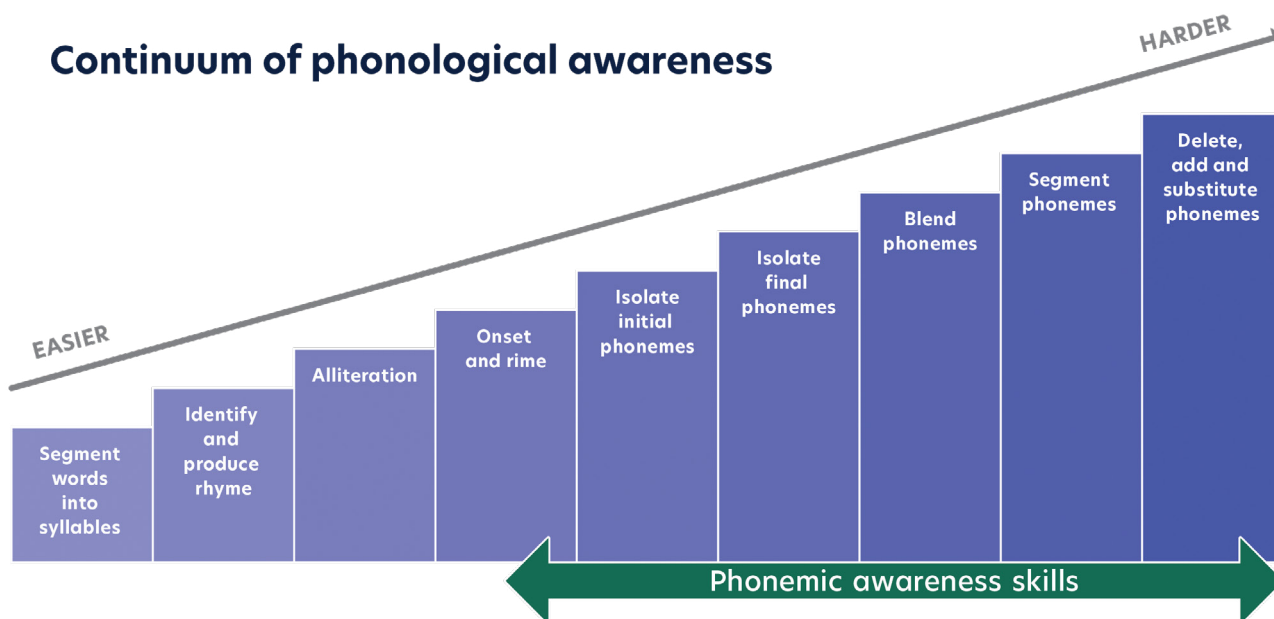


Phonemic awareness overview

What is phonemic awareness?

Phonological awareness is the broad ability to recognise and manipulate the sounds in spoken language. Phonemic awareness is a subset of phonological awareness; it relates to the more specific skills of recognising and manipulating single speech sounds in a spoken language. Current research suggests that oral practice of phonemic awareness complemented by known letters is a critical part of an effective phonics program.

The continuum of phonological awareness (below) shows the developmental progression students move through from the easier steps (segmenting words into syllables) to higher order phonemic awareness skills (deleting, adding and substituting phonemes). Explicit instruction of blending and segmenting phonemes is of particular importance in beginning reading and spelling instruction.



Visit the **Literacy Hub** website at www.literacyhub.edu.au to access more free, evidence-based literacy resources for teachers.

Why is phonemic awareness an important part of your phonics lessons?

In an effective systematic synthetic phonics approach, it is important to include phonemic awareness and manipulation activities in your daily instruction.

From Emina McLean, [Phonemic awareness instruction: what's the evidence?](#)

- Phonemic awareness instruction positively affects word-level reading and spelling abilities, and it should be included in early reading instruction.
- Less is more in that a focus on one or two phonemic awareness skills (e.g. blending and segmenting) will be more effective than focusing on a suite of three or more skills.
- Phonemic awareness instruction with letters is far more effective for both reading and spelling development than oral-only instruction.
- We do not need to teach phonemic awareness and phonics separately. High-quality phonics instruction will include frequent and significant opportunities to map speech to print through blending and segmenting practice.

What does a phonemic awareness session look like?

Choose one or two phonemic awareness activities to start your lesson every day. Activities can be conducted on a whiteboard or screen at the front of the classroom, on printed worksheets, or as physical games in the classroom.

No matter what format the activity takes, follow the explicit instruction principles of 'I do', 'We do', 'You do', to ensure your students are not being asked to tackle concepts they have not already been taught.

Useful links and further reading

[Daily review example](#)

[Emina McLean - Phonemic awareness instruction: what's the evidence?](#)

[Government of South Australia, Department of Education and Children's Services - Understanding the reading process](#)

[Literacy Hub professional learning: Implementing a systematic synthetic phonics approach](#)

[Phonological and phonemic awareness activities](#)