

The Zoo-phonics “Cast of Characters” and Associated Body Signals

Signal is a term used to explain the kinesthetic part of Zoo-phonics. As already stated, the Signals help to lock letter-shapes and sounds into memory. Each Signal, listed with the corresponding animal, is described below. The students should be encouraged to give the letter Sound while making the Signal. It is important to be consistent. The Signal should always be done in the same manner.

For each animal a name has been given. Example: allie alligator, bubba bear, catina cat, *etc.* The children delight in knowing the animal names. The names are a useful tool for reinforcing the picture-letter Sounds.

The following are the animals, their given names and a description of each Signal.



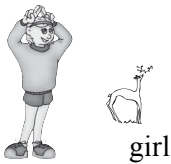
a – alligator (allie alligator):
Extend arms forward, one over the other, to form an alligator’s mouth. Open and close your hands/arms and say the letter sound /a/. (Sustain sound.) When sound blending, this becomes a quick “clap.”



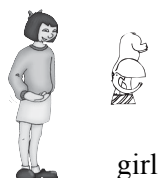
b –bear (bubba bear):
Reach your dominant hand above your head to an imaginary honeycomb. Bring a fistful of honey to your mouth as a bear might do, but don’t touch your mouth, and say the letter sound /b/. You are not trying to make a “b” with your body.



c–cat (catina cat):
Pretend you are a cat washing your face with your paw, and say the letter sound /c/.



d–deer (deedee deer):
Use two fingers of each hand to form deer ears on your head and say the letter sound /d/.



e–elephant (ellie elephant):
You have the option to do this two different ways. You and your class may choose one of them: 1) clasp your hands together in front of you, then swing your arms from side to side as if they were a trunk. 2) Take one arm and swing it to your mouth, as if ellie were feeding herself a peanut. Whichever one you choose, say the letter sound /e/. (Sustain sound.) Note: the second Signal leads into sound blending more easily. This is the Signal of choice for the authors, since our Zoo-phonics “kids” get into sound blending so early!



f –fish (francy fish):
With your hands in front of your chest, place the palm of one hand on the back of the other hand to form a fish (make sure you have a thumb on each side), then wiggle your thumbs and say the letter sound /f/. (Sustain sound).



g–gorilla (gordo gorilla):
Pretend you are peeling a banana, Gordo’s favorite food, saying the letter sound /g/.



h–horse (honey horse):
Slap both sides of your thighs or hips, suggesting a horse galloping. At the same time, say the letter sound /h/.



i–inchworm (inny inchworm):
Using your index finger, bend it up and down, and then move your hand forward suggesting the movement of an inchworm. While Signaling, say the letter sound /i/. (Sustain sound.)



j - jellyfish (jerry jellyfish):
Move in a jelly-like fashion (shake like jelly), or move hands and arms up and down in front of you. Whichever you do, keep hands and arms in front and not to the sides. Say the letter sound /j/.



k–kangaroo (kayo kangaroo):
Make two fists and pose as if boxing. Give a kick with one leg, while at the same time saying the letter sound /k/.



l–lizard (lizzy lizard):
Place your hands under your chin with your elbows lifted up level with shoulders. Pretend you are catching a fly. Say the letter sound /l/. (Sustain sound). (Make sure the students keep their tongues in their mouths to keep a pure “l” sound.)



m–mouse (missy mouse):
Place your hand close to your mouth and wiggle your fingers as if you are a mouse nibbling on a piece of cheese. While Signaling, say the letter sound /m/. (sustained sound).



boy

n—nightowl (nigel nightowl):

Using the thumb and four fingers of each hand, make round nightowl eyes and say the letter sound /n/. (Sustain sound.) Note: Make sure you always call Nigel a “nightowl.” Keep practicing – it will become familiar.



boy

u –umbrella bird (umber umbrella bird):

Place your fist on top of your head to suggest holding an umbrella. Extend your other arm out to your side, and then flap that arm as if in flight, saying the letter sound /u/. (Sustain sound.) Note: This is the sound for the “schwa,” regardless of which vowel says it!



girl

o—octopus (olive octopus):

Extend each arm outward at your sides, using a waving motion to suggest the tentacles of an octopus, and say the letter sound /o/. (Sustain sound.)



boy

v—vampire bat (vincent vampire bat):

Bend and raise your elbows horizontally with your hands near your mouth. Form little fangs with your index fingers. Flap elbows up and down and say the letter sound /v/. (Sustain sound.)



boy

p—penguin (peewee penguin):

Stiffen both arms at the sides of your body (hands up) and do a penguin walk, waddling from side to side. While Signaling, say the letter sound /p/. (Add no schwa sound.)



boy

w—weasel (willie weasel):

Place your arms in front of your chest, elbows up, and hands clasped on top of one another. Move your arms in a wave-like motion. This suggests what willie weasel looks like when he is running. While Signaling, say the letter sound /w/.



girl

q—quail (queeny quail):

Illustrate the topknot of the California quail by placing your bent index finger forward at the top of your forehead, while saying the letter sound /q/ (kw). Note: Make sure the hand is held on the front of the forehead, not on top of the head.



boy

x –fox (xavier fox):

Crossing your index fingers, move them as if you were knitting. Say the letter sound /x/. (“ks”). Tell your students that the “x” in Xavier comes at the front of the name, but the “x” in “fox” comes at the end.



boy

r—rabbit (robby rabbit):

Curve both hands, raising them to your chest to represent rabbit paws. Give a hop, hop and say the letter sound /r/. (Be careful not to make an “er” or a “ruh” sound, placing a vowel before or after the “r.” The secret is to keep your lips 95% closed as you give the sound. It is a tiny movement on the lips. Say “red,” now get rid of “ed.” Say “rabbit.” Now get rid of the “abbit.” That is the sound you want!)



boy

y—yak (yancy yak):

Form a “y-shape” by extending your thumb and little finger. Place your thumb next to your ear and your little finger next to your mouth, as though you were holding a telephone and “yakking.” While Signaling, say the letter sound /y/. Note: Make sure your children don’t say “yak, yak, yak,” instead of the sound.



boy

s—snake (sammy snake):

Move your hand forward in the serpentine manner of a snake, saying /s/. (Sustain sound.)



boy

z—zebra (zeke zebra):

Place your hands together and lean them against your cheek to suggest Zeke catching a few “z’s” (sleeping). While Signaling, say the letter sound /z/. (Sustain sound.)



boy

t—tiger (timothy tiger):

Extend your arms in a slightly bent “t” shape to suggest a tiger showing his strong muscles (the song on our CD says, “shakes the bars of his cage...”). While Signaling, say the letter sound /t/.

Teaching the animal name is important. It helps the child to hear the letter sounds.

“Tell me and I forget. Teach me and I may remember. Involve me, and I learn!” - Benjamin Franklin