



## Speech and Language Therapy Advice Sheet

# Speech Sound Awareness Activities

### ***What is Speech Sound Awareness?***

- Speech sound (or 'phonological') awareness is the knowledge that words are made up of smaller units of sound and the ability to play with those smaller units. Those smaller units might be syllables (cat-er-pi-llar), onsets and rhymes (c-at) or single speech sounds (c-a-t). Playing with the sounds of speech can mean things like clapping along to syllables, making up rhymes or playing i-spy.

### ***Why is this important?***

- It may not be obvious that speech sound awareness is important as it's not something we really use much as adults. But for children it's an essential skill - being aware that words are made up of syllables and sounds is the basis for all of literacy. Children who find speech sound awareness difficult may also have speech that is hard to understand. Speech sound awareness is a big part of early language and early schooling

### ***What can I do to support my child?***

- The good news is that the best way to support your child with this important skill is through games. This ideas sheet talks you through some games you can play at home. The games near the top are easier and the games towards the end are more challenging. The first games focus on syllables, the next ones progress to listening to and making up rhymes, then the final few focus on the individual sounds that start and end words. Only move through the games when you're confident your little one is ready. When supporting children with speech sound awareness it's vital that you use spoken language, and if you need to support children further you can

use pictures. Don't use written words as sometimes in English the sounds we hear in words aren't what we write down!

### ***Stomp it out***

Help your little one listen to the syllables that make up words by getting them to stomp along! Stomp, clap, tap, smash. Whatever action gets your little one engaged. Emphasise the syllables in a word until your child gets the idea, make sure they say each syllable along with each clap or tap or stomp. GOR-I-LLA. MON-KEY. DIN-O-SAUR.

### ***Get ready for blending***

At school children do a lot of blending, where their teacher will give them a series of sounds and ask them what the word is. You can get them ready for this by building their awareness of syllables first. What fruit am I saying? PINE. A. PPLE. Can you guess what we're having for dinner? It's CU.CUM.BER. Add good pauses between the syllables to make this a challenge.

### ***Bean bag toss***

Give your little one a bean bag or a ball. Put four hoops on the floor, or draw circles with chalk or string. Draw the numbers 1, 2 & 3 (plus 4 once they get it) on pieces of paper and put them in the middle of the circles. Give your little one a word and tell them to listen to how many parts (syllables) it has. Get them to toss their bean bag into the right circle. EL-E-PHANT goes in circle 3!

### ***Odd one out***

Give your little one three words to listen to. Can they spot the one that doesn't rhyme? Which is the odd one out? CAT, BAT, HAM?

### ***Silly rhymes***

As children start to become aware of rhyme, they can start making up their own silly rhymes. It's usually easiest to start making up your own rhymes if they're not real words. See if your little can make up some silly rhymes. They may need you to do plenty of silly rhyming before they get it! What rhymes with nose? OSE, FOSE, ZOSE, and you'll probably spot some real words sneaking in too. ROSE, HOSE. Anything GOES!

### ***I spy***

I spy is a classic family game. When children are first starting out you can play this with rhymes too as this is easier than knowing what sounds words start with. This is a great one for the car. 'I spy with my little eye something that rhymes with TOAD.' ROAD! Move on to the first sound when they're ready. Where they are different, remember to use the first sound not the first letter.

### ***Show me a rhyme!***

Challenge your little one to do an action that rhymes with a word you give them. Can they think of an action that rhymes with MIGGLE? How about BUN? Again these will be a bit easier if you give them a silly word to work with.

### ***Animal rhymes***

Stuck in the car and can't wiggle? No worries, can they tell you an animal that rhymes with the word you give them? You can make this one easier by giving them a clue for a longer animal name or harder by giving them a clue for a shorter animal name. Think of an animal that rhymes with SMELIFANT! Now try it with LAT!

### ***Bring me treasures***

You can do this one if you're stuck at home on a rainy day, or out and about in the park. Challenge your little one to bring you 5 things that start with a certain sound. Remember to talk about sounds here and not letters. Once they're confident with this you can switch it up by asking for things that end with that sound.

### ***That's not an animal!***

The most tricky part of speech sound awareness is changing one sound in a word for another. For example, changing the 'm' in mouse for a 'h'. Think of a silly word where your child can change 1 sound to turn it into an animal. For example 'can you change one sound to make an animal from hort?'. See if they can tell you what they had to do. Once they can tell you they changed the 't' at the end of 'hort' into a 's' to make 'horse' they've cracked speech sound awareness.

If you have tried using these strategies and you still have concerns about the impact that your child's speech sound difficulties are having, you can:

- Look on our website for further information and advice:

<https://www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/childrens-centre/your-childs-hospital-journey/therapy-services/speech-and-language-therapy/>

- Contact us via our 'Request for Help' line – see our website for further details
- You can also access further information from the following websites:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/tiny-happy-people>

<https://speechandlanguage.org.uk/>