

no. A-154



first-letter fun

instructional computing courseware
for the **apple® II** computer



a product from the
mecc early learning series



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instructional computing courseware
for the **apple® II** computer

This manual is compatible
with
the First-Letter Fun diskette
Version 1.x

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ISBN 0-87490-097-2

September 1985

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INTRODUCTION

First-Letter Fun consists of four programs that give practice in associating the initial sounds of words with the letters that make those sounds. The programs are designed for individual use by preschool- and kindergarten-age children.

Charming picture stories full of animation and color provide a setting and meaningful context for introducing the words. Each of the four stories presents ten pictures, each depicting a different word. All the letters of the alphabet are included with the exceptions of Q and X.

First-Letter Fun has been designed to introduce children to the study of phonics. Thus, only words beginning with the hard sound for the letters C and G or containing short vowel sounds in initial position are practiced since they are generally the first ones to be taught.

Teachers can select the type of letters (lower case or upper case) they want the program to display. Another feature of this package is the flexibility it offers students to enter their responses in a variety of ways depending on their personal preference, skill, and keyboard familiarity. Very young children benefit from the ease of using the Space Bar or arrow keys to move the cursor (the small hand) to make their selections. Older children are challenged when trying to locate a letter on the keyboard.

DESCRIPTION

First-Letter Fun is a collection of four programs that provide practice in matching the beginning sounds of words with the letters that make those sounds. All of the programs work in exactly the same manner, but the situations presented are different. Each word, represented by a picture, is introduced as part of an animated scene. Next, the picture is shown for study and four letters are displayed in the selection box to the right. One of the letters corresponds to the initial sound of the word. The student must select or type the appropriate letter.

In FARM, a boy fishes, feeds the animals in a barn, and encounters a goat.

In CIRCUS, exotic animals perform tricks under the direction of the ringmaster.

In MAGICIAN, a clever magician surprises the public with a variety of magic tricks.

In PARK, children meet to play and have fun.

Curriculum Area: Language Arts

Subject: Reading

Topic: Phonics

Type: Drill and Practice

Reading Level: Pre-reading

Grade Range: Preschool - Kindergarten

Classroom Use: Individual

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After using this courseware, the student should be able to:

- identify the initial sound of an object's or action's name;
- recognize the letter that is associated with an initial sound;
- understand the principles of word recognition and word identification (SELO 1-A-#).*

*Some Essential Learner Outcomes for Communications/Language Arts, Curriculum Bulletin 61, Minnesota State Department of Education, 1982, St. Paul, Minnesota.

PROGRAM PREVIEW

First-Letter Fun enables teachers to choose the type of letters (upper or lower case) that will be used in the programs. The programs are set to present upper-case letters. If you wish to change this, simply select Option 7, "Switch to small letters," from the main menu (Figure 1). Next, you will be presented with a message confirming the choice you have just made (Figure 2). In a similar fashion, you can turn the sound on or off by selecting Option 6, "Turn sound off (or on)."

