

What Is Phonemic Awareness?

A Parent Handout

Phonemic awareness is the ability to recognize and manipulate individual sound units (phonemes) in spoken language: to examine language independent of meaning, to see relationships between sounds in words, and to rearrange sounds to create new words. For example, the word *chick* is made up of three phonemes (/ch/ /i/ /k/); it can be changed to the word *pick* by replacing /ch/ with /p/.

Students who are phonemically aware are able to master the following tasks:

Rhyming—The ability to identify and form rhyming words.

Example: Do these words rhyme?

fun—fan	<i>no</i>
pig—wig	<i>yes</i>
cheer—year	<i>yes</i>
bread—seed	<i>no</i>

Sound Matching—The ability to hear and identify similar word patterns.

Example: Which word does not belong?

sun, sad, sip, tub	<i>tub</i>
mat, bat, hop, cat	<i>hop</i>
bee, meat, sea, fee	<i>meat</i>

Syllable Counting—The ability to identify the number of syllables in spoken words.

Example: How many syllables do you hear in these words?

ticket	<i>2</i>
dog	<i>1</i>
bicycle	<i>3</i>
pencil	<i>2</i>

* When letters appear between slash marks (such as /k/), the sound rather than the letter name is represented.

Syllable Segmenting--The ability to identify onsets and rimes.*

Example: What word do you have when you join these sounds together?

j-ump	<i>jump</i>
t-an	<i>tan</i>
cl-imb	<i>climb</i>
str-eet	<i>street</i>

Phoneme Blending—The ability to orally blend individual sounds to form a word.

Example: What word do you have when you join these sounds together?

/m/ /a/ /p/	<i>map</i>
/j/ /a/ /k/	<i>jack</i>
/ch/ /ee/ /p/	<i>cheap</i>
/b/ /r/ /o/ /k/	<i>broke</i>

Phoneme Isolation—The ability to identify the beginning, middle, and ending sounds in a word.

Example:

What's the beginning sound in <i>toe</i> ?	/t/
What's the middle sound in <i>big</i> ?	/i/
What's the ending sound in <i>plane</i> ?	/n/

Phoneme Counting—The ability to count the number of phonemes in a word.

Example: How many sounds do you hear in these words?

at	2
lake	3
paint	4
tent	4

* An *onset* is all the sounds in a word that come before the first vowel. A *rime* is the first vowel in a word and all the sounds that follow. (For example, in the word *splash*, the onset is *spl-* and the rime is *-ash*.)

Phoneme Segmentation—The ability to break apart a word into individual sounds.

Example: Which sounds do you hear in these words?

mud	/m/ /u/ /d/
play	/p /l/ /a/
strike	/s/ /t/ /r/ /i/ /k/

Phoneme Addition—The ability to add a beginning, a middle, or ending sound to a word.

Example:

What word would you have if you added /b/ to the beginning of *low*?
blow

What word would you have if you added /r/ to the middle of *bed*?
bread

What word would you have if you added /s/ to the end of *how*?
house

Phoneme Deletion—The ability to omit the beginning, middle, or ending sound from a word.

Example:

What word would you have if you took out the /f/ in *flake*? *lake*

What word would you have if you took out the /l/ in *play*? *pay*

What word would you have if you took out the /t/ in *meat*? *me*

Phoneme Substitution—The ability to substitute a new sound for the beginning, middle, or ending sound of a word.

Example:

What word would you have if you changed the /b/ in *ball* to a /t/?
tall

What word would you have if you changed the /o/ in *hot* to an /a/?
hat

What word would you have if you changed the /p/ in *map* to a /d/?
mad