



The **JOLLY**  
**JELLYFISH**  
jumps into literacy

# Introduction

This booklet is aimed at parents, carers and all practitioners working in settings with preschool children.

The aim is to increase understanding of the link between the ability to discriminate differences in sounds, particularly speech sounds and later success in learning to read. It provides practical ways to develop important language skills.

An independent review of early reading (Rose Report 2006) makes clear the importance of imaginative and active, multi sensory pre-reading activities.

The booklet is based on the analogy of a jellyfish, the “body” of which provides a brief developmental model of listening, attention and memory, the fundamental building blocks of language. The three “tentacles” use a developmental approach to provide activities to promote the sorts of language skills thought to be crucial for the later development of reading and writing.

This resource was compiled by a multi agency group of professionals working together to help support the Every Child Matters agenda. Representation included:

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# Promoting Early Reading Skills

## The Importance of Phonological Awareness

Phonological awareness is about the ability to listen to and recognise different sounds and patterns in the words of our spoken language. It involves auditory discrimination, the ability to recognise sequences of sound and also holding and storing sound sequences in memory. The ability to attend and listen carefully to sounds is fundamental to the development of phonological awareness.

There is a large body of research which shows that preschool children's awareness of phonemes, of the speech sounds that correspond roughly to individual letters, can account for as much as 50% of the variance in their reading ability at age six.

The evidence suggests that a child's level of phonological awareness skills on entering school is the strongest single determinant of the success he or she will experience in learning to read. This has been demonstrated widely, not just in England but in many other countries. Working from this evidence base, it would appear to be more beneficial to focus on the development of phonological awareness prior to school entry rather than introduce phonic based activities which link sounds to written letters.

## The Difference between Phonological Awareness and Phonics

Phonological awareness is concerned with listening, paying attention to the differences in speech sounds and the holding and storing of sequences of sounds in memory, without access to printed letters. In contrast, phonics is the system by which symbols (written letters) represent the individual speech sounds (phonemes) to form written words and sentences, for example f-l-a-g.

Before children can make sense of an alphabetic principle they need to understand that the sounds which are paired with the letters are exactly the same as the sounds in speech.



## The Structure of Language

Phonemes are the basic building blocks of spoken language. They are not spoken as separate units however but are fused together into syllables and words. Think about when someone says bat and compare it with pat. The differences between the sounds of the two initial phonemes are very subtle: compare /b/ with /p/. These subtle differences result in a dramatic difference in meaning.

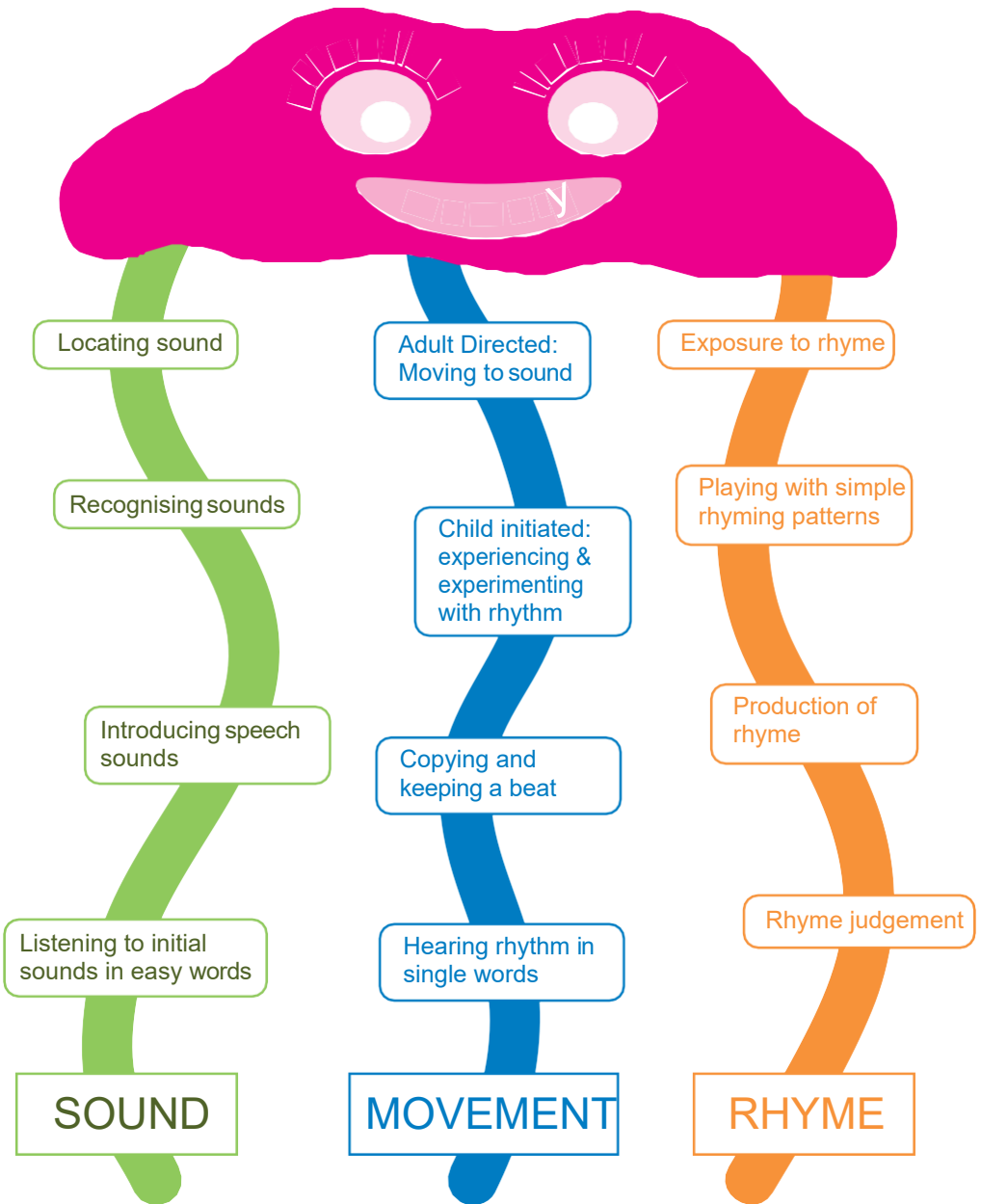
Babies become attuned to the phonemes of their native language in the first few months of life. This sensitivity to the differences between sounds is “built in” and not consciously attended to. In order to develop reading and spelling skills, this sensitivity to the subtle differences in sounds needs to become explicit and actively reflected upon.

