

# Phonological awareness activities

This area of language can be called Phonological Awareness, and it is all about an awareness of rhythm, sentences, words, syllables and sounds in words. For best results, work your way through the activities in order, starting with rhythm, sentences, words, syllables, beginning and final sounds in words and only then, try rhyming activities. Those are definitely the most challenging.

Your child's better understanding of sounds leads to improved reading and writing skills. None of our activities require your child to read or write, just listen to sounds.

## Copy the rhythm.

The aim of this game is to encourage your child to hear, memorise and copy the sounds. Sit back-to-back for this activity with the same six items on trays in front of you.

You begin the game by making four sounds in any order and ask the child to listen carefully, remember and then copy the sounds when you've finished, e.g. scrunch crisp bag, shake the peas, hit the spoon on the saucepan and scrunch the crisp bag again.

Then the child will try to copy those four sounds again, in the right order.

After leading the activity a few times, why not make it more entertaining by asking the child to make a pattern of sounds for you to copy.

### Resources needed:

- 2 Trays
- 2 Crisp bags
- 2 Yoghurt pots
- 2 Tub of peas
- 2 Water bottles
- 2 Spoons
- 2 Saucepans



## Counting words in a sentence.

The aim of this game is to help your child become aware of the numbers of words spoken. You can take turns to say the titles of favourite books and count the number of words in each, e.g.

Child: *'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. That's five for me'*.

Adult: *'James and the Giant Peach. That's five for me'*.

Child: *'How to Train Your Dragon. That's five more for me. Now I've a total of ten'*.



Adult: *'Charlotte's Web. That's two more for me'. Now I've a total of seven. Oh no, you're in the lead!*

The game is over when someone scores 20.

## Sentence building.

The aim of this game is to help your child recognise and count all the words in a sentence. This is not a reading game. For the child, it is a listening game. It can be great fun if others join in too.

Before the activity, the adult cuts up the individual words and sets them in the correct noun, verb or adjective pile. In this game, the adult will read aloud the three words which have been selected and should be incorporated into a sentence.

The game can last ten minutes. Use the timer to start the game.

The adult picks a word from each bowl, reads those three words aloud. Then each player has one minute to create a sentence using the three chosen words, e.g. if the chosen words are **Octopus, Dancing and Tired**. Your sentence could be *'The octopus was dancing all night and now he is very tired. That's 12 words, so 12 more bricks on my tower!'*

Scores can be kept by each player saying their sentence, counting the number of words and adding that number of bricks to their Lego tower.



When the timer sounds, the game is over and the person with the tallest tower wins the game.

### Resources needed:

- 3 bowls
- List of nouns (naming words)
- Verbs (action words)
- Adjectives (describing words)
- Timer
- Lego/building blocks
- Barrier (big book/ piece of cardboard)

### Example words to use:

Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives
Car	Running	Big
Ball	Sleeping	Smelly
book	Waiting	Red
Octopus	Dancing	Fast
Tractor	Falling	Tired
Submarine	Eating	Hungry
Mummy	Climbing	Excited
Elephant	Talking	Sad
Feather	Hiding	Long
Fridge	Looking	Heavy
Bridge	Crying	Green

## Syllable robot.

The aim of this game is to show just how easy it is to identify and count syllables.

You can choose any words to play this game, but it might be fun to choose a topic of interest to your child, e.g.

- Animals
- Food
- Superheroes
- Cartoon characters
- Transport
- People's names

To speak in syllables, all you have to do, is talk like a robot, e.g.

*'Hi-ppo-pot-a-mus. Wow. That word has five syllables!'*

*'Rhi-noc-er-ous. Gosh, that has four syllables!'*

*'El-e-phant. Oh, that has three syllables!'*

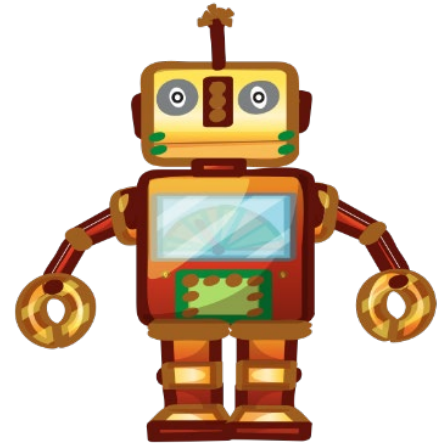
*'Ze-bra. See, that word only has two syllables!'*

*'Ti-ger. That also has two syllables!'*

*'Bear. Well, that has just one syllable!'*

You can make this more fun by asking the child to give instructions to you or another member of the family, e.g.

Child: *'Can you tell me which zoo animal that has two syllables in its name?'*



## Dice game.



The aim of this game is to give each other items with a certain number of syllables.

