

Speech Sound Awareness Pack:

Information and Activities

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Introduction

What is speech sound (or phonological) awareness?

Speech sound awareness is also known as phonological awareness. It is the ability to identify and manipulate sounds in words. It is an essential skill for speech sound development and reading.

Why is it important?

Understanding that words can be broken down and that they are made up of different sounds is an important part of speech and literacy development. For a child to be able to use sounds correctly when they speak, they need to be able to listen and identify:

- sounds at the beginning/ends of words
- syllables
- rhyming words

Top tips when carrying out speech sound awareness activities

- Try and find a time when your child is alert and engaged. Avoid times of the day when they are likely to be more tired.
- Try to keep background noise to a minimum (i.e. turn off the TV, radio, tablets etc.).
- Remember that little and often is best. It is much better to carry out the activities for 5-10 minutes every day than 30 minutes once a week.
- Encourage others (e.g. siblings or other children in their class) to join in with the activities.
- Make the activities fun. Use simple rewards such as posting letters in a box, finding pictures or objects that are hidden, or working towards a sticker.
- Remember to give lots of praise and encouragement (e.g. "I can see you're trying really hard", "You did really good listening").
- Don't worry if your child finds an activity tricky at first. You can help them by giving them lots of clues and showing them how to do it. The more they practise, the more they will learn.

Listening Activities

Why are listening activities important?

Helping your child to develop their listening skills in relation to instruments, music and everyday noises will help them to become more aware of the subtle differences between speech sounds later on.

It can help your child if they have lots of opportunities to experience listening to sounds. This will also help to build both their attention and listening skills. These are the foundations of developing speech and language skills.

Activities to support listening skills

Guess the instrument

- Choose two sets of matching noisemakers/ instruments. These may include shakers, bells or drums made of saucepans and wooden spoons. You could fill empty plastic bottles or pots with various materials such as sand, pebbles, water, coins and so on.
- Let your child play with the instruments and listen to the sounds they make.
- Describe the sounds. Are they loud or quiet?
- Hide one set of instruments behind a screen, and put a matching set in front of your child. Play one of the instruments behind the screen, then lift the screen and see if your child can show you which one you played. Gradually increase the number of instruments to choose from. See if your child can remember a sequence of 2 or 3 sounds.

Hunt the music box

- Hide a music box or musical toy somewhere in the room while your child waits outside the room.
- When your child comes back in, ask him/her to listen for the sound and find the toy.

Other game ideas

Play games that encourage good waiting, turn-taking and listening. These could include the following:

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- Playing 'ready steady go' with wind up cars, marble runs or pop up toys.
- Copying beats on a drum.
- Matching sounds to pictures (e.g. animal noises). Sound lotto sets and apps are commercially available.
- Playing musical statues, musical islands/chairs etc.
- Listening to environmental sounds (e.g. washing machine, Hoover, and car). Can your child identify what the sound is?

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Rhyme Awareness

Why is rhyme important?

Rhyme is an important skill in developing speech sound awareness and literacy. Your child may not yet know what we mean by 'rhyme', but there are still many ways we can give them the experience of listening to rhyming words. These are words that have the same ending, but a different beginning. The vowel sounds are always the same in rhyming words (e.g. 'snail' and 'whale').

Activities ideas to explore rhyme

- Sing nursery rhymes - action rhymes are the best. Repeat them over and over again.
- Make it fun! You can use gestures/actions, different voices and faces to make it exciting for both you and your child.
- When your child knows the rhyme well, try missing out a rhyming word to see if they can remember it, for example:

Baa, baa pink sheep

Have you any **spots**?

Yes sir, yes sir,

Lots and**lots**.

Some on my fingers

Some on my **toes**

And some on the end of my very long**nose**.

