



Escape from the Dragon

Escape from the Dragon is a versatile, wipe-clean gameboard/teaching resource which has been designed to be used in a number of ways. The board can be used with existing game/teaching materials, or with a range specially produced by The Learning Staircase. There are many different possibilities, some of which are described below.

Game Suggestions

Alphabet Skills

Teaching points: Some of the following activities can be used with letter sounds, or letter names. Make sure that your learner understands which you are using and be consistent. If your learner has difficulty, encourage him to say the alphabet out loud. When doing exercises with letter sounds, you may wish to have pictures beginning with each sound available. You could use one of the Alphabet Picture Sets for this.

1. Write the letters of the alphabet onto the spaces at random (or a selection). Take turns to throw the dice and move counters. Each player has to correctly name the letter he lands on or move back. This can be played with lower or upper case letters.
Main skill: letter recognition
2. The player has to write down the upper/lower case equivalent of the letter he has just landed on.
Main skills: letter recognition, letter formation
3. The player has to name the letter immediately before or after the letter he lands on (as it is in the alphabet – not on the board).
Main skills: alphabet knowledge, sequencing
4. Spread alphabet picture cards (from the Alphabet Set) face up around the gameboard. The player lands on a letter, gives the letter sound and has to find the picture card which begins with that sound. The player keeps the card (if correct). The winner is the player with the most cards when one (or both) players reach the end. Note: this game can also be played with initial blends, or with other spelling patterns using appropriate picture cards.
Main skills: letter recognition, phonic knowledge

5. When the player lands on a space, he must give a word which starts with that letter.
Main skills: letter recognition, phonic knowledge, phonological awareness, word generation.
6. Variation: the player must give a word which ends with that letter sound.
Main skills: as above, but practices end sounds.

Vowel Sound Activities

In some ways, these are also alphabet skills, but these games emphasise aspects of phonological processing which some learners find particularly difficult, i.e. distinguishing between short vowel sounds.

1. Write the vowels (a, e, i, o, u) into the spaces at random, and place the alphabet pictures (from the Alphabet Set) around the board. When the player lands on a space, he must give the short vowel sound (apple, egg, igloo, orange, umbrella). He must then find the card which starts with that sound.
2. Use one or both of the Alphabet Set picture sets. Place picture cards illustrating the short vowel sounds face up around the board. The player moves to a space and has to collect a card starting with that sound. The winner is the one who collects the most cards.
3. Use the short vowel picture set (from the Short Vowel Set). This set contains cards with pictures that represent words with short vowel medial sounds. Play as above, except that the player has to find the picture with the matching vowel sound in the middle (much more difficult).

Onset and Rime

Onset and rime awareness is an important stage of phonological awareness development. You will need cards with the common rimes. These can be printed from the www.stepsweb.com support website. You can also use rime cards/blocks from other sources.

1. Give each player a rime card (or several, if you wish). Write a selection of onsets (individual letters or consonant digraphs (i.e. b-, tr-, w-, s-, etc) on the spaces (one per space). The player lands on the space and has to see if he can put that onset

with his rime card to make a word. If it is a word, he writes it on the paper (or score card). The winner is the one with the most real words at the end of the game.

2. Vary the above game by writing rimes on the spaces. Players can be told to produce as many words as they can for that rime, or can match the rime with onset cards you have distributed earlier.
3. Using wipe-clean pens, mark spaces as green or yellow (quick scribble will do). When the player lands on a green space, he picks up a rime card. Yellow spaces are for onset cards. Players collect cards, trying to make as many words as they can with them. Note: The 'Chunks' game from Smartkids is ideal for this.

Rhyming Games

Using the Rhyme Set

1. Place the Rhyme Set picture cards face down in the centre. Each player throws the dice and moves to the appropriate space. He then turns over the next card and has to give a word which rhymes with that picture. If he fails to do that, he has to move back.
Main skill: Rhyme generation
2. Write a selection of words into the spaces. Use words which rhyme with pictures in the pack. Players turn over the top card and can then move to the next space with a word which rhymes with that picture.
Main Skill: Rhyme recognition and linking sound with written pattern
3. Each time a player lands on a new space, he takes a card from the pile. If he can give one (or two) words which rhyme with that picture, he keeps the card. If not, it goes back to the bottom of the pack and he moves back.
Main skill: Rhyme generation
4. Write numbers 1 – 3 at random into each space. Each player moves, turns up the top card on the pile, and has to give 1, 2 or 3 words which rhyme with his card, depending on the number written in the space he landed on.
Main skill: Rhyme generation

Syllables Games

Use the Syllables Set – available as a PDF which you can print, laminate and cut out. Most of the rhyme games above can be adapted to practice syllable skills instead.

1. This can use either all the cards (1 – 5 syllables) or any combination. Choose the cards you wish to use and spread them out, face upwards. Write the numbers 1 – 5 (or however many syllables you are using) at random in each space. When the player lands on a space, he has to pick out a picture card with that number of syllables. If he chooses correctly, he keeps the card and stays on that space. The winner can be the one who has the most cards when both players reach the end, or the first to reach the end.
2. Shuffle the set (or a selection of cards from the set) and place them face downwards. Each player takes turns to turn over the top card. If he can determine how many syllables are in that word, he can move the same number of spaces.

Sight Vocabulary Game (using high frequency cards you have created yourself, or print flash cards from appropriate wordlists from Steps)

Player picks up a card and has to read it before moving.

Spelling Game (using spelling cards you have created yourself, or print flash cards from appropriate wordlists from Steps)

Same game as above, but the player's opponent reads the card out, and the player has to write it correctly before moving.

Tables Game (using times table cards you have created yourself)

1. Each time a player lands on a space, he picks up a tables card (e.g. 5 X 5) and has to give the answer.
2. Write appropriate numbers in each space, and allocate one or more numbers to each player. Each player can only land on multiples of his numbers(s). Variation: Use one table only (e.g. multiples of 3). Write multiples of that table at random on each space. Players throw the dice and can only move to the space which has that number multiplied by your number (e.g. if your multiple is 3, and your player throws a 2, they will move to the nearest space with 6 on it).

General knowledge/study facts

Make your own cards with key facts for subjects, or general knowledge or vocabulary questions. Write your own forfeits onto the board (E.g. 'Bitten by watersnake – go back 3 spaces', 'Fall into poisonous water – miss a go').

Have fun!



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