



Dennis the Dragon



Dennis the Dragon is a versatile, wipe-clean gameboard/teaching resource which has been designed to be used in a number of ways. Because of its design, it is particularly suitable for sequencing activities. 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 Sequencing

You will notice that there are 26 'spines' on the dragon. This makes it ideal for teaching alphabet sequencing.

Teaching points: For alphabet sequencing activities, we would recommend that you use letter names, rather than sounds.

1. Write the letters of the alphabet (lower or upper case) onto the spines, leaving a few gaps for your learner to fill in. The number of gaps will depend on your learner's standard. If you wish, you could write the vowels in a different colour.

Main skill: alphabet knowledge, letter sequencing

2. When your learner is reasonably proficient, make the task more difficult and deliberately insert errors. The learner has to spot where the error is and correct it. This exercise can be used to practise letters which are visually confusing (b/d, m/w, u/n, p/q, etc). Avoid doing these activities until your pupil is reasonably accurate with alphabet sequencing – plan for success!

Main skills: alphabet knowledge, sequencing, visual discrimination, proof-reading

3. Play alphabet dominoes (you need a set of plastic letters or letter cards)
Share the letters/letter cards equally between the players. Write the letter 'm' in the correct space and hand that letter into a central pile. Each player takes turns to see if he has the next (or previous) letter in the sequent (i.e. 'n' or 'l' in this case). If the player has the next letter up or down, he writes the letter into the correct space and hands his card/tile into the centre. The winner is the first to get rid of all their letters.

Main skills: alphabet knowledge, sequencing, letter formation. Also helps to develop a 'spatial awareness' of the alphabet, i.e. an awareness of where to look for a particular letter. This is an important dictionary skill.

4. Variation of the above – use picture alphabet cards (i.e. picture of an object starting with that sound, but no letter). This is more difficult because the learner has to generate the letter himself, rather than just recognising and copying it.

Main skills: As above, plus letter-sound knowledge

5. Deal out a set of alphabet or alphabet picture cards. Each person takes a turn to turn up a card. The player then has to write that letter into the correct space on Dennis.

Main skills: alphabetic and phonic knowledge, letter position, letter formation.

Numeric and Logic Sequences

1. Write numerals into the spaces, leaving gaps which your learner has to fill in.

Main skills: Number sequencing, writing numerals

2. Use the same method to practise standard numeric sequences and patterns (2, 4, 6,)

Main skills: As above, plus number patterns/tables awareness

3. Adapt sequences so that the learner has to work out what the pattern is.

Example 1: 1,2,4,7,11, 16.....

Example 2: Z, 1, Y, 2, X, 3, W, 4,.....

Non-Verbal Reasoning

1. Draw simple symbols into the paces, leaving gaps. The learner has to recognise and use the pattern. This can be done at any level:

Easy Example: 111 000 111 000 111 000.....

Try using existing 'IQ' type questions or puzzles. Many can be adapted to this format.

Gameboard Uses

The space can be used as a normal gameboard, starting at the head and working towards the tail. Numbers or letters can be written into the spaces as desired. There are some suggestions below:

1. Write letters at random in the spaces. Spread the alphabet picture cards around, face upwards. Each player takes it in turn to throw the dice and move. When the player lands on a space, he says the letter sound out loud and picks out the card with a word starting with that sound. The winner is the one with the most cards at the end.
2. Adapt the above game to practise end sounds. Write a selection of end sounds into the spaces. You need to plan the letters and cards more carefully for this one!
3. Write vowel sounds into the spaces at random. Play as above, but spread the short or long vowel sound picture cards around, face up. When each player lands on a space, he has to say the vowel sound and pick a picture with that sound in it.
4. More advanced: The same game idea can be used with vowel digraphs (e.g. 'ai', 'ee', 'ea', etc) or other spelling patterns.
5. Vary the above ideas by turning over a card and moving to the corresponding space on the board instead of throwing a dice.
6. Write the numbers 1 – 5 into the spaces at random (repeating as necessary). When the player lands on a space, he has to pick a card with that number of syllables (using the Syllables card pack). Vary by turning over cards and moving the appropriate number of spaces, depending on how many syllables that word has. E.g. land on 'elephant' – move 3 spaces.

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Have fun!