## Teaching Phonological Awareness

For various reasons many children have difficulty with the development of phonological awareness skills which are critical in learning to read and write. However, parents and carers of preschool children and practitioners in early years settings can promote and teach phonological awareness in fun and interesting ways. This booklet explains how to do this and can be used as the basis for developing your own good ideas. These sorts of activities will provide a sound basis for achieving success with reading and writing. There is plenty of time for young children to link written letters with sounds when they learn phonics at school and when they have the prerequisite skills and understanding to do so.



# The Jolly Jellyfish Model



# Listening and Attending to Speech Sounds

Very young babies present a range of listening and attending behaviours linked to human speech. They are soothed by, and smile at, the carer's voice and give eye contact in their interactions. Babies become sensitive to tone and rhythm and their arm and leg movements often match the rhythm of the carer's voice. They react differently to the tone of a voice by smiling, becoming still, or crying.

Babies learn very quickly to attend to, and discriminate between, all kinds of sounds and to associate them with activities, for example, running a bath. They enjoy music, particularly when it has a strong beat. They begin to discriminate between fast/slow, loud/quiet and to develop a preference for a particular song or rhyme. They continue to develop the ability to discriminate between different voices and to respond to different tones, for example, sing song, questioning, soothing and playful.

As babies develop they continue to enjoy listening to talk, especially the ups, downs and rhythm of language. They respond to music and singing by swaying and bouncing and begin to copy the rhythm and actions of rhymes and songs. Contrasting melodies, rhythm and tone become a major feature of a child's understanding and form the basis of their own utterances.

By around one year old a child has usually learned to respond to many words, sounds and phrases by listening. He or she will enjoy listening to a simple story over and over and will respond when an adult makes symbolic vocalisations, for example, to point to a toy, animal or picture. As the child continues to develop language skills, he or she may try to copy much of what is heard, attempt to join in with a song or rhyme and begin to fill in a familiar missing word when an adult leaves a pause.