Roll a dice and think of a word with the number of syllables shown on the dice. You can put stickers over the numbers 4, 5 and 6 and replace them with another 1, 2 and 3 to make the game easier.

It may also be useful to set out a selection of household objects with varying numbers of syllables to help support your child, e.g.

To-wel, ta-ble, char-ger, te-le-phone, cush-ion, chair, stick-le bricks, Dup-lo, Plast-ic-ene, mag-a-zine.

You can make this more fun by asking the child to give instructions to you or another member of the family, e.g.

*'Please bring me a fruit which has only one syllable'. (pear)*

*'Please bring me a vegetable which has three syllables'. (potato)*

## Initial sounds.

The aim of this activity is to help your child understand words can be broken into sounds. In this activity, let's listen especially to the first sound in each word.

Remember in these activities, we use the sounds not the letter names ('sss-'; not 'Ess') when talking about sounds in words.

Like all these activities, for the child, this is a listening game and does not involve any reading or writing. The adult will lead initially.

### Stage One - Child listening to initial sounds.

The adult will sound out the words.

Adult: 'Cat. C-a-t. The first sound in this word is c-'

Adult: 'Car. C-a-r. The first sound in this word is c-'



### Stage Two - Child selecting initial sounds.

You offer two options and see if the child can identify which word begins with c-, e.g.

Adult: 'Which of these words begins with a c- sound? Horse, h-orse or Cow, c-ow?'

Adult: 'Which of these words begins with a c- sound? Fish, f-ish or Crab, c-rab?'

Adult: 'Which of these words begins with a c- sound? Carrot, c-arrot or Potato, p-otato?'



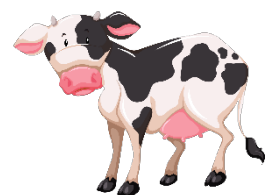
### Stage Three - Child suggesting initial sounds.

If your child is able to select beginning sounds in a word at Stage Two, you could have fun with this Stage Three activity. Without giving them any prompts this time, you can ask the child to tell you which words begin with c-, e.g.

Adult: 'Can you name a vegetable that begins with c-?'

Adult: 'Can you name an animal that begins with c-?'

Adult: 'I Spy with My Little Eye Something that Begins with c-'



### Stage Four - Child leading initial sounds games.

When you know that your child enjoys the activities and games at Stages One to Three, and can recognise initial sounds, you can make this more challenging by asking your child to lead and you can answer their questions, e.g.

Child: 'I Spy with My Little Eye Something that begins with c-'

Parents, please note that the sound chosen in this example is c-. You can match this activity to whichever sound your child needs to practise. Until they are certain about sounds in words, it is best to practise only one sound at a time, until they are confident about hearing that sound.

## Initial sounds game.

Try these games with your child after you have completed the activities at Stages One to Four.

- *'I went on holiday and took a towel, a table, a turkey, and.....'*
- *'I went to Outer Space and I took a pig, a pie, a pudding, a pony and.....'*

## Final sounds.

The aim of this activity is to help your child understand words can be broken into sounds. In this activity, let's listen especially to the last sound in each word.

Like the previous activity, the adult will lead initially.

### Stage One - Child listening to final sounds.

Adult: *'Cat. C-a-t. The last sound in this word is -t.'*

Adult: *'Mat'. M-a-t. The final sound in this word is -t.'*

### Stage Two Child selecting final sounds.

You offer two options and see if the child can identify which word ends with -t,

Adult: *'Which of these words ends with a -t sound? Sing or Chat?'*

Adult: *'Which of these words ends with a -t sound? Scarf or Coat?'*

Adult: *'Which of these words ends with a -t sound? Foot or Hand?'*



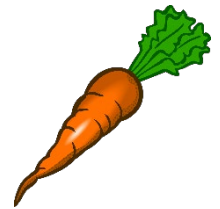
### Stage Three - Child suggesting final sounds.

If your child is able to select final sounds in a word at Stage Two, you could have fun with this Stage Three activity. Without giving them any prompts this time, you can ask the child to tell you which words ends with a -t sound, e.g.

Adult: *'Can you tell me the name of a vegetable that ends with -t?'*

Adult: *'Can you tell me an animal whose name ends with -t?'*

Adult: *'I Spy with My Little Eye Something that ends with -t.'*



### Stage Four - Child leading final sounds games.

When you know that your child enjoys these games and can recognise final sounds, you can make this more challenging by asking your child to lead and you can answer their questions, e.g.

Child: *'I Spy with My Little Eye Something that ends with -t?'*

The sound chosen in this example is -t. You can match this activity to whichever sound your child needs to practise. Until they are confident about sounds in words, it is best to practise only one sound a day.

Remember in these activities, we use the sounds not the letter names, ('sssss-', not 'Ess') when talking about sounds in words.

