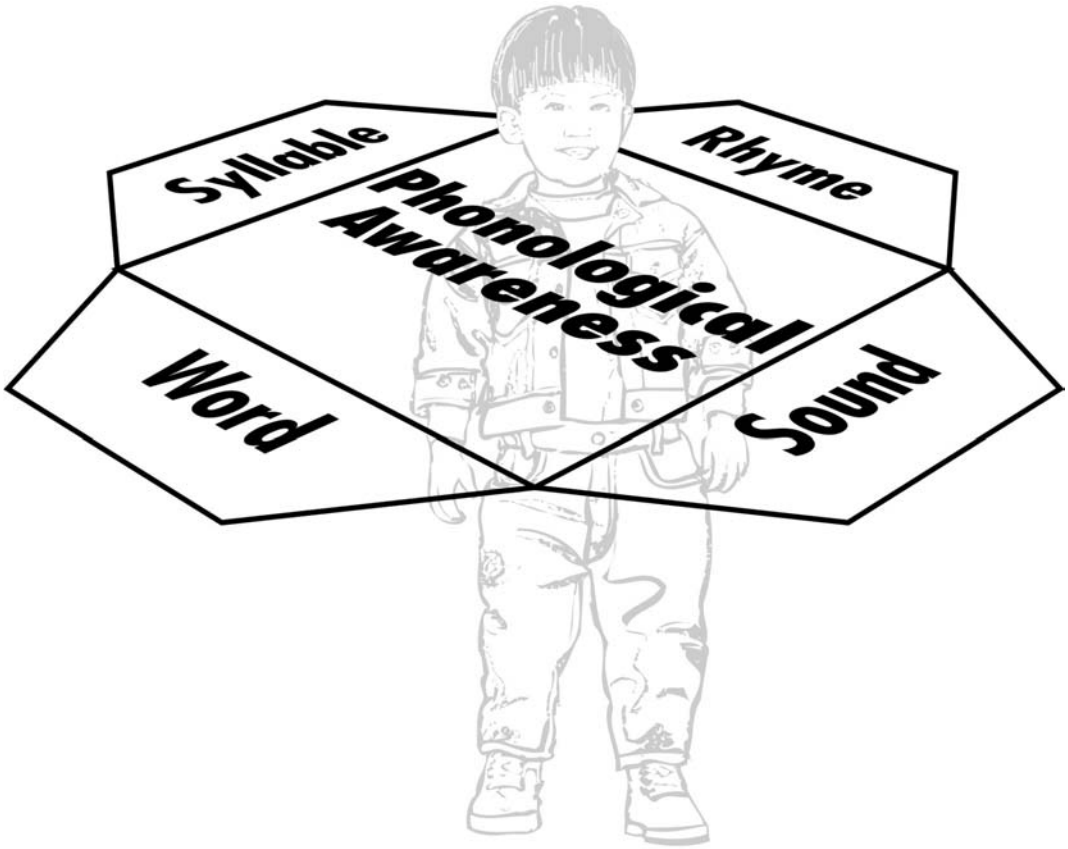
CHAPTER 2: PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

A student's level of phonological awareness at the end of kindergarten is one of the strongest predictors of future reading success, in grade one and beyond.[*]



[*] Adams et al. 2.

Research on Phonological Awareness

In recent years, many researchers have explored the relationship between phonological awareness and success with reading and spelling. Phonological awareness is the area of oral language that relates to the ability to think about the sounds in a word (the word's phonological structure) rather than just the meaning of the word. It is an understanding of the structure of spoken language—that it is made up of words, and words consist of syllables, rhymes, and sounds. Fitzpatrick summarizes it best by saying that phonological awareness is "the ability to listen inside a word" (5).

Children who have well-developed phonological awareness when they come to school have a head start making sense of how sounds and letters operate in print. This ability is important for using sound-letter knowledge effectively in reading and writing. In fact, a student's level of phonological awareness at the end of kindergarten is one of the strongest predictors of future reading success, in grade one and beyond. Many children begin kindergarten with well-developed phonological awareness. Some seem to develop these skills fairly easily within a stimulating classroom environment, while others need more instruction that consciously and deliberately focuses on phonological awareness. More than 20 percent of students struggle with some aspects of phonological awareness, while 8–10 percent exhibit significant delays. Early intervention is crucial and can make a real difference to students with limited levels of phonological awareness.

(See Chapter 5: Early Intervention for Students At Risk.)

The Development of Phonological Awareness

We know that many children first demonstrate phonological awareness as preschoolers. They begin to recognize words as separate entities (e.g., What does *the* mean?). They also become aware of how groups of sounds (syllables or rhymes) operate in words in spoken language (e.g., *Matt* and *pat* rhyme). They develop an awareness of individual sounds and can attend to and manipulate them in a word (e.g., *Dad* and *dear*—they start the same). These individual sounds of a language are known as **phonemes**.

Find Out More About Phonological Awareness

Adams, M. J., B. R. Foorman, I. Lundberg, and T. Beeler. *Phonemic Awareness in Young Children: A Classroom Curriculum.* Paul Brookes Publishing Co., 1998.

Bear, Donald, Marcia Invernizzi, Shane Templeton, and Francine Johnston. *Words Their Way.* 3d ed. Prentice Hall, 2003.

Cunningham, James W, Patricia M. Cunningham, James V. Hoffman, and Hallie K. Yopp. *Phonemic Awareness and the Teaching of Reading: A Position Statement from the Board of Directors of the International Reading Association.* International Reading Association, 1998. www.reading.org.

Fitzpatrick, J. *Phonemic Awareness: Playing With Sounds to Strengthen Beginning Reading Skills.* Creative Teaching Press, 1997.

Goswami, U., and P. Bryant. *Phonological Skills and Learning to Read.* Psychology Press, 1990.

Griffith, Priscilla L., and Mary W. Olson. "Phonemic Awareness Helps Beginning Readers Break the Code." *The Reading Teacher* 45.7 (1992): 516–23.

Gunning, Thomas. "Word Building: A Strategic Approach to the Teaching of Phonics." *The Reading Teacher* 48.6 (1995): 484–88.

Juliebo, Moira F., and Lita Ericson. *The Phonological Awareness Handbook for Kindergarten and Primary Teachers.* International Reading Association, 1998.

Pinnell, G., and I. Fountas. *Word Matters.* Heinemann, 1998.

Snow, Catherine E., M. Susan Burns, and Peg Griffin, eds. *Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children.* National Academy Press, 1998.

Yopp, Hallie K. "Developing Phonemic Awareness in Young Children." *The Reading Teacher* 45.9 (1992): 696–703.

———. "A Test for Assessing Phonemic Awareness in Young Children." *The Reading Teacher* 49.1 (1995): 20–29.

Phonological Awareness **refers to an understanding of the sound structure of language—that is, that language is made up of words, syllables, rhymes, and sounds (phonemes). This knowledge occurs initially in oral language; students do not have to know how to name letters or their corresponding sounds in order to demonstrate phonological awareness.**

Expected Phonological Awareness Skills in Kindergarten

By the end of kindergarten, given sufficient instruction, practice, and exposure to many literacy activities, students should be able to

Word level:

- recognize how many words are in a sentence

Syllable level:

- segment and blend words of at least three syllables

Rhyme level:

- understand the concept of rhyming
- recognize and generate rhyming words

Sound level:

- isolate the beginning or ending sounds in words
- segment and blend sounds in a word with three sounds
- change a sound in a word to make a new word in familiar games and songs

Phonemic Awareness **is one component of phonological awareness. It refers to knowledge of words at the level of *individual sounds*—how to segment, blend, or manipulate *individual sounds* in words.**

An important link in developing phonological awareness is to encourage students to use invented or temporary spelling. When students attempt to write a word, they must first listen to their own language, segment the sounds in the word, and finally, try to match the sounds with known letters. Students need some phonological awareness to use invented spelling, but their exploration of sounds through writing helps them to discover more about how sounds and letters work in English, and then how to use this knowledge as they read.

Phonics **refers to an understanding of the sound and letter relationships in a language. Phonological awareness is necessary in order to *use* this phonics knowledge effectively in reading and writing.**

The Role of Phonological Awareness

There are different levels of phonological awareness within words: syllables, onsets and rimes, and sounds. Recognizing this has important implications for supporting students' development of phonological awareness. Good readers look for familiar "letter patterns" as one strategy when attempting to decode or spell unfamiliar words—they use familiar sound chunks from known words, not just individual sounds. Thomas Gunning says that students look for "pronounceable word parts" (484). This "chunking" of sounds makes the reading and spelling process much more effective and efficient. These letter patterns are based on familiar syllable or rhyme patterns as well as sound clusters and individual sounds.

This ability to look inside words for syllables, rhymes, and individual sounds when reading and spelling is based on the

student's phonological awareness. Students have to be able to segment, blend, and manipulate syllables, onset and rime, and sounds if they are going to be successful in using letter-sound knowledge effectively for reading and writing. The phonological awareness skills of segmenting and blending are the most highly correlated with beginning reading acquisition (Snow 192).

The Role of Phonological Awareness and Phonics

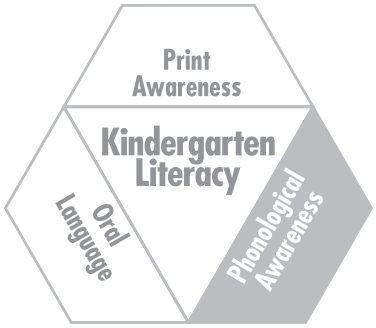
Students with a good understanding of phonological awareness have the underlying framework in place for reading (decoding) and writing (encoding) when letter–sound correspondences (phonics) are learned. Students who have difficulty with phonological awareness can often learn "phonics" (knowledge of letters and sounds), but they have difficulty *using* this knowledge as they read and spell (see Chapter 1: Print Awareness).

So, if students are expected to use letters and sounds as a source of information or cueing system as they read and spell (and they have to since English is based on an alphabetic system), it is important to ensure that all students have well-developed phonological awareness. Students who have difficulty with this area of language (approximately 20 percent) will struggle through school in figuring out *how sounds work in print*. They will not be able to use sound knowledge effectively because they will not have the underlying ability to "listen inside a word" and "play with the sounds" they hear (Fitzpatrick 5).

Words can be divided into *onsets* and *rimes*. The *onset* refers to any sounds before the vowel; the *rime* is any sounds from the vowel to the end of the word, and it is the part we usually think about as the "word family." For example:

	Onset	Rime
man	m	an
swing	sw	ing
twinkle	tw	inkle

Note: **The linguistic term for the part of a word that rhymes is the "rime."**



Assessment

In kindergarten, the classroom teacher should have a good understanding of students' phonological awareness knowledge to help in planning to address the needs of all learners. Many children come to kindergarten with a good awareness of how words can be divided into syllables, how to recognize and make words rhyme, and how to pick out individual sounds in words. For them, the general classroom instruction focusing on phonological awareness, print awareness, and oral language development will likely be all that is necessary to help them learn to read and write.

