

Speech Sounds

Guidance for Early Years Professionals



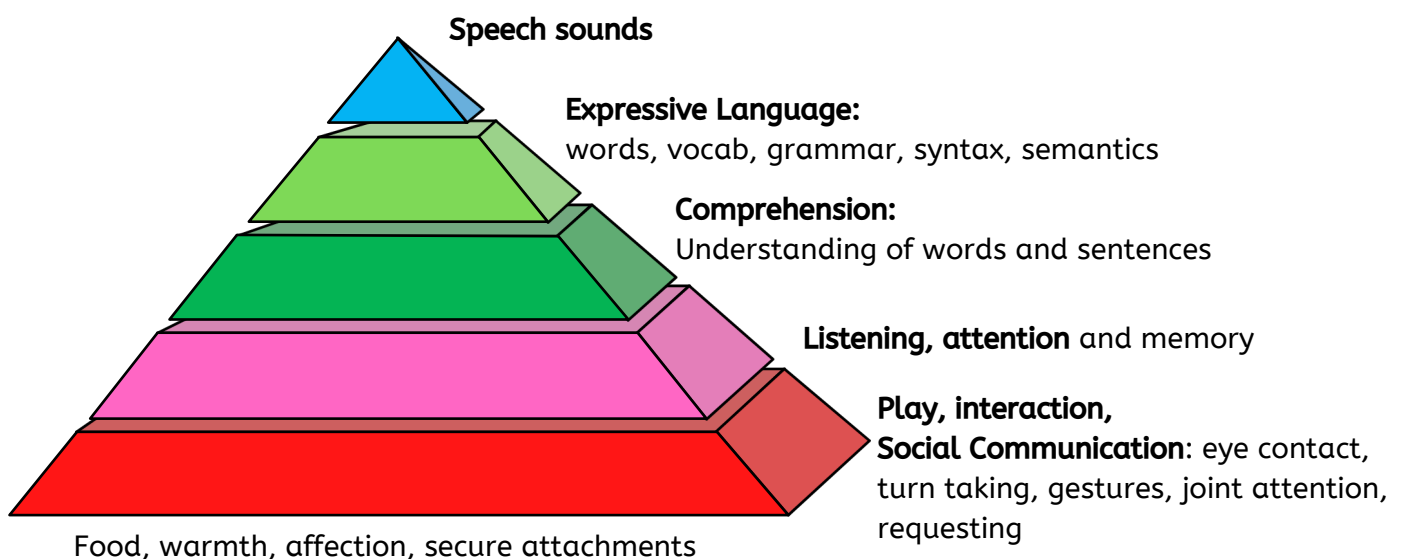
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The aim of this booklet is to provide information and advice to Early Years Professionals in Halton who would like to know more about speech sound development and how to support it in the Early Years.

Background

As children begin to learn new words every day, they are also having to store the sounds in their head correctly to say them later. Speaking is a complex task; children will make mistakes with which sounds they use when they are very young. We would expect that most children gradually start to use a larger variety of sounds throughout the early years, making their speech sound more clear. Sometimes children's speech can be less clear, and this can be a delay in speech sound development or a disordered pattern of development.

All areas of speech, language and communication can have an interacting impact on each other (see pyramid below) and this is why we may focus on supporting other areas of communication rather than speech sounds themselves in the early years.



