

Preschool Phonics Phase 1.1 Environmental Sounds

A Guide for Parents

Preschool and nursery phonics focus on pre-reading skills. These are speaking and listening skills, being able to distinguish the sounds they hear, patterns of speech, and sounds of speech. Phase 1 of the phonics programme is split into seven aspects; each builds on the previous aspect.

This guide introduces the first aspect of Phase 1 Phonics: Environmental Sounds.

Listening to environmental sounds can be practised very easily through day-to-day activities and you don't need any special equipment – just your ears. At home, the doorbell rings, the dishwasher beeps and the letterbox flaps open and shut. Talk to your child about what you can hear. Let them know when there is a sound. Did they hear it too?

Children learn to tune their listening into the wider world around them.

Nurseries, preschools and childminders will take children on listening walks. The children are each given a beater or drumstick and they investigate the different sounds that are made when objects are hit, e.g. a wooden fence or a metal gate, a wall or a tree. The children are encouraged to listen very carefully to the differences in the sounds they hear.

You can start this part of phonics as soon as your child has an understanding of language and questions (from as early as 18 months old).

This aspect of phonics and the listening and hearing activities are very useful for identifying whether your child can hear a full range of sounds. Can they hear the same things you can hear? Can they hear things as clearly as you can? Speak to your GP or health visitor if you have any concerns about your child's hearing and they can arrange for a hearing test for them.

When you are out and about, listen to the different sounds that cars, vans, and lorries make. Listen out for trains, dogs, and sirens. Listen to the different bird songs and the snap of twigs in the woods. Talk to your child about what you can hear.



Sound bingo games are available to buy or download, where children listen to environmental or animal sounds and match them to their game board.

The most important thing you can do is make time to listen to your child. Switch off the TV, radio and mobile phones and really listen to them!