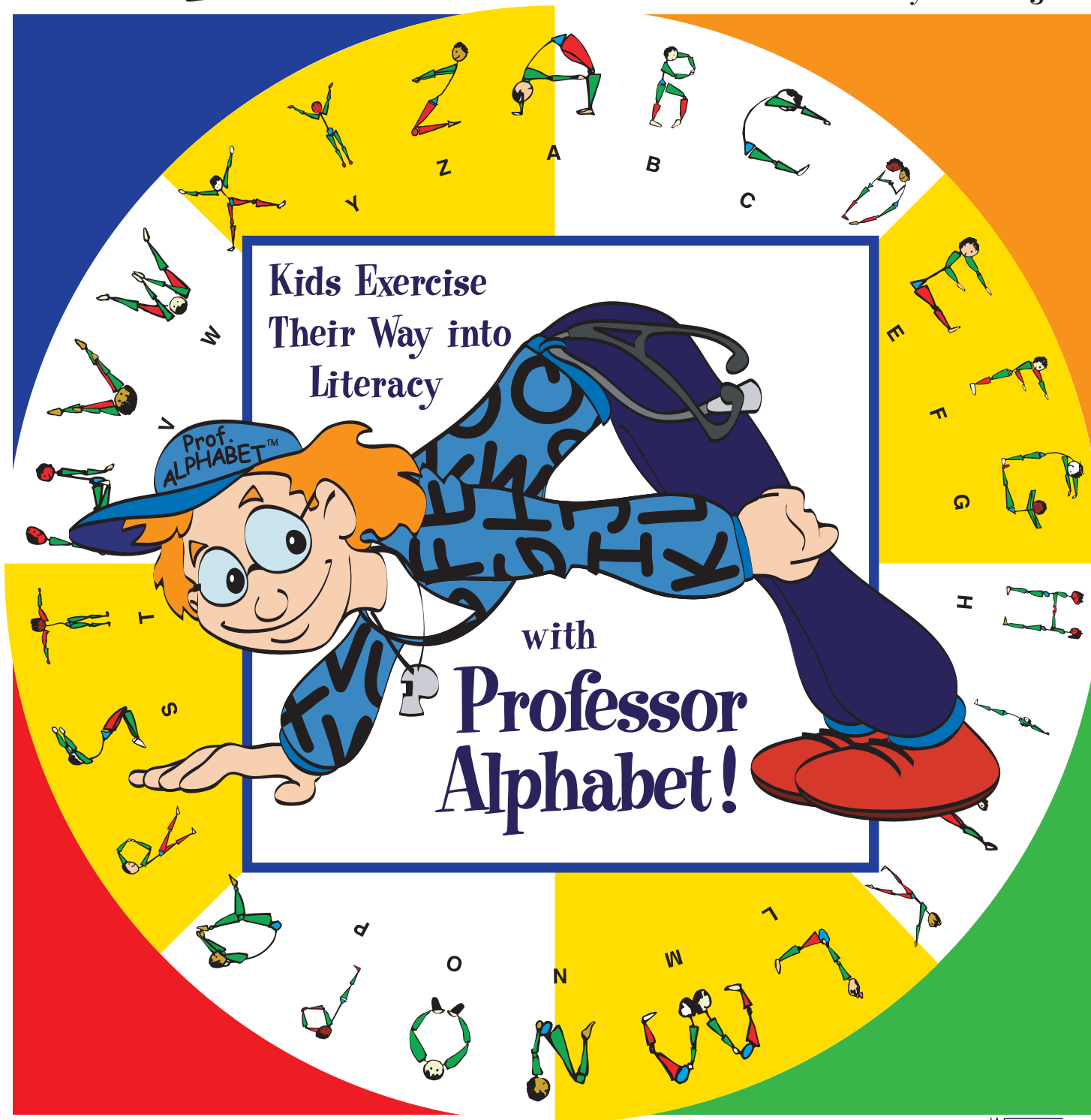


# Alphabet Fitness™

by Karen Voght



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## A One-of-a-Kind Literacy Fitness Guide

for Educators, Parents, Childcare Professionals,  
Therapists, and Fitness Directors

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## WITH GRATITUDE

To my children, David and Andra,  
and to all who believed and lent their strength,  
Michele, Susan, Kim, David, Tim, Ken, Geoff, Anita, Olly, and Barry,  
as well as to the many who will continue to do so.  
May I thank you all now for helping my dream become a reality.

## DEDICATION

...To create mutual respect among  
children growing up in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

## EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE

- To learn how alphabets influence each child's health, intelligence, and emotional happiness.
- To develop muscle-associated literacy skills as kids learn to "read" and "write" through playful movement.
- To teach children that positive words build magical potential into their lives.

*"When children form an alphabet letter with their own body, a pattern is established in the brain that creates a direct and playful connection with the subject matter." - Olly Harari*

**SIDE EFFECTS:** Overall fitness, a love of language, and greater recall.

Publisher's note: The publisher and author cannot accept responsibility for any injuries or damage incurred as a result of following the exercises in this book. It is suggested that you consult your doctor if you have any doubt as to the suitability of this book's advice or exercises.

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In literate societies, the child's muscles learn to respond in sync with his/her language development.

Note: Alphabet Fitness aligns with State & National Frameworks for Physical Activity, Language Arts, and Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences.

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ALPHABET  
FITNESS  
LINKS  
LITERACY  
and  
FITNESS

Linking initial language and literacy skills to children's large-muscle movements facilitates:

- Alphabet intelligence
- Learning readiness
- Pre-requisite reading and writing capabilities
- Healthier language-linked physiology
- Word-related stress prevention skills
- Physical, mental, emotional, and social fitness
- Enhanced Muscle IQ™ ( Motor-educated Intelligence)

CHILDREN OF ALL BACKGROUNDS AND ABILITIES PLAYFULLY EXERCISE:

Active listening and communication skills  
Whole-body reading and writing  
Whole-brain language integration  
Word-related movements  
Word awareness  
Diction  
Alphabet agility  
Word-linked fitness  
Word-body coordination  
Word-associated wellness  
Quickness/endurance/timing  
Impulse control/self-regulation  
Multiple intelligences  
Emotional expression  
Cooperation/teamwork  
A love of literacy  
Inclusion



The father of Louisa May Alcott, author of Little Women, taught all his children to learn the alphabet with their bodies.

*Muscles are magical.*

They can make us smile or frown, jump or fall, laugh or cry, alert or lazy, and happy or crazy. Muscles are fundamental to our ability to learn and be well, and no two children have the exact same perspective while learning, since the experience is contingent on the coordinated states of their own body's muscles.

## MEET PROFESSOR ALPHABET®:

Welcome to  
Alphabet Fitness.  
...where kids put  
letters into  
action!



*As Doctor of Letters,  
language coach,  
and fitness guru,  
Professor Alphabet:*

- Cross-trains the alphabet for long-term health and expanded intelligence.
- Teaches children to develop teamwork while exercising their way to literacy.
- Blends relaxation skills and sport performance techniques to train word-wellness.
- Helps children exercise positive alphabet habits.
- Shifts early literacy education into more physically active environments.

Young children learn valuable early literacy skills through exercise.

ALPHABET FITNESS: is a 10-week exercise program for the physical training of the alphabet – a prerequisite to literacy for young children growing up in today’s more sedentary electronic environments. Kid-friendly alphabet characters make the alphabet each child’s favorite learning companion.

- Weeks 1–5 familiarize the child’s large muscles with specially designed alphabet letter-postures, teaching the pre-literacy skills of laterality, directionality, sequencing, and segmentation in a playful movement format that perfectly suits young children’s growing brains and bodies.
- Weeks 6–10 reinforce weeks 1–5 while incorporating colors, feelings, emotions, and social skills, along with an understanding of how negative and positive words make a child’s body behave – intertwining the ABCs with the child’s overall fitness and well-being.

We are nurtured by the nature of our words.

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION TO ALPHABET FITNESS

#### ACTIVATING THE ALPHABET BUILDS HEALTHY KIDS.

- Our Beliefs
- Who Are We?
- Why Today's Children Need Alphabet Fitness
- Current Health/Educational Concerns

## OUR BELIEF

Wellness, Inc. believes that, to pro-actively, and effectively, address the health and educational concerns of today's children, we must better understand the role muscles play in the learning process, and, more specifically, the interrelationship between excess muscle tension, lack of muscle movement, language, literacy and fitness.

## WHO ARE WE? WHAT DO WE DO?

...adding heart and sole to literacy

We are an innovative company that has designed a novel literacy-fitness program to address the need to update healthy literacy skills for today's children:

Brain mapping studies show that growth areas in the brain linked to language are slow between the ages of 3 and 6, but speed up after that age, when fine-tuning usually occurs.<sup>1</sup> Since we know 3-6 year olds learn best through active imitation, multi-sensory motor interplay, and cross-lateral movements\*, we designed Alphabet Fitness to transfer this natural learning style to early literacy education. Its fun alphabet building exercises are taught through active and balanced, large-motor muscle movements as a pre-requisite to later sedentary, fine-motor reading and writing skills. The program's playful, dual-sided letter training nurtures whole brain language integration for more comprehensive learning and fitness-linked literacy.

*\*Note: Brains and bodies cross-signal. The brain's right hemisphere communicating with the body's left side, and the left hemisphere with the body's right side. In animals, and crawling children, these cross-lateral, large muscle body movements help brain and body function as a cohesive, well-coordinated unit.*

- Specially designed alphabet letter-characters and Alphabet WorkOuts jump-start and enrich literacy as children learn to synchronize their body muscles with the actions of their ABCs. Children love to mimic, and enabling them to replicate a more physical and playful alphabet, designed just for them, encourages them to link language more completely to their body muscles. Learning initially through the use of large muscles vs. small muscles builds stronger alphabet-related motor associations; improves brain-body metabolism for healthier learning; requires fewer learning repetitions than sedentary, audio-visual learning; prevents learning stress; and keeps children's brains and bodies more optimally coordinated during language learning. Children develop an earlier, healthier, and more comprehensive command of language.
- Learning to move with their letters adds the body posture, feel, and motor actions of letters and words to each child's learning experience. With playful practice, children become less dependent on audio-visual cues for memory, and grow to rely more on deeper physical sensations for quicker recall and meaningful communication. They develop a more intelligent and reliant inner 'locus of control'.



- Research shows that early letter–sound associations begin developing prior to birth, as each infant develops specific and consistent muscle response patterns to his/her mother's language while in the womb<sup>2</sup>. Alphabet Fitness expands on this innate learning process by linking language learning directly to children's muscle activity. Children learn early that the words they choose can alter the way they physically feel and respond to their world.
- Alphabet Fitness exercises provide English learning skills for young children of all types of abilities and nationalities. Children learn to playfully communicate through similar alphabet muscle movements.
- Providing young children an early opportunity to develop solid language links through physical experience offers the necessary steps now required for learning language and literacy in today's high–tech, fast paced, remote controlled environments.

***"The body adapts itself so well to an increasingly motionless environment that it redesigns itself to cope with the lack of stimulus."***

*- Peter Egoscue<sup>3</sup>*

## WHY TODAY'S CHILDREN NEED ALPHABET FITNESS:

In this challenging and competitive time for educational institutions, audio–visual over–stimulations, increasing pressures on children to perform, and reduced amounts of free play and physical activity, have become increasingly disruptive factors to the learning success, health, and happiness of many of today's children.

Many believe that the majority of problems faced by today's adolescents and adults are the result of problems that might have been avoided or resolved in their earlier childhood years. Programs such as Alphabet Fitness are increasingly looking to address these issues during early years – by 6 – so that children do not fall behind in language–dependent educational systems.

## CURRENT HEALTH/EDUCATIONAL CONCERNS CONSIDERED BY THIS PROGRAM:

1. The National Center for Learning Disabilities warns us that we are a nation in the grip of a reading crisis. Four in ten American children have literacy problems. Currently, 40% of our fourth graders can't achieve even a basic reading level. A student who finishes second grade without being able to read has only a one in four chance of reading at grade level by the end of elementary school. But if a child receives help earlier, in kindergarten or first grade, that child has a 90–95% chance of becoming a fluent reader<sup>4</sup>.
2. Today's decrease in daily "physical" activities lessens a child's emotional, mental, and physical fitness – impacting the ability to learn and feel well.
3. Attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders are growing and placing greater numbers of young children on early medications. Exposed earlier and earlier to the pace and lifestyle of today's larger than life, electronically simulated world, the physical body is having a hard time keeping up with its brain's appetite. Repetitive, excessive distractions enter the child's daily environments, causing inattention and chemical stress build-ups that impede his/her ability to develop healthy neuromuscular connections between brain and body – a requirement for meaningful comprehension, long-term memory, and the ability to perform and feel well.
4. 60–80% of people with learning disabilities have problems with reading and language skills. Children are having difficulty with automatic retrieval of words and memory for non-meaningful symbols such as letters.<sup>5</sup>
5. Dyslexic children exhibit nearly five times more brain lactate activation during a language task than non-dyslexics.<sup>6</sup> Anxiety stimulates excess lactate.
6. Dr. Carla Hannaford, author of Smart Moves, informs that children's muscle movements correlate with their effective ability to learn, and that "between the ages of 3–17 muscle movement decreases 70%; SAT scores decline; and learning disabilities increase."
7. Children are spending more time learning from, and emotionally connecting to remote, non-physical, "electronic instructors" as role models and companions, and less time with close, physically dynamic and caring educators and friends. This imprints neuromuscular response patterns in children similar to the behavioral patterns of their electronic models, fostering less human qualities and poorer physical, emotional, and intellectual fitness.

***Language lets the brain take the body to different locations in time and space.  
Its teaching deserves great respect.***



***“Today’s brain is a consequence, not a precursor of symbolic language. Language can change our response system faster than evolution changes our genes.”***

- Terrence W. Deacon, Author – The Symbolic Species: The Co-Evolution of Language and the Brain

## Chapter 2

### Updating Early Literacy Education What happens to the body and brain when we learn the alphabet?

- Active, happy muscles improve literacy and overall wellbeing
- Need for Educational Fitness
- The Changing Face of Literacy
- Alphabet Research & Theory
- Muscle adaptation to inventions
- Alphabets altered muscle–mind learning
- SOLUTION: Literacy–fitness for high–tech kids
- Word Wellness
- Muscle IQ
- Program Highlights

## TO EDUCATE KIDS IN THE SEDENTARY AGE OF HIGH-TECH, WE NEED TO LINK LITERACY EDUCATION TO OVERALL FITNESS

### Active, happy muscles improve literacy and over-all wellbeing:

Ongoing brain research increasingly confirms that physical activity– moving, stretching, walking, playing, etc.– enhances a child’s learning process along with his/her health. Movement educators know that kids’ muscles love to play, that young children learn well by "doing", and that the greatest obstacle to learning and wellbeing is inappropriate muscle tension and lack of movement. Most educational learning skills, however, are fairly sedentary; not fun for young children’s naturally active way of learning; and do not stimulate their active brains and bodies well enough to generate adequate oxygenation and healthy muscle–mind memory connections.

#### Need for Educational Fitness:

Looking for pro–active ways to improve children's health and learning abilities, we decided to focus on early "educational fitness", and the fundamental need to get each child’s initial educational experiences off to a more actively playful and stress–free start. Years of research had made us realize that a long–term educational overdependency on literacy – mostly a sedentary, audio–visual learning and communication tool– may inadvertently have been a contributing factor to a number of today’s learning and health issues.

#### The Changing Face of Literacy:

As we searched through the evolution of literacy, all the way back to the invention of alphabets, what we discovered surprised us, and we suspect it will also surprise you. Being the primary teaching tool for so long, literacy technology, built on alphabet sounds and images, came to redefine the relationship between body, mind, and spirit. The ease of learning and communications through word repetitions, vs actual physical enactment, allowed a relatively small number of alphabet letters to gradually reorganize the brain's associations and the body's corresponding responses – giving words the power to literally remold the "way' we think, act, laugh, love, and breathe. Education's long–term emphasis on small muscle, audio–visual modes of learning permitted other, equally life–enriching and self–rewarding modes of intelligence to become undereducated. Alphabet Fitness presents a readily accessible and constructive addition to early childhood literacy–education that helps today's children bridge the transition from print education to electronic imaging education. Let us explain.

### ALPHABET RESEARCH & THEORY:

#### A) What Alphabet Inventors Did Not Know About the Brain and the Body :

1. ...that the evolution of letters and literacy skills would foster an over reliance on audio–visual learning modes, suppressing gustatory, olfactory, and tactile intelligence.
2. ...that the brain links strongest memory to those muscles most active while learning. Young children learn through large muscle movements. Gross–motor alphabet experiences should precede fine–motor alphabet–literacy skills.
3. ...that gross motor, lateralized movements exercise the brain and the body together, maintain sensory integration, and require fewer learning repetitions than rote–word memorization.

4. ...that the brain and the body cross signal and require balanced physical stimulation to maintain equilibrium and full hemispheric integration – keys to higher level reasoning, creativity, and wellness. Because all brains are dependent on their body's moving parts, language skills would slowly alter the brain–body's long evolved communication system. Balanced muscle use it needed to integrate right/left brain functions, and balanced cross laterality develops a healthy vestibular system.<sup>7</sup>
5. ...that language would increasingly replace the use of larger muscle movements as a outlet for tension reduction. Tension build–up from excessive negative language exposure can narrow down how well the brain hears, sees, feels, and learns. It can inhibit non–dominant functions<sup>8</sup>, normal development of the left hemisphere for language, and a right ear preference for hearing and decoding language, delaying the ability to optimally hear the fast sounds of language.<sup>9</sup>
6. ...that excessive media "talk" would foster more frequent shifts in bodily processes (oxygenation, blood flow, temperature, etc.), speeding up and reprogramming children's chemical and neuromuscular response systems at "unobservable" psychophysiological levels.
7. ...that words would come to represent emotions that are displayed in the muscular system, and that one's range of emotions would be limited by one's range of words.
8. ...that repetitive letters/words would become linked to the involuntary response system, creating less conscious control, and producing automatic bodily responses without sufficient forethought.
9. ...that repetitive self–talk reprograms brains and bodies without physical awareness.
10. ...that the alphabet would be a precursor to virtual reality as "words" increasingly substituted for the physically tangible reality.
11. ...that different alphabets would hinder universal understanding and compatibility as different sequencing of language forms and sounds imprinted brains differently around the world. (This development begins in the womb.)
12. ...that language learning dynamics would allow us to forget that we learn most naturally through mimicking.
13. ...that the invention of TV, and its rapidly changing visual images, would come into neurological conflict with the more sequential, literate–trained brain–body.
14. ...that language and literacy would make us forget vital pre–alphabet behaviors and abilities. The brain, however, still retains early evolutionary, pre–alphabet behavioral response patterns, especially when the body perceives itself in danger.

*The Babylonian alphabet separated sound from image.  
Ancient Scripts of the World  
Lawrence Lo*

## B) Throughout history, human beings have adapted their body muscle responses to the most prevalent inventions and technologies of their time:

Alphabets may be one of the most powerful of those inventions, giving relatively small numbers of letters the job of compressing and encoding real, and imagined life experiences into words. With time, words began to take on the ability to stimulate a child's physical responses, and to organize the very activity of his/her muscles and mind. A simple change in a verb's tense allows man the unique ability to reset the brain's biological clock and the body's physiological response systems. Amazing when you think about it. The use of anything this powerful requires enormous respect and understanding. Few literacy programs, however, teach children the effect this low–tech tool can have on their physiological, emotional, and intellectual fitness.

C) Ironically, alphabets appear to have gradually altered the strength of the body's body-mind communication system – shifting it from a strong, sensori-motor dependent system to a more sedentary system increasingly dependent on fine-motor memory links.