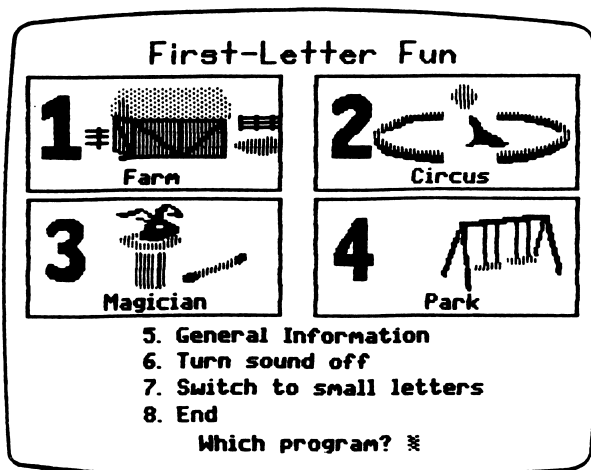


Figure 1

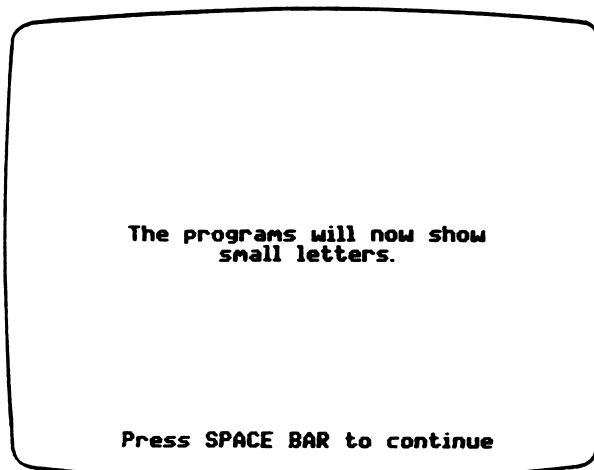


Figure 2

Students can select the program of their choice by entering the program number or the initial letter in the program title: F (Farm), C (Circus), M (Magician), or P (Park). Following the selection of a program, the first animated scene is presented (Figure 3). After a few seconds, a window opens in the middle of the screen and shows a large picture, which represents a particular word (Figure 4).

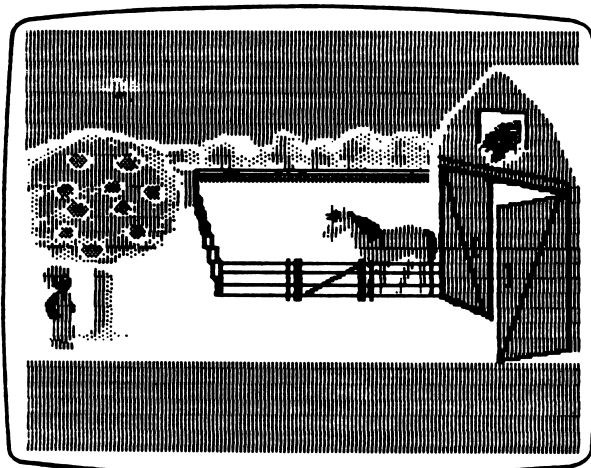


Figure 3

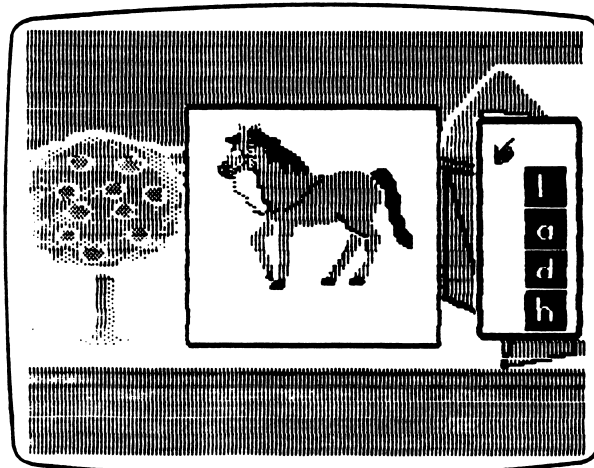


Figure 4

PROGRAM PREVIEW (continued)

For each word, four letters appear in the selection box to the right. Three of the letters are randomly selected distractors. (Where there are two possible words for a picture, such as "rabbit" or "bunny," only the letter of the word used in this program is displayed.) The remaining letter is the initial letter of the word represented by the picture (Figure 5).

