



Top Tips to Develop Phonological Awareness Skills for Young Children

Phonological awareness is the ability to identify and manipulate sounds within words. This includes; recognizing where words begin/end, hearing syllables in words, recognizing sounds in words, adding sounds, taking apart sounds and moving sounds around. Phonological awareness is the understanding that words are made with specific sounds, which helps with both speech sound development and reading ability.

How can I help my child?


The following activities can help your child to develop their phonological awareness. They begin with the most simple activities and get more difficult.

1. Animal Sounds


Set up a farm scene with some toy animals and make the child find the correct animal when you make the sound e.g. 'baa'.



2. Musical Instruments



Use pairs of musical instruments. When you play one your child has to find the same one and play it e.g. drum, bells, tambourine. To make this harder you could make pairs of simple shakers with different items in (e.g. bottles with pasta, rice, marbles in them) and ask your child to identify which one you are playing.



Children respond to a pattern of sounds made by instruments or just by clapping. Clap out a pattern of beats, and each child should imitate the exact sound pattern. Let the children take turns tapping out a pattern for the others to follow. A drum works well with this type of activity. Sound-pattern discrimination requires focused listening.

3. Environmental sounds

Play listening games where your child has to identify an environmental sound.



There are published games where you can play a CD and find the picture or you could try an app for your phone e.g. Touch the Sound - Innovative Mobile Apps

4. Rhythm Sticks



Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear word parts (e.g. syllables) and is a subset of phonological awareness. Preschool children can recognise word parts, which is a prereading skill. Give each child a rhythm stick and have the children practice hitting them together before beginning the activity. As a nursery rhyme is read, the children hit the sticks to demonstrate the different word parts. For example, "Jack and Jill went up the hill." They hit the sticks seven times for the seven syllables or "Humpty dumpty sat on a wall", they hit 8 times for each syllable.

5. Nursery Rhymes/Rhyming Words



Read or sing nursery rhymes to familiarise the children with the rhyming patterns. Repeat new rhymes several times. It helps to raise your voice with a rhyming word. Read the rhyme again and let the children fill in the word that completes the line. For example, "Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great _____.", but leave off the end word and ask them to fill in with their own rhyming word. Introduce new rhymes every day. If your child is able to do this easily you could find pictures/objects of things that rhyme and try to get them to match them e.g. what rhymes with 'mat'?

6. Beginning Sounds

Place several different items in a basket for the children to draw out and identify. If the child chooses a piece of paper, ask what the item is and what the beginning sound is. He should say that it is paper and then repeat the beginning sound -- not the letter. Letter and sound matching is a skill that will be taught later.

When walking around and seeing objects, point out what sound they start with (e.g. Look at the sun... hmmm what does that word start with... 's') or play eye spy (remember to use sounds not the letter names) e.g. 'I spy my eye something beginning with 'cuh' (not 'c')... 'car'.