## Final sounds game.

Try these games after you have completed the activities at Stages One to Four. They are really tricky!

Words ending with -t.

- *'I went on holiday and took a mat, a cat, a ferret, a coat....'*
- *'I went to Outer Space and I took a pig, a plug, a wig, a mug, a rug...'*

## Treasure hunt.

This is a team game. Set a timer for five minutes and you and your child work as a team to find as many items around the house which:

- Have a number of syllables in their name, e.g. *'How many things can we find, that have three syllables in their name, e.g. dinosaur, umbrella, magazine'*.
- Begin with a given sound, e.g. *'How many items can we find beginning with s-?'*
- End with a given sound, e.g. *'How many items can we find that end with -t '*



At the end of the game review the items you have both gathered and make sure they are correct.

## Follow the clues.



You give the child a clue to an object found in the house and the child must work out what object you are describing, e.g. *'I'm thinking of something you find in the fridge; it has one syllable and starts with the 'm' sound. (milk)'*. The child has to go and retrieve the object.

After practising this activity several times, you can make this more entertaining by asking the child to give clues for you to follow.

## Blending sounds.

The aim of this activity is to help the child see that words can be made up of separate sounds, which can be put together to make the word again. No words will be written. This is not a reading exercise, but, as usual, it is a listening activity.

From around your home collect objects with names containing a maximum of five sounds. We have included a list of possible objects.

Select four of these objects and place them on the table. Tell your child that you are going to ask for certain items, which you will 'sound-out', e.g.

Adult: *'Can I have the c-u-p?'*

Your child gives you the cup. Leave a little pause between items to use - remember we want them to have a maximum of five sounds not letters.

- Cup (c-u-p)
- Soap (s-oa-p)
- Dog (d-o-g)
- Hat (h-a-t)
- Skirt (s-k-ir-t)
- Teddy (t-e-dd-y)
- Bowl (b-ow-l)
- Jumper (j-u-m-p-er)
- Brick (b-r-i-ck)
- Book (b-oo-k)



When you know that your child enjoys blending sounds, you can make this more fun by hiding these items around the room and having a Treasure Hunt.

You could also make it more challenging by answering their questions, e.g.

Child: *'I Spy with my little eye something that sounds like L-e-g-o.'*

## Blending movement words.

The aim of this game is to familiarise the child with hearing words segmented into sounds and see how easy it is to blend those sounds together to make the word again. It also increases your child's vocabulary. See the examples below, e.g.

Adult: *'Let's see if you can move about in this way. S-k-i-p'.*

The child blends the word and moves according to the action, skipping around.

Actions you could use:

- C-r-aw-l
- J-u-m-p
- R-u-n
- R-o-ll
- W-a-lk
- C-l-i-mb
- Ch-a-r-ge
- T-i-p-t-oe
- S-k-i-p
- S-t-a-m-p
- Sh-u-ff-le
- H-o-p
- W-a-dd-le
- R-e-v-er-se
- St-u-m-b-le
- Pr-a-n-ce
- Sh-u-ff-le
- M-a-r-ch
- Th-u-n-d-er.



## Blending describing words.

You and your child can have fun making a list of words which have almost the same meaning. These can be called synonyms.

You can segment the words and the child can blend it, e.g.

Adult: *'Let's see if you can think of other words which have the same meaning as big, b-i-g'.*

Possible answers;

- h-u-ge
- g-i-g-a-n-t-i-c
- e-n-o-r-m-ou-s
- l-a-r-ge
- b-i-g
- v-a--st
- i-mm-e-n-se
- m-a-ss-i-ve
- m-e-g-a.



## The true/false game.

Your child has a green card and a red card which you prepared earlier. The adult makes a statement, and the child has to decide if it is true or false. If it is true, they hold up their green card, if false they hold up the red card.

- Syllables, e.g. *'The word trac-tor has three syllables. True or false?'*
- Syllables, e.g. *'The word si-lage has three syllables. True or false?'*
- Syllables, e.g. *'The word Sky has two syllables. True or false?'*
- Syllables, e.g. *'The word trail-er has one syllable. True or false?'*
- Syllables, e.g. *'The word far-mer has two syllables. True or false?'*



During this game your statements should only focus on one aspect of Phonological Awareness at a time. Next week you could concentrate on-

- Initial sounds, e.g. *'The word door begins with d-. True or false?'*
- Initial sounds, e.g. *'The word window begins with s-. True or false?'*
- Initial sounds, e.g. *'The word America begins with a-. True or false?'*
- Initial sounds, e.g. *'The words sausages and beans begin with the same sound. True or false?'*
- Initial sounds, e.g. *'The words fish and octopus begin with the same sound. True or false?'*

The following week, you could concentrate on;

- Final sounds, e.g. *'Shop ends with -t. True or false?'*

When your child develops their confidence, they can have a turn at being the leader. Make some deliberate mistakes in your answers and see if your child spots them.