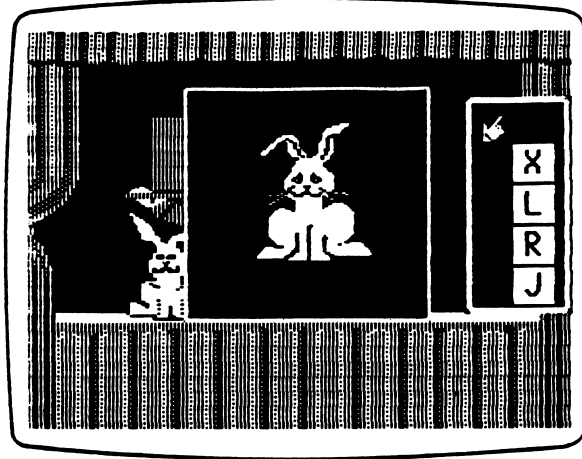


Figure 5

To select a letter, students can choose one of three methods. First, they can press the Space Bar to move the hand to the letter of their choice. Pressing the Space Bar moves the hand from top to bottom. When the last choice has been reached, pressing the Space Bar again moves the hand back to the first choice. When the hand is in front of the desired letter, students can press the Return Key to select it (Figure 6). Second, the arrow keys can also be used to move the hand. The Right-Arrow Key (→) and the Down-Arrow Key (↓) move the hand down; the Left-Arrow Key (←) and the Up-Arrow Key (↑) move it up. Pressing Return selects the letter pointed to by the hand. A third method allows students simply to type the letter key. The only letter keys activated are those for the four letters shown in the selection box.

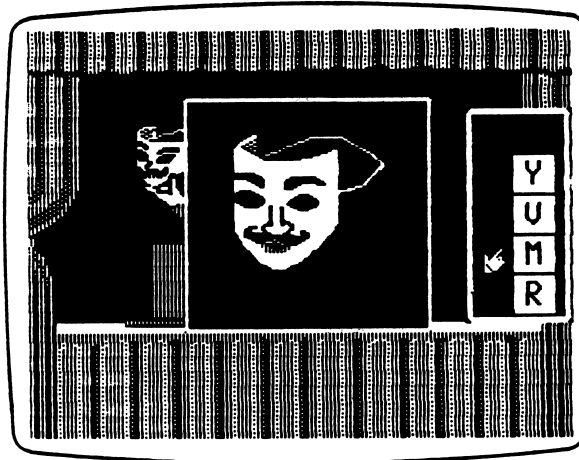


Figure 6

PROGRAM PREVIEW (continued)

If the letter the student selects is the correct one, a brief melody is heard and the entire word is spelled out below the picture (Figure 7). If the student makes an incorrect choice, a beep is heard and a slash appears across the word (Figure 8). After a short pause, the student may try a different choice.



Figure 7

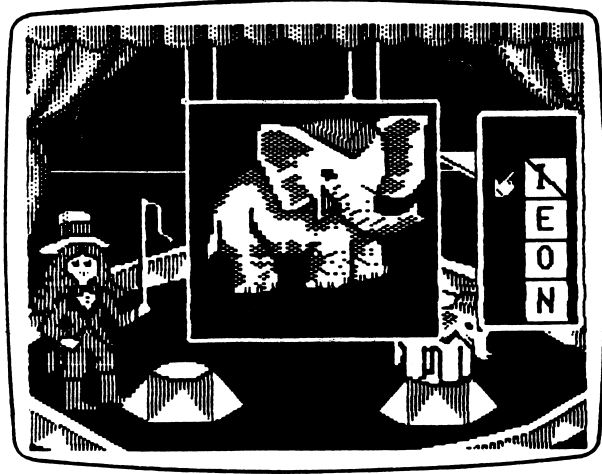


Figure 8

When an incorrect selection is made on the second try, a beep is heard and a slash is drawn across the letter. After a few seconds, the slash disappears and the correct letter blinks four times to cue students. If an incorrect choice is made again, a beep is heard and a slash is drawn across the incorrect letter. Then all of the distractors are removed one by one, the correct letter blinks twice, and finally the entire word is displayed (Figure 9). When ten pictures have been presented, the program ends and the summary screen is displayed (Figure 10). For each correct match on the first try, a picture and the initial letter of the word is displayed. Empty boxes represent incorrect matches.

