

No print, no prep



GAMES YOU CAN PLAY
ANYWHERE, ANYTIME TO
SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S
PHONOLOGICAL
AWARENESS

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Phonological a-what?

Phonological awareness is the understanding that language is made out of individual sounds (phonemes). The word *hot* for example is composed by three sounds: /h/, /o/ and /t/. The word *shoe* is composed by two: /ʃ/ and /u:/. Being able to identify and play with sounds in spoken language is a fundamental skill for learning to read and write.

You can practice that with your child by adding simple games to your day. No need to print, plan or sit down for a *lesson*.

You know your child better than anyone. Follow his/her curiosity and creativity. Add to the games, change the rules, make them *yours*.

Here are some ideas:

Odd one out: Say three words, two of which rhyme. Your child has to choose the one that doesn't. Example: You say **dog, jog, mud**. S/he has to say *mud* doesn't rhyme.

↪ Try it with longer words, with bigger groups of words, with pictures or objects, however feels right for you.

↪ You can also play this with focus on initial sounds.

Making sentences: Prompt your child with sentence starters that s/he has to finish with a rhyme.

Examples: There's a boy called **Jack** who lives in a ____.

Have you ever seen a **cow** ____?

I see rhymes!

Walking or driving: "Can you guess what I see? It rhymes with ____."

Or

One of you says something they see. Each player must say a word that rhymes, taking turns. If you can't think of one, you're out. The winner is the last one left, and gets to choose the next word.

At home: Tell your child s/he is going to collect five mystery objects around the house. To do so, she has to listen carefully to the clues (a word that rhymes with said object). One at a time, tell him/her what it rhymes with. One word is enough. Tell him/her to think carefully, not guess.

Once s/he has found all objects, it's time to put them back 😊 Ask him/her to tell you two rhymes before bringing the object back to its place.

→ You can time this and add a reward to make it more exciting.

I spy: I'm sure you know this popular game. You can play it anywhere, anytime.

You say, "I spy with my little eye something that starts with */sound/*". (You can also use rhymes). Your child has to look around and find what you see. Take turns.

Example: "I spy with my little eye something that starts with */f/*". "Flowers!"

→ If you have trouble isolating the sounds, this video will help: [The Key Sounds of English](#)

Let's go on a trip! The rule is simple: players must take turns adding to the packing list, but only items that start with the same sound.

Start by choosing the destination and one item, for example: "I'm going to **N**ew York and I'm bringing a **n**otebook."

Players take turns repeating the sentence and adding an item. "I'm going to **N**ew York and I'm bringing a **n**otebook and a **n**ectarine."

If you can't think of a word, you're out. The winner is the last one left, and gets to choose the next destination.

Sorting

Objects - decide on two or three sounds to work with. Choose a spot for each (on the table, on the floor, on the mat). Go around the house picking random (small) objects. Let's say you chose */t/*, */s/*, */b/*. Then you go and collect a book, a pencil, scissors, a teddy bear, a ball, a car, a blanket, a box, a hat, socks

and more, you get the picture. Discuss where to place each one according to their *initial or end sound*.

Pictures - Grab some old magazines, catalogues or newspapers, scissors, glue and sheets of paper (your choice of size and color).

Decide on a sound (only one per page) and search for pictures of things that start with that sound. Glue them on the page, write the letter-sound on the top and that's it! You can hang it on the fridge, on your child's bedroom walls or you could make a sound-picture book!

Making up characters: Tell your child you will make up a character for a story. All his/her answers have to start with the same letter-sound.

Example: What's your name? **M**att.

Where are you from? **M**adagascar.

What's your favorite food? **M**ashed potatoes.

What are your hobbies? **M**usic and **M**inecraft

Who are your best friends? **M**ary and **M**ax.

Do you have a pet? Yes, a **m**onkey!

→ Make up a short story about your character.

Word snake: You can do this orally or write it down in the shape of a snake.

You start with a word, let's say *top*. S/he has to add a word that starts with the *last sound of the previous one, /p/*. Your snake might look like: *top pet tin nap pack Karen nut tennis Sunday...*

Guess the word: When your child has a good understanding of sounds, s/he can begin to learn **blending**. Yes, even before actual reading and writing instruction.

Sound out words for your child to guess and vice-versa. Refer to The Key Sounds of English video if you're not sure how the letters sound in isolation.

You can also mix sounding out into your conversations: "Let's go for a walk with the /d//o//g/?"

↪ **Sounding out** is saying each individual sound of a word.

↪ **Blending** is saying each sound, then putting them together to make the word. These are essential skills for reading success.

☆ Remember to incorporate [nursery rhymes](#), singing, clapping games, [tongue twisters](#) and **lots of reading** in your daily routine.

Have fun!

About the author

I'm Ana Miranda. I'm a teacher and I believe learning to read and write well is not only the key to educational success but to self-confidence and joy.

Teaching multilingual children to read in their mother language is gifting them with a piece of their identity and a bond with their culture and their loved ones.

Let's talk about your children's literacy on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).

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Thank you!