



Make-A-Word Soft Touch™ Alphabet Dice

Demonstration

Before having students use the **Make-A-Word Soft Touch™ Alphabet Dice**, show them the dice and talk about the difference between red and blue dice. Model building some simple words using only three dice at first. Roll the beginning, middle and ending letter dice one at a time to represent clearly the C-V-C construction. Use the same dice repeatedly to show how many words can be made from so few dice.



Also, be sure to demonstrate each game for the group before having the students start playing. Explain how to choose the dice (always including a vowel for word building), keep points, take turns, and operate the timer, if using one.

Levels of Challenge

Word building activities are appropriate for early literacy learners who have begun to move beyond letter recognition. By actively creating words with their hands, students get to see and feel their letter-sound knowledge in action.

Start with the simplest version of any game, using just three or four alphabet dice. Including more alphabet dice and using a timer for speed challenges can help make reading more automatic and increase students' reading fluency. However, it is important that you do not make these adjustments before the students are very comfortable with simpler versions of the games.

Along the way, encourage students to practice their oral language skills by discussing the games and voicing any confusion they are having.

Vary the Challenge

You are encouraged to adapt these games to the abilities of your group.

- Change the number of dice used. As you increase the number to four and five letters, challenge students to make words with blends, short vowels vs. long vowels, and so on.
- Have students use the word(s) in a sentence. This is especially helpful for second-language learners.
- Have the student try to think of a word that rhymes with the word he or she made. If using points, offer an extra point for one rhyming word.
- Use a timer to limit turns, or to see how many words students can build from a few dice within a time limit.*
- Assign points to words based on their length (e.g., four-letter words get four points).*

*This is not recommended for emergent readers, who are just beginning to know the letters.



Really Good Stuff® Activity Guide

Make-A-Word Soft Touch™ Alphabet Dice

Congratulations on your purchase of the Really Good Stuff® **Make-A-Word Soft Touch™ Alphabet Dice**—a set of letter dice for hours of word building fun!

Inside this Really Good Stuff® set you'll find:

- 6 red vowel dice
- 18 blue consonant dice
- This Really Good Stuff® Activity Guide

Word building is an important early step in learning how to read. The **Make-A-Word Soft Touch™ Alphabet Dice** can be a very enjoyable part of this step.

Games using alphabet dice are a centuries-old way of teaching reading and spelling. The **Make-A-Word Soft Touch™ Alphabet Dice** offer countless games that allow new readers to interact with the building blocks of words. Using the steps described in this guide, with suggestions for higher levels of challenge, make your students' word building irresistibly fun.



The letters on the **Make-A-Word Soft Touch™ Alphabet Dice** were carefully chosen based on the frequency of their occurrence in words early readers encounter. The color-coding of consonants (blue) and vowels (red) provides extra guidance for students and an easy way to select the needed parts to make words during play. The foam material makes the Alphabet Dice soft and lightweight for safe classroom use.

Organizing the Group

Generally you'll want to work with small groups of three to six students who share similar abilities. Particularly in the beginning, assign an aid or student volunteer to oversee the game, choose the new dice and act as a judge when necessary. This can also be the person who writes down words as players roll the dice, then move them around and call out words during a more advanced, timed version of the **Make-A-Word game**.

If appropriate, have the students in the group take turns in this role, switching each time a new game begins. In order to allow everyone a turn, alternate in order of seating rather than allowing only the previous winner to be the judge.

Management Reminders

- Have all the necessary materials ready before the game begins. Besides the alphabet dice, this may include a timer and materials for writing the words and/or keeping score.
- Copy the game cards from pages 3-4 onto sturdy paper and store them in a zip-lock baggie with your **Make-A-Word Soft Touch™ Alphabet Dice**
- When adapting a game for a literacy center, be sure to demonstrate how to leave the literacy center when the activity is complete.
- Discuss the importance of good "sportsmanship": respectful language and conduct among players and the judge.

Warm-Up/Exploration

1. Give each student (or pair) two consonant dice and one vowel die.
2. Have the student roll the dice and see if they can make a word from the letters rolled. Encourage them to move the dice around to see if more than one word is possible.
3. Every time the student makes a word, have her say the word and use it in a sentence, if appropriate.

Challenge

Even as the games become more challenging, always introduce a new game with a warm-up/exploration activity.

When you first increase the number of dice, allow students to continue building words of only three letters. Only when they are ready, begin requiring that the words be at least four letters in length.

Exploration using the dice is a good activity for a literacy center.