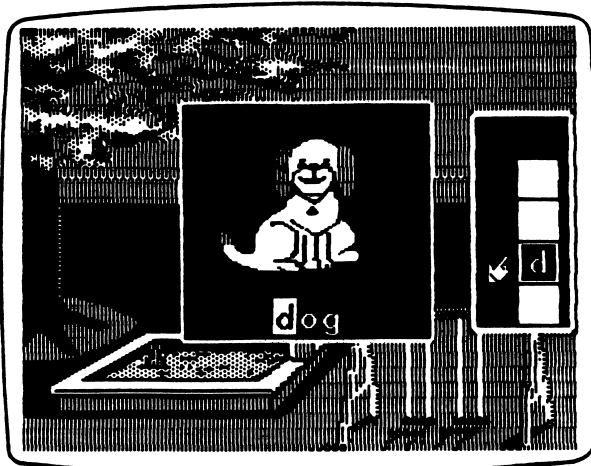


Figure 9

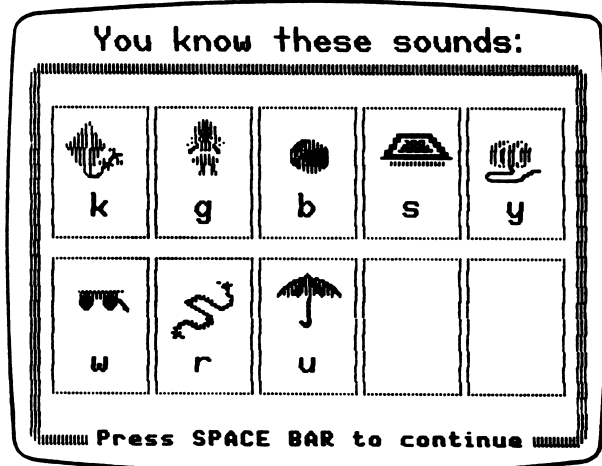


Figure 10

USE IN AN INSTRUCTIONAL SETTING

Preparation

FARM, CIRCUS, MAGICIAN, and PARK have several features that children should become familiar with prior to using the programs. You are strongly encouraged to provide individual instruction to students or to give a large-group demonstration on the mechanics of using the programs. Explain the meaning of the messages displayed after selecting and completing a program (the summary screen) and clarify what students need to do when such messages appear.

The word appears under the picture after a correct match or after three successive incorrect matches have been made. The word is automatically timed to be displayed for a relatively long period so that students can review the relationship between letter and sound. Students can, however, move on to the next sequence before that period has run out by pressing the Space Bar. The "Press Space Bar to Continue" message will not be displayed in these instances, but the Space Bar is nevertheless activated at all times.

Explain the different methods of input. Depending on your students' age and level of familiarity with computers, you may want initially to introduce just one method of input. Note that using the Space Bar and the arrow keys simplifies the complexity of the keyboard for children and allows them to reflect and change their minds before a final decision is made. The use of the Space Bar or arrow keys, however, requires that students press two different keys to make a response. On the other hand, typing the letter gives students an opportunity to practice locating keys on the keyboard. It also challenges them to be more accurate in their initial choice since they do not have the opportunity to change their selection once a letter has been typed.

Caution students not to press the Space Bar or arrow keys for too long because the automatic repeat feature will make the cursor move too fast. If students press a key for too long, they should lift their hand from the keyboard and wait until the cursor comes to rest. Then they can press the Space Bar or arrow keys again.

If you have set the program to display lower-case letters, review with your class the correspondence between upper-case and lower-case letters prior to using the program. Students who decide to use the letter keys will need to make the appropriate transference when they see lower-case letters in the selection box but upper-case letters on the keyboard.

The chart on page 8 serves as a quick reference to all of the words presented in the programs.

