

Learning and Growing with your Preschooler

What is phonemic awareness?

Phonemic awareness is about how individual letters come together in sound combinations to create words.

Phonemic awareness is important for many reasons in your child's reading and writing development.

Here are some of the reasons why:

- It gives readers a way to approach sounding out and reading new words
- It helps readers understand the alphabetic principle; that the letters in words are systematically represented by sounds.
- Lack of phonemic awareness is a primary reason in many

early reading difficulties.

- Although there are 26 letters in the English language there are approximately 42 phonemes (sound units) in the English language.
- Sounds are represented in 250 different spellings ie. /f/ as 'ph', 'f', 'gh', or 'ff'.
- Sound units are not overly obvious and must be taught.
- Without awareness of the phonemic segments of words the alphabetic system of writing is simply not very understandable.

Letter Recognition

It is important for children to begin to identify individual letters of the



alphabet before school entry. A few key items for children to know:

- Know that each letter is different and represents something different.
- Know the names and sounds of letters.
- Know that letters come together to make words, sentences, paragraphs, ect.
- The alphabet helps us write down what

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More ways to help children learn letters

- Ask children if they can find the letter their name begins with– then ask if any other letters from their name appear in the word.
- ABC puzzles, magnets, or even food (cereal, pretzels, soup!)
- Read alphabet books or ask questions about letters/words in story books.
- Have letters/ alphabet displayed throughout your home ie. pictures, posters, names, on the refrigerator, ect.

Active Letter Learning!

All children learn differently so introduce letter and name activities in a variety of ways!

A multi-sensory approach to letter learning will help children connect to the learning in more ways.

Some examples:

- Read and look at letters.
- Make letters on the floor with tape and walk around them.
- Trace letters in sand, salt, snow, ect.
- Make letters with their bodies (think of the YMCA song! Or make letter pyramids with friends!)
- Draw letters in the air or on your hand
- Use playdough, plasticine or clay to shape letters
- Sing the alphabet
- Create sandpaper letters and trace.

Help me learn my name!

One excellent way to work on letter recognition is to help your child learn to recognize and spell his or her own name.

This is an important milestone for all children. It is often the first word they recognize in print and it takes on special meaning as it is his or her own.

Since they will be asked to recognize and write their name several times a day it is an important skill to learn prior to kindergarten. It will give your child a great sense of pride when he or she can do this without any help!

A few ideas to help your child learn his or her name:

- Have name hung on bedroom door.
- A name placemat at the breakfast/lunch/dinner table.
- Write your child's name on his or her artwork. Have your child trace the name afterwards.
- Names can be found on a variety of souvenirs– such as key-chains, necklaces, bracelets, t-



*X, Y and tumbledown Z,
The cat's in the cupboard and can't see
me!*

- shirts or mugs
- Look for names in environmental print– restaurant signs, television shows, book, grocery store, ect.
- Make his or her name in food ie. cookies, alphabet pretzels, soup, cereal.

Learning to write:

When practicing writing, a few items to help children build their confidence:

- Use large, primary pencils. It is easier for children to organize their hands for writing with a larger surface. Markers will also accomplish this.
- Use a rubber pencil grip. This allows children to practice writing without losing grip on the pencil.

- Stress the correct holding of the pencil (pencil positioned between the thumb and index finger, balancing on the middle finger– or 'froggy legs')

***“Reading is a basic tool in the living of a good life”
-Joseph Addison***

Getting fingers ready for a pencil!

Little fingers have a hard time learning to hold a pencil because their muscles are not fully developed in their fingers and their coordination is still improving.

Here are a few ways you can help develop finger strength:

- Peeling a Clementine or small orange– which practices grasping and pulling at the same time.
- Make time for play-dough or clay– this improves hand/finger strength
- Using an old (clean) medicine dropper, have your child drop water from an empty container. You can even colour the water with food-colouring for added interest– improves finger strength and coordination
- With supervision, have your child practice using scissors– finger strength and coordination