Jargon busting

Intelligibility

level of speech clarity

Phonological
development

The organisation of the speech
sounds

Phonetic
development

The ability to produce the
speech sounds

Phoneme

Single unit of sound

Articulation

Process of creating clear speech
sounds

Speech / Language

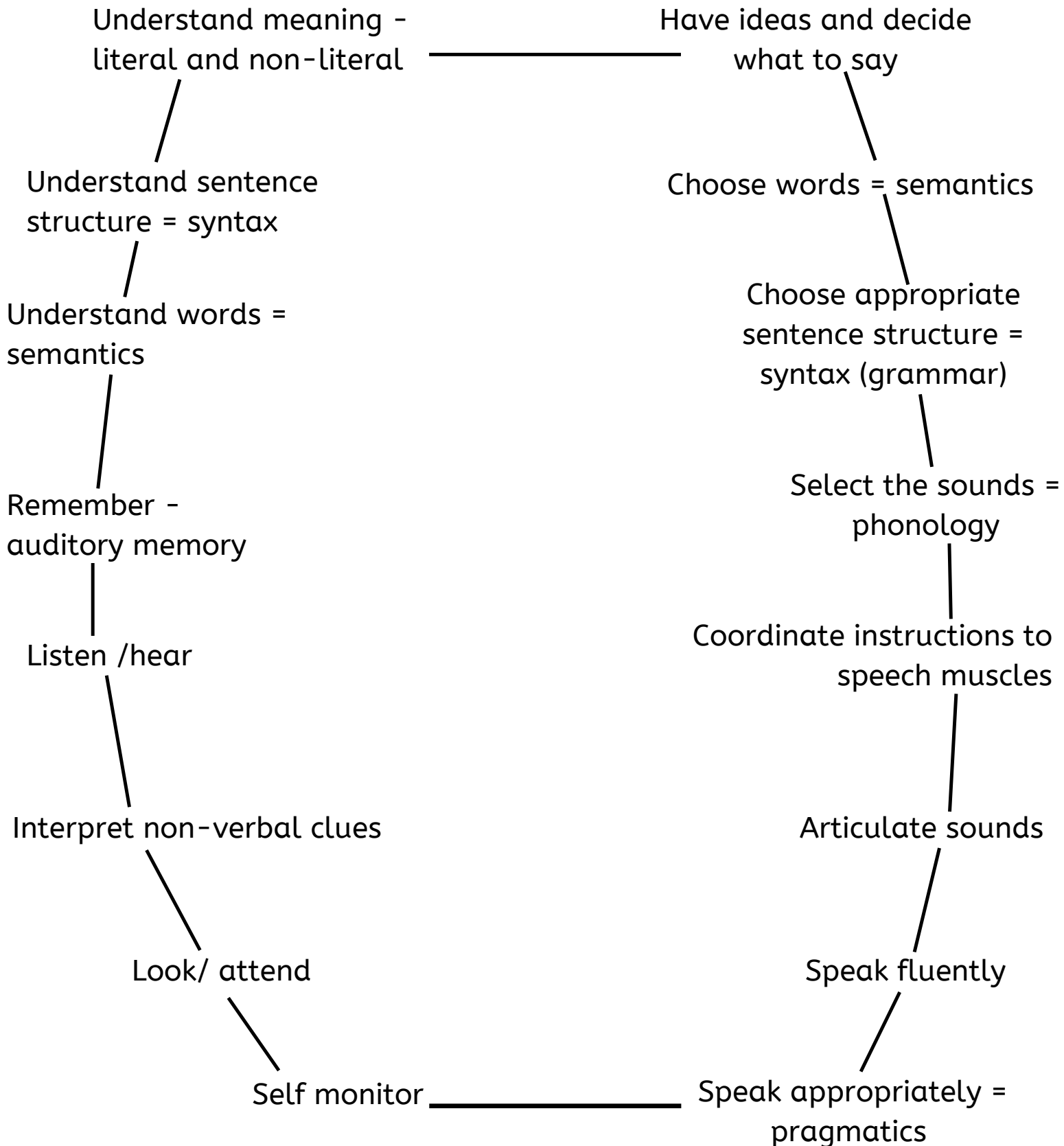
SPEECH

The sounds we use and
combine together to make
words

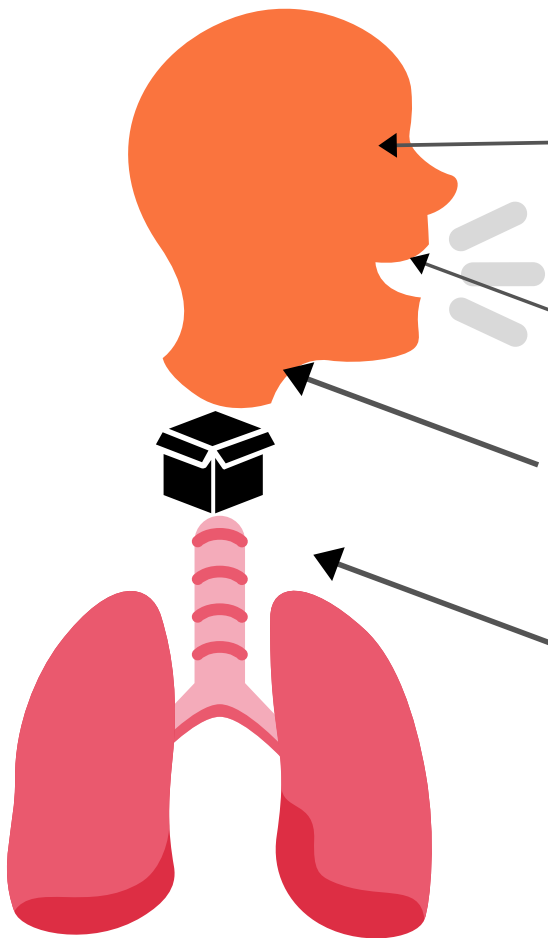
LANGUAGE

The words we understand, use
and combine together to make
sentences, communicate
thoughts and ideas, needs and
wants.