For students without this underlying understanding of the sound structure of language at the oral level, more specific instruction in large group, small group, or individual settings will be necessary in order to develop their phonological awareness skills. It is through focused student observation and assessment that teachers determine who needs what kind and what level of support.
The teacher must be aware that, for all students, phonological awareness develops over time as they begin to explore language in different ways. Sometimes behaviors will be well established; at other times, students may demonstrate knowledge of a particular phonological awareness skill in some situations but not in others. By watching students over time in a variety of activities, the teacher can develop a more accurate view of what students know and what they need to learn.

The assessment of phonological awareness needs to focus on the student's ability to play with the parts of words in the following ways:

- segmenting
- blending
- deleting
- substituting

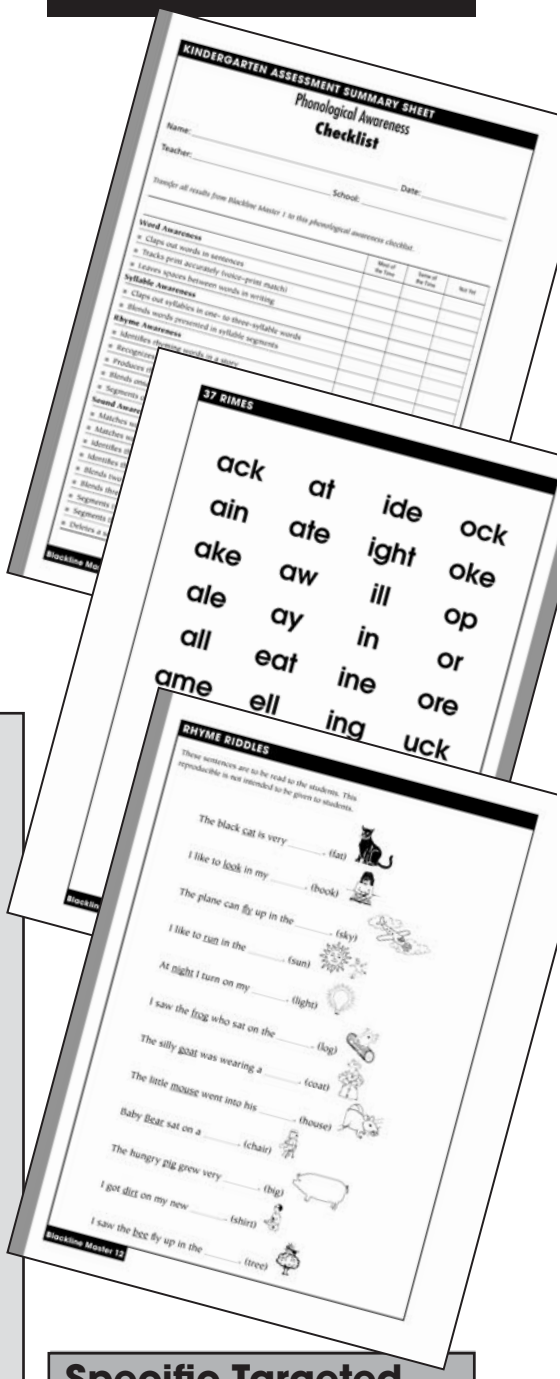
This wordplay occurs at different levels of complexity:

- words
- syllables
- rhymes
- sounds (phonemes)

Assessing Phonological Awareness Throughout the Kindergarten Day

See the Blackline Masters at the end of this chapter.

Students' knowledge of phonological awareness can be observed and assessed in the daily literacy activities in the kindergarten classroom, as well as through specific assessment activities. (See Blackline Master 1: Kindergarten Assessment: Word, Syllable, Rhyme, and Sound Awareness—Observation Checklist, on page 157.) This information can then be summarized for individual students to help with establishing programming goals (see Blackline Master 2: Kindergarten Assessment Summary Sheet: Phonological Awareness—Checklist, on page 164). The class assessment summary (see Blackline Master 4: Class Assessment Summary Sheet: Phonological Awareness, on page 166) provides a way of gathering and evaluating this information throughout the school year. If the teacher would like to compare a student's phonemic awareness skills to those of other students of his or her age, the Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation can be administered (see Blackline Master 3: Assessment: The Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation, on page 165).



Blackline Master 1:	Kindergarten Assessment: Word, Syllable, Rhyme, and Sound (Phonemic) Awareness (Observation Checklist), page **157**
Blackline Master 2:	Kindergarten Assessment Summary Sheet: Phonological Awareness (Checklist), page **164**
Blackline Master 3:	Assessment: The Yopp-Singer Test of Phoneme Segmentation, page **165**
Blackline Master 4:	Class Assessment Summary Sheet: Phonological Awareness, page **166**
Blackline Master 5:	Popcorn (Poem), page **168**
Blackline Master 6:	Segmentation Place Mat: Word Awareness, page **169**
Blackline Master 7:	Segmentation Place Mat: Syllable Awareness, page **170**
Blackline Master 8:	Silly Word Pictures, page **171**
Blackline Master 9:	37 Rimes, page **173**
Blackline Master 10:	Rhyming Pictures, page **174**
Blackline Master 11:	Rhyming Pictures, page **176**
Blackline Master 12:	Rhyme Riddles, page **178**
Blackline Master 13:	Segmentation Place Mat: Sound Awareness, page **179**

As students participate in a variety of reading, writing, and oral language activities, teachers use focused observation to assess students' knowledge of the range of phonological awareness skills.

Specific Targeted Behaviors

- Word Awareness
- Syllable Awareness
- Rhyme Awareness
- Sound (Phonemic) Awareness

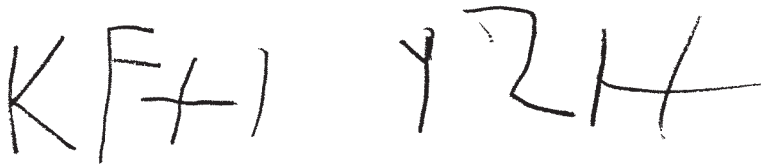
Specific behaviors are targeted in the following sections: Word Awareness, Syllable Awareness, Rhyme Awareness, and Sound (Phonemic) Awareness.

Word Awareness

Understanding the concept of a word develops from students' exposure to print and classroom activities that help them to recognize how words—especially the function words that are more abstract—exist as separate entities.

Initially, students may have difficulty isolating words in sentences orally (clapping words in a sentence), especially if the words have more than one syllable. That is, they may focus on all the syllables in the sentence rather than the words and consider function words to be part of the concrete words. For example, students may think that "the clown" is one word. As students learn to track print, word segmentation will improve. It will also start to show up in writing, with spaces between words, even when the words consist of only random strings of letters. However, some students may still not be using spaces between words in writing at the end of kindergarten.

Function words are the words that connect the more meaningful words such as nouns and verbs in sentences. They are the words that enable the speaker to form complete and correct sentences (e.g., _the_, _an_, _a_, _and_, _to_, and _of_).



(See Blackline Master 12: Student Writing Samples, Chapter 1: Print Awareness, on page 95.)

Syllable Awareness

Most kindergarten students have some sense of "syllableness," even if they do not know what a syllable is. They can recognize how many beats or syllables there are in a word. This is the easiest level of segmenting word parts. One would expect most kindergarten students to be able to segment and blend two- and three-syllable words, but they may have more difficulty with longer words with four to five syllables. With modeling and practice, they should be able to distinguish the syllables in three-syllable words before the end of kindergarten. If students cannot hear the beats or syllables in words, it is important to practice segmenting and blending at this level.

With modeling and practice, kindergarten students should be able to distinguish the syllables in three-syllable words by the end of kindergarten.

Rhyme Awareness

Although many children enter kindergarten with a good understanding of how to recognize and/or create rhymes, difficulty with rhyming may signal a more generalized problem with phonological awareness. Being able to rhyme orally requires the ability to understand the concept of rhyme and to be able to

- segment *m-an* (to know *where to segment* in the word)
- delete *-an* (to know that you have to *take one sound away)*
- substitute *c-an* (to know how to *add a new sound at the beginning)*
- blend *can* (to know how to *blend* the segments together)

The key components of phonological awareness are *segmenting*, *deleting*, *substituting*, and *blending*.

As indicated above, segmenting, deleting, substituting, and blending are the key components of phonological awareness. A student who cannot recognize or generate rhyme is certainly at risk for developing the skills he or she needs to be successful in using familiar word parts for reading and spelling.

Some students may not understand what a rhyme is. Understanding the concept of rhyming requires the student to know *which part of the word* is important for rhyming. Students who do not have a good sense of rhyme will often focus on initial or final sounds or word meaning rather than the entire rime. For example, they may say that *rock* and *run* or *hat* and *coat* rhyme.

Many children entering kindergarten already have a sense of rhyme and can pick out which two words rhyme in a poem or story and can give an example of rhyming words. However, they may have more difficulty with rhyming words of more than one syllable. In addition, students may initially produce only one set of words that rhyme, and rhyming may not be well established until the student can produce several rhymes fluently.

Given instruction and modelling, all students should be able to recognize and generate rhyme by the end of kindergarten.

Even if they can rhyme quite fluently, students may not be able to segment consciously at the onset/rime boundary (e.g., *c-at*) until they have been given specific instruction and modeling. If they have a good sense of rhyme and segmenting ability, they should be able to learn how to segment onset and rime easily. Understanding how to segment and blend words into onsets and rimes supports the use of analogies between words in reading and writing (e.g., knowing *br*ing and *joke* can help to read *broke*) (Pinnell and Fountas 78–80). Given instruction and modelling, all students should be able to recognize and generate rhyme by the end of kindergarten.

When asking students to generate rhymes, nonsense words are acceptable. What is being assessed is their ability to perform the rhyming task, not their vocabulary knowledge. It is important to remember that students do not have the same vocabulary base as adults and that they are still learning which sound sequences represent *real* words in English.

Blends are two or three consecutive consonant sounds that occur frequently in combination in English. Each consonant sound is produced. There are common consonant clusters, such as _pr_, _tr_, _bl_, _cl_, _sm_, _sk_, _str_, and _spl_. They can occur at the beginning or end of syllables (e.g., _tree_, _splash_, _rust_, _hand_).

Digraphs are two consecutive consonants representing one sound (e.g., _th_, _ch_, _sh_).

The shorthand used to describe sounds in words is C for consonant and V for vowel. For example, a word with three sounds, such as _cat_, is described as a CVC word. A word with four sounds, such as _stop_, is a CCVC word.

Sound (Phonemic) Awareness

Some children may enter kindergarten with an awareness that words start with the same sound, even though they may not know which letter goes with that sound. Segmenting and blending individual sounds within words is the most difficult level of phonological awareness and has a strong correlation to learning to read (Adams et al., Snow et al.). Some students in kindergarten may have difficulty with this initially because phonemic awareness appears to develop in a reciprocal (hand-in-hand) relationship with learning to read (Goswami 26). However, kindergarten students will benefit from exposure to phonemic awareness activities through classroom literacy and wordplay activities.

