



Activities to develop phonological and phonemic awareness

Phonological awareness is the ability to hear and identify and say the separate parts of words such as rhymes, and letter sounds. Phonological awareness has been shown in numerous studies to be one of the best predictors of initial reading progress.

Phonemic awareness is sub-skill of phonological awareness. It is the ability to identify, say and manipulate the smallest sounds in words (phonemes). Children with good phonemic awareness tend to learn to read more easily.

Beginning readers must develop an understanding that spoken words are made up of individual and distinguishable sounds, rather than thinking of each word as a single sound stream. Students need to be able to combine individual phonemes to construct a spoken word, and when given a spoken word, break it down into its phonemes.

By engaging your child in simple phonological and phonemic awareness tasks, you can give them a head start in success in learning to read.

Here are some simple activities that will help develop your child's phonological awareness. Have fun – don't be afraid to make these games your own!

- Sing nursery rhymes with your child at home, in the car, or out and about. Nursery rhymes teach your child language, rhyme, repetition and rhythm.
- Read books with rhymes. Books by Dr Seuss and Pamela Allen are a hit with many children. Try *'The Cat in the Hat'* or *'Doodledum Dancing'*.
- Take turns to come up with words that rhyme. For example, "What other words sound like car?"
- Ask your child to clap with you as you sound out the syllables in words: For example: sunshine (sun-shine, two claps), alphabet (alph-a-bet, three claps), wonderful (won-der-ful, three claps). Begin with two or three syllable words and build up to longer words with more syllables, such as imagination (i-mag-in-a-tion, five claps).

- Teach your child the separate sounds in his name. For example, ‘Sam’ has three sounds – sss-aaa-mmm.
- Talk about the separate sounds in words. “Do we hear /mmmm/ in the word mmmmoon? Do we hear /mmmm/ in the word cake? Is there a /k/ in cat? What is the first sound you hear in dog?” And, “Where do you hear the /g/ in pig (at the beginning middle or the end of the word)?”
- Play word games that encourage children to learn sounds. For example, ‘I Spy’ – ‘I spy with my little eye something beginning with /ffff/. What do you think I’m looking at that starts with that sound?’
- Choose a letter and play variations of the game ‘I went to the shop and I bought...’ For example, I went to the shop and I bought a cup. I went to the shop and I bought a cup and a crocodile, etc. For a trickier version, the next player’s item must start with the last sound in the previous player’s item. For example, I went to the shop and I bought a cup. I went to the shop and I bought a cup and a pig.
- Become a robot leader! Say this rhyme in a robot voice, sound out simple words, and have your child respond: “I am a robot. Can you help me? Can you tell me what I see? I see a /c/ /a/ /p/.” Encourage your child to repeat the rhyme in “robot talk” and then blend the final word to answer the robot’s question.

The FIVE from FIVE website has a collection of activities, videos, and online games and apps that have been carefully chosen to reflect scientific research findings on developing phonological awareness.

Visit us at www.fivefromfive.org.au

For more ideas, visit:

Reading Rockets – www.readingrockets.org

raisingchildren.net.au – www.raisingchildren.net.au

PALS: Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening – www.pals.virginia.edu

CELL: Centre for Early Literacy Learning – www.earlyliteracylearning.org