

Playing with Sounds Together

Developing Phonological Awareness in Oxfordshire



***Early Years and Childcare Quality Improvement Team
Oxfordshire County Council***

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Is this booklet for me?

Do you work in a nursery, pre-school, playgroup, or school? Are you a childminder who looks after young children? If the answer is yes, then this booklet is for you.

What is it about?

This booklet is about how you can help young children to develop the skills they need in preparation for learning to read and write.

Why is this important?

You are in the privileged position to make a difference; children's early language development is the foundation upon which all future success is built.

What do I need to do?

Notice what children can do and notice what they need help with.

How will I know what they need help with and how will I know what to do?

You can use the tracker that is included in this booklet to guide you; the tracker will show you what gaps each child has.

What will I do then?

Use the booklet to find games and activities to play with the children to help them to develop the phonological awareness skills that they need.

What is phonological awareness?

Phonological awareness is a listening skill; it helps children to notice, identify and manipulate different sounds.

Whether you are new to phonological awareness, or would like some new ideas, or games, then keep reading...

Why this, why now?

A broad early language ‘nutrition’ including lots of books, rhymes, singing and playful interactions from birth, helps to provide children with vital experiences to develop the skills they need to ‘play with sounds.’

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, some children have missed some of these essential experiences and are starting school with lower levels of communication and language. Some children have gaps in their phonological awareness and understanding and this hinders their progress in reading.

There has been an increased focus on reading and the teaching of phonics in primary schools in recent years. In 2022 The Department for Education (DfE) mandated the implementation of a Systematic Synthetic Phonics (SSP) programme in all schools. Phonics relates to print and involves knowledge of letter shapes and sounds.

Importance of Early Language nutrition

In early childhood children develop language skills such as attention and listening and turn taking. They build on these foundational skills of understanding language, developing expressive vocabulary and learning grammar, whilst developing secure speech sounds over time. Therefore, early language skills support the development of self-confidence and positive relationships with adults and peers.

[Speech and Language UK](#) report that “Language skills at age five have been found to be more predictive of reading skills at age eleven than other factors such as behaviour, peer relationships,

attention, emotional wellbeing and pro-social behaviour.” Early language is indicative of later life success.

In Oxfordshire, we are developing a shared understanding about the phrase, ‘early language nutrition’. This aims to help everyone recognise the importance of all the ingredients of early interactions from birth. This includes eye contact, building a warm attachment, attuned interaction, both verbal and non-verbal, and offering back and forth interactions.

Recognising when a child may not have had a rich and varied early language nutrition is important. Prioritising songs, rhymes, and book talk, offering quality interactions and matching your level of language to that of the child, are important tasks for any practitioner working with a young child in any context.



What is Phonological Awareness?

Phonological awareness is an oral language skill that every child needs in their journey to become a reader.

Phonological awareness is about speech sounds – it is a listening skill and does not involve reading or writing letters of the alphabet.

It refers to the ability to recognise and manipulate sounds in words. It involves skills such as recognising the difference between sounds and making different sounds, rhyming, alliteration, blending and segmenting.

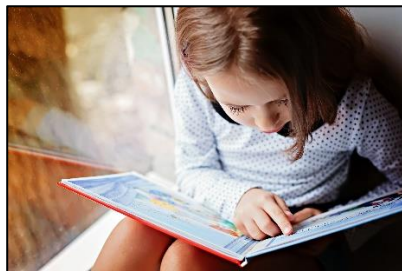
Phonological awareness develops naturally from birth when children have a healthy early language nutrition and can play and learn in a communication friendly environment. It can be enhanced by playing games which focus on sound discrimination.



Early years practitioners play a vital role in helping children to develop these skills. Reception teachers also play an important role in supporting those children who have joined school with gaps in their phonological awareness by identifying each child's specific gap and offering a range of activities to meet their needs.

Reframing support for early reading in Oxfordshire

Early Language underpins later literacy. In Oxfordshire, we are supporting the early years workforce to develop their understanding of the importance of phonological awareness as the best foundation.



The [Statutory Early Years Foundation Stage](#) states “It is crucial for children to develop a life-long love of reading. Reading consists of two dimensions: language comprehension and word reading. Language comprehension (necessary for both reading and writing) starts from birth.” Nursery settings and childminders supporting children before their reception year should primarily focus on phonological awareness. This booklet focuses on developing good early language provision and the concepts previously found in [Letter and Sounds Phase One](#). **All games marked with an asterisk (*) are taken from ‘Letters and Sounds’.*

This booklet will support staff in understanding the benefits of playing with sounds, rather than focussing on letter shapes at too early a stage. This is the best foundation for word reading. Unless you are based in a school nursery, it is not best practice to follow a specific phonics scheme, as this can confuse children when they start school. Letter shapes and their formation are taught in the reception year. Schools can use this booklet to identify children’s phonological awareness gaps in Reception and beyond and provide the necessary support they need to help children access phonics and early reading.

Meeting the needs of all children



It is important to recognise that some children may have barriers to developing phonological awareness. These could be based on physiological and / or environmental factors.

Physiological needs may include:	What can you do to support?
Difficulty hearing	Hearing is the beginning of the communication chain. Support early identification by recommending a hearing check.
Hurdles with listening and attention	Liaise with parents and carers. Enlist the graduated response. Keep groups small and short, focus on engagement. Consider a ‘May I join you’ approach.
Difficulty producing speech sounds	Complete the Oxfordshire Health NHS Speech Sound Checklist to identify if there is a delay or significant difference in children’s development.
Difficulties in the processing of language	Use WellComm to identify and support language development.

Environmental factors may include:	What can you do to support?
Over-use of dummies	Share and enact a dummy policy
Too much unsupported screen time	Improve universal provision for early language. Share information about the importance of interactions with families.
Poor early language nutrition	Develop your planned provision to specifically support phonological awareness. Use EYPP funding to provide support.
Not having enough experience / practice in phonological activities	Support parents to enhance the home learning environment. Plan phonological awareness development into your curriculum, including weekly opportunities to practise sound discrimination.

Please use the graduated response to support children with a difference in their development. [Oxfordshire SEND local offer | Oxfordshire County Council](#) Some children may have a delay in their own speech sound development. Please visit the Speech and Language Therapy website for further information about referrals and further information. [Speech & Language Therapy - Children's Integrated Therapies Children's Integrated Therapies \(oxfordhealth.nhs.uk\)](#)

Top Tips from Speech and Language therapists....

- Remember letting them hear the sounds in words frequently is important, it's not just about getting them to say sounds in words.
- Little and often: 5 minutes every day is better than ½ hour once a week.

Tracking and assessment

It is important to find out what each child can do and build on these strengths. Use your observations of children to help you consider what they can already do in relation to key sound discrimination skills. This tracking sheet may support you in this.

