

PHONEMIC AWARENESS

CHAPTER ONE – HEARING THE SOUNDS IN WORDS

In this chapter, I'll share: 1) why phonemic awareness is important, 2) many fun ways you can help your children build their awareness of phonemes, and 3) how these skills will impact reading and spelling success.

I want you to know that demonstrating an awareness of sounds in words can be a little tricky. If you find that *you're* not quite hearing all the sounds in words, don't be concerned. Phonemic awareness is not necessarily a prerequisite for learning to read and spell, but it is a very strong predictor of reading and writing achievement, and it is certainly worthwhile for us to engage our kids in fun-focused explorations of the sounds in words.

Remember, the English language is code-based. For us, that simply means that we have symbols, the letters of the alphabet, and that those letters that represent sounds or phonemes. We won't be addressing letter names, in these first lessons. We're just going to think about and *play with* sounds in words. Understand that when students can hear, repeat, and manipulate sounds in words, they are setting up for reading and spelling success and thereby strong academic achievement.

As you begin to heighten your children's awareness of sounds in words through playful, foundation-building interactions, your soon-to-be-readers will become better equipped to connect those sounds with letters. That's what we call phonics. Again, since we're focusing on the sounds without addressing letter names, we're working on building phonemic awareness.

I will be providing several different Building Block activities, that will equip your children to become successful readers, and YOU will be in the front seat to watch the magic. I would love for you to do all the Building Block activities for each lesson over a couple of days to a week or more. Each activity in this section serves to promote phonemic awareness. Each of the *Building Blocks* will help to build a solid Foundation for Literacy achievement.

Here are some suggestions for success across every lesson:

- Schedule your Building Block activity time for when your children will receive it best. Make it a date! (Asking kids to come in from playing with friends or to turn off the video game to "get this stuff done" isn't inspiring.)
- Smile a lot. Laugh. Give words of encouragement but keep it real. (Kids know when we're faking!)
- Avoid saying, "You're so smart." If children hear these words when they do something well, they may be less inclined to take risks the next time because they don't want to lose their "smart" status.
- Avoid saying, "No." If your children do something incorrectly, recognize that you understand why they thought that (if it's true), then provide the correct response, and give a quick tip so they can get it the next time. (Ask someone to watch you to be sure you're not furrowing your brow or shaking your head – no – when you're working with your children. Sometimes we don't even know that our very demeanor appears negative.)
- If your children don't *get it*, spend some time modeling correct responses. Remember, we're teaching not quizzing.

- Continually monitor your children's levels of engagement. Quit *before* they lose interest. Leave them eager to begin again the next time. Do not set a timer or make bribes. This time should feel like it is the reward. It should not require one.
- You may, certainly, repeat lessons if additional practice is needed. Keep coming back to the tricky ones.
- Remember that you don't have to be captivating. Strive instead to be captivated (by your child). S/he truly is a marvel. Am I right?
- Finally, share your successes. Have your children show off their new skills with others. Genuine praise is pure glory!

BUILDING BLOCK #1: Rhyming Words

One fun way to build your children's phonemic awareness is to read books with strong rhyming patterns. Words that rhyme are words that have the same sounds from the final vowel (a, e, i, o, or u), on. Actually, those are considered *perfect* rhymes. If you listen to music in most any genre, you recognize that many lyricists also use *imperfect* rhymes, where the words are "close" to rhyming, but the sounds aren't exactly the same.

In this lesson, we're going to think about *perfect* rhymes.

There are lots of games for you to play throughout the upcoming days to promote your children's sense of rhyme. I suggest that you read at least one rhyming book a day.

Also, Dr. Seuss (and others) uses crazy, made-up words to make rhymes, and you can, too! We don't want all the words to be nonsense words, but certainly some of them can be. It's fun!

Make it your diligent aim to engage in one of these Building Block Activities, each day:

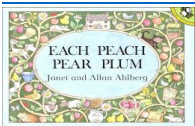
BUILDING BLOCK #1a: Fill in the correct Rhyming Words

To begin, read a book with a strong rhyming pattern. You may wish to choose one of these:

[Bear Wants More](#)



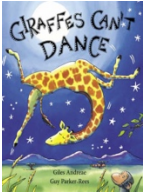
[Each Peach Pear Plum](#)



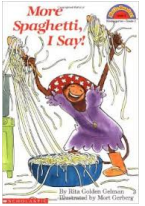
[Little Blue Truck](#)



Giraffes Can't Dance



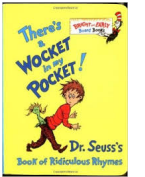
More Spaghetti I Say



That Cat Can't Stay



There's a Wocket in My Pocket



The Pout Pout Fish



Get started reading and enjoying many books' rhythm and rhyme. Stop, on occasion, to see if your children can fill in the second word that completes the rhyme that you strategically omit. For example, in the Little Blue Truck by Alice Schertle, you might say,

“Neigh,” said the horse.
“Quack,” said the duck.
“Beep,” said the friend-ly
little blue tr_____.

You do want to include all the sounds before the final vowel, as I've demonstrated with **tr**____. Our kids only need to fill in the ending part of the rhyme. Otherwise, it's just a guessing game. We definitely want our kids to focus on the missing ending sound. We don't want them to *guess* what word it *could* be. It's not a little blue bird. Though that would make sense, it doesn't fit in with the rhyming pattern. We don't want them to even think of what *rhyming* word it could be. It's not a little blue stuck. That rhymes, but it doesn't make sense. By making the initial sounds *tr*, we're focusing on the rhyming pattern and providing enough support so it's not a guessing game. It's hearing the pattern and completing the pattern when provided the initial sounds.

For further practice of this type-
Sing:

“I’m a little tea pot
short and stout.
Here is my handle,
here is my sp_____.”

or, you could sing, *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*, but instead of singing all of the words, you could say,

“... Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sk_____.”

Can your children fill in the correct word endings? If they can, it indicates that they have a good sense of rhyme.

BUILDING BLOCK #1b: Recognizing the Rhyming Words

Here’s a movement activity that my students love. I ask them to stand up and to march in place as I say lots of rhyming words, keeping the marching beat. You might say a word, for example, on each right-footed step. Then, when the kids hear a word that does NOT rhyme with the others, they are to plop down on the floor right away. I often begin like this:

rub, tub, stub, flub, club, sub, dub, cub, rub, chub, feather, grub, hub . . .

Hopefully, the kids plop down when they hear *feather*. If they don’t, read the words again, and YOU plop down. Explain that the word *feather* doesn’t sound like the other words. All the words end with /ub/, but the word feather has a *different* ending. Tell them that they, too, are to listen for words that don’t follow the rhyming pattern, and that when they hear a word that doesn’t have an ending sound like the others, they should plop down right away.

You will be reminded, when you observe the word lists below, that we absolutely cannot depend on spellings to determine whether words rhyme. Though your children won’t *see* the words as they’re playing this game with you, you can make note of this fact with your kids, today or another day. By the way, we will have explicit lessons teaching the varied ways to spell sounds in upcoming lessons. (And don’t worry. It’ll be fun!)

Remember to say these words slowly, correctly enunciating each sound.

