



Early Literacy Guides for Families

Families play a key role in helping children learn to read!

New Mexico educators came together with New Mexico families in mind to support families in working with their children throughout their early literacy development. Out of this work, the following guides were developed. The purpose of these guides are to provide background information on key skills for literacy development while explaining the importance and progression of these skills in the development of literacy.

Families can find easy activities to incorporate in everyday life, along with questions they are able to ask teachers to learn more about how their child is doing in school and what to look for to spot learning difficulties. Let's work together to build the "enchantment" of reading!

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The Importance of Print Concepts In Early Literacy Development

What are print concepts? Why are they important?

Print concepts are the understanding that print carries meaning. Understanding print is essential because print is all around us. Developing this early stage of literacy is important for later success in reading and writing. Print concept activities can be done every day, authentically, and with things in our environment.

What do print concepts instruction look like?

Print concepts (for English and Spanish) include:

- **Print awareness:** understanding that print carries meaning
- **Book features:** books have features that help us read and use them
- **Concept of word:** words are made up of letters and are separated by spaces, children have developed this skill when they can point to each individual word as they read it.
- **Directionality:** print is read in a certain direction (in English, print is read from left to right, and from top to bottom)
- **Mechanics of print:** print follows rules that include spacing, punctuation, and the use of different types of symbols (letters, numbers, punctuation, and other symbols).

In addition, print concepts include:

- Recognizing print in the environment (signs, menus, cereal boxes, etc.)
- Knowing that print is used for many purposes
- Understanding that writing (print) carries meaning
- Understanding the relationship between print and speech

Key Terms

1. **Concepts of Print**- the understanding of how print works. These include
 - letters make up words, which are separated by spaces.
 - words are used to make lists, sentences, stories, etc..
2. **Environmental Print**- the print of everyday life (the name given to the print of signs, labels, logos)
3. **Symbols**- a picture or image that stands for something else, for example seeing a “M” McDonalds sign and knowing it is McDonalds.



4. **Book Conventions**- understanding book handling skills (turning pages, holding upright, starting at the beginning, reading left to right)
5. **Text/Print**- words in writing, such as books, lists, menu etc.

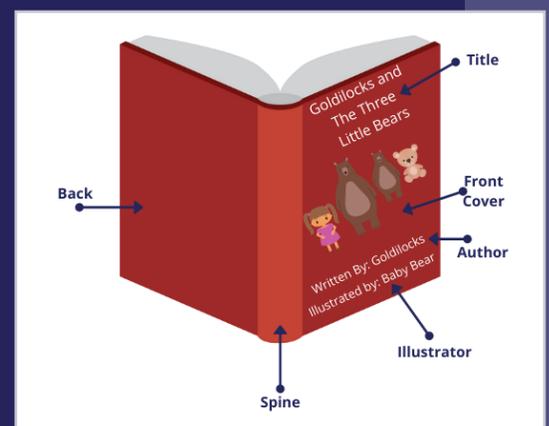
What Your Child Should Be Able To Do

Birth – End of Kindergarten

Most children develop **concepts of print** as they interact with print in a variety of situations. Print concepts emerge as babies experience books and **environmental print**, and continue through toddlerhood and preschool ages.

By the **end of Kindergarten**, your child should understand/be able to do the following:

- **Print Awareness:** Print communicates a message or carries meaning.
 - What is the story in this book about?
 - What are these words telling me?
- **Book Features:** How we use books.
 - Show me how to hold this book.
 - Can you point to the front cover? And the back cover?
 - What is the title of the book?
 - Who is the author/illustrator?



- **Concept of Word:** Letters make up words.
 - Touch each word as I read.
 - Show me a space.

- **Directionality:** We read print in a specific direction (left to right/ top to bottom).
 - Where is the beginning? Where is the ending?
 - Show me how to turn the pages.
 - Can you point to the top of the page? And the bottom?
 - Show me with your finger how I would start to read the words.
 - » Reading the pages from left to right
 - » Reading the words from left to right
 - » Return sweep - reading from left to right, and then sweeping back to the beginning of the following line
 - Can you show me where the first (or middle or last) word (or letter) is?

