



## **Phonological Awareness**

### **What is phonological awareness?**

Phonological awareness is: *‘the ability to reflect on and manipulate the structure of an utterance (e.g., into words, syllables, or sounds) as distinct from its meaning.’* Children need to develop this awareness to make sense of an alphabetic script such as English (Stackhouse 1999).

### **Is this the same as phonics?**

The words ‘phonological awareness’ and ‘phonics’ are often muddled; phonological awareness is the ability to process sounds from hearing and saying, therefore purely auditory, whilst phonics refers to the representation of speech sound on paper (grapheme-phoneme correspondence). Put another way, phonological awareness involves just the ears whereas phonics involves the eyes and the ears. Phonological awareness skills need to be in place for phonics skills to develop.

### **Why is phonological awareness important?**

Through developing phonological awareness, children understand that sounds are the building blocks of words. Both speech and literacy skills (particularly spelling) rely on this understanding. Research suggests (Stackhouse and Wells 1999, Bird et al 1995) that children with speech processing difficulties are vulnerable to literacy difficulties.

### **How do I know if a child has phonological awareness difficulties?**

Phonological awareness difficulties are evident when children have difficulties with:

- Syllables:
  - problems identifying, blending, and segmenting syllables in polysyllabic words
- Rhyme:
  - problems recognising rhyming words
  - difficulty in generating rhyme
- Phonemes:
  - difficulty identifying initial, medial, and final phonemes in words
  - difficulty with phoneme blending and segmenting
  - difficulty with manipulating phonemes

### **How do I assess a child’s phonological awareness?**

- Use SEND Specialist Services phonological awareness assessment
- Analyse results from the Y1 Phonics Screening Test
- Monitor progress through the ‘Letters and Sounds’ programme
- Use ‘Identification of Pupils on the Dyslexic Continuum’ (IDP)
- Use PhAB 2 standardised assessment (2014 edition), GL Assessment (£145 + VAT)

### **At what age do children typically develop these skills?**

Phonological awareness skill	Age
Rhyme awareness	3-4 years
Rhyme judgement	4 years
Syllable awareness	4 years
Onset-rime	5 years
Phoneme blending	5 years
Phoneme segmenting	6 years
Phoneme counting	7 years
Phoneme manipulation	once the above are mastered

Please note: some children will be able to master the above skills before the ages suggested.

## Activities for Phonological Awareness Training

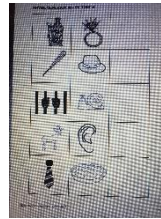
NB: these are all oral activities, to develop an 'ear' for language by encouraging the pupil to hear specific sounds, identify sound sequences and understand how this relates to spelling. *Please note:* the activities within each group are in order of difficulty but pupils do not have to achieve every aspect of the skill before moving on.

### Syllable awareness

- Blending - speak like a robot (What word is com/put/er? Does rad/i/at/or say radio?)
- Segmentation –
  - tap/clap names of friends
  - place counters on a picture equivalent to the number of syllables in the word
- Identification –
  - point to a counter and identify the specific syllable
  - identify the position of a given syllable
- Deletion – omit a syllable – what word are you left with? (Say toothbrush. Say it again without the tooth)

### Rhyme awareness

- Nursery rhymes – recite/sing well-known nursery rhymes
- Rhyme production – what rhymes with cat, mat, fat....
- Rhyme judgement – do two words rhyme?
- Rhyme detection – find the odd one out of three
- Play rhyme picture pairs or bingo



### Onset-rime awareness

- Isolate onset (say ball without the 'all')
- Isolate rime (say ball without the 'b')
- Choose a rime (e.g., 'all,' change the onset to make new words – ball, call, fall.....)

### Phoneme awareness

- Awareness of initial, final, and medial sounds
- Listen for a specific sound – clap when it is heard
- Locate the sound within a word (beginning/middle/end)
- Alliteration - identify the common sound in an alliterative sentence
- Identify the 'odd one out sound from a choice of 3 – use initial/final/medial sounds

### Phoneme blending

- Put sounds together to make a word e.g., c-a-t, f-l-r-k (real and non-words)
- Use counters to identify the number of phonemes
- Slow down speech – use an elastic band as a visual cue to stretch phonemes then bring them back together

### Phoneme segmentation

- Break words down into sounds
- Put a counter for every sound you can hear in a word (real and non-words)

### Phoneme manipulation

- Place counters in a phoneme frame to make a word, orally replace one phoneme, and ask the pupil to say the unfamiliar word
- Deletion – take b from bat = at
- Transposition – say these sounds in reverse order e.g., pack = cap
- Spoonerisms – transpose initial sounds in words e.g., car park = par cark