

What is Phonological Awareness?

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Phonological awareness skills are important in order to develop good reading skills. Having good phonological awareness skills means that a child is able to manipulate sounds and words, or “play” with sounds and words. For example, a teacher or speech-language pathologist might ask a child to break the word “cat” into individual sounds: “c-a-t.”

Phonological awareness includes the following skills:

- Recognizing when words rhyme (e.g., “Do ‘cat’ and ‘shoe’ rhyme?”) and coming up with a word that rhymes (e.g., “What rhymes with ‘key’?”)
- Segmentation of words in sentences (e.g., “Clap for each word you hear in the sentence ‘The dog is furry.’”)
- Blending syllables (e.g., “I am going to say parts of a word. Tell me what the word is. ‘Pan-da.’”)
- Segmentation of syllables (e.g., “Clap for each syllable you hear in the word ‘refrigerator.’”)
- Deletion of syllables (e.g., “Say the word ‘strawberry.’ Now say it without saying ‘straw.’”)
- Identifying sounds in words (e.g., “What sound do you hear at the end of ‘tulip?’”)
- Blending sounds (e.g., “Put these sounds together to make a word. ‘D-oo-r.’”)
- Segmentation of sounds (e.g., “Tell me each sound you hear in the word ‘cat?’”)
- Deletion of sounds (e.g., “Say ‘chair.’ Now say it without the ‘ch.’”)
- Addition of sounds (e.g., “Say ‘cook.’ Now say it with an ‘e’ at the end.”)
- Manipulation of sounds (e.g., “Change the ‘s’ in ‘sad’ to a ‘d’ and say the new word.”)



Why is Phonological Awareness Important?

Phonological awareness is important because it is a basis for reading. Children begin to read by listening to others read aloud, then recognizing sounds in words, sounding words out for themselves, recognizing familiar words, and so on. By engaging in word play, children learn to recognize patterns among words and use this knowledge to read and build words.