The Communication Chain



How do we make sounds?



The way a word is stored in the brain can impact the way the word comes out. A young child may know what they want to say, but the sounds are stored incorrectly at that time.

We put our tongue, lips and teeth in a certain position to create/articulate the different sounds.

The sound travels up to the **pharynx**, and is then shaped by the tongue, mouth and **nasal cavity**.

The voicebox (the **larynx**) is positioned just above the windpipe (**trachea**). This is where the **vocal chords** are found, which play a big part in sound production. When the air is pushed up through the **lungs** through the vocal chords, they vibrate which shapes the air to make sound. The **vocal folds** are why we have loud sounds (e.g. v, b, d, g) and quiet sounds (f, s, t, k).

Vowels and Consonants

Vowels are not made by producing friction or air pressure release in the oral cavity like consonants – but are made using the voice box sound and variations in tongue/ lip/ palate movement to ‘shape’ the sound

Classifying sounds

Easy sounds

- Sounds are made at the front of the mouth, therefore making it easier to see how the sound is made.
- 'gross' sounds made by banging to organs of articulation together to create air pressure that makes the sound



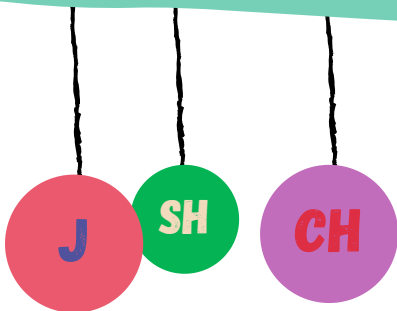
Harder sounds

- Sounds are made at the back of the mouth, therefore making it more difficult to see how it is made.
- Fricatives
- 'Long' sounds



Much harder sounds

- Sounds that are pushy and hissy at the same time!
- Affricatives
- Blends or clusters of sounds (fricative and stop)



Tricky sounds

- Sounds that are even harder to 'see' and combining different consonants together
- Multiple blends



- Vowels are not made by producing friction or air pressure release in the oral cavity like consonants – but are made using the voice box sound and variations in tongue/ lip/ palate movement to ‘shape’ the sound
- Made by moving the organs of articulation close to each other without touching
- Always have a relatively free outward flow of breath.
- There are 5 written vowel letters in English which represent around 20 vowel sounds that we make

simple vowels

ooh ih
eeh or
aah o ow

complex vowels

ear air
oy oh ay

Summary of production



- The harder a sound is to describe the harder it is to make.
- The harder it is to make – the more difficult it is to establish in the speech sound system or to teach.
- Children need good oral awareness and discrimination skills to develop a full speech sound system.
- Speech sounds typically develop in a specific order, easy ones first, harder ones later!

Intelligibility

Intelligibility (clear speech) steadily increases throughout the early years.

How much of a child's speech you understand will also depend on how familiar you are with the child, the length of the sentence they say, and whether they talk in context or not.



Typical speech sound development

0-6 months

Make sounds to themselves like cooing and gurgling

6-12 months

Babble strings of sounds 'no-no' 'goh-goh'.

12-18 months

Use of babble and some single words when they are playing, often sounding like they are speaking in their own language

18-24 months

Often able to use p, b, t, d, m, w.
Will often miss the end sound off words.

2-3 years

Use a wider range of speech sounds. Many children will shorten longer words e.g. 'nana' for 'banana' By 3 children should be able to use p, b, t, d, k, g, m, n, ng

3-4 years

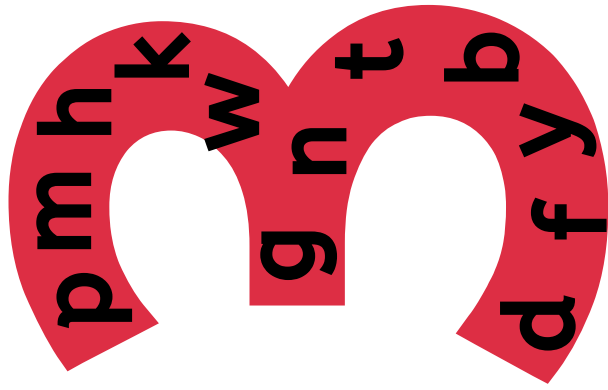
Development of hissy sounds e.g. f, s, z, sh
Might still have difficulty with these sounds including r, l, ch, j, v

