

Preparing your child for phonics:

Playing with sounds at home



To give your child a great head-start for learning to read and write with phonics in Reception, we would like you and your child to explore and play with sounds in words, specifically, rhyme, alliteration and syllable patterns:

Learning to rhyme – hearing and saying words which sound the same at the end e.g. mat and cat.

Alliteration – hearing and saying words which begin with the same sound e.g. boat, banana, bat, brave.

Syllables – hearing and breaking down words into units of sound e.g. dog has 1 syllable, rabbit has 2 syllables (ra-bbit), butterfly (butt-er-fly) has 3 syllables.

We have given you some simple and fun ideas for activities below.

We do have a little homework for you before you begin however! As your child is learning to hear and say individual letter sounds, it is vitally important that you say these sounds correctly and purely yourself as a model. This is explained in the following video:



Oxford **OWL**

How to pronounce
pure sounds



[Phonics: How to pronounce pure sounds | Oxford Owl - YouTube](#)

Rhyming Games and Activities

Nursery rhyme bag

Have a bag of objects, each object representing a nursery rhyme e.g. a sheep for Baa Baa black sheep, a star for Twinkle Twinkle Little Star etc. Ask your child to choose an object from the bag and guess the rhyme. Sing the rhyme together.

Rhyming pairs

You will need a collection of 10 or more pairs of objects/toys that rhyme. You could use picture cards instead if this is easier.

Lay out 3 objects for your child, two of which rhyme and one that does not e.g. car, dog, star. Say the word for each object as you point to them. Ask your child to find the rhyming pair e.g. which two sound the same? If this is tricky, you could say 'which two sound the same, car and star or car and dog?'

If this is easy for your child, lay out a collection of objects (3 different pairs of rhyming objects and one or two odd ones out) ask them to find the rhyming pairs.

Silly sentences

You might like to use rhyming pictures or objects to help you. Choose a rhyming pair and make up your own silly sentences e.g. the star fell on the car.

Change the rhyme

This is for the more experienced rhymers! Take a well-known nursery rhyme e.g. Hickory Dickory Dock. What happened if the clock struck 2? The mouse said....Boo! What if Humpty Dumpty sat on a chair? He cuddled a....bear!

Reading rhyming stories

Read your child's favourite rhyming stories again and again. They will soon learn to hear and anticipate the rhyming words. Emphasise the individual rhyming words with your voice as you say them. Once your child is familiar with the story and the words, you might try a pause before you complete the rhyme to allow them to jump in with the missing rhyming word.

Alliteration Games and Activities

A great place to start is with your child's name, also family names. Teach them to hear and say the letter sound that their name begins with.

Treasure hunt

You will need a collection of 4 or 5 toys which all begin with the same sound e.g. car, cat, coat, cup, crayon. You might wrap them up in paper to make the game more exciting and ensure they bring your chosen items back to you. Tell your child they are going to be a pirate and need to find all the hidden treasure. As they recover each item, ask them to name the object. You can then repeat and add in the initial sound e.g. "cat...cat begins with a c". Remember to say each sound purely!

When all the objects have been recovered, say them all at once, pointing to each object as you do so. This should help your child to hear that they have the same initial sound.

To increase the challenge, play the game as above but do not tell your child the sound. At the end when you have found all the treasure, say the word for each object, emphasising the first letter as you do so. Then ask them to tell you what sound it begins with. If this is difficult, you could offer them a choice e.g. do they begin with a p or a c?

Finally to further increase the challenge. Hide objects which begin with two different sounds. Once they have been collected, ask them to sort them into the two different sound groups.

Odd one out

You will need a collection of at least 10 pairs of objects which begin with the same sound – a different initial sound for each pair.

Lay four objects out on the table. Three will have the same initial sound and one will not e.g. cat, bus, car, can. Ask your child to listen as you say each word. Then ask, which one does not have the same first sound.

I spy

An old favourite! This is a game to play with your child when they can begin to hear and say the first sound in a word. If this is too tricky for them, give them three familiar objects on the table, each with a different initial sound, to pick from which you have used in the games above.

Syllable Games and Activities

Follow the leader

Demonstrate some actions that all make sounds e.g. clap hands, tap finger (on table), stamp one foot, cough. Tell your child you are going to play a follow the leader game where they must listen and watch carefully. Tell them you are going to make some sounds and you want them to see if they can make the same sounds. To begin with don't worry too much if they do not copy the sound the exact same number of times as long as they can hear and reproduce the sound.

Clap to the beat

Help your child to hear the syllables or 'beats' in a word by clapping them as you speak. Try this with each of your names e.g. say 'Mum-my has two beats' and clap for each beat in the word mummy. See if your child can clap the beats in their name. This might need a bit of practice and they may need to copy you at first.

Once they can clap the beats in familiar names, introduce objects or pictures. One syllable can sometimes be tricky. It can be easier to begin with two syllable words e.g. pen-ny, ra-bbit, pi-rate. If your child claps too many times say "listen...watch me" and model it for them to copy.

Climb the stairs

Have a collection of objects or pictures, each with 1, 2 or 3 syllables. Each player to have a toy that is going to climb the stairs. Each player takes turns to chooses a object or picture card and claps the syllables or 'beats' in the word. How many syllables did it have? Move your toy up the stairs to match the number of syllables. The winner's toy will reach the top of the stairs first. If you do not have stairs, draw a ladder on a piece of paper for each player and use a small toy to step up each rung in the same way.