

What is Phonemic Awareness?

Phonemic awareness is:

- The ability to hear the individual parts of words, separate the parts, put them back together and then change them to make new words (Adams, 1990)
- A strong indicator of reading success
- Oral (once you add print, it become phonics)
- Usually developed naturally through reading rhyming books, singing songs, and chanting nursery rhymes
- Usually secure by the end of first grade

A student with developed phonemic awareness can:

- Enjoy language and play with its sounds
- Understand that what we speak can be divided into individual words-concept of word
- Break words into syllables (parts/chunks)
- Provide rhyming words, find the words that rhyme
- Segment words into their individual phonemes (sounds) cat becomes /c/ /a/ /t/
- Blend individual phonemes (sounds) into words: /d/ /o/ /g/ becomes dog
- Identify the beginning, middle and ending sounds in words
- Match words with the same beginning sound
- Change beginning or ending sounds orally to make new words

Suggested Booklist for Developing Phonemic Awareness

Compiled by Beth Filapek, First Grade Teacher, 2005

Rhyming Books

There's a Wocket in My Pocket by Dr. Seuss

Hop on Pop by Dr. Seuss

Fox in Socks by Dr. Seuss

One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish by Dr. Seuss

Is Your Mama a Llama by Deborah Guarino

Down By The Bay by Raffi

Eek! There's a Mouse in the House by Wong Herbert Yee

I Can't Said the Ant by Polly Cameron

One Duck Stuck by Phyllis Root

Each Peach Pear Plum by Janet and Alan Ahlsberg

Jamberry by Bruce Degan

Oh My Gosh, Mrs. McNosh by Sarah Weeks

A Giraffe and a Half by Shel Silverstein

What rhymes with eel? by Harriet Ziefert

Chicka, Chicka Boom Boom by John Archambault

Jesse Bear, What Will You Wear? By Nancy White Carlstrom

I Knew Two Who Said Moo: A Counting and Rhyming Book by Judi Barrett

The Hippo Hop by Christine Loomis

Alliteration Books

A My Name is Alice by Jane Bayer

Four Fur Feet by Margaret Wise Brown

Six Sleepy Sheep by Jeffie Ross Gordon

Faint frogs feeling feverish and other terrifically tantalizing tongue twisters by Lilian Obligado

Dr. Seuss's ABC by Dr. Seuss

Four Famished Foxes and Fosdyke by Pamela Duncan Edwards

Some Smug Slug by Pamela Duncan Edwards

Wacky Wedding: A Book of Alphabet Antics by Pamela Duncan Edwards

Rosie's Roses by Pamela Duncan Edwards

K is for Kissing a Cool Kangaroo by Giles Andreae

Poems of A. Nonny Mouse by Jack Prelutsky

Busy Buzzing Bumblebees and Other Tongue Twisters by Alvin Schwartz

Playing With Sounds Books

The Hungry Thing by Jan Slepian

The Hungry Thing Returns by Jan Slepian

The Hungry Thing Goes to a Restaurant by Jan Slepian

Sing a Song of Popcorn by B. deRegniers, M. White, and J. Carr

Roar and More by Karla Kuskin

Stop that Noise! By Paul Geraghty

Ook the Book: And Other Silly Rhymes by Lissa Rovetch

Oodles of Noodles by Lucia Hymes

If I Had a Paka by Charlotte Pomerantz

Moses Supposes His Toeses are Roses by Nancy Patz

Slop Goes the Soup: A Noisy Warthog Word Book by Pamela Duncan Edwards

Alphabet Books

Eating the Alphabet: Fruits and Vegetables from A to Z by Lois Ehler

Dr. Seuss's ABC by Dr. Seuss

A is for Salad by Mike Lester

Tomorrow's Alphabet by Geroge Shannon

Chicka, Chicka Boom Boom by John Archambault

Q is for Duck by Michael Folsom

Alphabears by Kathleen Hague

Chicka Chicka Boom Boom by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault

Songs/Poetry Books

Little Bunny Foo Foo retold and sung by The Good Fairy, illus. by Paul Brett

The Eensy-Weensy Spider by Mary Ann Hoberman

Down By the Bay by Raffi

Hush, Little Baby by Margot Zemach

Mary Had a Little Jam by Bruce Lansky

Take Me Out of the Bathtub and other silly dilly songs by Alan Katz

The Frogs Wore Red Suspenders by Jack Prelutsky

Play Rhymes by Marc Tolon Brown

My Very First Mother Goose collected by Iona Opie

Hey, Diddle, Diddle compiled and illus. by Linda Bronson

Riddley Piggledy: A Book of Rhymes and Riddles by Tony Mitton

Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star by Iza Trapani

Miss Mary Mack: and Other Children's Street Rhymes by Joanna Cole and Stephanie Calmenson

