



A Classical Preschool/Kindergarten Curriculum  
Building a foundation for reading and spelling one letter at a time.

*By Melissa Corkum*

## About ABC's at Home

### For what age is ABC's at Home designed?

ABC's at Home is intended for PK4 to K5 students. While letter recognition is helpful, it is not required.

The activities do not require writing.

There is a lot flexibility built into this curriculum. The ideas are meant to be a spring board for your imagination and so you can make it work for your family and child(ren).

### What does classical mean?

The classical model (as I choose to interpret it) divides children's development into three stages (or the trivium) and utilizes methods best fit for each stage to instill a love of and skill for lifelong learning. In a nutshell, the first stage is the grammar stage (until approximately age 12) where a child's brain is built to acquire knowledge. The second stage, or logic stage, is when children process and understand their knowledge. Lastly, the rhetoric stage trains them to express their knowledge.

To further explore Classical education, check out <http://bit.ly/hfOImp>, *The Core* by Leigh Bortins, or *The Well Trained Mind* by Susan Wise Bauer.

### Objectives

The main objective is for the students to come out knowing his letter sounds backwards and forwards, so to say. This solid foundation will make for an easier transition to blending and then reading. The other topics (i.e., math, science, social studies) are simply vehicles to reinforce the sounds and provide you material for your portfolio review. They are meant to expose your child to a concept but not necessarily "teach" it.

### The Philosophy

This curriculum revolves around letter sounds. There are 26 weeks each corresponding to a letter and its sounds. I have chosen to introduce each sound the letter makes which will make a smoother transition to a full phonics/spelling curriculum to uses the 70 phonograms of the English language. For example, A says /a/, /ay/, /ah/.

The letters are organized by cursive stroke – starting with the easiest stroke (swing up) and ending with the hardest stroke (ocean wave).

Each week contains a math, science, social studies, and play topic that corresponds to the letter of the week. In addition, there is one read aloud each week that will be read each day, a Bible

memory verse, and penmanship practice. While reading the same book aloud each day may seem boring to you, the repetition is great for this age. Each day you can explore a different aspect of the book and it gives your child a chance to really absorb it so he can practice summarizing it back to you. Dialoguing about the read alouds is a great way to promote reading comprehension and language development. There are Read Aloud Tips each week. Feel free to spread them out over the four (or more) readings.

You are invited to make a lapbook for each week. Cutting is a great skill to strengthen the writing muscles. Lapbooks are also a great keepsake and great for portfolio reviews. If you are not a lapbook person (and honestly, I'm still deciding if I am), feel free to just do the activities and skip the lapbook part.

The suggested activities are not designed to take very long. I suggest using the rest of your day to play, explore, and go on adventures. I love the activities in Carol Kranowitz's *Growing an In-Sync Child: Simple, Fun Activities to Help Every Child Develop, Learn, and Grow* and the website *Modern Parents Messy Kids* if you need suggestions. Reading aloud great literature to your children is always a good choice, too.

Scattered throughout are poems or finger plays to memorize. Children this age are built for memorization, but it is like a muscle that you have to use to build endurance and strength. You will be amazed at how much little minds can absorb and retain.

As extra reinforcement, try to mention whenever you come across words that begin with the letter of the week.

### Why use cursive first?

1. All lowercase cursive letters can be written using 4 basic strokes. When letters are taught by stroke, retention is much quicker than teaching printing.  
swing ups-l,j,p,r,s,t,u,w  
roller coasters-b,e,f,h,k,l  
hills and valleys-m,n,v,x,y,z  
ocean waves-a,c,d,g,o,q
2. Cursive is a gross motor skill rather than a fine motor skill so it's more developmentally appropriate...especially for boys.
3. There is less letter mix-up with cursive since b's and d's and p's and q's have distinctively different shapes.
4. The practice of cursive writing develops parts of the brain in ways printing manuscript cannot.
5. Because cursive flows and does not require the writing implement to leave the paper as often as manuscript, it does not infringe on thought flow as much.
6. Cursive's bottom-up motion is easier for lefties.

7. Cursive is a more efficient writing style and even more important now that standardized tests (such as SAT) are requiring timed writing sections. As children get older their print usually morphs into a less-readable hybrid but they are too set in their ways to re-learn a new writing style such as classic cursive.

A NOTE: We've never had trouble learning how to write in cursive and reading in print.