My Phonological Awareness Skills	Emerging	Developing	Secure
I can listen to, and identify different sounds in the environment			
I can listen to, and identify different instrument sounds			
I can recognise and repeat rhythms and sound patterns			
I can recognise rhyming words and create a string of rhyming words			
I can play with voice sounds			
I can hear the first sound in a word			
I can hear and clap syllables in words			
I can hear individual sounds in words			
I can orally blend sounds together to make a word			
I can orally segment sounds to make a word			

Curriculum and planning

When and how?

Regular exposure to phonological awareness activities is crucial for children's development. These activities help children recognise and manipulate the sounds of spoken language, which is a foundational skill for reading. By engaging in both planned and spontaneous awareness activities, children can develop the necessary skills to decode words, understand the relationship between letters and sounds, and become proficient readers.

Phonological awareness is woven into the statutory educational programmes, and helpful statements to support planning can be found in the non-statutory guidance 'Development Matters'. Early Years providers should consider phonological awareness when planning their curriculum.

Consider what you would like children to have experienced by the time they leave your setting and also consider how you will help plan for this on a termly and weekly basis.

It is important to plan activities that help children play with sounds regularly and in a range of contexts; through exploration of resources you provide, through planned and ad-hoc interactions with children, through planned small group time activities and also through making the most of daily routines.

The appendices at the back of this booklet suggest some planning templates that you might use to support your planning.

How can I help children learn to listen?

Create a Quiet Listening Environment: Organise listening activities in a quiet space, minimising background noise by, for example, turning off music. Reduce wall decorations to avoid overstimulation and distractions.

Use Visual Aids: Display pictures or symbols illustrating good listening behaviours on the wall or an accessible board in the carpet area where group activities occur.

Agree on Reminders: Agree on actions to remind children to listen, like placing a finger to the lips, hands on top of each other to sit, or modelling sitting straight with hands in the lap.

Praise Positive Behaviour: Acknowledge and congratulate children who demonstrate good listening behaviours, such as making eye contact, or maintaining attention.

Avoid a Hands Up Approach: Encouraging young children to raise their hands during a game can lead to loss of focus and disengagement. Instead, ask them to call out their answers, and the adult can reaffirm by repeating, 'yes, it's the bells/crisp packet' etc.

Form Small Groups: Small groups are effective for young children as they develop their listening skills during this crucial stage.

Engage Parents: For children with English as an additional language, ask parents for key words in their home language that can help, such as the word 'listen'.

Teach Through Songs: Sing new songs slowly to help children learn the words.

Animal Sounds: Teach children the sounds that animals make. Ask parents or carers of children with English as an additional language how they say animal noises in at home.

Listening to different sounds

I want to notice and listen to sounds around me.

Did you know that when you talk to me and play with me, you help me to tune in and distinguish between different sounds?

- You can help me listen to sounds in my environment.
- You can help me listen to sounds made by instruments.
- You can help me make sounds myself.



To help me develop these skills, here are some games you can play with me.

The Magical Tambourine

Teach children how to 'freeze' if a tambourine is shaken. This is really useful for stopping any activity, or if you would like to get the children's attention.

Listening Walk*

Resources: Cut out large ears and attach to a headband for each child (optional), or just for lead adult.

How to play: Tell the children that you are going to go outside (or walk around the room) to see what different things they can hear and that they are going to use their listening ears. Sing the following song, to the tune of pop goes the weasel.

'We're going on a listening walk, we're going to really listen
We're going to see what we can hear, sh sh listen'

'I can hear a..... (children whisper what they can hear)
(Child's name) can hear an aeroplane, can you hear it too?
(spoken in a whisper)

Sing it quietly, ending in a quiet 'listen' at the end. It may help to add actions such as finger on the lips, and hand on ear.

At the end of the game, ask the children which sounds they all heard during their walk.

Mrs Browning's Box*

Resources: Fill a box with a variety of objects that produce distinct sounds, such as a crinkly wrapper, a plastic bag, a rattle, a squeaky toy, or bells. Decorating the box with shiny paper or similar materials can enhance the 'awe and wonder' effect

How to play: Show the children the objects, name them and demonstrate the sound each one makes. This will help them recognise the sounds later. Sing the following words to the tune of 'Old MacDonald':

"Mrs Browning had a box, ee-ie-ee-ie-ow, and in her box, she had a (shake/rattle/crunch one of the objects)"

Encourage children to call out which object they think it is. Don't do 'hands up' as children may disengage from the activity and lose focus.

Noisy Neighbour*

Resources: Fill a bag with various objects that make distinct sounds, such as a crinkly wrapper, a plastic bag, a rattle, a squeaky toy, or bells.

How to play: Show the children the objects, name them and demonstrate the sound each one makes. This will help them recognise the sounds later. Use a simple chant like, "Noisy Neighbour! Noisy Neighbour! What's that sound?" Reach into the bag and make the noise of one of the objects. The children then try to guess which object is making the sound.

Sleeping Lions

Resources: Can be played without physical resources. Optional: A tray of everyday objects that create noise, such as an empty crisp packet, keys etc. If you are using resources, ensure that you show, name and let the children listen to the resources prior to the game to increase children's chances of success.

How to play: Children lie on the floor whilst the adult identifies sounds like children playing or a bird whistling. Whilst children are

‘sleeping lions,’ make a sound, and they call out what they hear. Celebrate their listening by praising them.

Simon Says

Resources: None required.

How to play: First rule of Simon Says with young children is that nobody is ‘out’ if they make a mistake. The emphasis is on celebrating success and supporting learning. Adult to say, ‘Simon says wave/jump/tickle your chin, run on the spot’ etc. You will need to do it with them, as some instructions are not obvious to young children i.e., run on the spot. Use a tambourine to regain focus in preparation for saying, Simon Says...

I Spy a Colour*

Resources: Can be played without any specific resources. Alternatively, you could collect various objects of different colours. If you have young children who are not secure with naming colours, just choose one item for each colour to increase chances of success; for other children who are learning how to play the game, you could choose to collect multiple items of different colour.

How to play: Can be played in a group, or one to one. Adult says, ‘I spy with my little eye, something the colour blue (or alternative colour). Depending on the age of the children, adult and children can take turns to say, “I spy”. Remember to let children call out; waiting for another child to take a turn often results in children losing focus.

Alternatives to colour: having a tray with animals on, ‘I spy with my little eye, something that’s big and has a long trunk’ etc.

Matching Instruments Game

Resources: Tray, or piece of material, set of percussion instruments, e.g. maracas, tambourines, shakers.

How to play: Place a set of instruments on a tray, or a square of material, or alternative. Name the instruments and let the children hear what sounds they make. Then, children cover or close their eyes while the adult plays one of the instruments. Children should point to the instrument that the adult played. To extend it further, the adult could play two of the instruments consecutively then children could be asked to point to the first instrument they heard, then the second.

