

Learning Difficulties Australia

Learning Difficulties Australia is an association of teachers and other professionals dedicated to assisting students with learning difficulties through effective teaching practices based on scientific research.



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Phonological Awareness Supporting Early Literacy Success



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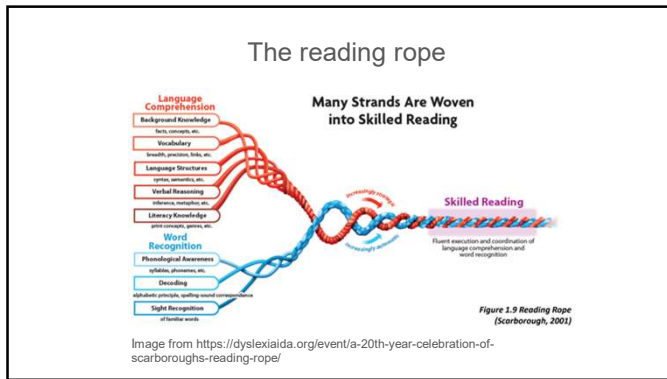
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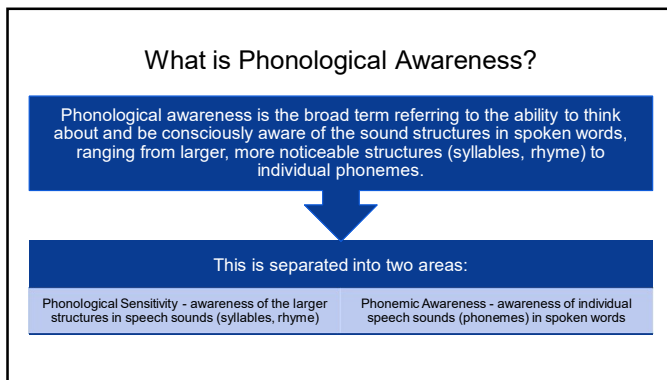
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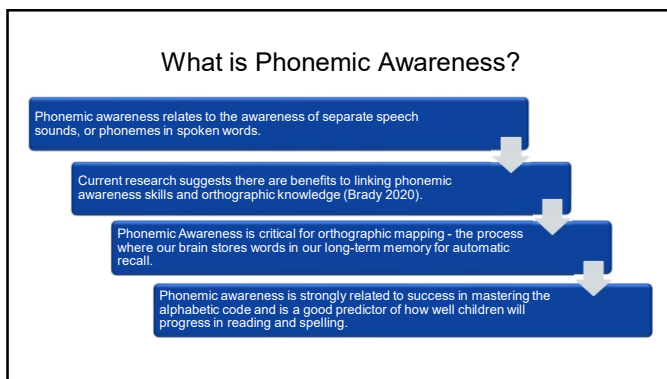
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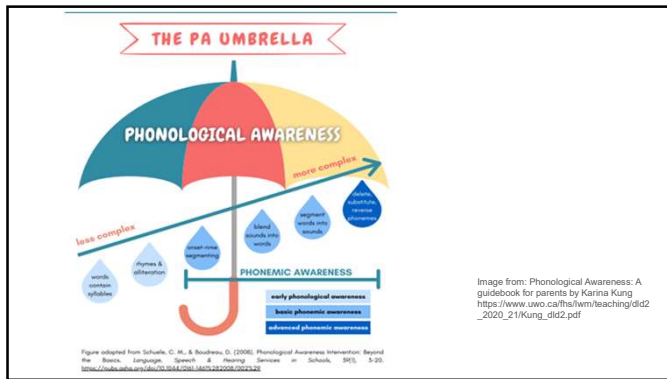
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Assessing and Monitoring Phonemic Awareness



- Screening or assessing phonemic awareness should be carried out early in the first year of school.
- Important to monitor children's phonemic awareness during the whole period when they are mastering the alphabetic code.

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Phonological and Phonemic awareness screening tools

Some phonological and phonemic awareness screening tools are

- Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP-2)
- Dibels 8th Edition
- Foundations of Early Literacy Assessment (FELA)
- Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening – PALS
- Phonemic Awareness Assessment at Reading Rockets
- Phonological Awareness Test 2 (PAT-2)
- Phonemic Skills Test - Sounds-Write Program
- Rosner's Test of Auditory Analysis Skills (TAAS) – via Spelfabet
- Sutherland Phonological Awareness Test – Revised (SPAT-R)
- School Entry and Phonological Awareness Readiness Test (SEAPART)
- The PAST Test (David Kilpatrick)
- Test of Phonological Awareness for Little Learners - via [Little Learner Love Literacy](#)
- Quick Phonological Awareness Screening (QPAS)

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Examples of questions from TOPALL

1G. Initial phoneme identification

M. sheep	/sh/	
T. pig	/p/	
1. mice	/m/	
2. top	/t/	
3. face	/f/	
4. catch	/k/	
5. sick	/s/	
A	D	N
/5		

1J. CVC blending

M. /b/ /t/ /k/	bike	
T. /m/ /a/ /t/	mat	
1. /b/ /u/ /g/	bug	
2. /t/ /a/ /r/ /m/	farm	
3. /t/ /a/ /l/	tail	
4. /h/ /o/ /t/	hot	
5. /sh/ /e/ /t/	sheet	
A	D	N
/5		

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Example from PAST

Basic Phoneme Levels (late kindergarten to late first grade)

LEVEL II

H1 (Deletion) Say *sleep*. Now say *sleep* but don't say /s/.