4-5 years

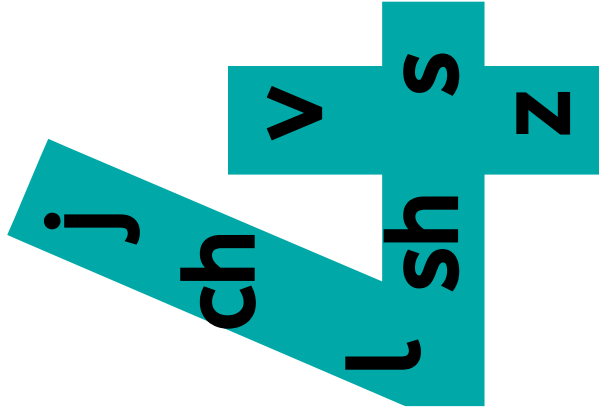
Use most sounds effectively, but might still struggle with r, th, ch, clusters

5-6 years

Might still struggle with r and th



p as in pig
m as in man
h as in hat
k as in kick
w as in wig
g as in goat
n as in net
t as in top
b as in ball
y as in yoyo
f as in fish
d as in dog



j as in job
ch as in chair
l as in lion
sh as in shop
v as in van
s as in sun
z as in zoo



th as in this
r as in rat
zh as in treasure



th as in thin

Types of speech difficulties

There can be different reasons why a child's speech is not clear. These can generally be put into two categories, or a mix of both.

This is something the Speech and Language Therapist will assess in order to provide the appropriate strategies and support.

Articulation based

Difficulty related to physically saying a sound, including in imitation

- Programming what to say
- Execution based on muscle weakness
- Structural
- Sensory/perceptual

Phonological based

Difficulty related to the organisation of sounds

- Uses sounds in the wrong place within words
- Will have underlying difficulties with speech processing skills
- Can articulate sounds in isolation

Typically, many children's speech difficulties will be phonological-based. Because of this, many of the early speech strategies involve improving phonological awareness.

Delay/Difficulty vs Disorder

When a child's development is delayed they are following normal developmental patterns only later than expected. They may appear to catch up themselves without intervention. We might say they have a **speech or language difficulty**

When a child's development is **disordered** they do not follow patterns of normal development. These children always need intervention.

Some children's speech sounds delay will persist in to school and beyond, where it can be classed as disordered speech. These children will usually need 1:1 speech sounds therapy in Reception and beyond, if required.

A Speech and Language Therapist will decipher whether a child's speech development is delayed, disordered or typical.



Types of difficulties

What is it?	How to spot it	What to do
Phonology	Difficulties with speech processing knowing which sounds go where	- Develop listening, discrimination and attention skills using Letters and Sounds approaches for all speech sound difficulties - EYFS pack - speech sound development pack - Mr Tongue can support oral awareness and can be used in the early years to help children increase awareness of their mouth, lips, tongue and palate and how they work - Lola the Listening Leopard - supports underlying listening skills to help speech - Meta linguistic awareness e.g. syllable clapping
Fronting	Normal pattern until 3-3;6, Children say: 'tar' - car, 'tow'-cow	- TALK Speech Sounds Workshop - Auditory discrimination activities

Types of difficulties

What is it?	How to spot it	What to do
Backing	- Disordered pattern - Children say: 'gaggy'-daddy	- Develop listening, discrimination and attention skills using Letters and Sounds approaches for all speech sound difficulties - EYFS pack - speech sound development pack - Mr Tongue can support oral awareness and can be used in the early years to help children increase awareness of their mouth, lips, tongue and palate and how they work - Lola the Listening Leopard - supports underlying listening skills to help speech - Meta linguistic awareness e.g. syllable clapping - TALK Speech Sounds Workshop - Auditory discrimination activities - Single word production - Minimal pairs - TALK Speech Sounds Workshop - Conversational speech
Stopping	- Normal pattern until 3 years - Children say: 'dee'-sea, 'beet'-feet	
Prosody	- Normal pattern until 4;6 - Children say: 'boon'-spoon, 'dar'-star, 'plate'-pate	
Initial consonant deletion	- This is a disordered pattern of development - Miss first sound off words: food - 'ood' Car - 'ar'	
Gliding	- Normal pattern until 6yrs - Children say 'wing - ring 'jots - lots	
Lisp - dental /s/	- Normal pattern until around 6 years 'ss' becomes 'th' - May not resolve until adult teeth arrive	

