

Using Cue Cards to Help Students Master Visually Confusing Letters

A *visually confusing letter* is a lowercase letter whose overall form is identical or similar to another lowercase letter's form. In a study, researchers found that similarity of these lowercase letter shapes caused the most confusion errors (Treiman, Kessler, and Pollo, 2006). More time is needed to teach these lowercase letters.

Providing students with cue cards that display pairs of uppercase and lowercase letters is a simple strategy that can help your students take responsibility for accurately identifying and writing visually similar letters. Consistent use of the strategy will promote mastery of these letters.

Creating the Cue Cards

The next two pages contain templates you can use to create cue cards for confirming lowercase letters that are frequently confused. In the first row of the template, enter the target letters in uppercase, and in the second row, enter the target letters in lowercase. The letters you enter are automatically added to each cue card. (See the last two pages for examples featuring the letters b-d-p.). Print the cue cards on 8½" x 11" sheets of self-stick labels. Two versions are provided:

- 1" x 2½" labels (30 to a page)
- 2" x 4" labels (10 to a page)

You may also print the cue cards on 8½" x 11" sheets of paper or cardstock and cut them apart with a paper cutter.

Directions for Using Cue Cards

Provide a student with a cue card. You may put a cue card on the student's desktop or stick a cue card label on each paper the student must complete. Direct the student to refer to the cue card whenever he or she reads or writes a word with one of these lowercase letters. The student should confirm a lowercase letter on the bottom of the cue card by double-checking it with its more distinguishable uppercase form on top.

Providing an incentive may motivate a student to check very carefully each time. For example, if a student doesn't confuse any of the letters on the cue card on a written assignment, the teacher may award bonus points, send the paper home with a positive note, post it on a special bulletin board for outstanding work, etc.

The letters b, d, and p are frequently confused, but students confuse many other lowercase letters as well. You can create an individualized cue card for a student with the specific letters that student tends to confuse—by displaying pairs of upper and lowercase letters like the sample b-d-p cue cards.

Visually Confusing Letters
b-d, b-p, b-q, d-g, d-q, e-a, g-a, g-y, i-j, i-l, k-x, m-n, n-c, n-h, p-q, u-v, u-w, u-y, w-m, y-v

Enter 3 uppercase and
3 lowercase letters:

Enter 3 uppercase and
3 lowercase letters:

B D P
b d p

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