New Words to Old Songs*

Resources: percussion instruments, e.g. maracas, tambourines, shakers.

How to play: Name the instruments and let the children hear what sounds they make. Take a song or rhyme the children know well and invent new words to suit the purpose and the children's interests. Use percussion instruments to accompany the new lyrics.

Lotto*

Resources: Counters and lotto boards.

How to play: There are various ways to play this game, including interactive online versions or purchased ones. You can also create your own laminated and Velcro lotto board with six blank squares, allowing you to change the noisy images based on the children's age. Use laminated squares with different images, like farm animals or musical instruments.

With younger children, you might make all the boards look the same, with older children, you might ensure that all children's boards are different.

Give each child a counter, play/make the sound, the child names the sound (if appropriate) and places the counter on the corresponding image. If not using counters, you could get the children to simply touch the image.

Musical Statues

Resources: A CD player, or computer/laptop to play music.

How to play: Unlike the party game, this version has no winners or losers. Play the music, and when it stops, freeze like a statue.

Follow My Rhythm

Resources: Enough instruments for all children to have the same, i.e. all tambourines, or all shakers.

How to play: Name the instruments and let the children hear what sounds they make. Adult models a beat, i.e. two quick shakes, and the other children follow by doing the same beats. Children can then take it in turns to be the teacher and model a sound pattern/beat for the other children to copy.

We Like to Move It, Move It!

Resources: Set of three musical instruments, for example, maracas, wood block and triangle.

How to play: Name the instruments and let the children hear what sounds they make. Choose an action for each instrument, like 'jump' for maracas, 'wave' for wood block, and 'clap' for triangle.

Show children three instruments (e.g., drum, whistle, triangle) with matching actions (e.g., drum = stand up, whistle = clap, triangle = jump). Play an instrument, and children respond by doing the actions.

Grandmother's Footsteps*

Resources: Selection of percussion instruments, e.g. maracas, tambourines, shakers

How to play: Name the instruments and let the children hear what sounds they make. With children decide how they should move when each specific instrument is played, for example, tiptoe when bells are shaken, stamping when wood blocks are banged together. Adult stands at one end of room/designated space, with back to children, children line up alongside one another. Adult plays instrument with back still to children, children move in the agreed way as adult plays instrument, when adult turns to face children, children freeze in position. The first child to get to the adult wins.

Which Instrument?*

Resources: Two identical sets of percussion instruments, e.g. maracas, tambourines, shakers, and a screen.

How to play: Give the children the opportunity to play one set to introduce the sounds each instrument makes and name them all. Then one child hides behind a screen and chooses one instrument from the identical set to play. The other children must identify which instrument has been played. Develop the activity by playing a simple rhythm or by adding a song to accompany the instrument (e.g. There is a music man; Clap your hands) while the hidden instrument is played. This time the listening children

must concentrate very carefully, discriminating between their own singing and the instrument being played.

Loud and Quiet

Resources: A selection of percussion instruments, e.g. maracas, tambourines, shakers. Prepared picture cards with images linked to loud or quiet sounds, for example, a drum for loud, or image of someone with a finger on their lips.

How to play: The aim of the game is for children to play in pairs, or with a small group, copying the 'leader' as they play either a loud or quiet sound on their instrument. The leader makes either a loud or a quiet sound with their instrument, the partner then copies. Whilst teaching children how to play the game, it may be best to model how to play it first. This game can be extended by using pictures to represent either loud or quiet.

Matching Sounds*

Resources: A selection of percussion instruments, e.g. maracas, tambourines, shakers.

How to play: Name the instruments and let the children hear what sounds they make. Invite a small group of children to sit in a circle. One child starts the game by playing an instrument. The instrument is then passed round the circle, and each child must use it to make the same sound or pattern of sounds as the leader. Start with a single sound to pass round the circle, and then gradually increase the difficulty by having a more complex sequence of sounds or different rhythms.

Match My Instrument

Resources: Two sets of identical percussion instruments, e.g. maracas, tambourines, shakers. A bag big enough to hold one set of the instruments. Optional – a screen.

How to play: Name the instruments and let the children hear what sounds they make. Present pairs of instruments (such as maracas and triangles) to a small group of children. Place one set of the instruments in a bag. Pass the bag around the group and ask each child to take an instrument from the bag. Once all the children have chosen an instrument, remind them to listen whilst you play an instrument; if the child hears their instrument being played, they must stand up and play their instrument (they can stay sitting if they prefer) The activity can be further adapted by using a screen behind which the instruments can be played.

Sounds*

Resources: A selection of percussion instruments, e.g. maracas, tambourines, shakers.

How to play: As you read or tell stories, encourage the children to play their instruments in different ways (e.g. Make this instrument sound like giant's footsteps, ... a fairy fluttering, ... a cat pouncing, ... an elephant stamping). Invite them to make their own suggestions for different characters (e.g. How might Jack's feet sound as he tiptoes by the sleeping giant? And what about when he runs fast to escape down the beanstalk?). As the children become familiar with the pattern of the story, each child could be responsible for a different sound.

Hidden Instruments*

Resources: A selection of percussion instruments, e.g. maracas, tambourines, shakers.

How to play: Name the instruments and let the children hear what sounds they make. Hide the instruments around the setting, indoors or outdoors, before the children arrive. Ask the children to look for the instruments. As each instrument is discovered the finder plays it and the rest of the group run to join the finder. Continue until all the instruments are found to make an orchestra.

Musical Show and Tell*

Resources: A selection of percussion instruments, e.g. maracas, tambourines, shakers.

How to play: Name the instruments and let the children hear what sounds they make. Invite groups of children to perform short instrumental music for others. The others are asked to say what they liked about the music. (They will need a selection of instruments or sound makers and some rehearsal time.)

Action Songs*

Resources: None

How to play: Singing songs and action rhymes is a vital part of Phase One activities and should be an everyday event. Children need to develop a wide repertoire of songs and rhymes. Be sure to include multi-sensory experiences such as action songs in which the children have to add claps, knee pats and foot stamps or move in a particular way. Add body percussion sounds to nursery rhymes, performing the sounds in time to the beat. Change the body sound with each musical phrase or sentence.

Encourage the children to be attentive and to know when to add sounds, when to move, and when to be still.

Animal Sounds*

Resources: A variety of animal puppets or toys and a range of percussion instruments, e.g. maracas, tambourines, shakers.

How to play: Name the instruments and let the children hear what sounds they make. Encourage the children to play with the instruments and the animals. Discuss matching sounds to the animals. Give a choice of two instruments to represent a child's chosen animal and ask the children to choose which sound is the better fit: Which one sounds most like the mouse? What do you think, David?

Move to the Music

Resources: Selection of percussion instruments, e.g. maracas, tambourines, shakers.