> When asking students to isolate, segment, or blend sounds, it is important to note the following:
> - Consonant sounds are easier than vowel sounds.
> - Single-consonant sounds are easier than sound clusters or blends (e.g., *pin* is easier than *spin*).
> - Certain consonant sounds (e.g., ***f, v, s, z, th, sh, m, n, r, l, w***) are easier than others (e.g., ***p, b, t, d, k, g, ch, j***).

Initially, many students may segment at the onset/rime boundary (e.g., *c-an*) rather than sound by sound. This is normal in the development of phonological awareness. The student may need more practice to hear and reproduce individual sounds in a word.

By the end of kindergarten, given sufficient instruction and practice, and exposure to many literacy activities, students should be able to

- isolate the beginning or ending sounds in words
- blend three sounds to make a word
- segment the sounds in a word with three sounds (CVC)
- change a sound in a word to make a new word in familiar games and songs

When students are successful with sound awareness tasks at the beginning of kindergarten, they will likely need little support in developing their phonological awareness and will simply benefit from the regular classroom focus on how words work. However, kindergarten students who still have considerable difficulty with segmenting and substituting sounds in words in January will benefit from additional early intervention in this area before the end of the school year. (See Chapter 5: Early Intervention for Students At Risk.) Teachers should consider this in relation to students' overall development in phonological awareness.

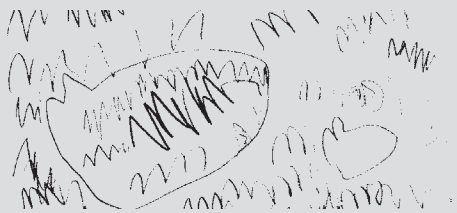
The development of all aspects of phonological awareness (understanding how words can be segmented and blended into syllables, rhymes, and sounds) will support the flexible use of sound knowledge as one component of the reading and writing process.

Assessing Phonemic and Print Awareness Through Writing

As students begin to write, teachers can observe their developing phonemic awareness and letter–sound knowledge in early writing attempts—that is, what sounds they are able to segment from their speech and how they can represent these sounds with the letters they know.

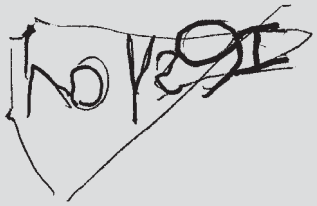
Early spelling development usually includes the following:

- Marks on the page.



- Scribble writing across the page.

- Use of random letters/numbers or letter-like symbols.



- A key sound is spelled in each word (e.g., *bed* = *b*).

(Happy Birthday Cake)

- Beginning and ending consonant sounds are used (e.g., *bed* = *bd*).

He run up

the mountain

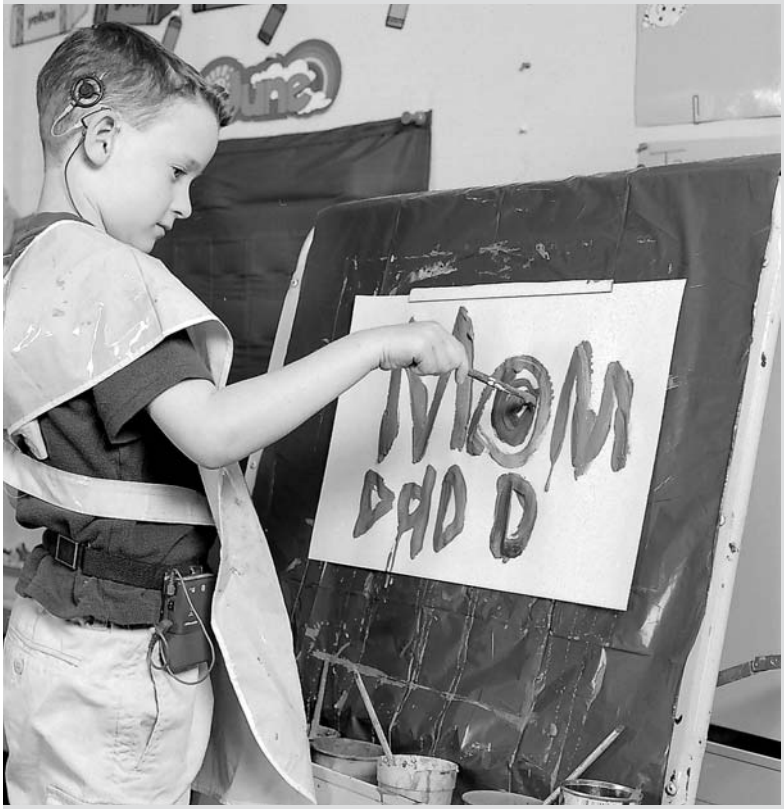
- A vowel is used in each word. This is usually not the *correct* vowel sound; instead, a vowel placeholder is used (e.g., *bed* = *bad*).

(I live in a house)

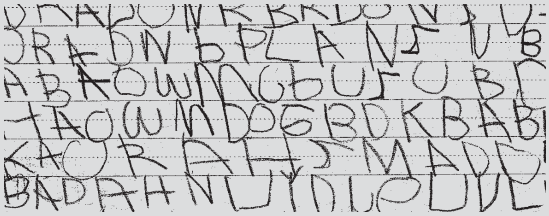
- Students may not put spaces between words when they write until they have developed word awareness.
(See Chapter 1: Print Awareness.)

When teachers analyze beginning writing attempts, it is important to remember that students will record the most prominent sounds they hear in the word. That is why at first, students usually spell using consonant rather than vowel sounds, and they may just record beginning and/or final sounds. Sometimes, their choice of letters to represent sounds reflects their attention

to letter names and the articulation of sounds (how the sounds are made in their mouth) rather than traditional letter-sound correspondences. A common example of this is spelling a word such as *when* as *yn*. Students may use ***y*** instead of ***w*** because that is the letter-name shape their mouth makes when they start to say the word *when*. As students develop phonemic awareness and phonics knowledge, closer approximations to conventional spelling are evident.



Understanding the normal progression of spelling development is helpful to the kindergarten teacher because of its wide range in the kindergarten classroom. Some students may be using some consonant blends and digraphs or vowels, while others may still be using random letters or a key sound for each word.



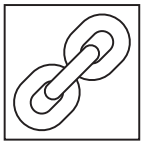
Early writing—random strings of letters

Later writing—uses some initial consonants correctly

In addition to the independent exploration of sounds in words as evidenced by early writing attempts, students may also begin to write some high-frequency sight words from their exposure to words in the classroom and from Word Wall activities. These often include words such as their own name, *mom*, *dad*, and *love*.

For a full discussion of the different stages of spelling development, see Bear et al.

Linking Assessment to Instruction—Developing Phonological Awareness



In making judgments about students' phonological awareness, the teacher needs to consider the wide range of normal development in phonological awareness in five- and six-year-old students. The information in the above section on assessment should be used as a guideline, with the primary focus of assessment being to inform the teacher and to drive instruction. Knowing what the student knows and *almost* knows can help determine what kinds of instruction will help the student move forward most effectively. To supplement ongoing balanced literacy programs, small-group or individual instruction that is at an appropriate level can be utilized to help students who have difficulty with any aspect of phonological awareness.

Effective Techniques for Developing Phonological Awareness

Instruction in phonological awareness should be interspersed throughout the day as students are involved in a variety of fun and engaging activities that enhance the notion of oral language play. These activities work well when they are tied to classroom literacy experiences in a balanced literacy program.

The teacher can embed attention to phonological awareness in daily reading and writing activities, including specific mini-lessons. Teachers need to organize the classroom program so that students have consistent opportunities to explore the nature of how words and sounds work in our language.

Although the focus of phonological awareness is initially on oral language play, it is important to begin to make the connection to print. Many of the activities for the development of alphabet knowledge and phonics in the kindergarten program presuppose that students have some understanding of how to segment the speech stream. These activities provide the opportunity to further enhance the development of phonological awareness.

(See Chapter 1: Print Awareness.)

It is important to use language terms such as *word*, *syllable*, *sound*, *letter*, and *rhyme* in context consistently. It helps to develop students' ability to understand and talk about language, as well as phonological awareness. Once students develop this understanding, they can use the terms themselves as part of classroom talk.

Components of a Balanced Literacy Program

Components of a Balanced Literacy Program

- Teacher Read-Alouds
- Shared Reading
- Guided Reading
- Language Activities
- Independent Reading
- Shared Writing
- Interactive Writing
- Guided Writing
- Independent Writing

Suggested Phonological Awareness Books for Read-Alouds and Shared Reading

Buller, J., and S. Schade. *I Love You, Good Night.* Simon and Schuster, 1988.

Carle, E. *All About Arthur (An Absolutely Absurd Ape).* Scholastic Library Publishing, 1974.

de Regniers, B., E. Moore, M. White, and J. Carr. *Sing a Song of Popcorn.* Scholastic, 1990.

Gordon, J. *Six Sleepy Sheep.* Boyds Mills Press Books, 1991.

Hutchins, P. *Don't Forget the Bacon!* Econo-Clad, 1989.

Krauss, R. *I Can Fly.* RH Children's Books, 2003.

Otto, C. *Dinosaur Chase.* Harper Collins, 1991.

Parry, C. *Zoomerang-A-Boomerang: Poems to Make Your Belly Laugh.* Penguin Putnam, 1993.

Pilkey, D. *The Dumb Bunnies Go to the Zoo.* Econo-Clad, 1998.

Raffi. *Down by the Bay.* Celebration Press, 1994.

Seuss, Dr. *Fox in Socks.* Random House, 1976.

Also see the list of Alphabet Books on page 48 in Chapter 1: Print Awareness.

Teacher Read-Alouds

Teachers can choose books for read-alouds for a variety of purposes, including attention to phonological awareness. The teacher's attention to wordplay provides a meaningful and fun language experience. Reading sections of the text and having students listen for particular features of language helps students focus on the "sound of language." It also provides them with practice in listening for a purpose.

(See Chapter 3: Oral Language.)

Specific activities for developing phonological awareness within the "Read-Alouds" component of a balanced literacy program include the following:

- Books, poems, or songs can provide a focus on the rhythm of language and rhyme. Rereading favorite texts repeatedly provides the opportunity for students to learn to listen to the rhyme patterns.
- After reading a text, the teacher can focus on syllable awareness by helping students to listen for long words (multisyllable) or short words (single syllable). Tapping out the beats in the various words will help them to make this distinction.
- Books can be chosen that provide examples of alliteration to help students begin to focus on initial sounds in words (listening for how they sound the same at the beginning).

Shared Reading

Shared reading using Big Books and charts (poems, songs, language experience stories) provides the opportunity to focus on various features of print awareness (see Chapter 1: Print Awareness). It can also be used as a time to focus on the development of phonological awareness skills. When introducing a story, poem, or song, the teacher may ask students to listen for the rhymes in the story, or to listen for words that all start with a particular sound. Then, as the text is read by the teacher, students start to focus on the particular aspect of wordplay.