Here are some lists of rhyming words along with one non-rhyming word to use as you play the marching game:

**Do not do these all at one time. Do a few each day, across several days. We want to spiral the practice, continually coming back to lessons until the skills are solidified.*

rot, bought, caught, tot, lot, thought, not, dot, spot, fought, camera, pot, got . . .

hip, sip, trip, flip, ship, rip, drip, snip, grip, lip, rooster, slip, zip . . .

week, peek, freak, bleak, flipping, beak, sneak . . .

lend, bend, tend, mend, pool, send, blend . . .

start, chart, dart, cart, smart, game, tart, art . . .

blue, chew, glue, new, stew, shoe, boo, crew, do, goo, who, clue, dog, through, true . . .

bat, cat, that, spat, mat, chat, horse, sat, flat . . .

cab, flab, tab, paper, slab, grab. . .

core, snore, door, store, more, chore, oar, pour, shore, adore, four, ignore, man, roar, war . . .

sock, chalk, dock, flock, mock, talk, shock, man, crock, block . . .

car, star, bar, wind, far, jar . . .

ice, mice, twice, dice, nice, dirt, rice, vice . . .

goat, float, boat, smote, note, wrote, coat, vote, moat, gloat, throat, kind, bloat, tote . . .

trees, fleas, bees, knees, wheeze, please, glove, he's, seize . . .

sun, done, nun, stun, won, pun, ton, shun, gun, fun, whack, bun, run . . .

bit, knit, fit, smile, hit, split . . .

BUILDING BLOCK #1c: Do These Words Rhyme?

- “Do these words rhyme?”

Say a word (e.g. shot), and then, another word (e.g. caught). Ask if the words rhyme. Your children will respond saying either yes or no.

If they respond incorrectly, repeat the words landing on the final sounds a little harder. Make the final sounds in both words and say, “Yes, they *do* rhyme. I can tell because...” or “They *don't* rhyme. I can tell because... Now, you try the next one. Listen carefully to the ending sounds in each word.”

- __(action) __ if these words rhyme.

For the next game, you simply name an action, “__(e.g. smile) __ if these words rhyme. (e.g. love/glove)

My students love this one! You can think of your own actions, depending on where you are. If you're outside, you could come up with many other things to do! If you are doing this at home, your child could even be in the bathtub! (e.g. “If these words rhyme, wash your toes!”)

Action Ideas- smile, wink, high five, tap your head, jump, blow a kiss, touch your toes, rub your belly, clap one time, clap two times, wave, give a thumbs up, stand on one leg, wiggle your nose, snort like a pig, spin in a circle, etc.

Below is a word list, for your convenience. For non-rhyming words, simply mix two non-paired words like *had* and *egg*. You may use this list of rhyming words for any of the rhyming games.

Word List:

had-bad	feet-sweet	toy-joy	band-stand	nickel-pickle
egg-leg	high-try	pal-Hal	star-car	ball-tall
slip-trip	go-snow	small-tall	gym-him	truck-stuck
shop-plop	true-flew	hug-tug	jet-net	fan-man
sun-won	hook-book	win-thin	rough-tough	egg-leg
day-stay	snoop-goop	slush-hush	good-would	sip-tip
flea-tree	cart-smart	cloud-plowed	best-rest	food-rude
wise-guys	how-now	mower-slower	bow-cow	boy-toy
hope-nope	show-snow	fly-try	whip-sip	hot-pot
cute-suit	horse, course	trick-stick	tie-buy	win-tin
map-flap	claw-straw	shape-cape	blue-shoe	light-right
head, red	fur-stir	hop-flop	grow-no	take-cake
bin, chin	sing-thing	might-white	place-face	seat-wheat
hot-shot	wink-pink	black-track	sock-clock	tug-bug
sun-fun	mall-hall	fellow-Jello	neck-deck	time-slime
stay-tray	pal-shall	hat-cat	shirt-dirt	tea-bee

BUILDING BLOCK #1d: Fill in the Blank With a Rhyming Word

- Finish this rhyme. red/bed- blue/_____ (e.g., glue)

In this game, you say two rhyming words to offer some support, and then you say another word (that's easily matched for rhyming) and encourage your children to fill in any rhyming word.

- clap, clap (clap hands together) snow - slap, slap (slap hands on legs) grow

This game has some action, so it may be more engaging. Also, the more senses we involve, the more likely it is to stick with our kids. Clap your hands together twice and say a word. Then slap your hands on your legs, twice, and have your children fill in a rhyming word. Try to keep it going without breaking the beat! It might help to have a list of easy rhyming words nearby. I have provided one, above. Don't worry. I'm not trying to insult your *mad* rhyming skills! I can tell you from experience that sometimes it's difficult to think of words on the fly. ☺

Of course, your kids will not have to name the provided rhyming words. Any rhyming words will do.

- What rhymes with miss and starts with /k/? miss - k(iss).

This game is a fun one, too. You want to try to keep it going— to keep a steady beat.

You simply say the first word, then you make the first sound of the second word, and the kids fill in the rime. (Yes, that's how it's spelled!)

e.g. You say: What rhymes with *fly* and starts with /tr/? (That /tr/ is called the onset. It's the part of the word that comes before the rime, which is the rhyming part of the word.) The child will say *try*.

My friend's daughter *still* talks about her mom posing this one:

What rhymes with art and starts with /f/?

Whatever it takes to captivate your child, right? ☺

Use the rhyming words listed, above, as needed.

BUILDING BLOCK #1e: Rhyming Word Videos

If you search for videos on the web that feature rhyming words, may I suggest that you choose those that do not show the word spellings and that do provide the correct definition of rhymes? The top video in my most recent Google search was not one I would recommend, so don't lean on popularity to make your choices. But, I liked the second one. It provided an accurate definition of rhymes, it focused only on the sounds- not the spellings, and it was not terribly annoying. That sure helps!

[Rhyming Word Video on YouTube](#) Try this one.

I hope you enjoy playing with words alongside your soon-to-be readers. Remember, as you play these games together, you are adding building blocks that provide the foundation for your children's literacy achievement.

Now, we've spent a lot of time learning about rhyming words. It's time to move on to another foundational skill. Remember to keep coming back, as needed or desired, to practice rhyming words.

BUILDING BLOCK #2: Words *Beginning* With the Same Sounds & Words *Ending* With the Same Sounds

Remember, the English language is a code-based language. For us, that simply means that we have symbols, or letters, that represent sounds, or phonemes. For now, we're just going to focus on and play with beginning and ending sounds in words (not, necessarily, including the vowel). As you work to heighten your children's awareness of beginning and ending sounds through playful, foundation-building interactions, your soon-to-be-readers will become better equipped to connect those sounds with letters. That's phonics. Today, we're focusing on sounds without addressing letter names. In other words, we're continuing our work on building phonemic awareness.

BUILDING BLOCK #2a- Listening to Beginning Sounds in Words

For this lesson, you may wish to have some flavored lip balm, a handheld mirror, and a tissue. It sounds crazy, maybe, but you'll soon see why . . .

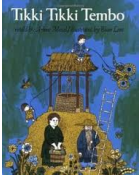
Presently, we are working to heighten kids' awareness of sounds and we're going to add some awareness of what our mouths are actually *doing* when we produce those sounds. Often, I use a pointer finger, pointing to my mouth, to draw attention to the sounds I want kids to hear. There are quite a few letters and letter

combinations that sound similar, and we want to help our kids *distinguish* those sounds one from another. Recognizing what our mouths are doing as we make sounds can be helpful in identifying letter sounds and even in promoting accurate speech, which absolutely can impact spelling skills. (e.g. twuck vs truck)

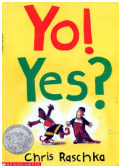
As I will often do, I encourage you to find a book to kick off this lesson featuring alliteration, words that begin with the same sounds. If you already have some, wonderful! If not, here are some that you can pick up at your library or local bookstore, or you can order them online. Note that these book titles are directly linked to Amazon.com for your convenience.

