

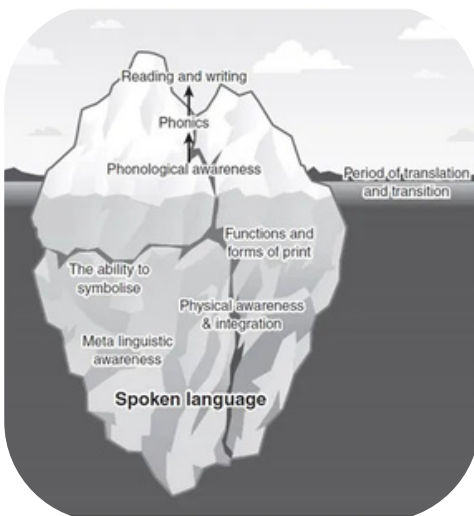


Activities to develop Children's Phonological Awareness

Part of a quick read series about phonological awareness.
*What do children need to understand about sounds before they
are ready for Phonics?*

About the AUTHOR

Fiona has taught Early Years and Key Stage 1 in London, Singapore and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. She is now the Deputy Head Teacher at Cookham Nursery School, which is one of the three Federated Maintained Nursery Schools in the Borough.

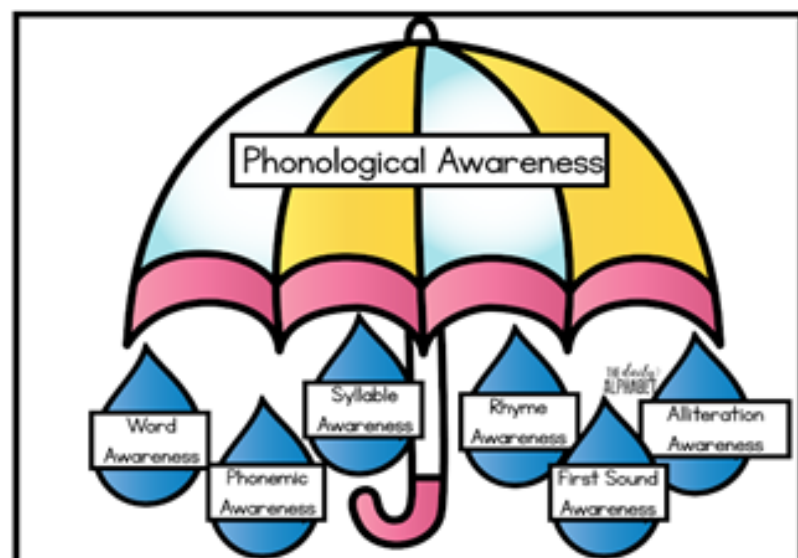


I hope you've enjoyed the 'Quick Read' blogs exploring what comes before teaching phonics. If you haven't had the chance to read them yet, it may be helpful to take a quick look before diving into the activities that follow. These will support children in building the essential foundations they need for early literacy. Please access Parts 1-3 in our Blog Library [here](#).

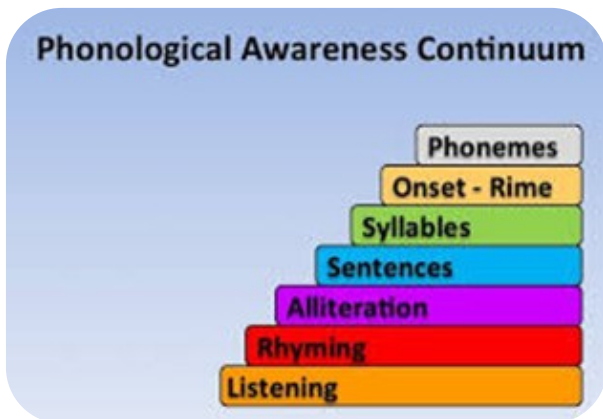
A reminder...

Phonological awareness is about having the ability to focus on aspects of language beyond meaning. It's about becoming aware of sounds in words, of rhyme and alliteration, of onset-rime and syllables.

It's about generally playing with words and having fun with them. As we model writing and make children aware of print, they begin to understand that our words can be written down and read.



The acquisition of phonological awareness usually follows a sequential developmental pattern.



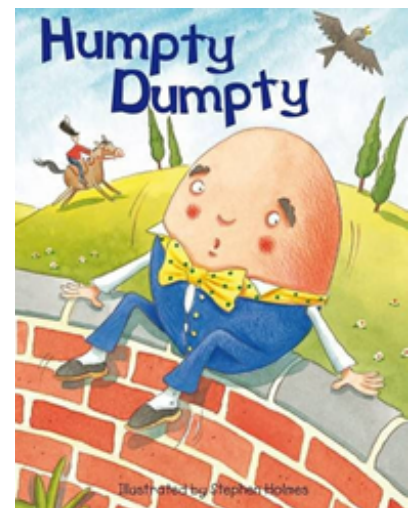
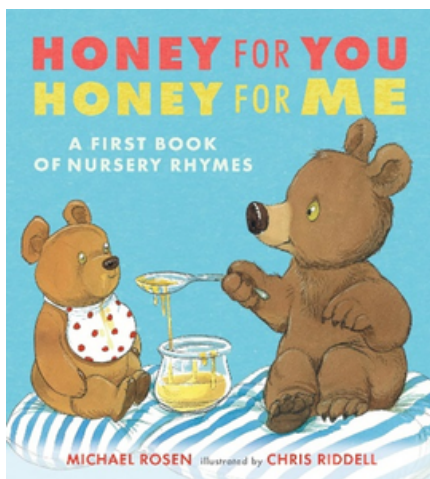
This diagram presents a phonological awareness continuum moving from larger units of sound to the smaller units - manipulating individual phonemes. Children listen to talk, hear oral rhymes and alliteration; they start to recognise words in spoken sentences, then they hear syllables and onset - rime in spoken words and finally individual phonemes in words.