Once the teacher has shared the text several times and students are familiar with what the story or poem says, the various aspects of phonological awareness can be highlighted:

- Pointing to each word as it is read helps students to develop word awareness.
- Picking a multisyllable word and talking about how it has

more than one beat (syllable), but it is still just one word, also supports word awareness.

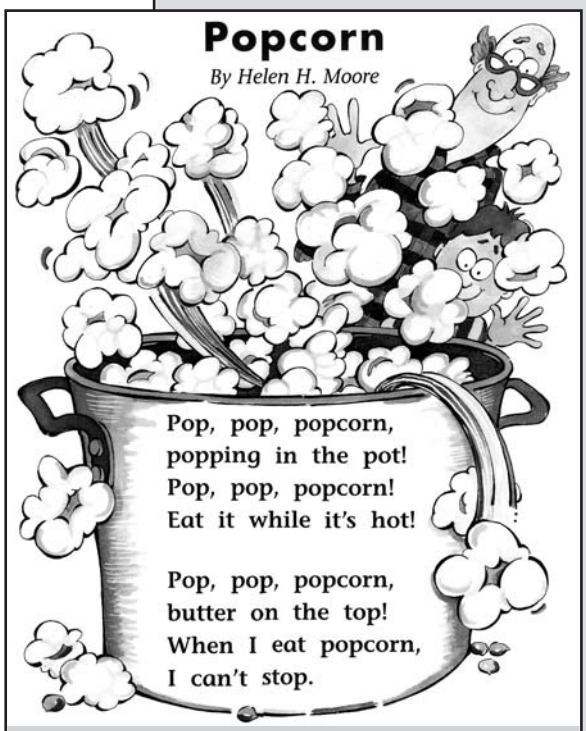
- Once students are familiar with a chant from a story, poem, or song after reading it several times, they can clap out the words, giving one clap per word. They can also tap on the floor or their knees, or use rhythm instruments to keep the beat.
- Pick some of the multisyllable words from the story. Say them in syllable segments and have students guess what the words are.
- If the text has examples of rhyme, point out which words rhyme and why they rhyme.
  - Talk about how all the words sound the same at the end *(-at, -id)*.
  - Segment the words at the onset/rime boundary so that students can hear how the rime sounds the same in both words.
  - Read the story again, but this time leave out the second rhyming word. Have students supply the rhyme. Ask them to think of other words that may rhyme with the first word.
- Select some words from the story that have three or four sounds. Say the words, sound by sound, and have students guess which words they are from the story. Initially, use concrete words such as names, nouns, actions, or descriptive

The teacher will need to model one clap per word to help students distinguish clapping for each word as opposed to tapping for each syllable. This will provide the opportunity to talk about the difference between words and syllables, as students can see the words printed in front of them.

One example of a story that could be used for this purpose is *I Can Read* by Margaret Malcolm. Each page has one simple sentence that contains words with a single syllable (*Mom, Dad*) and two syllables (*Grandma, teacher, myself*).

Mini-Lesson

Example of a Shared Reading Lesson



(See Blackline Master 5: Popcorn, on page 168.)

Before Reading

Explain to students that they need to listen to the sounds of the words in the poem.

During Reading

- Read the poem to students, emphasizing the sound of *pop* in each word.
- Read it again, emphasizing the rhyming words.

After Reading

- Ask students if they noticed anything about the sounds of the words. For example:
  - Some words have *pop* in them.
  - Some words rhyme.
- Segment the syllables in *popcorn* and *popping*, and have students imitate you. Then have them blend the words.
- Read the first verse again and pause before the second rhyming word to allow students to say the word. When students "fill it in," ask them how they knew what the word should be. Highlight the fact that the word rhymed with *pot*.
- Read the second verse and ask students to find the rhyming words. See if any of the students figure out that *top* and *stop* rhyme with *pop*.
- Segment *top*, *stop*, and *pop* at the onset and rime (*t-op; st-op; p-op*), and have students imitate. Ask students what the rhyme ending is. Then have them think of other words that rhyme with *pop* (e.g., *hop*, *mop*, *top*). These could be written on chart paper or the chalkboard.
- Finally, pick a word from the poem and ask students to be word detectives and figure out which word it is. Say *pop* slowly, sound by sound (i.e., /p/ /o/ /p/, not puh-o-puh). If they are able to figure it out, try segmenting *top* and *stop* next.
- Read the poem one more time for enjoyment and to help consolidate the wordplay just completed. Encourage students to join in wherever they can.

Source: Moore, Helen H. "Popcorn." *Join In* (Big Book Format). Nelson Thomson Learning, 1999.

words rather than function words (e.g., *is, of, the, has*) because function words do not carry much meaning for young learners. As the teacher builds knowledge of these words through the Word Wall, function words may also be included.

- If the story has examples of alliteration, read it again, emphasizing the alliterative section. Have students guess what the words have in common. Talk about how all the words start with the same sound, isolating the initial sound in each word. The teacher must focus initially on the *sound,* rather than on the *name of the letter.*

Shared Writing

The teacher and students work together to write a message or story. The teacher, who does the writing, demonstrates how writing works. As students and teacher compose the message together, the teacher may model the following:

- Use rhyme analogy to spell a word (e.g., *I know how to spell* cat, *so how would I spell* fat?).
  - Write *cat* off to the side (a white board works well for this).
  - Then have students problem-solve what part of the word will need to be changed for *fat*.

    - Erase the ***c*** and write in the ***f***.
    - Then write it in the message.
- Slowly say all the sounds in the word (sound segmenting), and try to write a letter for each sound. Ask students to suggest what letters should be written next. Ask students to explain their suggestions (e.g., *How did you know the next letter was ___?*).
- When writing words of more than one syllable, say them syllable by syllable.
    - Draw a line for each syllable ___ ___ on the white board.
    - Model the sound by sound segmenting within each syllable (e.g., /hap/ /py/).
    - Then write the word in the message.

Interactive Writing

During interactive writing, the teacher and students jointly compose and write, or "share the pen." Students may write individual letters, word parts, or whole words, and the teacher writes the rest. Teachers can encourage the development of phonological awareness during interactive writing by

- reminding students to think of how many syllables are in the word and writing a sound for each syllable
- encouraging students to use rhyme to help spell a word (e.g., *Find the word* can *on the Word Wall. If that is how you spell* can, *how would you spell* man*?*)
- helping students use matching and isolating sounds to help spell a word (e.g., man *starts with the same sound as* Marcus. *What sound does* man *start with?*).
- helping students segment the sounds in a word; encourage students to think about what sound they *feel* next as they say the word.

Independent Writing

Students need the opportunity to explore words and sounds in a variety of daily writing activities. Students will be at many different stages in writing at the beginning and throughout the kindergarten year. Initially, some students will just copy print from around the room, while others will use drawing instead of writing. Still others may begin to use some random letters or even letter-sound correspondence to record their ideas.

It is very important to support students' use of invented spelling in kindergarten because the exploration of language through this process is integral to developing sound-by-sound segmenting and awareness of how sound patterns work in English.

As students learn a few letters and sounds, they will begin to use them in writing if they can segment the sounds in words. At first, some students may need help to segment sounds, even though they may know which letters to use to represent the sounds. Although it is important initially to encourage students to write by segmenting the sounds for them, they also need to learn to segment on their own if they are going to write independently. In the beginning, when they segment the sounds in words on their own, they will likely not represent as many sounds in the words they write. However, in the long term, building their segmenting skills will enable them to become more effective writers and readers.

Language Activities

These activities are found throughout the kindergarten day. They include games, songs, poems, and wordplay activities that promote awareness of words, syllables, rhymes, and sounds in words.

Effective Techniques for Developing Word Awareness

The development of word awareness happens through oral wordplay, as well as through exploration and exposure to print. Knowing where individual words begin and end is not important for oral communication but becomes relevant when considering word boundaries in reading and spelling.

Effective Techniques for Developing Word Awareness

- Teacher Read-Alouds and Shared Reading
- Shapes or Colors Game
- Word Counters
- Word Segmenting Place Mats
- Morning Message
- Word Wall Match-Ups
- Sentence Cut-Ups
- Sentence Building
- Word Match-Ups

Teacher Read-Alouds and Shared Reading

During teacher read-alouds and shared reading using Big Books or language experience charts, the teacher can model word-by-word pointing to reinforce word awareness. Then, when students are engaged in rereading a story or chart to the class or are reading independently, they can be encouraged to point to each word as they read, until they are able to track print successfully through voice-print match. Students do not need to continue to point word by word once they are tracking the print accurately. Most students will stop using this strategy once their reading becomes more fluent. Students often revert effectively to this strategy when encountering challenging words while reading.

Shapes or Colors Game

Put shapes or mats of different colors on the floor. Say a simple sentence. Repeat it slowly and have students step on a different shape or color for each word you say. Start with sentences that use all single-syllable words. Then use names of students that have more than one syllable. Gradually, add more multisyllable words. Remind students to move for each word, not each syllable. For example:

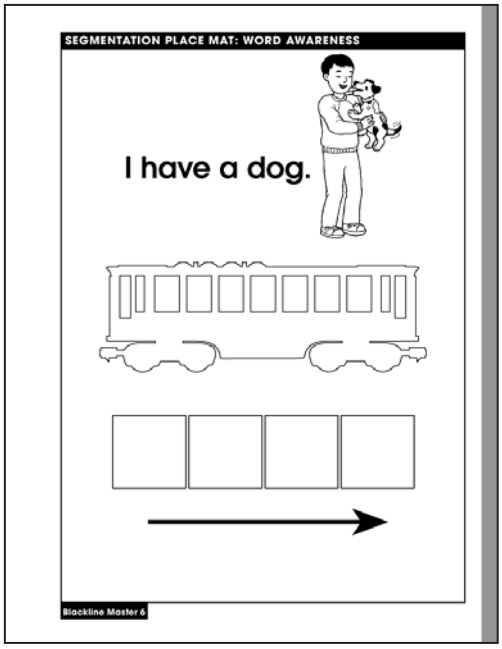
- I have a cat.
- John saw a blue book.
- Matilda has a pretty dress.

Word Counters

Use blocks, bread tags, or other items as counters. As you say a sentence, have students move a counter for each word you say.

