

## Phonemic Awareness Activities

### I. Read Books Aloud

No other activity can boast the same results as the simple act of picking up a book and reading it aloud to a child. It builds vocabulary, conditions the child to associate reading with pleasure, creates background knowledge, and provides a reading role model, to name a few.<sup>1</sup> It also helps build phonemic awareness skills,<sup>2</sup> when the right books are chosen: books that **rhyme** or **play with sounds**, including children’s poetry.

There is no end to the number of children’s books that meet these criteria. If you’re struggling to locate a book, visit [www.goodreads.com](http://www.goodreads.com), a website offering an extensive search engine for free. Simply type in a topic; for example, “children’s alliteration,” “children’s poetry” or “children’s rhyming.” Depending upon what you’re looking for, hundreds of titles will instantly appear with ratings and reviews from readers.

While reading aloud books *is* simple, there are still some important things for every reader to keep in mind. Author Jim Trelease has captured his read-aloud tips in a brochure titled “Thirty DO’s to Remember When Reading Aloud,” available at [www.trelease-on-reading.com/brochures.html](http://www.trelease-on-reading.com/brochures.html). (Check out the rest of his website for other good resources: [www.trelease-on-reading.com](http://www.trelease-on-reading.com).)

### 2. Play Word Games

Games are fun. Every child knows this (and some adults, too). Playing word games helps make learning fun—and when it’s fun, kids will keep playing (and learning). Here are instructions for two word games that help build phonemic awareness skills. Neither require any preparation or materials!

#### *I Spy!*<sup>3</sup>

- The tutor secretly identifies something in the room that can be seen by everyone who is playing. For example, it might be a *chair*.
- The tutor says, “I spy with my little eye something that rhymes with *bear*.”
- The students take turns guessing what the object is by naming things in the room that rhyme with bear. This continues until a student correctly guesses the answer.

There are a lot of variations that can be played with this game. Here are a few:

- ✓ I spy with my little eye something that starts with the /h/ sound and ends with /air/.
- ✓ I spy with my little eye something that starts with the /b/ sound.
- ✓ I spy with my little eye something that ends with the /t/ sound.

#### *I Went to Visit My Aunt in Kalamazoo*<sup>4</sup>

- The first player starts by saying, “I went to visit my aunt in Kalamazoo, and in my suitcase I brought a *toothbrush*.”
- The next player must now make the same statement, and add one more object to the suitcase. For example, “I went to visit my aunt in Kalamazoo, and in my suitcase I brought a toothbrush and a *pooper-scooper*.”
- Players continue to take turns, and with each turn they must repeat all of the previous items packed (in order) and add one new item.
- Play continues until one player cannot recall everything correctly.

There are a lot of variations that can be played with this game. Here are a few:

- ✓ Only items that start with the /b/ sound can be included.
- ✓ Only items that rhyme can be included.

<sup>1</sup> Jim Trelease. *The Read Aloud Handbook*

<sup>2</sup> Hallie Kay Yopp and Ruth Helen Yopp. <https://www.naeyc.org/files/yc/file/200901/BTJPhonologicalAwareness.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Linda Rath and Louise Kennedy. *The Between the Lions Book for Parents*

<sup>4</sup> Peggy M. Wilber. *Reading Rescue 1-2-3*

- ✓ Only items that start with the letter *a* can be included.
- ✓ Only items that have three syllables can be included.
- ✓ Each new item has to *start* with the same sound that the last item *ended* with. (For example, *shark* ends with the /k/ sound, so the next item must start with the /k/ sound, like *kite* or *cat*.)
- ✓ Each new item has to start with the next letter in the alphabet. (For example, *apple*, *bat*, *cookies*, etc.)

### 3. Use Flashcards, Magnetic Letters, or Letter Tiles

While the focus of phonemic awareness activities is on the sounds that we hear, “there is evidence to suggest that the relation between phonemic awareness and learning to read is reciprocal: phonemic awareness supports reading acquisition, and reading instruction and experiences **with print** facilitate phonemic awareness development.”<sup>5</sup>

In other words, having letters on hand while working on phonemic awareness will be helpful. Letter flashcards, refrigerator magnetic letters, or letter tiles (such as those found in the Scrabble game) all work well for this purpose. For some really great—and free—flashcards, visit [www.bogglesworldesl.com](http://www.bogglesworldesl.com) and check out the phonics tab. There are a lot of great game ideas on this website, too.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.reading.org/Libraries/position-statements-and-resolutions/ps1025\\_phonemic.pdf](http://www.reading.org/Libraries/position-statements-and-resolutions/ps1025_phonemic.pdf)