



**Simple Diagnostic Assessments
for beginning readers and spellers**

PHONEMIC AWARENESS

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Phonemic Awareness

Introduction

Phonemic Awareness is concerned with the ability of the brain to process and manipulate sounds in words. The ability to isolate chunks of sound (phonemes) in a given word *in the correct order* is essential for spelling tasks and the ability to blend sounds together is essential for reading tasks. These simple diagnostic assessments have been designed to test **very** early phonemic awareness skills.

Levels of Difficulty

Isolation of phonemes

In the *early* stages of spelling there are three levels of difficulty when isolating sounds in words, and these three levels are based on the position of a given sound within a word. The following list begins with the simplest task and progresses to the most difficult task:

1. The initial position (the first sound in a word)
2. The final position (the last sound in a word)
3. The medial position (the middle sound in a word)

Blending of phonemes

In a similar way, in the *early* stages of blending for reading there are three levels of difficulty:

1. vowel-consonant (v-c)
2. consonant-vowel-consonant (c-v-c)
3. digraph-vowel-consonant (d-v-c)

Note: the only digraphs used at this stage are *th*, *sh*, and *ch*

Important Note

These activities are concerned with the *sounds* that can be heard and **not** the **spelling** of the words. The main question to be posed during any activities is, "Tell me what you can *hear*". In this way, the first sound in the word 'onion' is short 'ü' **not** short 'ö', and the first sound in 'giraffe' is /j/ **NOT** /g/!

Suggested order for introducing the alphabet sounds

Young students will be more successful at these activities if the sounds are introduced in small groups (see below), rather than the whole alphabet. Once students have mastered one set, the sounds that belong to the next set may be combined with those already known. In this way previous learning will be maintained and practised.

Sets:

1. a, m, s, t, i, f
2. d, r, o, g, h, l
3. u, c, n, k, v, b
4. e, p, j, w
5. y, x, qu, z

Assessment

There are two main reasons for the assessment process in the classroom

1. To collect information that allows a teacher to write programs that match the needs of the class student-body.
2. To prepare a remediation program for students who have gaps in their knowledge, or who have mis-learned information.

Notes:

1. This is a VERBAL assessment. The student does not write anything and must not be able to see the master or record sheets.
2. The assessor reads the instructions provided at the beginning of each different exercise and makes notes on the master or record sheet as the test proceeds.
3. It is useful to record everything that the student says, even if it means recording the number of attempts, comments about the difficulty level, or comments about not understanding what is required, etc.
4. If a student gives an incorrect answer, record *exactly* what the student says as this will help in analysing what remediation support a student might need.

Error analysis

Error analysis is concerned with isolating *specific* remediation requirements. At this early level, phonemic awareness errors may be classified as follows:

1. **sound** reversals, or confusions, such as
/ă/ and /ũ/; /i/ and /ě/; /j/ and /g/; /b/ and /d/;
/s/ and /z/ /c/ and /g/; /t/ and /d/ /y/ and /ũ/
2. inability to isolate separate phonemes within a word, e.g.
'bed' /b/ /e/ /d/
'top' /t/ /o/ /p/
'shut' /sh/ /u/ /t/
3. the omission of sounds, e.g. 'pram' /p/ /a/ /m/; 'went' /w/ /e/ /t/
4. the addition of sounds, e.g. 'sob' /s/ /o/ /n/ /b/
5. the incorrect sequence of sounds, e.g. 'clap' written as 'calp'
6. the inability to blend, or chunk, for reading, e.g. /a/ + /t/; /f/ + /in/

Isolation skills for spelling

Phonemic Awareness for Spelling
Isolation of Initial Sounds

Isolation

"I will say a word. You tell me the first sound in each word."

Set 1 a, m, s, t, i, f

at

is

fit

sat

Tim

mat

Set 2 d, r, o, g, h, l

odd

hat

gas

lit

dig

ring

Set 3 u, c, n, k, v, b

up

vet

ban

kick

nice

cough

Set 4 e, p, j, w

egg

wish

jam

pill

jot

web

Set 5 y, x, z, qu

yap

quick

zap

quest

yes

zebra

Digraphs th, sh, ch

shut

them

think

chip

shell

chase

Phonemic Awareness Assessment: Isolation of Initial Sounds

TEACHER TO MARK THIS SHEET

Instructions:

Use this page as a recording sheet. Record any tasks a student cannot do. Write what the student says in the column of cells under each student's name. You may repeat the question, if asked, but **DO NOT HELP THE STUDENT IN ANY OTHER WAY**. *Keep going to the end of the test.* Add any notes at the end of the test about what you observe for each student as they complete the test.