Here are some suggestions:

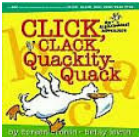
[Tikki Tikki Tembo](#)



[Yo! Yes?](#)



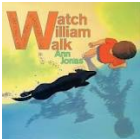
[Click, Clack, Quackity-Quack](#)



[Six Sick Sheep](#)



[Watch William Walk](#)



As you're reading one or more of these books or others like them, stop on occasion and ask, "What words, in this sentence (or on these pages), begin with the same sounds?" Read the sentence(s) to the children. Do not have them look at the pages, pointing out the words visually. We don't want them to rely on finding the same beginning letters on the pages. That is an unreliable approach. We want our kids to hear the sounds, to notice when sounds are the same, and to notice when they differ. After the lesson, you can show the kids the words that have different beginnings (like Hey! and Who? in Yo! Yes?), and you can teach them that sounds can be

spelled in a variety of ways, so we cannot rely on the first letter to determine whether words begin with the same sounds or not.

BUILDING BLOCK #2b- What is My/Your Mouth Doing?

Materials you may choose to use:

Lip balm

Hand mirror

Tissue

To play the first game, point one pointer finger to your mouth when you make the first sound of a word. Move it away from your mouth as you make the rest of the sounds in the word. Then, point the other pointer finger to your mouth when you make the first sound of another word, and move it away from your mouth as you make the rest of the sounds. You want to highlight what your mouth is doing at the beginnings of both words, so your children can more readily note the similarities or differences as you produce those sounds.

I do this, in the beginning, because sometimes kids don't quite *get* what I mean when I say, "What sound comes at the beginning of the word." It may be a little abstract for young ones.

You can ask, "What were my lips doing at the beginning of the first word? What were they doing at the beginning of the second word? Are they the same sounds, or are they different sounds? By the way, it is possible that your lips look like they're doing the same things, but the sound produced is different. Think about /p/ & /b/, /t/ & /d/, /k/ & /g/, /f/ & /v/, and /s/ & /z/. Did you realize that? We'll avoid having our kids relying *solely* on what our mouths are doing, but it can certainly be helpful.

There are some really tricky words with beginning sounds that may require the use of a tissue. For example, when we say *ship* and *chip*, our mouths are doing nearly the same things for the beginning sounds. The primary difference is the way the air is pushed *through* our mouths. You may use a tissue, held in front of your mouth, to demonstrate the difference. Another example where a tissue may be necessary is with the words *thin* and *that*. They do begin with exactly the same letters, but they make slightly different sounds. I refer to the two sounds for t-h as either a *puff* (as in *thin*) because we're puffing air out, or a *buzz* (as in *that*) because our teeth are buzzing on our tongues.

As you're working together through the activities below, you may notice that some children have some speech considerations. For example, the words *finger* and *think* do not have the same beginning sounds, but young learners may say *think* like this: /fink/. Many kids confuse those sounds and others. If one of your children does this, be matter of fact about it. No drama. Explain that you could practice saying the sound correctly, if you'd both like to. Then, let it go. Move on. Remember to avoid saying, "No." Instead, try saying, "That's the tricky one. We'll get it. Remember, (with /th/, for example) this is the one where you stick out your tongue. I think *you* put your teeth on your bottom lip like this: /f/. Watch me when I say *think*. Do you see my tongue? That's what we do when we make the /th/ (puff) or /th/ (buzz) sounds." Invite your learners to use a hand mirror to observe their own mouths as they produce sounds.

I tell my students that sticking out our tongues is NOT ALLOWED (stern face), *UNLESS* we're making a puff or buzz sound (for t-h words). ☺

Words beginning with an /l/ as in *like* and a /y/ as in *yawn* have very similar mouth formations, but the tongue is doing something different. If needed, TALK about what your mouths are doing. It sounds crazy, but you can help your children move forward by risking a little CrAzY.

BUILDING BLOCK #2c- Do These Words Begin With the Same Sounds?

Now, to play the first game ask:

Do these words begin with the same sounds?

Have your children say the words before they tell you if they have the same beginning sounds or not. Again, you may encourage them to use a hand mirror to enhance the talk about what your mouths are doing as you produce the initial or beginning sounds.

Ask:

Do these words begin with the same sounds?

win & whisker	(yes, /w/)	(mouth looks like a smooch)
bowl & blocks	(yes, /b/)	(lips closed and puff air between lips)
diaper & love	(no, /d/ & /l/)	(puff air between tongue and roof of mouth - no puff)
night & pie	(no, /n/ & /p/)	(tip of tongue in front on roof of mouth - puff closed lips)
cats & kite	(yes, /k/)	(back of tongue on roof of mouth, mouth open)
ship & chuck	(no, /sh/ & /ch/)	(tissue test- sh puffs tissue out - ch puffs air downward)
zap & zoo	(yes, /z/)	(squeeze air out with a buzz and tongue on top & behind teeth)
finger & think	(no, /f/ & /th/)	(top teeth on lower lip - top teeth on tongue, both puffing air)
gingerbread & jump	(yes, /j/)	(lips open, teeth closed, quick puff of air out)
wrist & right	(yes, /r/)	(lips and teeth slightly apart, air in throat)
gone & him	(no, /g/ & /h/)	(quick air puff in throat with tongue in back - open air throat)
monster & mug	(yes, /m/)	(lips closed, nose buzzes and makes sound)
wrong & rug	(yes, /r/)	(looks like smooch & lips and teeth slightly apart, air in throat)
slug & touch	(no, /s/ & /t/)	(tongue behind teeth - puff air between tongue and roof mouth)
like & yawn	(no, /v/ & /y/)	(tongue on roof of mouth - tongue down with chin dropping)

BUILDING BLOCK #2d- Comparing Ending Sounds in Words

To play the next game, cover your mouth with one flat hand. Move it down and away from your mouth as you make the last sound in the first word. Then, cover your mouth with the other hand. Move it away to reveal your mouth as you make the last sound in the second word. You want to highlight what your mouth is doing at the *ends* of both words, so you're highlighting the similarities or differences in the final sounds.



You can even ask, “What were my lips doing at the end of the first word? What were they doing at the end of the second word? Are they the same sounds, or are they different sounds at the ends of these two words?”

You don't have to keep your hands going throughout the entire game. Try *not* using them and see if your kids can *still* differentiate the sounds.