How to play: Name the instruments and let the children hear what sounds they make. While seated in a circle, show children the instruments and let each child take turns playing them. Agree on an action for each instrument, like clapping. As you play each instrument, children perform the action. Some children may lead instead of the adult. Extensions include creating patterns, like waving hands for maracas, then clapping for tambourine.

Follow the Sound*

Resources: None

How to play: Invite a small group of children to sit in a circle. The adult begins by producing a body percussion sound which is then 'passed' to the child sitting next to them such as clap, clap, clap. The sound is to be passed around the circle until it returns to the adult. Ask: Do you think that the sound stayed the same all the way round? What changed? Did it get faster or slower? Make the activity more difficult by introducing a simple sequence of sounds for the children to pass on (e.g. clap, stamp, clap).

Roly Poly*

Resources: None

How to play: Rehearse the rhyme with the actions (rotating hand over hand as in the song 'Wind the bobbin up'). Ro ... ly ... po ... ly ... ever ... so ... slowly Ro ... ly ... poly faster. (Increase the speed of the action as you increase the speed of the rhyme.) Now add in new verses, such as: Stamp ... your ... feet ... ever ... so ... slowly Stamp ... your feet faster. Ask the children to suggest sounds and movements to be incorporated into the song. Say hello ever so quietly Say HELLO LOUDER!

Words About Sounds*

It is important that adults engage with children in their freely chosen activities and introduce vocabulary that helps them to discriminate and contrast sounds, for example:

- slow, fast.
- quiet, loud.
- long, short.
- type of sound (click, stamp, etc).

- type of movement (rock, march, skip, etc).

Start with simple opposites that are obviously different (e.g. loud, quiet). Listen to what the children have to say about the sounds they hear and then build on and expand their contributions and ideas.

The Pied Piper*

Tell the story of the Pied Piper of Hamelin. Use different instruments for the Piper to play, with children moving in different ways in response. The child at the front decides on the movement and the rest of the group move in the same way. They follow the leader around the indoor or outdoor space, marching, skipping, and hopping – vary the pace and describe the action: Fast, faster, slow, slower. Introduce and model new words by acting them out (e.g. briskly, rapidly, lazily, sluggishly, energetically) for the children to copy and explore by acting them out in different ways.

Rhythm, rhyme, and sound patterns

I want to hear rhymes, feel rhythms, and make sound patterns using different sounds.

Did you know that when you sing and dance with me you help me learn to feel rhythm and hear rhymes and this helps me to recognise sound patterns?

- You can help me learn nursery rhymes and songs
- You can teach me poems.
- You can let me listen to music and let me move to it.
- You can teach me how to recognise when two words have the same ending i.e. bat and hat.



To help me develop these skills, here are some games you can play with me.

Rhyming Books*

Regularly include rhyming books as part of the daily book-sharing session. Read these books with plenty of intonation and expression so that the children tune into the rhythm of the language and the rhyming words. Encourage the children to join in with repetitive phrases such as Run, run, as fast as you can, you can't catch me, I'm the Gingerbread Man. Wherever possible make the activity multi-sensory to intensify learning and enjoyment.

Learning Songs and Rhymes*

Make sure that singing and rhyming activities are part of the daily routine in small-group time and that extracts are repeated incidentally as events occur (e.g. It's raining, it's pouring as the children get ready to go outdoors in wet weather). Play with rhyming words throughout the course of the day and have fun with them. Sing or chant nursery rhymes and encourage the children to move in an appropriate way (e.g. rock gently to the beat of 'See Saw Marjorie Daw', march to the beat of 'Tom, Tom the Piper's Son' and 'The Grand Old Duke of York', skip to the beat of 'Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush').

Name-Changer

Resources: None

How to play: During early morning routine, for example, do a rhyming hello/morning register: 'Hello Henry Menry,' 'Good morning, Rosie Posie'. Prepare in advance which words you are going to rhyme the children's names with.

Listen to the Beat*

Resources: A variety of percussion instruments, e.g. maracas, tambourines, shakers.

How to play: Name the instruments and let the children hear what sounds they make. Play the children different rhythms; remind the children to use their listening ears and to move in time to the beat – fast, slow, skipping, marching, etc. Keep the beat simple at first (e.g. suitable for marching) then move on to more complex rhythms for the children to skip or gallop to.

Our Favourite Rhymes*

Resources: A book to record the children's favourite rhymes and songs

How to play: Support a group of children to compile a book of their favourite rhymes and songs. They could represent the rhymes in any way they choose. The book can be used to make choices about which rhyme to say during singing time or used for making independent choices in the book corner. Children may choose to pretend to be teacher selecting rhymes for others to perform, individually or as a group. Have a bag of objects which represent rhymes (e.g. a toy spider to represent 'Incy Wincy Spider', a toy bus for 'The Wheels on the Bus') and invite the children to choose their favourite.

Rhyming Bingo*

Resources: Images of objects that rhyme, for example, cat, rat, bat. (These can easily be sourced online)

How to play: Give each child in a small group a set of three pictures of objects with rhyming names. Hide in a bag a selection

of pictures or objects matching the pictures you have given to the children. The children take turns to draw out of the bag one object or picture at a time. Invite the children to call out when they see an object or picture that rhymes with theirs and to collect it from the child who has drawn it from the bag. After each rhyming set is completed chant together and list the rhyming names. As you name objects give emphasis to the rhyming pattern.

Playing With Words*

Resources: Gather together a set of familiar objects with names that have varying syllable patterns (e.g. pencil, umbrella, camera, xylophone).

How to play: Show the objects to the children, name them and talk about what they are used for. Wait for the children to share some of their experiences of the objects; for instance, some of them will have used a camera. Then encourage them to think about how the name of the object sounds and feels as they say it. Think about the syllables and clap them out as you say each word. Then clap the syllables for a word without saying it and ask: What object could that be? As children gain confidence try some long words like binoculars, telephone, dinosaur.

Rhyming Pairs*

Resources: Pictures of objects with names that rhyme.

How to play: In pairs, children take it in turns to turn two cards over and keep them if the pictures are a rhyming pair. If they are not a rhyming pair, the cards are turned face down again and the other person has a turn. Start with a small core set of words that can then be extended. The children need to be familiar with the rhyming word families before they can use them in a game – spend time looking at the pictures and talking about the pairs.

Songs and Rhymes*

Resources: None

How to play: Include a selection of songs within the daily singing session which involve children in experimenting with their voices. Simple nursery rhymes, such as 'Hickory, Dickory, Dock' provide an opportunity for children to join in with weeee as the mouse falls down. Use this to find related words that rhyme, such as dock, clock, tick-tock. Substitute alternative rhyming sounds to maintain children's interest and enjoyment.

Odd One Out*

Resources: A selection of objects including some that rhyme, and some that don't.