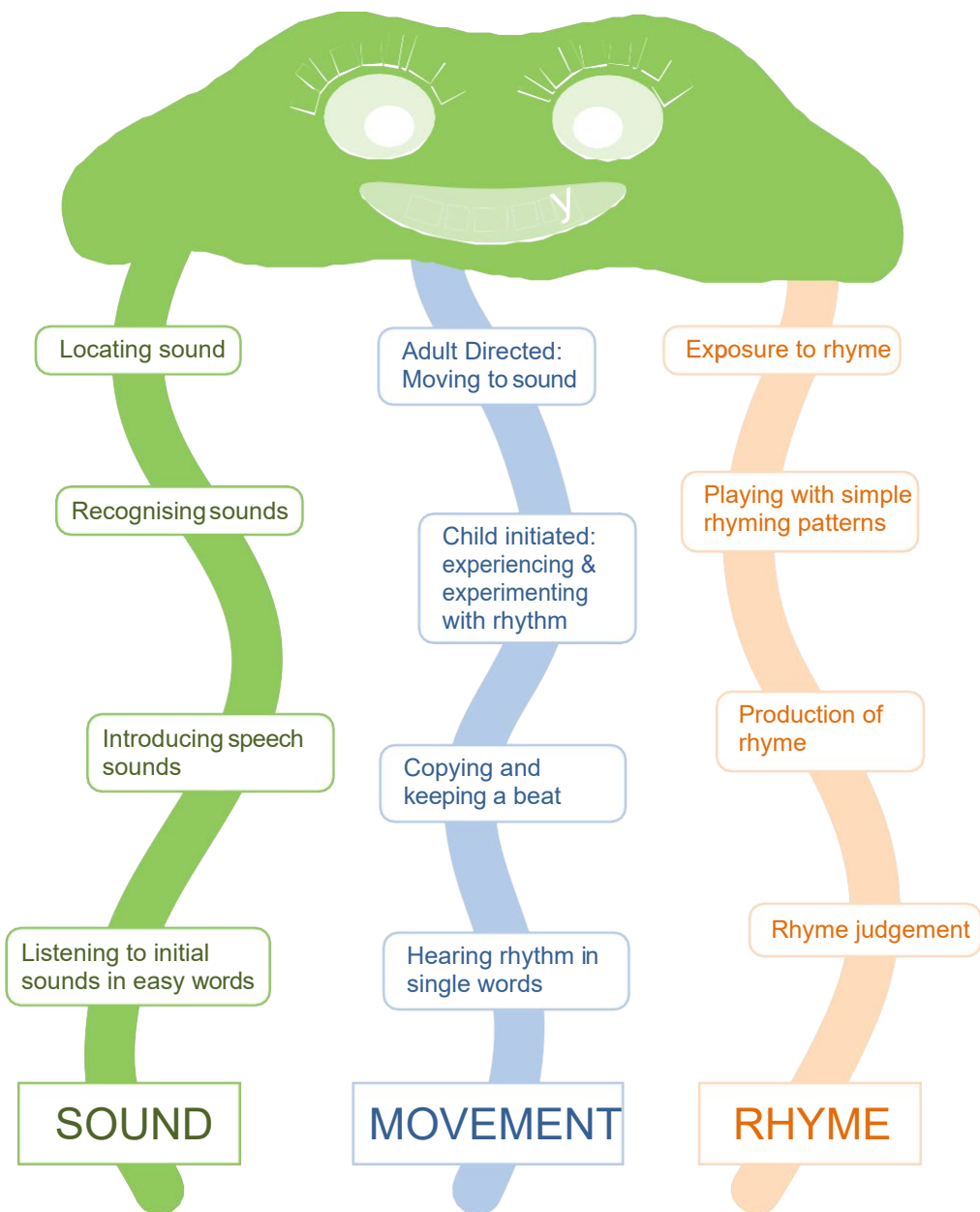
Children continue to fine tune their skills largely through imitating the speech sounds of others, including the ability to copy the correct number of syllables. They also learn, through imitating, the intonation and rhythm of what they hear.

By the time they attend an early years setting, children are usually quite vocal and their development of vocabulary, attention and understanding of spoken language is developing daily. The following activities build on this, encouraging further the ability to discriminate between sounds, respond to rhythm and appreciate rhyme. These are important language skills in their own right but are also fundamental when the link to later reading skills is considered.

All of the activities suggested in this booklet build on the development of these early skills and, as such, it is important to consider a child's developmental profile to determine their suitability.

So.....Lets go on a journey with the Jolly Jellyfish....

# Sound



# Locating Sound

Helping children to locate sound in developing their listening and attention skills starts at an early stage, but some children, may need extra practice and support.

## Hide and seek with sound

Choose a toy which the child can hear such as a loud banging toy or a quiet musical toy. Give this to the child and let him play with it for a while. Explain that you are going to hide yourself in the room with the toy. From your hiding place make the sound and see if he can find you.

## Find the musical toy

Wind up the musical toy and listen to the sound together. Hide the toy somewhere in the room. Encourage the child to listen and locate the sound. Now experiment with louder and quieter toys.

## Who has the bell?

Sit one child in the middle of a small circle of children. This child closes their eyes while you give another child in the circle a bell, small enough to hide in their hand. Tell the children in the circle to shake their clenched hands in the air. The child in the middle is asked to open their eyes and point to the one who has the bell.





