

Phonemic Awareness

What is it?

Phonological awareness is the ability to identify and manipulate words, parts of words, and individual sounds in spoken words. Phonemic awareness is one piece of phonological awareness. Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate individual sounds in spoken words. No print is involved. It is completely out loud. These are great activities to do at home or in the car because they can all be done without any materials.

Why is it important?

Phonemic awareness sets the foundation for later phonics learning. When a child notices individual sounds in a spoken word, he or she is more prepared for sounding out and blending written words.

What can we do at home?

Word identification - Count the number of words in a spoken sentence. Say the first line of a nursery rhyme (for example, Mary had a little lamb.) Then, using your fingers, count the words together. (Phonological awareness activity)

Beginning Sounds - Play "I'm going on a camping trip..." Start the game by saying, "I'm going on a camping trip, and I'm going to bring a dog and a dandelion. What are you going to bring?" The child should think of something that also starts with the d sound. Remember, this game is all about sounds, not letters! For example, if the sound you chose is "sss", and the child says, "circus," that would be an appropriate answer. (Phonemic awareness activity)

Rhyming - Play a thumbs up-thumbs down game. Start the game by saying, "If the words rhyme, give me a thumbs up. If they do not rhyme, give me a thumbs down." Make sure that your examples are very obvious for young learners, especially when the words do not rhyme. Avoid words that start with the same letter (dog-dinosaur) or fit in the same category (dog-cat). By choosing words that are very different and unrelated (dog-refrigerator), you are helping your child learn to focus in on the rhyme. (Phonological awareness activity)

Segmenting/Blending - Choose a word with three sounds (fan). Say each sound separately. Have your child touch his head when saying the first sound (fff), touch his waist when saying the middle sound (aaa), and touch his toes when saying the last sound (nnn). When your child can do this activity easily without assistance, say one of the sounds separately and ask your child to place his hands on the head, waist, or toes to show if the sound comes at the beginning, middle, or end. (Phonemic awareness activity)

PS - Tongue twisters, nursery rhymes, Dr. Seuss books, and other rhyming books are also great ways to develop these skills!