How to play: Put out three objects or pictures, two with names that rhyme and one with a name that does not. Ask the child to identify the 'odd one out': the name that does not rhyme. Start with a small set of words that can then be extended. The children need to be familiar with the rhyming word families before they can use them in a game – spend time looking at the pictures and talking about the pairs.

I know a word*

Resources: None

How to play: Throughout the course of daily activities, encourage the children to think about, and play with rhyming words. The adult begins with the prompt I know a word that rhymes with cat, you need to put one on your head and the word is...hat. This can be used for all sorts of situations and also with some children's names: I know a girl who is holding a dolly, she is in the book

corner and her name is...Molly. As children become familiar with rhyme, they will supply the missing word themselves.

Rhyming Puppets*

Make up silly rhyming names for a pair of puppets (e.g. Fizzy Whizzy Lizzy and Hob Tob Bob). Introduce the puppets to a small group and invite them to join in storytelling, leaving gaps for the children to fill in rhyming words, for example: Are you poorly Lizzy? Oh dear. Fizzy Whizzy Lizzy is feeling sick and...dizzy.

Rhyme Hunt

Resources: Selection of objects that rhyme; alternatively, pictures of objects that rhyme.

How to play: Hide objects or pictures around the room that rhyme with a given word. For example, if the word is 'star,' hide pictures of a 'car,' 'jar,' and 'bar.' Have the children find and match the rhyming items.

Rhyming Basket

Resources: Fill a basket with objects or pictures.

How to play: Pull out an item and say its name, then have the children think of words that rhyme with it. For example, if you pull out a ball, they might say tall, wall, or call.

Rhyme and Clap

Resources: None

How to play: Say a word and have the children clap if it rhymes with a given word. For example, say 'cat' and then 'bat' (clap), 'dog' (no clap), 'hat' (clap).

Finish the Rhyme*

Resources: Rhyming books the children know well, for example, 'A Squash and a Squeeze' by Julia Donaldson; 'Giraffes Can't Dance' by Giles Andreae.

How to play: When sharing the story, pause just before the final word in a sentence and invite the children to complete it. Use lots of intonation and expression as you recount the story or rhyme.

Playing with voice sounds

I want to discover all the different sounds I can make with my voice.

Did you know that when we sing songs like 'Old MacDonald' or make the sound 'weeee' when we go down a slide, you can help me tune in to the different sounds we can make using our voices?

- You can help me learn different songs
- You can teach me poems.
- You can help me learn the sounds that animals make.
- You can read to me.
- You can help me play with my voice to make silly sounds.



To help me develop these skills, here are some games you can play with me.

Voice Sounds*

Show children how they can make sounds with their voices, for example:

- Make your voice go down a slide – weee!
- Make your voice bounce like a ball – boing, boing
- Sound really disappointed – oh
- Hiss like a snake – ssssss
- Keep everyone quiet – shhhhhh
- Gently moo like a cow – mmmoooo
- Look astonished – oooooo!
- Be a steam train – ch-ch-ch-ch-ch
- Buzz like a bumble bee – zzzzzzz
- Be a clock – tick tock

This can be extended by joining single speech sounds into pairs (e.g. ee-aw like a donkey).

Mouth Movements*

Explore different mouth movements with children – blowing, sucking, tongue stretching and wiggling. Practising these movements regularly to music can be fun and helps children with their articulation.

Watch My Sounds*

Provide small mirrors for the children to observe their faces, lips, teeth, and tongue as they make different speech sounds and experiment with their voices.

Chain Games*

Working with a small group of children, an adult makes a long sound with their voice, varying the pitch (e.g. eeeeeeee). The next person repeats the sound and continues as the next joins in, to form a chain. The sound gets passed as far round the circle as possible. Start again when the chain is broken.

Target Sounds*

Give each child a target sound to put into a story when they hear a particular word or character (e.g. make a 'ch' sound when they hear the word 'train'). Start with a single sound that the small group of children can make together when they hear a target word. Be prepared to prompt initially and leave pauses in your reading to make it obvious where the sounds are required.

Whose voice?*

Record some children talking while they are busy with a freely chosen activity and play the recording to a larger group. Can the children identify each other's voices? Create a 'talking book' for the group or class with photographs of each child and help them to record their own voice message – My name is..., I like singing, etc.

Echo Game

Resources: None required

How to play: Make a sound (e.g., 'la la la' or 'brrr') and have the children echo it back to you. Start with simple sounds and gradually make them more complex.

Noisy Neighbour*

Resources: A selection of toy animals, and a screen to hide behind.

How to play: Explain to the children that they will be using their voices to imitate these animals. Use a simple chant like, "Noisy Neighbour! Noisy Neighbour! Who's that sound?" One child goes behind the screen and makes the sound of one of the selected animals. The other children then try to guess which animal it is.

Sound Orchestra

Resources: None required

How to play: Assign different sounds to each child (e.g., 'shh,' 'mmm,' 'zzz'). Conduct them like an orchestra, signalling when each child should make their sound. You can create a fun 'symphony' of sounds!

Help me to hear the first sound in words

I want to be able to tell you what sound a word starts with. I want to notice when words start with the same sound.

Did you know that when you talk to me and play with me, you help me to tune in and distinguish the sounds at the beginning of words?

- You can help me hear the small block of sound that is at the beginning of each spoken word (initial sounds)
- You can help me notice when I can hear that two words begin with the same sound (alliteration)



To help me develop these skills, here are some games you can play with me.

Silly Soup*

Resources: Saucepan, spoon, set of objects starting with the same sound.

How To Play: Sing the song (to the tune of pop goes the weasel)

We're going to make a silly soup,
We're making soup that's silly,
We're going to cook it in the fridge,
To make it nice and chilly!

In goes a 'sock' for example. As you place each thing in the saucepan, say, emphasise the initial sound, sssock, then say, 'we have a sock, a ssssausage etc, naming a repeating each of the items in the saucepan. Important to remember that you do not choose items that begin with the letter, but the sound that it makes. For example, if you are doing 's', you wouldn't put a 'sheep' in, as it begins with a 'sh' sound.

Silly Sentences

Resources: Can be played without resources, or can be played with a selection of objects, such as farm or zoo animals

How to play: If using animals select one and make up a silly sentence in which all, or most of the words begin with the same sound (best to prepare in advance). For example, 'Sid snake slithers silently across the sand'. This can also be done with names for example, 'Mrs Moss munches millions of monkeys', 'Ella likes elephants' eggs.'

Sound Story*

Resources: A pre-written sound story and objects beginning with the chosen phoneme.

How to play: Create an 'sound story' for your children. For instance, focus on the phoneme 'p'. Gather items that start with 'p' and arrange them on a tray or on the floor. Instruct the children to place their hands on their heads whenever they hear the 'p' sound; they might need some guidance when you first introduce this activity. Start your story, leaving blanks for the children to fill in with the names of the objects. Help the children recognize the 'p' sound as you narrate the story. For instance:

'Once upon a time, Percy Parrot went to Poland; he went on a plane! While he was there, he saw a(penguin, potato, pen) and decided to eat it for breakfast.'

