapping hands, do quiet finger clicking so you don't disturb the rest of the class.)
- High-five the learners when they get it right, and when they try. (Remember to do this quietly - you can 'Bluetooth' high-five them with a silent high-five!)
- When they make mistakes, say "Well done for trying! That is how we learn."
- Make sure they know that you believe in them and in their abilities.
- Be respectful of the school and do your best not to interrupt your teacher's lessons (e.g. by being too noisy).
- Encourage learners to speak up so the whole group can hear them.



## Enabling learning

Children need repetition and reinforcement.

- **Focus:** Cover between 1 and 5 letters in each session, depending on the learners' knowledge. Include **one or two letters** that most of the learners in your group **do not know**, and **three letters** that they **do know** for consolidation and to build automaticity (the ability to recognise letters without having to think about it).
- **Go slowly.** Do not overwhelm the learners by introducing too many letters at once. Take your time covering the same letters with different activities during the session.
- **Begin each session by reminding** the learners about what you did in the previous session.
- **Include content from earlier levels** to reinforce learning as you go.
- If one learner is very behind the rest, put that learner into another group of **learners at a similar level**.
- Use your **fast learners as assistants**. Children are often good at teaching each other. So if one learner in the group is mastering a letter sound, ask them to help others to remember it.
- **Rotate through different games and activities each session.** Children have different learning styles, so it's important to rotate the activities.



### Imagine each child's progress as a brick wall.

When building a wall, you lay down some bricks and then you add a layer of cement. Then you lay down another row of bricks, and add another layer of cement on top of those, and so on.

If you build the wall too fast, it can fall down. Why? Because you didn't give the cement on top of the bottom rows of bricks enough time to dry, so the foundation was not strong enough.

It is the same with children's learning. When we continue to revise the previous work, and repeat it often, we are giving the foundational layer time to consolidate and become strong. By consolidating children's learning, you are giving them a strong foundation upon which they can build their literacy skills. If we rush and load too much onto the child too quickly, they can't learn and will instead experience confusion.



## Data collection

The Zazi iZandi programme aims to ensure that every learner learns their letter sounds, so we need to assess each learner and track their progress over time.



We use the **Teampact app** to conduct Early Grade Reading Assessments (EGRAs) which assess each learner's letter knowledge at the beginning and end of the programme. It comes with a laminated card which you give to the learner to read while you record their responses on the app. *We also use Teampact to track what we do in each session.*



We track each learner's progress with letter sound knowledge using the **Letter Knowledge Progress Tracker (LKPT)** a paper-based system where we record the letters each learner has mastered. *You can find the LKPTs at the end of this Guide.*

## Assessing knowledge

We assess the learners at the **beginning** of the programme to:

- (i) **identify which learners to work with** (those who know their letters do not need to participate), and
- (ii) **to form groups of learners with similar levels of knowledge.**

We then assess learners at the **end** of the programme to:

- (i) **measure how much they have learned.**
- (ii) get a sense of **how much the programme has helped them.** It is thus very important that you get accurate scores when you assess, so be sure not to give the learners any clues or help in answering.

The first step to implementing Zazi iZandi is to test the learners' letter sound knowledge using the Early Grade Reading Assessment (**EGRA**) grid. This programme aims to improve learners' letter sound knowledge in English. If the learners make the letter sound in any other language while they are being assessed, they will be marked as incorrect. It is very important that you and the learners sound out the letters in **English ONLY**.

I	a	m	E	p	n	L	s	M	e
Y	i	K	N	d	H	f	U	b	v
F	y	C	I	T	k	D	Z	f	d
t	z	O	J	P	r	c	W	p	o
w	A	E	x	Q	I	g	O	U	z
X	r	V	B	j	h	q	u	R	G

## Administering the EGRA assessment

We assess **one learner at a time**.

The test aims to assess how many letter sounds each learner can get correct **within a time limit of 1 minute (60 seconds)**.