- **Mechanics:** Printed language follows rules that include spaces between words, the use of capitalization and punctuation, and the uses of different types of **symbols** (letters, numbers, punctuation marks, logos, etc.).
 - Is this a letter, number, punctuation mark, etc?
 - Can you show me a letter? A word? A sentence?
 - Why did the author use an uppercase (capital) letter here? (beginning of the sentence)

Sample Activities and Resources for Home

When at home:

- Set aside a time every day for reading (i.e., after dinner, before bedtime). Make it a natural time, don't pressure your child to sit for longer than they are able to. Choose books of interest to your child. If you do not have access to books, visit your local library. If you are unable to read books aloud to your child you can use audio books or digital books. Also take time to read books in your home language often.
- As you read aloud, model by pointing to each word as you read it. Show how you move from line to line (left to right) and page to page (top to bottom).
- Have your child retell the story you read to them using the book. They can hold the book, use the pictures, and turn the pages.
- Help your child to make his/her own book. Review the parts of the book as you make it such as title, author, pictures, words, etc.

When running errands such as grocery shopping:

- Create opportunities to talk with your child about print and how it works (i.e., letters, sounds, picture). Point out letters at the grocery store or signs on the road.
- Encourage your child to write everyday with real life opportunities (i.e., make a grocery list with you) and validate that their print holds meaning (i.e., say "Yes! You wrote lettuce!" at whatever developmental level they are writing, including scribbles). Give your child a journal that he/she can write in each day.
- Point out road signs as you are driving and tell your child what they mean.
- Ask your child to tell you the letters they see in signs. See if you can find the letters in ABC order, start by looking for the letter A, then B, etc. See if you can find the letters in your name.

Questions To Ask Your Child's Teacher

General Questions:

- Is it OK if my child “reads” books he/she has memorized?
- Should I be concerned if my child follows print from right to left?
- What should I do when I’m reading with my child?
- What can we do at home to encourage reading in a fun and stimulating way?
- What are some tools I can use at home to help my child grow in understanding the basic concepts of print you are teaching in your class?
- How can I help my child follow print in a book?
- Why are these skills important for literacy development?



The Importance of Phonics and Word Recognition In Early Literacy Development

Phonics and word recognition are critical in order for students to learn to read!

What is phonics instruction? Why is it important?

Phonics instruction teaches students the predictable relationship between spoken sounds and written letters which leads to:

- Learning letter patterns for various speech sounds
- **Decoding** new words
- Recognizing learned words faster and more efficiently (**automaticity**)
- Improved spelling (phonics, writing, and spelling go hand-in-hand)
- Improved reading comprehension and making meaning
- Accessing more information across content areas

Who benefits from phonics? When should it be delivered?

Great news! ALL students benefit from phonics instruction! Phonics instruction should begin in kindergarten and first grade.

What does phonics instruction look and sound like?

Phonics instruction should be both explicit and systematic:

- Directly teaches letter/sound relationships through modeling, practice, and feedback
- Follows a clear pattern of routines in daily instruction
- Includes: phonological and phonemic awareness, print awareness, alphabetic knowledge, **alphabetic principle**, **decoding**, reading practice with **decodable readers**, irregular or high-frequency words, and reading fluency
- Provides opportunities for children to apply their learning (hearing/reading/writing stories with **phonics** rules being taught, etc.)

Key Terms

1. **Digraphs**- two letters representing one sound (ch, th, sh)
2. **Trigraphs**- three letters representing one sound (tch, dge)
3. **Automaticity**- doing something without thinking about it; when reading automatically it is done so rapidly it seems the words has been recognized as a whole
4. **Phonics**- learning sounds and letter patterns that allow students to recognize the sounds letters make in print
5. **Alphabetic principle**- the relationship between letters and sounds
6. **Sight words**- words used most frequently in reading and writing that can be read quickly without having to sound them out.
7. **Decoding**- using letter-sound relationship to pronounce words correctly
8. **Decodable Readers**- texts that only feature words and patterns that were already taught

What Your Child Should Be Able To Do

Phonics and Word Recognition spans grades K-3 so that students have an opportunity to master the foundational skills necessary to become a skilled reader. If students are able to master the following skills involved in *learning to read*, they will be better equipped to *read to learn* across content areas.