For more information on teaching cursive, please visit <http://bit.ly/HdphOE>.

### Penmanship Practice

Strokes and letters should always be introduced in large format. A chalk board, easel, or whiteboard mounted at child-level is ideal. A vertical surface provides valuable muscle bio feedback. It's also important for the child to feel resistance when writing so if you have a whiteboard, use whiteboard crayons or grease pencils instead of markers. Unconventional mediums such as sand, dirt, finger paint or on a bag filled with colored hair gel is also a fun way to practice.

Each week also includes a "Sky, Grass, Dirt" paper for practicing. Describing the vertical space on a line using these visual descriptors, helps students learn to write each letter to the proper height. Have the student trace the letter in at least 5 different colors using crayons. Then encourage them to create a landscape scene in their sky, grass, and dirt. Skies might have birds, rainbows, clouds, and suns; grassy areas may have animals, plants, or building that reach into the sky; dirt scenes can show plant roots, worms, etc.

### Phonograms

For audio guidance when pronouncing the phonograms, visit <http://www.phonogrampage.com/>. It is important to not inadvertently add any sounds to the phonograms. For example, some may say /ma/ for letter M instead of /mm/.

### Letter Tiles

Having a grasp on the alphabetical order of the letters without having to sing the song is a life skill that is disappearing with hard copy books.

Working with letter tiles is not only multi-sensory, but can create alphabetical awareness. I suggest having students alphabetize a set of letter tiles once a week during kindergarten.

Another great drill is to chant the alphabet between two people/groups.

For example:

Person 1: A

Person 2: B

Person 1: C  
etc.

Once single letters are mastered, try saying two letters at a time.

For example:

Person 1: A, B  
Person 2: C, D  
etc.

### **Drilling Sounds**

It is important that students can identify which sound a letter makes (for decoding/reading) but also which letter makes a sound (for encoding/spelling).

For decoding, you can show the letters on flashcards and the student will say the sound(s).

For encoding, you can say the sound and the student will say the appropriate letter, choose it from the set of cards laid out on a table or floor, or write the letter.

Incorporating movement into drilling may also help retention. For example, students can march while reciting the letter and sound.

### **Basic Supply List (things used almost every day)**

1. Alphabet flash cards. These are easy to make on your own or you can purchase pre-made ones almost anywhere. Ideally the front of the flashcard would have lower case letters in cursive or manuscript.
2. 26 file folders if completing lapbooks.
3. Safety scissors.
4. Crayons.
5. Gluestick.
6. Supplies for the specific day listed in lesson plan.
7. Whiteboard/grease pencil or chalkboard/chalk (for penmanship practice).
8. Pencils.
9. Letter tiles.
10. Read alouds (1 per week).

## Lapbook: Folding the folder

All of the lapbooks in this curriculum use a file folder gate folded. Simply open the file folder all the way and fold the flaps into the center fold. Once it is re-folded it should remind you of a tri-fold board that is often used to display science fair projects.

## Suggested Weekly Schedule

This a 4 day schedule allows for plenty of field trip and adventure opportunities.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
Calendar, drill sounds, read aloud, practice penmanship, memory work			
Introduce sound and Bible memory verse	Math	Science	Social Studies

**NOTE:** Days 2, 3, and 4 are really interchangeable. I also suggest doing letter tile once a week.

### Estimated activity times:

Calendar – 5 minutes.

Drill sounds – 5 to 15 minutes.

Read aloud – 10 minutes.

Penmanship – 10 minutes.

Intro sound – 5 minutes.

Bible memory verse – 5 minutes.

Math, science, or social studies – 30 minutes.

Letter tiles – 15 minutes.

I do not provide a daily schedule because I want you to have the flexibility to work the activities into your schedule and around other children you may be schooling.

## What to do next?

There are many great options in classical homeschooling. Regardless of what curriculum you choose, I recommend sticking with a phonics/spelling program that is multisensory and uses the 70 phonograms and 28 to 30 spelling rules.

## Credits

All clipart courtesy of <http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/images> unless otherwise noted.

All Bible verses taken from the New International Version.

## Support, Questions and Feedback

Find and like the Facebook page. Search for “ABCs at Home.” Here you can connect to other users, ask questions, get clarifications, share ideas and resources, and upload pictures of your projects. Of course, I’d also appreciate you sharing the curriculum with others you think would benefit from it.