Assessment Date: _____								
Student names →								
a, m, s, t, i, f								
at								
is								
fit								
sat								
Tim								
mat								
d, r, o, g, h, l								
odd								
hat								
gas								
lit								
dig								
ring								
u, c, n, k, v, b								
up								
vet								
ban								
kick								
nice								
cough								
e, p, j, w								
egg								
wish								
jam								
pill								
jot								
web								
y, x, qu, z								
yap								
quick								
zap								
quest								
yes								
zebra								
th, sh, ch								
shut								
them								
think								
chip								
shell								
chase								

Phonemic Awareness for Spelling
Isolation of Final Sounds

Isolation

"I will say a word. You tell me the last sound in each word."

Set 1 a, m, s, t, i, f

am

tiff

fat

crease

Tim

mat

Set 2 d, r, o, g, h, l

pig

had

ball

sell

plug

made

Set 3 u, c, n, k, v, b

in

love

magic

stab

green

cub

Set 4 e, p, j, w

tap

wedge

jump

Set 5 y, x, z, qu

axe

fizz

bronze

Digraphs th, sh, ch

such

fish

tithe

moth

dash

rich

Phonemic Awareness Assessment: Isolation of Final Sounds

TEACHER TO MARK THIS SHEET

Instructions:

Use this page as a recording sheet. Record any tasks a student cannot do. Write what the student says in the column of cells under each student's name. You may repeat the question, if asked, but **DO NOT HELP THE STUDENT IN ANY OTHER WAY**. *Keep going to the end of the test.* Add any notes at the end of the test about what you observe for each student as they complete the test.

Assessment Date: _____								
Student names →								
a, m, s, t, i, f								
am								
tiff								
fat								
crease								
Tim								
mat								
d, r, o, g, h, l								
pig								
had								
ball								
sell								
plug								
made								
u, c, n, k, v, b								
in								
love								
magic								
stab								
green								
cub								
e, p, j, w								
tap								
wedge								
jump								
y, x, qu, z								
axe								
fizz								
bronze								
th, sh, ch								
such								
fish								
tithe								
moth								
dash								
rich								

Phonemic Awareness Assessment: Isolation of Final Sounds

Teacher Notes/Observations

Phonemic Awareness for Spelling
Isolation of Medial Sounds

Isolation

I am going to say a word. I want you to tell me the sound that you hear in the *middle*. 'Cat'.
What is the *middle* sound in cat? /ă/

Set 1 a, m, s, t, i, f

mat	Tim	sit
Sam	fat	miss

Set 2 d, r, o, g, h, l

hid	dog	rim
gone	rag	lock

Set 3 u, c, n, k, v, b

cob	but	nick
bug	nag	love

Set 4 e, p, j, w

wig	peck	fudge
pet	jot	well

Set 5 y, x, z, qu

zip	yes	box
yam	zit	quell

Digraphs th, sh, ch

much	shop	check
with	bash	them

Phonemic Awareness Assessment: Isolation of Medial Sounds

TEACHER TO MARK THIS SHEET

Instructions:

Use this page as a recording sheet. Record any tasks a student cannot do. Write what the student says in the column of cells under each student's name. You may repeat the question, if asked, but **DO NOT HELP THE STUDENT IN ANY OTHER WAY**. *Keep going to the end of the test.* Add any notes at the end of the test about what you observe for each student as they complete the test.

Assessment Date: _____								
Student names →								
a, m, s, t, i, f								
mat								
Tim								
sit								
Sam								
fat								
miss								
d, r, o, g, h, l								
hid								
dog								
rim								
gone								
rag								
lock								
u, c, n, k, v, b								
cob								
but								
nick								
bug								
nag								
love								
e, p, j, w								
wig								
peck								
fudge								
pet								
jot								
well								
y, x, qu, z								
zip								
yes								
box								
yam								
zit								
quell								
th, sh, ch								
much								
shop								
check								
with								
bash								
them								

Blending skills for reading

Phonemic Awareness for Reading
Blending of Two Sounds

2-letter blends

"I am going to say two sounds. I want you to tell me which word the two sounds make together. Listen: /aaa/ and /mmm/ make 'am'. Some of the words will be nonsense words."

