



# Phonological Awareness Strand

## What is Phonological Awareness?

Phonological awareness is the ability to analyse and manipulate the sound structure of language. In Lexia® Core5® Reading, phonological awareness activities include identifying, segmenting, blending, and manipulating syllables and sounds in words. Phonemic awareness is a component of phonological awareness that focuses on individual sounds within words.

## What is the role of Phonological Awareness in learning how to read and spell?

It has long been established that phonemic awareness abilities in preschool and reception are highly predictive of children's ability to learn phonic word attack strategies that are important for word identification. Before learning to read, children must develop phonemic awareness or the ability to recognise and isolate individual sounds in words. This awareness of individual sounds, or phonemes, is critical for mapping sounds onto print in an alphabetic writing system such as English. It directly impacts both reading and spelling. With appropriate exposure, many children develop phonemic awareness with relative ease during the early years foundation stage and reception. Others, however, need more intensive systematic and explicit teaching of these skills.

## What is the approach to developing Phonological Awareness in Lexia Core5 Reading?

Phonological awareness skills are targeted in Lexia Core5 Reading through a developmental sequence of activities that begins in the preschool years. Young children first develop an awareness of the phonological patterns that occur at the end of rhyming words. A next step involves awareness of bigger chunks within words, such as compound words made up of two independent words and syllables. Most importantly for reading success, students must also develop phonemic awareness as they learn to analyse and manipulate individual sounds within words. These phonemic awareness skills not only enhance phonics acquisition but also continue to grow as students work on letter-sound correspondences and application of phonic word attack strategies.

During early activities in Lexia Core5 Reading, students develop phonological awareness through picture-matching activities that emphasise recognition of rhyming words and the ability to blend syllables in spoken words. They also learn to segment spoken words by identifying the number of syllables they hear. Blending and segmenting activities begin with compound words and progress to three-syllable words.

Once phonological awareness of syllables has been established, students begin to develop phonemic awareness by analysing and synthesising individual sounds in words. During phonemic awareness activities, they match pictures with the same beginning and ending sounds, and also blend and segment individual phonemes in words. These phonemic awareness or sound analysis skills are critical for learning phonic word attack strategies related to word identification and spelling. Throughout the phonics activities in Lexia Core5 Reading, more complex phonemic awareness abilities involving the manipulation of sounds continue to develop.