By the end of Kindergarten, your child should be able to:

- recognize and name all lowercase and uppercase letters of the alphabet (A-Z)
- recognize letter sounds including:
 - » predictable consonants (m, s, t, l, p, f, c, n, b, r, j, k, v, g, w, d, h, y, z, x)
 - » short vowels (a, e, i, o, u)
 - » long vowel sounds with a single letter (me, he, we, so, hi)
 - » some consonant **digraphs** (sh, ch, wh, th)
- read and spell cvc words (cat, wet, dog, run)
- read and spell irregular high frequency words (was, they, there, said)

By the end of first grade, your child should be able to do all the kindergarten examples plus:

- read (and spell some) words including:
 - » two consonant blends (qu, st, sm, sn, sr, sl, cr, cl, tr, dr, -st, -ft, -lp, etc.)
 - » words with soft and hard c and g (carry, center, girl, gentle)
 - » final consonant blends (nt, nd, mp, nk)
 - » VCe long vowel patterns (wage, fine, doze, cute)
 - » vowel teams for most common vowel sounds (ee, ea, ai, ay, oa, ow, oe, igh)
 - » vowel-r combinations (er, ar, or, ir, ur)
 - » all jobs of y (cry, baby, gym)
 - » read and spell irregular high frequency words

By the end of first grade, your child should be able to do all the kindergarten examples plus:

- read (and spell some) words including:
 - » three-consonant blends and blends with **digraphs** (squ, str, scr, the, shr)
 - » **digraphs** (ph= the sound p, gh= the sound f, ck= the sound c)
 - » **trigraphs** (-tch= the sound ch, -dge = the sound j)
 - » other vowel-r combinations (are, air, our, ore, ear, eer, ure)
 - » silent letter combinations (knew, comb, write)
 - » multisyllabic words (com-mit-ment, ev-er-y, po-et)
 - » read and spell irregular high frequency words

By the end of third grade, your child should be able to do all of the kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade examples plus:

- read and spell:
 - » multisyllabic words building to 6 syllables
 - » possessives and plurals (house's, houses)
 - » common Latin roots (port, form, ject, dict, tend)
 - » prefixes and suffixes (-in, -un, -de, -ed, -est, -ing)

Sample Activities and Resources for Home

When driving in a car:

- Look for objects that begin or end with the letter _____. “I spy with my little eye something that begins with the letter (s).”
- Sound out words on signs or bumper stickers
- Look for specific letters on license plates



When doing chores or at home:

- Go on a treasure hunt for items (furniture, place, toy, etc.) that begin with a letter or that rhymes with _____ and clean it/put it away, etc.
- Read magazines or newspapers together and highlight words that follow a given pattern
- Play games with words such as Scrabble, Scattergories, or a pretend spelling bee

When cooking:

- Read recipes or box labels together and ask questions about the steps or ingredients
- Listen to your child read or have them tell you a story

When grocery shopping:

- Give kids the store advertisements or coupons and have them match them to the product
- Take turns reading the magazines and other books near the register while waiting in line

Questions To Ask Your Child's Teacher

General Questions:

- How many letters names/ letter sounds **should** my child know?
How many **do** they know?
- Can my child read words with (*insert the grade level skill you are wondering about*)?
- For example, "Can my child read cvc words like cat, sip, and run?
Can they read words with blends such as glad, stick, and strip?
Can they read words with VCe such as bike, ride, and tame?"
- What part of the **phonics** program can I work on at home with my child?
- What are my child's strengths when it comes to reading and spelling?
- Do you have concerns about my child's reading?
- How can I help my child when they read at home?
- What assessments are you using to measure my child's progress in reading?



The Importance of Fluency In Early Literacy Development

What is fluency instruction? Why is it important?

Fluency is your child's ability to read with proper speed, accuracy and expression. This is important because when your child can read with fluency they can understand what they are reading.

