

## Activity 2: The English Alphabet

**Level:**  
CEFR A2

**Time:**  
60 minutes

**Resources:**

- ▶ Handouts
- ▶ Smartboard

**Aims:**

- ▶ To be able to sequence words in alphabetical order
- ▶ To raise learners' awareness of the requirements of Task 3 in the Entry 2 Reading exam
- ▶ To feel confident in the pronunciation of the British English alphabet

**Exam task focus:** Task 3

### Procedure

1. Tell learners they are going to talk about the alphabet.
2. Set the context. Ask the class if they can remember how many letters there are in the English alphabet. Begin by drilling the correct pronunciation for the whole alphabet – if you have a poster with the alphabet on, use this, or otherwise find an appropriate image on Google and use this on your smartboard. As soon as you've completed the drill, **be sure to remove this or cover any posters with the alphabet on**, as it will affect the lesson. Take every opportunity to repeat the pronunciation of each letter throughout this lesson.
3. Tell learners to interview the people sitting directly nearest to themselves to find out who has the shortest alphabet in their own language. Get them to report back in their groups until you have found the shortest alphabet in the room.
4. Ask for five volunteers to stand up at the front. Give each student a random card from Handout activity 1 (you'll need to cut these up in advance). Tell them they need to organise themselves in a line in alphabetical order. They'll need to work together for this – any learners still sitting down can shout out help. Make sure they realise that the final result makes a sentence. Explain that this is a mnemonic – a silly sentence that you can memorise to help you remember the correct order of things.
5. Once the learners have all taken their seats again, explain that they're going to create some more mnemonics for the whole English alphabet. Give them Handout activities 2a and 2b. Make sure they do the numbering exercise first, so they don't make too many mistakes with Activity 2b.

*The final sentences should be:*

- ▶ A boy called Dave eats five great hamburgers in June.
- ▶ Kate loves meeting nice old people.
- ▶ Quentin runs slowly to university.
- ▶ Valerie will x-ray your zebra.

6. Explain that there are always three alphabet questions in the exam, where they will have to put words in order like this (we'll see an example soon). They can use the sentences above to help them memorise the correct order. Give out Handout activity 3a, which is a text similar to the kind they will see in Task 3 of the Entry 2 Reading exam. Ask them to read it through once and underline or highlight any words they don't know or aren't sure about.
7. Now get them to put their list of underlined words in alphabetical order, preferably without referring to anything to help them. Tell them to try and remember the sentences they have just created if they find this difficult – if they can't remember, then they can look back at the previous handout to help them.
8. Check each learner's word order and take class feedback on the difficult vocabulary, explaining meanings where necessary.
9. Give out Handout activity 3b, which essentially shows them what kind of questions they will encounter for Task 3 of the Reading exam. The questions will always follow this format for this task – the first three test their general understanding of the text ('obtain information from texts') and the next three questions test their ability to use first placed letters to order words alphabetically ('Sequence words using basic alphabetical ordering skills'). (See pages 16 and 17 of the Entry 2 Specifications for full details on what is tested in each set of questions.) Ask them to answer the questions, reminding them to transfer their answers to the answer grid below, as they would have to do in the exam. Point out that their papers cannot be marked if they don't do this, so it's very important.
10. Go through the answers as a class. They are:
  19. C
  20. B
  21. C
  22. B
  23. B
  24. A
11. Focus learners' attention on the exam box at the bottom of the handout to explain how the lesson has helped to prepare them for Task 3 of the Trinity Entry 2 Skills for Life Reading exam.

Handout activity 1

VALERIE

WILL

X-RAY

YOUR

ZEBRA

Commented [GH1]: Again, I am using sentence case, but it looks odd.

## Handout activity 2a

Write a number next to each word to decide which order it comes in the alphabet. For example, 'A' is number 1.

Example:

**A**

①

**WILL**

**RUNS**

**NICE**

**ZEBRA**

**HAMBURGERS**

**BOY**

**YOUR**

**JUNE**

**UNIVERSITY**

**QUENTIN**

**EATS**

**IN**

**KATE**

**PEOPLE**

**GREAT**

**DAVE**

**CALLED**

**X-RAY**

**MEETING**

**VALERIE**

**FIVE**

**TO**

**SLOWLY**

**LOVES**

**OLD**

## Handout activity 2b

**When you are sure about the correct order, read the words in order to yourself. They make four complete sentences. Write the sentences below, using normal lower case, with capital letters for the beginning of sentences and for names.**

*Sentence 1*

\_\_\_\_\_.

*Sentence 2*

\_\_\_\_\_.

*Sentence 3*

\_\_\_\_\_.

*Sentence 4*

\_\_\_\_\_.

## Handout activity 3a

Read the text and **underline** or **highlight** any words you don't know.

### Did you know?

#### Fascinating fact file

Did you know the shortest alphabet in the world has only 12 letters in it? It's from the language Rotokas. Only a few thousand people in New Guinea speak Rotokas. Meanwhile, according to the Guinness Book of World Records, the longest alphabet is Khmer, with 74 letters. Khmer has a total of 16 million native speakers. It is the official language of Cambodia.

Of course, none of these compare with Mandarin, which has so many characters that nobody is even sure of the exact number! Most experts believe Mandarin has somewhere between 10,000 and 60,000 characters.

But alphabets don't stay the same – for example, the English alphabet once contained a letter which looked like this: ꝥ. This changed slowly over many centuries. At first, people started to write it like the letter 'Y', but then they changed it to 'uu'. Finally, by around 1600, it became the letter 'w' we know in English today.

Now put your **underlined** or **highlighted** words in alphabetical order:

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## Handout activity 3b

This is how the questions in Task 3 of the Entry 2 Reading exam will look:

### Questions 19-21

Choose the letter of the best answer according to the text and circle it **on the answer sheet**.

19. The text is about
- A languages
  - B characters
  - C alphabets
20. How many letters does the Khmer alphabet have?
- A 12
  - B 74
  - C 10,000
21. The English letter þ has now changed into
- A Y
  - B uu
  - C w

### Questions 22-24

Look at the list of words. They are in alphabetical order. Circle the letter of the best answer **on the answer sheet**.

22. Which word comes first in the list, before **English**?
- A Portuguese
  - B Bengali
  - C Russian
23. Where does **Italian** come in the list?
- A between French and Hindi
  - B between Hindi and Khmer
  - C between Khmer and Mandarin
24. Which word comes last in the list, after **Spanish**?
- A Urdu
  - B Arabic
  - C Javanese

#### Languages

.....  
English  
French  
.....  
Hindi  
.....  
Khmer  
.....  
Mandarin  
Spanish  
.....

**ANSWER SHEET**

Please circle the letter of the best answer for each question. If you make a mistake, cross out the letter and circle your final answer.

**Task 3**

Question	Answer
19.	A B C
20.	A B C
21.	A B C
22.	A B C
23.	A B C
24.	A B C

**Exam hint**

In Task 3 of the Entry 2 Skills for Life Reading exam, you have to put words in alphabetical order and answer some questions about a short text.

You need to know:

- ▶ How to understand information in a text
- ▶ How to put words in the correct order according to the alphabet