

# POT OF GOLD ST. PATRICK'S DAY

## Literacy Activity



MAYA Smart

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# A Note from the Activity Creator

One March a few years ago I was teaching Pre-K and had hit a teaching wall. I felt like I had exhausted my whole arsenal of reading activities. My students were bored of the same small-group activities as they progressed from learning letters to reading simple words. I didn't know what to do to spice things up.

Cue Cara. Cara, one of my students, showed up one day and proudly showed me a bag of her newest treasure: chocolate gold coins to share with the entire class. Rather than simply hand them out, Cara threw them up overhead at Circle Time and shouted, "It's Patrick's Day treats!"

As my little friends began laughing and scurrying for coins, it struck me how much fun we could make reading with the use of a shiny treat. And leprechaun gold goes with rainbows! If you run with the five-year-old set, you'll know: Rainbows. Are. Everything. Thus Pot O' Vowels was born! It's the perfect St. Patrick's Day game that helps kids practice reading while having fun.

You'll find detailed instructions below, but first, let's look at why this kind of activity is so great for learning.

*Chrysta Naron*

Early Childhood Educator  
PlayfulPreK.com Founder  
MAYASMART.COM Contributor





# How This Game Develops Reading Skills







What's unique about this activity is that it develops children's phonemic awareness. Phonemic awareness is the ability to isolate a single sound in a word. Rather than just sounding out a word, a child has to listen for a specific sound in a specific spot to play this game. Phonemic awareness can be a tricky thing to learn and a tricky thing to teach, but Pot O' Vowels is a literacy activity that helps break it down in two ways.

- 1 We use consonant-vowel-consonant, or CVC, words. This means a three-letter word that starts with a consonant, has a vowel in the middle, and ends with a consonant. Words like BAT or KID. These words are usually ones children are familiar with and can easily sound out. (The longer the word, the harder it is to find a single sound within it.)
- 2 We focus only on the vowel sound. This makes the target something stable and limited. There are only 5 vowels, compared to 21 consonants, and we're only using the "short" vowel sounds. It creates a lot of combinations, but really focuses the skill for a child.



**Bonus: This game is also really inexpensive! I went to the dollar store and got everything for \$3! And it only takes a few minutes to set up. Talk about the Luck of the Irish!**

## Materials:

-  Gold coins  
(plastic or chocolate)
-  Small black pots  
(or any opaque container)
-  Markers or crayons
-  Tape
-  Paper
-  Packing tape (optional)





## Step 1:

On a sheet of paper, help your child draw a rainbow with thick bands of color. Make sure your rainbow has at least four stripes. Then repeat on a second piece of paper.



**Tip:** You can also print or draw a blank rainbow template and let your kiddo color it in.

## Step 2:

On each band, write the first and last letter of some three-letter CVC words that your child is familiar with.  
Here are some suggestions:

**C \_ T** (can go with CAT, CUT, or COT)

**D \_ G** (can go with DOG, DIG, or DUG)

**S \_ N** (can go with SUN or SON)

**B \_ G** (can go with BAG, BIG, BOG, BEG, or BUG)

**H \_ T** (can go with HAT, HOT, or HIT)

**S \_ T** (can go with SIT, SET, or SAT)





## Step 3:

Using a permanent marker, write one of the five main vowels (A, E, I, O, U) on each gold coin. Make sure that there are multiples of each vowel. You can use either plastic coins or chocolate ones; the choice is up to you.



## Step 4:

Place the gold coins in the black pot. Now you have a Pot O' Vowels! Any non-transparent container will work if you're unable to buy the pots.





## Step 5:

Each player takes turns drawing a coin from the Pot O' Vowels. Use the vowel coin to try to create words on your rainbow. The first player to have a rainbow full of words wins!



If your child loves this game, make it permanent using this old teacher trick. Cut out the rainbow and cover both sides in packing tape. It's low-cost lamination that will keep those cards safe from wear and tear.

## Upgrade:

Is your little leprechaun a pro at CVC words? You can make this game more advanced by choosing words with Y as the vowel, like FLY or TRY. Or create words that have a silent E, such as B\_KE (which could be bike or bake).



**TURN READING TIME INTO PLAYTIME?**  
**I-RISH YOU WOULD!**