Anything by Shel Silverstein or Jack Prelutsky

Top 10 Songs to Read by Raffi

What Families Can Do At Home to Strengthen Phonemic Awareness

Parents can participate in the development of their children's phonemic awareness by turning everyday occurrences into teachable moments. Research has shown that children need a solid foundation in phonemic awareness; it is vital to their later reading success. That foundation can be reinforced at home if you engage your children in enjoyable reinforcement activities. These activities are intended to be done orally and for short periods of time (5-7 min.) repeatedly in every day life. Examples: in the car, in the bath, waiting for appointments, car wash, in line, etc...

The parental role in the development of phonemic awareness is crucial. During the kindergarten and first grade years, parents can help their children build vocabulary, create interest in a variety of topics, and build the background knowledge necessary for them to become successful readers. When parents give their children opportunities to experiment with language at home, they increase the probability that their children will develop the phonemic awareness they'll need at school. In addition, engaging in phonemic awareness activities at home creates positive attitudes toward reading in children, allows parents to participate in their children's early learning, and strengthens the parent-child bond.

Children who are immersed in a rich language environment and have many opportunities to play with language often naturally perceive and manipulate the sounds in words. Homes that provide a "rich language environment" are filled with print materials, and engage children in phonemic awareness activities every day.

The BEST thing you can do to build your child's phonemic awareness is to read aloud to your child — and make sure to include poetry as well as stories. Poets must have a wonderful sense of phonemic awareness because their words sound so beautiful when read aloud. They prove that sounds and rhythm contribute to the beauty of a poem as much as the words and images themselves. I will bet you that few poets are poor readers! However, read on for more things to try with your child.

RHYMING ACTIVITIES

Children are naturally drawn to rhyming words. Parents can incorporate rhyming activities by reading aloud books that play with language. The books they read can contain nonsense rhymes, be nursery rhymes, or familiar jingles. Dr. Seuss books are excellent resources to help children develop phonemic awareness.

Try these activities at home to reinforce your child's concept of rhyme:

- Here's a song that you can use to generate new rhyming words: "I said a boom chicka boom. I said a boom chicka boom I said a boom chicka rocka chicka rocka boom." Change the word boom to zoom, room, loom, doom, and any other rhyming word your child suggests.

- After reading a rhyming book, ask your child to find words that rhyme. For example, you might ask, for example, "Can you find a word that rhymes with hop?" And the child might respond, "I see top."
- While reading a rhyming book with a predictable pattern, stop before you get to the rhyming word and have your child supply it.
- Give your child a word and then generate a list of rhyming words together (logs, frogs, dogs, hogs, etc.).
- One person names a word and then you both see who can make the most rhymes from it. Nonsense words are perfectly acceptable in this game (people, meeples, steeple, creeple, cheeple).
- Play a word game like The Hungry Thing. If your child wants a snack, he will have to ask for it by a word that rhymes. For example, instead of asking for an apple, he could ask for a frapple.
- Read and teach your child Nursery Rhymes.
- Substitute rhyming words for words in the poem by deleting the first sound and letting your child supply the new sound/word.
Ex: Hickory, dickory, dock Lickory, Lickory, Lock
The mouse ran up the clock. The mouse ran up the zlock.
Continue with multiple nursery rhymes and Dr. Seuss books, and any other rhymes/songs your family knows.
- Play "I spy" with rhyming words. After looking around the room, you might say, "I spy with my little eye something that rhymes with sock." Your child could answer "clock."

SYLLABLE MANIPULATION

Activities that encourage children to manipulate syllables also are very easy for most parents and children to engage in. A syllable, quite simply, is a word part. Young children often don't know or understand the term syllable, but they are able to hear the parts of words. The most common methods of manipulating syllables include clapping, tapping fingers, snapping fingers, nodding heads, and placing tokens on a chart.

Try these activities at home to reinforce your child's concept of syllables:

Clap the syllables in familiar nursery rhymes and favorite jingles. Manipulating syllables in "Old MacDonald Had a Farm," for example, is an easy activity. The parent says each word slowly, segmenting it into syllables and the child can repeat it.

- Clap the syllables of names of people in the family, places the family has visited, food in the pantry, toys in the toy box, or friends at school. For example, as the family passes in front of a Target store, the parent might say, "There is Target. Let's clap to see how many syllables are in Target." The parent and child then would clap their hands to each syllable in the word Target.
- Read a poem such as Hug-o-War by Shel Silverstein and notice the rhythm of each line by counting the syllables and looking for a pattern. Encourage your child to create a line of poetry with a certain number of syllables.