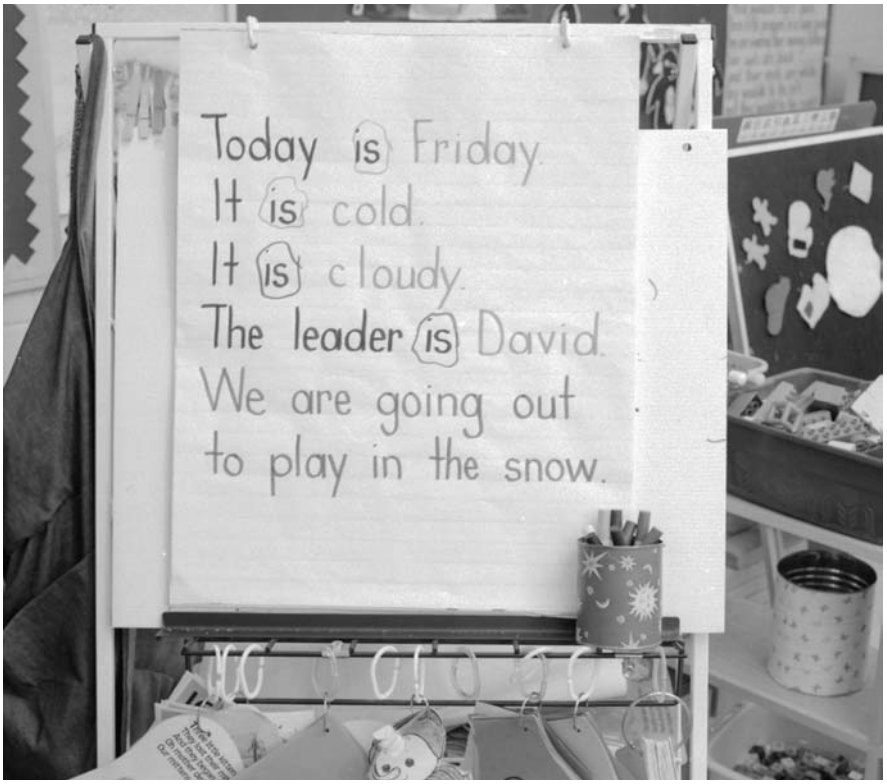
Word Segmenting Place Mats

Give each student a segmentation place mat (see Blackline Master 6: Segmentation Place Mat: Word Awareness, on page 169) and four counters (e.g., small blocks, bread tags). Have them place their counters on the drawing of the train. Each counter represents one word. Say a sentence (up to four words in length) to students, and model how to move the counters from the train into the boxes as each word is said. One counter should be moved for each word in the sentence. Then students repeat the activity individually as the teacher says additional sentences.



The segmenting place mat can be used for a variety of tracking and segmenting activities (i.e., word, syllable, and sound segmenting place mats in this chapter). The teacher can photocopy the place mat on different colored paper for each segmenting level (e.g., word = white; syllable = yellow; sound = green). It can also be laminated for durability. A sentence or keyword used as an example can be put at the top of the place mat to help students understand what aspect of the word they are to listen for. To start, all counters are placed on the train. As some students have difficulty knowing where to start in terms of left-to-right tracking, a green dot can be placed beside the left-hand box to mark the place to begin.

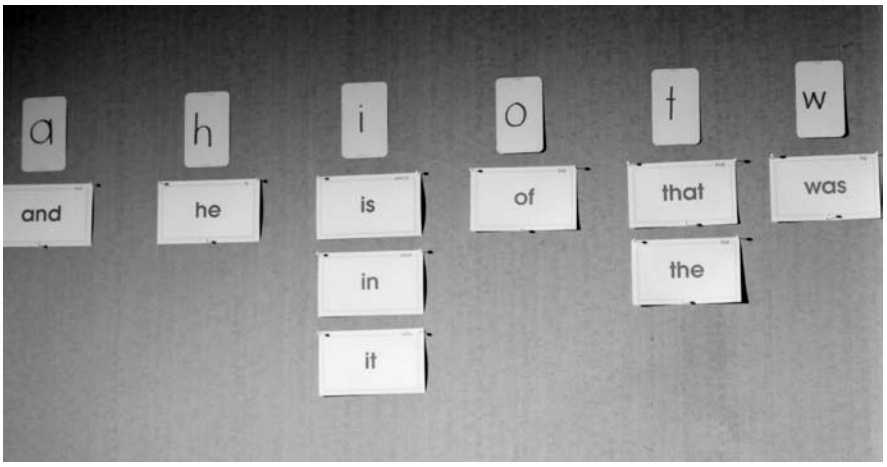
Morning Message



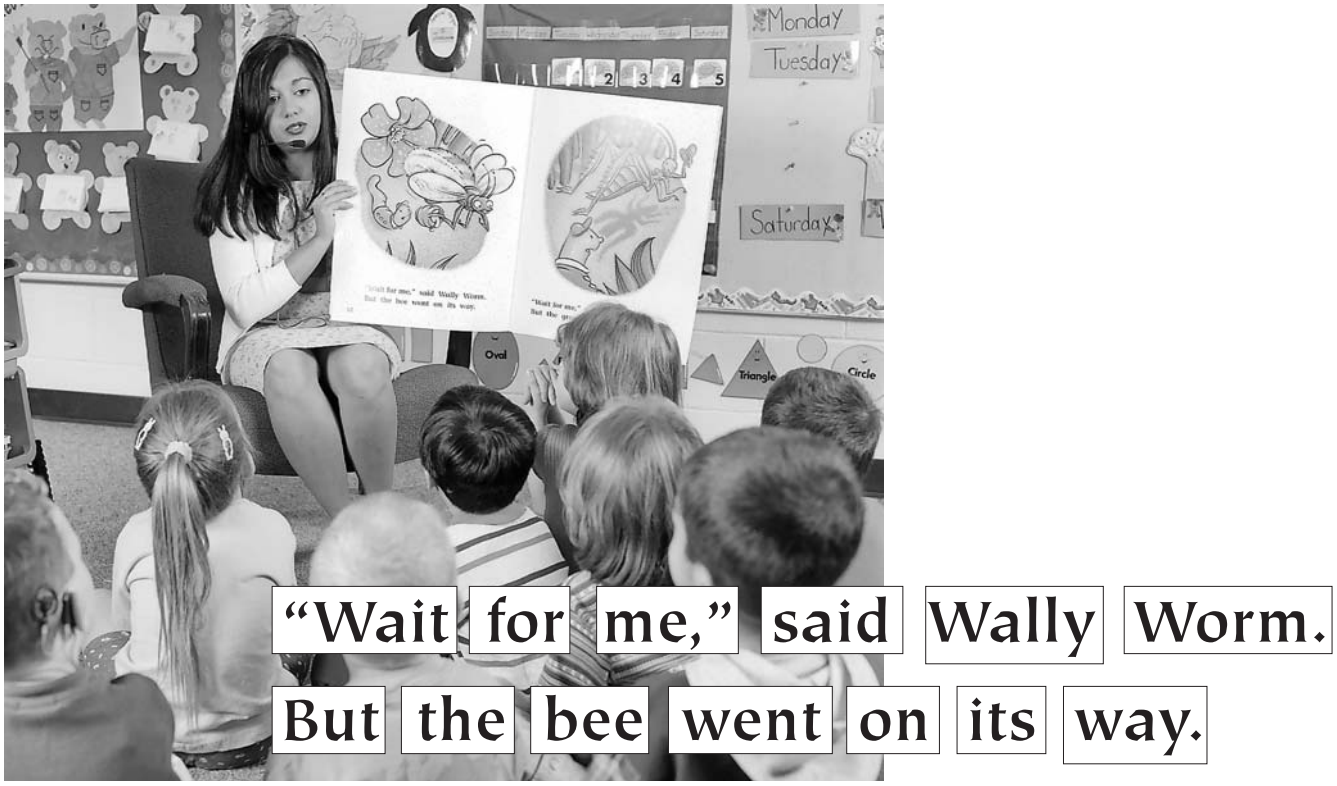
Pick a sentence from the Morning Message. Repeat it and ask students to clap one time for each word in the sentence. Then point to and count the words in the sentence as they are written in the message. Pick a word(s) from the message and write it on a separate piece of paper. Have a student match the word to the one in the message.

Word Wall Match-Ups

Give students copies of one or two high-frequency sight words from the Word Wall (use index cards or ticket board). Have them look for those words in a familiar text and match the words to the print.



Sentence Cut-Ups



Use sentences from familiar stories or charts. Write the sentence on a strip of paper. Then cut it up and have students re-create the sentence. They will probably need the sentence as a model in order to match the words.

(See Chapter 1: Print Awareness.)

Sentence Building

Choose a sentence from a familiar story or chart and put each word on a piece of paper. Give each word to individual students. Have them stand in front of the class as they re-create the sentence. Students may not be able to read all the words at first, but together they may be able to problem-solve which words go where.

Word Match-Ups

Give students words from a sentence printed on a familiar chart story. Have them match their word to the word on the chart.

Effective Techniques for Developing Syllable Awareness

- Teacher Read-Alouds and Shared Reading
- Bag It
- Syllable Sort
- Syllable Name Sort
- Syllable Segmenting Place Mats
- Tapping Game
- Word Wall
- Name Detective
- Syllable Detective
- Guess the Word
- Guess the Word—Syllable Take-Away
- Make a Silly Word

Effective Techniques for Developing Syllable Awareness

Developing syllable knowledge is useful in the early stages of phonological awareness. It also has practical implications as students progress through school since syllable knowledge becomes an important part of reading and spelling multisyllable words at all grade levels. Students who develop a keen ear for syllables and eventually a good awareness of syllable patterns can use this knowledge to read and spell more effectively and efficiently.

Teacher Read-Alouds and Shared Reading

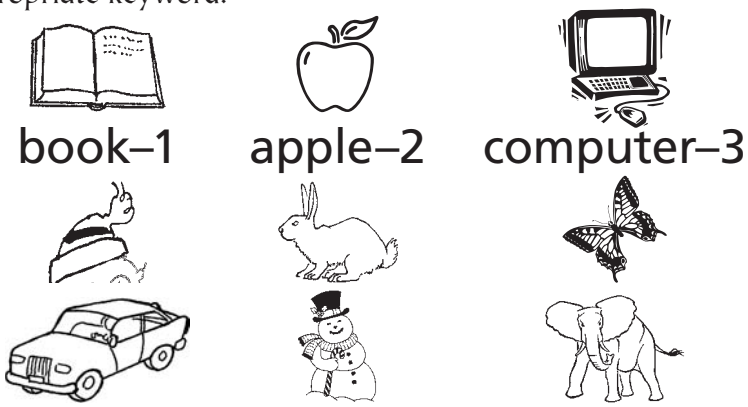
After reading a Big Book, poem, or chart during teacher read-alouds and shared reading, the teacher can focus students' attention on "long" and "short" words from the text. Students can tap out the syllables in the words to compare and contrast words with varying syllables. The teacher can also ask students to be "syllable detectives" as they figure out words from the text that are presented in syllable segments.

Bag It

Use real objects or pictures for this game. Students take turns pulling a picture or object from the bag, saying the word, and then tapping out the syllables in the word.

Syllable Sort

This activity can be used with any game using words of varying syllable lengths. Use key words (pictures) and mark the number of syllables for each (e.g., *book*—1; *apple*—2; *computer*—3). Then have students choose an object or picture, say the word, tap the number of syllables, and place the object or picture under the appropriate keyword.



