

Phonics, Phonemic Awareness, and Word Analysis for Teachers: An Interactive Tutorial

Ninth Edition

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The Early Stages: Phonological and Phonemic Awareness



Phonological awareness is a critical accomplishment for emergent readers. Phonological awareness exists when children become consciously aware that language is an object that may be analyzed and manipulated by them in different ways, such as rhyming, playing word games, and talking about words as objects.

When young children first develop oral language, they use language to communicate and accomplish many goals that are important to them. Usually, however, they are not consciously aware of language as an abstract object that can be manipulated by them and others, taken apart and put back together in different ways, and analyzed. Initially, this might first happen when very young children play the “I wanna game” with an adult. An adult initiates this word game by saying, “I wanna *banana*,” attempting to get the child to imitate the sentence while substituting a different noun at the end (“I wanna *apple/Snuffleupagus/etc.*”) as each tries to use a sillier and sillier word until both of them end up laughing. Being able to manipulate language like this, that is, substituting a number of different words in the same slot without any intent other than to play with language, is an example of phonological awareness. Another example of phonological awareness takes place when children can clap or tap each word in a sentence as they say it, indicating their awareness of individual words that actually occur in oral language as a continuous stream of sound. Phonological awareness also exists when a child can clap or tap each syllable in a sentence or a word (“I want a ba-na-na.”).

A very important next step occurs when young children begin to hear the separate sounds of a language, not just words or syllables. This is the beginning of a special aspect of phonological awareness, called phonemic awareness, and is a critical stage in a child's literacy journey. The term *phoneme* means the smallest unit of speech sound. Phonemic awareness occurs when children become aware of individual phonemes in our language and can manipulate them in different ways. Phonemic awareness skills include sound matching, sound blending, sound isolation, sound addition, sound substitution, and sound subtraction.

We see evidence of this important milestone when children develop the ability to rhyme one word with another (*cat-pat*). Being able to play a rhyming game with someone else indicates phonemic awareness because a child is manipulating individual phonemes at the beginning of words. Phonemic awareness also includes the ability to put several sounds together to form a single word. When you give a child several sounds (*/k/-/at/*) and he or she can blend them together to form an oral word (*cat*), we know that the child has developed phonemic awareness. This skill is essential for developing word analysis knowledge useful to read written language, such as phonic knowledge.

We use the term *phonological analysis* to refer to the conscious awareness of oral language as an object at the *word* and *syllable* level. We use the term *phonemic analysis* to refer to the conscious awareness of oral language as an object at the individual *phoneme* level. Phonological awareness is important because it gets the word analysis ball rolling as children begin to look at our language in an analytical manner. Phonemic awareness is important because it means that children are capable of analyzing the individual *sounds* of our language. This is essential to the successful development of phonic knowledge, which is an important aspect of word analysis. Both phonological awareness and phonemic awareness can be taught and are important components of an early reading program.



PRACTICAL RESOURCES FOR TEACHING PHONOLOGICAL AND PHONEMIC AWARENESS IN YOUR CLASSROOM



Lesson Suggestions

- *Building Phonemic Awareness with Phoneme Isolation* (<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/building-phonemic-awareness-with-120.html?tab=1-tabs>). This lesson contains games for kindergarten and first graders to identify whether a given sound occurs at the beginning or ending of a word and connect phonemes with graphemes.
- *Uh-Oh! Alphabet Game* (<http://www.readwritethink.org/parent-afterschool-resources/printouts/alphabet-game-30257.html>). A card game activity to build letter name and letter sound knowledge.
- *Generating Rhymes: Developing Phonemic Awareness* (<http://www.readwritethink.org/classroom-resources/lesson-plans/generating-rhymes-developing-phonemic-121.html>). Activities based on creating simple rhymes to build awareness of word and letter patterns, become familiar with twelve rhyming pairs of one-syllable words, give rhyming words for a given keyword in a poem, and interact with their peers to find rhyming pairs of word cards.



PHONOLOGICAL AND PHONEMIC AWARENESS

<p>1. Two aspects of oral language development that are important for developing word analysis skills and reading are _____ awareness and _____ awareness.</p>	<p>phonological phonemic</p>
<p>2. The definitions of phonological awareness and phonemic awareness differ among educators. Nevertheless, a common element in all definitions is that children who possess these abilities are consciously aware of language as an _____ that can be manipulated by them and others and analyzed.</p>	<p>object</p>
<p>3. In this book, we refer to _____ analysis as the conscious awareness of language as an object at the word and syllable level.</p>	<p>phonological</p>