- **Speed** is the process of rapidly recognizing and absorbing phrases or sentences on a page all at once, rather than identifying individual words.
- **Accuracy** is the ability to read the text with very few or no mistakes.
- **Expression** is a way to convey your thoughts, feelings or emotions, think of how the characters would sound in their dialogue.
- **Fluency is NOT just being able to read fast!**

Who benefits from fluency instruction?

Students who struggle with basic reading (decoding) use a lot of energy and time and have a difficult time when it comes to **comprehending** (understanding) what they read.

What does fluency instruction look and sound like?

One way to improve Fluency: Repeated reading improves reading fluency & overall reading achievement. This means your child reads the same material multiple times out loud.

- The key to success with this method is to read the same material 4-5 times and teachers, family members, or peers should listen and give feedback and praise.

Research has repeatedly shown that word recognition accuracy, **automaticity, comprehension** and attitude toward reading have been linked to improvement with **repeated readings**.

Key Terms

1. **Comprehension**- Understanding what is read or written.
2. **Automaticity** -The ability to recognize words automatically or effortlessly.
3. **Reading Rate** - Number of words read orally in 1 minute. It involves the **automaticity** of reading. Rate is measured by counting the number of words in a specific passage and timing the **reader**.
4. **Repeated Readings**- The student reads a text multiple times to improve word recognition, automaticity, speed and accuracy as well as fluency.
5. **Reading with expression**- Students read with expression when they read with feeling that matches the meaning in the words. To do this students need to be fluent readers and understand the grammar such as commas, and end marks.
6. **Track**- The ability to move one's eyes smoothly to follow the words across the page and from one line of text to another.

What Your Child Should Be Able To Do

In grades K-2, your child should be able to:

- Follow or **track** letters/words across the page without losing his/her place.
- Name the letters and the sounds they make.
- Share/tell a story in sequence (starting from the beginning and finishing at the end.)
- (End of Kindergarten) name all letters and sounds automatically.
- (End of 1st grade) read about 60 words per minute.
- (End of 2nd grade) read 90 words per minute.

In grades 3-5, your child should be able to:

- Automatically recognize, pronounce, and understand the meaning of common prefixes, suffixes, and multisyllabic words.
- Students should be able to read with an expression that matches the intent of the passage.
- Resolve mistakes quickly.
- Read with expression throughout reading.
- (End of 3rd grade) read about 100 words per minute.
- (End of 4th grade) read about 120 words per minute.
- (End 5th grade) read about 140 words per minute.

Sample Activities and Resources for Home

These activities can be done anywhere using texts or reading apps, including:

- At home
- When driving in a car
- When doing chores such as cooking or doing laundry
- When grocery shopping

Below you will find activities listed that you can do with your child to strengthen fluency skills.

- Have your child practice rereading books they can easily decode so they can focus on reading them with accuracy and expression
- Read and sing the nursery rhymes with your child.
- Pick a book and take turns reading with your child! This lets them practice and they hear what a fluent reader should sound like!
- Practice reading the same passage using different voices or accents
- Echo read (family member reads, child echos same passage)

- Have a Family Poetry Jam Night or Reader’s Theatre to practice reading with expression

- » **For example: How to Plan a Family Poetry Jam Night**
(from [Reading Rockets](#))

Start with playful, rhyming poetry about topics that are familiar to your child like animals, food, and bedtime. Nursery rhymes and Mother Goose collections are early favorites.

Read the poetry aloud slowly. Emphasize the sound of the words and the rhymes. Read dramatically to emphasize the breaks and phrasing of the poem. Have fun with the colorful language and word play.

Reread the poem several times. Many popular poets for kids (for example Shel Silverstein and Jack Prelutsky) have several of their poems online. These can be printed and used for rereading. Favorite ones can be arranged into a family poetry notebook.

Once a poem is familiar to your child, take turns reading! First you read one line or one stanza, and have your child read the next. See if you can do that while maintaining the rhythm of the poem.

Plan your own family poetry jam. Have each member of the family choose and practice a favorite poem to share with the family. Set aside a special time to celebrate poetry by having each person share their poem.

Fun fact: April is national poetry month!

