F is for Fair

JOYFUL

A NMAAHC KIDS ABCs ACTIVITY BOOK
EARLY LEARNERS EDITION - AGES 3 TO 5

Brought to you by the National Museum of African American History and Culture Early Childhood Education Initiative. Inspired by the children’s book, A is for All The Things You Are: A Joyful ABC Book written by Anna Forgerson Hindley and illustrated by Keturah A. Bobo, ©2018 Art by Keturah Ariel LLC.

Funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.
A is for All the Things You Are was written to affirm our children and empower them to see themselves as many things at once – daring and loving, creative and just, amazing and zany – and everything in between. The book offers wonderful opportunities for conversations with children to build their vocabularies, strengthen their sense of self and deepen their joy in and acceptance of human diversity. The illustrations allow them to see not only themselves but others in the same positive light as well. By seeing positive images of children of different colors, genders, abilities, classes, and other social identities, we nurture the child’s comfort and joy in human diversity so deep caring connections can be made across humanity. In exploring ideas such as fairness, kindness, open-mindedness and being vocal, children begin the task of recognizing injustice and knowing how to stand up for themselves and others.

Each activity booklet offers suggestions of how to begin the lifelong work of having a positive sense of self and others with your early learner, how to support their language development and how to build the foundations of literacy.
F is for Fair

Being fair always means being thoughtful and considerate about what is best for everyone. It might mean that the littlest kid gets a head start, or that everyone gets the same amount of snacks.

What is one way you can be fair to others?

Fairness is a pretty sophisticated idea. It requires knowing one’s own needs and desires and simultaneously thinking about the needs of others - which makes it especially challenging for young children to understand as their needs always are bigger and more real to them than other people’s needs. But fairness starts with reciprocity – I do something, you do something, we do something together.

Being fair is not about everyone getting the same thing but is about everyone getting what they need to be safe, healthy and happy in life. It’s not about simply following rules or about people getting the same number of cookies but requires recognizing that at different times people need different things.

Because the concept of fairness is complex, it’s important that we have conversations about how things are fair or unfair. Sometimes it feels easier to say “Because I said so!” or give a quick “Yes it is!” in response to a child’s “That’s not fair!” However, without an explanation about reasons or taking the time to listen to your child’s thoughts, we take away the opportunity to better understand what it means to be fair, to see situations from multiple perspectives and how to communicate about unfairness effectively.

Use the experiences in this booklet to support your child to make the world fairer for themselves and others with their voice and their choices. Remember this is an ongoing and daily conversation!

What You’ll Need:

The following supplies are suggested for the experiences in this booklet.

- Tape or chalk
- Glue stick
- Paper
- Markers, crayons or colored pencils
- Images from magazines, newspapers, or photos

Tip:

Build an at-home creativity kit full of all the supplies and recycled materials you’ll need for future ABC art and play activities. Find the supplies list here!
In early childhood, children learn best through doing! Explore this week’s theme with your child by trying this engaging experience inspired by our museum collection.

**Speaking Up and Listening to Others**

**What You’ll Need:** Tape or chalk

**Take turns.** Learning to be fair starts with observing what is happening to yourself and to others. If something feels unfair – like you or someone else isn’t getting what’s needed – you can use your voice to change that. Listening to others is an important part of making things fairer.

Look at the photo of children talking on a bench. How can you tell they are listening to each other? How does someone know when you are listening? Taking turns to talk and listen allows everyone’s ideas and feelings to be heard. **Play a game to practice taking turns speaking and listening!**

1. On the floor or ground, create a line with chalk, tape or your imagination about 10 feet apart or more. Ask your little one to stand at one end while you stand at the other.

2. Next, take turns asking each other questions so each person can share their opinions and listen to the other’s. Model the first time by inviting your child to ask you something simple like: *What’s your name?* Answer and ask the question back.

**Tip:**

Encourage your child to respond proudly by modeling “I statements.” Be delighted by every question or answer your little one offers.

3. With each answer, take a step (or hop) towards each other until you can greet each other in the middle with hugs!

As you go, ask more complex questions that focus on inspiring your child to think about what they need and what others need.
We all like and need different things. Sharing with each other what we like and don’t like is a helpful way to know what is fair for everyone. To get into the important practice of regularly talking with your child about their likes, dislikes and needs, try creating art together as you take turns sharing your thoughts and feelings.

Start by creating a poster filled with the things you both like. Draw pictures or glue images from magazines on a large piece of paper to show simple things you enjoy like colors or hobbies. As you each add to the poster, discuss what you like and why. Listen to each other and take turns making decisions about where things go and what the artwork looks like. Then, try making another poster for things you don’t like!