Sound Box

Resources: Fill a box with objects that start with the same sound.

How to play: Ask the children to pull out an object and say its name, then find other objects in the box that start with the same sound.

I Spy

Resources: A tray of objects

How to play: Instead of using the letter name 'm' when saying "something that starts with the letter 'm'," use the phoneme associated with the letter, which is the sound it makes. For example, say, "I spy with my little eye something that starts with the sound 'mmmm' ". You could prepare a tray with various objects that start with different sounds. If you are focusing on a

small group of specific sounds, select a group of objects that include a few items beginning with each of those specific sounds.

What's in the Box?

Resources: Two trays and a set of objects beginning with two different phonemes. An exciting box, or bag within which the objects are placed.

How to play: Teach the children the chant:

"What's in the box? What's in the box? What's in the box today?"

If using a bag, replace 'box' with 'bag.' Dramatically reveal an object, creating suspense and wonder:

"What have we got? It's a..."

Let the children name the object. The adult then repeats the name, emphasizing the initial sound. For example, if the phoneme is 's' and the object is a snake, the adult says:

"It's a ssssssnake. Can you say ssssssnake? Snake starts with a 'sss' sound, let's put it over here".

If the next object starts with a different phoneme, say:

"I hear a different sound at the start of this object. I don't hear a 'sss' sound, so I'm going to put it over here."

I Went to the Shop, and I Bought...

Resources: Tray of objects beginning with the same sound, for example, sheep, shell, shoe, shaker, or banana, button, ball, bun etc.

How To Play: Adult begins game by explaining that all of these things start with the same sound, modelling for example, sssnake, ssslide etc. Place an object beginning with the sound in front of each child, telling the child what they have. Adult begins, 'I went to the shop, and I bought a sausage, the next child says I went to the shop, and I bought a sausage and a snake etc.

I Spy Names*

Resources: None required

How to play: With a small group of children sitting in a circle, start the game by saying I spy someone whose name begins with... and give the sound of the first letter, for example 's' for Satish. Then ask: Who can it be? Satish stands up, everyone says his name and he carries on the game, saying I spy someone whose name begins with..., and so on. If any children call out the name before the child with that name, still let the child whose name it is take the next turn. If the children find separating out the first sound too hard in the early stages, the adult can continue to be the caller until they get the hang of it.

Sounds Around*

Resources: Make sure that word play with initial sounds is commonplace. Include lots of simple tongue twisters to ensure that children enjoy experimenting with words that are alliterative. Use opportunities as they occur incidentally to make up tongue twisters by using children's names, or objects that are of personal interest to them (e.g. David's dangerous dinosaur, Millie's marvellous, magic mittens).

Making Aliens*

Resources: Before the activity begins, think of some strange names for alien creatures. The alien names must be strings of non-words with the same initial sound, for example: Ping pang poo pop, Mig mog mully mo, Fo fi fandle fee. Write them down as a reminder.

How to play: Discuss the names with the children and help them imagine the strange creatures. Provide materials for them to create their own aliens. Comment on their creations using the aliens' names. Display the aliens with their names. Emphasize the initial sound of each name and show how to start each word with the shape of lips, teeth, and tongue.

Bertha Goes to the Zoo*

Resources: Set up a small toy zoo and join the children as they play with it. Use a toy bus and a bag of animal toys with names starting with the same sound (e.g. a lion, a lizard, a leopard, a llama, and a lobster) to act out this story.

How to play: Chant the following rhyme and allow each child in turn to draw an animal out of the bag and add an animal name to the list of animals spotted at the zoo.

“Bertha the bus is going to the zoo, who does she see as she passes through? ... a pig, a panda, a parrot, and a polar bear”

Musical corners*

Resources: Put a chair in each corner of the room, or outdoors. Collect four sets of objects, each set containing objects with names that start with the same sound. (Four different initial sounds are represented.) Keep back one object from each set and place the remaining sets on each of the four chairs.

How to play: At first, the children sit in a circle or facing you. Name each of the four sets of objects, giving emphasis to the initial sound. Explain that now there will be music to move around or dance to and that when the music stops the children are to listen. You will show them an object, and they should go to the corner where they think it belongs.

Help me to learn how to clap / tap syllables in words

I want to be able to show you that I can hear the number of syllables in a word by for example, clapping or tapping.

Did you know that when you play games with me like, 'clap your name' you help me learn how to notice syllables in words?

- You can clap/stamp/chop how many chunks there are in a word
- You can help me to chunk words into smaller parts, i.e., 'animal' – an-i-mal (three syllables) 'cat' – 'cat' (one syllable) 'picnic' - pic-nic (two syllables)



To help me develop these skills, here are some games you can play with me.

I Spy: Syllables

Resources: Tray and a variety of different objects – these could be themed, for example, all farm animals, or food, or they could be entirely random. Make sure that you choose objects bearing a variety of numbers of syllables.

How to play: choose an object (example: a banana) and separate out the syllables. For example, with a 'banana', you'd say, "I spy with my little eye: a ba....na....na." children have to say the complete word (banana).

Once children understand the concept of the game, you might choose a child to be the 'teacher'/'grown-up' and for them to say the words in syllables.

Clap My Name

Resources: None required

How to play: Sit children in a circle. Model by stamping your own name... 'Sa-rah' clap....clap, children copy. Go around the circle, clap each child's name in syllables, all children copy. When ready, you can move on to getting the child to clap their name back alone. Children can also take turns to be the adult and choose a child's name to say and stamp. That child repeats their name back, then chooses another child within the circle to say and clap. This could be used when asking children to collect their snack, or leave the carpet etc.

Syllable Jump

Resources: None

How to play: Say a word and have the children jump for each syllable. For example, for the word 'apple,' they would jump twice (ap-ple).

Stamp My Syllables

Resources: None

How to play: All stand in a circle. Model by stamping your own name... 'Sa-rah' stamp....stamp, children copy. Go around the circle, stamp each child's name in syllables, all children copy. When ready, you can move on to getting the child to stamp their name back alone. Children can also take turns to be the adult and choose a child's name to say and stamp. That child repeats their name back, then chooses another child within the circle to say and stamp. This could be used when asking children to collect their snack, or leave the table etc.

Stamp the Sentence

To help children learn the concept of a sentence.

Resources: Prepared sentences to say aloud.

How to play: Choose a sentence and say it aloud as children listen. Then, children stamp and repeat the exact same sentence. Each time they hear a word; they stomp one foot.

Syllable Puppet Game

Resources: Puppet and a bag/tray of objects.

