

Phonemic Awareness

What the skill is: The ability to hear, identify, and manipulate phonemes (the individual sounds) in spoken words. In the examples below, when you see / / marks you say the sound, not the letter name. Phonological awareness is the larger category of skills that involve listening to sounds within words. Blending and segmenting are the most vital to reading success.

Phonemic Awareness Skills include: (listed from easiest to hardest)

Isolating – identifying a sound in the word.

What is the first sound you hear in *shoe*? /sh/

What is the last sound you hear in *leaf*? /f/

What sound do you hear in the middle of *mitt*? /i/

How many sounds are in *thought*? **Three**, /th/ /ough/ /t/

Blending – hearing several sounds and being able to blend them into a word.

What word is this, /c/ /a/ /t/? *cat*

What's my word, /c/ /r/ /ay/ /o/ /n/? *crayon*

Segmenting – hearing a word and being able to say each individual sound in it.

What are all the sounds you hear in *drag*? /d/ /r/ /a/ /g/

Omitting/Adding/Substituting – take away, add, or substitute a sound to make a new word.

Say *slime* without the /s/ sound. **lime**

Say *nap*. Add /s/ to the beginning of *nap*. **snap**

Say *stash*. Change the /t/ sound to /m/. **smash**

What it is not: Phonics - teaching the sounds that the letters make; however, it can be more effective to use letters as a teaching tool to improve phonemic awareness. Rhyming (same last sound) and alliteration (same first sound) are related skills that can make learning phoneme awareness easier for young children.

Why it is important: Phonemic Awareness is a foundational skill that makes learning to read, comprehending or understanding what is read, and spelling easier. It's important to **focus on one or two phonemic awareness skills at a time for struggling learners**. Phonemic awareness is one of the best predictors of children's ability to read. (Ehri, et al 2001). You don't need any materials to teach this skills, you can do it by just playing games with words and songs, but picture and letter cards and Elkonin Boxes (next page) can be helpful, too.

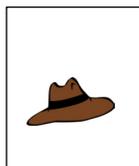
Ways to help your child: Play games with sounds while traveling in the car, waiting in the check-out line, getting ready for school, or anytime you have just a minute or two. Frequent and FUN practice that gets increasingly more challenging is key to helping your child master the critical skills of blending and segmenting.

Guess My Word – slowly say the individual sounds, or phonemes, in a word and have your child blend them together and say the whole word. Begin with short words that have just two or three sounds and work your way up to words with more than four sounds. Start by breaking apart compound words into two parts, like cup cake, class room, and cow boy if individual sounds are too hard and work up to words like /h/ /a/ /t/ (hat), /f/ /u/ /nn/ /y/ (funny) and /g/ /r/ /a/ /n/ /d/ /p/ /a/ (grandpa). **This is one of the MOST POWERFUL games to play with your child to help them learn to blend sounds.**

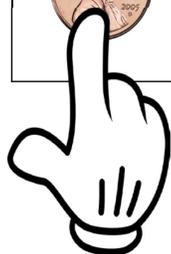
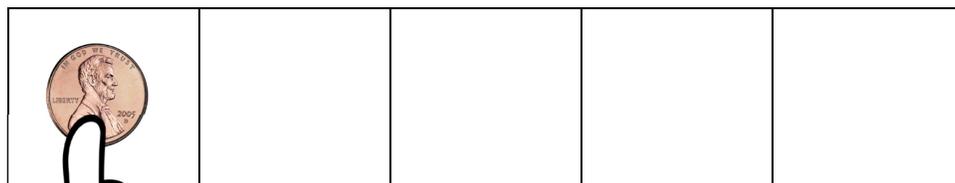
Break It Up – Say a word and encourage your child to say each individual sound in the word. Try words like *cat* (/c/ /a/ /t/), *bowl* (/b/ /ow/ /l/), *summer* (/s/ /u/ /mm/ /er/), *winter* (/w/ /i/ /n/ /t/ /er/), and *sandwich* (/s/ /a/ /n/ /d/ /w/ /i/ /ch/). This teaches segmenting, another critical skill your child needs.

Say it and Move It – Use the Sound Boxes, also called Elkonin Boxes, and a few pennies to play “Say It and Move It” with your child. **This is a POWERFUL game to play to help your child learn to segment sounds, but if you’re on the go without the supplies, just play “Break It Up” which can be played without any materials.**

Place the coins on the bold line, one under each box. Place a picture card at the top. Name the picture card and have your child repeat the word. Slide one coin up into a square for each sound you say. Then, repeat the word while dragging your finger under the boxes with the coins. Have your child choose a card and “say it and move it” as you listen for each sound. Once your child can do short words, add words with five phonemes. Next, challenge your child to do it without a picture cue at the top, just by listening to and repeating a word you have said.