### Step-by-step instructions:

1. Find a quiet space with no distractions.
2. Sit next to the learner at eye level.
3. Give the learner the laminated card with the letters on.
4. Select the relevant EGRA test on Teampact, and then select the school and click on “select this template.”
5. Fill in or select the learner’s name, surname, gender and EMIS number.
6. Explain the task clearly:



*“We are going to play a game where we look at some letters and say the sound that each one makes in English. Just try your best - it’s okay if you don’t know all of them!”*

7. Give an example with the learner:  
(Children understand examples better than instructions. Always give an example before the assessment begins, using the last row of the EGRA grid card.)

Ask the learner to point their finger, and guide it along the first three letters of the last row on the grid. It’s important that you allow learners to go at their own pace and identify as many letters as they can in one minute.

For younger learners, or those who struggle to identify many letters, you may need to guide their finger along the grid so that they keep going. If learners get the first five letters incorrect in a row then the test automatically ends. Say:



*“Let’s try the last row together. What sound does this one make? /x/... And this one? /r/... and this one? /v/...”*

8. Then tell the learner that the game is going to begin, and select **“start assessment”**,
9. Press the green tick button for every letter the learner gets correct, and the red cross button for every letter the learner gets incorrect.
10. If you make a mistake, select the relevant letter and then rectify your answer.
11. When the test ends the app will automatically calculate the learner’s score (the number of letters correctly identified in a minute).
12. The app will then list the learner names and scores in order of lowest to highest.

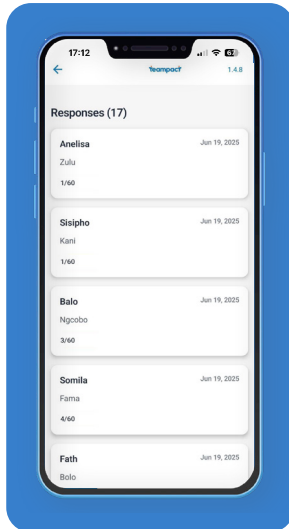
## Identifying eligible learners

Zazi iZandi is a catch-up programme helping learners to reach their grade level for letter sound recognition. Learners who already know their letters do not need to participate, so that we can focus our time and attention on those who need to catch up.

**Learners who achieve a score of 30 or more on the letter-sound EGRA test do not need to participate in the programme.**

## Grouping the learners

The learners will be in groups of seven based on their scores so that they can learn together at a comfortable pace. Once you have assessed all the learners in the class they will be assigned to groups with learners at a similar level of letter sound knowledge on Teampact.

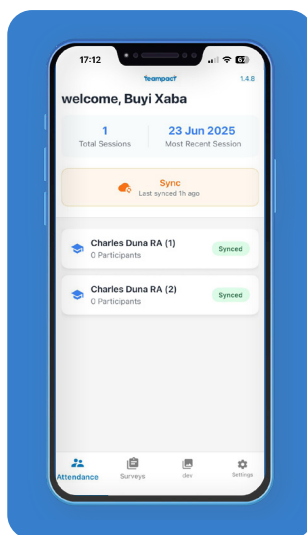


### STEP 1: Sort the list of collected responses by score on Teampact

1. Select the class name (e.g. RA)
2. Click "Sort"
3. Select EGRA letters score, and then
4. Sort ascending ↑ (lowest score to highest score)

### STEP 2: Identify learners who don't need to participate

- ▶ Find the learners with scores of 30 and above on Teampact.
- ▶ Show the list to the teacher and explain that these learners don't need extra support with catch-up.
- ▶ Ask the teacher to make an announcement to the class that these learners already know many letter sounds and so don't need to participate in Zazi iZandi.