How to play: Adult selects an object from the tray for puppet to say. Puppet says words slowly opening mouth for each syllable; children count how many syllables. As children begin to show a good understanding, they can try to be the adult slowly saying the word for object whilst rest of group count syllables.

Squish and splat that syllable

Resources: Playdough and playdough boards, bag of objects.

How to play: Slowly and dramatically take an object from the bag. Give each child a ball of playdough and ask them to 'squish' or 'splat' it for each syllable they hear. This activity can be themed, such as food, to introduce or reinforce key vocabulary.

Jumping Syllables

Resources: Number tiles, or masking tape (or similar) to create a number track.

How to play: Adult gives child a word and they jump, for example, helicopter, along the track as they say each syllable. The number they land on is the number informs the number of syllables in the word.

This could be further adapted for teaching understanding of words in a sentence. Children jump on to a new number for each word in a sentence.

Can You Feel the Syllables?

Resources: Can be played with objects, or without. If not using objects, ensure you have a list of words ready to use.

How to play: Child holds fingers under chin and says word slowly to feel the syllables as they say the word.

Cropping The Wheat

Resources: Can be played with objects, or without. If not using objects, ensure you have a list of words ready to use (e.g. c-a-t / b-u-s / ch-i-p / sh-o-p)

How to play: Tell the children which words are going to be 'wheat', children then use their arms in a chopping motion to crop each of the words so that you are segmenting the word.

Help me to hear individual sounds in words

I want to be able to blend spoken sounds together to make a word (You say 'c-a-t, I hear, and say 'cat')

Did you know that when you play games with me like, 'Simon Says' you can help me practise 'blending'? (*Blending: merging sounds to hear a word*)

I want to be able to tell you all the individual sounds that I can hear in a word (You say 'hop' I hear and say, 'h-o-p')

Did you know that when you let me lead games like, 'Simon Says' you can help me practise 'segmenting'? (*Segmenting: splitting a word into sounds*)

- You can play with puppets and toys with me
- You can read books with me
- You can sing songs with me
- You can teach me how to play games that let me practise blending and segmenting.



To help me develop these skills, here are some games you can play with me.

Oral Blending Games

Simon Says

Resources: None required

How to play: First rule of Simon Says with young children, is that nobody is 'out' if they make a mistake. The emphasis is on celebrating success and supporting learning. Adult to say, 'Simon says, for example, 'touch your n-o-se', the child hears the sounds, orally blends the word, and shows this by touching their nose. Adult could extend this by saying, 'Simon says j-u-m-p', 'r-u-n'. Use a tambourine to regain focus in preparation for saying, 'Simon Says' for the next action.

Blending Train

Resources: A selection of either three toy trains or cars. This would also work with a group of three animals.

How to play: As you push the first car forwards, say the sound 'c', the second one, 'a' and third 't', support the child to orally blend the word 'cat', until they become more proficient at oral blending. 'This can progress to having phonemes stuck on each car/train to blend words for reading once children know phonemes.

Blending Bingo

Resources: Create bingo cards with pictures of objects.

How to play: Call out segmented words, and children blend the sounds to find the corresponding picture on their bingo card. For example, call out 's-u-n' and they blend the sounds to find the picture of the sun.

Puppet Play

Resources: Puppet, or alternatively could be a child's favourite toy, for example, Peppa Pig, Buzz Lightyear, Peter Rabbit, etc. Have a tray of objects relating to the toy's chosen destination. For example, if you choose a farm, have some farm animals ready, if a supermarket, you might have a pot of jam, some ham, milk etc. Once you know children are orally blending well, you can play this without props.

How to play: Decide where the puppet is going to go – beach/farm/shop. Adult says, 'George went to Sainsburys, he decided to buy some....', puppet says, 'j-a-m'. Children call out 'jam'.
'George went to a farm, he saw a sh-ee-p'.

Toy Talk*

Resources: A puppet, or toy and a selection of objects that are simple to orally blend – i.e. with three phonemes, such as boot, comb, cup etc.

How to play: Puppet/toy whispers in adult's ear, I can see a 'b-oo-t', children then call out what they can see that sounds like 'b-oo-t'.

Cross the river*

Resources: Choose a selection of objects with two or three phonemes as above. There can be more than one of the same object. Make a river across the floor or ground outside with chalk or ropes.

How to play: Give each child or pair of children an object and check that all the children know the names of the objects. The toy

calls out the name of an object in sound-talk (e.g. p-e-g). The children who have that object blend the sounds to make the word and cross the river.

Robot Talk

Resources: None required

How to play: Using 'robot arms' pretend to be a robot and say words in a segmented manner. For example, say 'c-a-t' and have the children blend the sounds together to say 'cat.' You can also reverse roles and let the children be the robots.

Sound Slide

Resources: A slide or a ramp toy. Objects or pictures of items that can be easily orally blended, such as 'dog', 'cup'.

How to play: Place an item at the top of the slide and say the segmented sounds as they slide down. For example, 'd-o-g' slides down, and the children blend the sounds to say 'dog'.

Oral Segmenting Games

Many oral blending games can be adapted into segmenting games by reversing the roles between adults and children. For instance, in a game of Simon Says, the child could take on the adult's role and say, "Simon says touch your n-o-se." Initially, children might need assistance with this, as they typically develop oral blending skills before segmenting skills. However, there are always exceptions to this rule! You can do this with the following oral blending games:

- **Simon Says**
- **Blending Train**

- **Puppet Play**
- **Toy Talk**
- **Robot Talk**
- **Sound Slide**
- **Blending Bingo**
- **Cross the River**

Simon Says

Resources: None required.

How to play: This game prepares children for a later version of the same game where ‘Simon’ breaks down words into phonemes. First rule of Simon Says with young children is that nobody is ‘out’ if they make a mistake. The emphasis is on celebrating success and supporting learning. Adult to say, ‘Simon says wave/jump/tickle your chin, run on the spot’ etc. You will need to do it with them, as some instructions are not obvious to young children i.e., run on the spot. Use a tambourine to regain focus in preparation for saying, Simon Says...

I Spy a Colour

Resources: Can be played without any specific resources. Alternatively, you could collect various objects of different colours. If you have young children who are not secure with naming colours, just choose one item for each colour to increase chances of success; for other children who are learning how to play the game, you could choose to collect multiple items of different colour.

How to play: This game prepares children for a later version of the same game where the adult breaks down the name of an object into phonemes for children to ‘spy’. Can be played in a group, or one to one. Adult says, ‘I spy with my little eye,

something the colour blue (or alternative colour). Depending on the age of the children, adult and children can take turns to say, “I spy”. Remember to let children call out; waiting for another child to take a turn often results in children losing focus.

Clap It Out

Resources: None required.

How to play: Say a word and have children clap for each sound they hear. For example, for the word ‘cat’, they would clap three times: ‘c-a-t.’

