

# Phonemic Awareness

## Fast Facts



### > INTRODUCTION

Phonemic awareness is a component of phonological awareness.

**Phonological awareness** is an umbrella term. It includes word awareness, rhyming, alliteration, counting syllables, identifying onsets and rimes, *and* phonemic awareness.

**Phonemes** are individual speech sounds that can be combined to form words.

In the word CAT, there are three phonemes: /k/ /ă/ /t/

In the word BOX, there are four phonemes: /b/ /ŏ/ /k/ /s/

In the word SCREECH, there are five phonemes: /s/ /k/ /r/ /ē/ /ch/

**Phonemic awareness** is the conscious awareness of phonemes in spoken words and the ability to identify and manipulate them.

### > WHY TEACH PHONEMIC AWARENESS?

To understand our alphabetic writing system, learners need to understand that symbols represent units of sound. This is called the **alphabetic principle**.

To understand the alphabetic principle, learners must *first* become aware of individual phonemes in spoken words.

In other words, they must have phonemic awareness.

### > RESEARCH SUMMARY

- Phonemic awareness training helps students acquire phonemic awareness. In other words, teaching it works!
- Phonemic awareness training helps students learn to read and spell.
- Phonemic awareness instruction is most effective when letters are incorporated.
- It is not necessary to teach rhyming and syllable counting before teaching phonemic awareness.
- Phonemic awareness is a means rather than an end. The end goal is not that students are experts in phonemic awareness, but that they learn to read.

## ➤ IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION

- Begin teaching phonemic awareness in preschool.
- Teach students to identify initial, final, and medial sounds in words (in that order). After these beginning skills have been mastered, teach students to identify internal consonants in CCVC and CVCC words (such as /l/ in *slip* or /s/ in *cast*).
- Teach students to blend phonemes into words.
- Teach students to segment words into phonemes. Elkonin boxes are an excellent tool for this.
- As soon as you start introducing graphemes (letters that represent phonemes), start using them in your phonemic awareness instruction. Phoneme-grapheme mapping (also called word mapping or sound mapping) is a powerful activity for phoneme segmentation and blending.

## ➤ REFERENCES

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