

TEST OF PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS

Aim

The *Sound Linkage* test of phonological awareness takes about 10 minutes to administer. The main aims of the test are to create a profile of a child's strengths and weaknesses in phonological awareness, and to determine a child's point of entry to the training activities. As a normative test (Hatcher, 1996), it may be used to identify young children at risk of reading failure and those children whose reading delay may be attributable to limited phonological awareness skills. Following an interval of at least three (preferably six) months, the test may be re-administered in order to provide a measure of progress in acquiring phonological awareness skills. Instructions for administering and using the test are given here; information on its development and standardisation can be found in the 'Test development and standardisation' chapter.

Testing considerations

Materials needed: five counters, administration sheets (this chapter, p. 4 to 9) and photocopiable 'Test of Phonological Awareness' Record Sheet (Record Sheet A, pp. 156–157).

Administration, scoring and discontinuation

1. Before administering the test, run through it in order to familiarise yourself with the items and how to pronounce them. For example, words are separated into syllables based on spelling (e.g. *croc* – o – *dile*), but this might not best reflect how the individual syllables are pronounced (e.g. *croc* – u – *dile*).
2. The test should be administered in a quiet room free from distractions: children need to be able to hear and to concentrate in order to respond to fine differences of sounds in words.
3. Consonants need to be kept as phonetically correct as possible. Consonants such as p, t, k, th, f, v, s, z, sh, ch, h, m and n should be pronounced without adding a vowel. 'Spot', for example, should be pronounced /s/ /p/

/o/ /t/ and not 'suh' 'puh' 'o' 'tuh'. With other consonants, b, d, g, j, w, r, l and y, the following vowel should be kept as short as possible. A one-minute video on clear pronunciation of phonemes can be found on this webpage: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BqhXUW_v-1s

4. Care should be taken to avoid giving children non-phonological clues, particularly in the rhyme section. It is possible to prime children as to the expected answer by a change of intonation, stress or volume or by pausing before a word. Body language, such as changing eye contact, can also give children help. For these reasons, try to present items in a smooth and even manner. Ideally, children should sit sideways to the examiner.
5. When children ask for an item to be repeated, it is permitted to do so, just once. Immediately after this, it should be explained that they must listen very carefully as the rest of the words or sounds will be said only once.
6. There is a time limit of about 10 seconds per item.
7. To prevent them failing unnecessarily, the test should be discontinued if children have failed eight consecutive items.

From testing to teaching

The areas of difficulty on the test can be used as a general guide for where to enter the training programme.

The earliest phonological skills to develop are awareness of words, syllables and rhyming relationships between words. If a child makes any errors on the syllable blending or rhyme subtests, we suggest that some time is spent on training these skills using the first three sections of the teaching programme. However, for reading development, awareness of phonemes in spoken words is the most critical skill and we suggest that teaching progresses to developing phoneme awareness as soon as possible (using sections 4 through 10).

Children who made no errors on the syllable blending or rhyme subtest, but made errors on any of the phoneme awareness subtests, should begin with phoneme awareness training. As a guide, we suggest that such children should begin the training at section 4, 'Identification and discrimination of phonemes'. Sections 4 through 10 are ordered according to their level of difficulty for most children. We would recommend that teachers use these sections flexibly, but work through these different exercises to ensure that children have a secure foundation in being able to hear phonemes in words, blend and segment phonemes, and manipulate phonemes flexibly in conjunction with letters.

Syllable blending

Say:

I am going to pretend to be a robot who can only say words in a funny way. I want you to try to guess what I am saying.

Pronounce the word 'biscuit' leaving a one-second gap between each syllable:

bis – cuit

Help the children if they cannot do it. Present the next exemplar in the same way.

di – no – saur

Say:

What do you think the robot is trying to say now? Listen carefully.

	Correct response	
	Yes	No
win – dow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
croc – o – dile	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
phot – o – graph	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
tel – e – scope	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
ad – ven – ture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
mer – ry – go – round	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total	<input type="checkbox"/> /6	

Phoneme blending

When pronouncing phonemes, leave a one-second gap between each. Say:

The robot is now going to say some short sounds. See if you can make them into words.

t – a – p

Help children if they cannot do it.

Present the next exemplar in the same way.

d – o – g

Say:

What do you think the robot is trying to say now?

	Correct response	
	Yes	No
e – gg	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
r – ai – n	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
s – ou – p	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
d – i – s – c	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
s – t – e – p	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
s – o – f – t	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total	<input type="checkbox"/> /6	

Rhyme

Say:

Have you heard of Hickory, dickory dock? Hickory, dickory dock, the mouse ran up the ___ [clock]? Dock and clock are different words, but they sound a bit the same. Listen. Dock, clock.