Ask:

Do these words end with the same sounds?

ax & sauce (yes, /s/)
dad & read (yes, /d/)
purple & slurp (no, /l/ & /p/)
pot & strut (yes, /t/)
paper & run (no, /r/ & /n/)
type & hop (yes, /p/)
dog & dot (no, /g/ & /t/)
slam & math (no, /m/ & /th/)
crunch & pitch (yes, /ch/)
scab & poke (no, /b/ & /k/)
hum & stream (yes, /m/)
hello & no (yes, /o/)
frog & hug (yes, /g/)

blue & tutu (yes, /oo/)
stop & drum (no, /p/ & /m/)
coffee & me (yes, /ee/)
love & drive (yes, /v/)
terrific & block (yes, /k/)
chair & carpet (no, /r/ & /t/)
bunny & we (yes, /ee/)
van & ocean (yes, /n/)
crib & bathtub (yes, /b/)
tough & fat (no, /f/ & /t/)
pumpkin & ran (yes, /n/)
cool & simple (yes, /l/)
pause & fizz (yes, /z/)

BUILDING BLOCK #3: Listening Closely to Spoken Words (focus)

As we work with kids on phonemic awareness, it's important to recognize just how much concentration is required of your children. We need kids to hear the sounds in words, but we also need to teach them to really *tune in* with laser focus. Today, strive to engage fully with your children so that the hard work is genuinely rewarding for everyone involved. Giggle, hug, and just have some fun. The first game is always a hit with my young scholars, so I believe it will be a great way to begin your time together.

BUILDING BLOCK #3a- Listen Well and Catch My Mistake.

Following, you'll find some common songs, refrains, or items in categories. Your children will try to figure out what doesn't belong. In my classes, when I tried to fit all these phonemic awareness lessons into one hour (Oh my . . .), I saved this one for when the kids were getting a bit worn out. It always got their waning attention right back on track. Today, you'll be *beginning* with the fun! See if your children can listen closely and identify what doesn't belong with the others. Also - and this is important - have them explain what's wrong with the imposter word. Why doesn't "shoe" fit in with A-B-C-D-E-F-shoe-H-I-J-K . . .? We really want kids to be able to justify their responses. It's a fun and effective way to stretch kids and to encourage deeper thinking. It will also prepare them to demonstrate their understanding (comprehension) of text they read.

Do not feel you have to do all of these in one sitting. Sprinkle them throughout the day or over a couple of days. Do them when your kids are in the bathtub, on the swing set, climbing a tree, or riding in the car. Practice anywhere your children can focus for a short stretch of time.

Say or sing the following phrases with a somewhat slower pace than normal speech. Don't be boring but be deliberately clear. Enunciate your speech just a bit more than usual.

Imposter words are in bold. (Not that you needed any help, here.)

♪ A-B-C-D-E-F-**shoe**-H-I-J-K . . .

(Justification example- Shoe isn't a letter of the alphabet. It's a thing you wear on your foot.)

red, green, blue, yellow, black, **motorcycle**, pink, . . .

(Justification example- Motorcycle isn't a color. It's a vehicle.)

June, September, July, October, May, **hotdog**, January . . .

(Justification example- Hotdog isn't a month. It's a food.)

♪ Happy birthday to you. Happy **foxday** to you . . .

(Justification example- It should say, Happy *birthday* to you. Foxday isn't a word.)

Jack and Jill went up the **pickle** to fetch a pail of water . . .

(Justification example- The poem says, Jack and Jill went up the *hill*. They couldn't go up a pickle.)

1, 2, 3, 4, **flower**, 6, 7, 8 . . .

(Justification example- Flower isn't a number. It's a plant.)

♪ Twinkle, twinkle little **boat**. How I wonder . . .

(Justification example- The song says, . . . little star.)

square, circle, triangle, diamond, **shark**, rectangle . . .

(Justification example- A shark isn't a shape. It's an animal.)

♪ Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle **chair** the way . . .

(Justification example- The song says, Jingle all the way.)

car, truck, motorcycle, van, **popsicle**, go cart . . .

(Justification example- Popsicle isn't a vehicle. It's a treat.)

puppy, kitten, hamster, goldfish, **bread**, parrot . . .

(Justification example- Bread isn't a pet. It's a food.)

football, soccer, basketball, baseball, **princess**, hockey . . .

(Justification example- Princess isn't a sport. It's a person of royalty.) –*Yeah. Like a kid would say that.* ☺

♪ Old MacDonald **sneezed** a farm, e-i-e-i-o . . .

(Justification example- The song says, “Old MacDonald had a farm.”)

M&Ms, Reese's Cups, Skittles, **spinach**, Hershey bars . . .

(Justification example- Spinach isn't a candy. It's a vegetable.)

run, dance, play, swing, **potato chips**, sing . . .

(Justification example- Potato chips are a snack, not an action. We can't potato chips.)

grass, frogs, alligators, lettuce, **root beer**, broccoli . . . (*Tricky!*)

(Justification example- Root beer isn't green. It's brown.)

brother, grandma, cousin, dad, sister, **rollercoaster**, mom . . .

(Justification example- Rollercoasters aren't people in our families. They are rides.)

mittens, boots, coats, scarves, earmuffs, **pizza**, gloves

(Justification example- Pizza is not something we wear in the cold. It's food.)

♪ The itsy bitsy spider went up the waterspout. Down came the **bubblegum** and washed the spider out.

(Justification example- The song says, "Down came the rain and washed the spider out.")

eagle, goose, owl, duck, hawk, **watermelon**, woodpecker, robin

(Justification example- Watermelon is not a bird. It's a fruit.)

BUILDING BLOCK #3b- Listen For and Follow Directions in Songs

Here's one more idea to reinforce good listening.

Turn on some music videos, and have kids listen to the lyrics and follow the directions in the songs. Here are some suggestions for you:

Dan Zane's [All Around the Kitchen on YouTube](#)

The Hokey Pokey

(To differentiate the left and right hands, draw with a washable marker (or place two strips of tape) to make an uppercase L on the left hand with the pointer finger and the thumb sticking out. Or, if your students write with their right hands, have them hold a crayon in that hand to remember that their *write* hands are their *right* hands.)



[Hokey Pokey Song on YouTube](#) **WE NEED NEW HOKEY POKEY SONG!** 😊

[Follow Directions with Exercise on YouTube, by Mark D. Pencil](#)

[Move and Freeze on YouTube](#), Kids Songs by The Learning Station

BUILDING BLOCK #4- Sliding Sounds Together to Make Words

You will slowly *s-t-r-e-t-c-h o-u-t* words, sound by sound, while stretching a Slinky-type toy or another stretchy item. The children will be challenged to slide those sounds back together, more quickly, and to recognize each word you are saying.

To be clear, you will verbally stretch out the word, while stretching something stretchy between your hands. The kids will also be stretching their own items with you, while facing you. You will then quickly slide those sounds (as well as the stretchy tool you're using) back together, saying the word as one would normally say it.

Note: This practice can help kids to *hold sounds* in their working memories, which is an important skill in learning to read.

BUILDING BLOCK #4a- I Say it Slowly, You Say it Quickly

Sit, facing your children. If it's only two of you, sit with your knees touching their knees. Slowly say the words listed below, stretching them out sound by sound. Then, slide those sounds together more quickly, and your children will name the word you stretched.

You say: /u/-/p/.

The kids stretch a rubber band (or something else that's stretchy) while you're stretching out the sounds. You can repeat it, and they can make the sounds with you. Then, when you've finished stretching out the sounds, the kids will reduce the tension in their rubber bands by bringing their hands close together, and quickly make the same sounds you made, identifying the word.

