



# Parent's Corner

by

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## Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic Awareness is the ability to identify, think about and mentally manipulate the sounds within words. Developing good Phonemic Awareness is a gradual process. It is an essential prerequisite in learning to read and spell, and is a skill many children with learning difficulties struggle with.

Children initially need to learn to distinguish between the individual sounds within one-syllable words by identifying each sound and then nominating them as either vowels or consonants. Multi-syllable words have individual sounds organised into sound groups around a vowel, so that every syllable must have a vowel.

To help children identify the number of syllables within words, clap or tap on the table one beat per syllable. Alternatively place your hand under your chin with your lips together; every time the jaw drops is a syllable.

The next stage in developing good phonemic awareness is to match the sounds to letters. Children often can have poor short vowel awareness, making correct sound-letter identification difficult. The short vowels are *a, e, i, o,* and *u* as in *bat, bet, bit, bop,* and *but*. Common vowel confusions are 'a-u' or 'e-i' reversals where a child may read *cat* instead of *cut* or *set* instead of *sit*. Activities need to focus on awareness of the sound the short vowel makes and then matching it to the corresponding letter.

Speech perception is the ability to distinguish between words that sound almost alike, being able to isolate individual sounds e.g. *lust/ rust, met/ mat*. Alliteration and rhyming activities can help develop phonemic awareness to distinguish these sounds.

Speech production tasks that tap into phonological processes include articulating clearly challenging words or repetition of tongue twisters or fast repetition of a single word that is difficult to say.

### **Activities-**

The following games are good for developing phonemic awareness as they focus on alliteration, rhyme, isolation, letter-sound correspondence while supporting the child's vocabulary and general knowledge.

Place a number of items in a bag. If it is difficult to obtain a variety of objects then use photos or drawings of objects and place them in the bag.

For younger children choose items that target a specific sound that you want to focus on e.g. objects all beginning, ending or having the same middle sounds *m, s, t, f, i* or *a*.



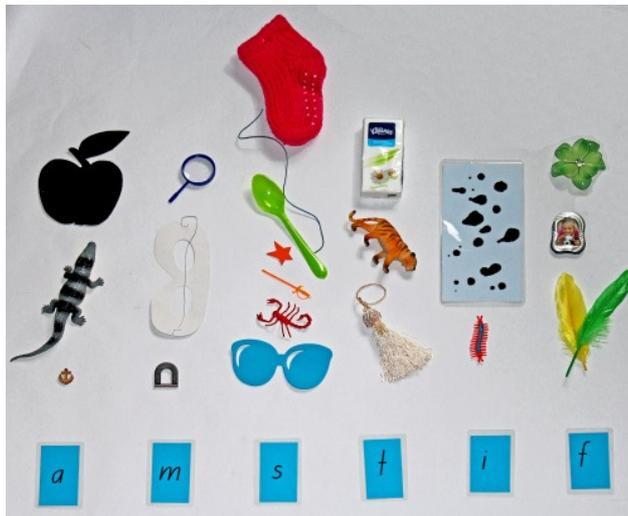
For older children choose objects that may support the child's homework spelling list e.g. words with 'ea' spelling.

One or more children can play the following games:

### Game 1- Multi Focus

Taking it in turns each child picks an item from the bag and then:

- *Names the object* e.g. tiger (vocabulary)
- *Tell us something about the object* e.g. Tigers are carnivores with orange and black strips and are an endangered species. They are the largest animal in the cat family. (general knowledge)
- *For younger children isolate the sounds in the name of the object and say where the target sound is located* e.g. the /t/ sound is at the beginning of the word 'tiger' (isolation)
- *For older children identify the number of syllables and sounds within the target word* e.g. Tiger has two syllables *ti/ger*: /t/ /eye/ sounds in the first syllable and /g/ /u/ sounds in the second syllable (**phonemic awareness**).
- *For younger children place the object under a letter card that represents the first sound of the object or for older children write the word* (letter-sound relationship)



- *For older children write a sentence or paragraph using the identified word*

### Game 2- Rhyming

Place the bag with the objects on a table allowing each child to select an object without showing the others.

Each child then asks a question to try to guess what the object is, for example:

- Does the object's name start with the sound .....
- Does the object's name end with the sound .....
- Is the ..... sound in the middle of the object's name?
- Does the object's name rhyme with .....
- Are the ..... beats in the object's name?

If a child guesses correctly, they win the object. The winner is the person with the most objects at the end of the game.