- Play "I spy" with beginning sounds and syllables. For example, after looking around the room, you might say, "I spy with my little eye something that begins like /f/ and has 3 syllables." Your child would have to answer "fireplace." Then switch roles.
- Place a few common objects into a bag. Ask your child to pull one of the objects out of the bag and then clap or pronounce the name of the object segmented into syllables (e.g., mar-ker, ap-ple, un-der-wear).
- Play 'Word Clap.' To play this, choose some words to say orally. Then have your child clap how many syllables (parts) are in the word. For example, you can say "Sailboat." Child says (while clapping), "Sail...boat" (claps two times for the two parts).
 Sample Words: playground, sandbox, crayons, chair, friend, classroom, paint, paper, kitchen, bedroom, bathroom, computer, dinosaur, bedtime, toothbrush, and names.
 *If your child has mastered 2 syllable words, try 3 or more syllables.

PHONEME BLENDING, SEGMENTATION, and MANIPULATION

Activities that involve phoneme manipulation deal with the individual sounds of words. A phoneme is a sound made by an individual letter. Manipulating the phoneme means working with the sounds in words in a concrete way. Again, the most common ways to manipulate individual sounds include clapping, tapping, or snapping fingers, nodding heads, or placing tokens on a chart. The activity may be focused on a beginning, ending, or middle sound of a word. It is important for your child to be able to segment words into their individual sounds, blend sounds into whole words, and change sounds to make new words.

Below are some common, yet confusing, terms when discussing the sounds (phonemes) in words.

Isolation: Say the first part of the word song; say the middle part of hop; say the last part of stick.

Deletion: Say the word pies without the first part.

Addition: Say the word you have when you add the sound s to the beginning of the word top.

Categorization: Say the word that does not belong in this group of words: pig, pack, top, put.

Substitution: Say the word you make when you take out the second part of stop and replace it with the first part of lake.

Segmentation: Say how many parts there are in the word build.

The following activities will help you do this at home.

- An excellent activity parents can engage in with their children is a scavenger hunt. The parent and child can hunt -- around the house, at the store, in the yard, at the park, in the car, or any place at all -- for things that begin with the same sound as the child's name, or some other sound.

- Parents and children also can sing a little jingle together, using objects familiar to the child. An example of a jingle you can use (sung to "Old MacDonald Had a Farm") is:

What's the sound that starts these words: mom, McDonald's, meat? What's the sound that starts these words: mom, McDonald's, meat? M is the sound that starts the words mom, McDonald's, and meat.

The jingle can also be changed to find the sound that ends a set of words.

- Or make up sentences together with the stipulation that every major word has to have the same beginning sound ("Six silly snakes sat slowly on a sandwich").
- Another good practice activity for phonemes is for the parent to segment little words with the child. You can start by segmenting the onset (beginning sounds) and the rime (ending sounds). You and your child can do this to the song "Bingo."

There was a kid who had a pet and cat was its name-o.

/c/ - /c/ - /c/- at, /c/ - /c/ - /c/- at, /c/ - /c/ - /c/- at,
and cat was its name-o.

(other verses can include: /d/-og, /r/-abbit, /h/-orse, /g/-erbil, /p/-ig)

- Then move on to segmenting the entire word, sound by sound. Show your child a picture. Show him how to say each sound in the word (by stretching it out slowly) while moving a penny at the same time (to keep track of the number of sounds). For example: cat /k/-/a/-/t/. The parent says the word slowly, so the child can distinguish each sound individually.
- After your child can segment words into individual sounds, work on having her blend sounds together to make a complete word. Again, you can start by providing just the onset (beginning) and rime (ending) and moving toward each individual sound. For example, say the following sounds and let your child blend them together to tell you the correct word. /h/ at. Your child should say hat. To move to individual sounds, you would say /h/ /a/ /t/.
- To prepare your child to hear sounds at the beginning, middle and end of a word, play this little game. Have your child close his eyes and listen for three sounds you make.

Ex: Parent claps hands, snaps fingers, and stomps feet.

Child opens eyes.

Parent says, "First you heard _____. In the middle you heard _____. And last you heard _____." Child fills in blank.

- Continue listening game using the following: animal sounds (moo, oink, quack), color words, familiar items (tree, grass, truck), letters of alphabet. sounds of alphabet "b-a-t"
- Finally, you can try substituting sounds to make new words. Say a word such as "pig." Tell your child to take away the /p/ sound and change it to /b/. Then ask what the new word is (big). You can continue working with each word, changing it by just one letter (either at the beginning or the end) until you have come up with 5 or 6 new words from the starting point.