

BUILDING SKILLS @ HOME

PHONEMIC AWARENESS

WHAT IS PHONEMIC AWARENESS?

Phonological awareness skills are essential to developing good reading skills. Having good phonological awareness means that a child can manipulate sounds and words, or "play" with sounds and words. For example, you might ask your child to break the word "cat" into individual sounds: "c-a-t." Phonemic Awareness includes the following skills.

- Recognizing when words rhyme (e.g., "Do 'cat' and 'shoe' rhyme?") and coming up with a word that rhymes (e.g., "What rhymes with 'key'?")
- Segmentation of words in sentences (e.g., "Clap for each word you hear in the sentence 'The dog is furry.'")
- Blending syllables (e.g., "I am going to say parts of a word. Tell me what the word is. 'Pan-da.'")
- Segmentation of syllables (e.g., "Clap for each syllable you hear in the word 'refrigerator.'")
- Deletion of syllables (e.g., "Say the word 'strawberry.' Now say it without saying 'straw.'")
- Identifying sounds in words (e.g., "What sound do you hear at the end of 'tulip'?")
- Blending sounds (e.g., "Put these sounds together to make a word. 'D-oo-r.'")
- Segmentation of sounds (e.g., "Tell me each sound you hear in the word 'cat'?")
- Deletion of sounds (e.g., "Say 'chair.' Now say it without the 'ch.'")
- Addition of sounds (e.g., "Say 'cook.' Now say it with an 'e' at the end.")
- Manipulation of sounds (e.g., "Change the 's' in 'sad' to a 'd' and say the new word.")

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Phonological awareness is important because it is a basis for reading. Children begin to read by listening to others read aloud, then recognizing sounds in words, sounding words out for themselves, recognizing familiar words, and so on. By engaging in wordplay, children learn to identify patterns among words and use this knowledge to read and build words.

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FUN ACTIVITIES TO TRY:

To help your child listen to the sound in words:

- Read books and poems that focus on the rhythm of language and rhyme. Books such as "Hop on Pop" or "Sheep in a Jeep" help children pay attention to sounds in words.
- Give your child a noisemaker (such as a whistle). Tell your child to make noise if you say two words that rhyme (cat, cup; sit, mitt)
- Play words games such as "Guess My Word." "I'm thinking of a word that rhymes with _____. Can you guess my word?"
- Have a sound scavenger hunt. Give your child a bag and ask him/her to find as many things around the house that begin with a specific sound.
- Play "I spy" with the beginning sounds of words "I spy something that begins with /t/."

To help your child segment (separate) and blend sounds in words.

- Have your child guess a word that you sound out slowly (ssssuuuuunnn).
- Give your child 3-5 blocks, beads, bingo chips or similar items. Say a word and have your child move an object for each sound in the word.
- Play Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes with sounds. Say a word and have your child touch his/her head for the first sound, shoulders for the second sound, and knees for the third while saying each sound.
- Jump for Sounds. Say a word and have your child jump for each sound in the word while saying the sound.