

Theoretical Explanation

This pack of tools and exercises is for you to be able to help a learner who struggles with basic words and sounds. There are four steps to developing reading ability that should be in this specific order:

1. **Rhyme:** recognizing and producing
2. **Syllable:** segmenting (breaking up) words into syllables and blending syllables to form words
3. **Onset and rime:** blending the start of a word with the end (e.g. b + and = band)
4. **Phoneme / sound level:** only once the above three levels are clearly grasped can the learner begin to focus on the letters that make up words and relate these letters to the sounds they now understand and recognize.

- ❖ Stages 1, 2 & 3 are relating to *phonological awareness* – that is they involve the sound of words, syllables and letters.
- ❖ Stage 4 relates to *phonemic awareness* – relating written letters to the sounds.

All of these levels have 3 types of activities that they include:

1. Segmentation – splitting words apart

E.g. syllables: paper = pa + per // onset & rime: fish = f + ish // words: cat = c + a + t

2. Blending – combining parts to form words

E.g. syllables: ta + ble = table // onset & rime: st + and = stand // words: m + u + g = mug

3. Manipulating – taking away and/or adding sounds and letters to change words

E.g. syllables: if one takes away the 'pet' in 'carpet' = car

onset & rime: if one takes away the 'br' in 'bright' and replaces it with 'l' = light

words: if one takes away the 'n' in 'men' = me

1. Rhyme

The following are examples of games and songs to stimulate rhyming, the very first step of literacy development for a child as s/he begins to learn about sound structure.

1.1 Silly rhymes

Take turns to make up silly rhymes. The options are endless! Here are some ideas.

E.g. I saw a frog on a ... (log) // I fell out of bed and hurt my ... (head) // Take a look at my new ... (book) // The man in jail got some ... (mail) // The funny seal ate his ... (meal) // Look at Fred, he's still in... (bed).

1.2 Oops!

Give a sentence with a non-rhyming word and let the learner change it. Say the initial rhyme and the non-rhyming words louder than the rest! Here are some ideas.

E.g. I am a mole and I live in a house (hole) // I have a car but it won't drive a long way (far) // I have a cat that sits on the rug (mat).

1.3 Rhyming name pairs

Make up rhyming pairs using people's names. Try and encourage the learner to invent some!

E.g. Her name is Sally, she lives in the ... (valley/alley) // Little Mike, rode his big ... (bike) // Princess Alice, lived in a ... (palace) // My friend Mark, plays in the ... (park) // My sister Jane, doesn't like ... (rain) // His name is Murray, and he hates ... (curry) // Her name is Farhana, she ate a ... (banana)

1.4 Hunting song

Sing this song together, adding to the list of given words as the learner's skill develops. You can also sing the song by yourself leaving out the rhyming word for the learner to sing.

A hunting we will go
A hunting we will go
We'll catch a fox
And put it in a box

Further examples:

Catch a dog... sitting on a log

Catch a cat... sitting on a mat
Catch a pig... wearing a wig
Catch a fish... put it in a dish
Catch a flea... chasing a bee

Try inventing some of your own rhymes with the following animals: mouse // snake // duck // bear

1.5 Reading rhyme books

Read books with lots of rhyme in the text to the learner such as Dr Seuss / Julia Donaldson & Alex Scheffler/ Usborne Phonics Readers. Stress the words that rhyme as you read. Encourage the learner to clap (or any other action) if they hear words that rhyme. After a learner has heard the same book a few times you can also pause before the rhyming word for the learner to guess before you read it.

1.6 Rhyme search

Play a rhyming game as you page through a book together. Start with an easier word such as 'hat' or 'ball' and ask the learner to look/listen for any words that sound the same as 'hat' in the book. It's a good idea for you to look through the book first and choose a starting word that does have a number of rhymes in the book.

1.7 Nursery rhymes

Nursery rhymes are fabulous for helping children grasp the concept of rhyme. They can be used in many ways.

1.7.1 Read nursery rhymes together. These can be sung or acted out. You can start a nursery rhyme and leave out the rhyming word for the learner to complete e.g. "Jack and Jill went up the ... (hill)". Please see the attached collection of enjoyable nursery rhymes.

1.7.2 Sing nursery rhymes together. Try substituting wrong words for the rhyming words and see if they pick it up e.g. "Jack and Jill went up the mountain (hill) // Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great crash (fall)".

1.7.3 Make up new rhymes using the same tunes from traditional rhymes.

1.7.4 Make up your own nursery rhymes together. These can be very simple and creative.

E.g. I went to the barber shop
To give my hair a chop
When I got there
I sat on a chair
And the chair went crash.

