

# Chatter Matters



## PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Welcome Back to Chatter Matters, the speech pathology newsletter for parents and teachers. This issue focuses on Phonological Awareness for children.

### WHAT IS PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS?

Phonological Awareness relates to our ability to understand sounds in our spoken language. Phonological Awareness skills allow us to recognise and play around with the sounds we can use. It involves focusing on the sounds we produce rather than the meaning of the words that we are saying.



### ARE PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS SKILLS IMPORTANT?

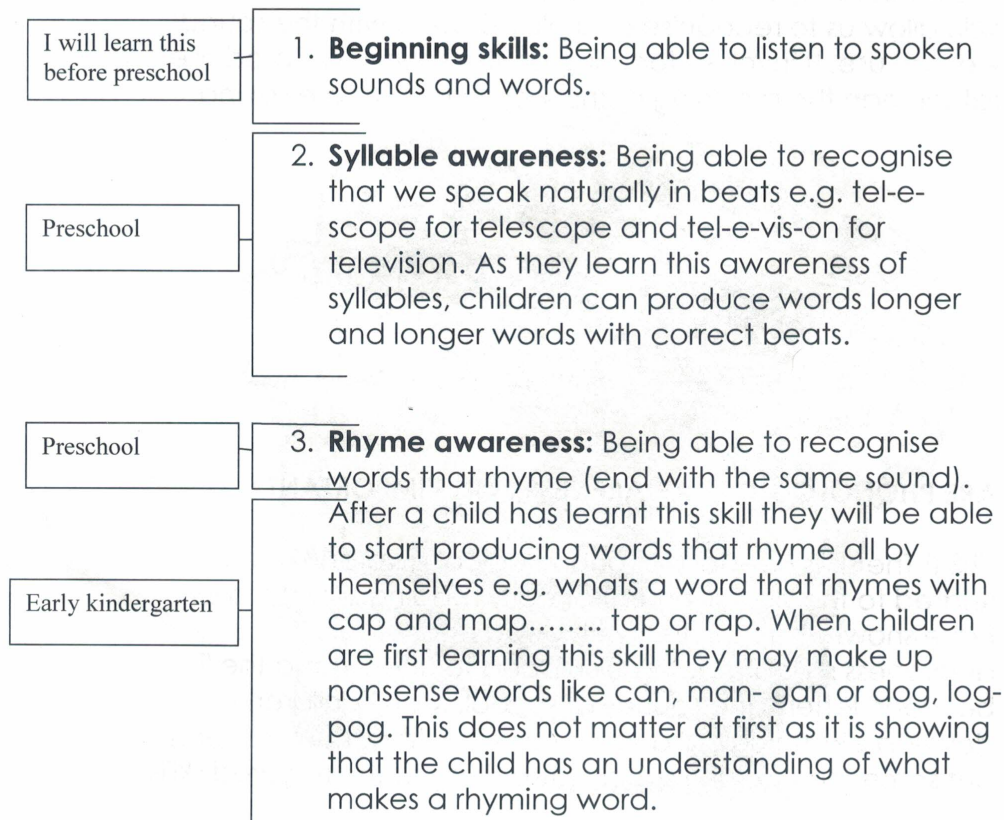
YES!!! The skills needed for phonological awareness are related to the development of early reading skills. Studies have shown that children with good phonological awareness skills are better equipped to understand the link between letters and sounds at school. Many children will develop phonological awareness skills without any support but some may require specific teaching of the required skills.

## WHAT PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS SKILLS ARE THERE?

The skills involved in phonological awareness revolve around the structure of words. They can be broken up into:

1. Individual sounds (phonemes) e.g. cat as c....a....t and farm as f....ar....m
2. Syllables, or the drumbeats to words e.g. caterpillar into ca-ta-pill-ar (4 syllables) and hospital into hos-pit-al (3 syllables)

By having a strong understanding of these structures in words a child can then manipulate or play around, with words. The way that children tend to learn phonological awareness skills follows this pattern below. The stages are broken up into when they should learn the skills are down the side.



in kindergarten. Activities that we can do to help children are:

- **Teaching them about listening:** Listening needs to be the first learnt skill for phonological awareness. Teaching listening can be difficult but it can be fun too. Story time activities and asking the children if they 'have their listening ears on' or asking 'who is listening' is a great way to create an awareness that we need to listen to get information.