Types of difficulties

What is it?	How to spot it	What to do
Articulation	Difficulties with production of speech sounds	- TALK Speech Sounds Workshop - Develop listening, discrimination and attention skills using Letters and Sounds approaches for all speech sound difficulties - EYFS pack - speech sound development pack - Mr Tongue can support oral awareness and can be used in the early years to help children increase awareness of their mouth, lips, tongue and palate and how they work - Lola the Listening Leopard - supports underlying listening skills to help speech
Dyspraxia	- Difficulties sequencing and co-ordinating sounds and/or oral to make words. - Child might 'grope' for sounds, may have had feeding difficulties as an infant	
Dysarthria	- Slurry speech due to muscle weakness. - Often associated with conditions involving muscle weakness ie: Cerebral Palsy. - Child might dribble and have little oral control	

Effects of speech difficulty

Research suggests that the effects of speech difficulties can impact in the following.....

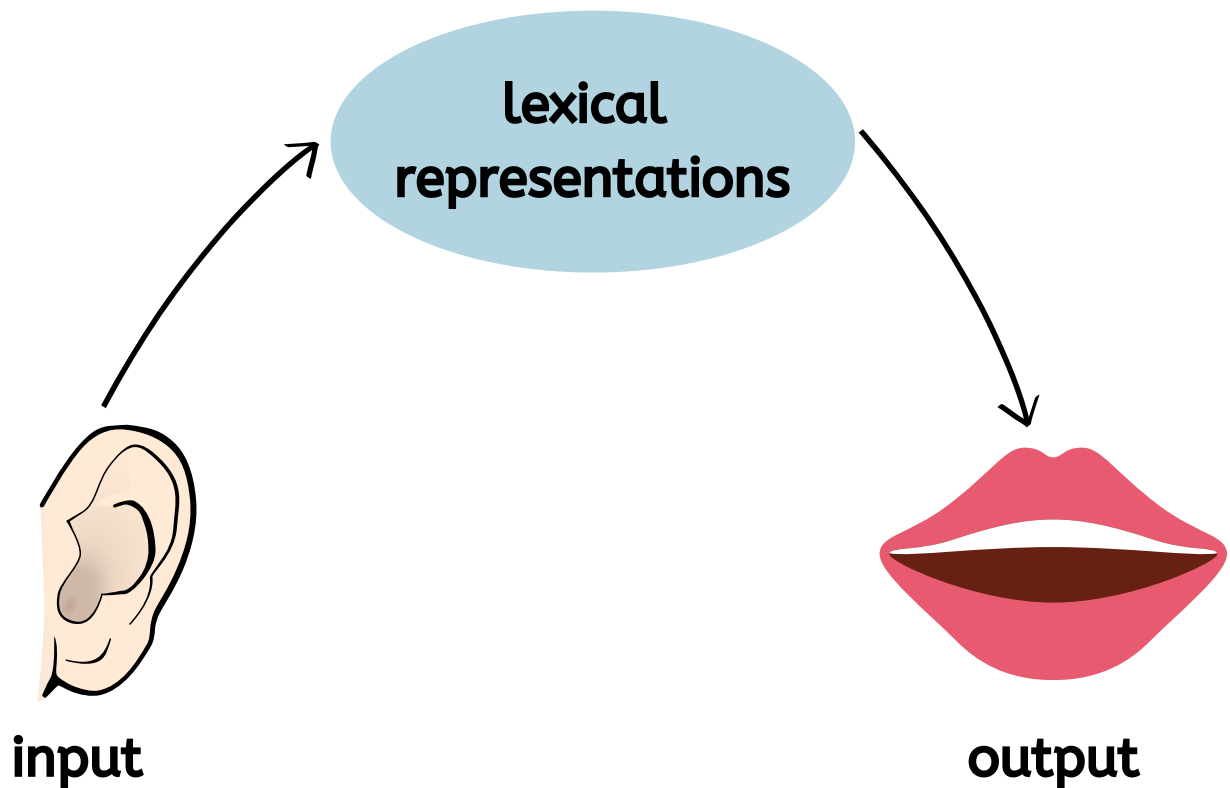
- School achievement
- Peer relationships due to social, emotional and behaviour difficulties
- Persistent impairment in adolescence affects literacy, mental health and employment