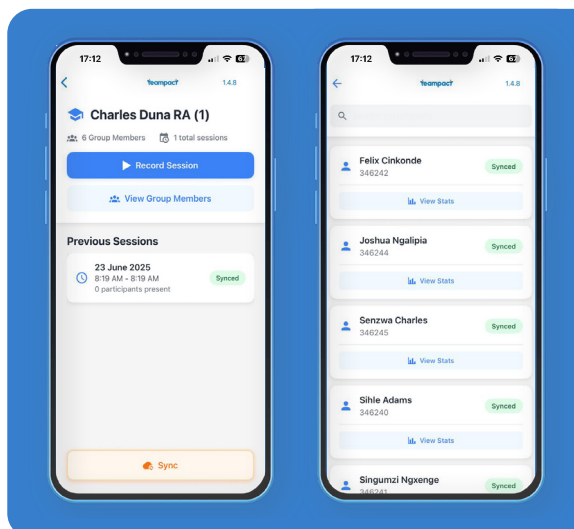


### STEP 3: Write the learners' names onto the relevant group on the LKPT

- ▶ The data team will create learner groups on Teampact once all of your assessment data has been submitted. **Note that this is an automated process effected on a particular date, and so please be sure to submit all your assessment data on time** (the deadline will be communicated closer to the time).

- ▶ You will know that the groups have been created when you log into Teampact and see a list of groups

- ▶ Find the LKPTs from page 23 of this Guide.
- ▶ Each LKPT is assigned a group number.
- ▶ Find the relevant group on Teampact and select it.



### ▶ Select "View Group Members"

- ▶ Write the learners' names for that group onto the LKPT



## Tracking progress

We use the LKPTs to track each learner's progress in identifying their letter sounds.

### STEP 1: Record letters known from the EGRA assessment for each learner

- ▶ Record the letters that each learner got correct on their EGRA assessment onto the LKPT:
  - Access each learner's EGRA information on Teampact
  - Scroll down to read the letters correct
  - Put a diagonal line across the corresponding square on the LKPT for every letter the learner got correct for both lower case and capital versions of the letter.

First name	Surname	o	i	a	u	e	s	t	p	n	c	k	h	r	m	d	g	l	f	b	q	j	z	w	v	y	x
Melanie	Swart	/	/			/			/			/															
Sipho	Gogwana	/	/		/			/					/										/				
Asanda	Grant	/					/										/										

### STEP 2: Record letters known from each session as you go

In the pages that follow, you will learn how to run sessions with your groups to teach learners their letter sounds through various activities and games.

You can track each learner's progress by shading in the corresponding squares on the LKPT for every letter they can consistently identify correctly in both lower case and capital form.

- When you believe that a learner has mastered identifying a letter sound, test them a few times for both capital and lower case versions of the letter.
- When the learner can consistently answer correctly, they have mastered the letter sound.
- Shade in the corresponding square on the LKPT.

First name	Surname	o	i	a	u	e	s	t	p	n	c	k	h	r	m	d	g	l	f	b	q	j	z	w	v	y	x
Melanie	Swart	/	/			/			/			/															
Sipho	Gogwana	/	/		/			/					/										/				
Asanda	Grant	/					/										/										



## NOTES

- Mastery means that the learner knows the letter very well and can identify both the small and capital letter quickly. Mastery can take multiple sessions to be achieved, and this is to be expected. It is important that you only shade the box when the learner can confidently identify the letter every time.

**Note: Learners do not need to be able to write the letter for you to shade the corresponding block.**

## Session preparation

Zazi iZandi is a play-based programme. You will receive the following materials:

### 1. Alphabet frieze cards

These are big cards with capital letters, small letters, and pictures.

### 2. Zazi alphabet cards

These are small cards with a single letter.

### 3. Board game

This is a laminated board game with tokens (one for each learner) and a dice.



**Preparation is key!** You only have 20 minutes with each group, so make each minute count! Know which learners and letters you are going to be working with, and have the admin sheets and games ready beforehand.

Before you begin:

1. Select the group of learners you will be working with.
2. Select two new letters for the session, and two or three letters the learners have covered previously. **Remember to follow the order of introducing the letters as shown on the letter knowledge progress tracker.**
3. Select one game or activity to cover during the session, and prepare for it.
4. Make sure that you have all the materials for the game you want to play. If you're going to be playing the board game, write the letters on the board. (*See the instructions under the heading "Board game" on page 17.*)
5. If you're playing card games, select the letters you'll be using in the session.
6. If you're going to be practising letter writing, make sure that each learner has paper and a pencil.

## Session structure

Begin each session by introducing the learners to the two to five letters that you will be covering during the session.