Do you know Jack and Jill? Jack and Jill went up the ___ [hill]? Jill and hill are different words, but they sound a bit the same. Jill, hill. Can you think of another word that sounds a bit like Jill?

Does 'fill' sound a bit like 'hill'? What about 'pill'? Does 'pill' sound a bit like 'hill'?

What about 'did'? Does 'did' sound like 'hill' and 'pill'?

Give the children feedback after their answers, but do not tell them to listen to rhyming sounds or to the last sound.

Say:

I am going to say three words and I want you to tell me the one that sounds the most different.

Pronounce the following with equal emphasis, at one-second intervals:

hat, fat, man

If a child got it wrong, say:

No. 'Man' was the one that sounds most different. Listen again.

hat, fat, man

Now try these:

peg, hen, beg

If a child got it wrong, say:

No. 'Hen' was the one that sounds most different. Listen again.

peg, hen, beg

Present the following sets of words and before each say:

Tell me the word that sounds most different.

	Correct response	
	Yes	No
dog, pot , log	[]	[]
late, mate, fat	[]	[]
bad, cap , mad	[]	[]
bun , hug, mug	[]	[]
hill, pill, dim	[]	[]
net , ten, pen	[]	[]
Total	[]/6	

Phoneme segmentation

Say:

Now it's your turn to talk in robot language. How do you think the robot would say 'off'?

Help the children if necessary by using two counters. Push a counter forward simultaneously with the pronunciation of each sound. If children are helped by the use of the counters, let them use them for the second example (two counters) and for the six test items. Always give the children the correct number of counters corresponding to the number of phonemes in each word (given in brackets after the word).

How do you think the robot would say 'tea'?

Help children if necessary.

Say:

You see if you can say these words just like the robot would.

	Correct response	
	Yes	No
pet (3, p – e – t)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
tick (3, t – i – ck)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
cost (4, c – o – s – t)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
slate (4, s – l – ay – t)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
crest (5, c – r – e – s – t)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
jumps (5, j – u – m – p – s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total	<input type="checkbox"/> /6	

Phoneme deletion

Say:

This time we are going to say a word like 'cup'. Then we will say it again, but without one of its sounds. What would the word 'cup' become without the /c/ sound? What word would you hear?

If necessary, help children by first pronouncing 'cup' and then segmenting it into its onset /c/ and rime /up/. The segmentation part of the process might be done a number of times with increasingly longer gaps between the onset and rime.

Cup, /c/ – /up/, /c/ – – /up/, /c/ – – – /up/

Say:

If we take away the /c/ sound from cup, it leaves the word 'up'. What word would be left if we took away the /m/ sound from arm?

If necessary, help children as above.

Say:

See if you can do these. What word is left if we take away the:

	Correct response	
	Yes	No
/g/ sound from gone? (on)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
/k/ sound from fork? (for)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
/s/ sound from stop? (top)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
/t/ sound from hurt? (her)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
/s/ sound from past? (part or pat)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
/w/ sound from swift? (sift)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total	<input type="checkbox"/> /6	

Phoneme transposition

Say:

In this section we are going to say a word like 'pat'. 'Pat' has three sounds: /p/ /a/ /t/. You say them. If we say the sounds for 'pat' backwards, /t/ /a/ /p/, we get another word. What word is that?

If necessary, help by saying:

Say the sounds for 'pat' like the robot would. Now say them backwards. What word does that make? Let's try another one. What word would we get if we said the sounds for 'nip' backwards?

Help if necessary.

Say:

Let's try these. What word would we get if we said the sounds for these words backwards?

	Correct response	
	Yes	No
net (ten)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
pack (cap)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
kiss (sick)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
late (tail)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
cheap (peach)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
nice (sign)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total	<input type="checkbox"/> /6	

Spoonerisms

Say:

In this last section, we are going to say two words and listen for their beginning sounds. We will change the beginning sounds round and say two new words. For example, 'bed time' (pause) would become 'ted bime'. Listen to the steps, 'bed time', /b/ /t/, /t/ /b/, 'ted bime'.

If necessary, help by saying:

The new words do not always make sense but that does not matter. Say the beginning sounds for 'large boat'. Now change them round (pause) and say the new words [barge loat].

Help if necessary.

Say:

Let's try these. What words would we get if we changed the beginning sounds round?

	Correct response	
	Yes	No
Kate Leigh (late key)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marsha Potter (parsha motter)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
red jug (jed rug)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
gold coat (cold goat)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jimmy Yarker (yimmy jarker)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
General Mutters (meneral jutters)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total	<input type="checkbox"/> /6	
Overall total	<input type="checkbox"/> /42	