

What are phonological awareness skills?

Phonological awareness refers to the conscious awareness of the phonological structure of words, phrases and sentences. Phonological awareness skills are not spelling skills. Children develop phonological awareness skills by consciously attending to how words sound-by listening to words. Phonological awareness skills are an indispensable foundation to the acquisition of spelling and reading skills.

It is important to know that, unlike the ability to use and understand language, phonological awareness does not develop naturally. Many reading experts recommend phonological awareness instruction as a prerequisite to early literacy training. Research has demonstrated a strong correlation between lack of phonological awareness and reading failure.

Children with language delays are at exceptional risk for reading failure and lack of acquisition of phonological awareness skills!

There are several levels of phonological awareness skills. Phonological awareness develops in a top-down fashion. That is to say, the learner begins at the level of the whole word and gradually progresses to even smaller parts of the word- sounds and letters. Here are some examples of phonological awareness skills that are taught in our Language and Literacy Sessions:

- Awareness that sentences and phrases can be broken up into words. For example, "How are you?" can be broken up into: how-are-you.
- Awareness that some words share sounds or sound sequences. For example, "sing" and "ring" rhyme and the words "black" and "blue" have the same beginning sound.
- Awareness that words can be broken down into component parts. For example, the word "tomorrow" can be split into: to-ma-row.