Designed for survival, the brain communicates back and forth with its body's multiple muscles. For it to conserve energy and maintain balanced cross-instruction with these muscles, the brain requires flexible, active bodies. The use of alphabets, however, and literacy skills more specifically, gradually shifted the body's muscle-mind relationship, as body-involved learning styles converted to more sedentary, rote memory learning styles. Over time, this steady decline in physically involved learning altered the quality and type of motor connections between the brain and its moving body parts. Literate cultures tend to reinforce left brain electrical activity over right brain activity and to understimulate large body muscle movements. This in turn alters the quality of blood and oxygen flows between body and mind and the optimal functioning of the brain-body's long evolved cross-signaling system.

### A HELPFUL SOLUTION: LITERACY-FITNESS FOR HIGH-TECH TYKES

We find ourselves at a crossroads in education, with standard print instructions increasingly replaced by electronic images. Having acquired a clearer picture of the influence of literacy on mental, physical and emotional fitness, we designed Alphabet Fitness to update early literacy education to meet the changing lifestyle needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century child. Utilizing the child's own muscle movements as a key training tool for educational fitness makes Alphabet Fitness an important precursor to sedentary literacy practices.

Because literacy remains a fundamental key to success and happiness in literate societies, we start with its core building blocks, alphabet letters. With the assistance of a physical therapist and a dance director, we developed a new, more anatomical and kid-friendly alphabet, along with action-oriented Alphabet WorkOuts, as a fun and more effective way to link early language, literacy, and fitness for kids. Imprinting new language patterns by exercising its playful, body-letters, allows children to acquire healthier word-related memory, while maintaining their naturally active, motor approach to learning. The program is offered as an important pre-requisite to the training of literacy and language-linked fitness for children growing up in the electronic age.

TO ACCOMPLISH OUR GOALS:

### **Meet Professor Alphabet, Doctor of Letters®:**

We created Professor Alphabet to be the coach of our Alphabet exercises. Calm, attentive muscles are essential to each child's ability to read well, test well, and focus well, and learning language in a positive environment is key to a child's literacy success. We feel very fortunate to have Professor Alphabet to teach Alphabet Fitness. The Professor knows that little kids' bodies and brains cross-signal, and for them to learn quickly and cohesively, their large body muscles need to participate in learning. He also makes sure to exercise fun into language learning, because he knows that the amount of muscle tension in the body determines how much information gets through to the brain. Most of all, he believes physical peer interactions are key to communicative learning, and works with a team of 26 AlphabeTykes to model alphabet movements and cooperative language skills.

To avoid the continuation of brain-body imbalance when educating literacy, we add physical education to early language learning, and teach pre-literacy skills to both right and left brain.

Few educational programs for children address the body-brain's cross-signaling design. Acting out letters with both body sides lets kids integrate language into both brain hemispheres. Children's muscles and minds naturally learn in tandem, and we found that they were happier, learned faster, and developed a stronger overall sense of well-being when they learned the alphabet through more active, bilateral body movements prior to less active, fine-motor, uni-lateral literacy skills. Cross-training the alphabet utilizes the body's large muscle movements to strengthen and expand the brain's motor-associated memory.

(Computer keyboards have begun this shift as they increase fine-motor, bilateral typing movements. This does not, however, teach conscious fine-motor language control, nor generate adequate large-muscle language related activity).

### **Develop the Alphabet Athlete:**

As any athlete, or performer, will tell us, practicing repetitive movement builds rapid muscle-reflex memory and conditions peak performance. Athletes refer to it as "muscle memory". To do it well requires the skills of positive imaging, muscle relaxation, and focused, repetitive bilateral movements. Since "words" (letter images and sounds) activate the body's muscles, we found that, if we treated literacy as a more interactive "sport", we could use these same sport performance techniques as a playful way to enhance early literacy education. Thus, we teach kids, just like skilled athletes, to physically perform the actions of their ABCs. Building on stimulus-response and classical conditioning, this program's playful, progressive exercises naturally integrate sport performance techniques, childhood play behaviors, Eastern imaging and movement, and wellness and stress prevention practices, into early language learning.

### Children give “sound” physical form:

One of the challenges in teaching spelling and literacy skills is helping children match up letter sounds with images. Language training has primarily focused on stationary learning modes such as careful listening and observing, and has overlooked whole-body kinesthetic learning. Carefully designed Alphabet WorkOuts let the child's larger muscles stretch in sync with letter sounds with images, fostering more rapid, motor-coordinated language learning and providing a fun format for all early literacy educators.

### Kids practice “word-wellness” skills:

Kids discover that the actions of different words stimulate different bodily feelings and behaviors. Physically exercising early language skills allows them to quickly recognize that different word actions will speed up, slow down, tighten, or relax their muscle movements, altering emotional and physical response patterns. Positive language relaxes and motivates them, while negative language constricts muscles and inhibits learning. Negative, or confusing language prevents positive loving feelings. Positive language makes the spirit soar. These important muscle-language relationships start in utero, in response to the rhythms of the mother's language, and continue to influence healthy learning behaviors throughout life...at mostly unobservable, but nevertheless, physically sensed levels. Many meditation practices train the elimination of language from the mind to “calm” the stress of language on the body. Alphabet Fitness helps kids to pro-actively practice word-wellness to lessen stress buildup in the first place.

### Healthy language becomes key to stress prevention:

We encourage parents and educators to recognize the need to educate more balanced movement while teaching the ABCs. Without this early opportunity, we believe many children raised in a more sedentary, electronic world, will continue to develop weaker neuromuscular memory, recall capacities, and decreased impulse control. Linking early positive feelings and large motor movements to early language learning imprints healthy relaxation and wellness skills into each child's every day language. As a side benefit, we expect that when children initially learn cross-lateral brain-body language skills, they will be equipped to prevent stress related learning difficulties better than children educated primarily in uni-lateral, fine motor literacy skills.

### Muscle IQ™: Kids use motor-memory for reading and writing:

This program opens the opportunity to restore physical experience as the child's language teacher. It is our goal to have each child learn healthy language, reading and writing skills ... to develop a positive learning attitude, a love for literacy and an appreciation for the gift of words, integrated language connections, and body-mind fitness. Please join Professor Alphabet as he expands early literacy skills, teaching children to put their very own muscle intelligence to work by attaching memory to their physical movements.



## ADDITIONAL PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

### 1. We've created 26 evolved alphabet letters a.k.a The AlphabeTykes:

Through a series of progressive alphabet building exercises, these playful letter-characters educate children's muscles to move in sync with their letters. Playfully mimicking the AlphabeTyke letter shapes, sounds, and sequences with their bodies allows kids to quickly build strong alphabet reflexes, making language learning a healthy habit. To jump-start literacy, children simply calm their brain, have fun, and educate their muscles...from the tip of their nose, to their fingers and their toes.

### 2. We teach children's large muscles to 'read' to their brain:

Alphabet Fitness uniquely trains children of all backgrounds and abilities to playfully "read and write" with their full body prior to moving on to rote, fine-motor writing and reading skills. Our kid-like alphabet characters model language learning and behavior skills for young children. Letter stretching exercises make learning relaxed and fun while encouraging individuality, with the peripheral benefits of promoting problem solving and social interaction.

Each child develops a physically interactive, fun relationship with all 26 alphabet characters. Children's muscles identify better with the action of their "letters" when they actually look, sound, and act like them, and not like those stiff-muscled, Roman letters invented ages ago.

Children enact language learning through skillfully designed gross motor alphabet exercises – strongly aligning children's muscle behaviors to their word's behaviors. Encouraging children to mold their arms, legs, and spine into anatomical letters lets their body muscles function as those letters. Group communication and team play follow as letters are sequenced into words.

### 3. We transform stationary, 2D letters into more interactive 3D playmates:

Enabling children to act out their letters and words, simultaneously imprints their messages in both brain and body. Utilizing both sides of their body when "initially" making their letters maintains whole brain integrity, and activates multiple neuromuscular brain links for more balanced perspective and comprehensive recall. Practice develops quick, reflex memory. This type of letter-play helps children internalize an early feel and familiarity for language. Since muscle tensions influence communication between a child's body and brain, alphabet exercises teach children to playfully monitor their muscle movements while learning language.

Reading and writing with body letters becomes as enjoyable and as easy as the spoken words that children have become accustomed to. Long term, Alphabet Fitness educates young children to skillfully recognize that the words they hear, see, speak, write, and think influence how they feel, learn, and act.

#### 4. We develop early kinesthetic alphabet intelligence in children:

We recognized that a program such as Alphabet Fitness would better suit the more peripheral and kinesthetic learning abilities of this age group if it offered children larger-sized, moving “body letters”. Not only could they learn their alphabet, but they would also acquire a consciously active, kinesthetic learning memory at the same time. When something is learned by the body it is retained in long-term memory.

#### 5. This introductory level program prevents the potential for children to develop an over-reliance on fine-motor muscle memory as they develop literacy skills:

Our series of sample Alphabet WorkOuts teaches children to playfully monitor their muscles and emotions while learning language in order to prevent muscle tension from negatively impacting body-brain communications.

#### 6. Most importantly, the alphabet exercises interactively and playfully provide a fun, stress free approach to learning through playful movement:

Putting letter and word learning into physical action provides an opportunity for children to practice the core pre-literacy skills of balance, matching, directionality, and laterality in conjunction with actual letter and word development. Children learn that words give direction to their brains and their bodies.

#### 7. Alphabet Fitness sets the stage for long-term fitness habits by conditioning healthy early learning habits:

The basic techniques used to learn the alphabet can be applied by children to other subjects, and create healthy learning habits for years to come.

#### 8. Alphabet Fitness provides a skill-based theme curriculum that focuses on acquiring language through movement skill development:

Its exercises incorporate important program strands designed to achieve the goals of fitness enhancement, cognitive learning, and affective development. The National Association for the Education of Young Children describes movement skill learning as an internal process that becomes visibly observable through the product of one’s movement. This level of learning provides children with the general feel for language learning. Through practiced repetitions, the learner gains a “feel” for the skill as kinesthetic sensitivity becomes more highly attuned, and learns to rely more on muscle than verbal and visual cues.<sup>10</sup>



## Chapter 3

### THE ALPHABET FITNESS AUDIENCE

**Professor Alphabet teaches children to exercise their letter connections.**

- **Who are Alphabet Fitness Exercises Designed For?**
- **Who Teaches Alphabet Fitness?**
- **Professor Alphabet's Body-Letter Chart**
- **AlphabeTyke Rules**
- **Alphabet WorkOut Muscle Chart**
- **The 26 Anatomical Letter Characters**

## WHO ARE THE ALPHABET FITNESS EXERCISES DESIGNED FOR?

Children of all backgrounds and abilities practice Alphabet Fitness...during childcare, pre-school-K, gym time, recess, home schooling, or every day story time. As children everywhere gradually join the ranks of the AlphabeTykes they will be uniquely able to better communicate with one another through the early development of “universally” educated language muscles. This is a broad long-term goal increasingly required in a world of high-speed communications.

## WHO TEACHES ALPHABET FITNESS?

- Pre-schools / Kindergartens / Daycare Facilities
- Fitness/gym Instructors
- Home Schooling Parents
- Special Education Instructors
- Rehab/ Therapeutic Facilitators/ Guidance Counselors
- Parents / Grandparents / Brothers / Sisters
- Child-Play Supervisors

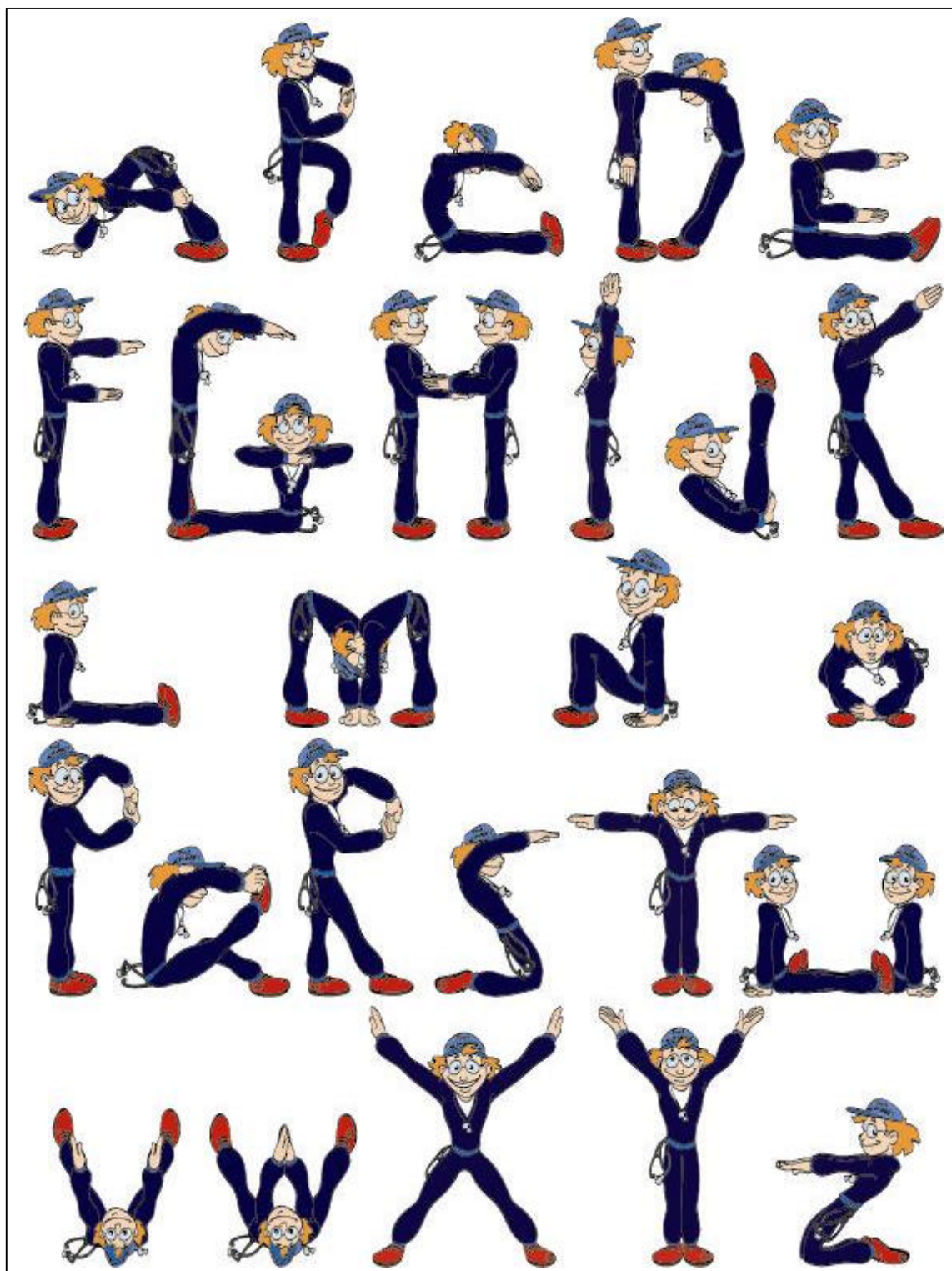
Please refer to Professor Alphabet's Body Letter Chart on the next page to assist you with your own letter stretching performance!

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Alphabet Fitness encourages both sides  
of the brain and the body to keep learning.

---

# Professor Alphabet's Body-Letter Chart<sup>©</sup>



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*"Body writing and reading create greater awareness, connection and comprehension than handwriting, speaking or visually reading words."*

- Dr. Elena Holden

## Chapter 4

### TRAINING DESIGN FOR ALPHABET FITNESS

As each child plays the role of "writer",  
the brain "reads" the shapes and actions of the body.

- Quick Review
- Getting Started
- Program Format/Scheduling
- Implementation
- Preparing Children Physically to be Readers and Writers
- Benefits of Physically Interactive Letter Learning

## Quick Review

### *Literacy Necessitates Stronger Muscle–mind Links.*

Young children must first have a solid base of sensori–motor experiences from which to build words – not the other way around. Without this, words establish only superficial, audio–visual, fine–motor muscle connections, able to be parroted back, but unable to be actively felt and comprehended by the child’s physical response system. The child simply does not build the strong neuromuscular pathways between brain and body required for conscious, alert comprehension. Alphabet Fitness made it a goal to weave stronger, more balanced, large muscle education into the early process of learning and literacy, so that each child’s body and mind does not become conditioned to parrot back the language of his/her environments without active thought.

### *Applying Sport Techniques for Performance, Relaxation, and Stress Prevention:*

Repetitive alphabet muscle movements pattern language memory and behavior. Our strategy is to emphasize physical repetitions and cross–lateral linkage between left–right brain hemispheres and left–right body sides for balanced and receptive learning. Relaxation, repetitive movements, breathing, and imaging techniques used by athletes for optimal sport performance, as well as stress prevention, are woven into a child’s language learning experience at an early age, promoting healthy physical growth and learning enhancement.

### *Program Stately and WorldView:*

We, at Wellness, Inc., believe that children of preschool age and older can benefit immensely through playful exercises that integrate their bodies and minds. With literacy such an important requirement for successful learning in our world today, learning the letters of the English language (for our foreign friends too!) can be intimidating and stressful. We’ve created Alphabet Fitness to make this process more fun, socially interactive, and eventually all language inclusive.

Please join Professor Alphabet and us in training the Alphabet Fitness exercises. The following letter and word building exercises will nicely bridge the child’s transition from early–childhood gross–motor learning behaviors to the fine–motor disciplines of more formalized education. Alphabet Fitness offers a simple, fun, and accessible program to help young children physically, mentally, and emotionally navigate this new, fast paced, highly techno–lingual world.

Come play. Life is a muscle response.

Children physically imprint their letter connections.



## GETTING STARTED:

- Use Alphabet Fitness as a complementary, transitional alphabet program, to give children 3 on up a 'body-start' to later, more sedentary literacy practices. It playfully and naturally creates early familiarity, comfort, and enjoyment with language learning.
- Alphabet Fitness can be applied at different levels to children of all backgrounds and abilities. Children learn rapidly by physically imitating one another's movements. If a child chooses not to join in, do not insist – just watching can be equally fun and educational. Insisting only creates fearful muscle tension that blocks the learning process.
- Once learned, children can be teachers too, as they inform and inspire their friends.

Repetitive muscle movements educate learning and listening habits.

## PROGRAM FORMAT/SCHEDULING:

As a formal program, utilize the progression of the ten Alphabet Fitness exercises and lesson goals provided in Chapter 6. Each exercise is designed to run daily, one week at a time, for 10 weeks. Daily practice (15–20 minutes) provides an opportunity to vary the delivery and/or focus on a different aspect of the same theme. Add your own creativity, as well as the child's, as you reinforce each lesson throughout the day.

The exercises represent a progression in complexity from letter learning to beginning words and short sentences. They progress from physical development (coordination, flexibility, cross-laterality) to affective development (the emotional content of letters/words). If your time frame is limited, split the program exercises into two, creating a shorter introductory level with the first five lessons, and an advanced level with the final five lessons as time permits.

Group size should allow for individual expression and optimal focus. You may use an existing exercise period, story, or playtime to deliver the alphabet exercises, or create an entirely new literacy time to accommodate this program.



## IMPLEMENTATION: HINTS TO FACILITATORS

### *Informal Learning for the Youngest of Children:*

This Alphabet Fitness primer prepares children's bodies to take on the muscle shapes and the meaningful actions of the 26 letters of the alphabet. Depending on the child, you may simply encourage him/her to reproduce the shape of each AlphabeTyke letter in a comfortable, playful way. Young children love to learn letters and new vocabulary by using playful body-letters during everyday reading time.

### *More Structured Learning Environments: Goals, background, and start-up information:*

Each Alphabet Fitness exercise includes goals and background information for adults to reference. Freely improvise with the alphabet exercise models provided and apply them to any subject matter for learning reinforcement. With each lesson, choose a favorite book to complement and physically practice the reinforcement of each exercise. This playful approach will more automatically expand the child's literary interests and verbal creativity.

