

**Speech and Language Therapy Service for Children, Barking and Dagenham**  
Mainstream Schools Team 2016

**Supporting Your Child's Phonological Awareness**

Phonological Awareness is a person's knowledge of **sounds** in a language. It is the ability to reflect on the **sounds** in words separately from the meanings and spelling of words. It includes:

- the ability to divide words into syllables (**caterpillar** has 4 syllables: ca-ter-pi-llar)
- the ability to rhyme (**cat** and **hat** rhyme)
- the ability to appreciate that words may begin or end with the same **sound**. For example, **coat** and **key** begin with the same sound [different from letter] and **horse** and **mouse** end with 's' [even though the last letter is e].

These skills are important for reading and spelling. They give a child different stores of word categories to help them when they read or spell. A child who has poor phonological awareness may therefore find learning to read and spell more difficult.

The difference between a letter and a sound is a very important one. In this leaflet we **always** refer to the sound that a letter or a pair/group of letters makes. That sound is called a **phoneme**. As an example, the letter 'c' can be spoken as a /k/ or as a /s/. **Circus** is a good example as it contains both sounds.

Your Speech and Language Therapist will let you know which part of Phonological Awareness your child is working on at any time.

Here are some games you can play for Phonological Awareness activities

**Syllables**

Tap or clap the beats in a word. Use a drum if you have one. Write down the numbers 1 to 4 (or maybe even 5) on separate cards. Your child can point to the right number. It doesn't matter if they can't say the word correctly. You could also hop/jump round the room as you say each syllable with your child.

Say the words *naturally* when you break them up into syllables. For example, the word is **caterpillar**. You would divide it up like this - ca-ter-pi-llar. (You wouldn't naturally say cat-er-pill-ar even though you might be tempted to when looking at its spelling).

Think about:

- the names in your family/pets
- the foods that you like to eat
- animals (dinosaur names give you lots of long words!)
- characters in a story
- things related to whatever your child is interested in (footballers, TV programme etc.)

## Rhyme

When you first start thinking about rhyme with your child talk to them about 'words that sound like each other'. Later, introduce the word 'rhyme'.

- Teach your child nursery rhymes.
- Look at books that use rhyme (Julia Donaldson is one author who writes rhyming books, e.g. *The Gruffalo*).
- Find things round your home that rhyme (pear/chair, red/bed, tin/bin, pan/man, hall/ball, pen/ten. Match the ones that rhyme and then show them something that doesn't rhyme with it.
- Using other objects around your home, talk about words they rhyme with that your child can't see at the time you are talking (spoon/moon, dog/frog, cat/bat, chair/bear etc.)
- When you are looking at a book together, choose an object that is pictured. Say two other words, one that rhymes and one that doesn't. Ask your child which one rhymes (For example, the picture is **dog**. You say "Look here's a **dog**. I'm thinking of two more animals: **frog** and **cow**. Which one rhymes with **dog**?)
- Play games that ask for rhyming words
  - "I went to market and bought....". Your child has to add an item that rhymes. So, you might say "I went to market and bought a **cat**". Your child might say "I went to market and bought a **cat** and a **hat**". See how many turns you can take with the same rhyme.
  - "I spy with my little eye something that rhymes with..."
  - Make up rhyming riddles. (e.g. "I'm thinking of something that swims. It rhymes with **dish**").

## Starts with/ends with

- Find things round your house that start/end with the same sound (cup/coat/key/coffee, socks/spoon/scarf, shoes/sugar/shirt, bread/head, mug/leg).
- Using other objects around your home that your child can't see at the time you are talking. Talk about sounds they start/end with (juice/giraffe, watch/church etc.).
- When you're looking at pictures in books together talk about other words that start/end with the same sound as a word in the book.
- Play games that ask for words that start/end with the same sound
  - "I went to market and bought....". Your child has to add an item that starts/ends with the same sound. So, you might say "I went to market and bought a **cat**". Your child might say "I went to market and bought a **cat** and a **car**". See how many turns you can take with the same start/end sound.
  - "I spy with my little eye something that starts/ends with..."
  - Make up riddles. For example, "I'm thinking of something that swims. It starts with 'f'", or "I'm thinking of something that flies. It ends with 'd'".
- Make up silly sentences using lots of words that start/end the same ("The caterpillar crawled creepily along the cardboard castle" or "My white hat sat in the hot boat and felt faint").

Please do not hesitate to contact the Speech and Language Therapy Service if you require further information or resources, or if you have any questions, on 0300 300 1754 or [salt.admin@nhs.net](mailto:salt.admin@nhs.net)