Questions To Ask Your Child's Teacher

General Questions:

- How can I help my child read without stopping to sound out words?
- How can I help my child to keep from losing their place when they read?
- How do I help my child have a conversation?
- How does accuracy support my child's fluency?
- How is my child's reading affecting what they understand?



The Importance of Background Knowledge and Vocabulary In Early Literacy Development

What are vocabulary and background knowledge instruction? Why are they important?

Background knowledge and vocabulary are important to language comprehension. Language comprehension is one of the components that helps students comprehend when they read.

Vocabulary

- The core definition of vocabulary is using and understanding words.
- Vocabulary building is pivotal in helping students understand what they read.
- Vocabulary can be **expressive** and **receptive**. **Receptive language** is what we read or hear. **Expressive language** is what we are able to say.
- There are different “types” or tiers of vocabulary words: frequently used words, academic words, **contextual words**
 - » (Tier 1) Frequently used words are words used day-to-day.
 - » (Tier 2) **Academic words** are words that students see in multiple places. **Academic words** are found in books, magazines, newspapers, etc.
 - » (Tier 3) **Contextual words or domain specific words** (Tier 3) are words that are specific to a topic or subject. Examples of words found in a specific subject like science are molecule, tundra, or atom.



Background Knowledge and Vocabulary

- Background knowledge is the information you know about a topic.
- Background knowledge is built through repeated exposure: lived experiences, online research, through reading literature and informational text, and by talking.
- Background knowledge helps the learner acquire new knowledge or builds on existing knowledge.

Key Terms

1. **Expressive**- What the child can say
2. **Receptive**- What the child understands
3. **Synonym**- Words that have the same meaning
4. **Antonym**- Word that is the opposite of a word (i.e. synonym - love; antonym - hate)
5. **Academic words**- words students will see in various places
6. **Contextual words or domain specific words**- words on a specific subject or topic

What Your Child Should Be Able To Do

By the end of K-2 your child should be able to:

- Answer questions about stories or texts to ensure comprehension.
- Figure out the meaning of unknown words.
- Use and understand common vocabulary including synonyms and antonyms.

By the end of 3-5 your child should be able to:

- Provide context for unfamiliar vocabulary words to aid in comprehension.
- Figure out the meaning of unknown words.
- Practice using unknown words and determine words that are similar or different.
- Answer questions about a text and use evidence to support their response.
- Use dictionaries or glossaries to help define words.
- Read multiple texts on a topic to build background about various content.

Sample Activities and Resources for Home

When at home:

- Read short stories before bed and add some time with them to discuss any part of the story that they do not understand well.
- Have your child retell the stories they read and add on to what they say with new vocabulary.
- Place sticky notes around the house with the names of the things and mix them up so the student can match the object with the word.
- Play table games focused on words and provide questions and answers to enhance the vocabulary.
- Watch educational TV channels that encourage vocabulary related to animals, plants, weather, etc.
- Have students help draft letters, cards, etc. to loved ones about new information they have learned or using words they have learned.

When driving in a car:

- Sing while driving to build vocabulary or build background knowledge if the song has any information related to history.
- Discuss shopping lists to build vocabulary.
- When sightseeing or riding around town, have a discussion about specific landmarks, or share stories about when you were a child and what life was like then.
- Have students use the new word and/or background information that they have learned in a sentence.

- Use your local or school library to help build background knowledge on a topic.
- Play games to find words that mean the same thing (**synonym**) or mean something different (**antonym**). For example, the family member gives a word and the student says a word that means the same (**synonym**) or different (**antonym**).
- Building vocabulary specific to NM (Pointing out geographical regions, landmarks, etc.).

Wherever you are:

- If your child shows interest in any topic such as the weather, certain animals, or how the body works, have discussions about what they know, share books or videos on the topic, and play games with facts about the topic.
- Helpful hints for building vocabulary (from [Reading Rockets](#))
 - » First, provide a simple, kid-friendly definition for the new word:
Enormous means that something is really, really big.
 - » Second, provide a simple, kid-friendly example that makes sense within their daily life:
Remember that really big watermelon we got at the grocery store? That was an *enormous* watermelon!
 - » Third, encourage your child to develop their own example:
What *enormous* thing can you think of? Can you think of something really big that you saw today? That's right! The bulldozer near the park was *enormous*! Those tires were huge.
 - » Lastly, keep your new words active within your house and throughout the day:
Over the next few days and weeks, take advantage of opportunities to use the new vocabulary word in conversation.

