

Help Children Hear the Sounds in Words

Talking about the first sounds in words builds a child's sound awareness. This helps lay the foundation for later reading and writing! Use these fun tips to draw children's attention to the sounds in words:

Play Time

While playing with sand toys, wait to see what the child does. Follow their lead by commenting and joining in with a toy. Once or twice during play, draw the child's attention to a specific beginning sound: "Listen. I hear the 'sss' sound at the beginning of **sss**nake. Can you hear it?" Other words to try: star, spoon, stick.

Daily Activities

During snack, watch what the child does or says, then make a related comment that emphasizes a first sound: "Yummy carrots! Carrot starts with the sound /k/!" Help the child come up with other examples: "We need a...cup to pour juice! Cup also starts with /k/!" Name the sound without adding anything extra – e.g., say /k/ not "kuh."



On the Go

When the child notices a sign out on a walk, talk about the sign's first letter and the sound it makes: "Yes, that's the mall! Mall starts with the letter M. M makes the 'mmm' sound in **mmm**all!" Ask the child to think of something else that starts with the 'mmm' sound. Share another example if they can't think of anything after five seconds.

Book Reading

When reading a very familiar book, switch the first sound of a common word – e.g., say "sork" instead of "fork." Give the child time to correct you, then respond: "You're right! I said 'sssork,' but it should be 'fffork.' Fork starts with 'fff'. I should have used 'fff' to say 'fork!'" Use this strategy just once or twice each time you share the book.



Notes