

# How do I help my child with ... Phonemic Awareness

## What is Phonemic Awareness?

Phonemic awareness is the ability to manipulate individual sounds in our language. (Think: taking the word map and being able to speak the sounds m-a-p.)

## Why does it matter?

Phonemic awareness and letter-sound knowledge are the two biggest indicators of how well a child will learn to read in the first two years of school.

If we can teach children to play with sounds, and then teach them the letters that represent those sounds, then they have a great chance of being successful in their schooling.

## What activities can we do together?

To build your child's phonemic awareness, play with sounds! Examples:

1. Say the sounds in a simple word (m-a-p, c-a-sh, s-t-o-p, etc.) and ask them to put the sounds together and tell you the word.
2. Do the reverse of #1! Tell your child a word, and ask them to give you the sounds. \*If your child is struggling to do this verbally, use coins, rocks, etc., to represent each sound and have them touch each item for each sound.

## It does NOT end with sounds!

While it's important to play with sounds, it doesn't end there. Phonemic awareness should be taught with letters symbols (*Phonics*) as soon as possible. Once your child knows most of the sounds that letters make, start with visually showing them, and by writing them.

## What is "tapping" sounds?

Tapping your sounds means physically touching something each time you say a sound. For example, when I say "SHOP", I can touch 3 blocks or hold up a finger for each sound (3) /sh/ /o/ /p/. This helps students to see and understand how many sounds are represented in a spelling of a word.



# How do I help my child with ... Learning Sounds

## Why does it matter?

Knowing the sounds that letter symbols represent is crucial for reading and spelling success. Without knowing letter sounds automatically, children usually struggle in all areas of reading - to include mathematic word problems. This can be a huge obstacle in communication and comprehension.

## Why is it taking so long to learn?

You may find it frustrating because you feel it is taking so long to learn sounds: trust us, we know it can feel defeating. But, did you know that it takes hundreds of exposures to a letter-sound correspondence before it sticks? We have around 44 sounds to learn in the English language, and with various spellings!! Practice makes PROGRESS!

## What activities can we do together?

Tips for learning letter sounds:

1. Teach the name and the sound at the same time (Ex: the letter name is M and the sound it represents is /Mmm/)
2. Practice often but in short chunks of time. Keep letters on the fridge.
3. Teach proper letter formation from the start. Use lined paper that has a dotted midline. "We always start our letters at the top!"




## "B" does NOT say "Buh"!

When we discuss letter sounds, it can feel natural to say things like b says "buh" and t says "tuh." However, saying "uh" attached to a sound is actually adding an additional sound, which can be confusing when starting to blend sounds together. Try to "clip" your sounds and pay attention to which sounds use our voice, and which sounds are just air.



**Carrie  
Brown**

LITERACY SPECIALIST

 CLBrown2@fcps.edu

