

PHONEME BLENDING

WHAT IS PHONEME BLENDING?

Phoneme blending is the ability to hear the individual sounds in a word, put the sounds together, and say the word that is made. For example, these sounds may be said to a student -/sss/, /aaa/, /nnn/, /d/ - and the student will say the word “sand”.

WHY ARE PHONEME BLENDING SKILLS IMPORTANT?

Phoneme blending is essential in developing reading skills. If a child can blend sounds, he will eventually be able to see letters in a word, think about the sounds the letters make, and blend the sounds to say the word.

Children who have strong phonemic awareness skills demonstrate better literacy growth.

ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP PHONEME BLENDING SKILLS

Finish My Sentence

Before beginning the activity, create a list of simple sentences. Include in each sentence a three or four-letter word you can ask your child to blend. Here are some examples:

I gave him my /p/ /e/ /n/.
Sam got on the /b//u//s/.
The pig ran in the /m//u//d/.
Suzy took my favorite /h//a//t/.

Say, “**Today we are going to play a game. I am going to say a sentence and you must help me finish it. Listen to my first sentence. ‘I gave him my /p/ /e/ /n/.’ What did I give him?**”

Help your child discover that /p/ /e/ /n/ is “pen”. Repeat the procedure with more sentences and continue asking your child to tell you the word that was broken apart. When your child gets good at oral blending, ask him to come up with his own sentence to say.

The Suitcase Game

Fill a suitcase with different types of clothing and travel items. Say, “**Imagine we are preparing to go on a vacation. We are going to (country). Last night I packed our suitcase for the trip, but I think I may have forgotten something. Can you help me find out what I forgot? One item in my suitcase is a pair of /p/ /a/ /n/ /t/ /s/. What is the first item in my suitcase?**” (pants) After your child says, “pants,” pull a pair of pants out of your suitcase to show him that he is correct. Say, “**The second item in my suitcase is a /b/ /r/ /u/ /sh/. What did I pack?**”

After you go through each of the items in your suitcase, ask your child, **“What did I forget to pack?”** If your child needs assistance, give him clues such as, **“Oh no, I forgot my /h/ /a/ /t/.** Additional items in the suitcase (or missing from the suitcase could be a book, comb, belt, shirt, shoes, socks, suit, dress, or skirt.

The Riddle Game

Say, **“I’m thinking of a small animal that likes to eat cheese and is a /m/ /ow/ /s/. What is it? That’s right! Mouse. Mmm-owww-sss, mouse. Let’s try another riddle. I’m thinking of an animal that lives under water and is a /f/ /i/ /sh/. What is it? That’s right! Fish. Fff-iii-shhh, fish.”** Continue with this game by making up your own riddles for your child.

Sound Blending

Pick out one of your child’s favorite picture books. Read the book before you read it to your child, and make a list of one-syllable words from the story that are the names of a person, place, animal or thing. Sit close to your child while you read the book out loud. Then tell your child that you are going to read the book again, but this time you want her/him to help. Next say that you will stretch out the sounds in some of the words while you are reading, and you want your child to help by squeezing these sounds together and saying the words. (For example, “There was a big window in the rrrrr-oo-oo-oo-mmmmm.”) Finally, read the book stretching out the sounds in the words you have chosen, and let your child guess what the word is. Don’t be afraid to help your child at first.

Slow Motion

Begin by saying your child’s name in slow motion, stretching out each sound as you say it. Repeat her/his name in this “slow- motion language” so your child hears each sound clearly. Ask, **“What did I say?”** When the child guesses his name, try it with other words, stretching out each sound as you say it. Ask your child to guess what word you said, saying the word as it is normally pronounced. Offer lots of praise for successful “translation.”