

# Phonological Awareness Strand Overview



## What is phonological awareness?

Phonological awareness is the ability to notice, analyze, and manipulate the sound structure of language. Effective instruction to develop phonological awareness includes identifying, segmenting, blending, and manipulating syllables and sounds in words. Phonemic awareness is a component of phonological awareness that focuses on the conscious awareness of individual sounds within words.

## What is the role of phonological awareness in learning how to read and spell?

Phonological awareness is foundational to literacy development. Students must have an understanding of all levels of the speech sound—or phonological—system to learn to read and spell. This awareness of individual sounds, or phonemes, is critical for mapping sounds onto print in an alphabetic writing system such as English. Difficulty with phonological tasks directly impacts reading and spelling. Because of the relationship among these skills, purposeful instruction and focused practice to develop phonological awareness is necessary. Once students are able to analyze and manipulate the specific sounds in spoken words, reading and spelling the corresponding printed words becomes easier.

## What is the approach to developing phonological awareness in Lexia® Core5® Reading?

Phonological awareness skills are targeted in Lexia Core5 Reading through direct, systematic, and explicit instruction that follows a developmental sequence of activities. In the early levels, students develop phonological awareness through activities focused on the recognition of rhyming words and the awareness of syllables and onset-rime. Blending and segmenting activities begins with compound words and progresses to three-syllable words.

Once phonological awareness of syllables has been established, students begin to develop phonemic awareness by analyzing and manipulating individual sounds in words. Instruction and practice progress to the phoneme level as soon as Level 2 in the program, with activities focused on phoneme blending and phoneme segmentation. Explicit instruction also includes a focus on identifying first, final, and medial phonemes in words. Teacher-led resources further support the development of phonemic awareness through conversations about what the mouth is doing when sounds are produced (e.g., to make this sound, put your tongue between your teeth).

The full progression of phonological awareness skills addressed in the Phonological Awareness strand of Core5 sets the foundation for and enhances phonics acquisition. Importantly, phonemic awareness skills also continue to grow in the context of cumulative review and opportunities for transfer as students work on letter-sound correspondences and phonic decoding. For example, warm-up activities in Levels 5–9 provide opportunities to review and practice phonological awareness skills with the goal of these skills becoming automatic. Throughout the phonics activities in Core5, more complex phonemic awareness abilities involving the manipulation of sounds continue to develop.