Questions To Ask Your Child's Teacher

General Questions:

- What topics are you reading about? Are there experiences I can do with my child to help them talk about what they are learning?
- How do I reinforce the vocabulary that my student is learning in school?
- How can I build my child's vocabulary in a fun or interactive way?
- Is it better to focus on using a digital or traditional dictionary to develop dictionary skills?
- How do I help my student(s) use new words in everyday conversations?
- How do I build background knowledge to help my students understand what they read?
- What can I do at home to help my child develop their vocabulary?



The Importance of Phonological Awareness In Early Literacy Development

What is phonological awareness? Why is it important?

Phonological awareness is the foundation for learning to read. It's the ability to recognize and work with sounds in spoken language. Phonological refers to the sound system in language and involves listening and speaking. Strong phonological awareness leads to quick word recognition and supports comprehension by freeing up attention to meaning rather than decoding. Phonological awareness is all about hearing. All phonological activities can be done with your eyes closed. Phonological awareness is the awareness that oral language can be broken up into smaller parts.

- Sentences can be broken into words,
- Words can be broken into parts of words (syllables),
- And parts of words can be broken into sounds (**phonemes**)

Who benefits from phonological awareness instruction? When should it be delivered?

Phonological awareness gets readers ready for print. Children begin learning about the sounds in our language at birth through interactions with adults in the world around them. Phonological Awareness is critical for learning to read and spell and should be an important part of literacy instruction in Pre-K to grade 2 for all children. Phonological difficulties can be prevented, corrected or minimized when phonological awareness skills are taught and mastered.

What does phonological awareness instruction look like and sound like?

Phonological awareness gets readers ready for print. Children begin learning about the sounds in our language at birth through interactions with adults in the world around them. Phonological Awareness is critical for learning to read and spell and should be an important part of literacy instruction in Pre-K to grade 2 for all children. Phonological difficulties can be prevented, corrected or minimized when phonological awareness skills are taught and mastered.

Sounds Like:

- **Identifying and making oral rhymes**
 - » “The pig has a (wig)” “Pat the (cat).” “The sun is (fun).”
- **Identifying and working with syllables in spoken words**
 - » “I can clap the parts in my name: An-drew.”
- **Identifying and working with onsets and rimes in spoken syllables or one-syllable words**
 - » “The first part of sip is the sound ssss.” “The last part of the word win is -in.”
- **Identifying and working with individual phonemes in spoken words**
 - » “The first sound in sun is sss.”

Looks Like:

- In a classroom, this might look like moving bodies connected to the sound, thumbs up, chopping sounds on arms, using colored blocks to represent sounds or parts of words, singing rhyming songs.

Key Terms

1. **Phonological Awareness** - Phonological awareness is the awareness that oral language can be broken up into smaller parts. Sentences can be broken into words, words into parts of words, and parts into sounds.
2. **Phonemic Awareness** - Understanding that words are made up of individual sounds.
3. **Phoneme** - Smallest unit of sound in a word. Ex: In the word “pat” there are three **phonemes** (sound) p-a-t.
4. **Phonological Processing** - A student’s use of sounds.
5. **Blending** - Putting sounds or syllables together to form words. Ex: the sounds sss-uuu-nnn blends to become the word “sun.” This skill is important for reading.
6. **Segmenting** - Breaking apart words to hear either individual syllables or individual sounds (phonemes) in a word. Ex: hat can be segmented into the sounds h-aaa-t. This skill is important for writing and spelling.