<p>4. We refer to _____ analysis as the conscious awareness of language as an object at the individual sound, or phonemic, level.</p>	<p>phonemic</p>
<p>5. In oral language, being able to break up a word such as <i>dog</i> into the separate sound elements /d/, /o/, and /g/ demonstrates a high level of _____ awareness.</p>	<p>phonemic</p>
<p>6. Being able to break up a sentence into its constituent words demonstrates _____ awareness.</p>	<p>phonological</p>
<p>7. Being able to clap or tap each syllable in a word such as <i>table</i> demonstrates _____ awareness.</p>	<p>phonological</p>
<p>8. When a child is able to blend together the oral elements of a word such as <i>book</i>, we can say the child has developed an important aspect of _____ awareness.</p>	<p>phonemic</p>
<p>9. Usually, _____ awareness develops before _____ awareness.</p>	<p>phonological, phonemic</p>
<p>10. The relationship between phonological/phonemic awareness and reading/writing is not unidirectional. Many children develop or enhance their phonological/phonemic awareness from their _____ experiences. They become more aware of language units—words and phonemes—from their interactions with print.</p>	<p>reading/writing</p>
<p>11. How do phonological and phonemic awareness work to help children become better readers and writers? First, being able to analyze oral language is likely to make it easier for children to think analytically about _____ language.</p>	<p>written</p>
<p>12. Second, analyzing the separate sounds in our language when phonemic awareness is achieved is likely to make it easier for children to match letters with _____, the content of phonics.</p>	<p>sounds</p>
<p>13. Third, phonemic awareness supports children in developing an awareness of the alphabetic principle; that is, letters in our written language often represent _____ in a reasonably consistent manner.</p>	<p>sounds</p>

<p>14. Did you know that phonemic awareness in kindergarten appears to be an excellent predictor of successful reading acquisition? This means that the extent to which children acquire _____ awareness in kindergarten predicts reasonably well their ability to learn to read in later grades.</p>	<p>phonemic</p>
<p>15. Although this is a powerful finding, it is not yet clear to what extent phonemic awareness causes success in reading or to what extent success in reading causes high levels of phonemic awareness. It is clear that learning to _____ will likely assist the development of phonemic awareness.</p>	<p>read</p>
<p>16. Phonemic awareness is not phonics, even though it makes the development of phonic knowledge easier. Phonics takes place in written language. Phonemic awareness takes place in _____ language.</p>	<p>oral</p>
<p>17. Most children, about 80 percent, develop _____ awareness by the middle of the first grade.</p>	<p>phonemic</p>
<p>18. The remaining 20 percent of children often find it challenging to learn to _____.</p>	<p>read</p>
<p>19. A logical outcome of this analysis of phonological awareness and phonemic awareness is that play with oral _____ should be included in a broad program of early literacy development for young children in preschool and kindergarten. These games would include nursery rhymes, word and sound riddles, songs, and poems. Teachers also use read-aloud books that manipulate the sounds of spoken language.</p>	<p>language</p>
<p>20. Phonemic awareness is not a single developmental milestone. Instead, it is a gradual process of an increasing ability to manipulate the _____ of language in different ways.</p>	<p>sounds</p>
<p>21. Rhyming ability, for example, appears much _____ than the ability to separate out each sound in a word such as <i>dog</i>.</p>	<p>earlier</p>

22. One of the later abilities to develop is the ability to blend together separate _____ to construct a word such as <i>cat</i> .	phonemes
23. It is clear that phonemic awareness contributes in important ways to the development of early _____ skills.	reading



SELF-CHECK FOR CHAPTER 2

1. The conscious awareness of language as an object at the individual sound, or phonemic, level is important to later reading success. We refer to this as _____ awareness.	phonemic
2. Being able to identify individual words and syllables in spoken language is referred to as _____ awareness.	phonological
3. _____ awareness usually develops before _____ awareness.	Phonological, phonemic
4. A close relationship between the letters and sounds in a language is referred to as the _____ principle.	alphabetic
5. In kindergarten, an excellent predictor of later reading success is a child's level of _____ awareness.	phonemic
6. Phonemic awareness will likely assist in the development of _____, but the development of reading is also likely to extend a child's _____ awareness.	reading phonemic
7. About _____ percent of children develop phonemic awareness by the middle of the first grade.	80
8. Being able to tap the syllables in a word is an example of _____ awareness.	phonological
9. Achieving phonemic awareness is likely to make it _____ for children to learn phonics.	easier



ONLINE READING RESOURCES

To learn more about phonological and phonemic awareness, explore these online resources:

- Author. (2010). *Phonological and phonemic awareness*. Reading Rockets, Washington, DC: WETA (Explains both phonological and phonemic awareness and how kids, teachers, and parents might see these in reading contexts).

Retrieved from <http://www.readingrockets.org/helping/target/phonologicalphonemic>

- Brummitt-Yale, J. (2010). *Phonemic awareness vs. phonological awareness*. (K-12 Reader. A short summary of the differences between phonemic awareness and phonological awareness.)

Retrieved from <http://www.k12reader.com/phonemic-awareness-vs-phonological-awareness/>

- Author. (1998). *Phonemic awareness and the teaching of reading: A position statement from the board of directors of the International Reading Association*. Newark, DE: International Reading Association. (The most recent position statement on phonemic awareness from the leading reading association in the world. It defines phonemic awareness and explains its developmental importance to reading).

Retrieved from http://www.reading.org/downloads/positions/ps1025_phonemic.pdf