Kids say: /up/

Word Lists for Stretching

Words With Two Sounds:

You Stretch and Say:

/u-p/
/a-z/
/e-g/
/m-e/
/a-sh/
/i-f/
/w-e/
/u-s/
/o-ff/
/a-t/

The kids slide the Sounds Together & say:

up
as
egg
me
ash
if
we
us
off
at

Words With Three Sounds:

/l-u-v/
/c-a-t/
/h-u-g/
/sh-r-t/
/k-i-ss/
/sh-i-p/
/n-e-ck/
/ch-o-p/
/b-a-th/
/f-ee-d/

love
cat
hug
shirt
kiss
ship
neck
chop
bath
feed

Words With Four Sounds:

/t-r-u-ck/

truck

/s-o-f-t /	soft
/t-ur-t-l/	turtle
/t-a-f-ee/	taffy
/p-u-p-ee/	puppy
/t-i-ck-l/	tickle
/s-u-ck-er/	sucker
/p-l-u-g/	plug
/s-w-i-m/	swim
/b-e-l-l-y/	belly

Words With Five Sounds:

/r-a-bb-i-t/	rabbit
/c-r-u-mb-s/	crumbs
/c-a-n-d-ee/	candy
/s-p-e-n-d/	spend
/d-a-n-s-r/	dancer
/d-i-sh-e-z/	dishes
/p-a-n-d-uh/	panda
/b-l-o-ck-s/	blocks
/k-i-tt-e-n/	kitten
/s-t-i-ck-er/	sticker

A NOTE JUST FOR PARENTS, FOR NOW-

We won't need to go beyond words with four and five sounds, because eventually students will spell, making the sounds for each **syllable** in words. For example, when spelling the word *caterpillar*, the kids will first say the word, dividing it into syllables. They'll say and spell cat, then they'll say and spell er, then they'll say and spell pil, and finally they'll say and spell lar. (We'll teach them, eventually, that **every syllable has a vowel**, so even when the vowel is being *bossed* by an r (we don't hear the vowel), the kids will know that there is a vowel there.)

To differentiate *syllables* (groups of sounds, each containing one vowel sound) from *phonemes* (each individual sound), we will be teaching kids to **clap for each syllable (which is bigger)**, rather than **tap, as we do when making each individual sound, or phoneme (which is smaller)**.

As I share each phonics rule (of thumb), beginning in chapter two, you will come to understand that those rules actually apply to each **syllable**, not just whole words. Remember, syllables always contain a vowel sound and often, a consonant precedes or follows the vowel sound. (There are rare exceptions. Some "words" containing no vowels are actually just sounds that convey meaning. Think: Sh! or Psst.)

Some syllables can consist of only a vowel sound. Think of the word **open**. Say it like this: o – pen (two claps). Notice that the *o* stands alone. It's *open*, as a syllable. Notice, too, that *pen* makes up the second and final syllable. The *e* makes a short sound because it is enclosed between two consonants. If we divided it like this: op – en, the word would be pronounced differently. You can explain to your kids that most of the time, when we have really short words (and syllables) that have vowels at the ends, the vowels say their names. We call those open vowels or open syllables.

Open vowel/syllable word examples: A, be, he, me, she, the*, we, hi, I, go, no, so

Now think of the word **di-no-saur**. Kids will be better equipped to spell this word when they know the rule about open vowels. The word couldn't be divided like this: din-os-aur because the d-i-n would say /din/, and the o-s would say /os/. Make sense?

I have an easy way to teach this in an upcoming lesson. I call it **Any Vowel Can Jump. (It doesn't *always*, but it *can*.)**

For example, in the word *open*, think about the magic e jumping over the p to make the o say its name. In the word dinosaur, think about the o jumping over the n to make the i say its name and the letter a jumping over the s to make the a say its name. It's not a hard-fast rule, but it works a LOT of the time, and it's easy for kids to understand once they learn about the magic e.

If that all sounds too complicated, don't worry. I'll share more about it, soon, and it will all make sense. ☺

As you practice playing **I Say It Slowly, You Say It Quickly**, remember that this skill is important because we are going to teach your children to decode words. When kids decode, they observe the letters, make the sounds those letters represent, one-by-one, across the words, moving from left to right. Then they quickly slide those sounds together to determine what word is written.

Soon, when our children see, for example, the word *log*, we will direct them to place a pointer finger under the first letter of the word, make the associated sound, /l/, then move to the next letter, produce that sound, /o/, and move on to the final letter and make *that* sound, /g/. We need the children to be able to *hold those sounds* in their minds and to recognize, when they slide the sounds together, that those sounds make a word they know. This game, *I Say it Slowly-You Say it Quickly* is a fantastic way to get kids ready for decoding words.

If your children struggle with this practice, just keep at it, for only a few minutes each time, throughout the day. To build energy, praise-in big ways-every approximation. Remember to say things like, "You almost got it!" rather than "No. That's not right." Remember to smile, be encouraging about what your kids are doing well, and make it fun. Avoid even shaking your head "No". Resist becoming frustrated and frowning your brow.

Also, avoid saying things like, "You're so smart!" This might imply that we are *smart* when we get it right and, therefore, *dumb*, when we don't. This kind of thinking can discourage risk-taking. Our aim is to encourage kids to take chances with their thinking. Right does not equal smart. Working hard, even when we're wrong a lot, leads to growth.

Remind yourself of when these young children began walking. We encouraged everything even close to the right moves. It's the same with these reading and spelling skills. Smiles, encouraging voices, genuine praises... These are the things that keep kids working at it.

By the way, this IS work. We don't refrain from calling it work. Anything worth doing usually requires at least *some* work. What we need to do is to make it so kids don't *mind* the work so much, because it's just so darn rewarding to grow!

Again, it's okay that this is not easy. (And resist saying that this *is* easy.) Genuine satisfaction comes from doing work that's hard and, finally, though it began as a struggle, succeeding. *Please note that it is equally troubling when we say that things are very hard, and they are not difficult at all.

Again, you must constantly remind kids of the many ways they are continually *improving*!

Focus on words with two to three sounds until the kids gain some skill and confidence. Take a break when words get a bit challenging. Then, after the kids have moved on to more challenging words, say, “Remember when this was difficult work? Now you can recognize words with four sounds! Whoa. That’s impressive. Your hard work is really paying off!”

Next, I’ll be sharing some ways for you to encourage your children to *really tune-in* to the sounds they hear in spoken words.

BUILDING BLOCK #5- Elision of Sounds in Words

When children can manipulate sounds in words, they are better equipped to read and spell well. In the next couple of lessons, we’ll take off the first sound and determine what word remains, and then we’ll take off the final sound and determine what word remains. Again, children will practice holding sounds in their working memories. These exercises help to prepare your children to become strong readers.

BUILDING BLOCK #5a- What Would it Say if We Got Rid of the Initial (or first) Sound?

(Teach your kids the word *initial* by teaching them their initials!)

In this game, you are going to stretch some words out again, but **THIS** time, you’re going to challenge your kids to figure out what the word would be if we eliminate the initial, or first, sound.

Like we did in an earlier game, it may help if you use your hand to cover your mouth when you’re making the first sounds in these words.

You could also use a continuous line or *sliding line*, like the one below, to help your children conceptualize what/where the **beginning** and/or **end** of each word is. Put your finger on the arrow (left side) and slowly enunciate each sound of the word you’re verbalizing.