- Make up silly rhyming names to match your child's name or a pair of puppets (e.g. Kim, Sim, Bim or Riley, Miley, Smiley etc.). Encourage your child to make up rhyming strings. They do not need to make real words (e.g. sanana banana, boggy doggy etc.).
- Read short poems and picture books that have a rhyming story. Read the same ones again and again so they get to know them and can start joining in the story with you.

Rhyme recognition

Remember we are focussing on your child being able to hear the rhyming words. Don't worry if they can't say them properly just yet.

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It's important that your child understands the difference between same and different before they start the suggested activities below.

Activities ideas to explore rhyme recognition

Play 'spot the rhyme':

- Pairs or snap - you say the words and your child identifies the words that rhyme.
- Place items or pictures in a feely bag - draw two out and say the words. See if they rhyme or not. You could use different household objects, toys or pictures.
- Make a rhyming monster together out of an old cardboard box. Feed the monster the rhyming pairs.

For example:

Adult – “dog and frog. Do they sound the same at the end?”

Child: “yes”

Adult: “well done! They both have “og” at the end.”

Adult: “tree and knee. Do they sound the same at the end?”

Child: “no”

Adult: “let's have another listen **tree** and **knee**. Can you hear that they both end in 'ee'?”

Remember to:

- Sit facing each other so that you can see each other clearly.
- Encourage your child to “have their listening ears turned on” before you say the two words.

Examples of rhyming pairs:

peg- leg

bed- head

sea- pea

socks- fox

bear- hair

mouse- house

top- mop

pen- hen

cat- hat

snake- cake

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Syllable Awareness

Why is syllable awareness important?

Words are made up of different numbers of 'beats' or syllables. Being able to break down words into these syllables helps the child to hear what all the different parts of the word sound like. This can help the child to say the word later on, particularly if they often miss syllables out.

Note – some children can find it tricky to listen and count at the same time. Included in this pack is a syllable counting line which could be used to help. Your child will need to move their finger along the sections with the numbers 1-4 on as the syllables are said. When the word is finished they can check which number they are on.

Activities to support syllable awareness

- Syllable awareness starts with being able copy a rhythm (e.g. dancing to a beat, clapping out a rhythm). Playing with musical instruments can help this skill: encourage your child to copy you making beats on the drum, or clapping your hands.
- Children often find it easier to talk about the 'claps' or 'beats' in a word rather than the 'syllables.' For example "how many claps are in banana?" (ba-na-na = 3)
- Look at one object/picture at a time and clap the syllables as you say the word. It may help to break the spoken word down slightly, so that your child can hear you saying the syllables (e.g. say 'di-no-saur', rather than 'dinosaur').
- Encourage your child to join in with you, so that they clap the syllables too (it may help to hold hands and clap together at first). Demonstrate lots of examples to your child before expecting them to have a go. You could do this by:
 - Clapping out the names of friends or family members
 - Clapping out the syllables in words for items around you or pictures of different items.
- When your child understands that words can be broken up in this way you could encourage them to have a go.

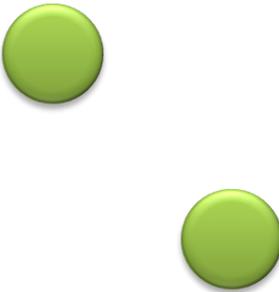
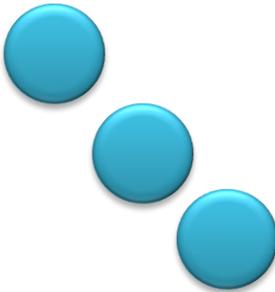
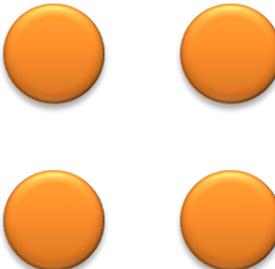
Game ideas:

- Take it in turns to turn over pictures or pick items from a bag. Count the number of syllables together. That person then earns that number of points (e.g. "paint--brush" = 2 syllables = 2 points).
- Label some boxes labelled 1-4 (for the number of syllables). Take it in turns to clap the syllables in a word and then post it into the correct box.
- Say a number between 1 and 4. Encourage your child to find a picture with that many syllables.