Using the Programs

Encourage children to follow a particular procedure when using the programs. They should:

- name the picture aloud;
- sound the word, paying special attention to the beginning sound;
- sound each of the letters in the selection box;
- choose the letter that corresponds to the initial sound of the word.

Follow-up

- Give each child a set of cards showing the letters of the alphabet. Use the summary screen as a starting point to think about other words for things that can be heard, seen, or found on a farm, at the circus, at a magic show, or in the park. Tell them to think of words that start with a particular sound. Ask them to show the letter that corresponds to the initial sound of their word as they say it.
- Ask a student to narrate his or her favorite story. Then ask the class to name some of the actions, objects, and people in the story and show the letters that corresponds to the initial sounds of those words.
- Several days before doing this activity, collect old magazines or catalogs and ask children to cut three or four pictures that start with the same sound as "ball." When children finish, ask them to cut pictures that start with a different sound. Continue in this manner until they have cut pictures for all of the sounds you want to practice. Collect the pictures and save them for later. Draw a bingo board (3 x 3 square) and write a letter on each of the squares. Also, gather a set of large letters.

Distribute a bingo board to each student along with nine different pictures. Then draw a letter card, hold it up, and say, "Find a picture that starts with the t sound." Students who have the letter t on their board can cover the square with the picture. The first student to cover three squares in a row wins.

- You may want to send parents copies of Handouts 1-4.

WORDS PRESENTED IN THE FIRST-LETTER FUN PROGRAMS

LETTERS

PROGRAMS

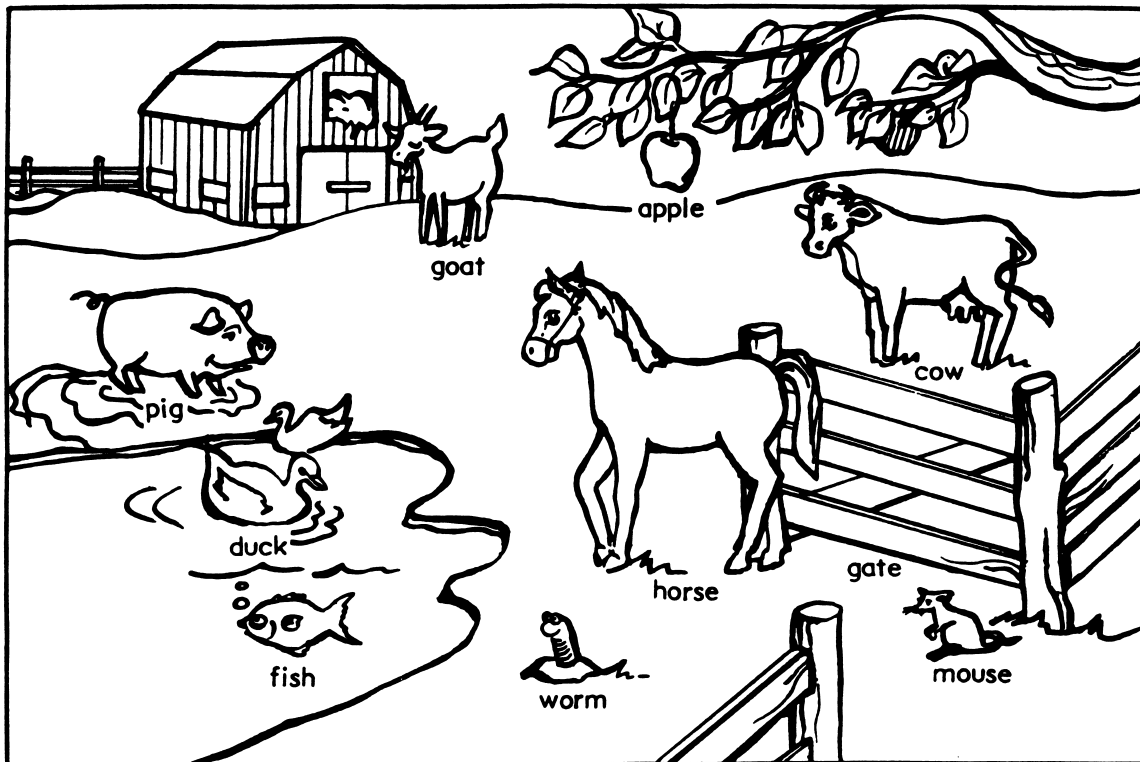
	FARM	CIRCUS	MAGICIAN	PARK
A	Apple			
B		Bear		Ball
C	Cow	Camel		
D	Duck			Dog
E		Elephant		
F	Fish	Fox		
G	Goat, Gate			Girl
H	Horse		Heart	
I			Igloo	
J				Jump
K		Kangaroo		Kite
L		Lion	Lock	
M	Mouse	Monkey	Mask	
N			Necklace	
O			Octopus	
P	Pig		Pumpkin	
Q				
R			Rabbit	Rope
S		Seal		Sandbox
T		Tiger	Turtle	
U				Umbrella
V			Violin	
W	Worm		Watch	Wagon
X				
Y				Yo-yo
Z		Zebra		