## Rhyme.

The aim of these activities is to help your child understand that words with the same final sounds, are said to rhyme. In these activities, let's listen especially to the last sound in each word to see if they rhyme.

Like the previous activity, the adult will lead initially.

### Stage One - Child listening to rhyme.

Adult: *'We know that words can be broken into sounds. We also know that if we change the start of the word and keep the same final sounds, the words rhyme. I will read you some examples of words which rhyme.'*

*C-at, M-at, S-at, H-at, R-at, B-at.*

*H-ouse, M-ouse, L-ouse.*

*B-oy, T-oy, J-oy, Pl-oy, Ann-oy,*

*M-ice, R-ice, N-ice, D-ice,*

*There are so many more rhymes.'*

### Stage Two - Child selecting rhyming words.

You offer two options and see if the child can identify which word has the same final sound as G-ame, e.g.

Adult: *'Which of these words has the same final sound as g-ame? Lap-top or F-ame?'*

Child: *'Fame'.*

Adult: *'So we can hear that G-ame and F-ame rhyme'.*

Adult: *'Which of these words has the same final sound as sch-ool? H-ome or P-ool?'*

Child: *'Pool'.*

Adult: *'So we can hear that Sch-ool and P-ool rhyme'.*

Adult: *'Which of these words has the same final sound as fl-ower? T-ower or C-astle?'*

Child: *'Tower'.*

Adult: *'So we can hear that Fl-ower and T-ower rhyme'.*

## Rhyming pairs memory game.

The aim of this game is to have fun thinking about rhyming words and to try to find them. Before starting this activity you will need to draw or print out six pairs of rhyming pictures. It is best to use pictures with no writing on them. Shuffle the pictures and place them face down on the table. Take it in turns to turn over two pictures and try and find two that rhyme. It is good to think aloud when it is your turn to demonstrate for your child what you have to do, e.g. *'Cat, bus do they rhyme? Cat, bus. No they don't.'*

If they do not rhyme, then replace the cards face down where they were found. Then the other player takes a turn. If a player picks up two cards which do rhyme, the player takes another turn and the game continues in this way until all the rhyming pairs have been found. The game ends when all the rhyming cards have been lifted and the winner is the player who found most rhyming pairs.

### Stage Three - Child suggesting rhyming words.

You might think that this is the first, or only stage in rhyming. Children are often asked, 'What word rhymes with .....?' Children can only understand rhyming if they have understood about final sounds in words. When you are happy that your child has worked through the earlier activities, then they may be ready for this stage. They will be able to select rhyming words in Stage Two, while you gave them options to choose from. Without giving them any prompts in Stage Three, you can ask the child to tell you a word that rhymes with G-oal, e.g.

Adult: *'Can you tell me a word that ends with the same final sound as G-oal?'*

Adult: *'Can you tell me a word that ends with the same final sound as S-chool?'*

Adult: *'Can you tell me a word that ends with the same final sound as -egg?'*

Adult: *'Can you tell me a word that ends with the same final sound as Sh-ell?'*

Explain that if words have the same final sounds, they are said to rhyme. Your child should be able to give you lots of examples of words which rhyme.

### Stage Four - Child leading rhyming words games.

When you know that your child enjoys these games, can recognise final sounds and suggest rhyming words, you can make this more challenging by answering their questions, e.g.

Child: *'I Spy with My Little Eye Something that rhymes with dog?'*

### Silly rhymes.

Finish the sentence with a rhyme *'I like jam but I don't like (ham), but Mammy gives me.....'*

Adult: *'A big fat cat sits on a (mat), he.....'*

Child: *'The noisy green frog sits on a ..... (log), he.....'*

These could be the start of silly poems. See how much more you and your child can add to these lines, to make silly poems. Share your silly poem with other members of the family.



### Funny song.

Why not try to create funny new words to a song, e.g.

Instead of singing the usual lyrics to the song, There Was An Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly. Why not make up your own, with your child. The sillier the better!

There was an old lady who swallowed a bee  
I don't know why she swallowed a bee  
Perhaps she'll eat me!

or

There was an old lady who swallowed a clover  
I don't know why she swallowed a clover  
Perhaps she'll fall over!

## Long journey rhyming fun.



On long journeys you could tell the child to listen to the words they hear. Or they can think of things around them. Rhyming pairs really are all around us. Ask them to tell you if they hear two words that rhyme, or if they see two things whose names rhyme, like ball and wall, or tree and knee. This encourages your child to think about rhyming sounds. They really are all around! Why not try to find some yourself and tell your child! They will associate rhyming with fun.