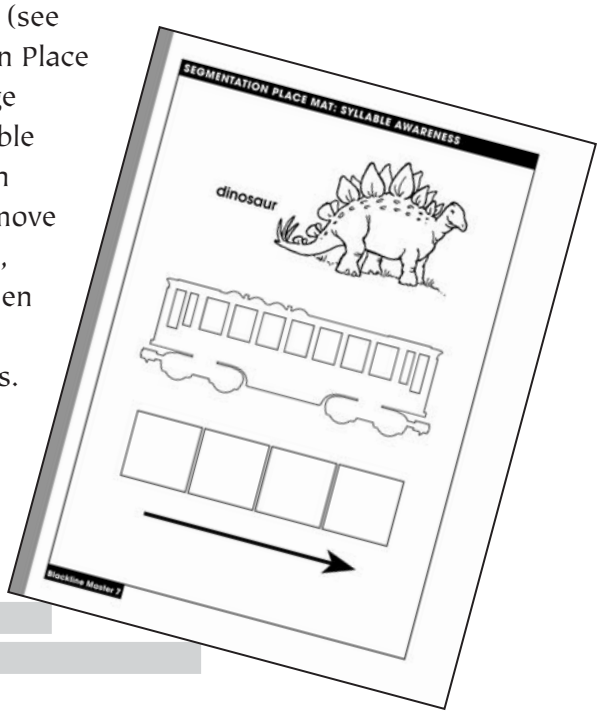
Syllable Name Sort

Make room for three or four rows in the classroom. Choose a student whose name has one (two, three, four) syllable(s) to represent the keyword for each column. Have students take turns saying their names and figuring out which key name has the same number of syllables as theirs. This activity may be included as part of the "Name Sort" activity on page 51 of Chapter 1: Print Awareness.

Syllable Segmenting Place Mats

Use the segmentation place mat (see Blackline Master 7: Segmentation Place Mat: Syllable Awareness, on page 170). Say words of varying syllable lengths. Have students start with their counters on the train and move them to the boxes, one at a time, for each syllable in the word. Then have them check their boxes as the word is modeled for the class. It is important that students say the word after the teacher so that they can practice the segmenting skill for themselves.

(See "Word Segmenting Place Mats," on page 135.)



Tapping Game

This game can be used to help students categorize words according to the *number* of syllables. Students can keep track of *how many* syllables there are in a word by tapping specific body parts. For words with up to five syllables, students can tap as follows:

- Have students stretch out one arm, palm up.
- Then, have them tap the following parts of the outstretched arm (and/or nose) in the following order, depending on the number of syllables in the word.
  1. fingertips
  2. wrist
  3. inside the elbow
  4. shoulder
  5. nose

For example, for a five-syllable word such as *hippopotamus*, students will tap all five parts, from fingertips to nose, in that order.

Number skills may also be developed with this activity. Students soon learn that words that tap out at the shoulder have four syllables; at the fingertips, one syllable; and so on. This reduces the difficulty of tapping or clapping and counting at the same time.

Word Wall

- Have students find words on the Word Wall that have a specific number of syllables. Ask,
  - *Who can find a word on the Word Wall that has ____ syllables?*
- Pick a word from the Word Wall. Say it by syllables and have students guess which word it might be.

Name Detective

When calling students by name (e.g., for attendance, for center activities), say their names in syllable segments.

In the "Guess the Word—Syllable Take-Away" activity, kindergarten students may not say all the syllables in some multisyllable words when asked to delete a syllable. That is because they usually focus only on the syllables that receive the most stress (said the loudest). For example, ask students to say *macaroni*. Then have them say it again without the "mac." Students will likely say "roni" rather than "aroni" because the "a" syllable is not stressed when it is said. The teacher can help students to hear all the syllables by saying the word again, emphasizing the unstressed syllable "a."

Syllable Detective

Tell students that throughout the day, words will be said by syllables, and that they need to listen to figure out what the words are. They could be words from a story or any classroom activity. Always stop and have students say each word that was segmented before moving on. For example:

- Today we are going to read a book about *di-no-saurs*. What is our book going to be about?
- Our star student today is *Te-li-ci-a*. Who is our star student?

Guess the Word

Have students practice saying words in syllable segments for the other students to guess.

Guess the Word—Syllable Take-Away

This activity can help students learn the concept of taking away part of a word and figuring out what word is left.

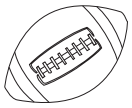
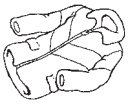
- Start with compound words. Say the word and have students repeat the word. Then say it again without one of its parts:
  - Say *cowboy*. Say it again, but do not say *boy*. [cow]
  - Say *rainbow*. Say it again, but do not say *rain*. [bow]
  - Say *snowflake*. Say it again, but do not say *snow*. [flake]
- Then try the same activity with other two- to four-syllable words. Delete only one syllable:

- Say *umbrella*. Say it again, but do not say "um"(brella).
- Say *yellow*. Say it again, but do not say "low"(yel).
- Try deleting the initial syllable at first. Later, try the final syllable.

Make a Silly Word

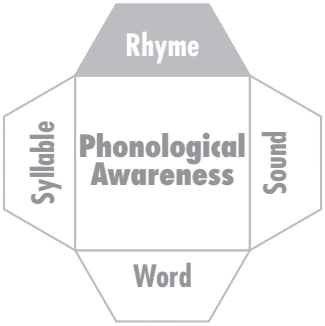
- Use compound words. Have students find which two words go together to make another word. It may help initially to use pictures to represent both parts of the compound word:

- dog + house = doghouse

- foot + ball = football 
- rain + coat  = raincoat

(See Blackline Master 8: Silly Word Pictures, on pages 171–72, for suggested pictures.)

- Switch the pictures around and ask students what the new silly word would be if they said the word parts (syllables) backwards or reversed their order:
  - housedog (*doghouse*)
  - ballfoot (*football*)
  - coatrain (*raincoat*)



Effective Techniques for Developing Rhyme Awareness

The first step in developing rhyme awareness is to have students listen to many stories, poems, and songs in which rhyming occurs. They need someone to point out when words rhyme, and what "rhyming" means. Rhymes are words that sound the same at the end (e.g., *bat* rhymes with *cat*). They need a great deal of exposure to what rhyming *sounds like* in fun, meaningful experiences.

Understanding rhyming has long-term implications for reading and spelling because it relates to students' understanding of "pronounceable word parts"—the "familiar pieces of words" that we look for as we try to read and spell unfamiliar words (Gunning 484).

Effective Techniques for Developing Rhyme Awareness

- Teacher Read-Alouds and Shared Reading
- Do These Words Rhyme?
- Odd One Out
- Rhyme Sort
- Name Rhymes
- Which One Does Not Belong?
- Rhyme Riddles
- Ball Toss
- Word Wall
- Segmenting Rhymes
- Rhyme Rhythm
- Adapt Familiar Songs

Teacher Read-Alouds and Shared Reading

- Choose books, poems, or charts that use rhyme so that students can begin to *hear* what rhyme sounds like. (Big Books and charts used during shared reading provide many opportunities to highlight rhyming.) However, do not assume that all students in kindergarten understand rhyming. Explicitly point out when words rhyme. Say such things as
  - Listen: In this sentence, *man* and *can* rhyme because they sound the same at the end. They both end with *an*.
- Ask students to listen for the rhyming words as a text is read. Then return to a specific section of the text that used rhyme and talk about which words rhymed and why they rhymed. Choose a word and have students think of other words that rhyme with it.
- Read the selection again and leave out the rhyming word. Have students think of the rhyming word that will fit. Have them try the sentence with other rhyming words. Talk about which rhyming words will make sense in the sentence.

Do These Words Rhyme?

- Provide examples of word pairs that rhyme and ones that do not. Use rhymes from a story you have just read or words from around the classroom. Have students tell you if the pairs of words rhyme or not and how they know. If students have difficulty, say,
  - Yes, *book* and *cook* rhyme because they sound the same at the end. They both end with "ook."
  - No, *book* and *bear* do not rhyme because they do not sound the same at the end. *Book* ends with "ook" and *bear* ends with "ear," which do not sound the same. They rhyme if they have the same ending.
- Initially, students may focus on the wrong part of the word as they try to figure out rhyming. They may focus on the beginning sound or just the last consonant sound rather than the entire rime, which includes the vowel to the end of the word (e.g., *book* = *ook*, *see* = *ee*, *man* = *an*, *heart* = *eart*).

37 Rimes

ack	ame	ash	ay	ice	ill	ink	oke	uck
ain	an	at	eat	ick	in	ip	op	ug
ake	ank	ate	ell	ide	ine	it	ore	ump
ale	ap	aw	est	ight	ing	ock	ot	unk
all								

Source: Wylie, R. E., and D. D. Durrell. "Teaching Vowels Through Phonograms." *Language Arts* 47.6 (1970): 787–91.

The previous 37 rimes are most critical for early success with reading. Use words with these rimes for your rhyming activities.

(See Blackline Master 9: 37 Rimes, on page 173.)

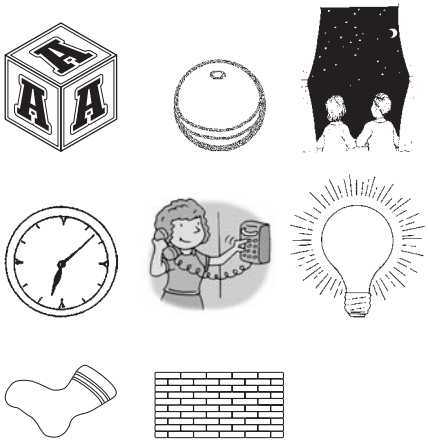
Odd One Out

Present three words to students, two of which rhyme. Ask students to determine which word does not rhyme. For example:

- What does not rhyme?
  - stop mop cake (cake)
  - night ball light (ball)

In the "Odd One Out" activity, at first use words that are not similar to the rhyming words. Increase the difficulty by using words that have more similar sounds. For example:

- ***man—book* (no similar sounds)**
- ***man—mop* (one similar sound)**
- ***man—mat* (two similar sounds)**



Rhyme Sort

- Pass out pictures to students based on three or four rhyming families. Keep an example of a picture of a keyword for each rhyme family.
- Have each student hold up and say the name of his or her picture. The teacher may have to help students say the correct name if they do not recognize the picture.
- The teacher holds up a picture and names the item. Students who have a word that rhymes with the teacher's word come forward.
- The procedure is repeated with the other keywords until all the rhymes have been made.
- Have students think of additional rhyming words for each family.

Students can also do rhyming sorts independently or in a small-group activity. They can find the words that rhyme and/or draw pictures of additional words that rhyme with the keywords.

(See Blackline Masters 10 and 11: Rhyming Pictures, on pages 174–77.
See also Blackline Master 9: Rhyming Pictures, Chapter 5: Early Intervention for Students At Risk, on page 400.)

Name Rhymes

Tell students that during the day, they will hear their names in a funny way—using another word that rhymes with their names.