When eliminating the initial sound, using the sliding line, I typically begin with both pointer fingers on the arrow. I would say the word *farm* while sliding my right finger from left to right. The second time I say the word, I slide my left finger upward, as if to cover up the first sound, and then I make the remaining sounds. /-/ /ar/ /m/



Ask:

What part of your body is in the word *farm*, without the first sound? (arm)

What do you have two of that is in the word *tears*, without the first sound? (ears)

What do you do at dinnertime that is in the word *feet*, without the first sound? (eat)

What might you eat for breakfast that is in the word *legs*, without the first sound? (eggs)

What color is in the word *bread*, without the first sound? (red)

What did I do with the ball that comes from the name *Scott*, without the first sound? (caught)

What do I do when I'm in a hurry that comes from the word *brush*, without the first sound? (rush)

What do we breathe that comes from the word *care*, without the first sound? (air)

What do you see with that comes from the word *shy*, without the first sound? (eye)

With whom might you play soccer that comes from the word *steam*, without the first sound? (team)

What did I do to the paper that comes from the word *store*, without the first sound? (tore)

What is a huge body of water that comes from the word *flake*, without the first sound? (lake)

BUILDING BLOCK #5b- What Would it Say if We Got Rid of the Final Sound?

In this second game, you are going to stretch some words out again, but THIS time, you're going to challenge your kids to figure out what the word would be if we eliminate the final, or last, sound.

Again, it may help if you use your hand to cover your mouth with your hand when you're making the final sounds in the words.

If using the *sliding line* to demonstrate the elision of the final sound, I put my right pointer finger under the period, and my left pointer finger on the arrow. I would say *farm*, for example, while sliding my left finger from left to right. The second time, after I made all the other sounds that make up the word *farm*, I'd slide my right finger upward, as if to cover up the final sound /m/. /f/ /ar/ /-/.

Say:

Think of the word *hair*.

What do horses eat that comes from the word *hair* without the final sound? (hay)

Think of the word *goat*.

What is something that you do in a car that comes from the word *goat* without the final sound? (go)

Think of the word *plate*.

What is something that you do outside that comes from the word *plate* without the final sound? (play)

Think of the word *toast*.

What is something that you can touch that comes from the word *toast* without the final sound? (toes)

Think of the word *fork*.

What is a number that comes from the word *fork* without the final sound? (four)

Think of the word *type*.

What might you do to your shoes that comes from the word *type* without the final sound? (tie)

Think of the word *boat*.

What might you tie with shoelaces that comes from the word *boat* without the final sound? (bow)

Think of the word *belly*.

What is something that rings that comes from the word *belly* without the final sound? (bell)

Think of the word *treat*.

What grows very tall that comes from the word *treat* without the final sound? (tree)

Think of the word *keep*.

What might you use for a lock that comes from the word *keep* without the final sound? (key)

Think of the word *next*.

What do we all have that comes from the word *next* without the final sound? (necks)

Think of the word *shoot*.

What do you wear on your foot that comes from the word *shoot* without the final sound? (shoe)

In the next two games, your children will stretch out the sounds and demonstrate the *number* of sounds (or phonemes) in words. This skill will be tremendously important as kids begin writing. They'll need to be able to represent each sound with letters as they record their thoughts onto paper.

BUILDING BLOCK #6- Stretching Out Words to Hear Each Sound

Now, we are going to say words without stretching them out at all. We will simply name a word. The children will then be challenged to slowly stretch the words out, enunciating each individual sound or phoneme.

Note: This practice will help kids to determine the sounds that are in words, in order. This is an important skill for kids who are learning to spell.

BUILDING BLOCK #6a- I Say It Quickly, You Say It Slowly



For this game, you'll need those slinky-type toys (or another stretchy item). This time, rather than stretching out the sounds together, you will hold the slinky-type toy between your two hands. Keeping it compact, you will say a word in your regular speaking voice. You won't be slowing it down, but you may be very carefully enunciating to be sure your words are very clear. You might say, "dog". Your children will repeat the word, and you'll verify that it is correct. Then, *invite the kids to stretch out the word*, pulling the Slinky-type toy, bit-by-bit, to show each sound in the word, dog. Then, have them quickly slide the sounds back together and say the whole word.

*To demonstrate slow motion, you might want to watch the YouTube video of the young baseball player who pretends to run in slow motion to home plate. 😊

not right-	do - g
not right-	d – og

*To demonstrate slow motion, you might want to watch the YouTube video of the young baseball player who pretends to run in slow motion to home plate. 😊 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6lkdeJ3gPk>

Word List for Stretching

Words With Two Sounds:

Words With Three Sounds:

Words With Four Sounds:

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flag

/f-l-a-g/

jelly

/j-e-ll-ee/

Words With Five Sounds:

peanut

/p-ea-n-u-t/

chicken

/ch-i-ck-e-n/

sandy

/s-a-n-d-ee/

kisses

/k-i-ss-e-s/

tracks

/t-r-a-k-s/

camper

/c-a-m-p-er/

muffin

/m-u-ff-i-n/

plant

/p-l-a-n-t/

dandy

/d-a-n-d-ee/

mitten

/m-i-tt-e-n/

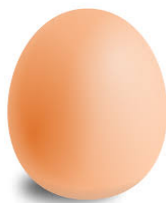
BUILDING BLOCK #6b- Tap the Sounds in Words

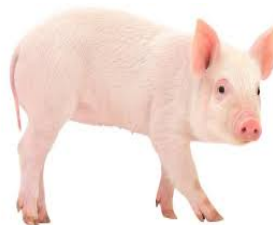
For this game, you will need a “tapping wand” of some sort. You could use a small mallet from a xylophone, or a pencil with a decorative eraser, or even a Dum Dum sucker.

You’ll also need some picture cards. You may simply print the following quick print tool and cut apart the pictures to make game cards. There are plenty, so you may play the game quite a few times. Note the number of phonemes for each picture is included below. If your children say a different word (if they say feet rather than toes) you may use what they say and determine the number of sounds on your own, or you may say, “I certainly see why you said _____. That’s what I thought, too. But the author wants us to try the word _____. How many sounds are in *that* word?”

*I did some copying and pasting from Google Images to create the picture cards, below. I prefer to print onto cardstock. If you have some, I recommend you use that rather than typical copy paper.

QUICK PRINT TOOL-









frog-4	flag-4	purse-3	ant-3	bag-3
egg-2	sock-3	bottle-4	sheep-3	shovel-4
hat-3	boots-4	apple-3	duck-3	box-4 /b/-/o/-/k/-/s/
glove-4	hand-4	worm-3	shirt-3	hammer-4
ball-3	tree-3	lips-4	fish-3	horse-3
tent-4,	foot-3	bat-3	pot-3	fence-4
cat-3	leaf-3	nest-4	truck-4	ship or boat-3
dog-3	bird-3	grass-4	bed-3	carrot-5
spoon-4	pig-3	nose-3	lemon-5,	
leg-3	toes-3	cup-3	peppers-5	

To begin, the children will draw a card from a pile. Then they will tap one of your fingers with their tappers- one time for each sound in the word. Next, they will count the fingers tapped to determine the total number of sounds in each word.

For example, they might choose a picture of a foot. Say the word *foot*. You can stretch it out, saying it slowly, together. You might want to grab those Slinky-type toys or the large rubber bands that we used earlier to begin. Then, say the word again, but this time, ask your children to tap one of your fingers with the “tapping wand” as they make each sound. You can help by holding out your pointer finger and say /f/, then hold out the the middle finger and say /oo/, then hold out the ring finger and say /t/. You guide the sound-stretching by holding out your fingers, one at a time, as you make the sounds, together. Then, hold your fingers upright and show and say how many sounds were in the word.