FEEDBACK: "If you say *sleep* without the /s/, you get *leep*. *leep-leep*."

(c)leep → leep ____ (c)ranc → rain ____

H2 Say *grew*. Now say *grew* but instead of /g/ say /t/.

FEEDBACK: "If you say *grew* and change the /g/ to /t/, you get *tree*. *tree-tree*."

(g)rew → (t)ree ____ (c)ranc → (b)rain ____ (t)lows → (c)lose ____

LEVEL I Say *went*. Now say *went* but don't say /t/.

FEEDBACK: "If you say *went* without the /t/, you get *when*. *when-when*."

I1 wen(t) → when ____ ran(g)le → rain ____

I2 whea(t) → we ____ nie(c)e → knee ____ dri(v)e → dry ____

Basic Phoneme Total:

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Also assess



Alphabetic knowledge is just as important a predictor of early literacy success as phonemic awareness is (Brady 2020).

Screen alphabetic knowledge at the same time, because it is useful to check that phonemic awareness skills and alphabetic knowledge is developing in tandem (Ros Neilson, 2023)

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Assessment of complex phonemic awareness skills

- For readers beyond the primary years who continue to make slower progress with reading, further assessment tasks may include blending longer strings of phonemes and phoneme manipulation tasks such as:
 - Deleting and substituting phonemes (e.g. 'went' without /t/ is 'when')
 - Spoonerisms (e.g. 'Jelly Beans' becomes 'Belly Jeans')
 - Saying words backwards (e.g. 'top' becomes 'pot')



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Implications for Instruction

- Early success at learning to read fuels interest in reading in the years that follow (IDA 2022)
- Effective early phoneme awareness instruction has the potential to launch more successful readers in the first years of school.

From Building Phoneme Awareness: Know What Matters (International Dyslexia Association)



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Where to start?

Phoneme awareness instruction should begin in Kindergarten (Prep).

Traditionally, instruction followed a sequence from larger to smaller phonological units, starting with tasks relating to phonological awareness and then moving to phoneme awareness.

More recent research (Brady 2020) suggests that phoneme awareness skills can be taught to children earlier and that we should shift away from the umbrella and steps representations of phonological awareness.

Focus on phoneme awareness at the appropriate level

- Start with initial phonemes, followed by medial vowel phonemes in words that are simple syllables
- Then move to internal consonants in complex, one-syllable words that include blends

The National Reading Panel (2000) report stated that phonological awareness instruction in kindergarten should concentrate on early phoneme awareness, not on phonological sensitivity. Instruction should be coordinated with letter/grapheme knowledge and handwriting.

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Syllable shapes vs number of phonemes

- The awareness of consonant clusters e.g. CCVC (stop) , CVCC (lamp) is often a later skill to develop e.g. 'seek' is easier to segment than 'ski' despite that each word has 3 phonemes and the same phonemes (Treiman, 1991).
- Spelling errors (e.g. 'wet' for 'went', or 'fog' for 'frog') can provide a reliable indication of when support is needed for identifying consonants in clusters (Neilson 2023).

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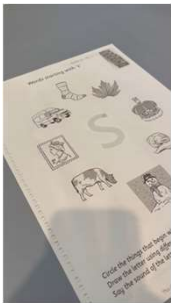
Examples of Phoneme Awareness Tasks

1. Phoneme isolation - recognising individual sounds in words "Tell me the first sound in pet" (/p/)
2. Phoneme identity - recognising the common sound in different words "Tell me the sound that is the same in bat, bike, ball" (/b/)
3. Phoneme categorisation - recognising the word with the odd sound "Which one does not belong? bus, bat, cup" (cup)
4. Phoneme blending - requires listening to a sequence of separately spoken sounds and combining them to form a recognisable word "What word is /f/ /l/ /a/ /g/? (flag)
5. Phoneme segmentation - requires breaking a word into sounds "How many phonemes (sounds) are there in shop? (three - /sh/ /o/ /p/)
6. Phoneme deletion - requires recognising what word remains when a specified phoneme is removed "What is brain without the /b/? (rain)

Adapted from National Reading Panel Report (2000)

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Identifying initial sounds



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Segmenting



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Segmenting and phoneme substitution



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Teaching phonological and phonemic awareness skills

Ensure that teaching links to grapheme/letter knowledge so that it supports learning to read and spell.	Move quickly to working on phoneme awareness skills from an early stage rather than focusing on phonological sensitivity skills for too long.	Work toward mastery of beginning phoneme awareness in simple syllables, progressing to later phoneme awareness of internal consonants in complex syllables.	Teach phonemic awareness skills with explicit and systematic instruction 'I do, we do, you do'.
There are a range of published phonological awareness programs available for purchase (e.g. Heggerty 2020). Programs such as Sounds-Write, Little Learners Love Literacy and Multitask also incorporate phonemic awareness activities.		Alphabet letters can be used for beginner readers when initially linking phonemes to graphemes.	Teaching phoneme awareness should be a component of a fully integrated and robust instruction in reading, spelling and writing.

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References

Brady, S. (2020). A 2020 perspective on research findings on alphabetic (phoneme awareness and phonics): Implications for instruction. *The Reading League Journal*, 1 (3), 20-28. <https://www.thereadingleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Brady-Expanded-Version-of-Alphabetic-TRLJ.pdf>

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