1.7.5 Play number rhyming games

E.g. One, two buckle my... (shoe)

Three, four knock at the... (door)
Five, six pick up... (sticks)
Seven, eight lay them... (straight)
Nine, ten a big fat... (hen)

E.g. One, two, three, four, five,
Once I caught a fish alive;
Six, seven, eight, nine, ten,
Then I let him go again.
Why did you let him go?
Because he bit my finger so;
Which finger did he bite?
This little finger on my right!

E.g. Twenty knobbly knees
Nineteen fidgety fleas
Eighteen building bricks
Seventeen chirpy chicks
Sixteen squiggly snakes
Fifteen fancy cakes
Fourteen flying bats
Thirteen hanging hats
Twelve croaky frogs
Eleven slippery logs
Ten teddy bears
Nine old chairs
Eight twinkling stars
Seven racing cars
Six bright coats
Five sailing boats
Four favourite books
Three quarrelling cooks
Two ticking clocks
One odd sock

Attached sheets:

1. Nursery rhymes and poems

2. Syllables

The following are examples of games and activities to stimulate syllable awareness. Words are made up of one, two, three or more syllables. If you put your hand below your chin, each time your jaw drops is an indication of the number of syllables in a word. When working with syllables with children do **not** exaggerate or over-pronounce each syllable. Rather say the word just as you would normally say it, only slower at times.

2.1 Syllable clap

Each syllable represents a clap, stamp or beat. Say a word and ask the learner to repeat the word while clapping or stamping for each syllable. Give a demonstration to begin with to help the learner understand. Start with compound words, then two-syllable words, then three-syllable words and then four-syllable words.

E.g. The word "rainbow" has 2 beats: rain – bow // 'Baby' also has 2 beats: ba – by // "Elephant" has 3 beats: e – le – phant // "Butterfly" also has 3 beats: but – ter – fly.

Compound words (a word made up of two separate words): rain/bow, sea/shore, eye/lid, finger/nail, pencil/case, lamp/shade, rain/coat, pop/corn

Two-syllable words: ta/ble, buck/et, jer/sev, win/ter, sum/mer, ti/ger, fun/ny, Eas/ter, mach/ine, moun/tain, emp/ty, ri/ver

Three-syllable words: te/le/phone, beau/ti/ful, hap/pi/ly, cam/e/ra, tom/a/to, py/ra/mid, pre/si/dent, fam/i/ly, di/no/sour, dan/ger/ous, lib/ra/ry, bi/cy/cle, ter/ri/ble, e/lec/tric, cu/ri/ous

Four-syllable words: bal/le/rin/a, te/le/vi/sion, pho/to/graph/y, dic/tion/ary

2.2 Speaking in code

Tell the learner that you are going to say words in a secret code and the key to understanding the code is to say the sounds together. If I say 'pho-to-graph', you say 'photograph'. Practice a few examples. Also invite the learner to speak in code with you and *you* break the code by saying the sounds together.

E.g. tell the learner, "I want you to listen and say the whole word to me, but – ter – fly." The learner's response should then be "butterfly".

2.3 Guess Who

Once you have read a book or are about to read it, look through the names of all of the characters. Say to the learner, "Guess whose name I am going to say now". Secretly choose the name of one of the

characters and say it slowly with the syllables separated. (E.g. Ma-ry). To ensure the learner completely understands this you can ask him/her to choose a name or word and you have to guess the answer!

2.4 Name chant

Each time the learner comes to a session ask him/her to clap the syllables in his/her name as well as three friends or characters in books.

2.5 Sounds in the word

Using three syllable words from pictures in a book sing the following verse to the tune of “the wheels on the bus”. Ask the children to guess the word and then show them the picture so that they can see if they were correct.

Lyrics: The sounds in the word go / e / le / phant /; / e / le / phant /; / e / le / phant /
 The sounds in the word go / e / le / phant /
 Can you guess the word?

2.6 Riddles and sounds

Ask the learner a riddle using words with more than one syllable (multi-syllabic words). Examples:

1. I am thinking of an animal with a trunk. It's an / e / le / phant /.
2. I'm thinking of an animal that eats bananas. It's a / mon / key /.
3. I'm thinking of an animal that runs very fast. It's a / chee / tah /.
4. I'm thinking of an animal with black and white stripes. It's a / ze / bra /.
5. I'm thinking of something you use when it rains. It's an / um / bre / lla /.

