

Phonemic Awareness Activities

Phonemic deletion:

What word would be left if the /k/ sound were taken away from *cat*?

Word-to-word matching:

Do *pen* and *pipe* begin with the same sound?

Blending:

/s/, /a/, /t/

Sound isolation:

What is the first sound in *rose*?

Phoneme segmentation:

What sounds do you hear in the word *hot*?

Phoneme counting:

How many sounds do you hear in the word *cake*?

Deleted phoneme:

What sound do you hear in *meet* that is missing in *eat*?

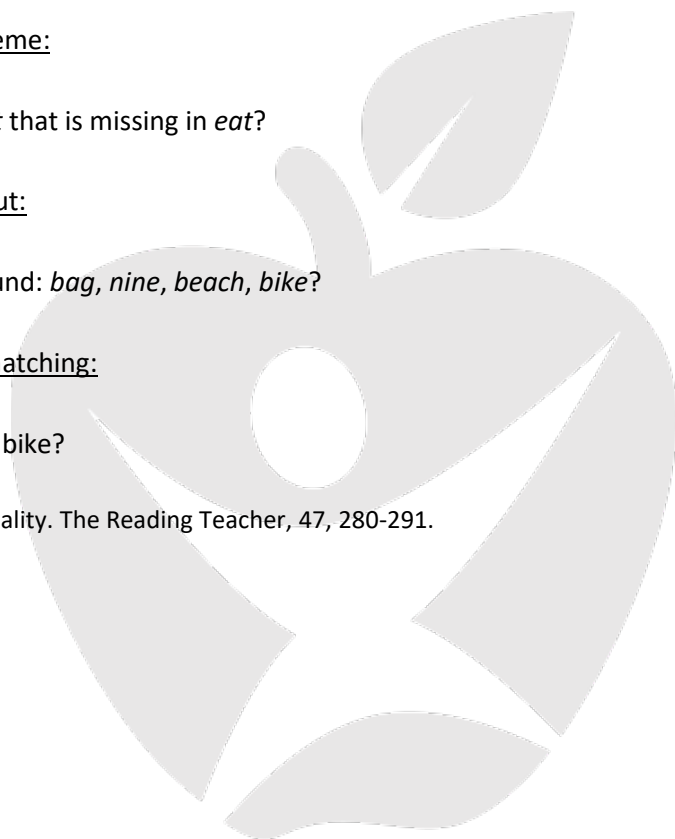
Odd word out:

What word starts with a different sound: *bag*, *nine*, *beach*, *bike*?

Sound-to-sound matching:

Is there a /k/ in *bike*?

Taken from: Stanovitch, K.E. (1993). Romance and reality. *The Reading Teacher*, 47, 280-291.



Teach the Alphabet

- A strong predictor of the ease with which a person learns to read is his or her familiarity with letters of the alphabet. This familiarity is a critical building block for learning to read.
- It is important to go beyond knowing the names of letters. Students must also develop a sense of the purpose of letters.
- Help them notice the letters in the print that surrounds them and that you share with them every day.
- Engage the students in activities that will help them learn to recognize letters visually.
- Help students learn to form the letters and encourage them to embellish their work with their names and with other attempts at writing.
- Don't assume that adults know the relationship between the written letter of the alphabet, its spoken sound, and its letter name.

Develop Phonological Awareness

- In listening and speaking, we pay attention to the meaning of language rather than to its sound. To learn to read, students must be taught to attend to the sounds, or phonology of language. This is necessary for them to understand how speech is represented by print. Adults with learning disabilities need special help in learning to develop such phonological awareness.
- Model and demonstrate how to break short sentences into individual words. For example, use the sentence "Frogs eat bugs," and demonstrate with chips, cards, or other manipulatives how the sentence is made up of three words and how the order of the words matters. Using manipulatives to make sentences, play with each word and put it in order.
- Develop students' awareness of the sounds of individual words by asking them to clap out syllables and to listen for and generate rhymes.
- Once adults are comfortable in playing games with words, syllables, and rhymes, move onto phonemic awareness.

Develop Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness refers to an understanding that words and syllables are comprised of a sequence of elementary speech sounds. Phonemic awareness is essential for learning to read, but it's not enough by itself. It must be coupled with instruction and practice in learning the relationship between letters and sounds.