/f/ + /oo/ + /t/ = 3 sounds

Later, when you feel like they’re ready, you can have the children tap their own fingers to determine how many sounds are in some words. In this way, you’re providing less support as the kids grow more capable.

When they’ve caught on, the kids can go tapping around the room, stretching out words, determining how many sounds they hear. (e.g., r-u-g: 3 sounds, c-a-t: 3 sounds, d-e-s-k: 4 sounds, b-r-u-sh: 4 sounds, o-v-e-n: 4 sounds, sh-e-l-f: 4 sounds)

I need to note, here, that some words are really tricky. For example, the word *fox* has three letters, but it has four sounds: /f/-/o/-/k/-/s/

The letter q (like the letter x) represents two sounds: /k/-/w/, and q is always followed by a silent u. So, the word *quest* has five letters and five sounds: /k/-/w/-/e/-/s/-/t/. I teach that **q-u says /k/-/w/**.

(When teaching handwriting, I always teach q and u, together. In English, you will not see a q on its own, so we don’t practice writing just a q. (Okay, so some scrabble words don’t have the u, like qat, an Arabian shrub, but that hardly counts, right? ☺)

There are tricky words like *coin* which would say /k/-/o/-/ee/-/n/. The o and i, together, make two sounds, but they don’t exactly match the expected sounds for the individual letters. We will talk about these kinds of words

soon. I recommend just avoiding them for now. You'll notice that I do not include these kinds of words in this practice.

One more thing, before we move on: Please do NOT label your home with word cards. I have heard literacy leaders recommend this practice, and I need to say that it can do far more harm than good. We do not want our kids trying to remember whole words. Eventually, they *will* do some memorizing, but that will be reserved for words that cannot be decoded ONLY. For most of those, even, some parts are decodable.

Most every parent has heard of *sight words*. They may be called star words, snap words, or something else, but we know what they are. Early childhood classrooms feature from 25 to more than 100+ words students must know *on sight* or *in a snap* by the end of the school year. That's not a problem—the quick, automatic reading of words. The problem can be in how those words are taught. **We do NOT want our kids to work at remembering whole words or striving to hold in their memories according to the way words look.**

Do you have older children, say in second, third or fourth grades, who, when reading say *the* when the word is actually *and*? Do they say *and* for the word *said*? In my first and second grade classrooms, at the beginning of the year, this happened quite frequently. I call it the “Guess and Go” syndrome. I believe this kind of reading error is a result of children being taught to remember “sight words.” They are taught to recall how words **look**. They are not taught to make the sounds they see, moving from left to right, across the words. If they had been taught to make the sounds they see, children would not say *see* when they come to the word *look*.

Teachers often post students’ “sight words” on the walls of their classrooms. The class frequently reviews, together, each word. The children are asked to practice using the words in various ways, perhaps, across a week. Eventually the word is supposed to *stick* in the memories of the students. If it doesn’t stick quickly enough, parents are asked to make flashcards for the words and review them with their children at home.

Here’s the problem: **When taught to rely on their memories of how words look, children are prone to make a lot of errors in their reading.**

Following are the kindergarten “sight words” in many schools, however most of these words are decodable. These words follow general, easy-to-learn phonics guidelines and, therefore, should NOT be taught as “sight words.”

a, I, go, no, so, he, me, we, [the- depending on pronunciation] (open vowel/open syllable- When you have a really short word and the vowel is at the end, the vowel usually says its name.)

am, an, and, in, is, it, up, can (closed vowel- vowel/consonant -vc- words, vowel/consonant/consonant -vcc, & consonant/vowel/consonant -cvc- words- The vowel makes its short sound.)

like, see, look (consonant/vowel/consonant/e -cvce-, two vowels together -vv- & 2 sounds for oo- Magic e makes a vowel say its name. When you have two vowels together, the first one says its name. Two o’s say /oo/ as in tooth or /oo/ as in book.)

These words do not follow general phonics guidelines:

do, to, you

the (can be pronounced as an open syllable)

my* - unless you've taught the rule (short words ending with y, the y usually sounds like /eye/ like **my** & long words ending with y, the usually sounds like /ee/ like **silly**. (If that doesn't make a word you know, just *flip it* and try the other sound.)

*I recommend teaching the *rule breakers* do, to, and who, together after teaching the double o lessons.

I believe that we must return to the **sound-by-sound** approach (left to right, across the words, making the sounds we see) and that we should reserve the "sight word" approach (memorizing words, letter by letter or by their shapes) for the words that do not follow phonics guidelines. Even irregularly spelled words have some expected sounds. We should be teaching that!

An intervention specialist in my building, a while back, was working with a student who was behind. She became frustrated with his slow rate of sound-by-sound reading and reverted to practicing "sight words" with him. What he needed was additional practice sliding sounds together to promote fluency. The fluent blending of sounds promotes fluent reading. It just takes some practice. For some kids, it takes a lot of practice. There are thousands and thousands of words. How could one possibly memorize the pronunciations of all of them and have immediate access to them in an instant?

Consider, now, that there are only **forty** some sounds in the English language and that there are about eighty common ways to spell those sounds. I can teach almost every single one of those spellings in about twenty-five fun-focused weeks. (We'll get there!)

Let's get back to phonemic awareness. It won't be long until we'll begin those phonics lessons. By the way, the phonics Building Block lessons are **much** more fun than these phonemic awareness Building Block lessons. ☺

BUILDING BLOCK #6c- Make the Sounds Racetrack

Another way to encourage your kids to notice the individual sounds that make up words is to place stickers* in a line on a 24" long strip of cardstock that is 3" wide** and use it as a game board/racetrack. You'll also need about 15 picture cards. You may use the pictures I included, above, or you may simply draw 15 pictures on small, sticky note-sized papers or you may collect pictures from magazines or print them from online images. Be sure to choose pictures with items that have only 2-4 sounds. I'm including a list of easy-to-draw items as well as the number of phonemes, for your convenience. I even added some extras just in case some of these don't actually seem easy for *you* to draw. ☺

frog-4	boots-4	nest-4	candle-5
egg-2	hand-4	grass-4	
hat-3	tree-3	cup-3	
glove-4	foot-3	ant-3	
ball-3	leaf-3	baby-4	
tent-4	bird-3	duck-3	
cat-3	pig-3	shirt-3	
dog-3	purse-3	fish-3	
house-4	bottle-4	pot-3	
spoon-4	apple-3	truck-4	
leg-3	worm-3	bed-3	
flag-4	lips-4	truck-4	
sock-3	bat-3	sock-3	

You'll play *with* your children, so you'll each need a mover. Take turns pulling pictures from a pile, one at a time. The number of spaces you'll move your mover down the track will be determined by the number of sounds in the word on your picture card. If my card has a bat on it, I'll move three spaces. As I land on each space, I'll make each sound, like this: /b/-/a/-/t/. If one of my children pulls a picture of a tent, he'll move four spaces, saying, "/t/-/e/-/n/-/t/" as he moves. See who gets to the end first!

*I use the multi-colored circle stickers from the dollar store.



[Multi-Colored Circle Stickers](#)

**I use bulletin board border, with straight edges on both sides, cut in half, from office/teacher supply stores.



[Bulletin Board Boarder](#)

BUILDING BLOCK #6d- Sound Mat Sliding Game

For the next game, we'll need an 8 ½" x 11" piece of paper that is divided into eight boxes, four across and two high.

