

How Parents and Families Support Phonological Awareness

STRATEGIES

Introduction

Phonological awareness involves the sounds and sound patterns of alphabetic languages (in such languages as English, Spanish, and Arabic), apart from the meanings of words. Young children show they are developing phonological awareness when they:

- ▶ Notice and listen to the sounds of language
- ▶ Play with sound patterns, including repeating sounds, rhyming words, singing, or chanting
- ▶ Identify sounds of words that sound the same, for example, at the beginnings and ends of words, such as “airplane” and “airport”
- ▶ Play with the sounds in words, such as when they blend words—for example, blending “air and “plane” into “airplane”—or manipulate sounds, saying things like “pancake, wancake, mancake”

By playing with words and sounds in different ways, parents and family members can support the development of phonological awareness—which, in turn, will one day help children to read!



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Supporting babies to develop Phonological Awareness

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As babies interact with parents and family members and explore the world around them, they learn the differences between the sounds around them (such as voices, barking dogs, vacuum cleaners) and language. By the time they are born, babies recognize the sound of their mother's voice. Soon they will recognize the sound of other caring voices when they hear them often! With time and lots of repetition, babies also begin to recognize their favorite songs, poems, and stories.

Babies develop Phonological Awareness when parents and family members:

- ▶ Sing songs and nursery rhymes in children's home language(s) (Gillon, 2007)
- ▶ Use child-directed speech or "parentese," which means speaking in a higher pitch, at a slower rate, with clearer enunciation, and in simpler and shorter phrases, combined with gestures and facial expressions (Snow, 1991)
- ▶ Respond to babies' needs by, for example, changing him as soon as he is wet or putting her down for a nap as soon as she appears sleepy
- ▶ Talk using many different words
- ▶ Describe the voices (e.g., "Oh, I hear Sissy coming. There's Sissy!") and the sounds they hear (e.g., "Did you hear that doggy bark? Woof, woof!")
- ▶ Read rhyming books, songbooks, and storybooks and use sturdy books, such as board books, that hold up to babies' active exploration and use—carrying the books, turning pages, dropping them, etc. (Hoffman & Cassano, 2013)
- ▶ Help children label and describe pictures and objects to build their vocabulary (Gillon, 2007)



Some ways parents and family members support babies' Phonological Awareness

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At Home



Four-month-old Elina sits on her Mami's lap. "La linda manita, que tiene el bebe," Mami sings as she gently waves Elina's hands. "Que linda! Que bella! Que bonita es!" Mami brings Elina's hands up towards the sky as she stretches out and stresses the word "es." By the time Elina is 6 months old, she will wave her own hands in the air as soon as Mami begins to sing this song.

On a Home Visit



Sarah, the home visitor, shares with Kyi's mom how to engage 9-month-old Kyi in a conversation. "Look, Kyi!" Sarah says to get Kyi's attention. "Look at the book!" Kyi looks at and then reaches for the colorful board book that Sarah is holding. "Kyi, you want the book?" Kyi takes the book from Sarah. "Babababoo," he says. "Babababoo yourself!" Sarah says and laughs. "You like the book, don't you?" Sarah adds. "Look! There is a ball in the book. Let me show you." Sarah sits on the floor and encourages Kyi's mom to sit with them as she invites Kyi into her lap. "Ah ah gah!" Kyi says when he sees the picture of the ball. His mom notices that although Kyi isn't able to answer yet, he is listening and he is having a conversation in his own way.



Supporting toddlers to develop Phonological Awareness

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Toddlers develop phonological awareness by listening to and imitating the “conversations” that they participate in and the sounds they hear in their environment. Parents and family members can support their development by encouraging sound play and by talking, reading, and singing with them. The more language children learn, the easier it will be for them to develop phonological awareness (Metsala & Walley, 1998; Metsala, 1999).

Toddlers develop Phonological Awareness when parents and family members:

- ▶ Share many nursery rhymes, rhyming books, alliterative texts, and songs and chants that play with words, for example, “Wibbaly, Wallaby, Woo,” “Down by the Bay” (Yopp, 1995; Adams, 1998)
- ▶ Draw children’s attention to print in the community, such as stop and exit signs and advertisements (Adams & Osborn, 1990)
- ▶ Have one-on-one conversations with children several times a day and “strive for five” by trying to give five turns for each speaker in the conversation (Dickinson, 2011)
- ▶ Read and reread rhyming and other types of stories (Yopp, 1995) and read with emotion and change the loudness and softness of the voice to capture the rhythm of the story (Schickedanz & Collins, 2013)
- ▶ Point out rhyming words (e.g., “You said you have new shoes! Listen. ‘New’ and ‘shoe.’ They rhyme!”) (Bradley & Bryant, 1983)
- ▶ Encourage children to say the rhyming word at the end of a sentence (e.g., “Switcheroo, right foot, right _____ [shoe] !”) (Gillon, 2007)
- ▶ Make up rhymes together (e.g., “Pancake, wancake, I want a fancake!”)
- ▶ Encourage children to play with sounds (e.g., “Can you guess whose name this is? Mo-ha-med.”)
- ▶ Develop listening and attentional skills by asking for children’s attention (e.g., “Listen . . . ”) (McClelland et al., 2007)
- ▶ Introduce alphabet books and puzzles, and talk about the letters, including how they are formed, their sounds, and their names when reading (Paratore, Cassano, & Schickedanz, 2011)
- ▶ Talk with older toddlers about the name of meaningful letters, such as the letters in their names, and their sounds (e.g., “Look! There is the letter L just like in your name, ‘Lily.’”) (Pierce & Profio, 2006)