STUDENT HANDOUTS

Dear Parent:

Today _____ was using the computer to practice identifying the beginning sounds of the words shown in the picture below. You can help your child learn more about these sounds by reading the story under the picture and talking about the words and the sound each word begins with.

Farm



Tommy visits his grandfather at the farm.

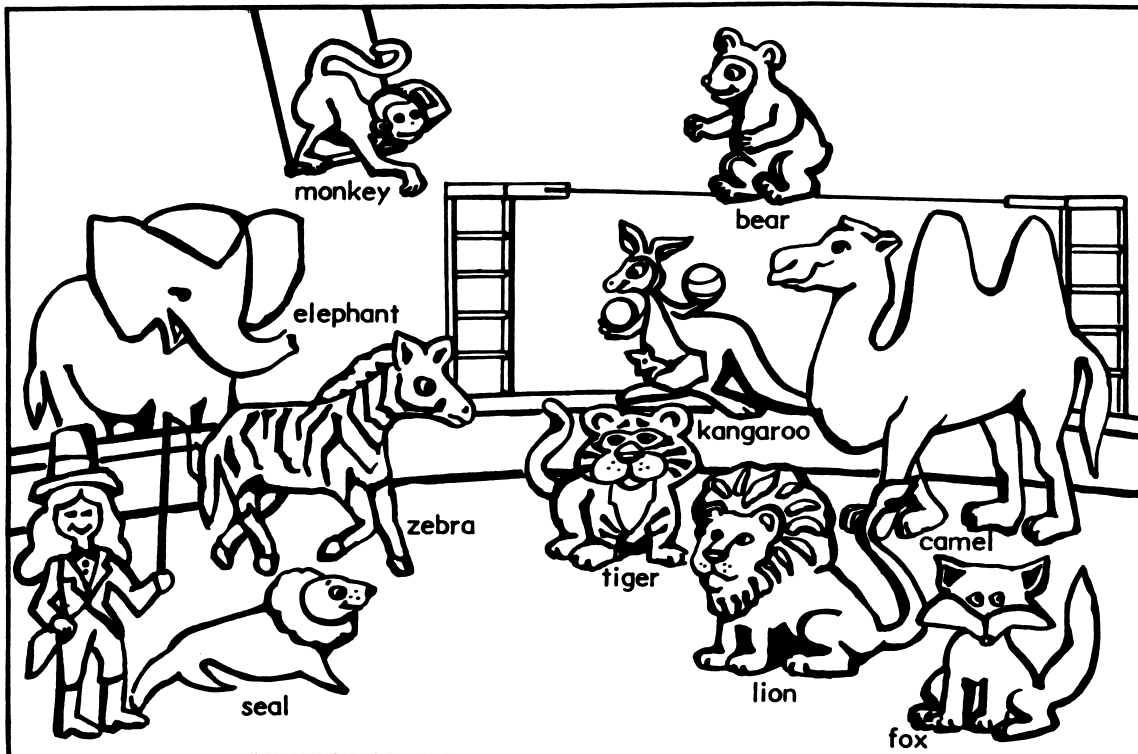
He feeds the animals in the barn,

fishes, and plays with the goat.