Facilitate deeper conversations with art. The next time you make a poster, invite your little one to tell you something they like and something they don’t like about what you do by asking them to finish the sentences “I like it when you...” and “I don’t like it when you...”. Share how you feel by finishing the same sentences. Honor what was shared during the conversation by creating a drawn or collaged poster. This time, as you create together, talk about ways you can respect your individual likes and dislikes.
LETTERS & LITERACY

Invite your child to take part in the following experiences to support their literacy and language skills.

What is fair and unfair?

Children can gain a greater understanding of fairness through everyday examples of fair and unfair and conversations about them. Story time together can be a meaningful and fun way to start conversations about complex topics like fairness. As you read books with your child, draw attention to behaviors where people are taking turns or helping each other. Ask your child questions like: *How did they show fairness to the other person?* or *How did they help each other?* Ask what they would do to be fair or helpful in the same situation. Be sure to point out examples of fairness in daily life and children’s videos too!

This week, take turns finding the letter F in your daily life. Ask, “Where do we see the letter F?” while playing in your home, riding in a car, bus or train or on a walk. Before pointing a F out to your child, suggest that they look in that direction to give them the opportunity to discover it on their own. When it’s spotted, you both can say together “F is for Fair!” in a playful way!
EXPLORE MORE
Continue learning with your little one using these recommended resources:

Books
Read together to support your child to think of different perspectives, speak up and recognize when something is fair or unfair.

- **I Speak**  
  by Cheri J. Meiners,  
  illustrated by Penny Weber

- **Strictly No Elephants**  
  by Lisa Mantchev,  
  illustrated by Taeun Yoo

- **Jamaica's Find**  
  by Jaunita Havill,  
  illustrated by Anne Sibley O'Brien

- **Fair is Fair**  
  by Sonny Varela,  
  illustrated by Peter Mahr

Tip:
Use your favorite search engine to find read-aloud videos online!

Online Resources
Learn to support your child's ability to understand what is fair and unfair and how to speak up for themselves and others.

- **For Families: Story Reflections** - [Making Caring Common Project, Harvard School of Education](#)

- **Understanding Anti-Bias Education: Bringing the Four Core Goals to Every Facet of Your Curriculum** - [NAEYC](#)

- **Fairness** - [Long Story Shortz Video](#)
Why do these experiences matter?

A child’s identity is both internally constructed and externally imposed. They learn who they are and how they are valued from the words and actions of others and from the way they do or don’t make sense of those messages. Their beloved adults (that’s you!) are the most important people in their world. The words you give a child to describe themselves and others have lasting power in their lives. When a child has the words to think about their strengths and their worth, they can sort through negative messages and hold on to their sense of being loveable and capable. The experiences in this booklet are invitations for you to use objects, activities and words to support your child’s positive identity development, their fascination with how people are both different and the same, and their ability to read emotions and build empathy. In time, experiences like these will also support your child’s ability to recognize unfairness or unkindness and to stand up for themselves and others.

What about supporting language development and getting ready to read?

Alphabets, in and of themselves, are not particularly interesting to young children. However, learning letter-filled words to describe the world around them and inside of them (their feelings, experiences and senses) are very interesting to children! Discovering new words, new ways to say things and new ways to think is exciting and essential to a child’s literacy and identity development.

The developmental path to reading is a child’s understanding that, “Anything I do or see, I can say! Anything I say can be written! Anything written can be read!” Many booklet experiences will encourage you to engage in conversations about objects and during story times to deepen your child’s connection to spoken and written words. Other experiences will invite you to build literacy skills by writing down what your child says, feels or thinks and reading it back to them aloud. Some booklets will introduce fun ways to boost fine motor skills that contribute to a child’s writing and reading abilities. The booklets will also recommend books that intrigue children by illustrating the rich diversity of people in the world and providing them with a mirror to their own lives or a window into other lives.

Every child’s path to literacy is different and valid - just like their identity. The experiences in these booklets aim to support you and your child along their unique journey to literacy and a positive sense of self. Remember to have fun along the way!

Credits

Objects
- Two’s A Team by Joe Schwartz, 1940s. Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Gift of Joe Schwartz and Family, © Joe Schwartz. 2010.74.40

Program Photos
- Doug Sanford, National Museum of African American History and Culture, 2019

Original Artwork
- Bluebird (cover, page 4); Streamers (page 2); Children (page 5); © 2018 Art by Keturah Ariel LLC