

Foundations in Emergent Literacy Instruction

Phonological Awareness



The goal of emergent literacy instruction is to teach the building blocks that will, in later grades, provide children the foundation needed to become good readers. Phonological awareness is one of the building blocks.

What is Phonological Awareness (PA)?

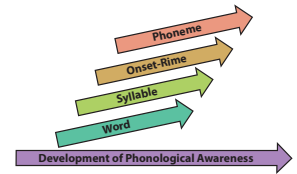
The understanding that spoken language can be broken down into parts and the ability to manipulate those parts at the word, syllable, onset-rime, and phoneme levels. **Onset** is the part of a word that comes before the vowel and **rime** is the vowel and letters that follow. For example, in *sun*, /s/ is the onset, and /un/ is the rime. **Phoneme** is the smallest unit of sound in spoken words. For example, *cat* has three phonemes /k/ /ă/ /t/. PA is a heard or spoken skill and does not involve written words.

Why is Phonological Awareness Important at the Preschool Level?

- Difficulties with PA are at the heart of most children's reading challenges and does not come naturally to all children.
- Building children's capacity to hear and manipulate sounds in spoken language supports their ability to understand connections between sounds and letters and written words when they get older.
- Strong PA skills help children decode later when encountering unfamiliar words.

What are Effective Instructional Practices for Teaching Phonological Awareness at the Preschool Level?

All children benefit from explicit PA instruction. Only exposing children to singing rhyming songs or clapping syllables with the whole class is not sufficient for all children to learn PA. Plan meaningful activities in which children manipulate sounds in spoken words at the appropriate level along the PA developmental continuum. The PA continuum includes **word**, **syllable**, **onset-rime**, and **phoneme**. Understand where individual children are along the continuum so you can focus instruction. Provide multiple, short opportunities for children to practice one specific skill at a time and be sure to review skills previously taught.



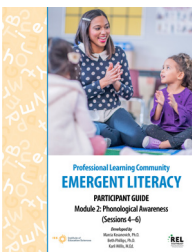
- Be **systematic** by having a plan for what to teach and by building on prior learning; be **explicit** by making learning goals obvious, **scaffold** instruction by providing supports, and **differentiate** by matching instruction with each child's needs.
- Keep explicit instruction short, do it often, connect to knowledge-building themes, and make it playful.

Integrate PA instruction throughout the day using these effective practices:

- **Small-Group Explicit Instruction.** Form small, same-ability level groups to focus on specific skills. For example, at the word level, teach children how to delete parts from spoken compound words using the I Do, We Do, You Do routine. I Do (teacher models saying a familiar compound word then leaves the first part off. *Sidewalk*. Then teacher says *sidewalk* without saying *side*. *Walk*.) We Do (Children practice together with other words - *doghouse*, *cupcake*.) You Do (children practice independently using two-part picture puzzle pieces - one piece has a picture of a *dog*; the other piece has a picture of a *house*).
- **Provide additional opportunities to practice throughout the day.** For example, lead a matching game with pictures of compound word parts. Each child has a card with a picture of one half of the compound word and they have to find their match (*dog* and *house*, *cup* and *cake*, *side* and *walk*). Take advantage of pointing out examples during read-alouds ("oh, there's a word we were working on today. What is the first part of *cupcake*?")



Learn More



This infographic is part of a suite of materials designed to support early education leaders and providers to build understanding and implement evidence-based instruction in early language and literacy in preschool settings called, *Professional Learning*

Community: Emergent Literacy. Explore these materials [here](#).