



Early Literacy Skills – Phonological Awareness

Phonological Awareness is being able to “play” with sounds and words.

The focus here is playing with **sounds** – **not letters!**

Rhyming – Identifying two words that sound the same at the end like “cat” and “hat”.

- Emphasize rhymes that you hear. For example: “*lip and sip. They both end in ‘ip’.* They rhyme! Lip – sip – lip – sip”
- Read books with rhymes. Talk about and emphasize the words that rhyme. When your child is ready you can “hunt” for rhymes in the book.
- Silly words: Practice coming up with “silly” words that rhyme. You can start by giving one or two examples and then asking your child to think of one.
 - “*Cake – I’m going to think of silly words that rhyme like cake. Yake. Nake. Hake. Can you think of any?*”
- Sort rhyming words: Have 3-4 pictures or objects that rhyme and one that doesn’t rhyme. Say the names of the pictures or objects and find the one that doesn’t rhyme. Make it fun by “throwing it in the garbage” or hiding the word that doesn’t fit.
- Repetitive rhyming books: Once your child knows a rhyming book really well, read the sentence and pause to see if your child can fill in the right word. Talk about how it rhymes. For more advanced practice give a “sentence starter” and have your child fill in the blank (example: I see a cat sitting on a).
- Songs and Nursery rhymes: These are full of rhymes! Once you’ve practiced a lot, make a mistake and see if your child picks up on it. In Twinkle Twinkle say “*up above the world so high, like a diamond in the farm*”. For more advanced practice you can use songs or nursery rhymes that let you come up with your own ideas. For example: in the song “Down by the Bay”.

Clapping syllables - To be effective readers children need to be able to break sentences and words into parts.

- Start by practicing clapping words in a sentence. Example: “*I love Chase*”. *I’m going to clap for each word I say. Let’s try another one! “Chase is so fast”*
- Try clapping the syllables in 2-4 syllable words like puppy, dinosaur, or elevator. Show your child how to do it and then have them copy you. *I’m going to clap the beats in the word “puppy”. 2 claps! You try!*
- You can represent syllables in a word with blocks or other objects. I have 3 blocks – there are three parts in the word di-no-saur
- Have beads on a string and slide a bead over for every word or syllable you hear
- Clap the syllables in words that are important for your child. Family member names, favorite characters, favorite foods and talk about if they’re long and short

Practice hearing sounds in words – Children need to be able to hear different sounds that make up a word. This could include hearing what sound a word starts or ends with.

TIP: We are talking about the **sounds we hear** – Not the letter names. Start with sounds that are easily represented by a letter.



- For example: identifying farm starts with the “F” sound is easier than identifying “phone” starts with the “F” sound.
- Start with important people names. Say the name slowly and listen for the sound the name starts with (tip: pick simple sounds like “Marshall” or “Batman”. Sounds like “Chase” or “Thor” can be a bit more tricky.).
- Collect a bunch of objects that start with the same sound. For example: bury “sandals”, “sunscreen”, “sunglasses”, “sailboat”, and “soap” in the “sand”, dig the objects out and talk about how they all start with the “S” sound.
- Pick toys out of a toy box or food out of a lunch box and talk about what sound they start with.
- Practice writing cards (Valentine’s cards, Holiday cards, birthday invites). Have your child identify the sound they hear at the start of their friends names. You can tell them the letter that goes with this sound and have them help you write it (copying, tracing, observing, etc).
- Name three items and have your child pick the one that doesn’t start with the same sound. For example: “fish”, “foot”, “monkey”.
- Sound stories: make up a silly story and have your child pick one word that starts with the special sound. For example: *“listen for the “LLLL” sound. ‘Lyla wanted a little lollypop to lick because she likes the taste of licorice’. What “LLL” words did you hear?*

TIP: Many of these activities could be completed for sounds at the **end** of the word or even sounds in the **middle** of the word but this can be a little bit more challenging.

Blending and Segmenting syllables and sounds:

Blending is **putting together** parts or sounds of a word to identify the word. This skill helps children learn to sound out and read words.

- Pick a 2 or 3-syllable word. Say the syllables with a pause between and encourage your child to “guess the secret word”.
 - For example: “ba – na – na” as banana
- Once they can blend syllables, slowly say the sounds of simple words.
 - For example: “c – a – t” is cat, “b – i – g” is big

Segmenting is **breaking apart** a word which is an important skill in spelling. This skill is more difficult for children to learn.

- Pick a simple 2 or 3 sound word like “at”, “rat”, or “up”. Say the word slowly and ask “what sound does the word start with?” Encourage your child to say the SOUND (not the letter). Once your child identifies the sound you can use foam letters, letter blocks, or printing to write the letters and eventually spell the word
- You can help your child understand the number of sounds in a word by representing the sounds on your fingers. For example: *“there are 3 sounds in the word ‘sip’. ‘s’, ‘i’, ‘p’”* – holding up a finger each time you say a sound.

Remember:

There are a variety of other skills important for reading

- Vocabulary
- Understanding and use of language
- Concepts about Print
- Alphabet knowledge