

Parent and Community Resource Coalition

Lakewood Memorial Library

Phonemic Awareness

What is it?

Phonics involves associating written letters or letter combinations with sounds in order to sound out words in print. To do this successfully, children must first learn to *hear* sounds in words. This is *phonemic awareness*, becoming aware of and learning to hear sounds (phonemes) in words.

Fortunately, most young children develop phonemic awareness naturally through their everyday experiences. They listen to and recite nursery rhymes and childhood poems, they sing rhyming songs, they chant jump rope rhymes. As they play with the sounds of language, children begin to develop an awareness of sounds and how they work. By kindergarten, many children have developed enough *phonemic awareness* to begin to profit from phonics instruction.

The activities that follow focus on rhyming sounds and blending/ segmenting sounds, several important phonemic awareness skills. Note that these do not require reading; they are all done orally. Do the activities in short, game-like sessions. Make it fun!!

Phonemic Awareness Activities

Sing familiar children's songs. Read familiar children's poems and nursery rhymes. Many of these are available online, so check for different versions. As your child learns the songs and poems, invite him or her to sing and recite with you.

Play "Do They Rhyme?" Select several easy, one-syllable words, like "cat" or "leg." Pair each word with another that either rhymes (cat, rat; leg, beg) or doesn't (cat, card; leg, luck). Say the two words and ask your child, "Do they rhyme?" You can also provide three words, two of which rhyme (for example, *cat, cold, hat*) and ask your child which two rhyme. After your child has developed the concept of rhyming, ask him or her to provide the words to you.

Play "I'm Thinking of a Word."

O You can focus on rhyming. Say, "I'm thinking of a word that rhymes with *net*. Could it be *get? New? Met?* For each, your child answers "yes" or "no." Or "I'm thinking of a word that rhymes with *mat*. It's an animal. What word is it?"

O You can also focus on blending sounds ("I'm thinking of a word that is an animal. Here are its sounds c----a----t.")

Play "Same or Different." Select three easy words, two of which begin with the same sound, for example *cat, hat, cold*. Ask either which two start the same or which one starts differently. After your child has developed the ability to hear beginning sounds, play the same game with ending sounds (for example, *cat, cap, hat*) and then middle sounds (for example, *cat, hot, hat*).

Play “Turtle Talk.” Select an easy one-syllable word. Say it to your child, but stretch the sounds of the word WAY out, like a turtle would talk. Ask your child what the word is. After your child has developed the ability to blend sounds, ask him or her to “turtle talk” a word for you to figure out.

A more advanced version of this “Turtle Talk” game has you saying the sounds of a word in isolation and your child responding with the word (for example, you say “cuh” [pause], “a” [pause], “tuh”; your child says “cat.”) When your child has developed some ability in this, ask him or her to choose a word and segment it for you to guess.