- As students are called for attendance or other classroom activities, say each student's name and then a word that rhymes with it. Use both real and nonsense words as long as they rhyme. For example:
  - Tibor—Libor
  - Hiroko—Biroko
  - Barry—Larry
  - Tara—Mara

- Using both real and nonsense words, ask students,
  - Who has a name that rhymes with *Windy* (Cindy), *Tim* (Kim), *Pinda* (Linda)?

Which One Does Not Belong?

Tell students which rhyming family they will be listening for (e.g., *Today's family is the* -an *family.*). Ask them to raise their hands when they hear a word that does not belong in that family—when it does not rhyme. For example, say,

- *man, can, fan, pan, look* [look]

Rhyme Riddles

Think of simple rhyming riddles. Ask students to guess the rhyming word. Ask students to think of a word that rhymes and makes sense. For example:

- The black cat is very _____. [fat]

Additional examples of rhyming riddles can be found in Love, E., and S. A. Reilly. *A Sound Way.* Markham, ON: Pembroke Publishers, 1996.

If students have difficulty thinking of the rhyming word, say the sentence again and give the first sound of the rhyming word. For example:

- The black cat is very f_____.

(See Blackline Master 12: Rhyme Riddles, on page 178.)

Listen carefully to their rhyming words. Sometimes students may have difficulty with rhyme endings because the sounds are almost exactly the same. They may say *bike* and *light* rhyme; or *hand* and *Sam.* (These inexact rhymes are sometimes used in poetry.) *The endings of the rhyming words should sound exactly alike, even if they are spelled differently.*

Ball Toss

Have students stand in a circle. The teacher says a word and tosses a ball (or beanbag) to a student. That student has to think of a word that rhymes. If he or she cannot think of a rhyming word, he or she simply tosses the ball to another student. This way, students are not put on the spot if they are unable to make a rhyme. If a student gives a rhyming word, he or she tosses the ball back to the teacher. The teacher then chooses another word. Once students become comfortable with rhyming, they can continue to toss the ball around the circle until they cannot think of any more words to rhyme with the initial word.

Word Wall

Have students think of words that rhyme with the words from the Word Wall.

Segmenting Rhymes

Model rhyme segmenting as a way of explaining to students what part of the word they are to listen to in detecting rhymes:

- Start with words with a single consonant as the onset (e.g., *m-an; b-ook*), and then use consonant clusters or blends (e.g., *st-op*; *fl-at*; *br-own*).
- Use your hands to demonstrate:
  - Put your fists together and say the word *book*.
  - Then move your fists apart as you say each segment *b-ook*
  - Then bring your fists back together and say *book* again.
- Give several examples and then have students model after you.
- During the day, present words in onset and rime and ask students to guess the word.

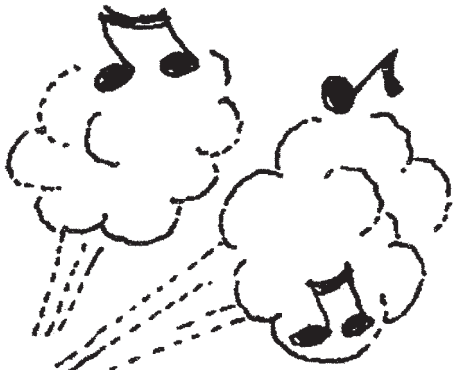
Rhyme Rhythm

Have students sit in a circle. Ask them to practice a pat/pat/clap rhythm by patting their legs twice and then clapping. Once they have the rhythm, use it to reinforce rhyme segmentation.

- Provide a word segmented in onset and rime (*b-at*). Students pat their legs as they say the onset (*b*) and then the rime (*at*) and clap as they blend the word together again (*bat*). For example:
  - *b (pat)*
  - *at (pat)*
  - *bat (clap)*
- Use students' names, words from across the curriculum (animals, colors, numbers), or stories.

Adapt Familiar Songs

After you have practiced blending onsets and rimes, sing a song such as "A-Hunting We Will Go," but change the verse to include an onset and rime. For example:



A-hunting we will go,
A-hunting we will go.
We'll find an /s / and add an /un/ and now we have a "sun."

Effective Techniques for Developing Sound (Phonemic) Awareness

- Teacher Read-Alouds
- Shared Reading
- Sound Matching
- Guess the Sound
- Odd One Out
- Bag It
- Listen for Target Sound
- Travel Game
- Sound Sort
- Scavenger Hunt
- Sound Blending
- Songs
- Sound-Segmenting Place Mats
- Linking Cubes
- Guess the Word
- Sound Substitution
- Sound Substitution—Using Blocks to Represent Sounds
- Sound Substitution—Make a New Word

Effective Techniques for Developing Sound (Phonemic) Awareness

Becoming aware of individual sounds in words is the most difficult level of phonological awareness. It is also the area of phonological awareness that research indicates is the most predictive of success in using sound knowledge in reading. However, it is important to remember that its development (especially the ability to segment individual sounds and manipulate sounds to form different words) coincides with the exploration of words in reading. Children need to be engaged in ongoing reading and writing experiences as they are developing phonemic awareness.

Classroom literacy activities that provide opportunities for students to be matching, blending, segmenting, manipulating, or isolating beginning or ending sounds in *spoken language* are all wordplay activities that should be included in the kindergarten program.

In addition, connecting these activities to the exploration of sounds and letters in the development of alphabet knowledge helps to bridge the gap between learning sounds and letters and learning how to *use* this knowledge to read and spell.

Teacher Read-Alouds

- Read a poem, chant, or story to students. Pick a section in which several words start with the same sound (books with alliteration are a good choice for this). Read it again, emphasizing the words with the same sound. Ask students what is the same about the keywords (you may need to repeat them).
- Have students think of other words that share that sound.
- This can also be tied to activities for developing letter names. For example, you can use "Wait for Me" by Bonnie Ferraro. Have students listen for and find all the words that start with the /w/ sound (e.g., *Wally, Worm, went, walk, way, wait, waited*).

Shared Reading

Shared reading opportunities using Big Books, poems, and language experience stories can be used to play with the sounds in words. After a story has been read with students several times:

- Say a word from the story sound by sound, and have students guess the word.
- Have students listen for words that begin or end with the same sound.

Sound Matching

Sound-matching activities help students learn to listen to words in order to hear if they begin or end with the *same sound*.

- Start with students' names. Pick two or three students whose names start with the same sound. Have them come forward and say their names: Michael, Manuel, and Maria. All their names start with the same sound—/m/. (Make sure you say the sound and not the letter.) Repeat with other groups of students. Each day, pick a different group of students and have them tell what is the same about their names.
- Extend this activity by having students think of other words that begin with the same sound.

Guess the Sound

Show students three pictures of words that begin with the same sound. Have them say the words and then guess what sound they start with.

(See Blackline Master 4: Beginning Sounds—Phonemes, Chapter 5: Early Intervention for Students At Risk, on page 389.)

Odd One Out

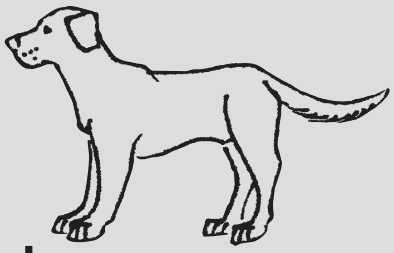
To extend the above activity, show students three pictures, two of which start with the same sound and one that is different. Review what objects the pictures represent. Then have students state which two words start with the same sound. When students choose the correct words, model for them what the beginning sound is (e.g., they both start with ***s***). As students become comfortable with this activity, have *them* identify what the beginning sound is and what letter makes that sound.

Bag It

Put several objects or pictures that start with the same sound in a bag. Tell students that all the items in the bag start with the same sound. Have them take turns picking an item and placing it in front of them on the floor. As each item is pulled out, repeat the names of all the items. When the last item is named, have students indicate what the beginning sound is.

In any of the naming activities, it is important to be prepared for students to give an alternate name for the item. Accept the student's answer and then say, *We are going to call it a* _____. Students' interpretation of pictures and vocabulary knowledge may not match what was intended by the teacher. For example, a picture of a "gate" may be called a "fence"; a picture of a "deer" may be called a "reindeer."

Repeat the "Odd One Out" and "Bag It" activities above for *ending sounds.* Students may not understand the concept of beginning and end or first and last in reference to words, even if they have these concepts in terms of real objects. Visually, represent the beginning, middle, and end with a picture of a dog and talk about how the beginning is its head, the end is the tail, and the middle is its body. Model (using sounds, not letters) the beginning sound as /d/, the end sound as /g/, and the middle sound as /o/. Continue to refer to the visual of the dog as you do many of the sound activities.



d o g

By the end of kindergarten, students may be able to listen for the *middle sound.* The vowels are much harder for young students to hear, so some may find this difficult.

(See Blackline Master 4: Beginning Sounds—Phonemes, on page 389, and Blackline Master 5: Ending Sounds—Phonemes, Chapter 5: Early Intervention for Students At Risk, on page 391.)

Use Reading Rods® Alphabet and Phonemic Awareness Kit for many of the "developing sound awareness activities" to facilitate a hands-on approach to learning.

Listen for Target Sound

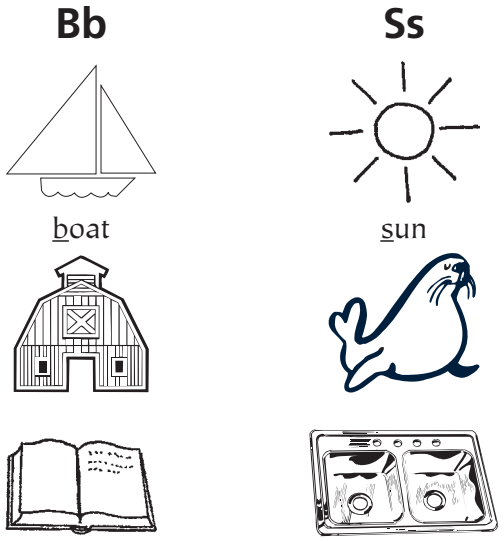
Read a list of words or reread a familiar story, poem, or song, or a few sentences from them. Have students raise their hands when they hear a word that begins or ends with a certain sound (target sound). Students may be given a card with the letter written on it to enhance the sound-letter connection.

