



## What is phonological awareness?

Phonological awareness is defined as the ability to identify and manipulate the sounds in words, and is recognised as a key foundation skill for early word-level reading and spelling development. For example, phonological awareness would be demonstrated by understanding that if the 'p' in 'pat' is changed to an 's', the word becomes 'sat'. (Rose2009)

Do children need to have phonological awareness knowledge to access phonics teaching? Not necessarily as these skills can be taught during the delivery of a reading programme however there is strong evidence to suggest that older poor readers/spellers have weaknesses with phonological awareness.

If a child attends a nursery/pre-school setting, then they should have accessed activities to promote phonological awareness. Children also pick up these skills by being exposed to a rich language environment and also by listening to/singing: nursery rhymes, rhyming stories, rhyming songs, chants, and word and movement games. One of the most difficult skills is phonemic awareness (isolating individual sounds) and this is a skill that is taught during a phonics programme.

"The majority of preschoolers can segment words into syllables. Very few can readily segment them into phonemes. The more sophisticated stage of phoneme segmentation is not reached until the child has received formal instruction in letter-sound knowledge." Predicting reading and spelling difficulties (Snowling & Backhouse 1996)

Pupils who have difficulties in this area may have:

- problems identifying syllables in polysyllabic words
- problems recognising/generating rhyming words
- difficulty identifying initial, medial and final sounds in words
- difficulty with sound blending
- visual strengths (learning better from charts, diagrams, videos, demonstrations and other visual materials).

### Top Tip

There is no fixed order to teaching phonological skills although training should start at larger units of sound such as syllables and rhymes. The Letters and Sounds programme Phase 1 focuses on the phonological awareness- it is free and available online.



If you would like further information about phonological awareness pedagogy - More information is available on :

<https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/teachingresources/discipline/english/literacy/readingwriting/Pages/litfocusphonological.aspx#link93>

# Activities to develop phonological awareness

Don't make life too difficult for yourself! There are many resources online to help develop these skills in the Early Years. The Hands on Literacy Programme contains numerous activities for children who need extra support in this area and is a structured evidenced based programme for Early Years children. Phase 1 of the Letters and Sounds Phase 1 is also focussed on phonological awareness to prepare children for Reception class. The Top Marks website also has many games to support these skills.

## Auditory discrimination

This is the ability to tell the difference between noises that are in the environment. This skill will be needed before moving onto discriminating sounds.

Matching animal sounds : <https://www.phonicsbloom.com/uk/game/match-sounds?phase=1>  
[http://www.literactive.com/Download/live.asp?swf=story\\_files/match\\_the\\_sounds\\_US.swf](http://www.literactive.com/Download/live.asp?swf=story_files/match_the_sounds_US.swf)

Matching musical sounds :

[http://www.literactive.com/Download/live.asp?swf=story\\_files/Listen\\_And\\_Match\\_US.swf](http://www.literactive.com/Download/live.asp?swf=story_files/Listen_And_Match_US.swf)

Identifying Animal Sounds : <https://www.phonicsbloom.com/uk/game/whats-behind-the-door?phase=1>

## Sentence segmentation



This involves the identification of words in sentences.

- Say a sentence. Have the children repeat the sentence and use blocks or other objects to represent the words, building a snake that shows how many words are in the sentence. Later, have the children put ticks or counters in a row of squares for each word they hear or draw a dash for each word.
- Seat children in a circle. Say a sentence. The children should take it in turns to repeat the words of the sentence, one word at a time, in the correct order, rolling a ball from one speaker to the next as each word is said.
- Have three children stand side-by-side in front of the room. Read a three-word sentence. When the first word is read, the first child should jump forward, when the second word is read, the second child should jump forward, etc. Begin by pointing to each child when it is time to jump. The child on the left of the onlookers should jump first. Use the words 'first', 'next', and 'last' in talking about word order.
- Start with basic commands (e.g. 'Come here', 'Sit down now'). Place hoops in a line on the floor with a little space between them. The child should jump into a different hoop for each word, starting with the left hoop and jumping to the right (in the reading direction).

## Syllable segmentation/blending

This skill involves the ability to hear and blend syllables in words and should be easier to do than working with individual sounds. If a child is struggling to hear sounds in words, it is a good starting point to see if they can isolate syllables first.

