

# Phonological Awareness

To become a good reader a child needs to know letters and corresponding letter-sounds. He/she also needs to retrieve these linguistic items from the memory (rapid automatized naming or RAN) and keep them in short-term memory. Finally, phonological awareness is a skill that is also needed.

Phonological awareness is a skill that includes identifying and manipulating units of oral language-parts such as words, syllables, and sounds. Also onsets and rimes in English. Children who have a good phonological awareness are able for example to identify and make oral rhymes, can clap out the number of syllables in a word, or can recognize words with the same initial sounds (some-sit).

**Phonemes (letter-sounds)** are the smallest units in spoken language. Phonemes can be combined to form syllables and words. For example, the word 'sit' has three phonemes: /s/ /i/ /t/. Phonemic awareness is important because it is the foundation for word recognition skills. When a person relates letter-sounds to letters he/she is able to form written words. This skill is especially useful in transparent orthographies like Bantu languages, Finnish or Spanish where the correspondence of letters and letter-sounds is very high and stable. English is not transparent because the spelling of most words is very different from the way they are pronounced (e.g. eye /ai/). Phonemic awareness is one of the best predictors of how well children will learn to read and spell.

Phonological awareness includes the following skills:

- Letter-sound correspondences
- rhyming
- blending

- segmentation
- manipulation.

When **assessing and training** phonological awareness it is important for the teacher or therapist to know what kind of skills the pupils already have and what kind of skills still need more practice.

**The following tasks** are useful for both assessment and training. Examples are in English, but you can see the tasks in local languages here.

- **Letter-sound correspondences** (See more)
- **Rhyming:**
  - recognizing when words rhyme: e.g., Do 'cat' and 'chair' rhyme?
  - coming up with a word that rhymes: e.g., What rhymes with 'cat'? (See more)
- **Blending:**
  - blending syllables: e.g., I am going to say parts of a word. Tell me what the word is 'Lin-da'
  - blending sounds: e.g., Put these sounds together to make a word: 's/i/t' what word do you get? See more
- **Segmentation**
  - segmenting of syllables: e.g., Clap for each syllable you hear in the word 'kindergarten.')
  - segmentation of sounds: e.g., Tell me what sound is there in the beginning of a word 'pat' or Tell me each sound you hear in the word 'cat'? (See more)
- **Manipulation:**
  - deletion of syllables: e.g., Say the word 'strawberry.' Now say it without saying 'straw.'
  - deletion of sounds: e.g., Say 'chair.' Now say it without the 'ch.'
  - addition of sounds: e.g., Say 'cook.' Now say it

with an 'e' at the end.

- manipulation of sounds: e.g., Change the 's' in 'sad' to a 'd' and say the new word. (See more)

## **Training phonological awareness**

Start training from easy tasks like rhyming. Also, tasks with syllables are usually easier than tasks with phonemes.

- Train both segmenting and blending skills to get better results.
- Practice every day! A child with problems in learning to read and write needs a lot of practice.
- Parent-based literacy activities makes training more effective. (More...)
- Training should be motivating so that the child will continue training as long as needed. (More...)
- Training is more effective when sounds with corresponding letters are present.
- GraphoGame (see more)
- Training with peers (see more)