Tip:

Saying the whole word again after counting the syllables will help you child hear how the different syllables all blend together e.g. "paintbrush, that has two claps, can you hear? Paint--brush, paint—brush...paintbrush".

Syllable counter

1	2	3	4
			

1 syllable words:

car	dog	door
bus	shoe	chair
cup	key	

2 syllable words

apple	baby	carrot
lion	window	tractor
rabbit	tiger	

3 syllable words

elephant	aeroplane	potato
butterfly	tomato	broccoli
banana	dinosaur	

4 syllable words

helicopter	rhinoceros	caterpillar
cauliflower	certificate	supermarket
television	ballerina	

Speech Sound Activities

When working at this level it is important to remember that we are using letter *sounds*, not the letter *name*! For example 'f' is produced "ffff," not 'eff.'

Activities to support awareness of single sounds

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Use the sound pictures that your child's therapist has provided, or phonics pictures that your child uses at school (e.g. Read, Write Inc, Jolly Phonics). You could ask your child's class teacher for a photocopy of the phonic system they use.

- Feely bag - put a selection of sound/phonics pictures into a feely bag. Encourage your child to take the pictures out of the bag one at a time for you to say.
- Hidden pictures - once your child is familiar with the sound/phonics pictures, you could display 2 or 3 of the sound/phonics pictures around the room. As you say the speech sound, encourage your child to find the correct picture. Your child may enjoy earning rewards for pop up pirate, bricks to build a tower, or putting the sounds in a post box or bag. Alternatively, you could encourage your child to throw a ball or beanbag on to the sound they hear. If your child shows some difficulty identifying the correct sound you could make this a little easier to start with by making the speech sound louder as they get nearer/quieter as they move away.
- Jigsaws - hide a piece of jigsaw under each sound/phonics picture. You say a sound and when your child points to the correct sound/phonics picture, he/she can put the piece in the jigsaw. Another piece can then be hidden in its place.
- Spot that sound - put one sound picture in front of your child. Say a range of sounds (e.g. 'm', 'd', 'p', 'l', 's') and each time he or she hears the sound in front of them, they put a brick on a tower, or colour in a bit of the picture etc.

Activities to support awareness of the first sound in words

Once children are able to identify sounds on their own, they are ready to progress to listening to sounds at the beginning of words. Try to avoid words with two consonants at the beginning, such as **st**ar, **pl**ane, **fr**og etc. Instead use words where the consonant is followed by a vowel sound, such as **h**at, **f**ish, or **c**ut. At this level, you are saying a word and your child has to find the sound/phonics picture for the sound they heard at the beginning of the word (e.g. pen = 'p'; sock = 's').

- Running - stick 2 or 3 different sound/phonics pictures on the wall. You say a word and your child has to run to the sound they hear at the beginning of the word.

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- Sorting – gather some objects or pictures and sort them by their beginning sound (e.g. p – pen, pig; f – fox, finger, four).
- Odd one out - look at 3-4 pictures or objects with your child and talk about the names of the items (e.g. 'pig', 'peg', 'pen', 'cat'). Encourage your child to identify the sounds at the beginning of the words. Which picture is the odd one out?
- Crafts - children often find it fun to engage in craft activities. Using just a few sounds at the beginning of words, you could create a poster or scrap book together (e.g. words starting with 'd', words starting with 's').
- Matching - place a variety of objects or pictures on the table (begin by making sure these only start with 2 or 3 different sounds, for example 'd,' 'f' and 'k'). Take it in turns to find two pictures that start with the same sound.
- Sound hunt - give your child 2 pictures that start with the same sound. Encourage your child to identify the sound at the beginning of the words. Next, ask them to find another word that begins with the same sound. For example, if you showed them a picture of a bike and a bat, they may come up with a word such as 'ball.'