**Remember! Do not introduce more than two new letters, and include two to three letters that you have already covered in previous sessions.**

- Show the learners the letters on the alphabet frieze cards.
- Say each letter sound clearly.
- Get the learners to say each sound, together and individually, with repetition.
- Flash each card to the group (and then later to individual learners) and ask them to say the letter sound.
- Ensure that each learner is able to say the sound correctly.

Then select one of the games or activities (*under the heading "Games and activities" on page 13*).

## Tips for maximising sessions

The more sessions you have with each group, the more letters the children will learn.



- Have a good relationship with the teacher (remember to always help the teacher as much as you can to build a good, trusting relationship).
- Ensure that the teacher knows about the programme, its goals and the results.
- Make sure that you are consistently present in the classroom.
- Ask the teacher for more session time.
- Make the most of down-time opportunities in the classroom (e.g. on days when there isn't much happening due to low learner attendance or events at the school, work with the learners who are there).
- If the teacher is not in the classroom and the learners are restless and noisy, work with groups outside if the weather allows.
- Regularly debrief with the teacher about how the programme is going and how the learners are doing.

## Teaching at the Right Level

It is very important that each learner is on track. We achieve this by working with learners in groups with similar knowledge levels, so that they do not spend too much time on letters they already know, but get enough repetition that they don't forget what they've learned, and spend most of the time learning new letters.



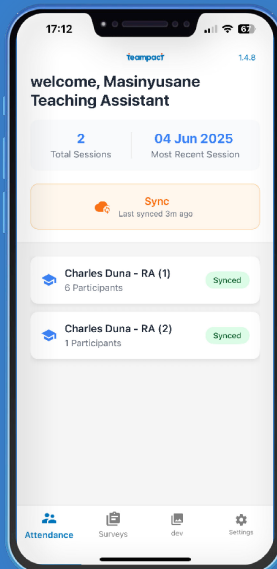
- ✓ Grouping the learners according to similar knowledge levels helps us to plan and focus instruction, and ensures that the learners don't get bored or feel overwhelmed.
  - ✓ The **letter knowledge progress tracker** allows us to easily monitor individual and group progress throughout the programme.
- When you begin sessions, use the LKPT to identify which letters to cover with each group.
  - Then move steadily along the letter order on the LKPT, teaching at the right level.
  - Most likely the lower groups will move along the letter order slower than the higher groups.

**All of your groups should not all be doing the same letter! Make sure each group is doing the letters they need to learn.**

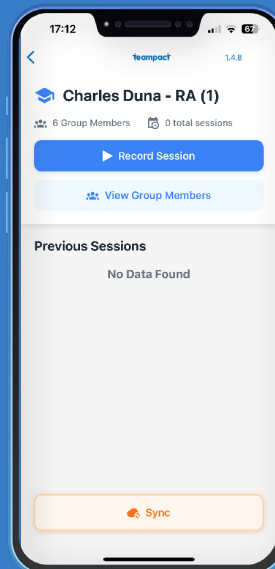


# Recording session activity on **teampact**

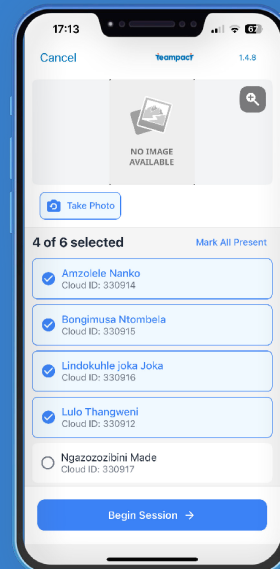
- 1.** Select the group you are about to work with



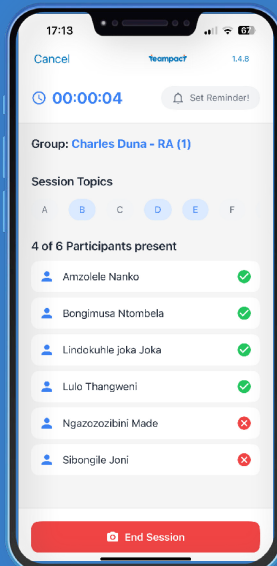
- 2.** Click **“Record Session”** and take a photo to begin your session