General strategies and tips

- **React to what the child says, not how clearly he speaks.** Children often do not realise they are mispronouncing words so correcting them can be confusing.
- **Repeat what the child says correctly so the child hears good examples.**
- **Don't make the child repeat the words.** Children need to feel relaxed and confident in order to experiment with sounds and so change their speech patterns. Drawing attention to mispronunciations and making children repeat is not helpful. If they could say it right they would!
- **Build self esteem.** If part of the child's conversation is understood, repeat it back. This show them that they have been partially successful and may encourage them to tell you more.
- **Don't pretend to understand.** Try asking questions or saying 'show me...' and encourage the use of gesture and mime as well as the child taking you to things. Sometimes you just have to admit that you can't understand. Be reassuring as possible. Change the subject and focus on something positive.



Psycholinguistic perspective



- When children are generating speech, they select words from the mental lexicon that express their ideas.
- These words are produced based on the current rules that govern the lexicon e.g. cluster reduction as a rule.
- Children will sometimes be able to say words more accurately through direct imitation than spontaneous speech.
- This is because they are not needing to think about the word and access their stored version of the word.

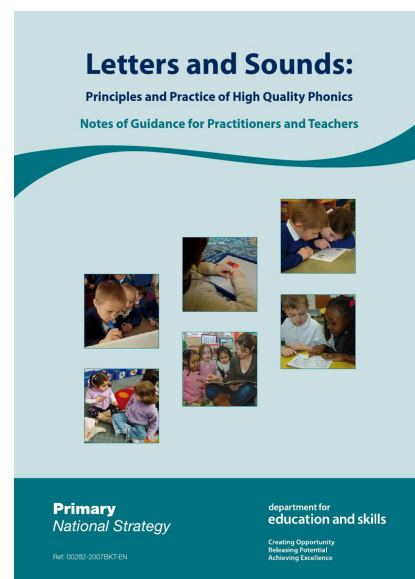
Listening and discrimination

We learn to talk through watching and listening to others. Listening to and discriminating sounds is an important skill to build upon; if a child finds discriminating sounds difficult, this means articulating those sounds will be difficult too.



Listening games and associating sounds to meaningful pictures can help a child to understand the sounds. Listening games are also a low-pressure style approach to speech sounds which is important if a child is experiencing frustration with not being understood.

There are lots of great games and activities in Letters and Sounds Phase 1. The emphasis during Phase 1 is to get children attuned to the sounds around them.



Before getting started with listening and discrimination activities, it is also important to consider the child's ability to hear.

Tuning into sounds

Tuning in to different noises and sounds in the environment is a great place to start to build phonological awareness.

What resources could you use in your setting and environment?



Listening walks -
listening to sounds of
nature, comparing
sounds of vehicles...



Animal sounds -
Talking about and
recreating animal
sounds, animal bingo/
lotto...



'Sound Stories' such as
Peace at Last by Jill
Murphy



Musical instruments -
Talking about the sounds musical
instruments make, matching sounds,
finding the odd one out, adjusting the
volume by making the sounds
louder/quieter