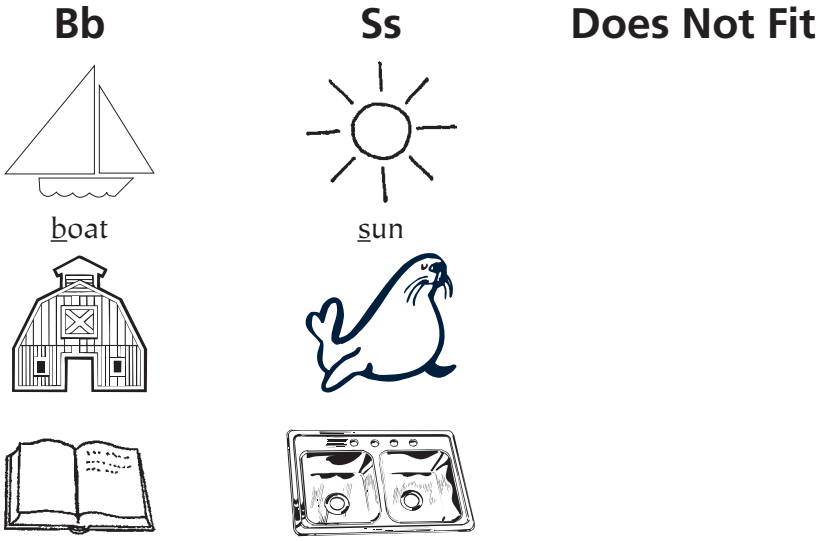
Travel Game

Pretend to pack a suitcase for a trip, but tell students that only things that begin with a secret sound may be packed. Have students make suggestions of things that can be put in the suitcase. If the item starts with the secret sound, pretend to pack it. If it does not, tell students that it cannot go in the suitcase because it does not start with the secret sound. Continue with the game until several students appear to know what the secret sound is. Then play the game again, using a different sound.

Sound Sort

Give students pictures of words that begin with two different sounds. Provide a keyword picture for each sound. Demonstrate how to sort the pictures according to what sound they start with. Ask students to say the words and sort them into two piles, matching the sounds of the keywords. Showing the keyword that goes with the picture with the initial letter highlighted helps students' development of letter-sound knowledge.





When doing any kind of word- or sound-sorting activity, it is helpful to have a column for words that students cannot match to the intended keywords. It can be called the "Does Not Fit" column. This works especially well when students are working independently and they call a picture by a different name. It can go in the "Does Not Fit" pile until the teacher has a chance to review it with them.

Scavenger Hunt

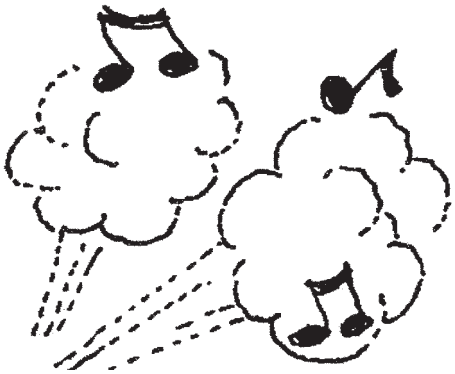
Select three or four sounds. Distribute pictures around the room of things that begin with these sounds. Place the letters and/or picture keywords for those sounds in the middle of the floor (or use a bag). Have students find the pictures and put them with the

correct keyword. The class may be divided into groups, with each team looking for a particular sound (e.g., the ***s*** team, the ***b*** team).

Sound Blending

Students are told that the teacher is going to say words in a funny way, and they have to figure out what word is being said.

- Use students' names with up to five sounds to start with. Show photos of three or four students whose names you are going to segment.
- Say the names slowly, sound by sound. Say only the sound without adding the "uh" vowel (e.g., /g/, not "guh"). When students guess the correct name, model the word sound by sound again, and then say it blending the sounds together (e.g., *S-ue, Sue*).
- Extend this activity by using pictures of familiar objects or words from a story or from across the curriculum.



Songs

Use familiar songs, chants, or language experience stories and present some of the words sound by sound. Ask students to blend the sounds together to guess the word. For example:

- I went shopping and bought a *c-oa-t*.

If students are able to segment three sounds in a word easily, the teacher may want to introduce words that have up to four sounds. This can be done in a small-group situation.

Sound Segmenting Place Mats

After many models of words have been presented sound by sound, try a sound-segmenting place mat, using the segmentation place mat (see Blackline Master 13: Segmentation Place Mat: Sound Awareness, on page 179). Show a picture of a word and name it. Say the word again slowly, sound by sound. Model how to move a counter for each sound in the word. Start with words with two sounds and gradually move up to words with three sounds.

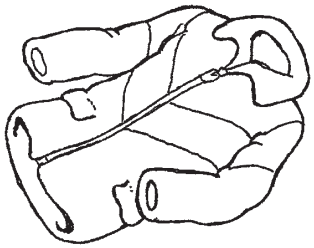
- Present words from familiar stories, songs, or classroom topics. Have students say the words themselves, slowly, and move the counters.
- It might be useful to have students do this activity in pairs in order to help each other listen for and segment the sounds in the words.
- At first, many students may find this activity difficult. If necessary, provide more models until students can do it successfully on their own.

(See the "Word Segmenting Place Mats" activity earlier in this chapter, on page 135.)

Blending Sounds

Give students Reading Rods® and pictures to use as they work in pairs or small groups. Students need to say the word slowly, picking a cube for each sound in the word. Then, as students put the cubes together, they can blend the sounds together out loud to make the original word.

Guess the Word



c–oa–t

Have students present words segmented sound by sound, which other students have to identify.

- To ensure that students present words with two and three sounds, provide appropriate pictures in a bag.
- Students pick a picture from the bag and segment the word that the picture represents.
- Other students have to figure out what the segmented word is. The picture can then be shown to confirm students' answers.

Sound Substitution

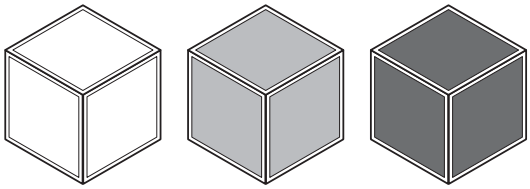
Making a new word by changing a sound is a difficult phonemic awareness task. Kindergarten students will need many models and practice before they are able to demonstrate this skill independently. However, by late kindergarten, most students should be able to understand and manipulate sounds in words successfully by doing the following activities:

- Teach songs such as "Willoughby Wallaby Woo," "Oo-pples and Boo-noo-noos," and "The Name Game," in which one sound in a word is changed to make a new word.
- Read a few sentences from a familiar story, but change all the initial consonants to a new consonant. Students will enjoy the silly sentences that are made. Then give them a short sentence or a familiar chant and a new sound, and have them try to say the sentence with the new consonant sound. For example, "I like popcorn" can become "I wike wopcorn" by changing the initial consonants to *w*.

Sound Substitution—Using Blocks to Represent Sounds

- Give each student six blocks and have them put three blocks directly in front of them. Demonstrate how to use the blocks to represent sounds in words by touching a different block as each sound in the word is said.

Changing the middle sound in a word may be difficult for many students at first. The teacher may want to change just the initial or final sound in the words until students are ready to focus on the middle sound. However, students who have well-developed phonemic awareness may be able to substitute sounds in all positions of words. The teacher can work with these students in a small group even if the other students in the class are not yet ready for middle-sound work.



- Practice with a few words until students understand how to match sounds with the blocks.
- Present the initial word (*man*), segmenting the sounds in the word by touching a block for each sound. Then say a new word, changing one sound in the word (e.g., *man* to *tan*).
- Have students figure out which sound changed and replace the block representing that sound with a new block. At first, the teacher may need to model which block to change.
- Continue to make chains of changes:
  - *man* to *tan*
  - *tan* to *tap*
  - *tap* to *tip*
  - *tip* to *tick* (still three blocks—only three *sounds*)
  - *tick* to *pick*
- After students have done five changes, pick a new word to start a different chain.

Sound Substitution—Make a New Word

- Choose a word and say it to students. Demonstrate how to change the first sound to make a new word. Use *sounds,* not letters. For example:
  - *fat*—change ***f*** to ***c*** to make *cat*.
  - *can*—change ***c*** to ***m*** to make *man*.
- Then ask students to figure out the new word.
  - Say *car*. What word do we make if we change the ***c*** to an ***f***? [far]
  - Say *rope*. What word do we make if we change the ***r*** to an ***s***? [soap]

  This is an oral language task, so the spelling does not matter (*rope*, *soap*).
- When students are successful with initial sounds, try final sounds. For example:
  - *fin*—change ***n*** to ***t*** to make *fit*.
  - *man*—change ***n*** to ***p*** to make *map*.

Resources on Phonological Awareness Activities

For additional activities to support phonological awareness, check out these books and articles:

Adams, M. J., B. R. Foorman, I. Lundberg, and T. Beeler. *Phonemic Awareness in Young Children: A Classroom Curriculum.* Paul Brookes Publishing Co., 1998.

Bear, D., M. Invernizzi, S. Templeton, and F. Johnston. *Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary and Spelling Instruction.* 2d ed. Pearson Education, 1999.

Blakemore, Caroline Jackson, and Barbara W. Ramirez. *Literacy Centres for the Primary Classroom.* Dominie Press Inc. 1999.

Booth, David. "Language Delights and Word Play." In *Voices on Word Matters,* ed. I. Fountas, and G. Pinnell, 91–101. Heinemann, 1999.

Cunningham, Patricia M., and Richard L. Allington. *Classrooms That Work: They Can All Read and Write.* Pearson Education, 2002.

Fitzpatrick, J. *Phonemic Awareness: Playing With Sounds to Strengthen Beginning Reading Skills.* Creative Teaching Press, 1997.

Love, E., and S. A. Reilly. *A Sound Way.* Pembroke Publishers, 1996.

Pinnell, Gay Su, and Irene C. Fountas. *Word Matters: Teaching Phonics and Spelling in the Reading/Writing Classroom.* Heinemann, 1998.

Richgels, Donald J., Karla J. Poremba, and Lea M. McGee. "Kindergartners Talk About Print: Phonemic Awareness in Meaningful Contexts." *The Reading Teacher* 49.8 (1996): 632–42.

Wellington County Board of Education. *The Phonological Awareness Companion.* E. Linguisystems, 1995.

Yopp, H. K. "Teaching Reading: Read Aloud Books for Developing Phonemic Awareness: An Annotated Bibliography." *The Reading Teacher* 48.6 (1995): 538–42.

Yopp, H. K., and R. H. Yopp. *Oo-pples and Boo-noo-noos: Songs and Activities for Phonemic Awareness.* Harcourt Brace, 1997.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Research supports the benefits of helping students develop phonological awareness to build success with learning to read and write. Phonological awareness (being able to segment, blend, and manipulate parts of words) occurs at the level of oral language, but it operates in concert with print awareness (how we record our oral language on paper). Students need to have well-developed levels of phonological awareness if they are going to be able to use their phonics knowledge effectively as one source of information as they read and write.

Activities that support wordplay can increase students' phonological awareness. Ongoing experiences with reading and writing texts allow students to see how this knowledge of the sound structure of language is used. Several suggestions for developing phonological awareness within a balanced kindergarten program were provided in this chapter. Parents also play an important role in providing ongoing support in the area of phonological awareness. (See Chapter 6: Linking Home and School.)

Although this chapter has focused on the sound structure of language, it is critical that teachers also support the development of print awareness and oral language in their classroom programs. Knowledge of sounds and letters is not enough to be able to read effectively and efficiently. Reading is a complex process that requires the reader to use a variety of language cues to make sense of the printed word. Children come to school with a great deal of knowledge about language, and it is this knowledge base that they use as they learn to read and write. The next chapter explores students' oral language development and how this knowledge specifically supports the development of early literacy.