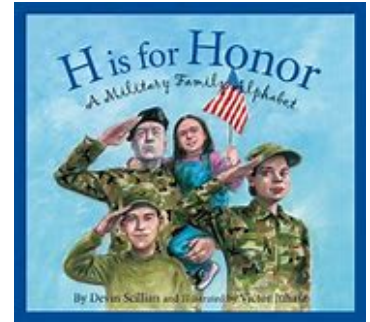


# H is for Honor: A Military Family Alphabet

By Devin Scillian

This book is an informative and fun description of the United States Armed Forces. The author uses the ABCs to share information about the different branches of the military and what it takes to serve our country. The use of rhyme and vivid pictures keep young children interested, and the detailed written pages teach older children and adults even more about the U.S. military.



## Discussion and Questions:

### Ages Birth to 5:

- Point to the big letter on each page and name it.
- Simplify the text in the book by only reading what each letter stands for.
  - There is more text on each page than what is developmentally appropriate for young children. However, simplifying the text will help young children stay focused.
- Talk about the pictures in the book.
  - Help the child point to familiar objects and people in the pictures.
  - Label objects that may be unfamiliar to the child.

### Ages 3 to 5:

- Point to the big letter on each page and prompt the child to name it.
  - If the child does not know the letter, name it and encourage the child to repeat the letter.
  - Children who are nonverbal may benefit from seeing the sign for each letter of the alphabet. If possible, help the children make the sign with their own hands.
- Read the words on the middle of each page, but adults should consider not reading the text on the edges of the page. Doing so would make the book very long for most children.
  - If the information on the edge of the page is relevant to the child, providing a summary would be more age-appropriate than reading every word.
  - Another option would be to read one or two pages of the book at a time. The reader could spend more time talking about the information on the edges of the pages while still holding the child's attention.
- The text in the middle of each page contains rhyming words. Adults should keep their voice steady and emphasize the rhyming words by changing their tone.
- After each page is read, repeat the phrase “ \_\_\_\_ is for \_\_\_\_ ” (inserting the information from the page) while pointing to the big letter.
  - The child should get used to this pattern and start saying the phrase with the reader.
- Draw special attention to pages that apply to the child's family member/family member.
  - For example, if the child's family member is in the Navy, spend more time on the pages that are relevant to the Navy.
  - Talk about the pictures and which items might apply to the family member.
  - Pointing out specific phrases and pictures that apply to the child's family will make the book more relevant and help the child learn about their family member's job.

## Activities:

### Ages Birth to 5:

- **ABC Military Dance**
  - Use purchased alphabet cards or create them using 3” by 5” index cards.

- Tape these cards to the floor or to chairs ensuring that they are spread out randomly around the room.
- Gather the family or group together to play a game.
- Explain to the participants that while the music is playing, they can dance around the room, but when the music stops the need to find a letter to sit on.
  - Very young children may need guidance to find a place to sit.
- Play a version of the ABC song loud enough so everyone can hear the music. Stop the music at an unexpected time.
- When all participants are seated, select a few and have them identify what letter they are on. Turn to the correlating page in the book and read the primary phrase for that letter. Allow the child to read the page using the pictures for context clues if they would like.
- If more than 5 people are playing, it may be better to only have a few participants stand up and read what their letter says each round.
  - If a child cannot read or identify the letter, an adult can tell them what it is, and the child can repeat the letter's name.
  - If the child is nonverbal or very young, an adult can answer for them or help the child use the sign for the letter.
- Play several rounds so everyone gets a turn to say an alphabet letter.
- **C is for Caregiver**
  - Use a picture or drawing of the military caregiver and glue it to a larger piece of paper, cardstock, or poster board.
  - If the child is able, ask them to tell who the person in the photo is (mom, dad, uncle, grandmother, etc.).
  - Using the name the child provided, write the words "D is for Dad," "M is for Mom," or "U is for Uncle" etc. Read the title to the child.
  - Have the child make the sound for the D or M or to mimic their caregiver in making the sound. If the child is older, encourage them to repeat the whole phrase.
  - Have the child and other family members list words that describe the caregiver and write them around the picture. Children could also draw pictures on the poster board that represent the parent.

#### Ages 3 to 5:

- **ABC Military Book**

In this activity children will create a simplified ABC book using terms that apply specifically to their family. The military caregiver should be invited to participate in creating the book. This activity should not be completed in one sitting. When the book is finished, consider laminating the pages or covering them with clear contact paper.

- Provide construction paper, glue, markers, crayons, and a stapler.
- Help the child glue a photograph of their family and/or military caregiver on the first page.
  - Older children could draw a picture of the family instead of using a photograph.
- Write the words "Our ABC Military Book" on the same page as the photograph/drawing.
- Each page should begin with the letter and phrase from the *H is for Honor* book ("\_\_\_\_\_ is for \_\_\_\_\_"). Help the child write the whole phrase or just the letter of the alphabet on each page.
- Brainstorm with the family about what terms and phrases they want to include in their book. These words do not necessarily have to be military specific but could be about the family in general.
- Have the child draw a picture to represent each word.
  - The family could also take pictures of their family to put in the book or find pictures on the internet or in magazines that go with the text.

- When all of the letters have been completed, the book can be stapled together.
- The book should be stored in a place where the child can easily look at it, especially when their military caregiver is away from home. Families can read the book together and the child can practice saying the letters.

Note: This activity can be modified to work in a group if there are several children who are military connected. To do this, invite families to send in pictures or drawings of their service member. Follow the procedure above including all students in the creation of the phrases and artwork for the book. The book can be read at circle time and stored on a book shelf where children will have access to it.

- **S is for Sharing Activity**

- Family setting: This activity will help children feel connected to their military caregiver while they are deployed.
  - Turn to the “F” page in *H is for Honor* (“F is for Family”).
  - Read the rhyming words in the middle of the page and then talk about how family is important, especially when they are separated.
  - Tell the family that this activity is called S is for Sharing.
  - Ask family members to find something in their home or community that is meaningful to them each week to create a video recording in which they will share this meaningful item. (i.e., trip to nearby park, playing with blocks at home, etc.)
  - Show caregivers how to use a computer, cell phone, or other recording device to take a video of the activity each week or plan a time to video chat with the military caregiver if possible.
    - The recordings could be sent in an email or saved for when the caregiver returns home.
  - In the recordings, the family will gather together and take turns talking about the item they brought and why it is important to them or where they are and what makes that particular place important to them.
  - The military caregiver can also participate by finding objects that are meaningful to them. If they are unable to video chat or take videos, the military caregiver can write about a special item or place each week.
  - If the family cannot send the videos to the military caregiver right away they can send letters each week and share the videos when the caregiver returns home.
- Group Setting: Military children may feel isolated and different than the other children in their class because they are separated from their caregiver. The following activity would give military children the opportunity to share with their class what it means to be a military child.
  - Turn to the “L” page in *H is for Honor* (“L is for Letters”).
  - Read the rhyming words in the middle of the page and discuss how military caregivers often receive letters and other items in the mail.
  - Explain to the children that they are going to get to share something special with the military caregivers of their peers.
  - Provide the military children in the group with an opportunity to talk about their caregiver or show a picture of them to the class.
  - As a group write a letter to the military caregivers. Brainstorm with children what kinds of things they can share with their loved ones.
  - Encourage the children to draw pictures to include with their letters. Children may also want to send small tokens (i.e., stickers, candies, dried flowers, etc.); ensure these are okay to send by checking with the family of the military member.
  - Help the children put their items in a big envelope or box to send to the military caregivers who are deployed.
  - Review everything that will be sent with the group so they can see their creation.