## START-UP PREPARATION:

- First...begin practicing the Alphabet Fitness letters yourself – stretching and bending. Your own participation in the exercises models a stronger and more enjoyable learning experience for the child. Adults will need to work on their own flexibility. Stretch gently, and ease into the letterforms slowly.
- When instructing, maintain a positive tone of voice, and a slow, even pace of speech. Never hurry the program. It can be easily repeated.
- Always remember that language communication requires a speaker and a listener, and that learning the alphabet lets our brain-body talk to others, as well as to ourselves.
- Help the brain hear properly. Relax, smile, and speak clearly, enunciating words completely and with care. Check that your accents are placed on the proper syllables. Create short time-intervals between your words for clarity.
  - Demonstrate body letters visually and physically in clear sight of each child, so that the child's ability to replicate is not impeded.
- Review the Alphabet Fitness video clip for added understanding of body letter education and playful beginning letter animations.
- Maintain a positive attitude. Being positive naturally releases muscle tension buildup which causes resistance to healthy learning.

Eyes see, ears hear, but the body feels and knows.

## PREPARING CHILDREN PHYSICALLY TO BE WRITERS AND READERS:

1. Take time to let the child become familiar with each AlphabeTyke images.
2. Writing and reading with your full body will feel different for you. When you first begin teaching these more anatomical letter forms, line-up the child(ren) in front of a wall (as though they are going to be letters on a huge piece of paper). Be careful to orient your own letter body in the position you want the letter to be learned (read) by the children. Physically model the letters one at a time so that the children may replicate them comfortably.

If you are facing the children, be sure you make the letters in the right direction to be read by them. You'll know if they are doing their letters in the right direction if "you" can read "them", especially letters A,B,C,D,E,F,G,J,K,L,N,P,Q,R,S, & Z (Letters H,I,M,O,T,U,V,W, X, &Y are the same in either direction). You, and the children, may alternate body sides as you make the letters, but maintain the correct direction for them to be readable.

3. During 10 weeks of this guide's progressive alphabet exercises, children will continually alternate between acting as readers and writers of these more physical letter-forms. Physically switching between reading and writing positions allows the child's brain and body to more fully participate in the process of learning letters; reinforces stronger kinesthetic motor-memory; develops greater right/left brain comprehension during language learning; and lets kids acquire the mental, physical, and emotional dexterity required for learning healthy literacy skills. Playfully developing playful "alphabet muscles" fosters a more dynamic, gross-motor approach to literacy, later transferable to fine-motor handwriting and reading skills.

Children become both physically and cognitively aware of their letters and words. Children will kinesthetically condition core pre-literacy skills of concentration, mirroring, matching, laterality, and letter directions in sync with the physical practice of writing and reading these body-letters.

4. As children learn to read body letters, have crayons and paper available for them to draw, or copy from a book, the letters they are learning. This helps transfer body writing into handwriting.

5. **\*\*Frequently ask the children to notice which muscles they use to make each letter. Have children notice where their feet (soles) are when they see, form, and hear a letter? Where are their arms, legs, head, back, hands and buttocks as they make their body letters and words? Name the muscle areas (i.e. arm, leg, etc.). Ask how those muscles feel? What are those muscles saying to them? Enjoy the answers!**
6. **Reinforce letter names and standard letter images with the Alphabet Fitness' letter images. Also, have children trace each other's body letters, holding their hands about 6" from the body...like practicing a body Braille in the air. The skin is the largest body organ and provides a heat exchange for vital growth information. Make it a game to have the children try and sense each body letter's "heat" with their hands.**
7. **Capital letters are larger and easier than lower case letters. After children are quite comfortable with this program, feel free to explore lower case letters with them. Let them figure out letter designs using one or two children. (See Kirshner, 1971)**
8. **Innovate. Each exercise provided on the following pages has been created as a sample guideline. Freely expand on them. Ask the children to help.**
9. **Reinforce routinely to condition healthy, language muscle memory.**
10. **Be sure to send weekly alphabet exercises home for families to playfully share and reinforce. Have children put the stories they love most into physical body letters!**

Let children teach you too! Most of all ...have fun.

---

**Note: We have taken artistic license with our 'N' and 'M'.  
The children in 'M' may reverse head-feet if they like.  
Have children implement letter shapes slowly and comfortably.**

---

## BENEFITS OF INTERACTIVE LETTER LEARNING:

### Children Take Turns Playing Readers and Writers:

- Children will be switching their reading and writing roles throughout the exercises. Some will be body writers, and others will be body readers. Reading and writing words allow their actions and emotions to become more fully integrated into each child's muscle memory.
- Most letters are formed by individual children, while some letters require the cooperation of two children: The buddy system is frequently used. Children also learn by watching, seeing that other children have different concepts of fun, levels of flexibility, and spatial abilities. In sharing physical letters, the children share physical, mental, and emotional feelings.
- Letter formations progress to the formation of words, where participation by groups of children is required. Mostly single individuals are involved with component letters; pairs of children with some letters; and groups of children to form and read words, and ultimately sentences.

### Group Participation:

- Alphabet exercises involve word awareness, listening, problem solving, planning, spatial conceptualization, negotiating, emotional entrainment, trust, cooperation, and leadership. They foster an awareness of and a respect for community, as well as confidence in one's individual contribution and participation.
- By program's end, each child will have developed strong mental and physical links to letters, words, and the important role they play in determining how they learn, feel, communicate, and create.

*The concept of body literacy is as natural as life itself.  
The more we move, the better we feel.  
The better we feel, the easier it is to think.  
Movement and thinking go hand in hand.*

-Joan Palladino,  
Dean, School of Dance, Dean College



## Chapter 5

### Teaming up with the AlphabeTykes

How do kids learn letters and words?

They become them!

- The AlphabeTyke Rules
- Alphabet WorkOut Muscle Chart
- Introducing the 26 Playful Letter Characters and mini body-writing instructions.

The



## LPHABETYKE RULES

1. We drink water. (It helps our body and brain send letter messages.)
2. We stretch and smile. (It naturally releases muscle tension.)
3. We breathe more deeply and slowly. (It sends oxygen to body and brain.)
4. We mimic the letters of a word we want to learn with our whole body.  
We ask our friends to play along and help us write our words.
5. We notice the muscles and the parts of our body that we use as we write our body-words. (We educate our body's muscles.)
6. We act out our words...See, hear, smell, and say them. We even give them a flavor. (It creates multiple brain-body learning connections.)
7. We notice how different words make us feel "inside" our body...happy, sad, glad, lonely, angry, excited, friendly, smart, or strong.
8. We notice how different words make our body "act" ...happy, sad, glad, lonely, angry, excited, friendly, smart, or strong.
9. Once we've become good friends with a word, we add more word-friends to our vocabulary.
10. We practice writing our own body-letters and words, and take time to read our friend's body-letters and words too.

# Alphabet WorkOuts

## MUSCLE IQ CHART™

	SHOULDER	LEG	BACK	ABS	HEART	ARM	SMILE	HAND/SOLE	HIPS	BREATHING
<b>A</b>	😊		😊					😊	😊	😊
<b>B</b>	😊	😊						😊	😊	
<b>C</b>	😊		😊	😊			😊			😊
<b>D</b>		😊		😊	😊		😊	😊		
<b>E</b>	😊	😊	😊			😊	😊			
<b>F</b>	😊					😊		😊		
<b>G</b>	😊		😊		😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	
<b>H</b>					😊		😊	😊		
<b>I</b>	😊							😊		
<b>J</b>		😊	😊	😊					😊	😊
<b>K</b>	😊	😊	😊			😊		😊	😊	
<b>L</b>			😊				😊		😊	
<b>M</b>	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊			😊		😊
<b>N</b>		😊	😊				😊	😊	😊	😊
<b>O</b>		😊	😊					😊		😊
<b>P</b>	😊					😊	😊	😊		
<b>Q</b>	😊	😊	😊	😊				😊	😊	😊
<b>R</b>	😊	😊						😊	😊	
<b>S</b>	😊	😊		😊		😊				😊
<b>T</b>	😊					😊	😊	😊		
<b>U</b>				😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	😊	
<b>V</b>	😊			😊		😊			😊	😊
<b>W</b>	😊	😊	😊	😊		😊			😊	😊
<b>X</b>	😊	😊						😊	😊	😊
<b>Y</b>	😊				😊			😊	😊	😊
<b>Z</b>	😊	😊	😊	😊					😊	

**WORDS EXERCISE YOUR BODY'S MUSCLES**

### FOR FUN

**SUGGESTIONS** For a playful ABC-ab WorkOut do 5 reps of letters C, D, J, M, Q, S, U, V, W, and Z.  
 For an ABC-backstretch do 5 reps of letters A, C, E, G, J, K, L, M, N, O, Q, W, and Z.  
 Hold each letter's position longer for Isometric ABCs. Stretch slowly for ABC yoga.  
 To increase your vocabulary and your range of motion, spell out different ab and backstretch words. Add smile, shoulder, heart, sole & leg words. **Team Spell** your name and your friends' name.



www.alphabetafitness.org

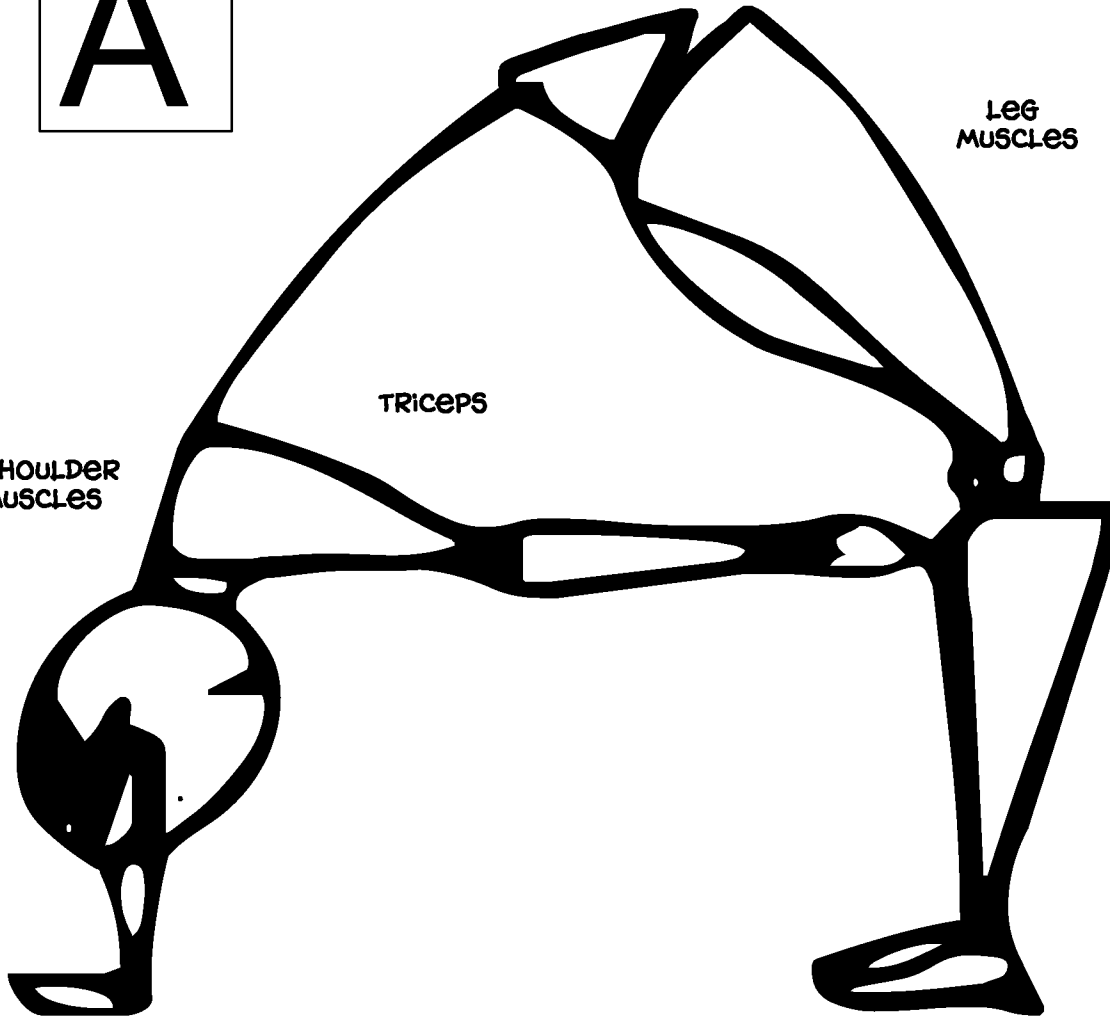
© 2002. Wellness, Inc., MA

A

SHOULDER  
MUSCLES

TRICEPS

LEG  
MUSCLES

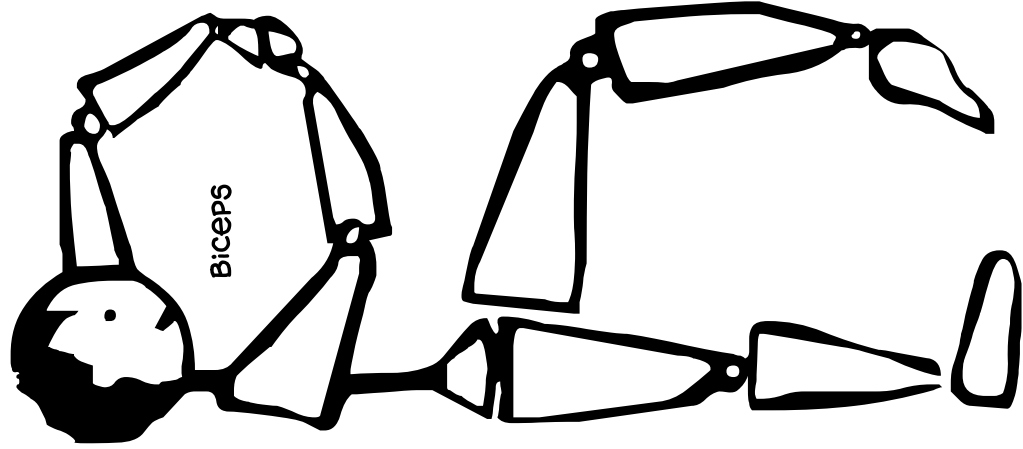


Stand straight, feet parallel to shoulders. Slowly kneel down and place palms on mat with arms supporting body. In flexible motion, raise your body without moving your feet or palms from the floor. Straighten your legs in the knee area as much as possible, but do not lock it. Stretch your muscles, feeling a little tension in the legs. Finally, elevate your pelvis to the highest point. Take your left hand and slowly move it to grasp behind your knee area. Hold gently for a few seconds. Now letter "A" is formed. During kneeling breathe out. When you're raising pelvis, and stretching legs, breathe in. Repeat exercise by using other side of the body.



**B**

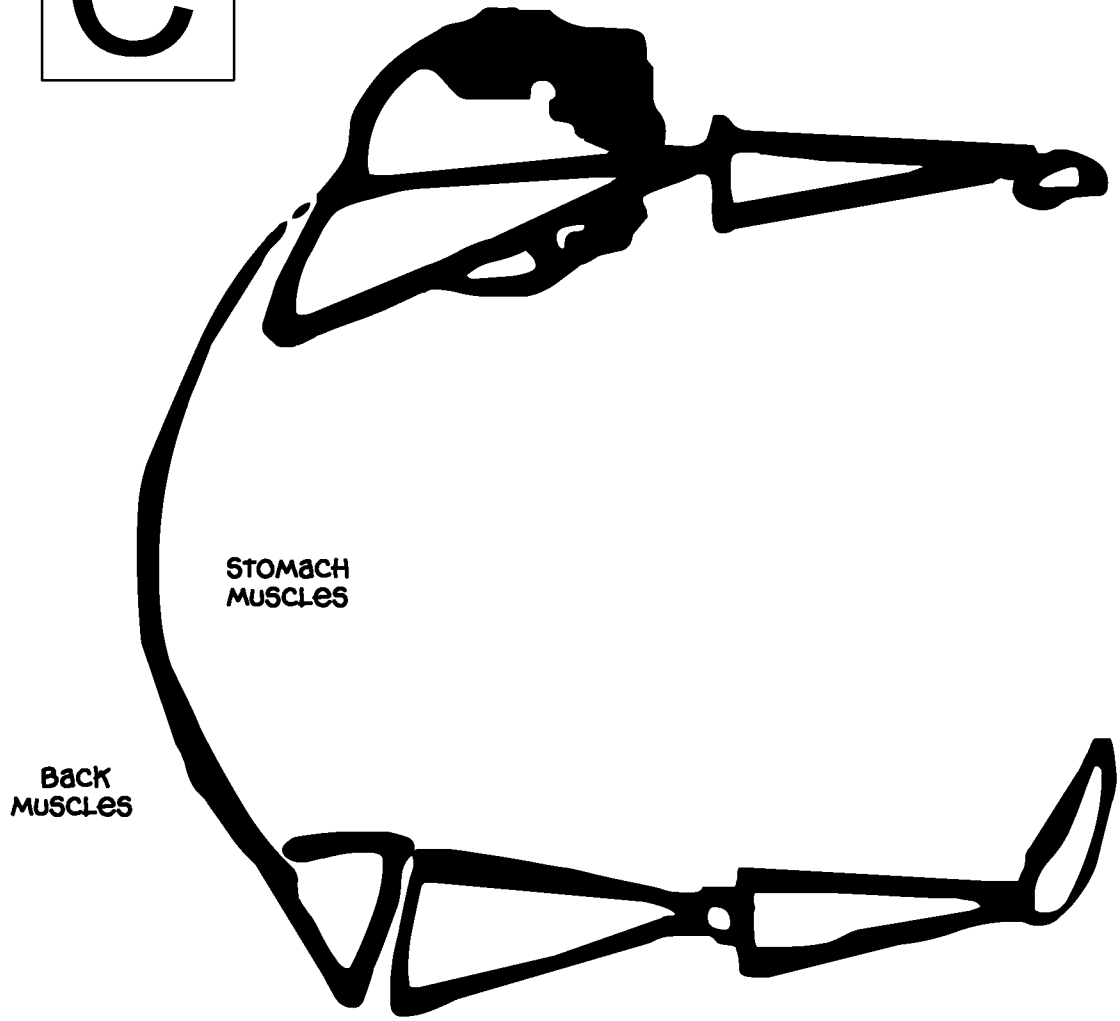
SHOULDER  
MUSCLES



Stand straight.

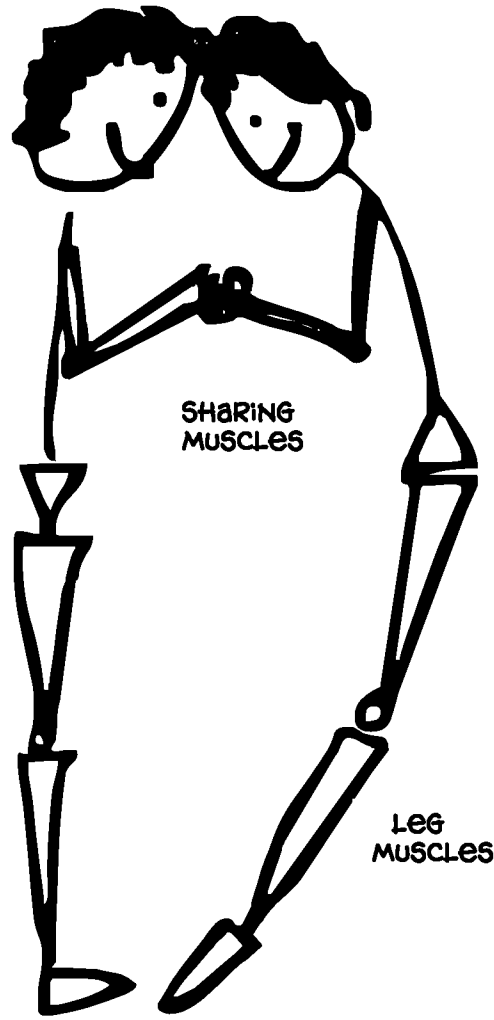
Breathe deeply in and out. Visualize the letter "B" and your body in that space. Move your arms slowly in a free, circular motion, forming the top of the "B". Right hand moves from the top and left hand from the bottom. Touch fingertips. Left leg moves forward with arms in parallel manner. Try rounding your leg in the knee area and bring your toes as close as possible to your supporting leg. During letter formation, breathe in. When you return to original starting position breathe out. Repeat, using cross-lateral movements.