Please feel free to direct any questions or feedback to [\*Melissa@thecorkums.com\*](mailto:Melissa@thecorkums.com).

## Year-at-a-Glance

Week/ Letter	Math	Science	Social Studies	Play	Bible Verse	Read Aloud
1/I	Inches	Insects	Islands	I Spy Ice Cream	John 15:5	<i>Inch by Inch</i> by Leo Lionni
2/T	Triangles (music crossover)	Teeth (health crossover)	Ten Commandments	Telephone manners	Prov. 3:5	<i>Tacky the Penguin</i>
3/J	Jellybean (counting/ sorting)	Jellyfish	Jungles	Make jam	Heb. 13:8	<i>Jungle Song</i> by Miriam Moss
4/U	Uni- (and other numerical prefixes)	Universe (art crossover)	United States	Using utensils	Prov. 28:5	<i>The Umbrella</i> by Ingrid and Dieter Schubert
5/P	Puzzles	Parts of plant cell	Police (health crossover)	Make pizza	Psalms 147:1	<i>The Poky Little Puppy</i> by Janette Sebring Lowrey
6/S	Squares (art crossover)	Starfish, Sea Urchins, Sand Dollars	Split of the Roman Empire	Store	Amos 5:14	<i>Stone Soup</i> by Marcia Brown
7/R	Rectangles	Reptiles	Fall of Rome	Restaurant (health crossover)	Ex. 20:8	<i>Rain</i> by Manya Stojic
8/W	Weight	Weather	World	Washing (health crossover)	Psalms 27:14	<i>Wacky Wednesday</i> by Dr. Seuss
9/L	Lines (parallel)	Leaves	Leaders of our Country (aka. Presidents)	Laundry	Matt. 22:37	<i>Leaf Man</i> by Lois Ehlert
10/E	Equal	Ears (health crossover)	Empires	Egg race	Prov. 20:12	<i>Eli</i> by Bill Peet
11/H	Hours (time)	Healthy foods (health crossover)	Heian Empire (art crossover)	Hammers	Ex. 20:12	<i>The Big Honey Hunt</i> by Stan and Jan Berenstein
12/F	Fractions	Parts of a Flower	Family	Fire safety (health crossover)	John 3:16	<i>One Fish, Two Fish</i> by Dr. Seuss
13/B	Balance	Birds	Bakery	Babies	Acts 16:31	<i>Blueberries For Sal</i> by Robert McCloskey



14/K	Kilograms (mass)	Kangaroos and other marsupials	Kush	Kitchen	Lev. 20:8	<i>The Emperor and the Kite</i> by Jane Yolen
15/M	Money	Metamorphic Rock	Mailman	Marbles	John 10:27	<i>Mailing May</i> by Michael O. Tunnell
16/N	Numbers (writing them)	Nutrition (health crossover)	Henry the Navigator	Nuts/bolts	Matt. 6:24	<i>The Napping House</i> by Audrey Wood
17/V	Vertical/horizontal	Volcanoes	Vikings	Vet	Micah 5:15	<i>The Velveteen Rabbit</i> by Margery Bianco
18/Z	Zero	Zoo animals	Aztecs	Zipper practice	Psalm 97:8	<i>Zany Zoo</i> by William Wise
19/X	Next (and ordinal numbers)	Exercise (health crossover)	Texas (and other states)	Box play	Psalm 99:5	<i>The Crayon Box That Talked</i> by Shane Derolf
20/Y	Yesterday, today, tomorrow	Yawn	Yardsales	Yoga (health crossover)	John 15:14	<i>The Yak Who Yelled Yuck</i> by Carol Pugliano-Martin
21/A	Addition	Atmosphere	Ancient Mesoamerica	Make apple pie	Rom. 3:23	<i>How to Make an Apple Pie and See the World</i> by Marjorie Priceman
22/C	Calendar	Classification	Canada	Camping	1 Peter 5:7	<i>Circus Caps for Sale</i> by Esphyr Slobodkina
23/D	Dozen	Dinosaurs	Deserts	Dentist	Psalm 37:4	<i>Danny and the Dinosaur</i> by Syd Hoff
24/O	Odd/even	Ocean animals	Olympics	Obstacles	Rom. 12:21	<i>Ox Cart Man</i> by Donald Hall
25/G	Graphing	Gravity	Globe/geography	Gardening	1 John 4:8	<i>The Grouchy Ladybug</i> by Eric Carle
26/Qu	Quilt patterns (art crossover)	Quartzite and Other Rocks	Queens/Kings	Quiet games	Song of Songs 8:7	<i>The Quilt</i> by Ann Jonas