2.7 Jump to the sounds

Using chalk, draw hopscotch squares outside in the playground. Show the learner an object or picture of a multi-syllabic word and ask them to jump along the squares as they say each syllable in the word. For example, the learner would jump three times for a three-syllable word such as / ra / di / o /.

2.8 Tap to the sounds

Place objects in a bag or pillow case (multisyllabic words only). Give the learner a pencil as a rhythm stick. Pull objects out of the bag one at a time and ask the learner to tap their rhythm stick as they say each syllable of the object's name.

2.9 Tortoise talk

This activity helps learners to stretch out words to hear the syllables. Give the learner a cardboard picture of a tortoise and get them to colour it in. Cut it out and prestik/tape it onto a pencil or stick. Explain to the learner that tortoises move very slowly and talk very s-l-o-w-l-y. Tell them that it is tortoise time and model saying multi-syllabic words slowly, stretching out the word so that the syllables are clear. Encourage the learner to slowly move their tortoise picture from left to right as they 'stretch out' the words.

2.10 Froggy hop

The same as tortoise talk above, except now you explain how frogs hop from rock to rock. Ask the learner to use their frog to 'hop' as they say each syllable in the word.

2.11 Theme words

Play a game with the learner by both trying to come up with as many two syllable words as possible on a certain theme such as brands of cars (Hon / da : Fi / at), people's names (Re / ne : Li / sa), things in the classroom (ta / ble : cray / on), food types (ho / ney : ca / rrot) etc. This can also be played with three and even four syllable words once the learner is much more confident.

2.12 Steal a bit

Continue with the syllable games above until the learner has a firm grasp of joining syllables to form words and separating words into syllables. The learner will only be ready for this task once the activities above are mastered as it involves manipulating the syllables in words to form new words. Ask the learner to change or delete one syllable from a word. Some examples:

1. Say the word 'buttercup'. Now steal 'cup'. What is left? (butter)
2. Steal the 'ter' from 'winter'. What is left? (win)
3. Say people. Now steal the 'pee' and add 'stee'. What word do you now have? (steeple)
4. Say the word 'friendship'. Now steal the ship. What is left? (friend).
5. Say the word 'carpet'. Steal the 'pet' and add 'go'. What word do you now have? (cargo)

The words that you create can also be imaginary, playful words. As you can see in the example of 'steeple', the learner is still working with *sounds* at this level, so the words you choose can vary in spelling as long as they sound the same when the new syllable is added.

Attached sheets:

1. Frog and tortoise pictures

3. Onset & Rime

The following games and activities aim to teach beginning and ending sounds in words to encourage letter/sound awareness.

Starting the process:

- Begin by orientating them to being aware of the **letters in their name** (especially the letters at the beginning and end) and associating that letter with the sound. Point out objects that begin with the same sound as their name.
- Talk to them about their **friends' names** and the sounds that are at the beginning of their names. Again play matching games. They should ideally begin to build up awareness about sound and spontaneously start playing with sounds, which should be encouraged!
- Play **"I spy"** beginning with *initial sounds*: 'I spy, with my little eye, something that begins with /b/ (e.g. book).' When this is relatively easy for the learner, play it with *end sounds*: 'I spy, with my little eye, something that ends with /t/ (e.g. light).' Invite the learner to also give "I spy" clues for you to guess.

3.1 Guess who

Similarly to how it is played with blending syllables, once you have read a book or are about to read it, look through the names of all of the characters. Say to the learner, "Guess whose name I am going to say now". Secretly choose the name of one of the characters and say the initial sound. For names beginning with stop consonants, the sound should be repeated over and over again e.g. /d/ /d/ /d/ /d/. Continuant consonants should be stretched as well as being repeated e.g. /s-s-s-s/ /s-s-s-s/. If there is more than one name in the book with the same initial sound, encourage the learner to guess *all* of the possibilities. This introduces the idea that the same sound can occur in different words. Once the game is familiar, pass control to the learner asking him/her to choose the name and you guess the answer!

3.2 Silly greetings

Sing a good morning chant using the letter-sound that you are focusing on that week. Greet the learner by replacing the first sound of their name by with the target sound.

E.g. I say good morning to Tary (Mary).

You can then greet the characters in a book as well...

E.g. We say good morning to Tālice (Alice), Tolo (Lolo), Tam (Sam) and Tindi (Lindi).