C



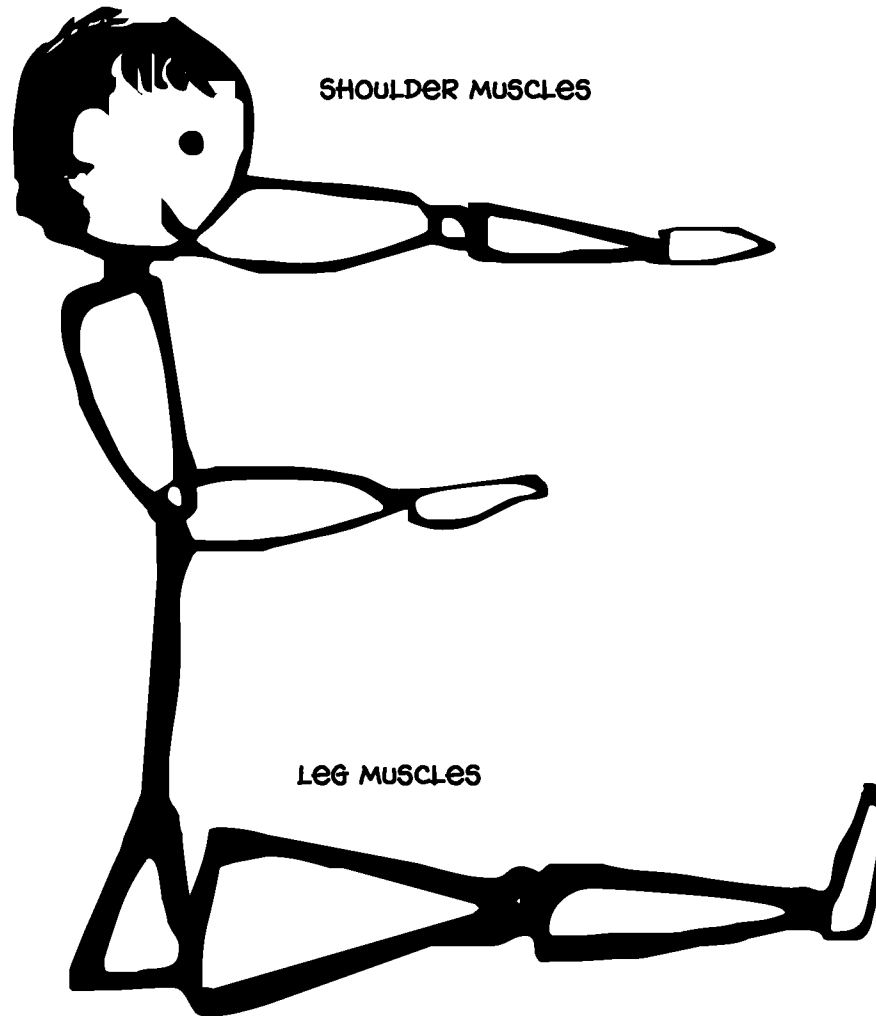
Sit down on the mat. Gently straighten your legs in the knee area. Slowly raise your hands over your head. Continue to move them, in an arc-like shape, to the front of your body - your head located between your arms. During this exercise, gently curve your back outward forming a half circle. As you form the letter "C", breathe out. Upon your return to your original position, breathe in.

D



Involves two participants and cooperative learning. One partner stands straight with feet parallel to shoulders. Breathe in. Bend arms at elbow and clasp hands. Breathe out. One partner bends his body back in the middle portion of his torso, leaning out from the letter's mid line. His back becomes rounded and forms a curve in relation to straight standing partner. Toes of the feet almost touch each other. The letter "D" is formed. Maintain normal breath. Exchange positions with partner.

E



SHOULDER MUSCLES

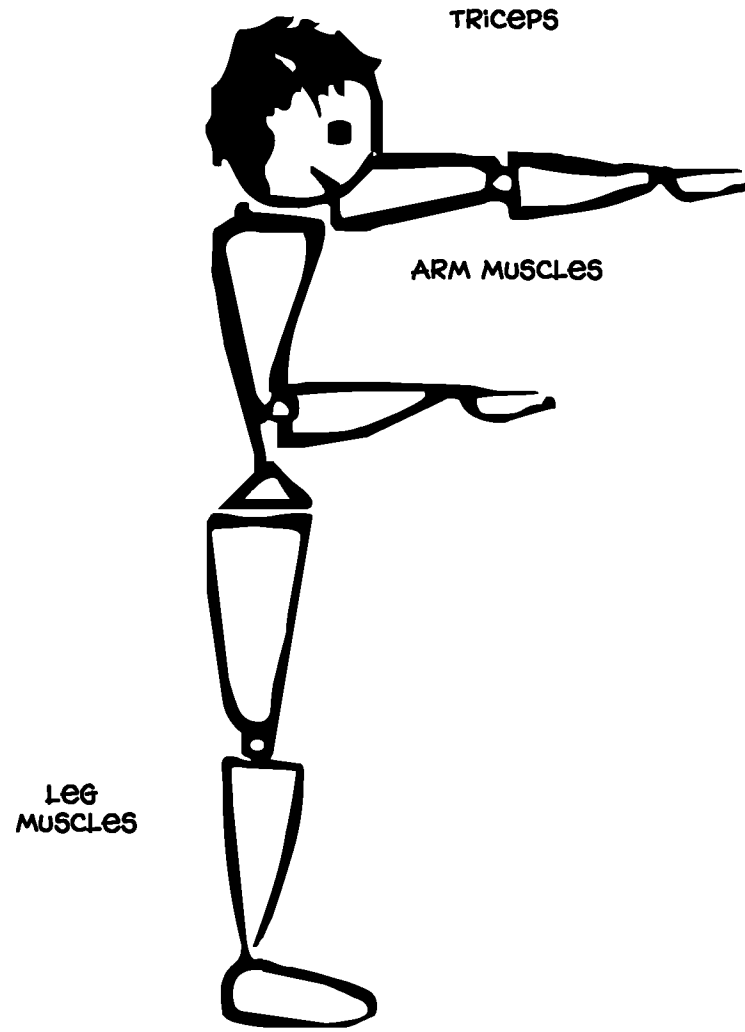
LEG MUSCLES



Sit on

the mat. Keep your torso straight and vertical to the ground level by forming a 90-degree angle in relation to extended arms and legs. Toes of legs are pointed up. Bend left arm at elbow, bringing it to chest level with palm facing down and parallel to legs. Extend right arm, and keep it straight, level with shoulder, palm facing down and parallel to the other arm. Move left and right arms without moving your spinal column. Maintain balance and breathe regularly. Alternate left and right arms in letter formation.

**F**



**Stand**

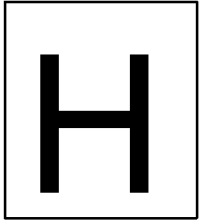
straight. Feet parallel with shoulder. Maintain normal breathing. Extend left arm straight forward with palm facing down. Bend opposite arm in the elbow area. Hold arm against torso and extend forearm. Your upper extremities parallel each other. They form letter "F". Alternate left and right side. Maintain normal breathing.

G

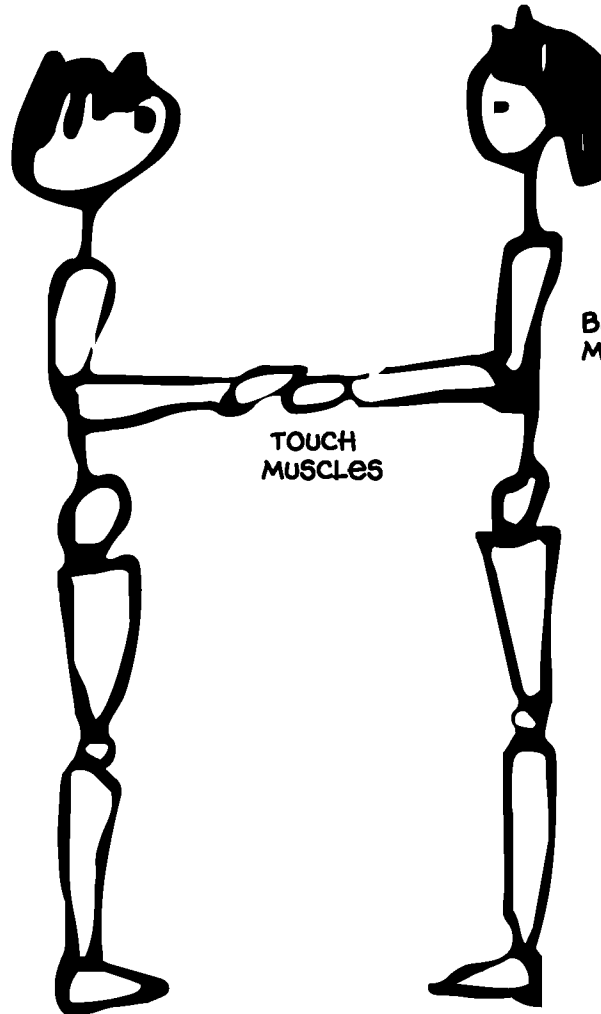
SHOULDER  
MUSCLES



Involves two participants and cooperative learning. One partner stands straight and rounds his shoulders forward, with head located between, arms extend forward with palms rotating toward mat. Partner maintains sitting position with elbows bent and hands clasped behind neck. Back straight. His heels touch the toes of the partner. Maintain deep breath. Play the different sides of the letter "G"

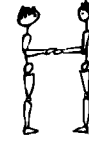


ARM  
MUSCLES

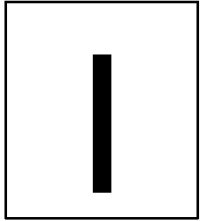


Back  
MUSCLES

TOUCH  
MUSCLES



Example of cooperative learning. Two participants stand straight and face each other, maintaining straight spinal columns. They bend their arms in synchronous manner. Press their upper arms against torso, and extend forearms toward each other, gently clasping each other's hands.



STOMACH  
MUSCLES



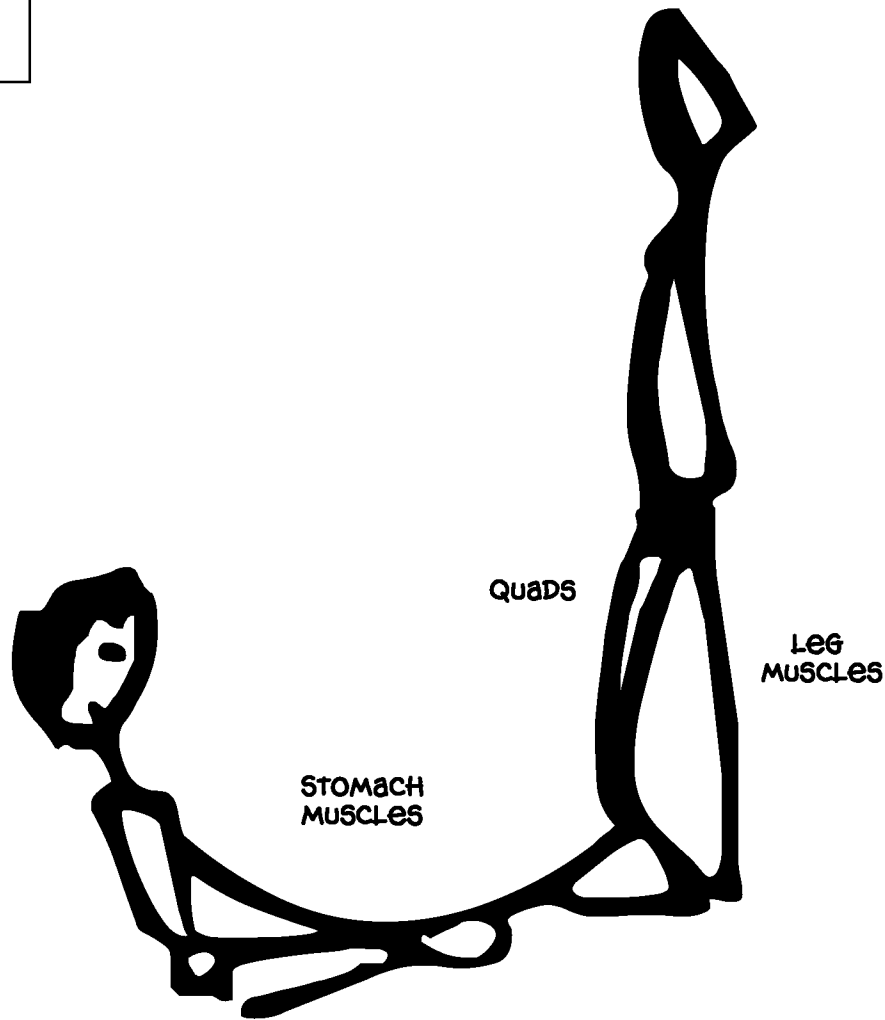
SHOULDER  
MUSCLES



Maintain body in natural vertical position. Feet parallel. Toes pointed forward. Breathe out and slowly raise arms to the side in a semicircle manner. Continue to move arms overhead. As you raise hands breathe in. Stretch body. Pull it up toward the sky and look at it. Then slowly move hands to original position. As you lower hands breathe out. Repeat a couple times.



J

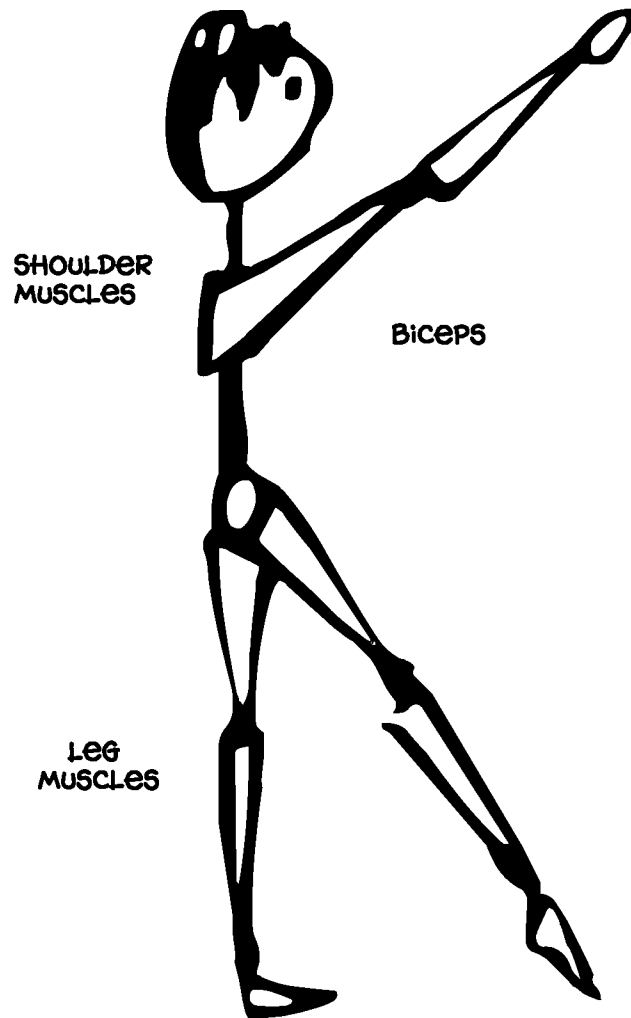


Lie flat

on your back. Slowly bring your legs to the highest point. Arms, along with torso, participate with legs in support and balance. When legs are moving up breath out. Repeat a couple of times.

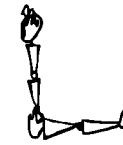
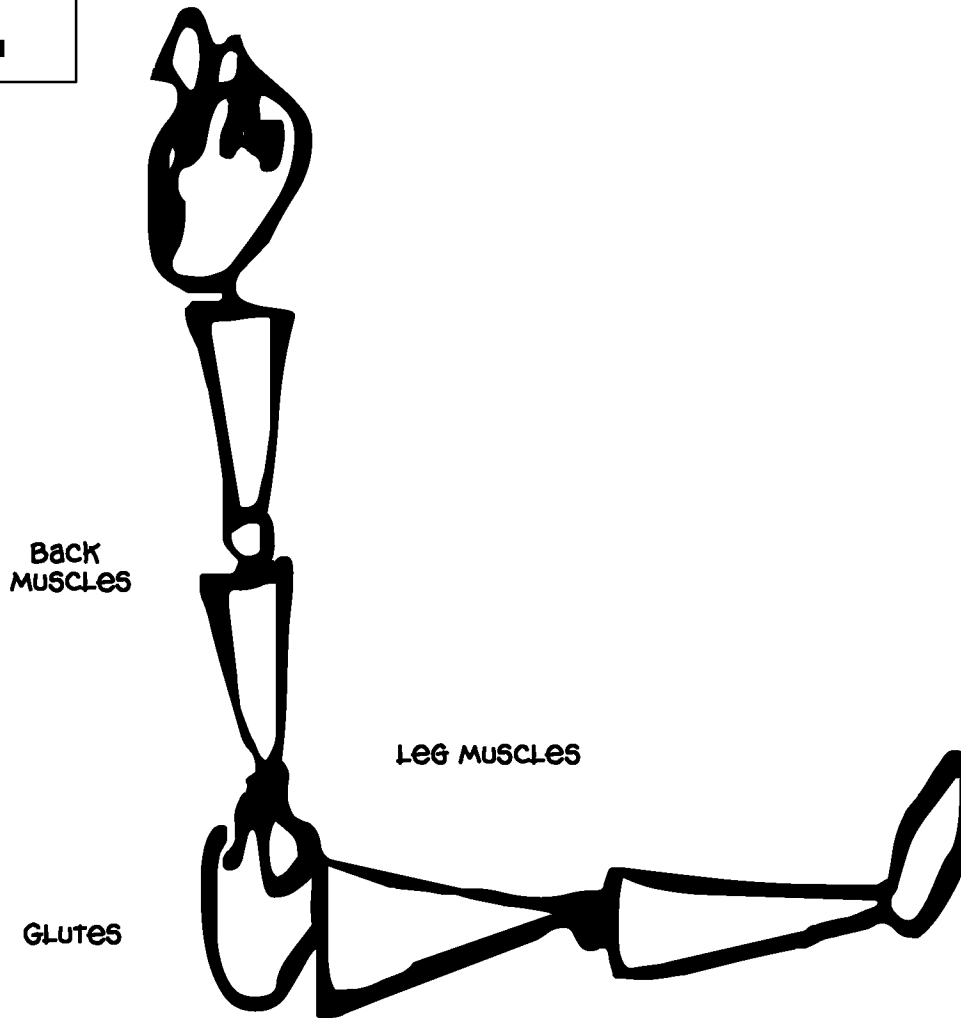
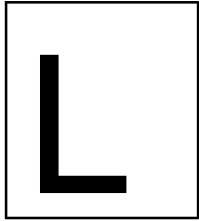
(Can also lift shoulders and grasp lower legs with your hands for added support.)