## Week #2-Letter T

**Sounds:** /t/

**Bible Verse:** “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;”  
Proverbs 3:5

**Read Aloud:** *Tacky the Penguin* by Helen Lester

### Letter T Supply list (in addition to basics)

1. Green construction paper.
2. 2 hardboiled eggs.
3. 2 cups of dark brown soda.
4. 2 cups of white vinegar.
5. 2 containers that will fit the liquid and egg.
6. Bible or Bible Story book.
7. Play phone (optional).

### Intro: Letter T

1. Practice saying /t/ when shown “T” flashcard. Talk about tapping your tongue against your teeth to make the sound.
2. Practice saying /t/ while practicing writing a large cursive “t” on whiteboard or other large medium.
3. Color and cut out “T” pictures and glue to front left flap of lapbook.
4. Introduce memory verse. Glue to lapbook.
5. Read aloud.

### Math: Triangles (art crossover)

1. Trace the Triangle Tree template onto green construction paper. Cut out the triangles (or let your child, if you’re feeling brave).
2. Explain that triangles have 3 sides and 3 points. Count the 3 sides and points on each triangle. Count the triangles.
3. Arrange the triangles with the smallest on top and the largest on the bottom to make an evergreen tree. (**Skill: seriation**)
4. Glue the tree to the right front flap of your lapbook.

5. Explain that any 3 dots (that are not in a line) can be connected to make a triangle. Give it a try a couple times on the inside left flap of lapbook.
6. Eat a triangle snack such as triangle crackers and cheese slices.

### Science: Teeth (health crossover)

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1. Talk about why we need teeth (for eating food). Explain that sugars in the food we eat, the acid in our saliva, and bacteria that live in our mouths can cause cavities. Brushing and flossing are how we keep our teeth healthy.
2. Ask what will happen if you do not brush and floss? Write down your child's response in the Hypothesis section of the Tooth Lab sheet.
3. Observe what the eggs look like before the experiment and how they are similar to teeth (both have calcium to make them hard, both white, etc.). Record observations on Tooth Lap sheet.
4. Explain that the soda represents sugar from the foods we eat and the vinegar represents acid from our saliva that is helpful for food digestion.
5. Place one egg in each liquid overnight.
6. The next day observe how each egg changed. The egg in soda may be discolored and pitted, and the egg in vinegar will be fragile and soft because the acid dissolves the calcium. Record observations on Tooth Lab sheet.
7. Emphasize why it is so important to brush to keep the sugar, acid, and bacteria from getting together to eat away at our teeth.
8. Cut out lab sheet and glue to middle inside section of lapbook.

### Social Studies: Ten Commandments

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1. Read Exodus 19 and 20 aloud (or read the story of the Ten Commandments from your favorite Bible Story book).
2. Color, cut, and paste the Ten Commandments bookmark to the inside right flap of lapbook.

### Read Aloud Tips

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1. Talk about how God made everyone with different personalities. Which penguin is most like you?
2. Talk God wants us to treat people – even if they are different.

3. Count the penguins on page 8.
4. Talk about how Tacky is the same from his friends and how he is different.

### **Play Ideas (music crossover)**

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1. Practice good telephone manners. Have your child role play being the caller and the answerer. This is a great time to memorize your phone number, too!
2. Get out the tinker toys if you have them.
3. If you can get your hands on a musical triangle, practice rhythm echoing. You clap a rhythm and see if your child can reproduce it on the triangle.

## Suggested Lapbook Layout

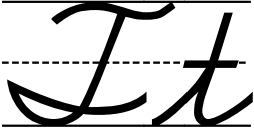
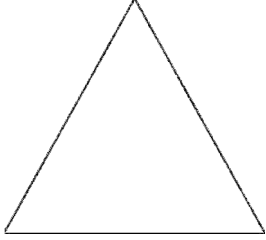



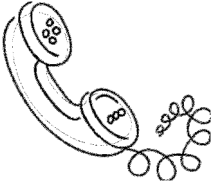


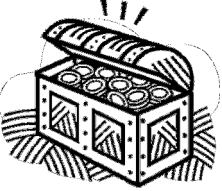
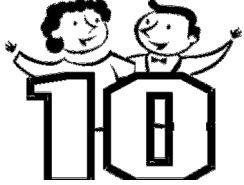

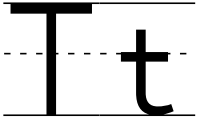
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/T/ PICTURES	TRIANGLE TREE
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TRIANGLES	BIBLE VERSE  TOOTH LAB	TEN COMMANDMENTS
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Paste "Sky, Grass, Dirt" on back.