Make-A-Word

1. Give the group (or pair) two consonant dice and one vowel die.
2. The first player rolls the dice and then moves them around to see if he can make a word. At first, offer plenty of time and guidance if the students are not seeing words they could make. If Player 1 cannot make a word with the letters, the next player gets to roll the dice and take a turn. If Player 1 can make a word, he puts the dice in order and reads the word aloud. He then gets to try to make another word with the same letters.
3. Keep track of the words players have made. Play continues until one player has made ten words.

Challenge

When the students are ready, increase the number of dice, eventually using two vowel dice instead of one. As you begin to use more than four dice, require that the words made have four letters minimum.

When the students have practiced building words with the dice in a game format, introduce a simple scoring system. For every word the player makes, he or she gets one point. The points are added up at the end, after the dice have been changed a few times. However, the focus should be on ensuring that all the students are seeing words they can make.

Have the students make sentences with each other's words. Use a timer to limit the turns.

Change-A-Letter

1. Give the group or pair of students two consonant dice and one vowel die.
2. The players take turns rolling the dice until someone makes a word on the first try. This player (Player 1) puts the dice in order and reads the word aloud.
3. Player 1 then picks up and rolls the first letter die in the word. He checks to see if the new beginning letter makes a word with the two ending letters. If so, he says the new word aloud and then gets to roll the same die again to see if yet another new word can be made with the ending. If not, the next player takes a turn by rolling all three dice again.
4. Play continues until time is up. If you are keeping track of the words players have made, the winner is the player who makes the most words (or is the first to make ten words).

Challenge

Increase the challenge in this letter-substitution game only after demonstrating every new variation.

A fun challenge is to have the student make up a silly sentence using all of the rhyming words they have made in one turn (for example, Sam took a ham down to the dam.). For added support, this part can be done as a group.

Have the students roll dice to change the entire rime (ending vowel-consonant combination) or just the ending sound.

Have the players write down the new words as they make them, or only accept words they can use in a sentence.

Find-A-Word

1. Have a timer handy. Give the group three consonant dice and two vowel die. Give each player a paper and pencil or a lapboard and dry-erase marker. A teacher or aid must oversee this game.
2. Someone rolls the dice and sets the timer for one minute.
3. The players write down as many words as they can make from the letters they see on the dice. The students are not allowed to move the dice around.
4. When time is up, go around the group and have students read their words. When a student reads a questionable word, ask her to use the word in a sentence. (This step can be very amusing for the players.) Students must cross off words that are not accepted by the teacher or aid.
5. Players count the words they have made. Whoever has made the most words wins the round. If you are using a point system, determine the winner after several rounds have been played.

Challenge

Increase the number of dice and adjust the amount of time allowed for each round. When students are ready, require that they make words of four letters or more.

If you are using a scoring system, assign more points for bigger words (e.g., four-letter words get four points, five-letter words get five points, etc.). You can also use the scoring to encourage students to challenge themselves. For example, give extra points for rhyming words or plurals.

Vary the rounds to emphasize different language skills. For example, have the students find only long vowel words.

When students are reading their words aloud, challenge them to check their own work by justifying the words they made. Encourage students to discuss the activity, voice any confusion they have making use of their oral language skills.

Real Word?

1. Give a small group or pair of students three dice. A teacher or aid must oversee this game.
2. Player 1 rolls the three dice in C-V-C order, one at a time. He attempts to sound out the letters to see if they make a real word. If the letters do not make a word, the next player takes a turn. (If the letters don't make a real word, quickly move on; do not focus on the nonsense word.) If the letters do make a real word, he gets to roll the dice and try to make another word.
3. Play continues until time is up. If you are keeping score, the winner is the player who made the most words during the game.

Challenge

This activity can be more challenging, and even more fun, when you are able to increase the number of dice; however, do not try this until the students have mastered building four-letter words in an independent setting.

You can vary the activity by allowing students to switch the beginning and ending letters to make a new word before play passes on to the next student.

A variation for slightly more advanced students is to include a blank blue die. The player tries to make a word using the blank as a consonant "wild card." This requires students to call upon words from their own vocabularies.

Make-A-Sentence

1. Give a pair of students two consonant dice and one vowel die.
2. Player 1 rolls the dice until he can make a word. He puts the dice in order but does not read the word aloud.
3. Player 2 reads the word aloud and tries to make a sentence using the word. If she cannot make a sentence with the word, Player 1 gets to make a sentence and then roll the dice again. If Player 2 can make a sentence, she gets to roll the dice and make a new word, and Player 1 tries to make a sentence from the word.
4. Play continues until time is up.

Challenge

At this point your students may be ready to use all eight of the **Make-A-Word Soft Touch™ Alphabet Dice** in one roll.

Challenge players to make up sentences using two or three words made from the same eight dice. Have them write out their sentences on paper.

For added fun, the students can take turns rolling dice but make the sentences together. Be prepared for the laughter, as students particularly enjoy making wacky sentences.