Here's a video to show you, exactly, what I mean. [YouTube Video- How to Fold a Paper Into Eights](#)

You will lay the paper, so that it's wide, not tall, in front of you. In the top four boxes, you'll draw four 2" (or so) horizontal lines, centered, one in each box.

—	—	—	—

We will call these papers *sound mats*.

You will need four coins, fruit snacks, game movers, checkers, or some other similar items. Finally, you'll need those picture cards, again.

To begin this game, place your four *movers* (cereal pieces, coins, or other) in the empty bottom boxes that have no lines. Draw a picture card from the pile of cards. Stretch out the sounds, sliding one mover up for each sound in the word, beginning on the left side. Some words will need only two movers to slide up into a box with a line, while other words require that all the movers be moved up.

(To make magnetic sound mats/boards, you can use a cookie sheet, some washi tape- to make the dividing lines,

and four magnets. You could even make *parking spaces* and move up one car/mover for each sound.)

Eventually, you could use magnetic letters to replace the movers, to represent the sounds on each line. When doing so, you should only use words where each sound is represented by a single letter, to start. (e.g. frog, cat, dog, flag, hand, pig, lips, bat, leg, nest)

BUILDING BLOCK #6e- Tap Light Sounds

For this lesson, you'll need to purchase four inexpensive tap lights. I have the kind pictured, below. They were only a dollar a piece at our local dollar store, but I did have to buy a couple of AA batteries for each one of them. I feel the novelty and excitement that they add to the practice of recognizing the sounds in words makes them a great deal! My students just *light up* when they get to use them. 😊



[Tap Lights](#)



[AA Batteries](#)

The first time you do this lesson, you will use either three or four tap lights to help your children demonstrate their recognition of the sounds in words. To begin, I say a word and then I tap one light for each sound in the word. I move from left to right, across the tap lights. The highlighted 0, below, indicates a glowing light. The remaining light(s) are not on because they weren't tapped since there aren't that many sounds in the given word.

Following are some examples:

at

0	0	0	0
/a/	/t/	-	-

tap

0	0	0	0
/t/	/a/	/p/	-

crush

0	0	0	0
---	---	---	---

/c/

/r/

/u/

/sh/

To extend the learning, a little later on, you can even have kids write, with a dry erase marker, directly onto the tap lights, the letters that are represented by each shining light. Neat, huh?



[Washable Dry Erase Markers](#)

BUILDING BLOCK #6f- Magnetic Sound Slide

Another fun building block activity makes use of magnetic wands and metallic edged chips to slide sounds in words together.



[Magnetic Wand with Metal Trimmed Discs](#)

There are the magnetic wands with bingo chips that some diehard bingo players use. There are also magnetic wands and chips marketed for educational purposes. Either set is about \$7-\$8, and they can be ordered online. Most sets have LOTS of chips, but only one wand. I've used magnetic sticks made for pulling canning jar lids out of hot water, and they work well, too. Mine was about \$0.99 from Big Lots, so I bought quite a few. Here are some from amazon.com.



[Magnetic Stick](#)

Now, you will use your sound mat from building block #7b, the **Sound Mat Sliding Game**, place one magnetic chip in each of the four boxes on the lower half of the mat. Pull a picture from the stack, name the picture, and slide one chip up for each sound in that word. Then, one-by-one, gather the chips up with your wand, moving left to right across the chips. This activity provides a satisfying *clink* for each sound. How cool is that?!

I hope you enjoy playing with words alongside your soon-to-be reader. Remember, as you play these games together, you are adding more and more building blocks to your child's Literacy Foundation.

Phonemic Awareness Games to Play in the



A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in speech. We want our kids to be able to recognize, discriminate, and manipulate those sounds. Promote reading success by playing with words!

- **Do these words rhyme?** *red/bed-Yes, go/no-No, why/fly-Yes, big/hot-No, shop/flop-Yes, etc.*
- **Finish this rhyme.** red/bed- blue/_____ (e.g. *glue*)
Say two rhyming words, (for support) and another word. Kids fill in a word that rhymes with the word you said.
- **clap, clap-_____. slap, slap** (hands on legs) _____.
Clap twice. Say a word. Slap your hands on your thighs twice. Kids fill in rhyming word. (Try to keep a steady beat!)
- **What rhymes with _____ and starts with _____?** (*ship-/ch/-*)
net-/p/, milk-/s/, goat-/b/, ball-/t/, horse-/f/, week-/sp/, kitten-/m/, tree-/fr/, bear-/st/, razor-/l/, truck-/l/, grass-/p/, etc.
- **__(action) __ if these words rhyme.**
(smile, wink, high five, hop, blow a kiss, touch your toes, stand on one foot, spin around, give a hug, wiggle, snort, etc.)
- **Do these words begin with the same sound?**
(*sneak/cheek-No, slim/snap-Yes, neck/Know-Yes, lizard/lips-Yes, car/kazoo-Yes, nickel/penny-No, shrug/sugar-Yes, etc.*)
- **Do these words end with the same sound?**
(*hard/mad-Yes, wet/lift-Yes, hip/flap-Yes, rug/soft-No, swim/hum-Yes, love/have-Yes, light/brown-No*)
- **What is your mouth doing when you make this sound /___/?**
(*/h/- huffy breath with lips open, /s/-teeth together and air squeezing between teeth and tongue, /m/ lips together, etc.*)
- **I'll say it slowly, & you say it quickly.** (*/b/-/e/-/d/-*)- _____ (*bed*)
Say a word, slowly stretching-it-out, sound by sound. The kids "snap" or slide the sounds back together, naming the word.
- **I'll say it quickly, & you say it slowly.** (*neck*)- _____ (*n-e-ck*)

Say a word. The kids stretch-out the sounds one by one, into individual parts.

- **How many sounds (phonemes) are in the word ____? (tiger-4)** Say a word. The kids stretch the word into individual parts, counting the number of sounds they hear.

Remember to model what you want your kids to do. They don't want to be quizzed and to fail. You assist so that the whole time you're practicing, the kids feel great about it! No one wants to practice if they cannot be successful. Ensure success and FUN by modeling how each task is done in a positive, affirming way.

**Remember, we are not focusing on syllables, but phonemes.*

If your kids are struggling . . .

There is a program known as LiPS that was specifically designed to assist children who demonstrate weak phonemic awareness. I attended the LiPS workshop and it really got to the task of discriminating the identity, number, and order of sounds within words by teaching students to discover and label the mouth movements for each sound. The increased awareness of oral-motor movements can be helpful for kids who have difficulty *hearing* the sounds in words. The instruction really focuses on what the mouth is doing when producing the sounds we hear in words.

If your children are struggling to complete the tasks I have provided, with the goal of strengthening phonemic awareness, I would recommend the LiPS program as an option for intervention. There are some parts of the program that I do not wholly embrace, as I do believe they overcomplicate some basic phonics guidelines or "rules". But when it comes to helping kids recognize what their mouths are doing (or *should* be doing) to produce certain sounds, the LiPS program might be very helpful. For more information, please check out the LiPS website. Find the link below.

[Lindamoodbell](#)

Finally, I want to let you know that what we're teaching, presently, is for basic 3-4 letter words. As we progress, we'll observe the same *rules* at work in each individual **syllable** of more complex words. We will not be dividing words into syllables until our kids have had a lot of experience with phonemes/individual sounds in words. We don't want to confuse our kids with the various ways we can divide words (phonemes, graphemes, morphemes, etc.)

