

# Phonological Awareness – A Parent’s Guide

## What is Phonological Awareness?

It is the ability to **hear and play with the sounds** in spoken language. It is a purely oral skill—it’s about what we *hear*, not what we see on a page. Developing these "ear muscles" now is the single best predictor of how easily your child will learn to read later.

## 1. Everyday Games to Try (No Equipment Needed!)

These work best as short, 5-minute bursts of fun.

- **Syllable Drumming:** Use your hands, a drum, or even "chin-bobs" to count the beats in names or objects.
  - *Try:* "How many beats in 'di-no-saur'?" (3 claps).
- **Robot Talk (Blending):** Speak like a robot, pausing between sounds, and have your child guess the word.
  - *Try:* "Can you find the /c/ - /a/ - /t/?" (Cat).
  - *Tip:* Use "**Pure Sounds**" (say /ssss/, not "suh").
- **I Spy (Sound Version):** Play "I Spy" using sounds instead of letter names.
  - *Try:* "I spy something starting with the sound /p/." (Plate).
- **Rhyme Time:** Use nursery rhymes and pause before the rhyming word to let your child fill it in.
  - *Try:* "Humpty Dumpty sat on a **wall**, Humpty Dumpty had a great..." (**Fall!**)

## 2. Top Tips for Success

- **Little and Often:** 5 minutes a day is more effective than one long hour.
- **Model First:** Show them what you want them to do first (e.g., "I'm going to clap a name: Dan-iel! Now you try yours.")
- **Keep it Playful:** Use toys, silly voices, and physical movement. If they get frustrated, stop and try again tomorrow.

# Progress Tracker & Practice Lists

## Phonological Awareness Checklist

*Use these ages as a flexible guide. Remember, every child develops at their own pace.*

Stage	Age (Approx.)	Skills to Look For
Stage 1	3–4 Years	<input type="checkbox"/> Joins in with rhymes. <input type="checkbox"/> Claps along to syllables.
Stage 2	4–5 Years	<input type="checkbox"/> Can tell if two words rhyme. <input type="checkbox"/> Identifies the <b>first sound</b> .
Stage 3	5 Years	<input type="checkbox"/> Can think of a rhyming word. <input type="checkbox"/> Blends 3 sounds into a word. <input type="checkbox"/> Identifies the <b>last sound</b> .
Stage 4	5–6 Years	<input type="checkbox"/> Blends and reads short sentences. <input type="checkbox"/> Identifies the <b>middle sound</b> in 3 sound words
Stage 5	6+ Years	<input type="checkbox"/> Can swap sounds (Change /h/ in <i>hat</i> to /c/ for <i>cat</i> ).

## Quick-Start Word Lists

### Syllables (The Beats)

- **1 Beat:** Cat, Dog, Sun, Tree, Bus.
- **2 Beats:** Ap-ple, Rain-bow, Mon-key, Spi-der.
- **3 Beats:** Di-no-saur, El-e-phant, But-ter-fly.
- **4 Beats:** Cat-er-pil-lar, Wa-ter-mel-on.

### Robot Talk (Blending)

- **Animals:** /p/-/i/-/g/ (Pig), /h/-/e/-/n/ (Hen), /d/-/o/-/g/ (Dog).
- **Body:** /l/-/e/-/g/ (Leg), /h/-/ea/-/d/ (Head), /f/-/oo/-/t/ (Foot).

## Parent Observations & Notes

*You can use your child's reading record to jot down sounds your child is finding tricky or words they successfully blended today! If you are concerned about your child's progress, please speak to their class teacher.*

*Links for further information:*

**Activities to develop phonological awareness**

<https://www.whittington.nhs.uk/default.asp?c=46116>

**Video explaining phonological awareness**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K0G6teawxls>

