

SOUND AWARENESS

Sound awareness (also known as Phonological Awareness) is the knowledge of what sounds are and how they come together to make words. Words can be broken down into much smaller units of single sounds and syllables. Sound awareness skills include being able to:

- Rhyme (e.g. 'Cat' rhymes with 'mat')
- Segment words into syllables (e.g. car-pet) and individual sounds (e.g. d-o-g)
- Blend sounds together (e.g. sounding out each individual sound to make a word, i.e. c-a-t)
- Identify sounds in different positions in words (e.g. what is the beginning/middle/end sound of 'bag')



Why is Sound Awareness important?



A strong relationship has been established between sound awareness and literacy development, and if there are difficulties in this area it can lead to difficulties in reading and writing.

Being able to understand a word's sound structure, and how it can be broken down into smaller parts, enables children to decode, or sound out words when reading or writing.

If a child has difficulty with sound awareness, they may also experience speech sound difficulties, as they will find it hard to discriminate between the varying sounds in words.

Sound Awareness – Typical development pattern

- The ability to hear rhymes and alliteration.
- Hearing words in spoken language.
- Hearing syllables in spoken words and then being able to clap out syllables.
- Hearing sounds at the beginning of words and then being able to produce words that begin with certain sounds.
- Recognising and identify rhyming words and then being able to produce rhyming words.
- Being able to hear individual sounds in words.
- Being able to blend individual sounds together to make a word (e.g. c_a_t = cat).
- Being able to segment sounds in words (e.g. cat = c_a_t).
- Deleting, substituting and manipulating sounds in words.

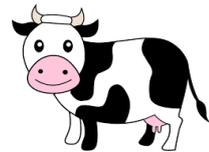
Activities to support Sound Awareness

- **Listen to sounds in the environment** and point them out to your child (e.g. cars, buses, horns, birds, wind in the trees)



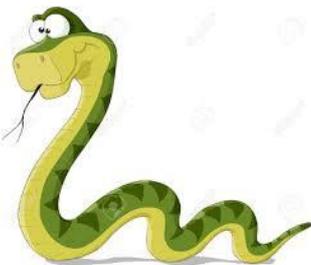
- **Sound matching**, for example with instruments. Choose 2 sets of matching instruments and place a board between you and your child. Take turns to make a noise, whilst the other one matches it. Start off with individual sounds, and build up to sequences of sounds.

- Use **symbolic noises** in play. For example, when playing with animals, encourage use of animal noises, e.g. miaowww, baa, moo. Household noises and activities also provide lots of opportunity for symbolic noises to listen to and try to reproduce, e.g. hoovering, doorbell, telephone.



- Make **transport noises** when playing at home with little vehicles, or when out and about and you hear or see them, e.g. 'brrrum brrum', 'nee naw nee naw'

- **Reading books together** from an early age. Books which have an emphasis on sound play can introduce your child to rhyming, alliteration (words together that start with the same letter, e.g. 'Sammy snake sings a song'), or words that start or end with the same sound, and you can highlight these points to them as they grow older.



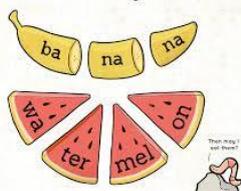
- **Making sounds.** Talk with your child about how sounds are made with your mouth and practice making different sounds in front of the mirror. (e.g. 'a snake makes a 'sssss' sound')

- **Singing nursery rhymes.** These often have strong rhythm and rhymes in them that can be emphasised to your child.



- **Syllables.** Model and encourage your child to identify the number of syllables in a word, with fun activities such as:
 - Clapping or drumming out the syllables in names of family or friends
 - Stamping your feet or jumping to the syllables in names of pets or favourite toy characters.
 - Place a variety of objects in a bag, and ask your child to choose one. Then say the word and work out how many syllables it has (e.g. 'potato' – po-tay-to)

Count the syllables.



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