**Phonological Awareness**

Children who have difficulties with speech sounds sometimes have difficulties in splitting words into individual sounds, discriminating sounds and manipulating sounds and words.

Being able to split a word into parts and sounds, recognising where one word ends and another begins as well as knowing that we can change a word just by changing one sound, are all important skills for speaking, reading, and writing.

The skills that we need to do this are known as **Phonological Awareness** and the activities in this resource are designed to help your child to develop their phonological awareness as part of their speech and language therapy programme. These skills are, as mentioned before, a very important factor in developing your child’s reading, writing and speech abilities.

This pack has been designed to address each skill in the order in which they generally develop, so it is important to work through the pack in the correct order.

The activities and suggestions are to help your child enjoy the learning process, so it is important to keep these activities FUN!

Regular, short activities will be more effective than long, drawn out sessions. So, try for **5 – 10 minutes a day** as this is better than 1 hour a week. This input from the parent/ carer in the home environment added to by making the activities fun, has been shown to greatly improve a child’s learning.

These activities will focus on **listening** to words and sounds rather than saying them. Talk to your child about “good listening” to help them understand that they will need to listen carefully during the activities.



**How does phonological awareness develop?**

Children pass through a number of complex stages before they have fully developed their skills in recognising and using sounds, so they are able to talk about and understand how words are made. The table below is a simple example of how phonological awareness progresses and the ages are not set:

**At 3 years:** children have begun to notice that words can rhyme like ‘frog’ ‘log’ ‘dog’ ‘sog’ ‘mog’ etc. This is known as **rhyme awareness.**

**At 4 years:** children are able to start splitting words up into different parts or syllables e.g. ‘ca- ta- pi-ler’. This is called **syllable segmentation**.

**At 5 years:** children continue to learn how to split words up into different parts. For example, ‘pat’ can be broken down into the ‘**onset**’ (the sound at the beginning of the word) and the ‘**rime**’ (the sounds that make up the rest of the word, not to be confused with ‘rhyme’) so it can be said **P**-**AT**.

**5 – 7 years:** children learn how to split words up into different sounds and how to blend sounds together to spell a word, e.g., C-A-T = ‘cat’.



# Rhyme Awareness

The first main stage of phonological awareness is rhyme awareness, which children usually have by the age of 3.

Rhyme awareness is the ability to know that certain word endings sound alike and so they also contain the same **sounds**. It is important to remember that it is the **sound** of the word they are listening for and **not the spelling**!

i.e., C**AP** – M**AP**

K**ITE** - F**IGHT**

By doing the suggested activities below you are teaching your child to recognise when words rhyme and also how to create their own rhyming words by exploring sound patterns.

## Activity 1: Feely Bag / Box

Simply collect a few objects that rhyme and place them in a bag or box, start with around 4 objects at first (two pairs) and take it in turn to take out and name the object. Once they are all out, encourage the child to match their object to its rhyming pair (it is important to use objects or picture of things easily recognised by your child). You may have to match your pair first, leaving only one choice for your child, but they will soon get the hang of it and then you can increase the amount of objects or pictures to put in the bag / box



## Activity 2: Odd one out

See the rhyming pair words below, each pair comes with an ‘odd one out’ choice. Place one set of three separated words (or turn them into pictures) in front of your child (2 rhyming and 1 odd) and encourage your child to help you name them, emphasise the rhyming part of the words. Explain to your child that two of these words sound the same and one does not, so this is the ‘odd one out’ (you could make a little posting box for them to put it in). Ask them to select the odd one out.

As they get more skilled at doing the activity, you can increase the difficulty by asking them to say the words without your help and then ask them to choose the odd one silently (by saying the words ‘in their heads’ before choosing).

Another way of changing the activity is to draw pictures of words that rhyme and those that do not with your child. To make it more difficult you could have two rhyming words and one that does not but is connected with one of the other objects in some way. Children who find rhyming difficult will tend to group words together which may be from the same category and ignore the rhyme  
e.g., **cat** (odd one out), **dog** (same category), **log** (rhyming word)



Example words:

hat – bat – scarf tree – bee – flower

car – star – bus pen – men – paper

house – mouse – cat train – bus – rain

**General activities:**

You can also teach your child about words that rhyme during other day-to-day activities using a variety of learning aids such as:

* Nursery Rhyme books, poetry books, songs and story books with patterned rhymes, e.g., Hickory, Dickory, Dock…
* Recorded music, songbooks, and songs with actions.
* Collections of ‘tongue twisters’ and books that play with language, e.g., ‘Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled pepper…’ or ‘The Cat in the Hat’ by Dr Seuss.
* When reading a short rhyming poem or story, you could pause before the next rhyming word in order for your child to add it in!

**Remember:**

Keep the activities short as it is important that your child enjoys them. This applies to the stories and songs that you use as well, so try and include ones you know they like.

**Syllable Segmentation**

This is seen as the next stage after Rhyme Awareness. Once your child is confident with rhyming words, you can focus on how words can be split into sound parts, the main groupings are known as **syllables**.

A simple way of explaining the syllables in a word is to think of the rhythm of the word and count the number of ‘beats’ within it. So, for example **SISTER** has **2 syllables** (or beats) **SIS** – **TER** as does **RA** – **BIT**.



**CA-TER-PILL-AR** has **4** beats!

Table

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**Activity 1: Clap the Beat**

You can clap your hands at each word syllable, tap a tambourine, or even bang a drum! Just say the word and for each syllable clap the sound out. You may have to clap your child’s hands together for them at first until they get used to the rhythm of the sounds.

**Activity 2: Jumping Jacks**

Using the list of 1, 2, 3, and 4 syllable words, make a short list of words with different syllables in them and write them on separate cards. Sit on the floor with the cards face down between you both. Tell your child that when a card / word with 2 syllables/beats is turned over, you have to jump up!

Read the word slowly and allow time for them to ‘count the beats’ in their head.

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