# Recognising Sounds

This section is designed to develop the child's ability to recognise sound and give meaning to it.

## Sound lotto (available to buy or better still – make your own)

Everyday sounds are recorded on audio tape. Pictures of the objects are presented in the form of a lotto card. The child has to place a counter on the picture that matches the appropriate sound on the tape.

### Old MacDonald had a Farm

Sing this song. Encourage the children to join in with the animal sounds. Show them pictures of the animals when you make the sounds. Can they point to the appropriate picture when you make the sound?

## Lost animals

You will need several toy animals for this activity. Explain to the children that they are going to be zoo keepers and that several animals have escaped. Their job is to round up the lost animals and collect them in the bag for return to the zoo. Place several toy animals around the room and tell the children to listen very carefully. Make an animal sound near to the children, when the child hears the sound he must find the animal that is making the noise. If the child is incorrect, the animal is released again. (Start with a few familiar animals.)



# Recognising Differences in Sounds

These activities are designed to develop the child's ability to make simple discriminations between sounds. Here the child must decide whether two sounds are the same or different. These activities are also designed to improve concentration and memory.

## Butterflies and Elephants

Shake a tambourine and the children run like butterflies. Bang the tambourine and the children stamp like elephants.

## Spot the Difference

Introduce a shaker and a drum to the child one at a time. Talk about how they look and sound. Let the child have a turn at playing with them and comparing the sounds. (Point out to the child how the sound is different.)

Explain to the child that you are going to play a listening game. Place a similar shaker in front of the child but out of reach. Place the original shaker and drum behind the screen. Make sure the child is ready and then tell them

to listen carefully. Make a sound with the shaker in sight and then a second sound behind the screen using either the original shaker or the drum.

Ask the child if the sounds are the same or different. Show the child which instrument made the sound. Let the child have several turns.

To increase the complexity of the activity:

Introduce instruments that sound increasingly similar;

Introduce a delay before making the second sound.

N.B. remember the child will need to have the concept of same and different for the game to be successful.



# Introducing Speech Sounds

Children can learn by watching others speak and by listening to clear models of single sounds. Listening to speech sounds, associating the sounds with an object or picture and talking about the characteristics of speech sounds helps a child with later links between sounds and letters.

It is important to work on sounds that sound different (e.g. p/s), moving over time to those which sound more alike (e.g. f/s, p/t, p/b.) When the adult is producing the sound it is important that the adult makes the pure sound “p” not “puh”.

Introduce sound pictures cards that are very different (e.g. /p/ and /s/.) The adult makes the pure sound and the child is encouraged to select the sound picture card. You could make this a game by posting it. Over time widen the range of sounds. When they are secure you can do these activities.

## Magic wand

The adult introduces the magic wand, which moves round the circle, stopping occasionally and pointing at one of the children.

As the wand moves “it” makes a humming sound. Warn the children that when it stops it will make a speech sound and they will have to listen and find the correct sound picture card. Learners can just repeat the sound.

## Puppet says

Ask a child to pick a sound card out of a bag. Practise making the sound together. Make up an action for the sound. For example, move your arm like a long snake for the /s/ sound, pretend to bang a drum for the /d/ sound, etc. Any actions can be used or you can use Jolly Phonics symbol-related actions but not use any written letters. Do this for a number of sounds pulled from the bag. The more sounds, the harder the game so

start with three and work up. Now introduce the puppet to the children and say that he is going to be ‘leader’ in a game.

The puppet says a sound and the children have to do the action. You can try to catch the children out by making the puppet say other sounds too (some speech sounds and some silly non-speech sounds). Remember that the more similar the distraction sounds are to the target ones, the harder it will be for the children to discriminate, e.g. /sh/ when the target is /s/ would be very difficult.

## Sound Basket

Allocate sounds to individual children, e.g. if /p/, /f/ and /s/ are used, the first child has to remember /p/, the second /f/, the third /s/, the fourth /p/ and so on. Follow the format of the game "Fruit Basket" - the children have to swap places when their sound is said. Here the "All change"

command is "All the Sounds".

The circle leader could pass the role of leader to children who are listening particularly well. Watch out for sounds that some children can't say as leader.

articulation of the target sound(s)  
Give visual information by working in front of a mirror and watching each other. Give tactile information by explaining how to make the sound.

### Hide and Seek

Make three copies of each sound picture. Hide them around the room or out in the garden/playground. Say a sound and the child has to find the corresponding picture.