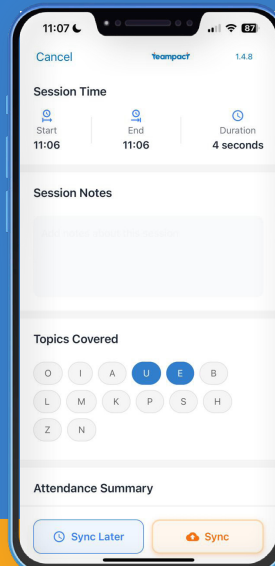
- 3.** Select the learners who are present at the session, and click **“Begin session”**



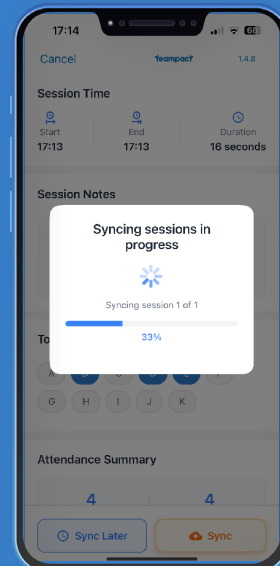
- 4.** When the session is over, click **“End Session”**



- 5.** Click **“Complete Session”**.



- 6.** Click **“Sync”** to add your session to the database.



On this page, select the letters you covered in the session. Under “Session Notes” make a comment that helps you know what to focus on next time. For example, “Five learners in the group have mastered the letters covered (U and E) in both lower case and capital letters , but Thabo and Nandi still need more practice.”

# Games and activities



When introducing a game or activity to the learners for the first time, **it is important to do so in a way that they can easily follow the steps.** Make sure the learners understand the instructions. First demonstrate the game or activity for them, and then allow the learners to try it out.

## 1. Practise writing the letters



### Objective:

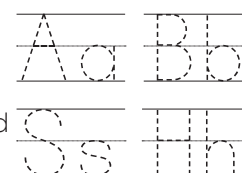
It is important for all learners to practise writing. At this level, we call it emergent writing, and it's through practice that their scribbles eventually start to resemble letters.

There are a number of different ways in which the learners can practise writing their letters.

### Explaining the game:



- Give the learners a card from the alphabet frieze to copy or trace.
- Draw a letter using short dashes on the board or on a piece of paper for the learners to join together.
- Have the learners write letters in the air with their index finger. This is a fun way for children to practise their fine motor skills. NOTE: When showing this to the learners, twist your body and write the letter above your shoulder so that the letter isn't backwards for the learners. You can also have them write letters on their leg or arm using their index finger.
- Write letters on the board. This will allow the learners to use a big space to practise writing larger letters (letter formation). You can also have them write letters in different colours or patterns. For example: one small 's' then one capital 'S', one small 's' then one capital 'S', etc.
- Write letters in sand or in flour. This is a sensory way for learners to practise writing letters. You can have them write both capital letters and small letters.
- If the school has playdough, you can ask the learners to form different letters with it.
- Ask the learners to turn their letters into characters. For example, ask them to write/draw a 'happy' A or an 'angry' C.
- Put the learners in pairs. They can take turns writing a letter on their partner's back with their finger. The learner whose back is getting written on should try to guess and sound out the letter their partner is writing.



### Letter Formation Chart

a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r
s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z	



## Help the children to hold their pencils correctly

**Show the child how to hold the pencil.** The correct way to hold a pencil is with the thumb, the index finger and the middle finger. The index finger should be on top of the pencil, with the thumb and middle finger on either side of the pencil (thumb on the left of the pencil and the pencil resting on the middle finger – the thumb would be reversed for left-handed children).

**Let the child practise holding the pencil.** Give the child a few minutes to practise holding the pencil correctly. You can help them by guiding their fingers into the correct position.

**Be patient.** It may take some time for the child to learn how to hold the pencil correctly. Be patient and offer positive reinforcement when they are successful.

