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Phonological Awareness Checklist

Hi! I'm miss beth — an early childhood literacy expert. I'm sharing a few tips to help you check in on your preschooler-3rd graders reading skills.

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If kids are struggling with reading the first place I check is their phonological awareness.

Luckily you can check your child's phonological awareness on your own without any tools! Browse below for a few quick games to informally see what your child knows and where they need more support — broken down by age.

What is phonological awareness? I am so glad you asked!

Phonological awareness is a set of crucial pre-reading skills and under this umbrella term is another term you might hear about called phonemic awareness.

Phonemic awareness is one of the strongest predictors in lifelong reading success. It is the ability to hear, identify, and play with the sounds in spoken language —like playing with rhymes, breaking apart syllables, and playing with phonemes, or the smallest unit of sound in a word.

There are 44 phonemes but only 26 letters. This is why our focus should be on sounds and not memorizing letters. Yes, we need to know the ABC's, but our focus should be on playing with sounds in words. When children have strong phonological awareness skills they are ready to read.

The most important thing to note about phonological awareness is it can be practiced with your eyes CLOSED.



Here's what kids should know at each stage and a few activities to check!

For more phonological awareness activities DM me @bigcityreaders and say “phonological awareness activities please!**” And we will send you some activities.**

TODDLERS

Phonological awareness actually can be practiced with babies and toddlers. This is why at Big City Readers we have virtual “reading” classes for babies and toddlers and their grown ups.

So much of the reading skills kids need to know is rooted in language development and we can build these skills through reading to them and singing to them and just playing.



At the toddler level, practice building phonological awareness by:

- **singing lots of nursery rhymes**
- **reading rhyming books**
- **saying words slowly**
- **practicing finger play games**
- **practicing listening skills**

DM us @bigcityreaders for toddler-specific activities!

PRESCHOOLERS

Then when toddlers become preschoolers we take all the things we have been practicing and get silly with it. The PA skills we want to see in preschoolers are:

* **Listening:**

Did you know following directions is a step in learning to read? When we give preschoolers the opportunity to listen to and think about the directions we give them we are building on phonological awareness.

* **Alliteration + rhyming:**

Do they like to play with rhyming or listen to books they rhyme? Can they finish a rhyming song they know like “Twinkle Twinkle Little Star” if you take away one of the rhyming words?

* **Syllable recognition:**

We want preschoolers to start to notice parts of words or syllables. I like to start with clapping or humming and with the names of family members. This helps kids understand they have one name but it has many parts. Then I move onto words like football and cupcake. Are they able to clap out the parts (two) in cupcake?

* **Concept of a spoken word:**

This one is so overlooked and so important. Can your child count the words you SAY? We want them to do this on their own. It needs to happen before we expect them to track print. If they aren't understanding that we are saying a certain number of words, they aren't going to understand they are reading or writing a certain number of words either. Ask: How many words are in the sentence: Let's eat pizza!

KINDERGARTENERS

Kindergarten students should be able to do all the things preschoolers can do and a few more.

* Rhyme recognition, completion and production:

There are actually 3 stages of rhyming:

First: Which two words rhyme: frog, dog, mom

Second: Can you finish this rhyme: Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, How I Wonder What You

Third: What is a word that rhymes with cat?

* Syllable segmentation:

Try: "Clap the parts in the word: rainbow, thunder, mommy"

* Syllable blending:

Try: "Say rain. Say Bow. Now put them together"

* Syllable deletion:

Try: "Say cupcake, but don't say cake"

* Phoneme isolation (beginning sound):

Try: "What is the first sound in "sugar"?" We are looking for the child to say the /sh/ sound, not "s" because that is the letter and not the sound.

* Blending of phonemes with word parts (onset and rime):

Try: "What is this word: cl-ap?"

FIRST GRADERS

First graders should be able to do all of the above and a few more. First graders usually LOVE these games so make sure to keep it fun and not feeling like a quiz.

* Phoneme segmentation:

Try: “Show me how many sound are in the word: stop, mop, man, run”

* Phoneme isolation of the final sound:

We often see kids say “A is for apple,” forgetting there are other sounds in the word. This helps us see if kids are understanding. Say: What is the last sound in the word run? chip? Sugar?

SECOND AND THIRD GRADERS

This is where it gets really fun and also shows adults “are you smarter than a second grader?”

* Phoneme deletion of initial and final sounds and reversals:

Say the sounds, not the letters for these activities.

- “Say pail, now say pail but don’t say /p/”
- “Say pail but don’t say /l/”
- “Say driving but don’t say /v/”
- “Say swimming but don’t say /m/”
- “Say make but say the first sound last and the last sound first (came)”
- “What sound would you change in the word hat to make it the word pat?”

Note: This is just a quick reference and is not in place of following a systematic structured reading curriculum.

Looking for more individualized support?

miss beth offers 5 virtual tutoring sessions a month and can give you specific strategies based on one session with your child!

Visit bigcityreaders.com for more information on our online courses, classes, events, and one on one tutoring with miss beth.



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