PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

The foundation of which all speech, language and communication sits. This is the ability to pay attention to and identify chunks of sounds within our language. There are 4 levels:



WORD LEVEL

The ability to identify individual words within a sentence.

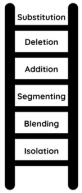
SYLLABLE LEVEL

The ability to break up a word into syllable chunks. Can they clap the syllables in the word cat/er/pillar? or bang a drum for each syllable in the word sun/flow/er?

ONSET AND RIME LEVEL

The ability to break up a word into it's initial sound and the string of letters following i.e. c/at, d/og

PHONEMIC AWARENESS LEVEL



This the most complex area of phonological awareness and is a child's ability to identify and manipulate the phonemes (units of sounds) within words.

"TOP"

Isolation - can they tell you the first sound is /t/? Can they identify the final phoneme as /p/?
Oral Blending - say the individual sounds /t/o/p/. Can they blend the sounds and say "top"?
Segmenting - Say the whole word "top". Can they tell you the three phonemes in the word?
Addition - What word do we make if we add /s/ to the start?
Deletion - What word do we make if we take away /t/?
Substitution - What word do we get if we change /t/ for /m/? What word if we change the /o/ to /i/?

WHAT CAN BE THE IMPACT OF PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS DIFFICULTIES?

- unclear speech
- difficulty hearing instructions and messages
- difficulties with literacy, reading and writing skills
- need more time to process and give a response
- low self esteem
- problems joining in with conversations
- frustration and behaviour problems
- leaving education early

(SLT for Kids, 2026)

"More growth happens between the years 0-5 years old than any other years in a child's life" (Whitehead, 2010)

What to do if I have concerns?

If you are concerned about your child's speech, language or communication development then speak to your child's key worker or class teacher as well as the SEND coordinator at the setting. For further information scan the QR code below

For more information visit Speech and Language UK

For translated versions of this leaflet

Polish

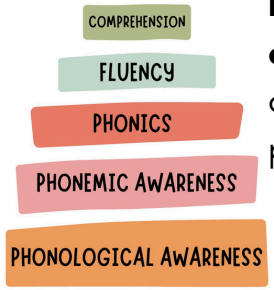
Urdu

SETTING STRONG FOUNDATIONS FOR SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION

Information for parents on the importance of phonological awareness skills in the early years for later speech and language development

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Speech, Language and Communication underpins every area of children's learning. Having an understanding of these areas and how to support them at home will help children develop strong foundations for later learning at School.



Focusing on key speaking and listening skills will give children the best head start, particularly in early literacy

start here

A child's communication can be categorised into two areas:

EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE

This is how well children use language to talk, express their ideas, thoughts and needs including asking questions, telling stories and using a range of words.

RECEPTIVE LANGUAGE

The words a child speak are only part of the puzzle. Receptive language refers to how much children understand language which includes following instructions, understanding vocabulary and answering questions.

1 TALKING AND SHARING STORIES

Talking and sharing stories is the number one tool to expose children to a richer vocabulary, correct sound articulation, modelling sentence structure and taking turns in conversation.

"Many kids hear what you say, some kids do what you say, *All* kids do what you do" (National Children's Book and Literacy Alliance, 2015)

2 VOCABULARY



Pupil's **expressive** vocabulary and **receptive** vocabulary are really important components of their wider language skills. In fact, research has found that vocabulary is one of the most robust long term predictors of literacy development (Snow & Juel, 2005) and that the number of words a child knows and can speak by 3 is a predictor of later language development (Hart & Risley, 2003)

3 NURSERY RHYMES

Children's knowledge of rhyme has been shown to be a predictor of later success in literacy. Bryant etc al (1989) found strong links between children's early knowledge of rhyme at 3 and their reading ability at 6 years old due to rhyme enhancing children's phonological sensitivity.

How do nursery rhymes help?

- expose children to rhythm, rhyme and alliteration
- develop vocabulary
- repetitive so children are more likely to join in and repeat by heart
- prompt correct enunciation
- develop memory
- encourage listening and concentration skills

WHAT MIGHT WE EXPECT AT DIFFERENT AGES?

SPEECH

By age 3: 90% of children would have acquired m, b, p, h, and w
By age 4: 90% of children would have acquired k, g, t, d, n, f, and ng
By age 5: 90% of children would have acquired s, z, l, v, y, th, sh and ch.

LANGUAGE

By 18 months: Say around 20 words, understand simple words and point to familiar objects.
By age 2: Use approximately 50 words and start to put two or three words together to form sentences
By age 3: Use up to 300 words, refer to things from the past and ask lots of questions

COMMUNICATION

By age 2: focus on an activity of their choice and follow adult body language
By age 3: begin to listen and to talk with interest and hold a conversation but jumping topics
By age 4: understand turn taking in conversation and share with adults and peers