What Your Child Should Be Able To Do

By 8 months, your child should be able to:

- Make utterances with many vowels (e.g., “ma ma ma”, “da, da, da”)

By 18 months, your child should be able to:

- Engage in spontaneous vocal play (e.g., make voice louder/softer and babble)

By 24 months, your child should be able to:

- Respond to rhythms and hums or sing familiar songs

By the end of 3 years old, your child should be able to:

- Recite simple and familiar chants and rhymes
- Identify and separate syllables (word parts) in familiar words

By the end of 4 years old, your child should be able to:

- Identify words that rhyme when orally presented with matched pairs of words
- Identify and separate syllables in words and begin isolating initial sounds in spoken words
- Repeat alliterative language (e.g., “Cute cats can kiss”, “Pepe pecas pica papas con un pico”)

By the end of Kindergarten, your child should be able to:

- Consistently distinguish words that rhyme from those that do not rhyme
- Produce rhyming words when given a pattern (e.g., “what rhymes with rat and cat?”)
- Identifies, isolates and pronounces the beginning, ending, and middle sounds (phonemes) in 3 phoneme words

By the end of 1st Grade, your child should be able to:

- Blend sounds together (e.g., “the sounds c-a-t, blends together to say ‘cat’”)
- Segment sounds (e.g., the sounds in “cat” are c-a-t)

Grades 2-4

- Delete sounds to words (e.g., say “yum” without the y sound. “-um”)
- Add sounds to words (e.g., say -ant, add the k sound, “can’t”)
- Substitute sounds in words (e.g., say “deal”, change the d sound to the h sound, “heal”)

Sample Activities and Resources for Home

These activities can be done anywhere using texts or reading apps, including:

- At home
- When driving in a car
- When doing chores such as cooking or doing laundry
- When grocery shopping

Below you will find activities listed from easiest to hardest you can do with your child to strengthen phonological awareness skills.

Rhyming and Alliteration Activities

- Singing or reciting nursery rhymes
- Noticing when beginning sounds repeat (alliteration) such as Dr. Seuss’s ABC, Aunt Annie’s Alligator, A, a, A
- Singing rhyming songs like “Down by the Bay” where your child can create their own rhyme
- Coming up with rhyming words in word play (say “bat” and child responds with other words that rhyme “cat, hat, fat, sat”)
- Read books with rhyming words (Cat in the Hat)
- Say silly tongue twisters together
- Give your child two words and ask if they rhyme (ham, jam rhyme; ham hat do not rhyme)

- Ask your child to give you a word that rhymes (what rhymes with nut?)
- Give your child 3 words and ask which one does not rhyme. (mat, sun, fat)

Syllable Activities

- Counting out syllables in words using a sock puppet (cer-e-al, mu-ffin, choc-o-late)
- Jump, walk or skip to the number of syllables or sounds in a word
- “Snail talk”—break a word into either syllables or individual sounds and see if your child can guess the word (say dog, say house, put together for doghouse) (Touch your l-e-g) (What is my word, say the sounds separated “b...-ig”?)
- Using beans, legos, or household objects to match number of sounds/ syllables in a word
- Give your student a compound word like birdhouse. Take away ‘bird’, what is left? (Answer: house)

Sound (phoneme level) Activities

- In the car, “I spy with my little eye...either something that rhymes with ____ or something that begins with the sound sss”
- Sort items by beginning sound
- Identifying the first, last and middle sound they hear in words. First sounds are the easiest, followed by ending and last to develop is middle sounds
- **Blending** individual sounds into words (c-a-t = cat)
- Sound Scavenger Hunt (give child a sound p and have them find things around the house that start with the sound)

Questions To Ask Your Child's Teacher

General Questions:

- What do you see as my child's strengths?
- What are academic challenges for my child?
- What part of this reading assessment measures **phonological awareness**? How is my child doing on that part of the assessment?
- Can my child break down words into syllables? Can my child break down words into individual sounds?
- Can my child **blend** whole words from separate syllables? Can my child **blend** words from individual sounds?
- What is my child learning in **phonological awareness** and what do I need to know about what they are learning?
- What can I do to help my child at home with **phonological awareness**? Is my child performing at the expected level for this time of year?
- How is my child assessed in **phonological awareness**?
- Is my child meeting the developmental milestones of **phonological awareness**?
- What can be done to help my child in class?
- What **phonemic awareness** program are you using and how often is it used?