If the child cannot copy your



# Listening to Initial Sounds in Words

Start with simple beginning sounds in words for example **cat** and **dog**, instead of **spoon** and **flower**.

## Magic Box

This is a useful activity to reinforce one sound. Collect objects which begin with the target sound. Use a specially decorated box put one object inside. Pass the box around the room and sing "Magic box, what's inside? What's the sound you're trying to hide?" (to the tune of "This old man he had one, he played nick nack ...."). When the song stops, open the box, name the object and talk about the sound it starts with.

A variation of this game could include objects which start with two or three sounds. The children can then sort the objects.

## Postman game

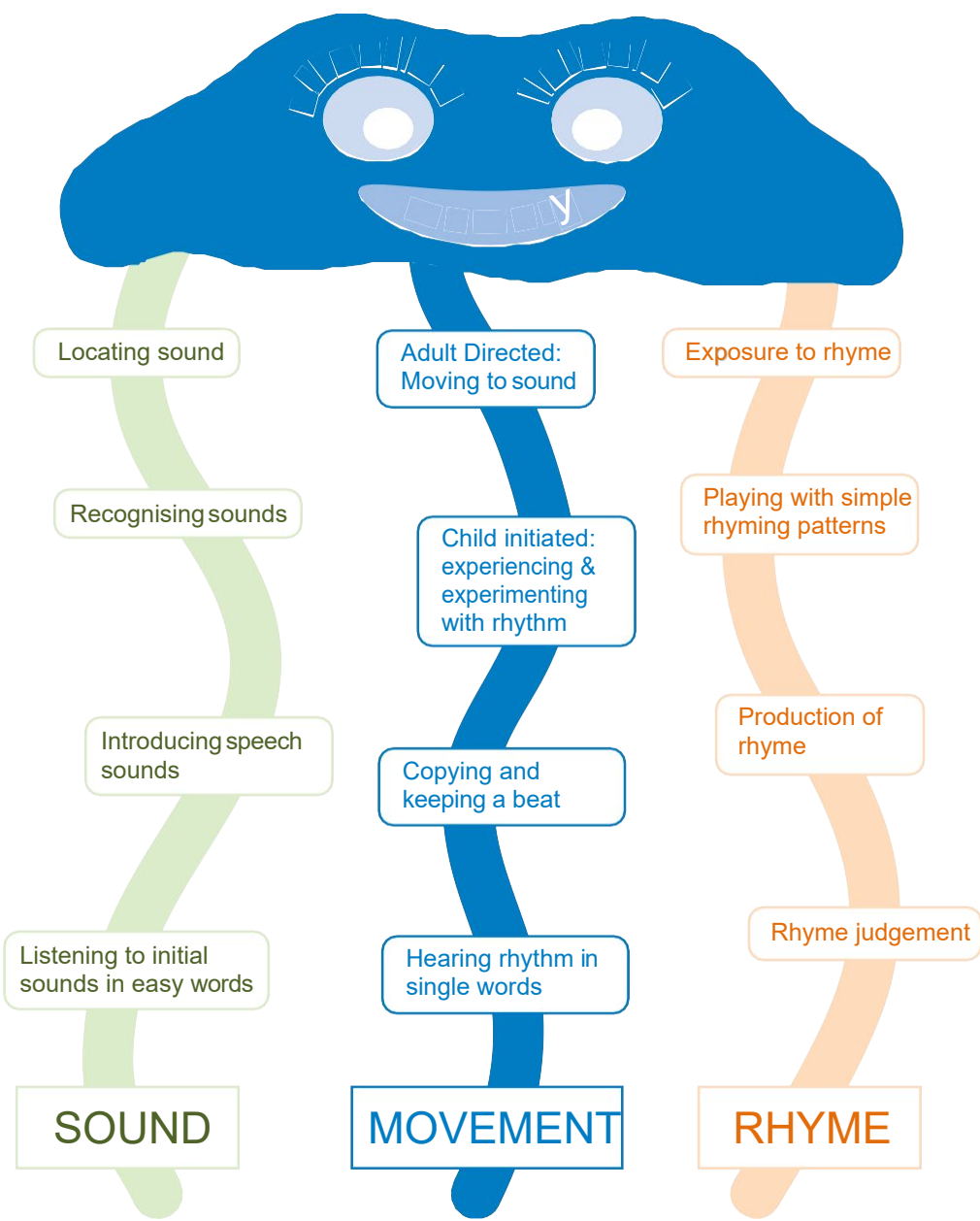
Make two distinct areas of the room into two shops. Use two large cards with a picture on each (or real objects) and explain that each shop only sells things which begin with the same sound. For example, this is the "s" shop and this is the "b" shop. Collect together objects which start with the two sounds. Using a postman's bag and perhaps a hat take it in turns to hand each child a bag which has an object inside. The "postman" opens the bag and delivers the object to the correct shop.