K



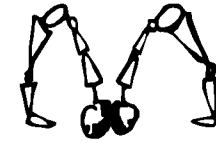
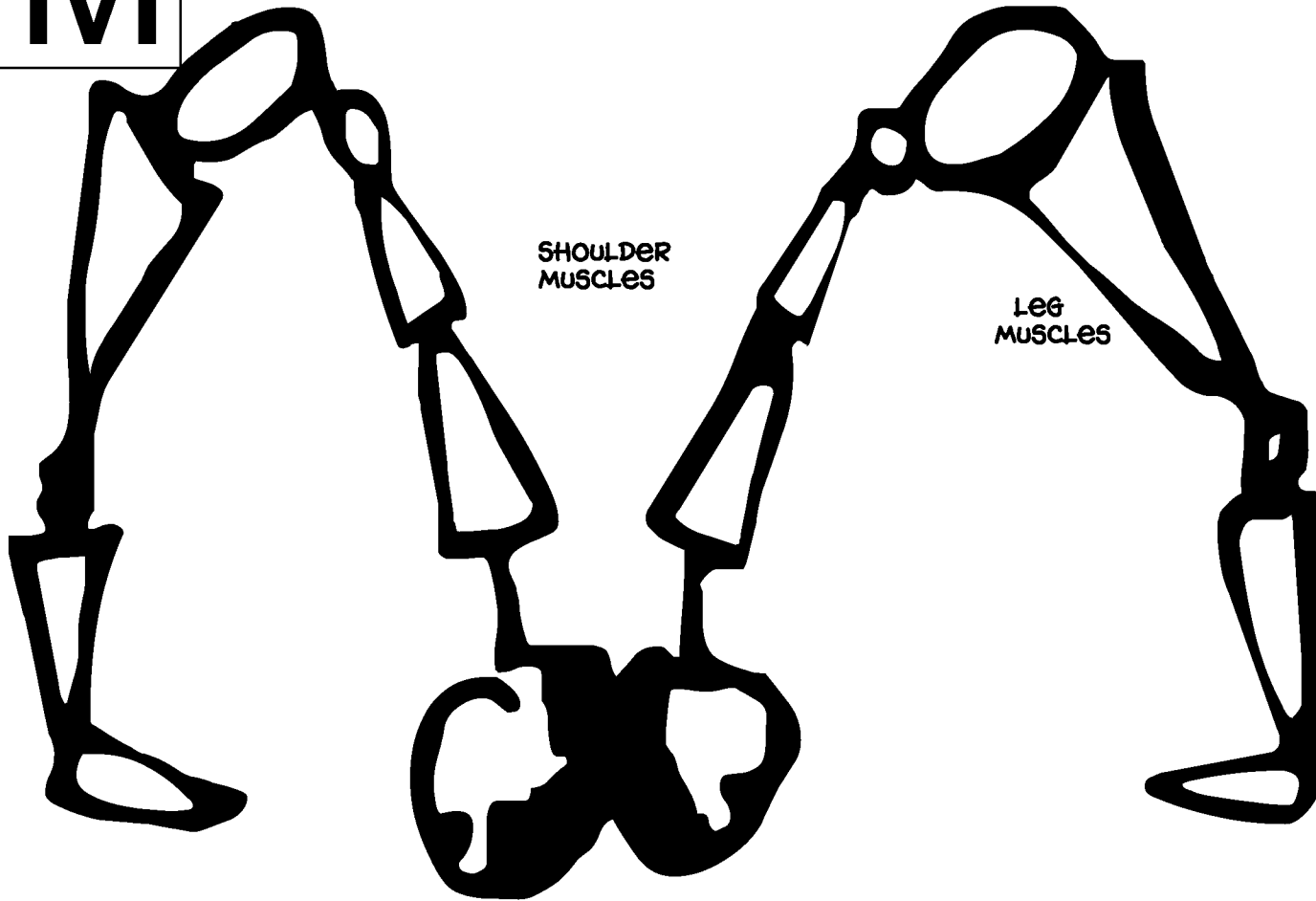
Stand straight.

Feet parallel. Slowly raise right hand. Hand forms angle about 45 degree in relation to the vertical torso. Breathe in. Move right leg forward with toes pointed toward the mat. Touch toes to the mat. Torso maintains straight position, perpendicular to mat. Upper and lower extremities move simultaneously. When your return to starting position breathe out. Repeat exercise by alternating left and right legs.



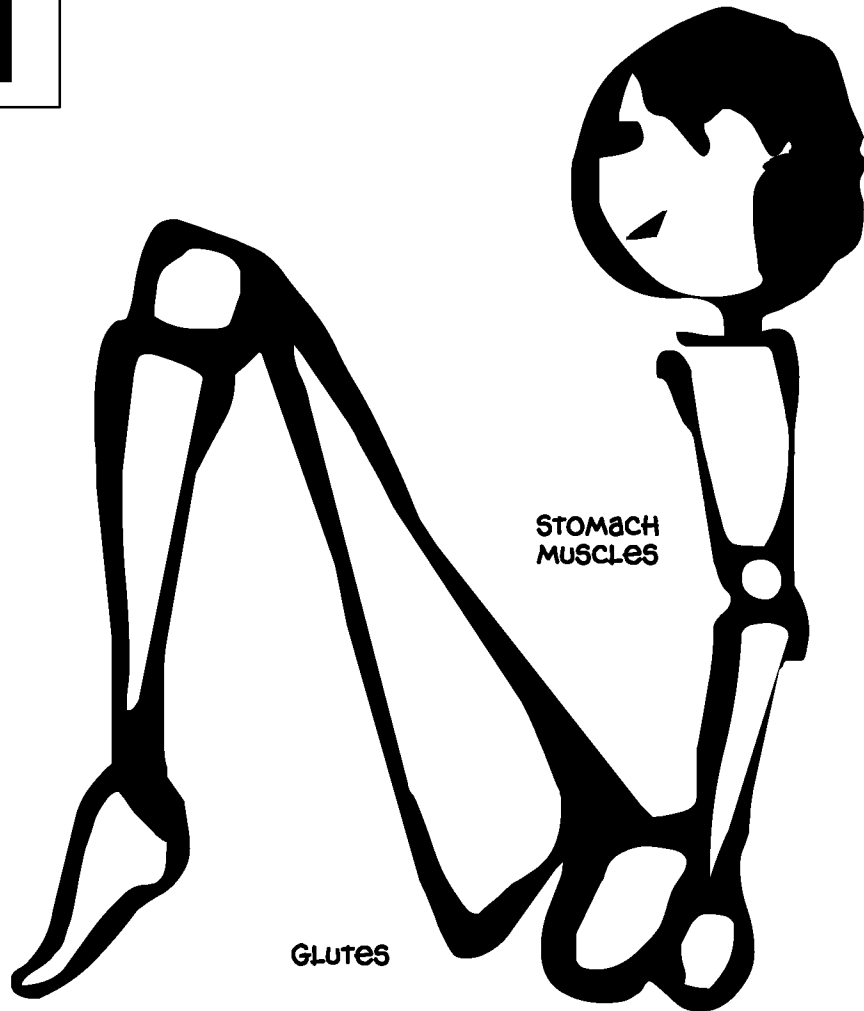
Sit on a mat. Bring the soles of your feet together as closely as possible to the body by using hands. Knees face upward and relax. Breathe in and out. Slowly move legs forward and breathe in as they lay flat on the mat. Maintain your legs parallel and close to each other. The letter "L" is formed. Slowly return to your original position and breathe out.

M

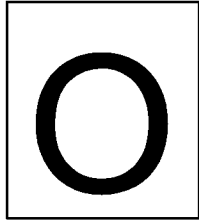


A two participant, cooperative exercise. Stand straight with feet parallel. Slowly start to kneel on the mat. Hands support your body like the letter "A" exercise. Move pelvis up while hands and legs remain on the mat. Straighten your legs in the knee area. Stretch your legs and body muscles. When your body forms an inverted "V" shape breathe in. Slowly return to starting point. Breathe out. Your partner will follow the same procedure. Your bodies are almost mirror reflections.

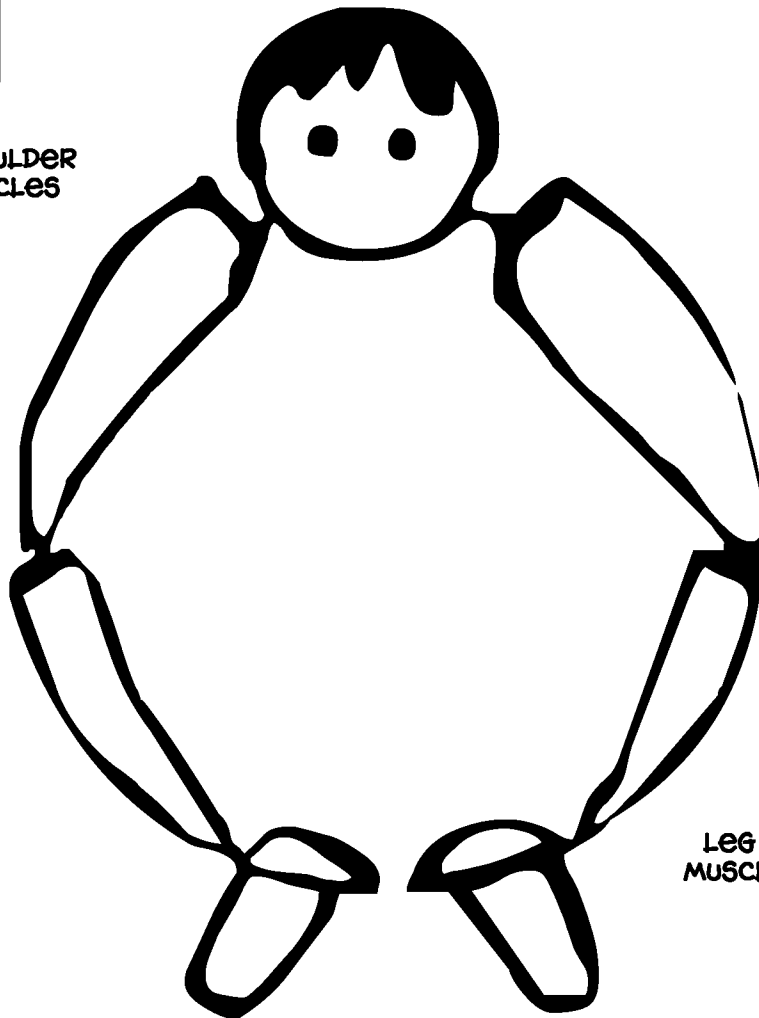
N



Maintain sitting position. Your legs are straight and parallel. Relax. Continue to breathe in and out. Your hands are supporting your body from behind. Slowly pull your legs close to the body so that knees are almost drawn to your chest but maintain distance. Breathe out as you pull legs in for letter formation.



SHOULDER  
MUSCLES



Leg  
MUSCLES

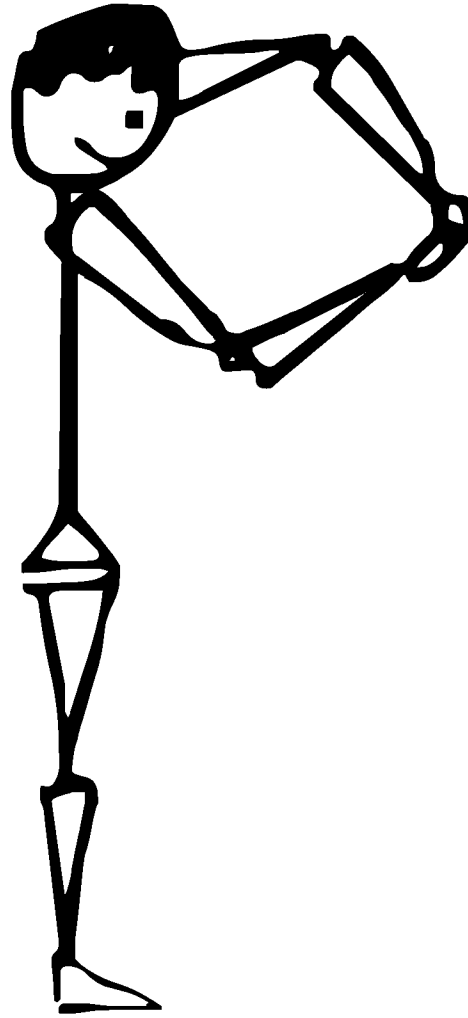


Maintain correct posture. Slowly start bending your legs with knees facing outward. While doing this breathe out. Toes of the feet facing outward and heels almost touching each other. Hands rounded and close to legs. Upon return to original position breathe in. The spinal column is maintained straight all the time, even while your torso bends forward in the lower position.

P

ARM  
MUSCLES

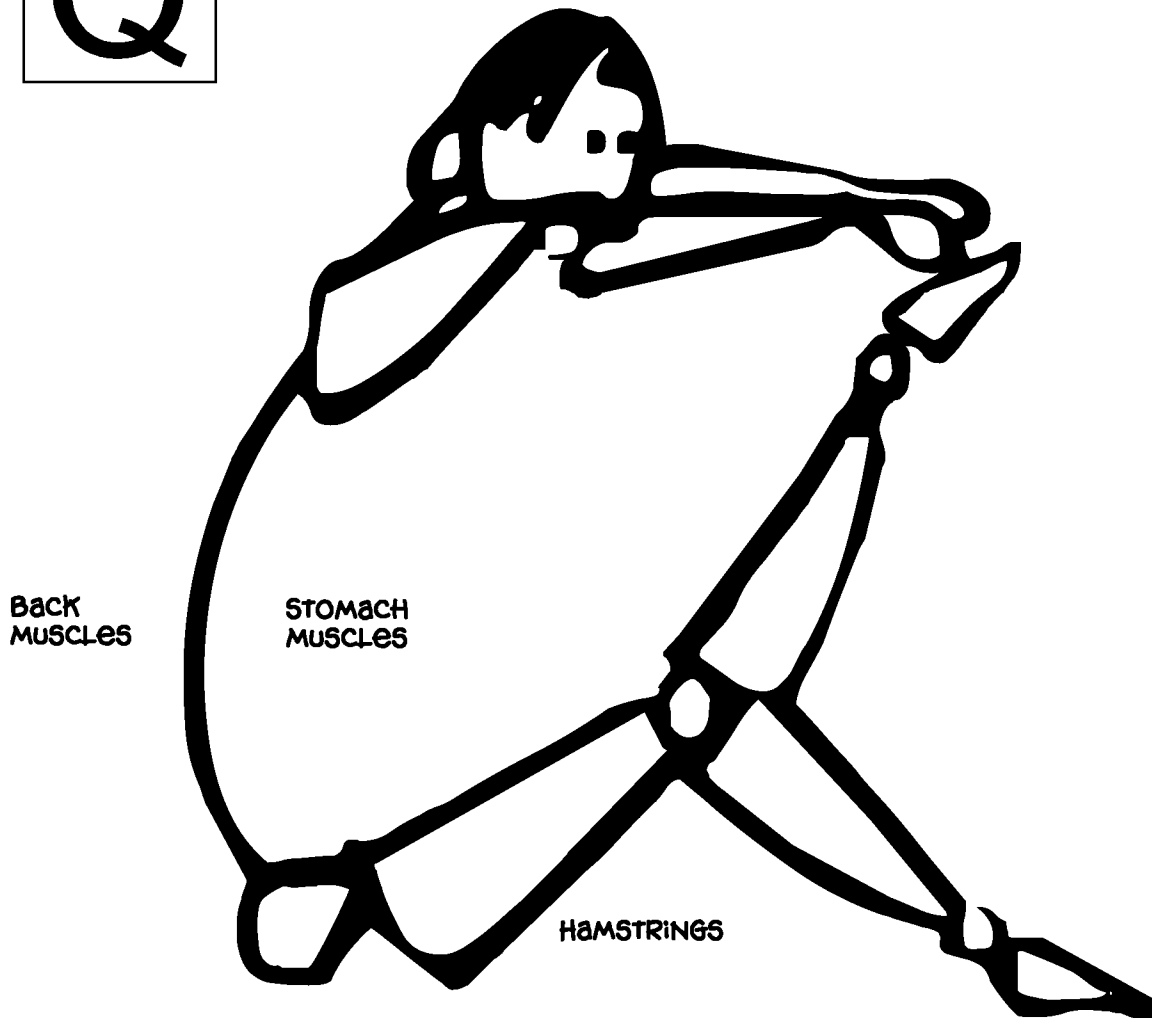
SHOULDER  
MUSCLES



Stand

straight. Breathe deeply. Visualize the letter and your body in that space. Move your arms slowly in free circular motion to form rounded configuration. Right hand moving in circular motion from the top, and left hand from the bottom. They touch each other. Try to do exercise with eyes closed. Breathe in during letter formation. When return to starting position breathe out. Alternate right and left hands.

Q

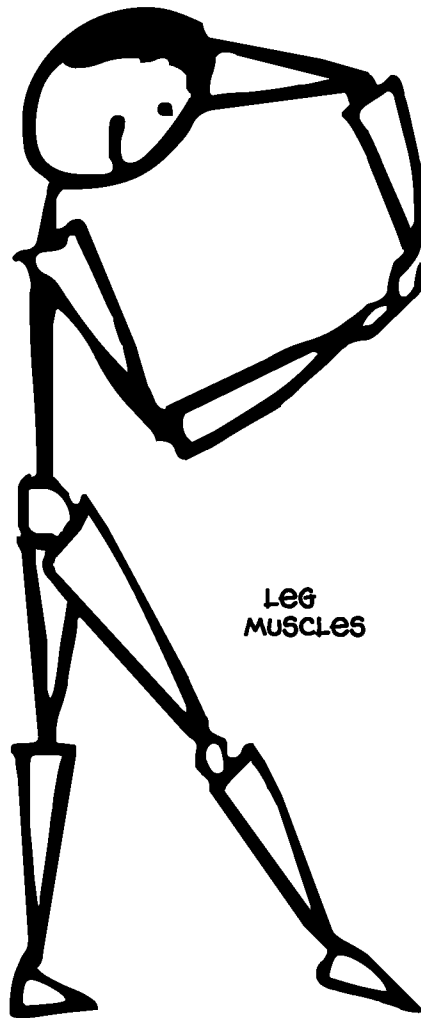


Maintain sitting position on the mat. Pull your legs toward body. Bend your legs. Right leg moves forward and extends toward the sky. Hold foot with you hands, toes pointed toward the sky. Pull rounded body and hands (spinal column has shaped of a bow) toward extended foot. When forming the letter “Q” exhale air from lungs through the nose. Return to staring position and breathe in. Alternate left and right legs.



R

SHOULDER  
MUSCLES



LEG  
MUSCLES



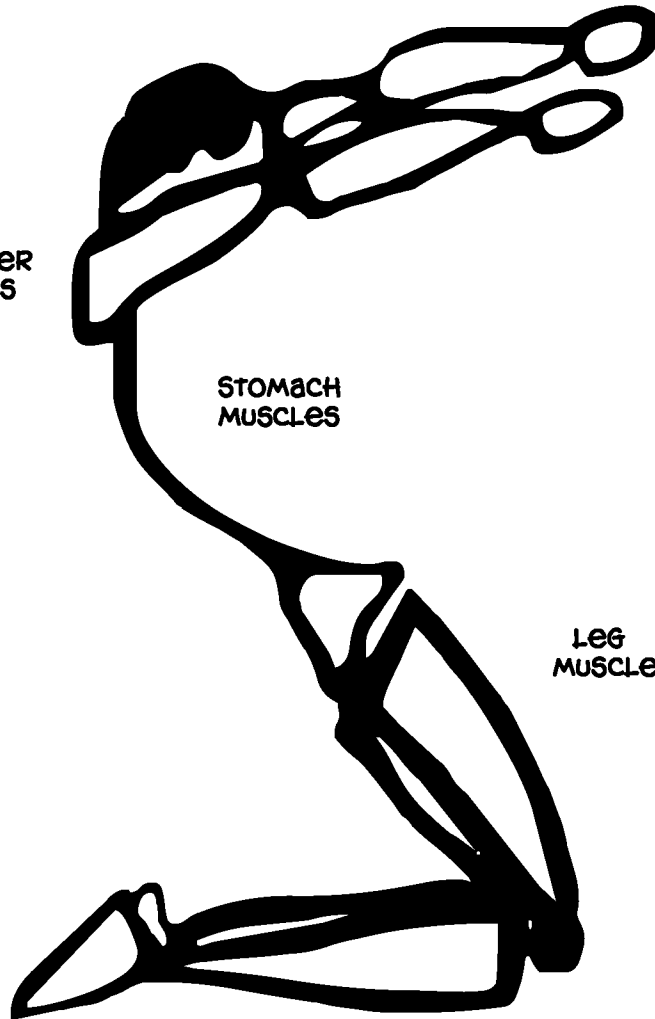
Maintain starting vertical position of the body. Move your slightly bent arms in a circular motion to form rounded configuration of the letter "R". Right hand moving from the top and left hand from the bottom. They touch each other. Right leg extends a little bit forward. Toes touch surface of the mat. Breathe in when your form "R". Breathe out when your return to original position.