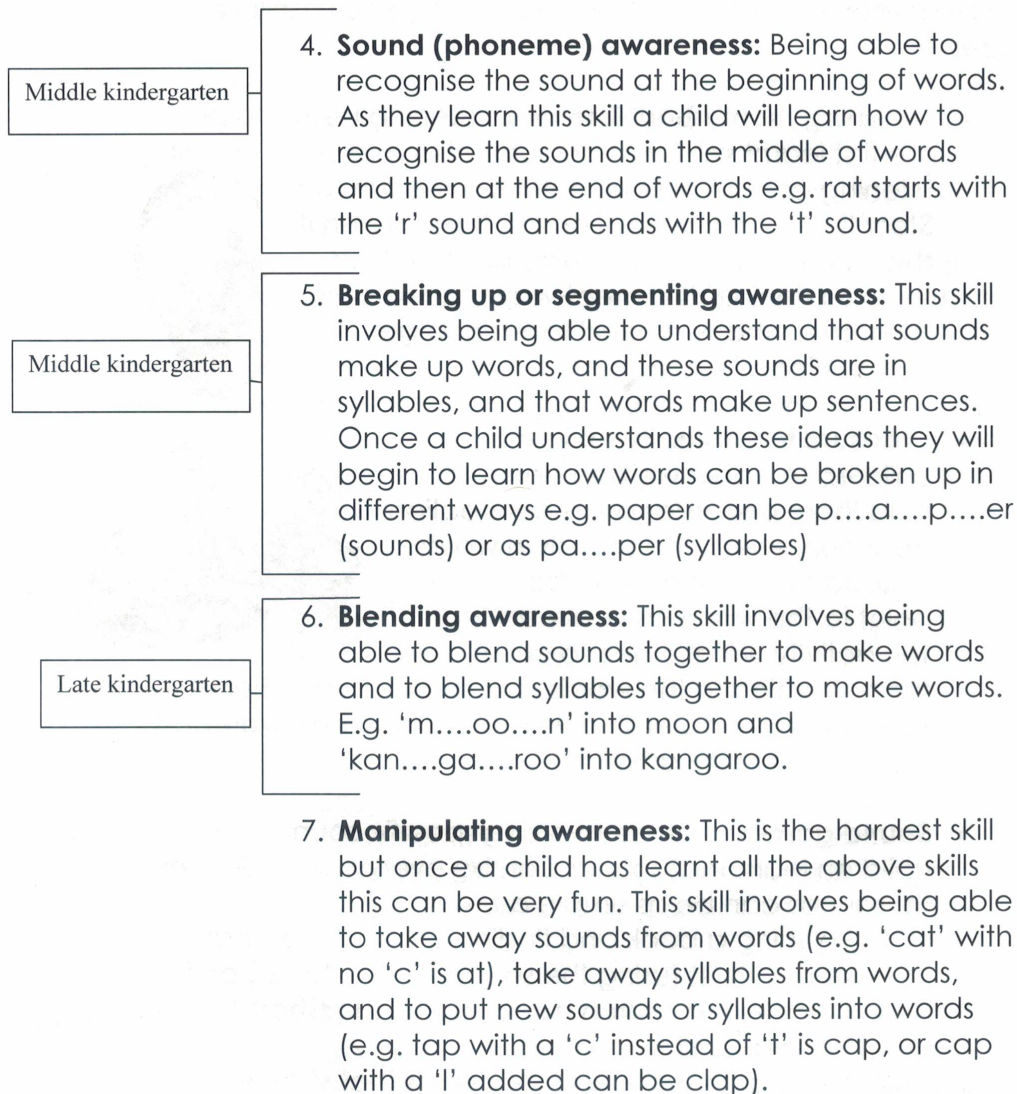


- **Exposure to books:** By exposing children to books we can begin to help them understand the connection between letters and sounds in words. A good activity is to read books and point to the words as you read them. This activity will also help a child focus their attention to the words and sounds. It also helps them gain a greater understanding of word awareness and sentence awareness.



- **Sound games:** Games involving specific sounds help children learn that sounds can be everywhere. Games for sounds can be as simple as:
  1. Reading a book and finding all the things that start with 's' (using the sound not the letter) on the page e.g. a beach book has 'sand', 'shorts', 'sun', 'surfing' and 'swimming'.
  2. Making up sentences using words that start with the same sound e.g. Joshua is jolly jumping or Luke likes lollies and lions.
  3. Choosing a sound and seeing how many things can go with that sound e.g. At the 'm' shop (sound not letter), we can find mice, milk, mittens, music, meat, mangoes and motorbikes.





These skills are all learnt at different stages but typically follow this order in terms of learning.

### HOW CAN WE HELP DEVELOP PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS SKILLS IN CHILDREN?

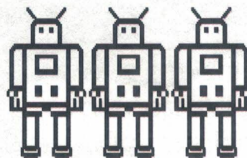
Preschool is the perfect place for children to start gaining phonological awareness before they begin to learn to read

- **Rhyming games:**

1. Singing nursery rhymes and songs are excellent for children. They learn the pattern of the song and can then play around with it e.g. old McDonald and using more and more animals.
2. Another activity you could do would be to point out rhyming words when you hear them e.g. blue shoe- 'Hey those words rhyme. Can you think of another word that rhymes with blue and shoe?'
3. Many children's books have rhyming patterns and as children become familiar with them you may be able to get them to fill in the final rhyme e.g. Hairy McLairy from Donaldson's .....  
Bottomly Potts all covered in .....

- **Games for syllables:** Syllables are the parts of words and follow a drumbeat structure. Getting children to clap in group activities is great fun and they can learn the syllabic way in which we talk e.g. 'We are singing' has 1-1-2 syllable structure and 'Jacob is playing' has a 2-1-2 syllable structure. Other activities that are fun for children are:

1. Using syllables in children's names when giving tasks e.g. 'If you have 2 syllables in your name you can get your lunch' or in Simon says type games 'Sit down if you have 3 syllables in your name'.
2. Talking like robots: A child's idea of a robot can be a perfect example of speaking in syllables (I – am – a – ro-bot, - talk – like – me).



**FURTHER INFORMATION:**

If you are concerned that your child is having difficulty with phonological awareness, call a speech pathologist.

Your local speech pathologist can be contacted at:

Forbes Community Health Centre 68 502233

Parkes Community Health Centre 68 621866

Canowindra Community Health Centre 63 441314

Molong Community Health Centre 63 238323

Cowra Community Health Centre 63 402356