3.3 Sound matching

Using some old magazines or learners' drawings and cardboard, make picture cards of objects. You can also use the Smile Sound Snap cards, or Memory Game cards if you have them available. Include a variety of initial sound objects in the cards. Secretly choose a target sound e.g. /m/ and select the cards beginning with that sound. Ask the learner to guess the target sound. This activity can also be repeated using end sounds once the learner is confident with initial sounds.

3.4 Matching sounds

Remind the learner that the beginning sound of a word is the first sound that you make when you say the word. For example, in 'cat', the beginning sound is /c/. To play the game, tell the learner you are going to say two words, and if the words have the same beginning sound, they must clap their hands. After a few rounds, you can add in that if the words have the same ending sounds, the learner should stomp their feet.

Examples:

1. book / beak = clap and stomp
2. lift / lose = clap
3. bite / bubble = clap
4. mum / cat = silence
5. break / cake = stomp
6. day / dream = clamp
7. brick / broke = clap and stomp
8. light / fright = stomp
9. gate / goal = clap
10. pin / pen = clap and stomp

3.5 What big ears you have!

Make big ears (using paper and elastic bands) to emphasize the importance of listening to sounds. Let the learner put on the ears to help him/her identify the first sound. Say the following verse with the learner.

1. Reading helper & learner: Listen, listen, loud and clear, what's the first sound that you hear?

2. Reading helper: dog, dad, duck
3. Reading helper & learner: Tell me, tell me, what do you hear?
4. Learner: ... /d/

3.6 Odd-one-out

Also using the big ears if you like, ask the learner to listen carefully as you say three words. Explain that only two of these words begin with the same sound. Ask the learner to identify the word that does not belong. E.g. sock, kite, sun (kite). As a variation, you can also use the picture cards instead of saying the words.

3.7 Picture search

Spread the picture cards over a large table or on the floor and ask the learner to find pictures beginning with a certain sound. As each picture is found, the learner must say the beginning sound of the word e.g. f-f-f-f-fish.

3.8 Matching pairs

Choose five pairs of pictures with matching initial sounds. Place these ten picture cards face down on the table, naming each picture as you place it. The learner and you then take turn turning over pairs of pictures and working out if the initial sounds of the picture's names are the same. If the initial sounds match, the player keeps the pair, if not s/he puts the cards back.

3.9 What do you hear?

Teach the following song to the tune of 'London Bridge is falling down'. Use any single-syllable word.

What's the first sound that you hear?
That you hear? That you hear?
What's the first sound that you hear?
In 'dog', 'dog', 'dog'

/d/ is the sound that I hear,
That I hear, that I hear.
/d/ is the sound that I hear
At the beginning of 'dog'.

4. Phonemes (individual sounds)

The following games and activities aim to help the learner to isolate the different sounds that make up a word.

4.1 Sounds in the word

Using one syllable words from a picture in a book or a picture card sing the following verse to the tune of “the wheels on the bus”. Ask the children to guess the word and then show them the picture so that they can see if they were correct.

Lyrics: The sounds in the word go / l / o / g / ; / l / o / g / ; / l / o / g /
The sounds in the word go / l / o / g /
Can you guess the word?

4.2 Letters go together

Hold a picture card or a picture from a book without the learner being able to see the picture. Sing the following song, saying the sounds. The children should respond by saying the word printed in bold. Once they have said the word, show them the picture so that they can check whether they were correct or not. Sing to the tune of: ‘*The more we get together*’.

Letters go together, together, together
Letters go together to make lots of words,
Like / c / a / t / , / c / a / t / **cat!**
Letters go together to make lots of words.

4.3 Riddles and sounds

Ask the learner a riddle using one syllable words and break them up into individual sounds (phonemes).

Examples:

1. I am thinking of an animal that barks. It's a / d / o / g / .
2. I'm thinking of an animal that catches mice. It's c / a / t / .
3. I'm thinking of an animal that lives in water. It's a / f / i / sh / .
4. I'm thinking of an animal that likes to sing. It's a / b / ir / d / .
5. I'm thinking of an animal that lives in a sty. / p / i / g / .
6. I am thinking of a place you can buy things. / sh / o / p / .

4.4 Speaking in code

Tell the learner that you are going to say words in a secret code and the key to understanding the code is to say the sounds together. If I say 'h-an-d, you say 'hand'. Practice a few examples. Invite the learner to speak in code with you and you break the code by saying the sounds together.

E.g. tell the learner, "I want you to listen and say the whole word to me, c – a – r". The learner's response should then be "car".

4.5 Jump to the sounds

Using chalk, draw hopscotch squares in the playground. Show the learner an object or picture of a single-syllabic word and ask them to jump as they say each sound in the word. For example, the learner would jump three times for a word such as / b / a / t / or / l / ou / d /.

