

What Is Phonological Awareness?

Phonological awareness is the ability to hear and play with sounds in spoken language. It includes:

- Recognizing rhymes
- Breaking words into syllables
- Identifying beginning and ending sounds
- Blending sounds to make words

Children with phonological awareness difficulties may struggle to:

- Recognise rhyming words
- Clap out syllables
- Hear individual sounds in words
- Blend sounds to form words

Why Phonological Skills Matter

- **Early Reading Success:** Phonological awareness helps children understand that words are made up of sounds. This is essential for decoding (sounding out words) and spelling.
- **Sound-to-Letter Connections:** These skills support children in linking spoken sounds to written letters, which is key to learning the alphabet and beginning to read.
- **Vocabulary Growth:** As children play with sounds and words, they become more aware of language patterns, which boosts vocabulary and comprehension.
- **Listening and Attention:** Developing phonological skills also strengthens auditory discrimination and attention — helping children focus on sounds, follow instructions, and engage in classroom activities.
- **Reading Comprehension:** Strong phonological awareness leads to fluent reading, which in turn supports better understanding of texts.

What It Looks Like at Age 5

- Children begin to:
- Recognize and produce rhymes

- Clap out syllables in words
- Identify beginning and ending sounds
- Blend sounds to make words (e.g., /c/ /a/ /t/ → “cat”)
- Segment words into individual sounds (e.g., “dog” → /d/ /o/ /g/)

How Teachers Support These Skills

- Teachers use rhyming games, songs, storytelling, and sound-based play to build phonological awareness. These activities are fun and engaging, making learning feel like play.
- In short, phonological skills are the building blocks of literacy. Without them, children may struggle with reading and writing throughout their school years.

How You Can Help at Home

1. Play with Sounds

- Emphasize sounds in words: “Let’s listen to the /b/ in ‘ball’”
- Stretch out words slowly: “sssssun”

2. Use Rhymes & Songs

- Sing nursery rhymes and silly songs
- Pause and let your child fill in the rhyming word

3. Break Words Apart

- Clap out syllables: “ba-na-na” (3 claps)
- Say each sound: “cat” = /c/ /a/ /t/

4. Blend Sounds Together

- Say sounds slowly and ask your child to guess the word: “/d/ /o/ /g/ = dog”

5. Read & Talk About Sounds

- Choose books with rhymes and word play
- Ask questions like “What sound does ‘sun’ start with?”

Fun Activities to Build Phonological Awareness

Activity	What to Do	Skills Practiced
Rhyme Time	Find words that rhyme with “cat” or “dog”	Rhyming
Syllable Clapping	Clap out syllables in names or food items	Syllable awareness
Sound Sorting	Sort objects by beginning sound	Sound recognition
Mystery Word Game	Say sounds slowly and guess the word	Blending
Rhyming Books	Read books like “The Gruffalo” or “Room on the Broom”	Rhyming, sound play
Sound Hunt	Find things around the house that start with /s/, /m/, /t/	Initial sound identification

Conversation Starters

- “Can you think of a word that rhymes with ‘hat’?”
- “Let’s clap the word ‘elephant’—how many claps?”
- “What sound does ‘milk’ start with?”

Quick Tips

- Keep activities short and playful (5–10 minutes)
- Repeat and revisit sounds often
- Celebrate effort and progress