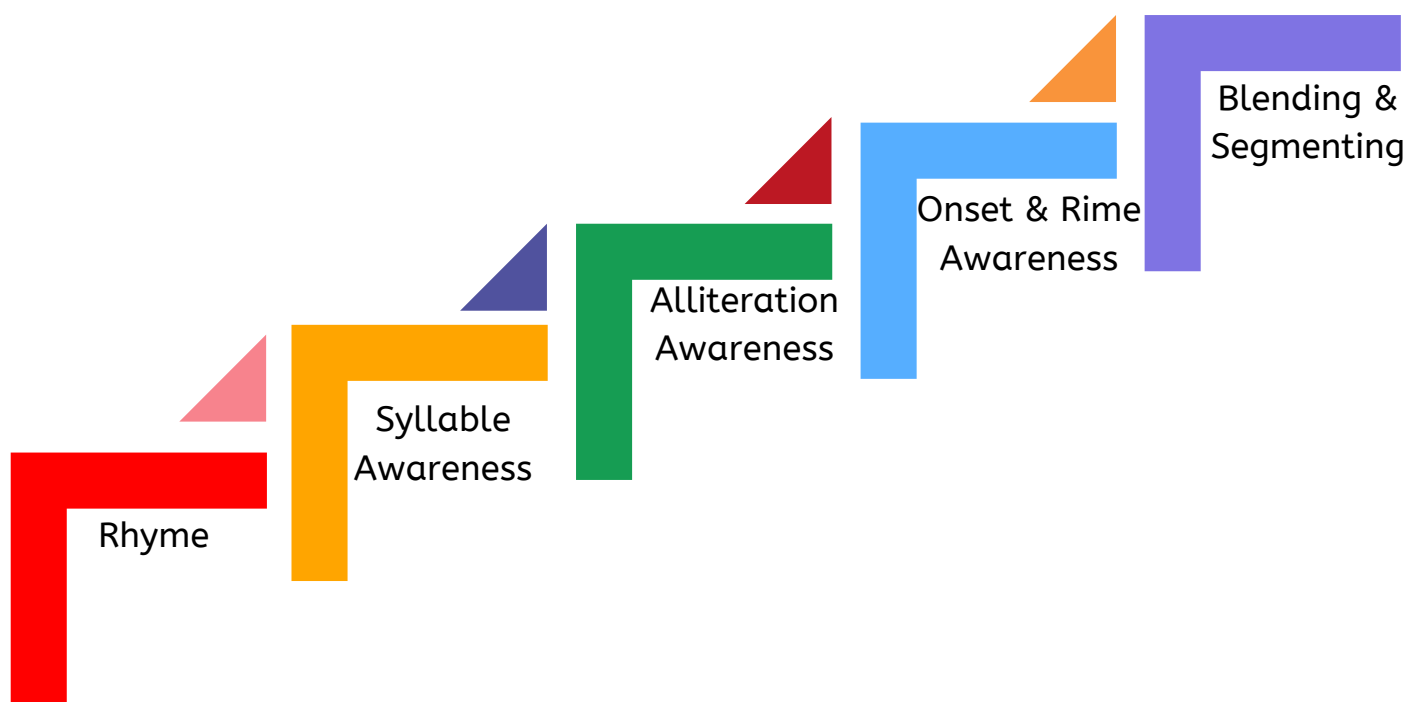
Phonological awareness

Phonological awareness involves the knowledge that sounds are the building blocks of words. Children become increasingly sensitive to smaller units of sounds as they get older.

Phonological awareness develops from larger 'units' of sound and breaks down in to smaller parts.

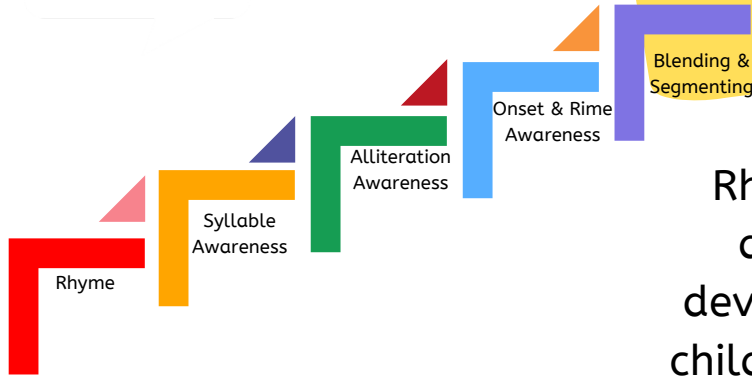
All children can benefit from building on phonological awareness skills, and is particularly important for children experiencing speech sound difficulty.

Phonological awareness is important for early literacy skills.



Phonological awareness

- Rhyme



Rhymes are important for language acquisition and help with speech development. Rhyming activities help children develop auditory skills such as discriminating between sounds.

Nursery Rhymes - singing Nursery rhymes, pausing so the child can fill in the rhyming word, changing the words to create new rhymes....



Humpty Dumpty up
a tree, he got stung
by a

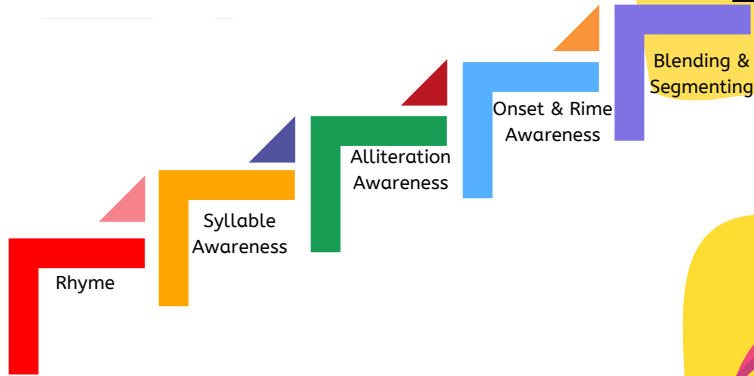


Rhyming Soup - find a selection of objects/ pictures that rhyme. Place them into the bowl to make a rhyming silly soup