S

SHOULDER  
MUSCLES

STOMACH  
MUSCLES

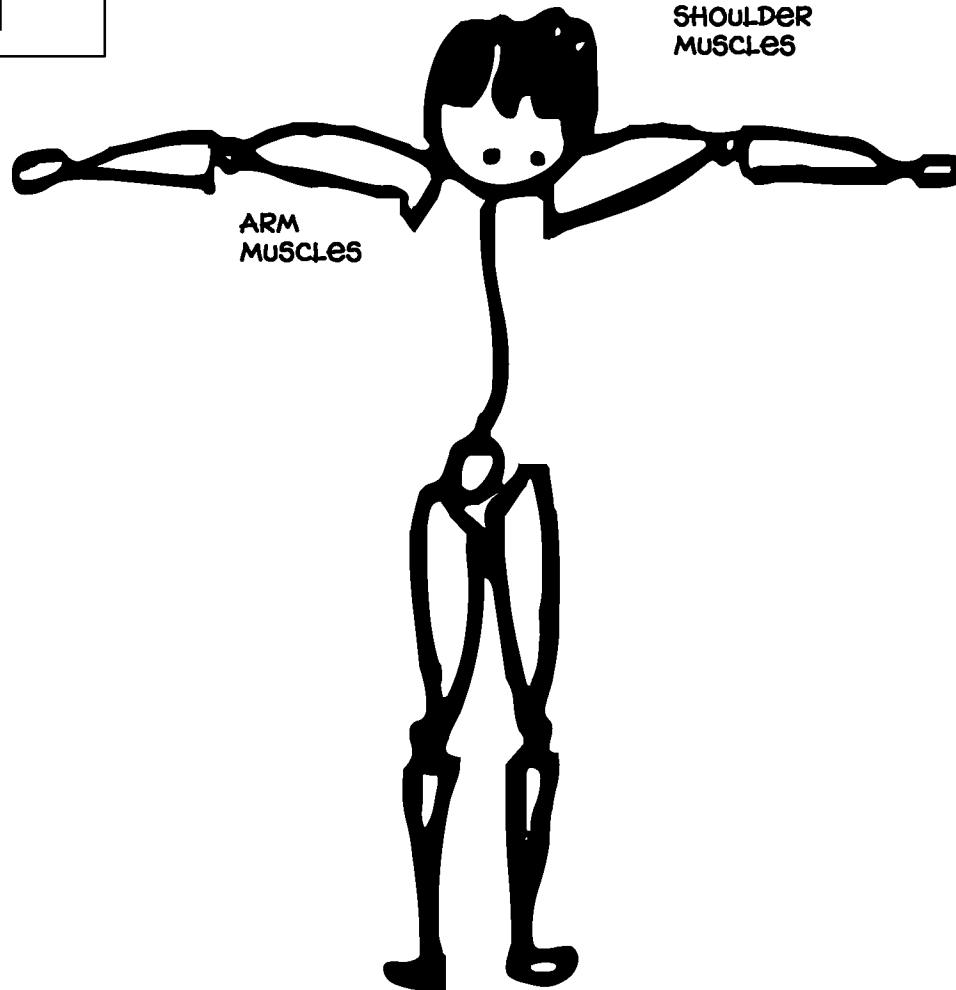
LEG  
MUSCLES



Kneel down and slowly move your torso backward with arms over the top of your head. Bend slightly forward, arms pointed with palms facing down. Try to keep balance by distributing your weight equally on supporting legs. Use arms as a leverage to balance your body. The letter "S" is formed.

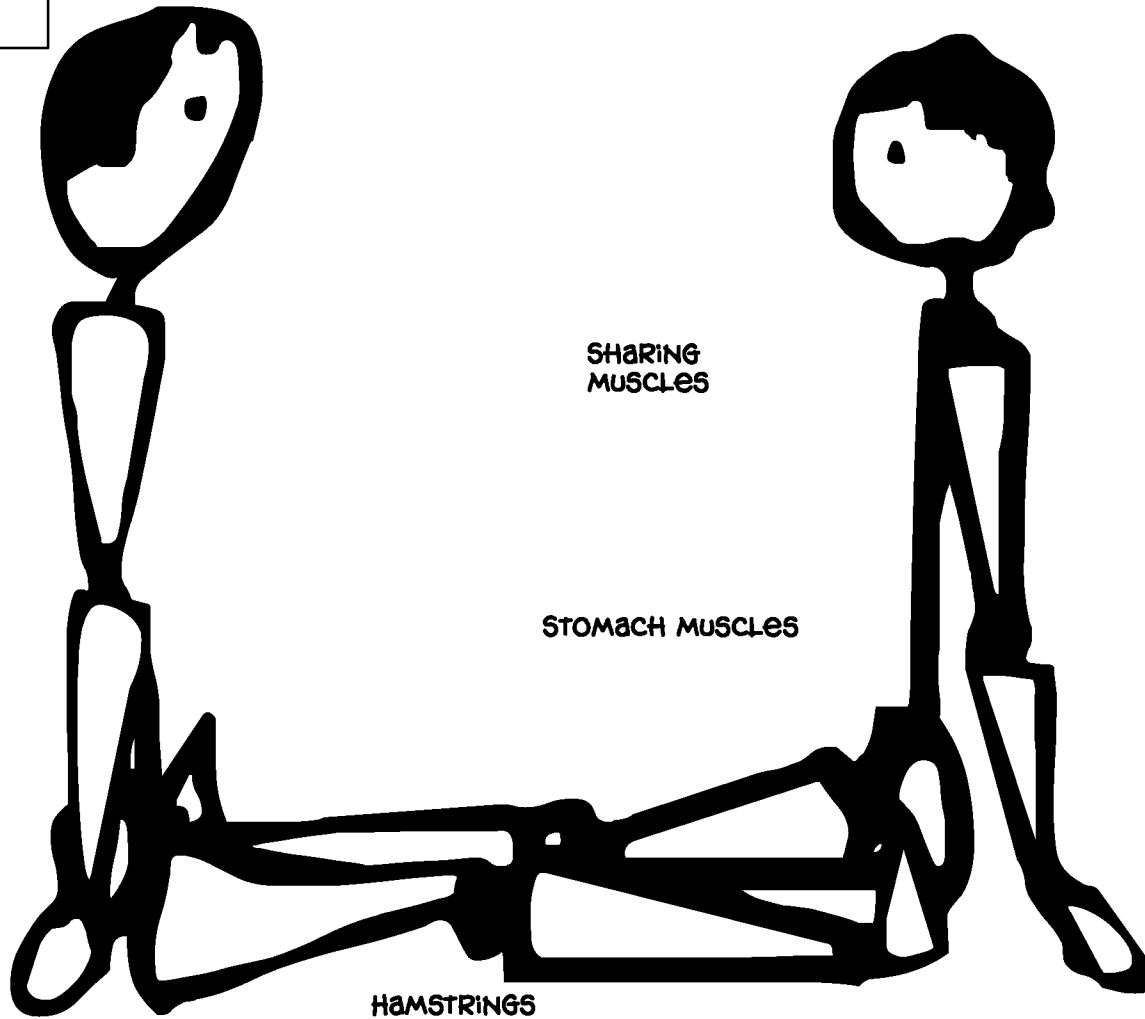
When you move your hands forward and move your pelvic back, breathe out. Breathe in upon the return to your original position.

T

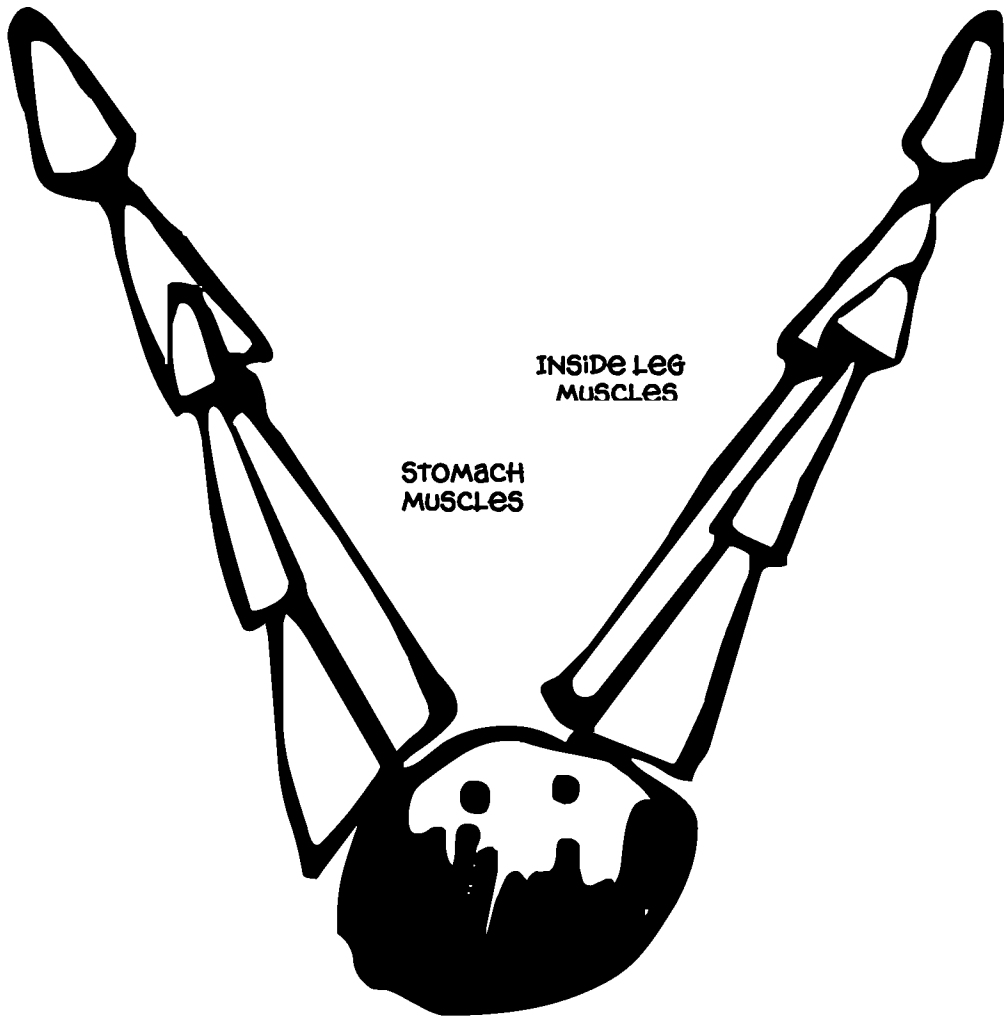
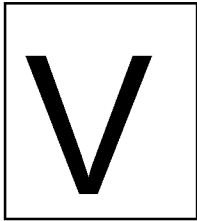


Stand straight. Maintain regular breathing. Slowly spread arms on shoulder level. Keep them parallel to the mat. When letter "T" is formed breathe in. Return hands to original position. Breathe out.

U

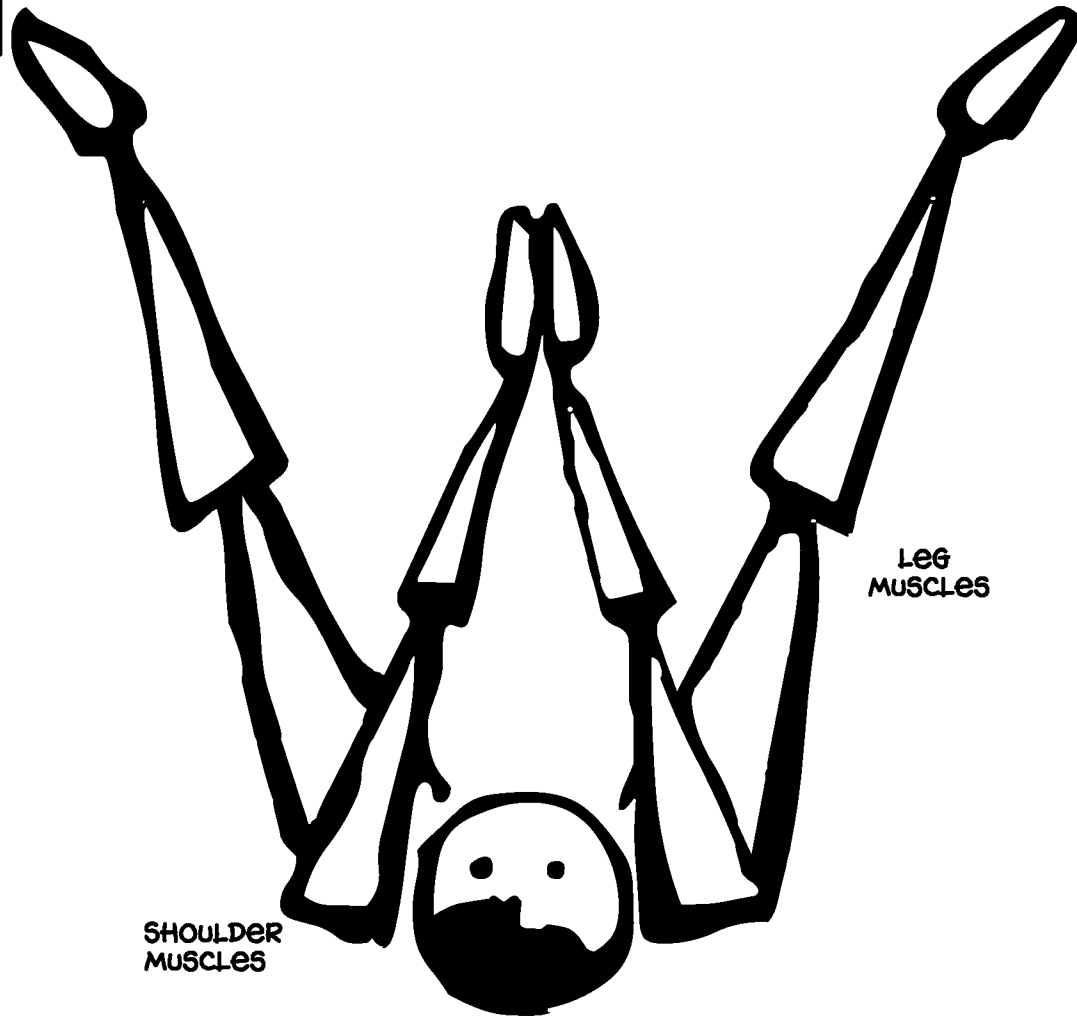


Cooperative exercise. Needs two participants. Maintain sitting position like during "L" formation, your arms parallel and pressed along torso. Arms provide support and balance. Place your legs parallel with your partner legs. You are facing forward toward your partner and laughing. Maintain regular breathing.

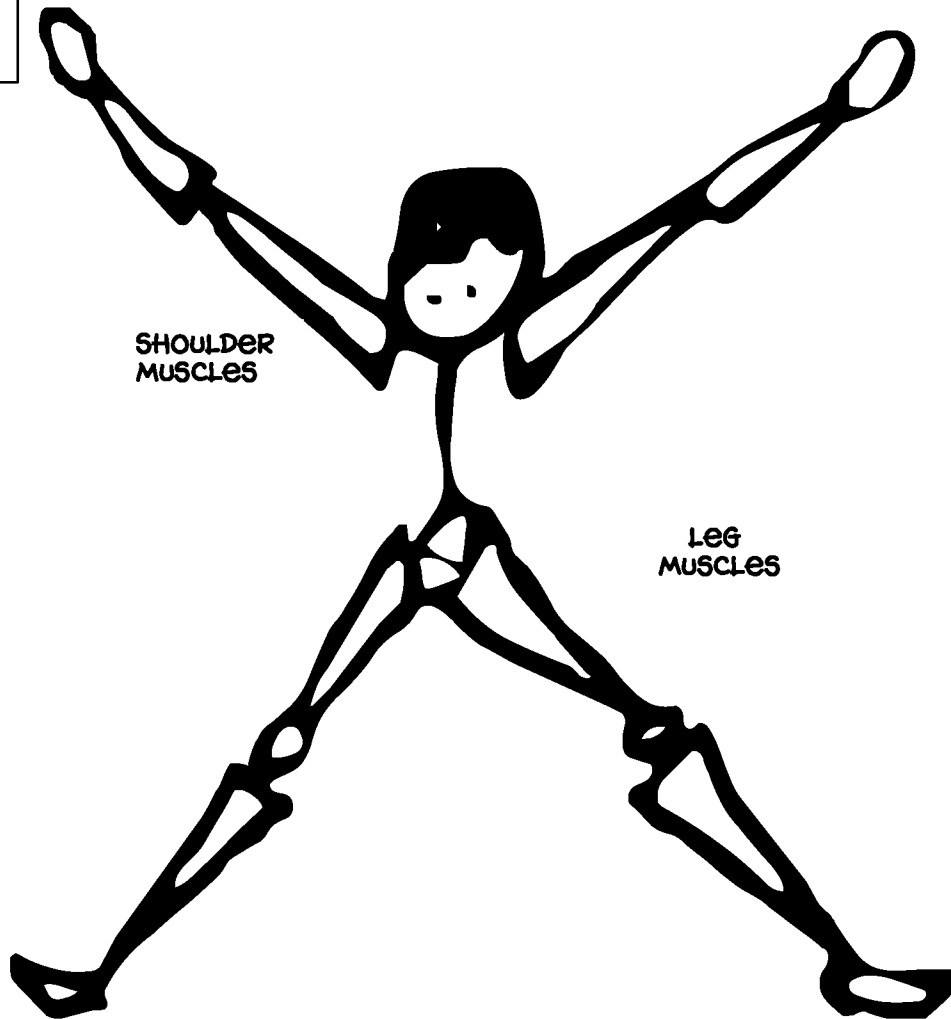
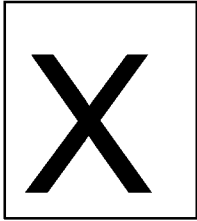


Lay on  
your back. Breathe  
gently in and out.  
Slowly rise your legs.  
Straighten them in the  
knee area. Hold your  
legs with your arms.  
Stretch and hold legs  
up to form letter "V".  
Pelvis, back, and head  
touch the mat.  
Maintain normal  
breathing.

W



This exercise resembles "V", except you bring your arms together. Breathe out during letter formation. Breathe in when you return to original position.