Dear Parent:

Today _____ was using the computer to practice identifying the beginning sounds of the words shown in the picture below. You can help your child learn more about these sounds by reading the story under the picture and talking about the words and the sound each word begins with.

Circus



It is fun time. The circus is in town.

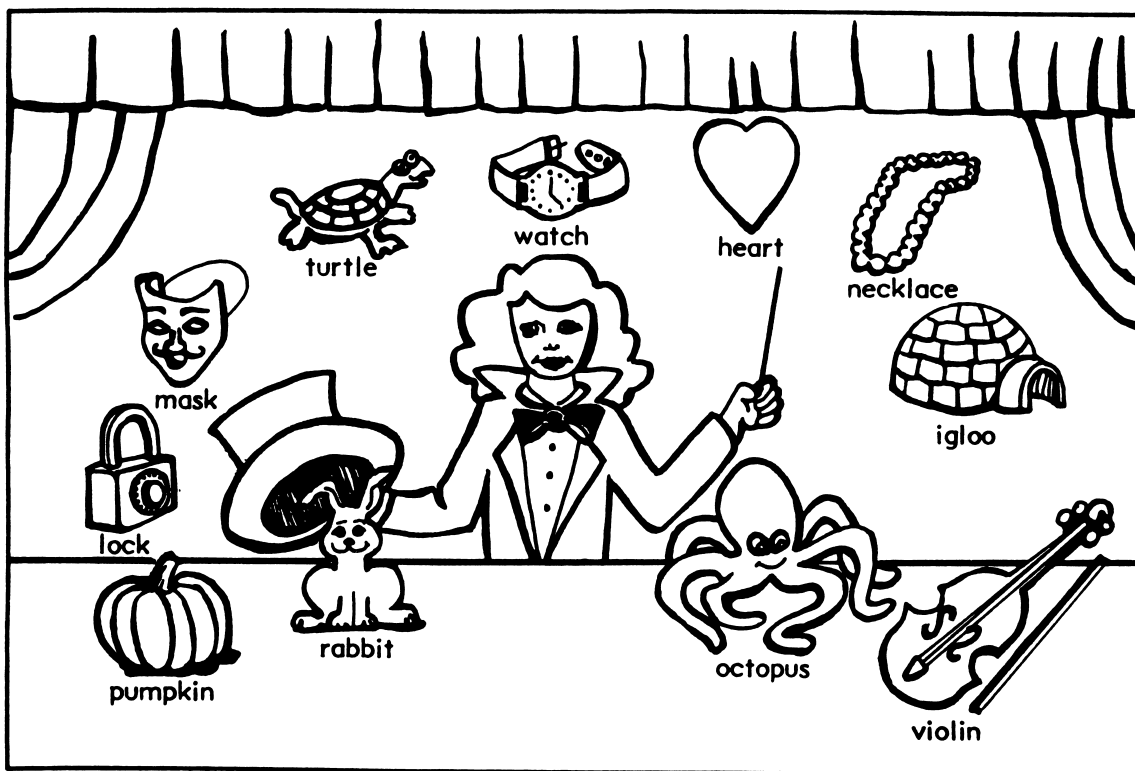
The ringmaster gives the order,

and the zebra, bear, or tiger does a clever act.

Dear Parent:

Today _____ was using the computer to practice identifying the beginning sounds of the words shown in the picture below. You can help your child learn more about these sounds by reading the story under the picture and talking about the words and the sound each word begins with.

Magician



Children love to go to the magic show.