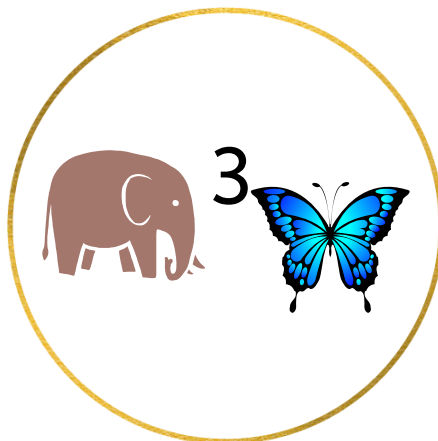
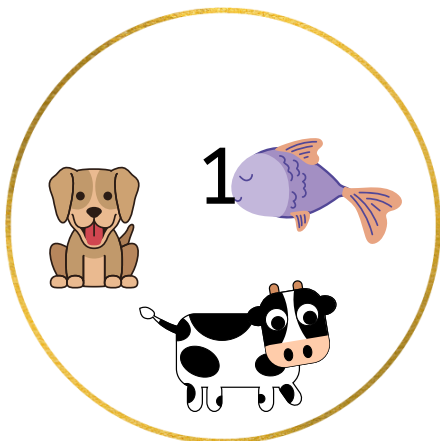
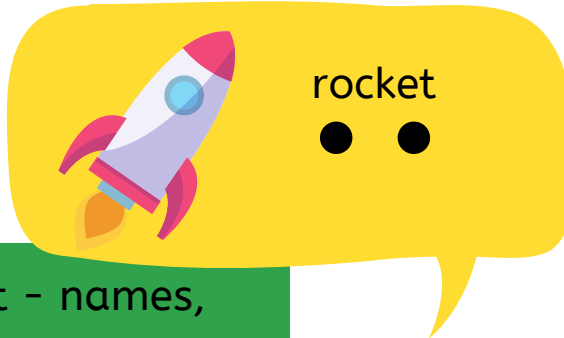
Other rhyming games to play

- Rhyming pairs
- Rhyming bingo / lotto
- Feely bag - pulling out rhyming objects
- Stepping stones - jump on the rhyming pictures
- Fishing game - find all the rhyming fish

Phonological awareness - Syllable Awareness



Clap it out - names,
familiar objects... count
the syllable



Sorting by the number
of syllables

Tapping out syllables in
songs using sticks



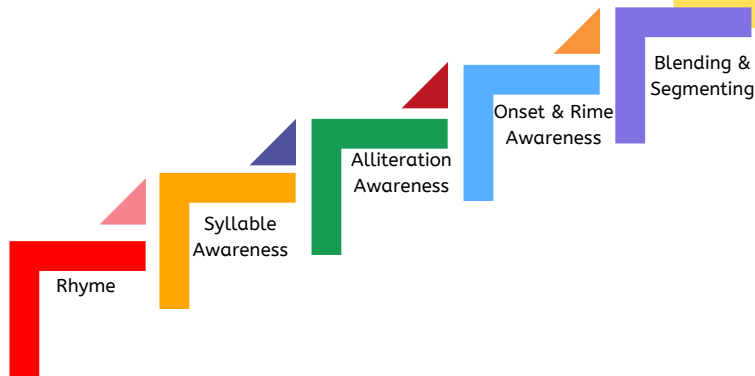
Other syllables games to
play

- Feely bag - pull out the objects to build the suspense!
- Syllable lotto



Syllable puzzle/ jigsaws

Phonological awareness - Alliteration Awareness



I spy - finding things in the picture that begin with the same sound



Silly Soup - putting in objects/ pictures that begin with the same sound to make a silly soup

Digging for treasure - hide a variety of objects in the sand. Challenge- add objects of more than one sound for children to find and sort



Other alliteration games to play

- Feely bag - pull out the objects to build the suspense!
- Alliteration lotto / bingo
- Sing alliteration songs (e.g. sizzling sausage)

Focus on *what* they say, not *how* they say it

Avoid pretending that you've understood if you haven't

Turn it on to you
- "Sorry, my ears weren't switched on then, say it again?"

Encourage them to show you what they're talking about, then model the words for them

Don't ask them to repeat it after you e.g. "say it like this...CAR"

Mirror what they say but with the correct speech sounds

Be an active listener

Use listening-based games in your practice

Teach phonological awareness skills