4.6 Tap to the sounds

Place objects in a bag or pillow case (single syllable words only). Give the learner a pencil as a rhythm stick. Pull objects out of the bag one at a time and ask the learner to tap their rhythm stick as they say each sound of the object's name.

4.7 Tap and Sweep

Say single syllable words one at a time. Get learners to 'knock' on their tabletop as they say each sound, moving their hands from left to right. Once they have finished 'knocking' for each sound, they should go back to the first position and sweep their fists on the table from left to right while blending the sounds together.

4.8 Tortoise talk

This activity helps learners to stretch out words to hear the sounds. Give the learner a cardboard picture of a tortoise and get them to colour it in. Cut it out and stick/glue it onto a pencil or stick. Explain to the learner that tortoises move very slowly and talk very s-l-o-w-l-y. Tell them that it is tortoise time and model saying *single syllable words slowly*, stretching out the word so that the individual *sounds* are clear. Encourage the learner to slowly move their tortoise picture from left to right as they 'stretch out' words.

4.9 Froggy hop

The same as tortoise talk above, except now you explain how frogs hop from rock to rock. Ask the learner to use their frog to 'hop' as they say each *sound* in the word.

5. Phonics exercises

The following activities are designed to help learners in the early stages of reading.

5.1 Vowel grid chart

This chart is to be placed on the desk while reading and pictures & words added to the row as they arise. The learner can refer to this chart at any time to help him/her understand the pronunciation of a word. Learners can draw their own pictures in the blocks provided. Looking at the chart and understanding it helps the learner understand that some words rhyme even though they look different. Each learner should have their *own* chart. (See the demonstration chart with pictures already filled in the blocks.)

5.2 Speed wizard

This exercise helps learners to practice in a fun way the 220 Dolch words that should be recognized by sight. Please see the instruction sheet with the list of words and graph sheet. This takes only a few minutes to complete and if done each session can vastly improve fluency in reading!

5.3 Ten words

When starting sessions with a new learner, it can be helpful within the first few sessions to ask them to write down any ten words that they know. This can help the volunteer to get a sense of what level the child is at and work at the level of the child. This should, however, be given as a fun activity rather than a test. Some ideas to make it more fun are to try and put all the words into one or two sentences afterwards or find rhyming words or opposites etc.

5.4 Change a word

Using letter cards or magnetic letters, construct a basic three letter word such as 'tin'. Ask the learner to remove the 't' and see what remains. They should see that the new word is 'in'. Ask them to add a 'f' and read the new word. You now have the word 'fin'. Remove the 'i' and add 'u' at the end and the learner should say the new word 'fun'. Continue

manipulating the word by adding and removing letters. Once the learner grasps the three letter words, the same exercise can be done with four and five letter words.

5.5 Alphabet letters phonetically

For learners who struggle with letter recognition it can be beneficial to read through the 26 letters of the alphabet *phonetically* each session. It is vital that you say the letters as they are read in the attached Letterland chart (in all games and activities) rather than using letter name pronunciation.

5.6 Worksheets

There are a number of worksheets that help learners understand the blending of letters to form different phonemes that they can learn to recognize. These can be beneficial and fun to do with those learners who are struggling to read basic words. There are some examples with this pack. Please also feel free to use others that you might come across or ask your support worker for more worksheets.

Attached sheets:

2. Blank vowel grid chart and completed chart as example
3. Speed wizard: instructions, list of words, record sheet
4. Alphabet letter cards
5. Letterland phonemic pronunciation chart
6. Phonics worksheets

Most of the above activities come from a compilation of exercises by Mandy Kowarski, a Learning Support Specialist. She invites you to contact her with any questions or comments you may have on 083 476 2764.

These activities have been taken from the following books:

1. Adam, M., Foorman, B., Lundberg, L., & Beeler, T. (1998). *Phonemic awareness in young children. A classroom curriculum*. Baltimore: Paul H Brookes Publishing Company.
2. Blachman, B., Ball, E., Black, R., & Tangel, D. (2000). *Road to the code. A phonological awareness programme for young children*. Baltimore: Paul H Brookes Publishing Co.
3. Ericson, L., & Fraser Juliebo, M. (19998). *The phonological awareness handbook for kindergarten and primary teachers*. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association.
4. Fitzpatrick, J. (1997). *Phonemic awareness: Playing with sound to strengthen beginning reading skills*. California: Creative Teaching Press.