

WHAT CAN I DO TO PREPARE MY CHILD FOR LEARNING TO READ!

Every day our team of speech pathologists at Tyquin Group are helping children at primary school improve their reading and spelling performance. We are doing this by teaching them skills that all children need to have, to become successful readers and spellers.

These skills are called 'phonological awareness' skills. The term 'phonological awareness' relates to the ability to break words up into their individual sounds and then to be able to consciously manipulate those sounds in order to make new words. Phonological awareness allows a child to reflect upon and manipulate the spoken sounds that make up a word. It's important to remember that this refers to spoken words not written words.

So it allows a child to realise that when they say the word 'dog' it:

- has three sounds
- starts with the /d/ sound
- ends with the /g/ sound
- has the /o/ sound in the middle
- has the same first sound as 'day'
- rhymes with 'log'

Most children develop these phonological awareness skills in their normal course of development building upon well-developed spoken language skills. Through reading to your child and making observations about the way words sound these skills are

encouraged and developed. At this early age (from 3 years onwards) it is very easy to join in with sound games initiated by your child (e.g. when your child starts to play with words and say:

Child: “Shelly, nelly”

Adult: We can say “shelly nelly – boy those words sound a bit the same; those words rhyme.”

However, for some children these skills simply do not develop no matter how much we have read to them or played rhyming games. These children may have what is known as a phonological awareness disorder. This can be treated and obviously the best time to start is before they hit Grade 1.

By the time your child reaches the second half of pre-school research tells us that most children should be able to do the following tasks:

- Syllable Segmentation “How many syllables / parts in _____?” Use practice examples to show children how to segment syllables.
- Rhyming Identification – “Does ‘bed’ rhyme with ‘hot’?”
- Judging Rhyme – “Do ‘light’ and ‘late’ rhyme?”
- Rhyme Production “Tell me another word that rhymes with ‘pin’?”
- Rhyming Judgement “Which is the odd one out ‘hot’, ‘top’, ‘cot’?”
- Phoneme Segmentation “How many sounds can you hear in the word ‘ten’? What are the sounds?”
- First Sound Identification “What’s the first sound in ‘find’?”
- Last Sound Identification “What’s the last sound in ‘pig’?”
- Blending “What word do these sounds make ‘t oa s t’?”
- Identifying Alliteration “Do these words start with the same sound ‘seal’, ‘dog’?”
- Alliteration Production “Say a word that starts with the same sound as ‘dog’”



- Identifying words that have the same last sound “Do these words end with the same sound ‘hat’, ‘road’?”
- Identifying words that have the same middle sound “Do these words have the same sound in the middle ‘digging’, ‘wagging’?”

All of these tasks are done at the spoken level only.

If your child is nearing the end of his pre-school year and is having a lot of difficulty doing several of the tasks listed above it means that your child is highly ‘at risk’ for struggling with reading and spelling once they go to school.

Tyquin Group Speech Pathology has recently held several in-service seminars for teachers on phonological awareness difficulties and their impact on the child’s development of reading and spelling. There was an overwhelming consensus that we need to be identifying children who are having significant difficulties with their phonological awareness tasks at pre-school so that work can be done to teach them these skills before they enter Year 1.

Education of parents is vital so that you can access help before your child starts to fail with reading at school.