### Here are some additional tips:

Use a variety of activities to help the child practise holding the pencil. You can try tracing, colouring, or writing simple letters or words (see activity 4 on page 15). Make sure the child is comfortable. The child should be sitting upright with their shoulders relaxed. Provide positive reinforcement. When the child is holding the pencil correctly, give them praise or a small reward.

Here are some common mistakes that children make when holding a pencil:

- **They grip the pencil too tightly.** This can make it difficult to write smoothly and can lead to hand cramps.
- **They hold the pencil too far away from the tip.** This can make it difficult to control the pencil and can also lead to hand cramps.
- **They do not use all three fingers to hold the pencil.** This can make it difficult to control the pencil and can also lead to hand cramps.

If you notice that the child is making any of these mistakes, gently correct them and offer them some guidance. With patience and practice, they will eventually learn how to hold a pencil correctly.

## 2. Letter writing race

**Objective:**

Practise writing letters and building speed. You can play this game once the learners have made progress in writing some letters and need to practise.

**Setting up:**

For this game you will need your board or a big piece of paper, and each learner will need a piece of paper and a pencil.

**Explaining the game:**

- Write a letter on the board.
- Ask the learners to say its sound.
- Then ask them to write the letter on their paper while whispering the sound of the letter to themselves.
- The first learner to write the letter correctly gets a point.
- Play for as long as the learners are engaged, factoring in the available time.
- The player with the most points wins the game.

## 3. Memory game

**Objective:**

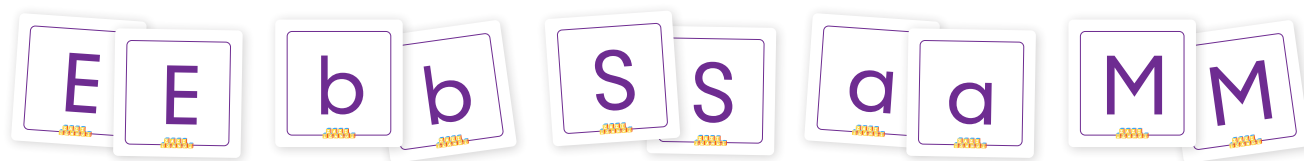
Recognise letters and remember where they're placed.

**Setting up:**

You will need five different pairs of matching letter cards for this game. Use the two letters you are focusing on in this session, as well as three letters you have covered before.

**Explaining the game:**

- Put the cards on the table, and ask the learners to sound out the letters.
- Then flip the cards over to face down on the table.
- Each learner has a turn to pick up two cards. If the cards match (i.e. they have the same letter), then the learner can keep them. If the cards do not match, then the learner must put them back on the table face down in the same place.
- The learners need to try to remember where the cards have been placed.
- The learner with the most cards at the end wins.



## 4. Container game



### Objective:

Recognising letter sounds and identifying words that begin with that sound.



### Setting up:

For this game, you will need a container (e.g. an ice-cream tub or large margarine tub) holding a selection of small cards with letters that you are focusing on during this session and those that have already been covered.



### Explaining the game:

- Take the learners outside and have them stand in a circle.
- Have them pass the container around the circle while singing the jingle below:  
*Choose the letter (x2)*  
*Read it for us*
- When the jingle stops, the learner holding the container must take a letter card and sound it out to the other learners. For example: “a” for “apple”.
- Then the jingle begins again, and the container continues to be passed from learner to learner around the circle.
- When the jingle stops again, the learner holding the container this time takes a letter card and sounds it out to the other learners, and so on.
- Continue playing until most of the learners have had a turn.

## 5. Snap



### Objective:

Recognising letter sounds with speed.



### Setting up:

You will need the small alphabet cards for this game.

Select all the cards for each letter that you are covering in this session, as well as a few letters that you have covered in previous sessions.

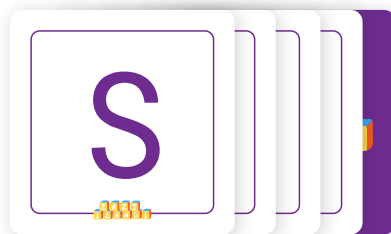
Shuffle the cards and then give each player (including yourself) four to seven cards.

