

Let's imagine you are a Grade R learner. Now, take a look at the letter h below.

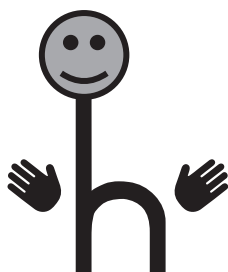
# h

At first glance, it is a meaningless visual. You are then told that it makes a sound, 'huh'. You may also be told it is 'aitch' (i.e. its name). Perhaps you are taught both the sound and the name. You look around and notice other letters that are not dissimilar, for instance the letters b and n! How do you tell them apart?

There are several problems with this approach (or non-approach):

- The h symbol has no context in the life of the learner so he/she struggles to give it any meaning.
- The symbol is not unlike several other letters, and it can therefore be very difficult for a learner to tell the difference between it and other similar-looking letters.

Now, let's repeat the exercise again. Pretend you are a Grade R learner. Your teacher uses a mnemonic to introduce the letter h.



## Happy handyman

You are shown the 'picture symbol' above and your teacher introduces you to Happy handyman – a very happy, helpful handyman. He has a big heart and is very helpful. He always says 'hello' and loves eating honey, hamburgers and hotdogs. His favourite tool is his hammer. In fact, he loves anything that begins with his special sound – 'huh'.

Your teacher then asks you to think of other things Happy handyman loves. You and your classmates offer the following: houses, hats, horses.

This approach is more accessible because:

- The letter is given a context that the learner can relate to.
- The letter's sound, i.e. 'huh', is emphasised and exaggerated.
- Learners can immediately contribute to the learning experience.
- The short story helps the learner remember the symbol and its sound.