

Phonemic Awareness

What is phonemic awareness?

Phonemic awareness is the ability to isolate, change, and take out sounds in words. This skill is an important part in the understanding of sounds in words, called phonological awareness.

Why is phonemic awareness important?

Taking apart sounds (segmenting) and putting together sounds (blending) in words are beginning level skills in reading development. First, a child must understand that words are made of sounds. Then, the child must learn how to identify the sounds, take them apart and put them together to make words.



What are some phonemic awareness activities I can do with my child?

A child does not need to master each skill in order to move on to the next. It may be helpful to use objects such as the child's fingers or colored blocks without letters in the beginning. One sound is used per finger or block.

1. Have your child pick out sounds in words.

- Start with a simple word like “bag.” Ask your child to pick out the first sound, “b” and then the rest of the word “ag.”
- Next, have your child pick out the first and last sounds in simple words. If you say the word “phone”, your child should say “f.” Make sure your child is saying the sound, not the letter. Then move to last sound in the same word. If you say the word “phone”, your child should say “n.” Other words to try are hat, cup, pen, horse, ship, and watch.
- Words with blends (i.e. two consonants together) are more difficult. Words with blends are drip, green, hand, and bump.

2. Have your child put syllables together to create words and pull them apart.

- When putting syllables together, you give the two parts of the word (e.g. “cup”---“cake”). Then your child puts the two parts together and says the whole word (e.g. “cupcake”). The words might be real or “silly” words. Other words to try are rewind, football, mailbox, and potato.
- When pulling words apart, you give your child the word (e.g. “potato”) and have him pick out the syllables (e.g. “po”—“ta”—“to”).



3. Have your child take apart sounds (segment) and then put sounds together (blend) to create words.

- When segmenting, you say a simple word (e.g. “dog”). Then have your child say the individual sounds in the word (e.g. “d---“o”---“g”). When blending you give your child the sounds (e.g. “d---“o”---“g”) and your child then says the word (e.g. “dog”).
- Start with simple words like “pie” and “in.” Then try words like “pig” and “dog.” Then move to words with blends at the beginning of the word such as “crib”, “slope”, “flap, and “step.” Last, try words with blends at the end of the word such as pump, hand, fast, lift.

4. Have your child delete sounds in words to make new words.

- Give your child a word like “snack.” Have your child say the word back. Then have your child say the word without the “n.” Your child should say “sack.”

5. Have your child change sounds in words to make a new word.

- Give your child a word like “phone.” Have your child say the word back. Then have your child say the word but instead of “f” say “b.” Your child should say “bone.”

The mastery of segmenting and blending sounds is a crucial skill for decoding and reading development. If you are having trouble coming up with words, <http://www.brendenisteaching.com/gen/wordlist/> is a good site for generating word lists with specific sounds.

If you are worried that your child has a reading problem:

Call the Reading & Literacy Discovery Center at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center **(513) 803-READ** (513-803-7323) or visit us at <http://rlde.cchmc.org/>