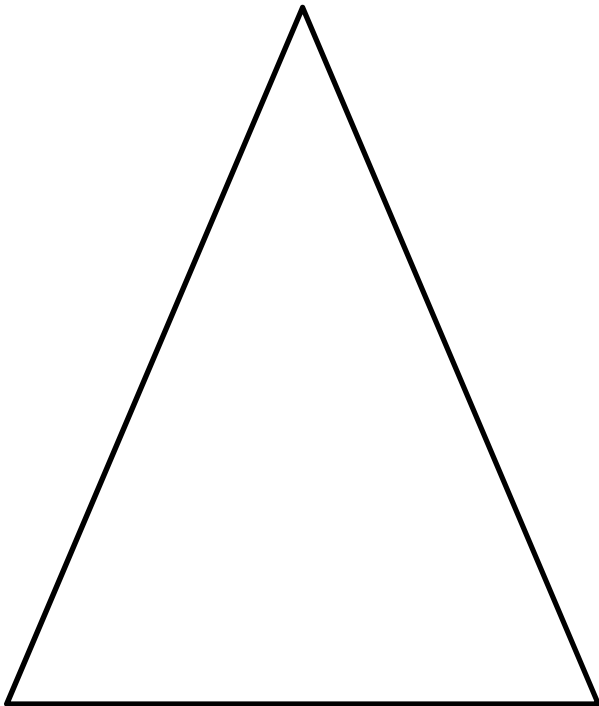
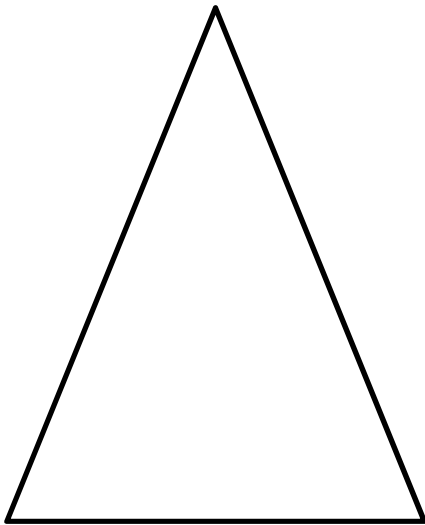
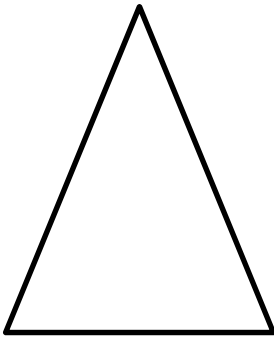
“T” Words for front of lapbook or for BINGO.

 T t	 triangle	 truck	 tree
 tiger	 telephone	 train	 teddy bear
 treasure	 ten	 two	 T t

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and  
lean not on your own understanding;”

Proverbs 3:5

Triangle Tree Template



**Tooth Lab: Why is it important to brush our teeth?**

Hypothesis: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Egg Observations (Before)

\_\_\_\_\_

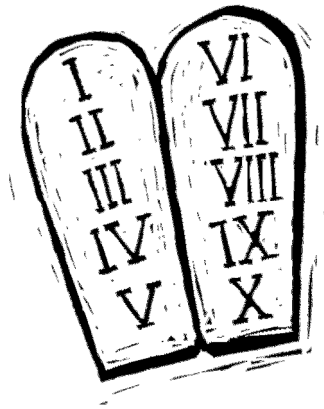
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Egg Observations (After)

Soda Egg \_\_\_\_\_

Vinegar Egg \_\_\_\_\_





Thou Shalt...

1. Have no other gods before me.
2. Not make unto thee any graven image.
3. Not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
5. Honor thy father and mother; that thy days may be long upon the land the Lord thy God give thee.
6. Not kill.
7. Not commit adultery.
8. Not steal.
9. Not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
10. Not covet.