Note: all vowel sounds must be given as the **short** sound.

Set 1 a, m, s, t, i, f

a - t i - m i - t

Note: make sure that you say the **short** sounds of the vowels for the following row:

f - i s - a m - a

Set 2 d, r, o, g, h, l

a - d i - l o - g

Note: make sure that you say the **short** sounds of the vowels for the following row:

r - o d - a g - i

Set 3 u, c, n, k, v, b

u - m i - n u - b

Note: make sure that you say the **short** sounds of the vowels for the following row:

n - u k - o b - a

Set 4 e, p, j, w

e - g a - b e - p

Note: make sure that you say the **short** sounds of the vowels for the following row:

w - e j - i p - o

Set 5 y, x, z, qu

a - z i - x a - p

Note: make sure that you say the **short** sounds of the vowels for the following row:

qu - i y - e z - o

Digraphs th, sh, ch

sh - a

ch - i

th - u

Note: make sure that you say the **short** sounds of the vowels for the following row:

o - th

e - sh

u - ch

Teacher Notes/Observations

Phonemic Awareness Assessment: Blending of Two Sounds

TEACHER TO MARK THIS SHEET

Instructions:

Use this page as a recording sheet. Record any tasks a student cannot do. Write what the student says in the column of cells under each student's name. You may repeat the question, if asked, but **DO NOT HELP THE STUDENT IN ANY OTHER WAY.** *Keep going to the end of the test.* Add any notes at the end of the test about what you observe for each student as they complete the test.

Assessment Date: _____								
Student names →								
a, m, s, t, i, f								
at								
im								
it								
fi								
sa								
ma								
d, r, o, g, h, l								
ad								
da								
gi								
ro								
da								
gi								
u, c, n, k, v, b								
um								
in								
ub								
nu								
ko								
ba								
e, p, j, w								
eg								
ab								
ep								
we								
ji								
po								
y, x, qu, z								
az								
ix								
ap								
qui								
ye								
zo								
th, sh, ch								
sha								
chi								
thu								
oth								
esh								
uch								

Phonemic Awareness for Reading
Blending of Three Sounds

3-letter blends

"Now, I am going to say three sounds. I want you to tell me which word the three sounds make together."

Set 1 a, m, s, t, i, f

m - a - t	T - i - m	s - i - t
f - i - t	m - i - s	t - a - t

Set 2 d, r, o, g, h, l

d - i - g	h - a - d	g - o - t
r - a - m	d - o - ll	l - i - d

Set 3 u, c, n, k, v, b

v - i - m	c - u - p	n - a - n
m - u - g	b - a - n	k - i - n

Set 4 e, p, j, w

p - e - n	w - i - g	j - u - t
d - u - ck	j - o - b	v - e - t

Set 5 y, x, z, qu

y - e - t	z - a - g	p - e - n
qu - i - ll	w - a - x	j - a - ck

Digraphs th, sh, ch

th - e - m	sh - a - m	d - i - sh
ch - a - t	s - u - ch	w - i - th

Phonemic Awareness Assessment: Blending of Three Sounds

TEACHER TO MARK THIS SHEET

Instructions:

Use this page as a recording sheet. Record any tasks a student cannot do. Write what the student says in the column of cells under each student's name. You may repeat the question, if asked, but **DO NOT HELP THE STUDENT IN ANY OTHER WAY**. *Keep going to the end of the test.* Add any notes at the end of the test about what you observe for each student as they complete the test.

Assessment Date: _____								
Student names →								
a, m, s, t, i, f								
mat								
Tim								
sit								
fit								
mis								
tat								
d, r, o, g, h, l								
dig								
had								
got								
ram								
doll								
lid								
u, c, n, k, v, b								
vim								
cup								
nan								
mug								
ban								
kin								
e, p, j, w								
pen								
wig								
jut								
duck								
job								
vet								
y, x, qu, z								
yet								
zag								
pen								
quill								
wax								
jack								
th, sh, ch								
them								
sham								
dish								
chat								
such								
with								

Some Useful references

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