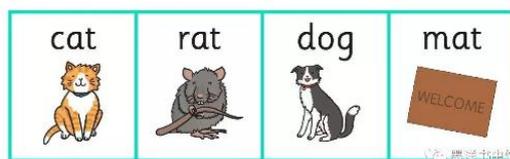
- Finish the name - adult to say the first syllable of a two syllable name (e.g. Hen...), then ask the pupil to complete it (Henry).
- Finish the word - adult to say the first syllable of a two syllable word (e.g. zeb...) then ask the pupil to complete it (zebra).
- Syllable count - say the word (e.g. yesterday), then use fingers to count the syllables (yes/ter/day). *Black Sheep Phonological Awareness* is ideal for this or alternatively write down a list of words before you work with groups.
- Silly bulls : <https://www.spellingcity.com/syllables-with-silly-bulls-game.html?listId=8528299>
- Syllable segmentation activities: [https://childdevelopment.com.au/images/Resources/SLP\\_games\\_and\\_activities/Syllable\\_Segmentation\\_Resource.PDF](https://childdevelopment.com.au/images/Resources/SLP_games_and_activities/Syllable_Segmentation_Resource.PDF)
- Counting syllables: <https://blog.allaboutlearningpress.com/count-syllables/>

## Rhyme

Nursery rhymes are a good way of introducing rhyme to young children in a fun way. Provide a small choice of laminated pictures so that the children can choose which nursery rhyme they want to sing and build this into the day in Early Years Settings.



- Rhyme families 1 - collect rhyming pictures ('Can I have a picture that rhymes with...').
- Rhyme families 2 - collect rhyming words ('Can I have a word that rhymes with...').
- Odd word out - both oral and written (e.g. ring, sing, song, thing).
- Books - What rhymes with me?
- Rhyming riddles - Adult says 'I am thinking of a word. It is a furry animal that catches mice and it rhymes with 'mat'. The child then tries to guess the target word - variations on the target word are not allowed e.g. pussy does not rhyme and is incorrect.
- I hear with my little ear... Adult asks 'Can you think of a word that rhymes with more?' (floor) target objects in the environment/classroom.
- Rhyming bag/table - collect objects in a bag. Give a clue based on rhyme. When the child guesses correctly, the object is shown to the group (Give credit for good rhyming alternatives) i.e. 'the objects name sounds like a hen (i.e. pen).
- Washing Line Rhyme: [http://www.interactive.com/Download/live.asp?swf=story\\_files/washing\\_line\\_rhyme\\_US.swf](http://www.interactive.com/Download/live.asp?swf=story_files/washing_line_rhyme_US.swf)
- Match Rhyming Words <https://www.education.com/game/match-rhyming-words/>
- Dino Rhyming Bones <https://www.education.com/game/dino-bones-rhyming-words/>
- Apps - Partners in Rhyme (Free), Twinkl Phonics suite , Montessori Rhyme Time,



## Onset and Rime identification

Onset and rime are **two parts of a word**. The onset is the **initial consonant sound, blend, or digraph in a single syllable word or syllable**. Not all words have onsets, such as the word oar. The rime is the first vowel phoneme followed by all the other phonemes (at in r at; esh in fr esh). Words that share the same rime are considered rhyming words (e.g., fresh, mesh, flesh).

- Pairs - matching pictures to initial sounds.
- Bingo - matching pictures to initial sounds.
- Initial sounds: [http://www.literactive.com/Download/live.asp?swf=story\\_files/easel\\_US.swf](http://www.literactive.com/Download/live.asp?swf=story_files/easel_US.swf)
- I spy - 'I went to the zoo/park/seaside and saw something beginning with...' (initial sounds).
- Sound/picture mapping - match picture to sound by drawing lines.
- Chunk stacker game
- Onset and Rhyme Word Machine 1:  
[http://vtcpsa.hwb.wales.gov.uk/learn\\_y4/main.asp?lesson\\_path=year\\_4/word\\_machine\\_onset/&lesson\\_file=lesson.swf&language=eng](http://vtcpsa.hwb.wales.gov.uk/learn_y4/main.asp?lesson_path=year_4/word_machine_onset/&lesson_file=lesson.swf&language=eng)
- Onset and Rhyme Word Machine 2:  
[http://vtcpsa.hwb.wales.gov.uk/learn\\_y4/main.asp?lesson\\_path=year\\_4/word\\_machine\\_c-v-c/&lesson\\_file=lesson.swf&language=eng](http://vtcpsa.hwb.wales.gov.uk/learn_y4/main.asp?lesson_path=year_4/word_machine_c-v-c/&lesson_file=lesson.swf&language=eng)

## Phoneme segmenting

This is the skill of identifying all if the sounds in words. This can be tricky for some children and requires extra practice.