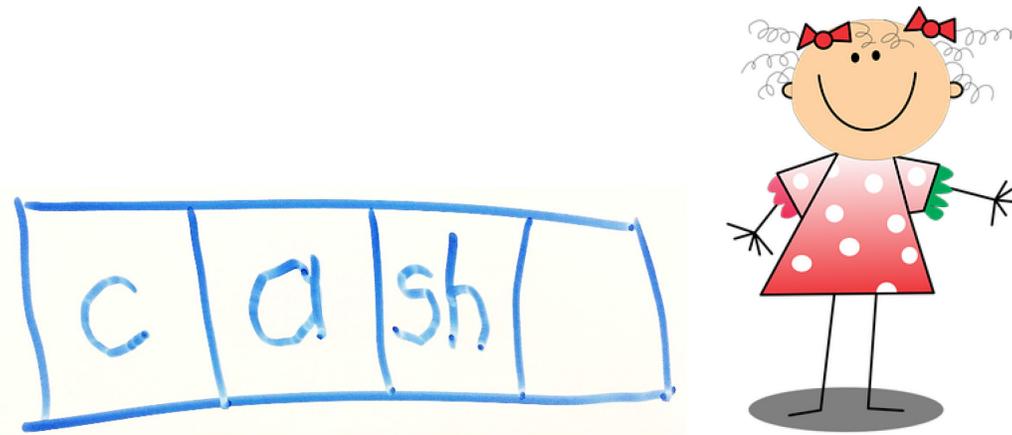


/h/ /a/ /t/
hat

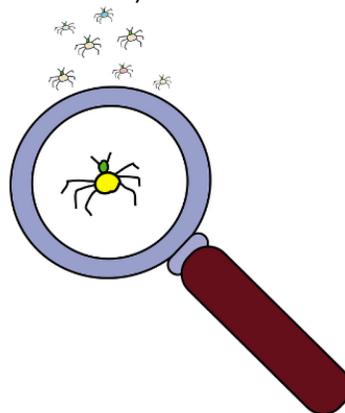


Sound Boxes with Letter Cards – Once your child can play “Say it and Move it” with fair accuracy, you can add letters. Select the magnetic letters or letter cards necessary to spell a word and place them under the sound (Elkonin) Boxes. As you say each sound, slide the letters up in to the box. Repeat the word as you slide your finger from left to right under the letters. Some boxes will have just one letter while others will have several letters that join together to make a single sound.

Writing in Sound Boxes – Use a dry erase board to draw sound or Elkonin, boxes. As your child says each sound, they write the letters in each box. Some boxes will have just one letter, others will have several letters that join together to make a single sound. After saying and writing, have your child repeat the whole word by dragging their finger or marker from left to right under the word.



I SPY with Sounds – instead of just describing things you see, such as “I spy something blue that bounces.” say, “I spy something that starts with /b/.”
“I spy something that has the /eee/ sound in the middle.”
“I spy something that ends with the /z/ sound.”
“I spy a /s/ /p/ /i/ /d/ /er/.” Take turns with your child.



Match Ups - Spread several cards in front of your child. Ask your child to find pairs that start with the same sound. Increase the number of cards that you put out at one time.

Memory - Place a set of cards face down, take turns drawing two at a time. Players “keep” any sets that match. Can be played by matching beginning sounds, end sounds, middle sounds, or for younger children by matching cards that rhyme.



Silly Putty – Use a ball of silly putty. Encourage your child to stretch it slowly while saying all of the sounds in a word.

Sing the Name Game Song – remember this from your childhood? Using the names of family and friends your child will know.

Sadie, Sadie, bo-badie,
Banana-fana fo-fadie
Fee-fy-mo-madie
Sadie!

Morgan, Morgan, bo-borgen
Banana-fana fo-forgen
Fee-fy-mo-orgen
Morgan!



Mix ‘em Up - Sing songs or say rhymes and change the sounds.

Row, row, row your boat
gently down the stream.
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily;
Life is but a dream

Bow, bow, bow your boat
bently bown the beam.
Berrily, berrily, berrily, berrily;
Bife is but a beam.

Sow, sow, sow your soat
sently sown the seam.
Serrily, serrily, serrily, serrily;
Sife is sut a seam.

One of these Words is Not Like the Others – say three words and have your child say which one does not start like the others (alliteration) or which one does not end like the others (rhyme).

Listen carefully, which one does not rhyme? *cat, sat, fan.*

Which one has a different beginning sound? *shoe, stand, shop.*

Okay, this is a hard one. Which word has a different middle sound? *bed, pan, hat*



References

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