

Disclaimer: Activities with children must always be risk assessed, including for allergies or choking. Children must always have adequate supervision. Resources and materials must always be appropriate for children's age and stage of development.

Developing phonic confidence

Staff who confidently use phonics throughout their everyday practice will enable children to develop skills for tuning in to sounds and words.

For children in nursery settings, the focus should be on developing children's listening and speaking skills to support them for when they are ready to read and write letters to make words.



These ideas for developing phonic confidence with your staff do not involve reading or writing letters.

1. Make sure your staff are familiar with the vocabulary used to describe phonics:

Vocabulary	Description
Phoneme	The smallest unit of sound in speech, e.g. the <i>sound 'c'</i>
Grapheme	A written representation of the speech sound, e.g. the <i>letter 'c'</i>
Alliteration	Words which <i>start</i> with the same sound, e.g. <u>ch</u> air, <u>ch</u> urch, <u>ch</u> erry
Rhyme	Words which <i>end</i> with the same sound, e.g. <u>fe</u> t, <u>me</u> et, <u>be</u> at
Blending	Combining phonemes (sounds) to make a word, e.g. ch/air = <i>chair</i> , f/ee/t = <i>feet</i>
Segmenting	The opposite of blending. Breaking down words into their individual sounds, e.g. <i>chair</i> = ch/air, <i>feet</i> = f/ee/t

2. Ensure practitioners are familiar with the correct pronunciation of phonemes (letter sounds). These need to be clearly modelled by staff. Try looking on YouTube for videos demonstrating the correct enunciation of sounds and share in staff meetings, with everyone practising the correct sounds
3. Don't rush for children to recognise and name letters (graphemes). In maths, you will provide lots of opportunities to say the number names while counting before recognising the numerals and matching them to a quantity. So in phonics, provide lots of opportunities to play with sounds and words before expecting them to recognise letters and match them to a sound

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4. Find opportunities to use alliteration through play, such as, "Look! Two tall towers" and encourage the child to hear and say the alliterative sounds, e.g. "t,t,t...two tall towers." Tell them that the words start with the same sound so that they can start to notice alliteration in their own and other's talk
5. Find opportunities to encourage children to notice when there's a rhyme, e.g. "Here you go, **Mike**. It's your turn on the **bike**. Did you hear that rhyme? I said Mike, bike. The ends of the words sound the same. Mike and bike rhyme." Often, once children 'get' rhyming, they find it highly amusing. It's a great opportunity to play with real and nonsense words, encourage their humour and share some funny words together
6. When children are confidently able to recognise the sound (not letter) at the start of a word and rhyme at the end of a word, they can begin to orally blend sounds together. Children can be asked to go and find their c/oa/t or put the toy in the b/o/x. Encourage them to say the blended word so that they hear the segmented sounds blended into the word
7. When orally segmenting words, the first and final sounds are easiest for children to hear in the first instance. For example, ask a child to tidy away all the resources beginning with the same sound, e.g. brick, ball and book.

NDNA products to support you

- [Literacy Champions](#) - programme
- [Let's Look at...Phonics](#) – online course
- [Developing literacy superheroes](#) - publication

Find more resources at www.ndna.org.uk/hub/myndna