



What is Phonological Awareness?

“Phonological awareness” is a fancy term for the ability to tune in to the sounds we use in spoken language, how they relate to one another, and how they are similar and different.

As children, we learn to understand that “cow” stands for the big animal that says “moo” and gives us milk. But we also learn to understand that the word “cow” is made up of two individual sounds: “k” and “ow.” We learn that “cow” rhymes with other words, such as “now” and “how.” We learn that the “k” sound at the beginning of “cow” is the same as the “k” sound at the end of “duck.” We learn about the form or structure of sounds and words in our language.

Why is phonological awareness important? Well, it’s fun to play with sounds. Besides, current research tells us that children who have a hard time understanding that words are made up of individual sounds are likely to have a hard time learning to read.

Development of Phonological Awareness

Nobody is born understanding the form of a native language. Over time, a child begins to recognize that sentences are made up of words and he or she will express the following knowledge:

- I can tell you when you say words that rhyme: **“bat, cat” vs. “boy, cat.”**
- I can say rhyming words myself: **“too, blue.”**
- I can tell you when you say words that start with the same sound: **“pan, pot” vs. “pan, jump.”**
- I can say words that start with the same sound myself: **“boy, ball.”**
- I can tell you when you say words that end with the same sound: **“book, lock,” vs. “book, hat.”**
- I can say words that end with the same sound myself: **“off, leaf.”**
- I can tell you when you say words that have the same sound in the middle: **“chicken, pocket” vs. “chicken, cowboy.”**
- I can say words with the same sound in the middle myself: **“happy, apple.”**
- I can recognize, and then say, the syllables in words: **“pan-cake, tea-cher.”**
- I can recognize, and then say, the starting sound and the rest of a word: **“p – at, d – og.”**
- I can recognize, and then say, the individual sounds in a word: **“c – a – t.”**
- I can recognize that sounds can be taken away from words to make new words; then I can do it myself: **“School. S-kool. Cool!”**
- I can blend sounds into words: **“c – a – t. Cat!”**
- I can take words apart into sounds: **“Dog. d – aw – g.”**



How Can I Help My Child ?

There are lots of things you can do to help your child develop the awareness of sounds, and get ready to learn to read:

- Let your child see you reading. He or she will want to be just like you, and have books, too!
- Make books available to your child. From a very early age, children love exploring books. There are more and more brightly coloured, durable, preschool books available.
- Encourage family and friends to give your child books as presents. Visit your local library.
- Share books with your child. You don't have to read all the words at first, just talk about the pictures. As a child grows, he or she will choose favorite books and want to hear them again and again!
- Music, finger plays and rhyming books are a great way to let your child hear how you can play with the sounds of language.
- Above all, have fun with language, and have fun with your child!



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