# Final Sounds

Once children are thoroughly familiar with the idea of identifying sounds at the beginning of words, similar games can be used to help them identify sounds at the ends of words e.g. peg doll cat





## Adult Directed: Moving to Sound

Moving to music helps a child to hear and discriminate rhythmic patterns in language. For example, Stop/Start, Silent/Quiet/Loud, Fast/Slow.

### Action and movement games

Using a musical instrument ask the children to perform an action or movement when the instrument is played. Actions could include clapping their hands or raising their arms in the air. Movements could include standing up or sitting down, taking a large stride, a hop or a skip.

### Musical statues

The children move around to the sound of a musical instrument or taped music and freeze into a statue when it stops. Make the periods of silence between sounds longer and longer so it becomes more and more difficult for the children to stay still.

### Musical bumps

This is a variation of musical statues but in this game children sit down as soon as the music stops.

### Musical chairs

A group of children can play

musical chairs. They must move around to the music and then sit on a chair when the music stops. The catch is that a chair is taken away each time and one child is "out" when they lose their seat.

### Vice versa

Try playing musical chairs and statues with the child moving around when there is no sound, and stopping when the music is playing.

### Sound in everyday routines

Use the start or the end of a sound to signal an activity; for example, the children have to wait until you finish ringing a bell before they line up for outside play.





Now the children are used to moving to music, let them try it out by themselves!

### Let them play!

Here are some suggestions for ways the child can generalise their skills once you have shown them.

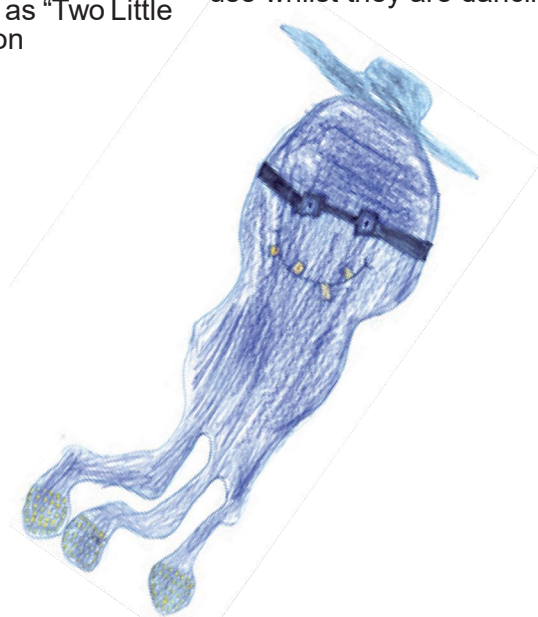
Show the child how to use both hands to beat out a rhythm then how to use different parts of their body to beat out a rhythm, such as tapping their foot, clicking fingers, clapping, stamping, drumming fingers, knocking. Now leave them to experiment.

Encourage games that integrate a number of different rhythmic actions. Examples include “Pat-a-Cake” and other clapping games; skipping games; action songs, such as “Wind the Bobbin up”; finger rhymes, such as “Two Little Dicky Birds Sitting on a Wall”.

Use musical instruments so that two hands are beating out the rhythm; for example, holding two maracas, banging two cymbals together or clicking castanets in each hand.

Let them try dancing/moving to different types of music. One day use a slow, ponderous tune the next a fast tune. Don't forget to use current popular music.

Provide lengths of ribbon or chiffon scarves for the children to use whilst they are dancing.



## Copying and Keeping a Beat

This ability to copy a rhythm and recall the order of sounds presented in sequence is an important aspect in the development of the child's listening skills. The activities in this section help the child to practice memory skills and ordering through the use of non-speech sounds.

### Me then you

In small groups practise clapping loudly, softly, quickly and slowly. Introduce the idea of clapping/tapping patterns, e.g. three short sounds followed by two loud sounds. Talk about the pattern as you are clapping/tapping it. Encourage the children to repeat or echo the pattern.

Instruments are a good idea for this activity. The adult can use a tambourine while another one is passed around the circle for each child in turn to try to echo the pattern. Talk about the patterns to reinforce the language.



# Hearing Rhythm in Single Words

It is important that children become aware that words can be broken down into chunks.

## Stepping the syllables

When carrying out this activity use vocabulary familiar to the child.

Place hoops in a row on the floor, one child is given an object e.g. teddy and jumps from hoop to hoop with each syllable of the object's name.