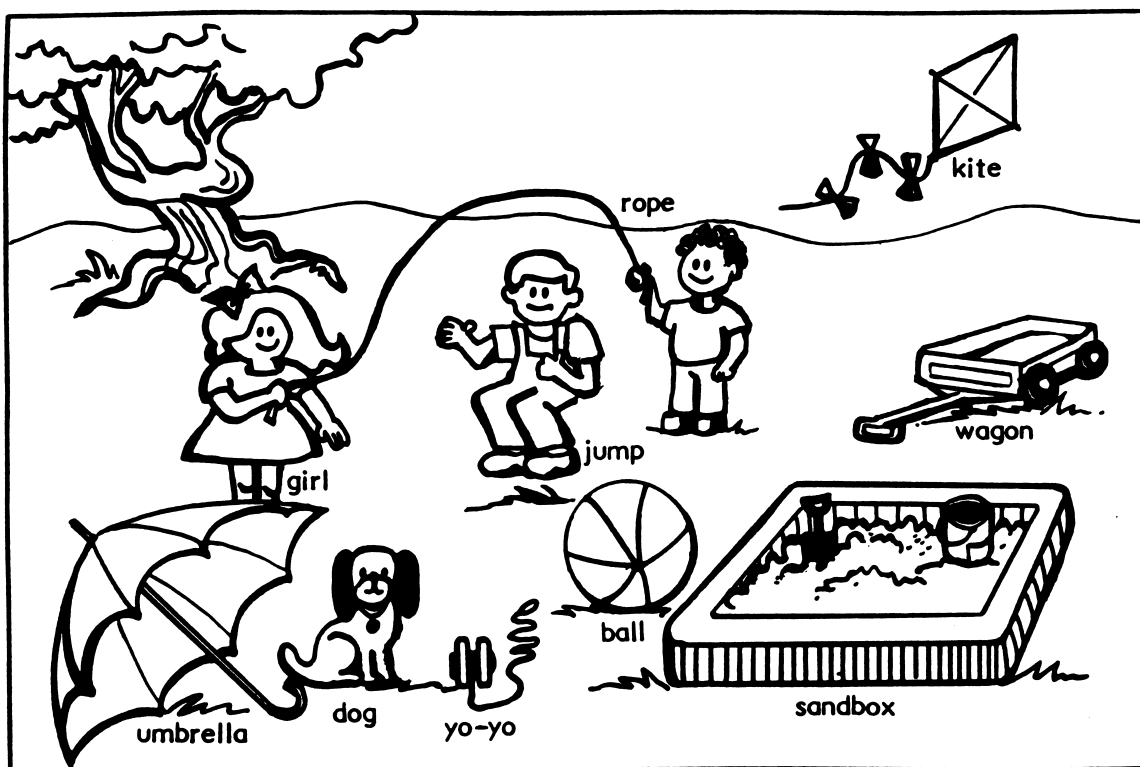
The magician taps the wand. Surprise!

A turtle, mask, or rabbit shows up.

Dear Parent:

Today _____ was using the computer to practice identifying the beginning sounds of the words shown in the picture below. You can help your child learn more about these sounds by reading the story under the picture and talking about the words and the sound each word begins with.

Park



Andy, Sue, and Tim have fun at the park.

They jump, play ball, and fly kites.

It starts raining, and they go home.

APPENDICES

CREDITS

First-Letter Fun was produced by a MECC development team consisting of Miryam Acevedo-Bouchard, Charolyn Kapplinger, Sherry Luedloff, Steve Splinter, Diane Spiegel, Tim Anderson, and Jim Bullis.

TO THE READER:

MECC has made every effort to ensure the instructional and technical quality of this courseware package. Your comments—as user or reviewer—are valued and will be considered for inclusion in any future version of the product. Please address comments to:

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 - 2) note the *brand* and *model* of the equipment involved, as well as the type of *printer card* used if the problem concerns a printer;
 - 3) write or call the Help Line to describe the problem (612/481-3660).

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