Sound Counting

Resources: None needed, but you could prepare a tray of objects as props.

How to play: Say a word and have children count the number of sounds they hear. For example, for the word ‘dog,’ they would hold up three fingers: ‘d-o-g.’

Stretchy Snake

Resources: None but could use a toy snake for added engagement.

How to play: Pretend to be a snake and stretch out the sounds in a word. For example, say ‘ssss-u-nnn’ and have children repeat the segmented sounds.

Segmenting Hopscotch

Resources: Create a hopscotch grid with different sounds written in each square.

How to play: Say a word and have children hop to the squares while saying each sound. For example, for the word 'bat', they would hop to 'b', 'a,' and 't.'

Sound Boxes

Resources: Draw three boxes on a piece of paper or card. Some buttons or beads.

How to play: Say a word and have children place a small object (like a button or a bead) in each box for each sound they hear. For example, for the word 'pig', they would place objects in three boxes: 'p-i-g'.

The importance of nursery rhymes



Hearing lots of nursery rhymes in the early years supports children's language development. Familiar songs and rhymes with repeated words and rhythms are an important ingredient in children's early language nutrition. Here are some favourites and don't forget you can change the lyrics to suit your own situation!

Baa, Baa black sheep	Old MacDonald
5 little speckled frogs	One potato, two potato
Head, shoulders, knees & toes	12345, once I caught...
Here we go round the mulberry bush	Pat-a-cake, pat-a-cake
Hickory Dickory Dock	Pop goes the weasel
Humpty Dumpty	Sleeping bunnies
Incy Wincy Spider	The Grand old Duke of York
Jack and Jill	Twinkle, Twinkle
London Bridge	Wheels on the bus
Miss Polly had a dolly	Wind the bobbin up

The importance of home learning environments



Please share with parents and carers the importance of developing children's phonological awareness. Work with families to help identify any physiological and environmental hurdles early and support them with ideas to help children play with sounds at home.

Helpful things you could do to support families:

- Share helpful information about using a dummy for sleep time only
- Help parents / carers see the importance of playing phonological awareness games at home
- Share ideas for games and activities at home via your digital platform / in newsletters

“Parent–child interactions in the early years matter. Parents and caregivers lay the foundations for children’s life skills, including the ability to build productive relationships, emotional regulation, communication and problem-solving.”

[Foundations for Life: What works to support parent-child interaction in the early years? | Early Intervention Foundation](#)

Useful Websites for resources

- [EYFS. Listening skills - 12: Sound games 1 - BBC Teach](#)
- [What is phonological awareness? Tips to help kids learn to read - BBC Tiny Happy People](#)
- [Tiny Happy People - Nursery Rhymes and Songs](#)
- [BookTrust | Getting children reading](#)
- [Books with songs | Words for Life](#)
- [Nursery Rhymes in the Early Years | National Literacy Trust](#)
- [Speech and Language Therapy: How Tiny Happy People can help if you're waiting on speech and language referrals - BBC Tiny Happy People](#)
- [Speech sounds - Speech and Language UK: Changing young lives](#)
- [Speech & Language Therapy - Children's Integrated Therapies Children's Integrated Therapies \(oxfordhealth.nhs.uk\)](#) Handouts and worksheets on website
- [50 Things to Do | Oxfordshire](#) A menu of fun, affordable ideas for play and learning with your 0–4-year-old in Oxfordshire.
- [The reading framework - GOV.UK](#)

Glossary

Articulation

The actual production of sounds e.g. make long noise with lips together and air down nose = 'mmm'.

Auditory discrimination

Distinguishing between different speech sounds.

Blending

Sliding sounds together.

Communication

How children and young people use language and nonverbal skills to interact with others. For example, being able to wait for your turn in a conversation rather than interrupting someone else or understanding that someone is annoyed because they have turned their back on you.

Delay

Delay in the typical pattern of speech sound development.

Disorder

Extremely delayed or an unusual pattern of speech sound development.

EYPP

Early Years Pupil Premium funding.

Graduated Response

The graduated response follows the four-step cycle of assess, plan, do and review. It helps understand the child or young person's needs to allow support to be put in place and ensure they progress. It also ensures that parents and carers are kept

actively involved and informed throughout the whole planning process.

Language

The words, sentences, and rules of grammar that we need to understand what people are saying and to use to express ourselves. For example, understanding the order that words must go in to make sense in a sentence, or adding ‘-ed’ on the end of a word to make it past tense.

Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness, as defined in the reading framework, is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words. This skill is purely auditory and does not involve written text. It is a critical precursor to phonics, as it helps children understand that words are made up of smaller sound units, and this is essential for learning to read and spell.

Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognise and manipulate the spoken parts of sentences and words. This includes skills such as identifying rhymes, recognising alliteration, and breaking words into syllables.

Phonology

How the speech sounds are used in words e.g. ‘ng’ used at middle and end of words but not the start.

Phonics

Phonics is a method of teaching reading that focuses on the relationship between sounds and their corresponding letters or groups of letters. Specifically, systematic synthetic phonics (SSP) is emphasized, which involves teaching children to sound out and blend phonemes to form words. This approach

is crucial for developing decoding skills, enabling children to read fluently and accurately.

Speech

The sounds we use for talking. We need the ability to combine sounds to be able to make words. For example, c-a-t combine to make cat. Speech also includes how smoothly a child says words, for example if they stammer or not, and the quality of a child's voice.

Speech sounds

Speech sounds are the sounds we use for talking. We use our tongue, lips, teeth, and other parts of our mouth to create different speech sounds. Speech sounds are not the same as letters. For example, the word 'sheep' has five letters, but only three sounds: 'sh' 'ee' 'p'.

Target sounds

The sound(s) you would like the child to achieve.

WellComm

WellComm is a complete speech and language toolkit, from screening to intervention. It helps identify children who are experiencing barriers to speech and language development so they can be supported early in their education journey. In Oxfordshire, WellComm is used as a universal tool.

For more definitions and further information please visit
[Speech and Language UK: Changing young lives](#)

Appendices

Possible planning and tracking sheets

Printable tracking template

Skills	Planned provision	Focus children
Listening to sounds around me		
Body percussion		
Rhythm and Rhyme		
Alliteration		
Playing with sounds		
Oral segmenting and blending		

Printable tracking template

My Phonological Awareness Skills	Emerging	Developing	Secure
I can listen to, and identify different sounds in the environment			
I can listen to, and identify different instrument sounds			
I can recognise and repeat rhythms and sound patterns			
I can recognise rhyming words and create a string of rhyming words			
I can play with voice sounds			
I can hear the first sound in a word			
I can hear and clap syllables in words			
I can hear individual sounds in words			
I can orally blend sounds together to make a word			
I can orally segment sounds to make a word			

Space to record favourite songs and stories in our setting:

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