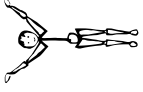


SHOULDER  
MUSCLES

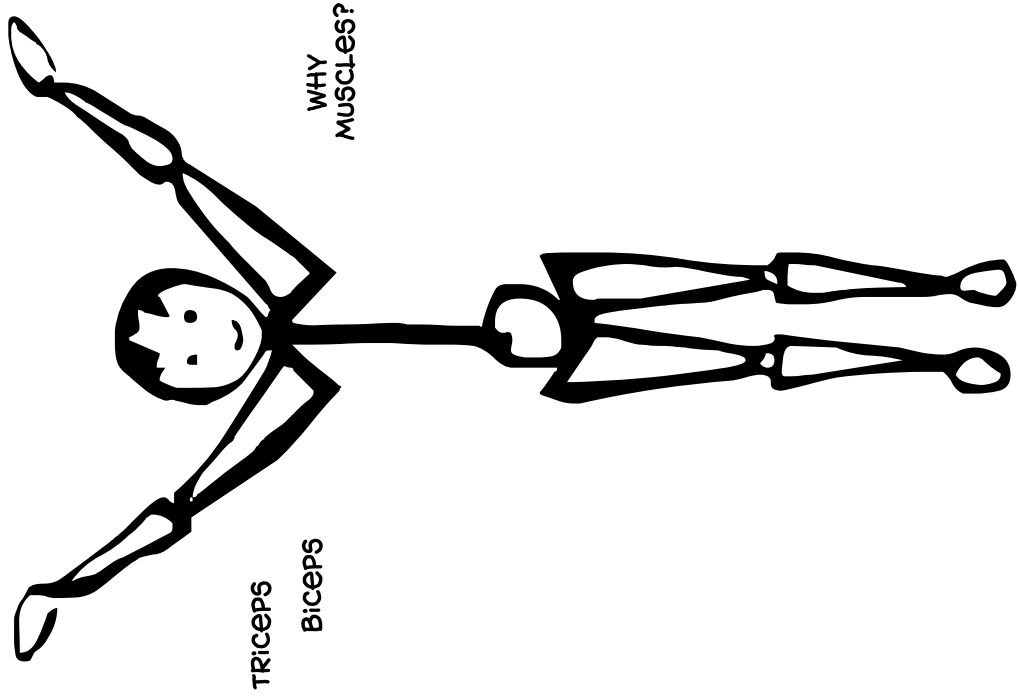
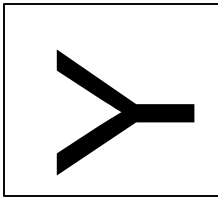
LEG  
MUSCLES



Stand straight. Spread your arms wide over head, palms out. Spread legs, feet parallel to hands. Breathe in. Return to original position. Breathe out.

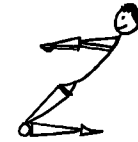
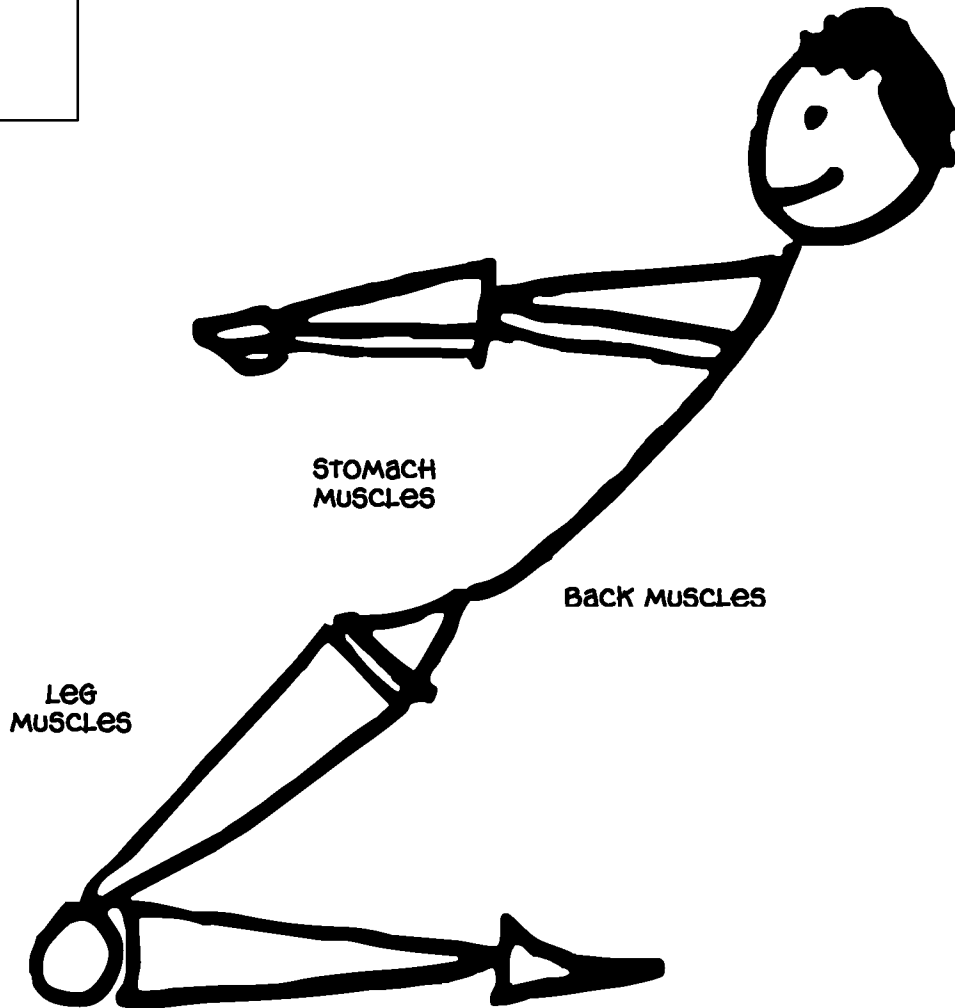


Maintain body straight as during "T". Raise your hands over head. Spread them out, pointed to the sky at approximately a 45 degree angle to the shoulder. Breathe in. Breathe out when you bring arms back to original position.

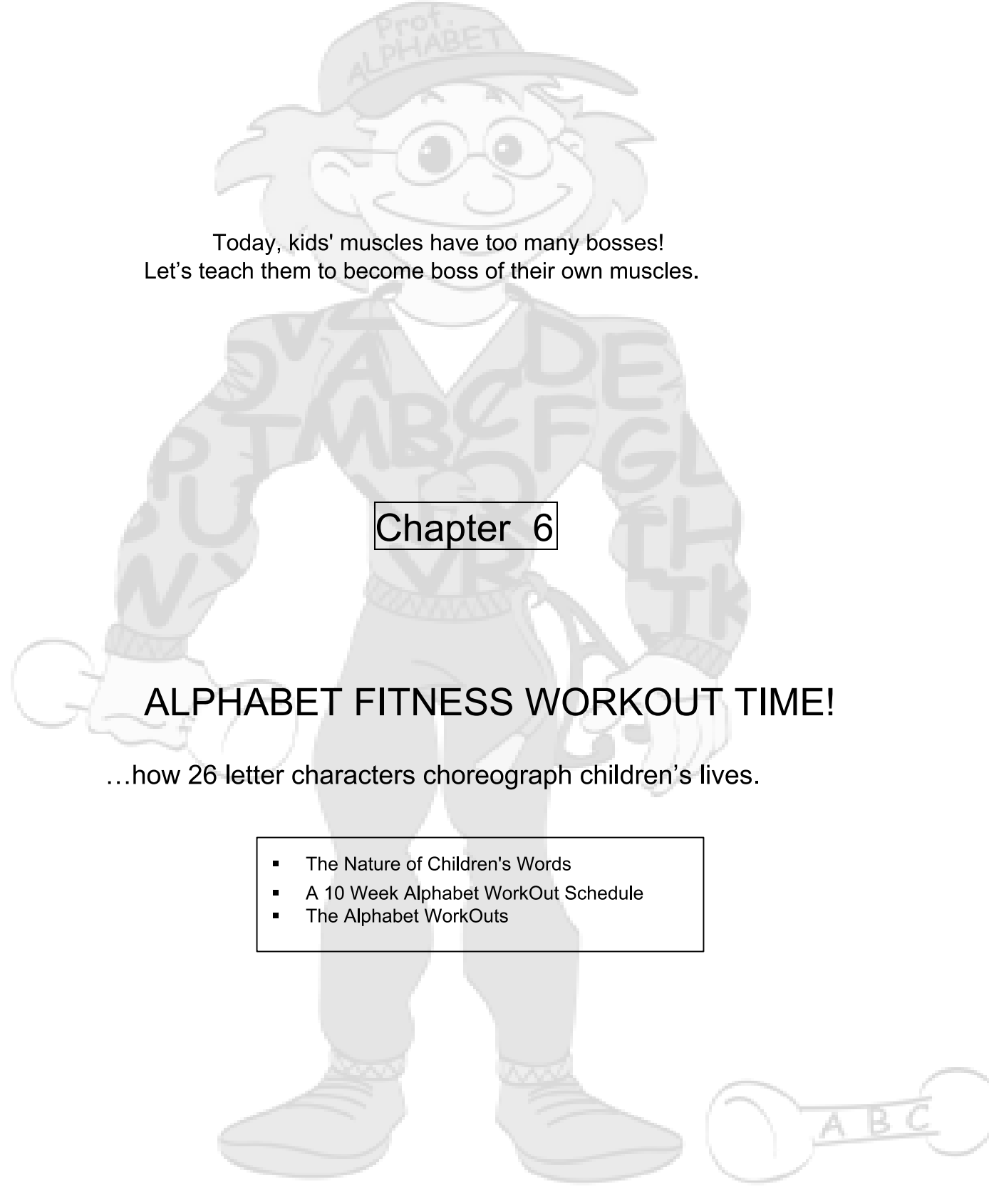




Z



Shape your body like the “S”. One noticeable difference is that all lines of the body are straight and parallel. Try to use arms as leverage to maintain balance. Back should be in straight line with the neck. Breathe out when you stretch your muscles. Breathe in while returning to original position.



Today, kids' muscles have too many bosses!  
Let's teach them to become boss of their own muscles.

## Chapter 6

# ALPHABET FITNESS WORKOUT TIME!

...how 26 letter characters choreograph children's lives.

- The Nature of Children's Words
- A 10 Week Alphabet WorkOut Schedule
- The Alphabet WorkOuts

# THE NATURE OF CHILDREN'S WORDS

## Insights from a Child's Vocabulary:

If we listen and observe carefully, we can gain great understanding about our children's natures through the words they frequently speak – or do not speak at all. As children increasingly internalize language, words can shift the child's temperament. Healthy vocabulary growth helps enrich overall well-being. Negative language induces muscle tension and inhibits healthy learning, and physical and emotional growth. Consciously changing one's words can change one's physical, mental and emotional nature.

## Gently Enrich Vocabularies:

As you practice Alphabet Fitness, help each child create a special "word diary" to track the main words he/she uses each day. Practice changing the negative words, or other energy-depleting words, and watch the nature, comfort level, and learning ability of the child shift. Add a few missing words ...especially loving, praising, melodious words. Notice the change.

### Match-up a Child's Nature to the Nature of his/her Words

**Communicative Nature:** Are the child's words primarily visual (i.e. Let me see)? Auditory (Let me hear)? Tactile (feel)? Gustatory (taste, a 'gut' feel, visceral)? Or olfactory (scent)?

**Socially Interactive Nature:** Are the child's words shy, playful, reserved, social, aggressive, serious, comfortable, compassionate, or empathetic?

**Emotional Nature:** Are child's words frequently excitable, fearful, calm, blasé, curious, sad, light-hearted, happy, content, serious, shutdown, or non-demonstrative?

**Imagery Nature:** Are the child's words mostly mechanical, flowery, animal words, people words, nature like, sensory words, TV or game-oriented language?

**Physical Nature:** While talking and/or silent, is the child's body flexible, active, or rigid? Are tension levels high or low? Is breathing shallow or diaphragmatic? Are body movements ambidextrous or single-sided, big or small muscle movements?

**Concentrative Nature:** Are child's words used mostly focused, detailed, concise, peripheral, or rambling?

**Voice Nature:** Notice the pitch, volume, clarity, pace, melody, coarseness and speed of words.

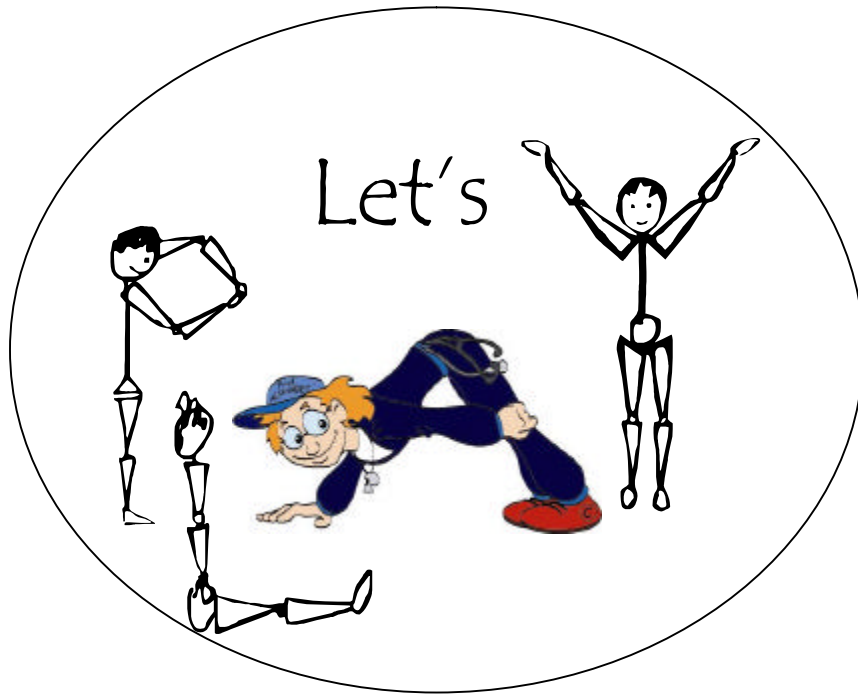
**Attitude Nature:** Are child's words mostly positive, negative, funny, sad, questioning, or helpful?

**Connective Nature:** Does child frequently use words like we, us, our, let's, me and/or I?

**Brain Nature:** Are words cooperative, competitive, concrete, imaginative, anxious, or calm?

**Dream Nature:** Dreams speak for children's inner nature. Help the child put them into words.

*We are nurtured by the nature of our words. Choose healthy words.*



## Alphabet Fitness

### A 10-WEEK ALPHABET WORKOUT OVERVIEW Linking body muscles to language.

- Week 1: BODY-MIND WARM-UPS (Muscle familiarity/ muscle IQ) p.59
- Week 2: ALPHABET YOGA™ (Letter postures, muscle feel/directionality/focus) p.60
- Week 3: CHILDREN'S INITIALS (Letter attachments/self-confidence) p.61
- Week 4: LETTER BUDDIES (Cooperation and socialization skills) p.62
- Week 5: LET'S BE READERS AND WRITERS (Matching/ laterality/opposites) p.63
- Week 6: TUMBLING LETTERS/DANCING WORDS (Word growth) p.64
- Week 7: ALPHABET MATH (Letter sequencing/ feeling words) p.65
- Week 8: SPELL'N'BE (Linking words to actions and feelings/motor associations p.66
- Week 9: COLORFUL WORDS (Sensory enhancement/linking emotions to words) p.67
- Week 10: THE LIFE OF AN A, B, C... (Drama/ body-mind expression) p.68

Young children establish healthy muscle response patterns to letters and words, as they playfully learn that language develops corresponding physical actions – between speaker and listener, and reader and writer.

## WORKOUT 1: BODY-MIND WARM-UPS

Raising Muscle IQ™ through body movements.

Breathe...relax...stretch like an A,B,C

### GOALS: Muscle Familiarity / Tension Release / Body Focus

- Children learn to pay attention to different body muscle movements and feelings.
- Children stretch and release muscle tensions that interfere with the ability for nerves, oxygen, blood flow, and chemistry to function optimally for healthy learning.
- Children condition in confident feelings of muscle relaxation through repetitive, flexible stretching and healthy deep breathing ... pre-requisites for mental and physical learning.
- Children learn that large muscles are important to learning ...as their movements activate larger brain areas for quicker, more cohesive brain-body connections.
- Children become familiar with core pre-literacy movements – balance, laterality, matching, sequencing, and direction – while learning their letters.
- Children practice muscle matching to condition rapid, reflex-memory links.

### ALPHABET WORKOUT

1. Gather the children in a circle. Let them know that “muscles like to be warmed up, and we will be doing this by making alphabet letters with our entire body! But first, let’s warm up by taking 3 slow, deep, relaxing breaths in and out...expanding our lungs slowly with air, and then releasing all that air out.” Repeat 3X.
2. Ask the children “Do you know how many ways you can stretch your body’s muscles?” “Can you show me by using your neck, elbows, wrists, waist, hips, knees, ankles? First let’s stretch the muscles on one side of our body... Great! Now let’s stretch the muscles on the other side... OK, now let’s stretch our middle muscles...”
3. “How many ways can you curve your body’s muscles?” Use arm, leg, and torso muscles. Muscles love to learn different directions: right, left, up, and down...
4. “OK, stretch our muscles to make more body shapes...straight ones...and curved ones! These shapes stretch and contract our muscles. Can you feel your muscles smile? Happy muscles make us smile. Suggest different shapes and ask how their muscles feel? Happy, sad, tired, full of energy, etc. ...?”
3. Have the children mimic all different object shapes to exercise their muscles. Pair children up to make shapes together, taking turns choosing which shapes they want to become. Making physical mimicking a habit helps muscle memory stay in shape!

## WORKOUT 2: ALPHABET YOGA™

Physically mimicking body letters – postures and forms

Breathe...relax...stretch like a D

### GOALS: Letter Matching/ Letter Directionality/ Attention

Language gives direction and instructions to the body through sequenced letter symbols called words.

- Children attach physical movements to language through alphabet muscle matching. The repetitive matching of their body positions to the postures, stretches, and muscle feel of the 26 AlphabetTykes™ strengthens their physical connection to the brain.
- Children appreciate that physical mimicking is an easier, more fun way to learn. The brain pays closer attention to strong stimulations sent by the body's larger muscle movements.
- Children improve attention skills through exercises focused by fuller body participation and movement.
- Children turn flat 2 dimensional letters into 3 dimensional forms as the body stretches and contracts to accommodate and feel the shape it has been asked to mimic and learn.
- Children learn that linking large body movements to their alphabet speeds up memory. Involving both body sides in learning keeps the whole brain involved in the process, preventing right-left hemispherical separation of information.
- Learning yoga letters adds calm to language learning, allowing children to focus.



### ALPHABET WORKOUT

1. "Let's have fun today learning to play a game called Alphabet Yoga. Did you know that we can speak to each other, without even talking, by letting our bodies be our alphabet letters! Our brains learn our letters by reading the shape of our bodies. Let's begin by stretching our bodies into the 26 different letter shapes. Once we learn them, we won't need any sound for us to read and talk each other!"
2. "OK, let's choose a letter we want to be, and silently pretend to be that letter with our bodies." (Select one of the Alphabet Fitness letter shapes) "We'll do one at a time, and we'll guess each other's letter. This way our bodies and our minds will learn the names of our letters together. If your mind forgets, ask your body!"
3. "Remember to also picture your alphabet letter's body posture inside your head. Say the letter's name, and feel the letter stretching your body's muscles."
4. Enjoy the silence and fun of this alphabet, yoga-like communication game. Repeat to include every child in the class, encouraging the use of all 26 letters.

## WORKOUT 3: CHILDREN'S INITIALS

Building letter associations

Breathe...relax...stretch like an E and an F.

### GOALS: Personal Attachment / Self-confidence

- Children learn the first and last initials of their name. Initials are often the first letters a child will learn. They will be frequently used throughout his/her life.
- Children learn to take ownership and pride in their initials. Life-long associations continuously link to children's initials. Performing body initials makes them more conscious about the kinds of experiences they link to those initials, and how their initials make them feel.
- Children learn a sense of self-confidence when their initials link to positive experiences.
- Children learn to 'feel' more responsible for what they become attached to through the process of personalizing their alphabet letters.
- Letters attach to the muscle movements and emotions that are used to learn and express them.

