



Part I: Phonemic Awareness

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What is Phonemic Awareness?

Phonemic Awareness is the ability to focus on and manipulate the smallest units of sound that combine to form syllables and words of our spoken language. Phonemic Awareness has been identified as the most powerful predictor of reading success (Stanovich, 1986, 1994) and is the number one factor that separates normal and disabled readers (Adams, 1990). Learning Phonemic Awareness improves word reading, comprehension, spelling skills and has been shown to benefit students of all grade levels (Armbruster, Lehr and Osborn, 2001). Phonemic Awareness activities include:

Phonemic Isolation: The student is taught to recognize the individual sounds in a word. For example, asking the student to isolate and say the first or last sound in a word.

Phonemic Identity: Teaching the student to recognize the same sounds within different words. For example, asking the student which words in a set of words begin with the same sound.

Phoneme Categorization: Recognizing letter sound differences when presented with a list of words. For example, “Which word doesn’t belong? **bug, big, rat?**” ...*rat* wouldn’t belong because it doesn’t begin with the /b/ sound.

Phoneme Blending: After listening to a sequence of individually spoken phonemes, students then combine the individual sounds together to form a word. Words can first be broken into two sounds (e.g., **n-et**). As the student progresses, words can be divided into individual sounds or phonemes (e.g., **sh-o-p**). Students can write the word and then read the word aloud.

Phoneme Segmentation: Students break a word into its individual sounds, clapping or tapping as they say each sound. Students can count the number of sounds they hear in a word (e.g., **at=2, cat=3**). Then students can be given words and asked to separate them into their separate sounds (e.g., **sip=/s/ /i/ /p/, sock=/s/ /o/ /k/**). The word can be written down and read aloud.

Phoneme Deletion: Students learn what sounds in a word remain after one phoneme is removed from that word. For example: **Face** without the /f/ sound is **ace**.

Phoneme Addition: By adding a phoneme to an existing word, students make a new word. For example, if you add /s/ to the beginning of **top**, the word becomes **stop**.

Phoneme Substitution: Students replace one phoneme in a word for another to create a new word. For example, if you change the /g/ sound in **dog** to the /t/ sound, then new word is **dot**.

What is the Most Effective way to Teach Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic Awareness instruction has been found to be most effective when it focuses on only one or two types of activities. Particularly, Phoneme Blending and Segmenting have been found to produce the most benefits.

Phonemic Awareness is most effective when it is taught within small groups where students use alphabet manipulatives (such as magnetic letters that we put on our refrigerators) as a visual and physical representation of the phonemes that are being studied. This allows the student to not only hear the different sounds, but also see what letters are associated with the sounds and actually touch them. By presenting these vital reading skills

through touch, vision and hearing, students are able to better understand and remember how the sounds of our language relate to one another.