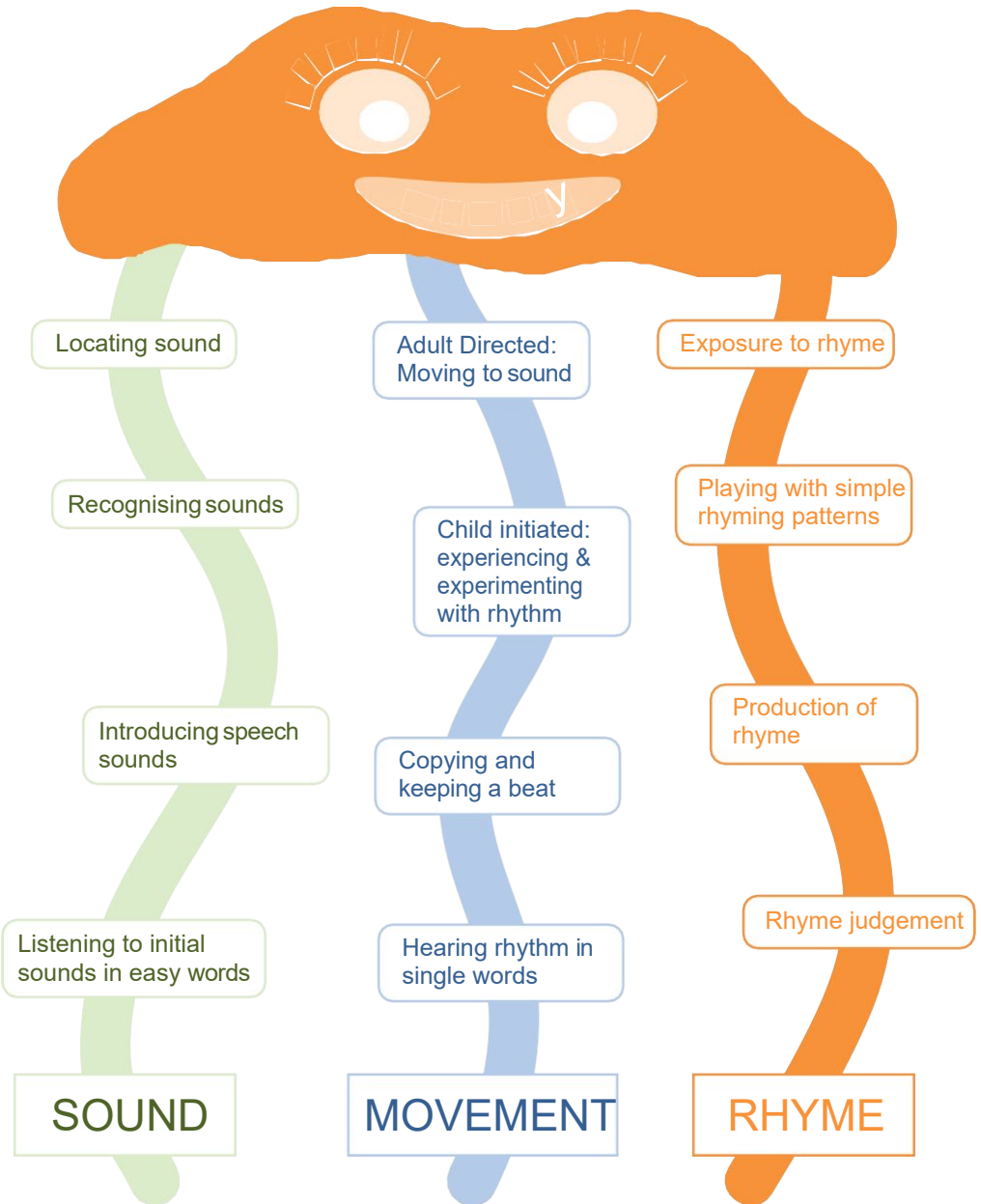
Extend this game by asking the child to put out the number of hoops they need before "jumping the word".

In a group situation this provides excellent learning opportunities for all the children as this involves looking, listening and doing.

Extend this game by putting out a row of two hoops and three hoops. Provide the child with objects of two or three syllables and the child decides which row to jump.



# Rhyme



# Exposure to Rhyme

Nursery rhymes are a valuable introduction to rhyme. It is never too early to sing or say rhymes to a child. Don't forget playground ring games

## Nursery rhymes

Use finger rhymes e.g. Incy Wincy Spider, 5 Currant Buns, Tommy Thumb.

Use whole body movement rhymes e.g. "Row, row, row your boat."