- There are a list of fun activities for segmenting sounds in words on the following website: <https://earlyimpactlearning.com/oral-segmenting-activities-16-fantastic-games/>
- The Elkonin grid activity is free and is **available on the Cognition and Learning website**.

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## Phoneme Blending

Whilst this appears to be one of the easier skills, sometimes children can blend letters out of order, omit sounds or cannot blend sounds together to make recognisable words. Practising and modelling is a good way to help develop this skill. Before you start though, you will need to check that the child can repeat sequences of numbers/objects back to you make sure that it isn't an auditory memory difficulty that is causing the problems with blending sounds together.

- Phoneme blending Sense or nonsense - as the pupils to identify the words that make sense by blending the phonemes (e.g. brick, quick, stick, smick, trick).
- Blending bingo: <https://www.ictgames.com/mobilePage/bingoOriginal/index.html>
- Garden Leaves:  
[http://www.literactive.com/Download/live.asp?swf=story\\_files/garden\\_leaves\\_US.swf](http://www.literactive.com/Download/live.asp?swf=story_files/garden_leaves_US.swf)
- Simon Says: Play the game in the usual way, but for the instruction say the word in its sounds so your students blend them to work out what they need to do. For example, "Simon says p-a-t your b-a-ck." or "S-i-t down." If any of the students do the instruction but you didn't say 'Simon says' then those students are out of the game.
- I Spy: Pick an item in the classroom, such as the mat. Then say: "I spy with my little eye a m-a-t." Your students need to then blend the sounds together to tell you the item. When you first start out with oral blending activities some of your students may find it hard to hear the word. In that case hold each of the sounds a little bit longer and don't have a pause between each sound.
- Apps : Phonics Read CVC 100 words - joe scrivens, Short vowels, Reading Magic 1

### Phoneme deletion/ manipulation

These activities can be quite boring so it is helpful to make them as fun as possible. An example of this is the game below.

Feed the puppet game taken from <http://www.speech-language-development.com/phoneme-deletion.html>

You will need a puppet and different coloured blocks, counters, sticks etc. with letters written on them. Start with CVC words. Put the puppet on your non-dominant hand. Place three blocks of different colours in a row in front of the child as you say, "Let's make the word cat. Here's cat." Remember to arrange the pieces left-to-right from the child's perspective, so the /c/ sound is represented by the block at the left of the row. Next, have the puppet say, "I'm hungry. I want to eat ccc. Give me ccc, please." Picking out the requested sound gives the child a chance to exercise and reinforce phoneme isolation skills.

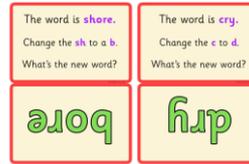
Let the child feed the puppet the block corresponding to the /c/ sound (make sure the puppet remembers to say "Thank you"), then say: "Well, we had cat, and we gave the puppet ccc, so now we don't have cat any more. Now we have cat without c. Instead of cat we have ..." Ideally, the child will say "at". If not, you can review: "First we had cat, ccc, ah,t. Then the puppet ate our ccc sound, so now we have ah,t; at "

- Find the final letter  
[http://www.literactive.com/Download/live.asp?swf=story\\_files/slides\\_US.swf](http://www.literactive.com/Download/live.asp?swf=story_files/slides_US.swf)

Dinner Time: [file:///srvnasmbfs03/userfrce\\$/hughesju/Downloads/Dinner-Time-Rhyming-Game.pdf](file:///srvnasmbfs03/userfrce$/hughesju/Downloads/Dinner-Time-Rhyming-Game.pdf)

Sound substitution <https://www.lizs-early-learning-spot.com/sound-substitution-when-you-only-have-a-minute/>

- Twinkl have numerous activities for this



- Missing vowels - helps the pupils to become aware that there could be more than one choice of vowels for each word (e.g. bt - bat, bet, bit, but).
- Pegs can be used and making your own resources can be easy so that letters can be swapped to make new words. Choose which letters you are going to give the child so that they experience success.
- Once the child has mastered this with CVC words then increase the level of difficulty by including consonant clusters and more complex sounds:
- Bin without the b is?
- Plot without the l is
- Say plot, now say plot without the l
- Say bag, now swap the a for and u . What does it make?

