

Make Your Own Architectural Alphabet!

There are no specific rules, but I'll leave you with some suggestions

1 Keep an Open Mind

Invite your friends and go out hunting for letters! They may be hiding on a building's façade, in the space between structures (negative space), in tiny details or in the cityscape around you (a mosaic pattern, a bike rack, a bus stop). Accept that you will have a lot of certain letters and few or none of the others (Gs and Qs are notoriously hard to find). Don't forget to look in parks and open spaces – trees branches make great shapes!



Q's are a rare find! Yes, this one is a satellite dish



Back-seat passengers spot a very large 'H' on a bridge on the west coast of Sweden

2 Let the Kids Hold the Camera

This game is about walking, looking, taking it in and sharing what you've spotted with someone. Remember we are not looking for perfect letters, but make sure at least two people 'see' the letter. Decide on the best angle (where do you see the letter most clearly from?); focus on the form rather than the function – you don't have to photograph the whole museum if what you are interested in is how its columns make an 'H' – and then snap.

3 Print & Place Letter-buildings on Paper

The fun is in finding the letterforms, but it's also in the editing process. Once you have a selection (if you've found seven As, you might need to let go of some) I would encourage you to print them in black and white on a home printer. Once your letter-buildings are on paper, you can cut the paper to frame each letter, if you like, and put your alphabet in order. At this point, you might realize there are some gaps in your alphabet, but that's OK.



The letter form 'R' is made from a doorway opening, its shadow, and a handrail. Spotted in Porto, Portugal

4 Display It

Trace your letters using your favorite fluorescent marker and stick them on the wall. You can build your architectural alphabet wall over time or go on a letter hunting walk and spot as many as you can in one go.

You might be doing this with your nieces and nephews, or with a class of 25 kids; so you might like to apply a different structure or a theme to make it work for you. For example, challenge the gang to complete a full alphabet during a vacation, or turn it into a project about your neighborhood, or give yourselves a time frame – why not make a 2018 A to Z?



Photographs of local buildings are projected on the screen at a workshop for four and five-year-olds