Use certain rhymes to fit in with the routine of the day e.g. "This is the way we wash our hands" to the tune of "Here we go round the Mulberry bush" every time hands are washed.

Eventually, practise rhymes but leave off the last word of the rhyming line. E.g. "Humpty Dumpty sat on the wall, Humpty Dumpty had a great..."

## Rhyming books

There are many rhyming story books and exposure to a wide variety of these books is helpful e.g. The Gingerbread Man, Each Peach Pear Plum, Duck in a Truck, Chicken Licken.



# Playing with Simple Rhyming Patterns

Children are able to play with simple rhyming patterns from an early age without understanding the concept of rhyme.

## Rhyming Pattern Play

In a small group the adult produces simple rhyming sound pattern, ba, da, and children then continue round in a circle adding to the string, e.g. ba, da, fa, la sa, ta

## Yummy Mummy

You will need:

Sound cards with no written letters, and a list of easy rhymes that all (or most) of the children will be able to say. Two syllable forms are often easier to hear/remember initially, e.g. 'abby', 'oppy', 'icky', 'ummy.'

Say the one you have selected e.g. 'ummy' three times and then get the children to join in.

Explain that you are going to add a sound to the start of the word, for example /m/. Showing the sound card at the same time. Say mummy three times and then get the children to join in.

Demonstrate that the end bit is not changing, e.g. "Mummy... ummy." and the end bits are rhyming.

Continue with a few different sounds — it doesn't matter if the children produce a nonsense word.



# Production of Rhyme

When the child is confident with playing with simple rhyming patterns, begin to talk about “rhyme” and use these activities to encourage an awareness of rhyme.

## Hickory Dickory Dock

Develop the number of times the clock is struck to encourage the children to find a rhyme for example “the clock struck two, the mouse went... boo”, “the clock struck three, the mouse went... whee.”

## Rhyming Pairs

Make up some rhyming couplets with children:

- > I like rice — it’s very nice.
- > I like fish — on a dish.
- > I like jelly — it wobbles in my belly.

Encourage children to add some actions to the rhymes. Snack time is often a good opportunity for this activity as you often talk

about this food at this time.

## Stepping Stones

Use number cards 1-5 and place them around the floor. With a group of four children ask them all to stand on a number. They then take it in turns to suggest a word which rhymes with the number name e.g. one-sun, two-shoe, three-bee. See how many you can find.

## Skittles

Make a set of cards using pictures that the child is familiar with. Attach one to each skittle. Throw a ball at the skittles. When the child knocks a skittle over they have to give a word which rhymes with the attached picture.



# Rhyme Judgement

These activities use spoken words or pictures to help children develop their awareness of the way auditory patterns in words can rhyme.

## Hide and seek

Use pairs of pictures that rhyme. Give each child one of the rhyming pairs of pictures, and ask them to name the picture to ensure they have the correct word. Hide the other picture cards around the room. Each child has to find his matching pair, and then say the rhyming pair together for reinforcement.

## Feely bag

Place a selection of objects in a feely bag. Place paired objects which rhyme on a tray. Ask each child to take out an object and match it with the rhyming object on the tray. This can be made easier by only putting two or three objects out on the tray.

## I Spy!

Play I Spy as in the traditional game but then instead of asking for a word that begins with certain letter the players must select an object that they can see which rhymes with it. Place a selection of objects on the table and say for example: "I spy with my little eye something that rhymes with cat." The child picks up the hat.

## Catch me out

Use a puppet to deliberately say a word wrong in a rhyme and see if the children spot the mistake, e.g. "Jack and Jill... went up the road" and "Little Miss Muffet... sat on a chair." Tell the children that it doesn't sound quite right and ask them to help





# A Cautionary Tale

There are other ways to promote reading!

These activities should be used as part of the broad and balanced curriculum that is offered to all children. There should be lots of opportunities for child initiated multi sensory interactive play with chances to practise new skills and games.

While phonological awareness is important in developing reading and other literacy skills and is the focus of this booklet, it should be used in association with a variety of other experiences.

Young children learn about language and learn to love stories by being read to. It is never too early to start reading to a child. Sharing books and reading together is a fun and positive experience.

Children learn book handling skills by sharing books with others. For example, they learn which way up books go and that print goes from left to right.

Gaining meaning from texts is fundamental to the reading process and begins in the early years. For example, discussing the pictures, asking and responding to questions and developing prediction skills about what might happen!

Young children are aware of, and recognise, many signs and symbols from the local environment. This experience of early reading should be promoted. It is another important part of the knowledge and experiences a child brings to school.

Over the page you will find a chart to record when you do the activities.



**A page for you to jot down your own  
good ideas!**





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