Show the learners how to pick up their cards and to hold them so that they can see all of their cards at once.

### Explaining the game:



- You have the first turn at being the dealer. Take one of your cards and put it down face up.
- If any of the other players has the same card, they say “Snap!” and sound out the letter sound.
- The first learner to shout “Snap!”, and gets it right, keeps both cards.
- When all of your cards are used up, the learner with the most cards gets to be the dealer.
- After a time, the player with the most cards is the winner.





## 6. Board game



### Objective:

Recognising and sounding out letter sounds.



## Setting up:

Write the two letters that you are covering in the session, and three other letters from previous sessions, in the spaces on the board. Each of the five letters should be written three times to fill the 15 spaces.

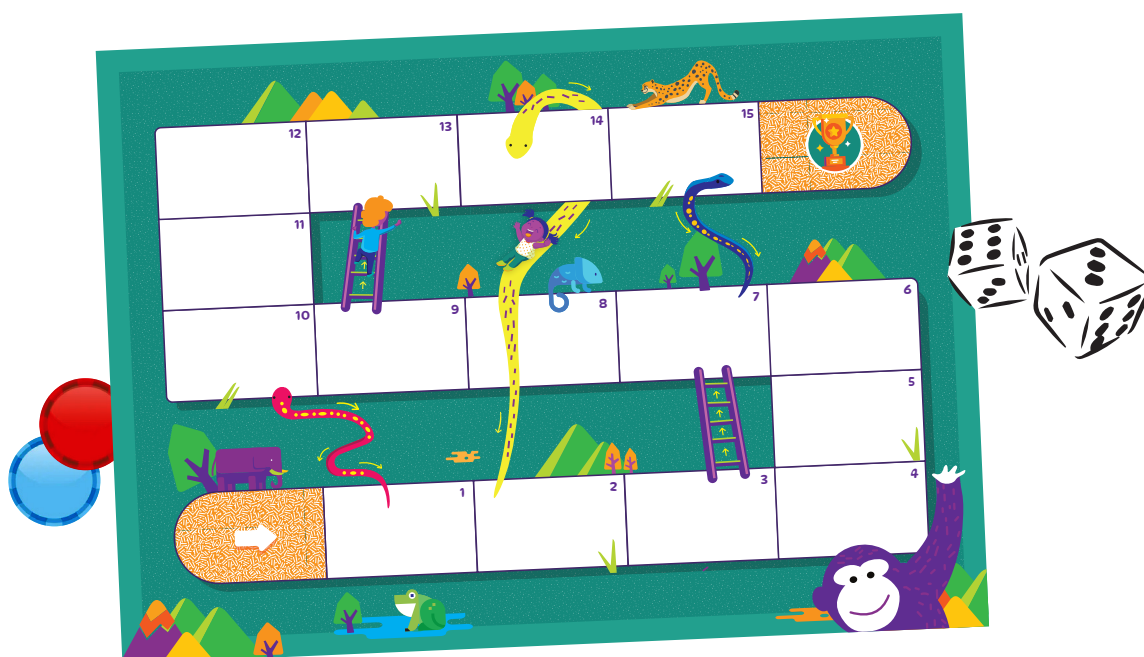
Write the letters clearly so they can be easily identified (e.g. make sure your 'a' doesn't look like a 'd'). Join in as a player yourself, and make the experience fun for everyone!

When seating the learners, put them in a semi-circle around the board so that the letters are facing the correct way for them. You should sit opposite them so that the letters are upside-down for you.



### Explaining the game:

- Each learner has a turn to roll the dice. The learner who rolls the highest number begins the game.
- The first player rolls the dice and moves their token the number of spaces shown on the dice.
- Players take turns rolling the dice and moving their tokens along the board. When they land on a block, the player should sound out the letter that they land on. Ask the other learners to sound out the letter too.
- If a player lands on a block with a ladder, they must move their token up the rungs of the ladder to land on the block where the top of the ladder reaches. The player must then sound out the letter at the top of the ladder.
- If a player lands on a block with a snake's head, they must slide down the snake to the block where the snake's tail ends. The player must then sound out the letter at the bottom of the snake.
- If a player lands on another player's token, they have to go back to the beginning. (NOTE: If the game is taking too long, you can disregard this part.)
- The first player to reach the final block at the top wins the game. Keep playing until every learner has reached the end.