In the Community

Two-year-old Sara and her dad Darryl are “reading” Sara’s favorite book at the library. It is a picture book about animals. Darryl helps Sara name the animal in each picture and says a little bit about each animal as they name them. Sara is especially delighted by the elephant and laughs as she points to the picture and says the word. Darryl laughs with her and says, “Elephant, elephant, bellyphant, jellyphant! The elephant answered the telephant!” Sara giggles and says, “Again!”

At Home

Carla is teaching her mom and younger sister “I’m a Little Teapot,” which she learned at Head Start. They sing it together and act it out. Her mom gets her teapot from the kitchen and talks about a couple of new words in the song. Pointing to the spout she says, “The spout is the long skinny part that the tea pours out of. And see the shape of the teapot? It’s round and chubby—stout.” Carla giggles and repeats, “The spout pours out! And the pot is stout!”

Between Home and Early Head Start

Two-year-old Santiago is loudly singing a rhyming song, “Arroz con leche,” in the car on the way home from Early Head Start. “Arroz con leche me quiero casar, con una señorita, que sepa bailar.” His older sister Isabella says, “When I was in Head Start, I learned it a different way.” She sings, “Arroz con leche, me quiero casa, con una viudita, de la capital.” As the children continue to sing, their mother smiles. She is pleased that Santiago is learning rhyming songs that he will still remember when he is Isabella’s age.



At Home

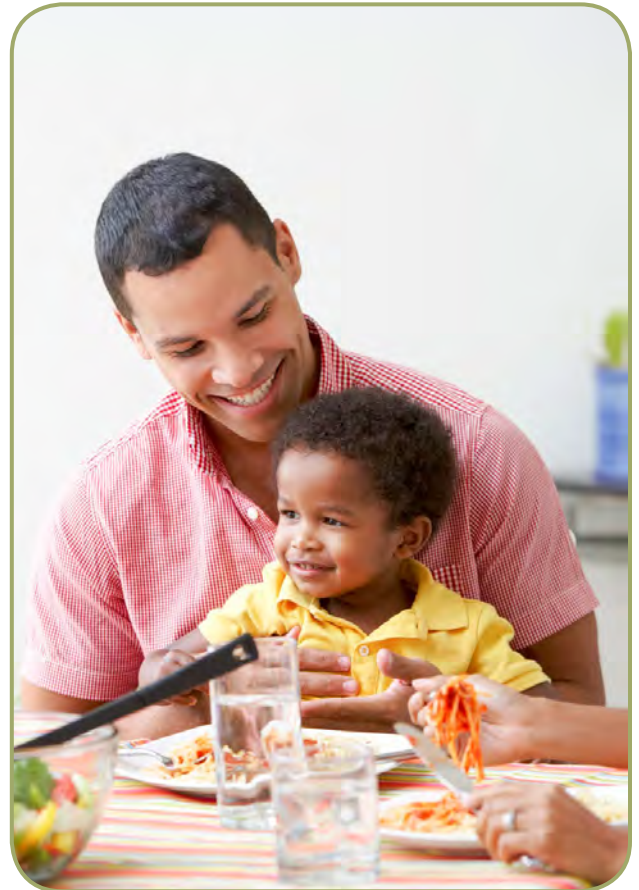


Simon is banging the spaghetti box as he impatiently waits for the spaghetti to cook. "Look, Simon," his mom says. "See the S on the spaghetti box! S for spaghetti and S for Simon." "Mine!" Simon says. "Yes," his mother says and laughs, pointing to the S on the box again. "S is for Simon, but S is also for spaghetti!"

At Home



Jana is having lunch with her girls—Ana, age 2, and Alia, age 4. "Mmmm, lunch!" Jana says. "I like to munch on my lunch! 'Lunch' and 'munch'—they rhyme! Hear how they sound the same at the end—lunch, munch!" The girls giggle. "Here's another rhyme," Jana says. "Don't eat with your feet!" Again the girls giggle and Alia repeats "eat with feet." "That's right!" Jana says, "'Eat' and 'feet.' They rhyme! But don't do it or you might hit your nose with your toes! 'Nose' and 'toes'—they rhyme too!" After more giggles, Jana tries to think of a few new rhymes to share with her little-girl lunch bunch.