Ideas for older children:

- Play games such as "I went to the market and I bought...". When playing this game try to think of words beginning with only one sound, for example toy, tin, tea etc.
- Games such as "I spy...". Take it in turns to guess what word the other person is thinking of by only the first letter.

Some example words are included on the next page of this pack; however the activities can be extended to include other words.

The above activities can be adapted to explore sounds at the ends of words, for example kitet, mat and fit all end in 't'.

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boy	box	kite	cat
paint	peg	game	goat
torch	tap	monkey	milk
dog	duck	knee	nose
fork	fan	sheep	shoe
sun	soup	cheese	chair
jam	juice	lolly	light
wellies	wall	van	vegetables

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Error Detection

Why is error detection important?

Error detection means being able to hear the difference between two similar sounding words (e.g. "ben and pen") and identifying the correct word. They could be real or made up words.

Error detection is an important skill for children to develop. It helps them to understand that sounds make up words, and that changes in speech sounds affect how a word is heard and understood by others. For example "can I have the key" and "can I have the tea" would get different responses.

Listening to how other people make mistakes helps children to monitor their own speech. It also takes the pressure off them to 'say' the words, as they are correcting you instead! It is fun for a child to sometimes play the role of a teacher!

Activities to support developing error detection skills

Beginning sounds

Find a selection of objects (toys, household items etc.) or pictures beginning with a range of sounds (e.g. soap, pen, book, fork, cup, dog etc.).

Tell your child that they are going to be your teacher for a little while, and that they need to listen carefully to how you say a word. They need to tell you if you are saying it right or a bit funny!

Draw a happy and a sad face. When your child hears you say the word correctly, encourage them to put the picture or object by the happy face. If your child hears you say the word incorrectly, encourage them to place it by the sad face.

Begin by missing off the first sound completely (e.g. say 'ook' for book). Once your child is able to identify when you have done this, begin to change the first sound for a different sound (e.g. 'cook' or 'took' for book). Remember to say the word correctly sometimes!

Once your child has identified that you've said a word incorrectly, correct yourself (e.g. "silly me. It's **book**, not cook"). Place a slight emphasis on the altered sound.

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Final Sounds

Play the same game as above, but this time miss off the last sound of a word (e.g. "lea" for leaf or "boa" for boat).

When your child is able to do that, change the last sound (e.g. "leat" or "boaf").

It is great if others get involved too, such as brothers and sisters or friends. Always remember to give your child lots of encouragement, and have fun!

Specific Sound Practise

Your child may have difficulty producing certain sounds. Their speech and language therapist will be able to tell you which sounds to focus on. Your Therapist may well provide sound pictures and activity sheets that you can practise at home.

The following ideas and activities can be used in everyday situations to encourage your child to use their target sounds in words.

Modelling the words

Don't correct your child's speech by telling them that it's wrong. Instead, clearly repeat what your child has said using the correct sounds. For example:

Child: "my dock"

Adult: "yes, it's your sock"

This allows your child to hear the correct model, and also lets him/her know that you have understood what they have said.

If your child has been practicing the sound in words, but sometimes forgets to use it in his/her everyday speech, you can gently remind him/her to use the sound (e.g. "remember, that word has the snake sound at the beginning – sock").

Bombardment of a target sound

- Point out things beginning with the target sound. This may include when you are on the bus, walking in the park, reading a book or just looking out of the window! For example, if practicing the 's' sound, say things like "look, there's some sand", "It's very sunny." At first clearly emphasise the target sound so that your child can really hear it.
- Read a list of words beginning with the target sound (your therapist can provide a list if needed).
- Make up a silly story using the target sound (e.g. "one day, Sam the slippery snake went out to see his sister, Susan. Susan lived near the sea, so they sdecided to go for a swim in the sea...").
- Try playing I-Spy (e.g. "I can see something beginning with the 'k' sound"). You could make it easier by having a small selection of objects or pictures beginning with different sounds.

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