How families can help their children when learning how to read

Ideas to help develop Phonological Awareness skills at home!

At Singleton Primary School, children are engaging in daily, year level phonological awareness activities in Pre-primary to Year 1, using the Heggerty Program.

Phonological awareness allows children to recognise and work with the sounds of language. Children with phonological awareness skills can do things like identify rhyming words, count syllables and break apart compound words. Phonemic Awareness is a subskill of phonological awareness and relates to children hearing and manipulating the smallest sounds in words. For example, knowing 'mountain' starts with 'm' and ends with 'n'. There is no print involved in phonological awareness, it is all about hearing the sounds. Language development is a naturally developing skill and there are a wide range of games and activities families can do at home to help their child develop awareness in a range of these phonological areas.

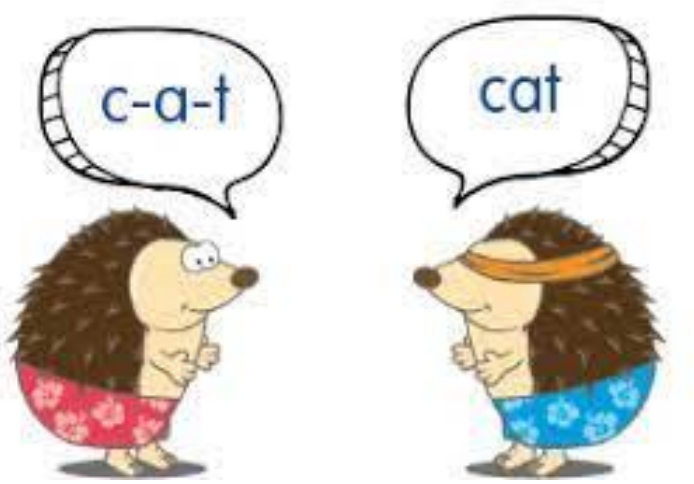
If you would like to help your child develop their phonological awareness, below is a number of ideas you might like to try.

Hearing Rhymes

By singing along to nursery rhymes, you are already engaging children's phonological awareness. Exposure to rhymes is the easiest and first step to your child learning to manipulate sounds. If you would like to focus on your child's phonemic awareness skills more specifically, you can encourage them to make rhymes by only the beginning sound in a word. For example, you could start with the word "rat." Your child might reply with the word "hat." On and on you can go together!

Differentiating Rhymes

Helping your child distinguish what words do or don't rhyme is an important introduction to more advanced concepts. This also helps your child recognise how changing the letter of a word can also change the sound and meaning. To play this rhyming game, a parent says three words, two of which rhyme and one that does not (you can make this as sensible or as silly as you like). For example, you might say 'mit', 'bit' and 'frog'. Then ask your child for the word which doesn't rhyme. Once your child gains confidence try and see if they can choose the words and you identify which are rhyming



Producing Rhymes

To help your child learn to make their own rhymes, try saying a sentence and asking them to finish it with a word that rhymes. For example: In my bag, I have a ___ (rag). You can play up the fun in this activity by seeing which one of you can come up with the silliest rhymes. Because this activity is focusing on listening skills, the words you come up with don't even have to be real!

Recognising Sounds

Recognising the beginning and ending sounds of words is really important for beginning readers. Try saying three words that begin or end with the same sound and asking your child what sound they share. For example: m-mouse, m-oney, m-mountain. You could also change it up by inserting a word that does not belong in the group of words and have your child identify which is the odd one out.

Creating and Associating Sounds

There are many variations of the classic 'I-spy' game that can help with these skills. Start by saying, "I spy with my little eye something that starts with a /t/ sound." Your child should answer with something around you that begins with that sound. And while you're playing, remember that at this stage, you're focusing mostly on sounds, not the traditional letter name. A further variation for blending sounds can include saying 'I spy with my little eye a r-oa-d' and have your child blend the sounds together.

Blending Sounds

Pretend you are a robot who has come to Earth and is trying to learn the English language. Ask your child for help with a certain word in robot-speak. Break down the sounds in a word and tell your child you don't know what the word is. Ask them to repeat it in robot talk (example: /c/a/t/), and then ask them what word you are saying. This will help them practice blending different sounds together to create a single word with a single meaning.

Tongue Twisters

Tongue twisters are a fun way to practise saying different sounds and identifying common sounds in sentences. Some tongue twisters you might like to try out could include-

How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?
Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers. How many pickled peppers did Peter Piper pick?
Black background, brown background (say it 5 times)
She sells seashells by the seashore.

Alliteration

Alliteration is when the sound being focussed on is repeated over and over again. It can be a fun way to provide practice with a given speech sound. You could try these with your child and work together to make your own. You could also see who could make up a sentence with the most words to start with the target sound.

- For M: Miss Mouse makes marvelous meatballs!
- For S: Silly Sally sings songs about snakes and snails.
- For F: Freddy finds fireflies with a flashlight.

Sound Scavenger Hunt

Choose a letter sound and time your child to find three things around your house that starts with the same sound. For example, ‘p’, your child could find a pencil, pear and picture etc.

Jump, Skip, Hop

Say a word to your child (you might use a magazine, book or scenery to give you ideas of words). Have your child break the word into its sounds. For example ‘rat’ would be r-a-t (3 sounds), ‘chair’ would be ch-ai-r (3 sounds). Have children jump, skip or hop for each sound in a word.

Sound counting

Use Lego blocks to create a tower of sounds. Have your child add a block to the tower for each sound in a word. E.g., ‘duck’ d-u-ck (3 sounds), add three blocks to your tower. How high can you make your tower?

These activities are meant to be fun and engaging. Be light-hearted, enjoy the games with your child and don’t panic if they are challenged. Repetition and practise goes a long way! Make sure your child receives lots of praise and cheers for their efforts!

If you would like to read some extra information about Phonological Awareness and strategies to help your child learn to read at home, some helpful websites are listed below.

Parent Resources- Five from Five Website
https://fivefromfive.com.au/parent-resources/

Free parent ‘Help your child to Read and Write course’ by John Walker
https://www.udemy.com/user/54e5c34e6b89b/?fbclid=IwAR2qYPjb3hWNCq552Dlfa4DcKYPvfL-Cfq8lYQU3LzXXaxDAA3tT8j3nPwQ