Between Home and Early Head Start



On his way home from Early Head Start, two-year-old Lan chants, "*Con cò bé bé, nó đậu càngh tre, di không hỏi mẹ . . .*" His mother Xuan smiles to herself. Lan's teachers had invited her to teach this rhyme and its hand motions to the children in Lan's Early Head Start class. Although she has been singing this song to Lan since before he was born, she is happy that other children may share a rhyme from her culture.



Supporting preschoolers to develop Phonological Awareness

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Preschoolers develop phonological awareness as they notice the sounds and sound patterns of language—that is, the syllables, rhymes, and individual sounds or phonemes in English—and begin to hear, identify, make, and work with the sounds and sound patterns of spoken language. Although phonological awareness is not required for everyday conversations, it is essential for learning to read in alphabetic languages, such as English, Spanish, and Arabic (Lonigan, Schatschneider, & Westberg, 2008). Preschoolers should be given many opportunities to hear rich language, but they also need opportunities to listen to and play with the sounds in words.



Preschoolers develop Phonological Awareness when parents and family members:

- ▶ Talk, talk, talk! Hearing lots of words (Huttenlocher, Waterfall, Vasilyeva, Vevea, & Hedges, 2010; Hoff & Naigles, 2002) and many different words (Pan, Rowe, Singer, & Snow, 2005) helps preschoolers build their vocabularies, as the more words they know, the easier it will be for them to develop phonological awareness (Metsala & Walley, 1998)
- ▶ Encourage careful listening (e.g., “Listen for directions . . .”) and attention (e.g., “Use your eyes and ears to see what I am doing and saying . . .”)
- ▶ Read (and reread) books that rhyme, and teach rhyming poems, songs, and such nursery rhymes as Mother Goose
- ▶ Play with rhymes and identify rhymes in songs and stories (e.g., “‘Thumb’ and ‘plum’—they rhyme!”) as well as make them (e.g., “Can you think of a word that rhymes with . . . ?”)
- ▶ Make word play meaningful by linking initial word sounds to children’s names (e.g., “Can you guess whose name this is: ‘A-miir?’”) or to words in books they’ve enjoyed (e.g., “I am thinking of something the caterpillar ate: ‘sa-la-mi.’ Can you guess my word?”) (Schickedanz & Collins, 2013)
- ▶ Provide preschoolers with opportunities to play with alphabet games and puzzles and sit with them and talk about letters and their sounds as they play (Gillon, 2007)
- ▶ Teach the alphabet—especially the letters in children’s names; talk about letters and their sounds (e.g., “The sign says ‘push.’ Push also starts with ‘P,’ just like your name, Pilar! What letter says ‘P’?”) (Ball & Blachman, 1991)
- ▶ Focus children’s attention on the beginning sounds in words by finding pictures or objects that begin with the same sound (e.g., “‘Baseball’ and ‘boy.’ They both start with B.”)

Between Home and Head Start

Jhumur is volunteering in her daughter Julia's class. During circle time, they are playing a simple and fun game about beginning sounds. The teacher looks around the classroom and says, "Please raise your hand if your name starts with the same sound as 'car'!" Carlos and Kara raise their hands. Then she says, "Please raise your hand if your name starts with the same sound as 'window'!" Wendy raises her hand. At home later, Jhumur is playing "school" with her daughter Julia and her stuffed animals. All are seated in a circle, just like in school. Jhumur says, "Please raise your paw if your name starts with the same sound as 'lamp'!" Julia raises her toy lion's paw. Then Jhumur says, "Please raise your hand if your name starts with the same sound as 'microwave'!" Julia raises her toy monkey's hand. They both laugh about how smart the lion and monkey are!



At Home

Elliette and her older brother Ethan are playing a rhyming game. "Crash, smash!" Ethan says. "Crash, smash . . . they rhyme!" Elliette cheers. "That's right," Ethan says. "Here's another one—mop, hop." Elliette nods, "Mop, hop. They rhyme! Let's play again!" Ethan laughs. "Okay. What about 'car' and 'cat'?"

In the Community

Benjamin and his mom are running errands, but they are also on a sound hunt. "Where else might we find another 'buh' sound like Benjamin?" his mother asks. "Look," she says pointing towards a tree in the park, "birds." "Buh. Buh. Buh. Birds! Buh . . . Benjamin," Benjamin shouts! "That's right," his mother says. "What else do you see that starts with 'buh'?" "Blanket!" Benjamin says, pointing. His mother agrees, "Yes, that family is having a picnic on a buh, buh, blanket! You are very good at sound hunting! Now we only have one place left to go—the post office!" "Buh. Buh. Buh. Post office" Benjamin laughs. Nope! Not a 'buh'!" His mother also laughs, and they continue on their letter hunt.

Resources for Phonological Awareness

STRATEGIES

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Resources for Phonological Awareness

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