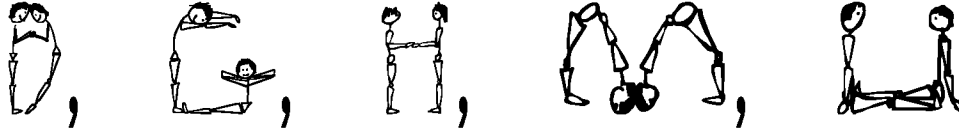
### ALPHABET WORKOUT



(Initials of Oscar Wilde or Oprah Winfrey)

1. "For today alphabet exercise, let's play "initials". We will learn how important the initials of our names can be. OK, who wants to play out their initials? What is your first name? Shall we all say the letter that begins your first name?"
2. "Let's all have our body form its own "first initials (i.e. the first letter of your first name). Pay close attention: Picture the letter in your head, and feel it in your muscles."
3. "Now we'll exercise your last initials" (i.e. the first letter of your last name).
4. Continue for each child's initials. Have two children buddy-up and take turns exercising each other's initials.
5. "We can exercise our friend's initials, mom's or dad's initials...sister, brother, aunt, etc."
6. "Let's exercise show and tell initials. i.e. Daffy Duck, animal of the week, sport's player themes..."

## WORKOUT 4: LETTER BUDDIES



Breathe...relax...stretch like an I, J, and K

### GOALS: COOPERATION/ SOCIALIZATION

- Children learn to build simple words with letter friends, fostering cooperative learning, partnering, leadership, problem-solving, and social communication skills. This helps counterbalance today's more solitary, sedate learning styles.
- Children become aware how enjoyable learning can be. When children interact in playful, positive learning movements with other children, educating muscle memory becomes a fast, physically and socially healthy way to learn.

### ALPHABET WORKOUT

1. "Some of the body letters need two bodies to make them. Who wants to find a buddy to make one of these letters? Don't forget to name your letter. Now what is another buddy letter? Who wants to buddy together for that letter?"
2. "It is important to be friends with our letters. Why don't you have a short talk with your letter buddy? Can you think of a word that starts with the letter that you and your buddy made?"
3. "Now find a different buddy, and be the other part of the letter this time...like this... (Make the shapes of the letters made by two children.) Now switch sides again with your letter buddy."
4. "Now two buddies find someone to make a one-body letter and make words together, like HI; MY; WHY; and HUGS!" Reinforce with the physical gesturing of each word.



## WORKOUT 5: LET'S BE READERS AND WRITERS



Breathe...relax...stretch like a G and an H

### GOALS: MATCHING / OPPOSITES (CROSS-LATERAL LETTER LEARNING)

- Children enjoy using strong, large muscle movements as a playful mode for learning early language abilities. Letter sounds and images become linked to the child's gross-motor-associated memory.
- Children more quickly condition the core pre-literacy skills of concentration, mirroring, matching, laterality and letter directions in sync with the physical practice of writing and reading letters with their entire body.
- Children instill a strong kinesthetic awareness of each letter's direction and behavior when they put letters into action.
- Children maintain whole brain/body comprehension during language learning. Acting as each other's writers and readers integrates a child's cross lateral processing system.
- Children add spatial body movement to two-dimensional letter shapes, linking right and left brain processing.
- Children's bodies and brains learn in tandem during playful movement. Limited muscle resistance allows the body to move more in sync with its brain's images for quicker, reflex memory.
- Children prepare for later fine-motor linear reading and writing of letters.

### ALPHABET WORKOUT

Writing with my alphabet body etches letters in my brain.

1. "OK. For today's alphabet exercise let's pair up in a different way, and take turns playing "Reader and Writer". We'll form two lines: a "letter-writer" line, and a "letter-reader" line.
2. Letter Writers: "In alphabetical order, we'll all write one letter at a time with our entire body. "
3. Letter Readers: "Attentively watch the letter writer's movements, and guess which letter he or she is writing and you are reading. Continue through the whole alphabet. Then reverse and switch roles. As the week progresses, each team of writers can huddle and choose letters out of alphabetical sequence to make it a little more challenging for the "readers".
4. Have the children pay attention to how their body letters feel...where their feet are when they form and hear a letter? ...where their arms, legs, head, back, hands and buttocks are as they make their body letters? Continue to have the children notice which muscle groups they are using as they make each letter.

## WORKOUT 6: LAZY LETTERS / TUMBLING LETTERS / DANCING WORDS

Breathe...relax...stretch like an L, M N, O, and P

### GOALS: ROOT WORDS / PHYSICALLY FEELING WORDS/ MOTOR GROWTH

- Children learn that implementing basic pre-literacy motor behaviors makes learning the alphabet fun.
- Children link physical and emotional feeling to letters.
- Children get a feel for letter sequencing and linearity – the letter line-up.
- Children dance to the rhythm of their words, making alphabet learning fun.
- Children’s word comprehension grows naturally when they move as letter shapes. They expand their words back into their 3D spatial images. This greatly strengthens sensori-motor stimulation, enhancing learning and well-being.

### ALPHABET WORKOUT

1. “Let’s all be lazy letters for a moment. Let the kids do all their letters while lying on the floor, on their side or back.”
2. “Now, we’ll have our muscles work a little harder so they’ll remember longer and faster. Can you roll or crawl your body into a letter? Can you jump into a letter? Can you hop into a letter? Can you jump and form the letter T?”
4. “OK writers, let’s try writing a dance word with out bodies, and then reinforce it through a dance movement. Let’s be the letters C, O, N, G, A, and wiggle and dance our body letters to the Alphabet Conga!” Choose appropriate music for different dance words; spell other dance words and let the kids playfully sway their body letters to the music, i.e. jazz, classical, rap...
5. Always feel free to form any word and then reinforce it through dance activity.

JUST MAKE A LETTER OF THE ALPHABET AND THEN PLAY WITH IT!

Dance like an “I” in ballerina

Fly like a “T” in flight

Roll like an “O” in roll.

## WORKOUT 7: ALPHABET MATH

Adding/subtracting letters



Breathe...relax...stretch like a Q, R, S, T, U, V

### GOALS: MOTOR SKILLS / SEQUENCING / PHYSICALLY GROWING WITH WORDS

- Children add and subtract their body letters in linear formations to make words.
- Children begin to associate body movements and feelings to simple root words as they physically coordinate their letters into meaningful words. Their physical sequencing of spatial body letters into words is a precursor for later fine-motor muscle learning skills of hand writing and reading (of written literature).
- Children discover the difference that the placement of a single letter can make in the action and meaning of a word.
- Children learn faster when they include large motor movements in learning vs relying on repetitive fine motor movements. Large motor movements stimulate multiple brain links, and repetitive movements encourage rapid, automatic reflex memory.

### ALPHABET WORKOUT How children's bodies grow along with their words.

1. "Can you form the word CAT? The C calls the A, calls the T."
2. "The C runs away and now you have AT"
3. "An E runs in and AT becomes ATE."
4. "An L jumps in front and ATE becomes LATE. etc."
5. "What if the C in CAT ran away and H took its place? And then a B replaced H?"
6. "If you like, try adding two letter-words: Let's try pop. Can you make the sound of a pop? Are there different kinds of POPS?"
7. "Now let's try popcorn. See how different a word can become when its sound or image is added to another word!"

## WORKOUT 8: SPELL and BE



Breathe...relax...stretch like a W and an X

**GOALS: LINKING WORDS TO ACTIONS AND FEELINGS / MOTOR ASSOCIATIONS / SELF-REGULATION THROUGH LANGUAGE LINKED MUSCLE MOVEMENTS**

- Children's different muscle tensions influence how words are spelled, spoken, written, read, perceived, and felt.
- Children learn to 'be' the words they 'spell' and act out with their bodies. Changing a word's spelling literally changes which muscles and feelings attach to that word, and changing one's words changes one's feelings and physical reactions. Simply using capital letters vs. lower case letters can change one's muscle-linked feelings.
- Children's physical ability to act out words helps them link appropriate emotions to their letters and words. Attaching emotions to words improves word comprehension and communication. This fosters more expressive, healthier communication skills, while enhancing retention.
- Children's muscles can become 'spellbound' or conditioned by repetitive words.
- Exercising their words lets kids "expel" muscle-bound emotions and built-up tensions.
- Children's muscle tightness often makes them see, feel, and interpret words incorrectly. Physically choosing "feel good" words helps build a healthier, happier word foundation to fall back upon in stressful times.
- Children's exposure to positive words strengthens their physical and emotional well-being. Children's exposure to negative words weakens self-esteem, physical strength, and well-being.
- Children playfully become the words they spell as their body muscles move in tandem with the different letter-sequences of their words.

Teach children to become positively spellbound.

### **ALPHABET WORKOUT: "Spell and Be" Time**

1. "Let's 'spell out' the word CAT, using your body to form the letters."
2. "Can you move like a big CAT? ...like a little CAT?"
3. "Can you show the different emotions you feel as you spell CAT? Happy, sad, tired, lonely? How do your bodies feel as a crying cat? A smiling cat?"
4. Exercise feel good words (laugh, happy, smile, hugs, joy, play...), comfort words, loving words, encouraging words...vs. painful or fearful words. Notice each child's muscle tension and posture as he/she writes and reads different words.

## WORKOUT 9: COLORFUL WORDS



Breathe...relax...stretch like a Y

### GOALS: SENSORY ENHANCEMENT / LINKING COLOR TO EMOTIONS

- Children playfully spell out colors with their body. This activity provides an outlet for children to express and feel different emotions and understand emotional attachments – to develop emotional self-regulation.
- Children love colors. They play a vital part in enriching each child's emotional and creative life, enhancing learning and memory. Primary colors are key. Acting as their words allows children to 'try on' all different colors and associated feelings and behaviors.

### ALPHABET WORKOUT

1. "I wonder, can we all picture the color red in our head?"
2. "What does the word red remind you of? Can you spell red? Is it a happy color? What does the word red make your body feel like? Smell like? Taste like? Sound like? Act like? Does it give you energy to think of red?"
3. "Let's all act 'RED' together. Isn't it fun to learn how your body acts out a color?"
4. "Repeat, as you run through the list of major colors. Blend "color feelings" if you like i.e. describe 'blue-green' feelings. There is a color for all different feelings."
5. "What colors made you happy? sad? playful? smart?"

## WORKOUT 10: THE LIFE OF AN A, B, C...

Breathe...relax...stretch like a Z

### GOALS: DRAMA / BODY-MIND EXPRESSION

- Children need to be much more in touch with their body's physical response to words due to the 'non-physical', non-tangible nature of symbolic language learning.
- Children develop imagination and word connections through creative drama. Writing and acting out words with their body turns infinite combinations of mental words into physically real stories.
- Children physically repeat the actions of their letters and words to condition strong associated reflex-memory. Education becomes a physically involved, healthy activity.
- Children's large muscle letter movements prepare both their bodies and minds for later fine motor reading and writing skills.
- Children's minds, bodies and behaviors shift in accordance with the words they use. Discover how physically learning and acting out different words makes young children more aware of word 'behaviors'. Simply changing verb tenses can change motor linked behaviors and emotions.

### ALPHABET WORKOUT

1. "Can you think of a word that begins with the letter A? Or, find a word in a book that starts with an "A". Let's form that word with our bodies?"
2. "Now let's act it out. Each of you can act it out in your own special way. Shake your legs, wiggle your arms."
3. "Now let's all write a short "A" sentence with your bodies so I may read it? Let's act out each sentence - just like a story."  
(Later do a "B" story, i.e. Bobby bakes bread...etc.)



"Great! Now you all are official AlphabeTykes™...able to write and read with your body."

**REMEMBER:** Kids learn easily by listening, watching, and physically imitating. Repetitive words grow into automatic reflexes, locking in conditioned responses and associated habits. Choose your words carefully.



# Glossary

*"We are always engaged in small muscle and neural activity that we normally disregard. It is called thinking. The body is always conversing back and forth with the brain."*

- A. Sheikh

- Alphabet Anatomy – Different positions, body figures, and movements of the body, which replicate shapes and sounds of letters.
- Alphabet-wellness – the ability to link the 26 letters of the alphabet to healthy, constructive language and associated physiological responses.
- AlphabeTykes – newly designed kid-friendly alphabet characters that form letters and words with the full body.
- Ambidextrous – dual sided physical agility
- Body Awareness – knowledge of body parts: where each part is, what it does, how it might feel, and how it relates to the rest of the body
- Body part – group of muscles, which provide support for the body, such as legs, arms, and chest.
- Body reading – reading another child's body letters
- Body writing – forming letters with the full body/writing and encoding a letter-posture
- Breathing techniques – ability to maintain normal breath, synchronizing inhaling and exhaling with exercise.
- Crossing the Midline – body control that involves reaching and grasping across the midsection of the body without moving other parts of the body.
- Cross-laterality – physical movement where limbs on one side of the body cross the body's midline and coordinate with limbs on the other side of the body – so both sides of the brain are being used simultaneously, improving the nerve communications between the sides of the brain.
- Directionality – body movement/position of body in space.
- Fine-motor movement – small, more specialized body muscle movements
- Gross-motor movement – large body muscle movements; The ability to control and coordinate the movements of the large muscles; those of the trunk, arms and legs.
- Kinesthetic sense – ability to be aware of the location of the body in a space
- Laterality – cross-over movements; coordinating one side of the brain with the other through physical movements. Key to reading, writing and communicating, and ability to think and move in balance/unison.
- Motor-memory – memory created through movement
- Muscle IQ – motor-educated memory; movement-related recall; muscle memory
- Muscle tension – changes in the tone of the muscle tissue from prolonged muscle contraction
- Negative words – groups of words which suppress children's emotions and have long-term effect on mental and intellectual development
- Patterning Skills – the ability to identify patterns or arrangements of parts that make up a whole, such as the letters that make up a word
- Phonics – the teaching of sound-letter associations; sound to print or print to sound knowledge. Requires knowledge of alphabet letters and the sounds they represent either alone or in combination with other letters.
- Positive words – groups of words that have positive effect on emotion, attitude, motivation, memory and well-being
- Physiology – Study of the mechanism of all internal processes in the body.
- Pre-Reading Activities – Activities that prepare a child physically and mentally to learn to read
- Sense of Balance – The ability to keep the position of the body steady in relation to gravity while muscles interact
- Sensori-motor – all of the senses work by using muscle movements. Without muscle movement one cannot sense.
- Sensory Stimulation – any stimulator that causes messages to be sent from the senses to the brain.
- Sequencing – the ordering of letters into word formations.
- Segmentation – the breaking down of words into its segments.
- Visualization – conscious ability to create mental pictures of not physically visible or tangible objects.



Whole Body Control – the ability to coordinate the movement of the trunk and limbs to complete a task.  
Word-wellness – the ability for positive words to stimulate positive chemical responses and feelings.

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## Program Affirmations

"Applying the latest understanding of brain physiology and the development of neurological pathways for learning, Wellness, Inc. has designed an educational program that perfectly suits young children's growing brains and bodies. Kids love that the exercises speak to the active way they learn, making it a fun and effective program. Children learn pre-literacy skills through play and with great enthusiasm. All of this makes Alphabet Fitness a model curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century."

- Janice Kahn, Ph.D., Health Educator/Medical Sociologist, Brookline, MA

"Alphabet Fitness is a concrete way of knowing the kids really do get it. When they actually arrange their friends as letters, I have evidence that they learned what I am trying to teach them. (J\_\_) is using her words more, interacting with the kids, acquiring a lot of leadership skills...and her mom is noticing a difference. She is even beginning to read."

"Kids don't move. Without Karen's program we'd have to do a fitness piece for kids to learn how their body parts work together. This gives them a foundation for them to add to. Without physical movement you waste time. With these kids every minute you have with them is precious, and every minute is as if you are building a house. Without that foundation to build upon, and without math skills and literacy skills, they're not going to succeed when they move on from us. So, Karen's program is that extra piece to help us build that house, an academic house I like to call it!"

- Michele Roumo, The YMCA, of Greater Boston, Roxbury Branch, Kindergarten Director

"I have administered endless numbers of IQ tests to young children, and have never experienced such quickness in comfort factor and focus as I observed in the children who had received the Kids' Wellness programs."

- Ben Webman, Ph.D. candidate, Neag School of Education, Storrs, Connecticut

NIH - National Institute of Health

Critique: Grant Submission 2000: Integrating Body-mind Training in Kindergarten

"This proposal targets an important, often neglected area of early education. The project offers an eclectic, comprehensive training package of mind-body self-regulation and integration training. Given the high rates and accompanying costs of mind-body disorders in primary care medicine, this is a worthy endeavor."

"By using body movements, Karen Voght has integrated a left hemispheric process of learning the alphabet into the right hemisphere. Small children will develop a muscular memory for alphabetic learning that will prove very beneficial."

- Leonard Shlain, author of the Alphabet Vs. the Goddess: The Conflict Between Word and Image.

NOTE of INTEREST: A 30-year-old program run by a Canadian Optometrist, Dr. Abraham Kirshner, uses a lower case "body alphabet" with the aid of a stick to relate visual impressions to motor activities. A child then identifies a shape he is reading. Early testing with this form of body alphabet showed that a child of three is able to recognize a specific body posture performed by the teacher, and match it with one of the mannequin figures. This program begins training at a 3-year level of child development and is suited for teaching the slow learner and the retarded reader. It provides concrete kinesthetic experience prior to the more symbolic and abstract levels that are represented by form perceptions.

About the Author:



Karen Voght is the founder of Wellness, Inc., a Boston-area company that designs innovative wellness products and curricula for children. After many years of researching the effects of body mind integration on human creativity, learning, and well-being, Karen authored *The Kids' Wellness Guide: How Well They Feel, How Well They Learn*, and now *Alphabet Fitness*. She is a staunch believer in physically interactive education and early stress prevention training for children. Her work on educating a state of learning readiness for inner city preschool populations is published in the *Journal of Child and Youth Care Work*. Presently she is designing kinesthetic alphabet games for early literacy-fitness for children growing up in increasingly sedentary and audio-visually over stimulating environments.









## BODY LETTERS

*Moving our bodies is lots of fun  
Tells our brains how to get things done  
Moving muscles helps us get  
The letters of the alphabet  
Bend and stretch we make each letter  
Alphabet muscles remember lots better!  
Making our bodies our ABCs  
Helps us learn with the greatest of ease.*

## Letras de Cuerpo<sup>©</sup>

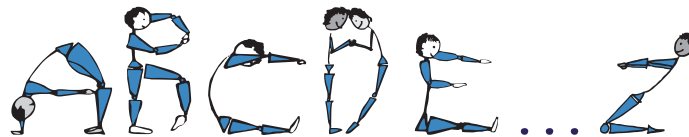
*Me divierto moviéndome el cuerpo  
Me enseña a hacerlo todo  
Al moverme los músculos aprendo  
Las letras del alfabeto  
Doblando y estirándome creo cada letra  
Los músculos del alfabeto recuerdan con claridad  
Convirtiendo el cuerpo en varias letras  
Me ayuda a aprender con mayor facilidad*

SEAMOS LETRAS...

Combining fitness  
and literacy by ...



Generating a More Active Alphabet  
for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Child.



Professor Alphabet's Playful WorkOuts Offer:



- An alphabet designed just for kids. No more lazy Roman letters for 3-6 year olds!
- A more physical jump-start to reading, writing and school readiness. Kid's muscles get hooked on literacy and fitness at the same time.
- Letter exercises, plus an alphabet muscle chart, for improved cardiovascular systems, coordination and muscle intelligence.
- Alphabet cross-training®, Alphabet Yoga®, literacy fun and much more!
- A literacy pre-requisite for kids growing up in a high-tech age.



ISBN 0-9662340-6-5



"Training muscles intensifies the strength of motor memory, which becomes inherent in the pace of a child's learning. As a choreographer of muscles, I believe there is a great opportunity to integrate Alphabet Fitness with different learning styles. Its playful literacy workouts provide a well thought out program that gets literacy off to a healthier start for kids of all abilities."

Joan Palladino, Dean, School of Dance  
Associate Professor, Dean College

"Throw away those developmentally inappropriate worksheets that supposedly teach letters to very young preschoolers! If you want to promote literacy along with large muscle coordination through fun activities, get the Alphabet Fitness Guide. Kids develop a kinesthetic awareness of alphabet representation – fundamental to reading and to developing social skills, physical health and emotional well-being."

Karen VanderVen, PhD, Child Development  
Department of Education, University of Pittsburgh, PA