When children listen to talk, they focus on the meaning and initially are unaware that talk is a string of words that can be broken up into increasingly smaller units such as syllables, onset - rime and phonemes. This needs planning into the curriculum as these areas are not triggered just by language exposure.

If children have an awareness of these smaller units of sound by their Reception year, they will find Phonics easier to learn.

Rhyming and Alliteration Activities

The earliest stage of phonological awareness is the ability to hear rhyme and alliteration. From infancy, children need regular opportunities to engage with rhymes, songs, and poems so they can tune their ears to these sound patterns. As they move through early childhood, this exposure should grow in sophistication, with adults encouraging children to notice, think about, and talk about the rhymes and alliteration they hear.



Look at the songs and rhymes that you teach your children in your settings and see if you can plan to teach them in order of complexity throughout the year.

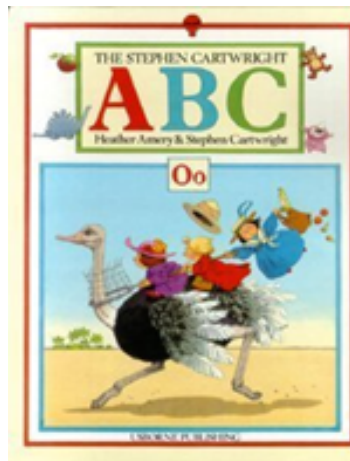
Oh Dear, Look What I Got!

Michael Rosen Helen Oxenbury



With a focus on alliteration, play 'I Spy' with a focus on one letter – have objects set up and in view as part of adult- led learning – pan, pot, pig, peg, Peppa Pig, panda. With all the objects found and lined up, you can intentionally teach alliteration by saying the names of the objects in a string along with the children.

This is a lovely Big Book for hearing alliteration and rhyme. Avoid focusing on the letter shape – it's about the initial sounds all sounding the same with a rhyme to go with it!

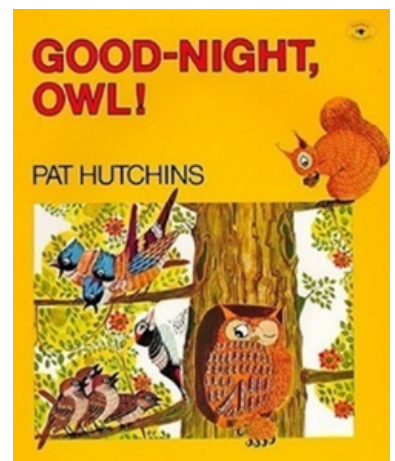
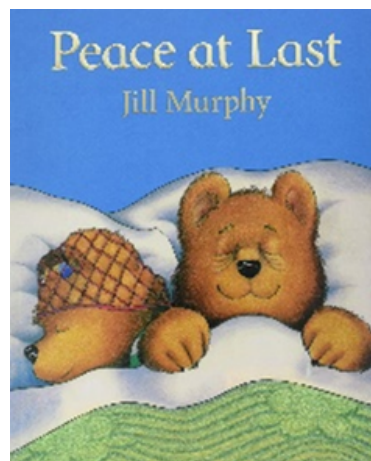


Take a look at Mr Tongue and Mr Wiggle and Mr Waggle online! They are stories with sound effects which children can join in with.



Here are two great stories that children can join in with the sounds.

We can intentionally teach how our mouth shapes and tongue position changes the way a sound is made.





In addition, children need opportunities to listen and respond to a wide range of sound prior to phonics.

This includes...

- ★ Listening to music
- ★ Making music and making sounds
- ★ Movement and dance
- ★ Stories with sound effects
- ★ Games involving listening and responding
Statues and Musical Bumps.



Remember what your objectives are when you are planning these activities so that you can emphasise the focus.



A reminder about Onset- Rime

The onset is the part of a word before the vowel and the rime is the rest of the word. This breaks a word down more than syllables but less than phonemes, so it comes in the middle of that continuum. Have a go with some of the words on here!

Have fun with onset-rime in your settings; break down the children's names and play games by asking the children to guess the words that you are splitting up into onset-rime. It's all about word play.

T-ime t-o g-et y-our b-ags!



**"I spy with my little eye
something that sounds like"
b-ook w-ater tr-ee sn-ack**



Remember, it's about children hearing how sounds in words are split up and then putting the word back together again orally -

they don't need to know the words 'onset - rime.' As we teach children the word 'rhyme,' 'onset-rime' would be too confusing at this stage.

Onset- rime is the children's bridge in phonological understanding between syllables and phonemes. For them, it's just playing with words - which gives them a great sense of how words are made up of sounds.



And finally - Phonemic Awareness!

To learn letter- sound correspondence - which is essential for learning to read, children must first become aware of phonemes. Phonemes are the smallest units of sound in words. Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify and orally manipulate phonemes in words. Activities will be based on what we can **hear**. **Children will start their phonics programme in Reception.** When children have learned speech sounds, their ability to see individual letters and spelling patterns is strengthened.



This teaching and learning should all be play based and enjoyable.

Segment and blend cvc words as part of adult -led small group learning. Play 'what's in the bag with cvc items in it - pig, hat, map, bat, bag, box, pen, peg.

Emphasise initial sounds bbbbbbb ball hhhhhhhh hop etc. Keep initial sounds clipped and short - b not ber.



Treasure hunts – hide things that all begin with the same sound.



Identify initial sounds by grouping toys by what we can hear at the beginning of the word.

Thank you so much for reading! I hope it helps you plan for the age, stage and different needs of the children in your setting.

Feedback:



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