## 7. Hopscotch



### Objective:

Sounding out letter sounds.



### Setting up:

You can only play this game if the teacher allows you to take the learners out of the classroom to a nearby space (so you don't lose session time), and it's not disruptive to other learners.

Create a hopscotch grid on the ground using chalk. Decide which letters you are practising, and write them into each square of the hopscotch board.



### Explaining the game:



#### Easy version

- Each learner has a turn to hop from the start square to the end. (They need to start at the beginning each time and not jump down the board, as then the letters will be upside down.)
- Learners should hop on one foot if there is one square, and land on both feet if there are two squares, with one foot in each square.
- As the learner hops on a square, they must say out loud the sound that letter makes.
- When they hop on two squares, they should say both letter sounds out loud.

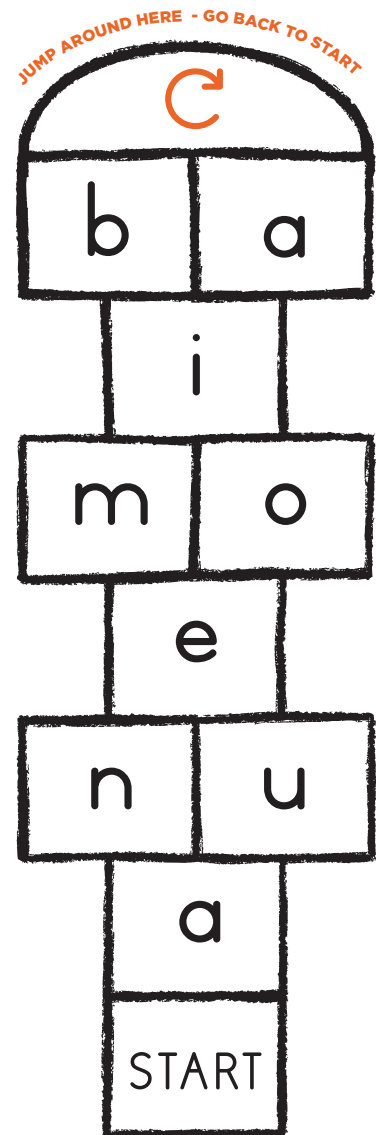


#### More advanced version

You will need the dice and tokens for this.

- Each learner throws the dice and then hops for the number of squares on the dice. A double block counts as two.
- They put their token down on the square where they land.
- They must then say out loud a word that has that letter sound near the beginning.

Depending on how much time you have for the game, you can let each player go up the hopscotch 2-3 times.



## Assessment results tracker

When you assess the learners using the EGRA grid and Teampact, enter the learners' results into this assessments results tracker so you can see their progress over time.

Use one column for the full set of tests that you conduct at the beginning, middle and end of the programme. Enter the date of the assessment that you're conducting in the relevant column. Then enter each learner's score (the number of letters that they got CORRECT). List the learners with the lowest score (meaning they know the fewest letters) at the top, and the learners with the highest score (meaning they know the most letters) at the bottom.

If learners score 30 or more then tick the Graduated column. (This means they do not need to participate in the programme as they have caught up to grade level.

[illegible]

## Assessment results tracker

[illegible]



## Assessment results tracker

[illegible]

## Group 1

[illegible]

## Group 2

[illegible]



### Group 3

[illegible]

## Group 4

[illegible]

## Group 5

[illegible]

## Group 6

[illegible]

## Group 7

[illegible]

## Group 8

[illegible]

## Group 9

[illegible]

## Group 10

[illegible]



# Conclusion

Thank you for being part of the Zazi iZandi programme. Thanks to your hard work, passion and commitment, your learners can learn their letters and establish a solid foundation on which to build their literacy skills.



## Notes





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