- In teaching phonemic awareness, the focus of all activities should be on the sounds of words, not on letters or spellings.
- Use strategies that make phonemes prominent in attention and perception. For example, model specific sounds, such as /s/ in the word *sat*, and ask student to produce each sound in isolation and in many different words until they are comfortable with the sound and understand its nature.
- Begin with simple words and simple challenges, e.g., listen for initial /s/ in *sat*, *sit*, *sip*, and *sad* or for long /e/ in *me*, *see*, *bee*...
- Teach students to blend phonemes into words. Begin by identifying just one phoneme, e.g., /m/-ilk, /s/-at, working gradually toward blending all the phonemes in words, e.g., /s/-/a/-/t/.
- Teach students to identify the separate phonemes within words, e.g., what is the first sound of *soup*? What is the last sound of *kiss*? Beginning phonemes are easier to identify than final phonemes.
- Once students are comfortable listening for individual phonemes, teach them to break up words, into component sounds, e.g., /m/-/oo/-/s/= "*moose*."
- Create a sequence of segmenting and blending activities to help students develop an understanding of the relationship between sounds in words.
- Provide more support when first teaching a task. For example, model a sound or strategy for making the sound, and have the student use the strategy to produce the sound. Model and practice several examples. Prompt the student to use the strategy during guided practice, and gradually add more examples. As the students master these skills, provide less teacher-directed instruction and more practice and challenge.

Teach the Relation of Sounds and Letters

- Students should learn the letters of the alphabet and discriminate each letter from the other, because each stands for one or more of the sounds that occur in spoken words.
- When presenting each letter, model its corresponding sound and have students produce the sound themselves. For students with learning disabilities, the teaching activities must be explicit and unambiguous.
- At first, teach and work with only a few letter-sound correspondences that have high utility in many words (e.g., /m/ in *man*, *mad*, *him*, and *ham*). Postpone teaching less frequently occurring letters until students have a firm understanding of how left-to-right spellings represent first-to-last sounds (alphabetic understanding).

Teach Students How to Sound Out Words

- After students have mastered a few letter-sound correspondences, teach them to decode words or sound them out. Begin with small, familiar words. Teach the students to sound out the letters, left to right, and blend them together, searching for the word in memory.
- Model sounding out the word, blending the sounds together and saying the word. The ability to sound out new words allows students to identify and learn new words on their own.
- Give students stories containing words that reflect the letter-sound patterns they've been taught, and encourage them to sound out uncertain words.
- Help students learn spelling conventions, such as the use of final /e/'s to mark long vowels, by comparing and contrasting lots of examples.

Teach Students to Spell Words

- Teach students to spell words by *sounding* their letters one by one. Model the sounding and spelling process as they spell.
- Begin with short words they can sound out, because these words follow regular spelling conventions, e.g., *cap*, *bat*, and *sit* instead of *cape*, *bait* or *sight*.
- Begin with simple words that do not contain consonant blends, e.g., *ham* and *pan* instead of *slam* and *plan*.
- Encourage students to use spelling knowledge and strategies regularly in their own writing.
- Introduce spelling conventions systematically. Begin with words that exemplify the most frequent and basic conventions, and provide support and practice to help students generalize from these words to others. The goal is to help them see the spelling conventions in the words.
- Use words in which letter-sound correspondences represent their most common sounds (e.g., *get* instead of *gem*).
- Develop a sequence and schedule of opportunities that allow students to apply and develop facility with sounds and words at their own pace. Specify what skills to assess and when to assess them so that you will know when to move on. Take into account each student's background knowledge and pace in moving from sounding out to blending words to reading connected text.

Develop Fluent, Reflective Reading

- Help students extend their experience with the words, language, and ideas in books by interactively reading harder texts with them and to them every day.
- Relate information in books to other events of interest. Engage students in discussion of the topics.
- In both stories and informational texts, encourage wondering. For example, "I wonder what the policeman will do now?" "How do you think the father feels?" or "I wonder what frogs do in the winter? Do you think that's a problem? Why?"
- Model comprehension strategies and provide students with guided assistance.
- Point out how titles and headings tell what a book is about.
- Help students identify the main ideas presented in the text, as well as the supporting detail. Graphics help to reveal main ideas, and the relationship between text and graphics helps students understand what they are reading.
- Point out unfamiliar words and explore their meaning. Revisit these words frequently and encourage students to use them in their own conversations.
- Show students how to analyze contextual clues to figure out the meaning of an unfamiliar word. Research shows that most vocabulary growth comes from learning new words in reading.