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# Introduction

*Pre-Phonics Tests* is a book of simple tests (or diagnostic strategies) for preschool, kindergarten, and primary-age children who have not yet started to read or who are just learning to read. Each of these ten tests has important teaching implications. For example, if children do not know the alphabet or how to blend together different sounds to make a word, then teach them.

The focus of this book is to help the child realise that spoken language can be broken down into smaller segments such as syllables, onset and rime, and individual phonemes. All of the tests in this book emphasise important pre-reading skills, but none requires any reading ability. The final phoneme awareness tests are of particular significance because phoneme awareness is an excellent predictor of future reading success. In fact, it is an even better predictor of later reading achievement than an intelligence test or a reading readiness test.

Furthermore, phonemic awareness can be taught and so can the other skills in this book, which is why *Pre-Phonics Tests* is so beneficial. These are not just tests for the purpose of academic interest or to measure the early achievements of primary-age children (though they will do that, too). This book points the way to meaningful skills that can be taught and that have real importance for future reading and writing (spelling) achievement.

Young students who don't get the idea that speech is composed of individual and interchangeable words and phonemes will have a difficult time learning to read and spell. They will have a more difficult time learning phonics, which is why this book has 'pre-phonics' in its title.

All children are different; they develop at different rates and have different abilities. Therefore, it is essential that you use the tests in this book which best fit the particular goals you wish to achieve with your students. Start where the student is, and proceed from there – even if that means not following the selected order.

# Capital Letter Names

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Practice					
A	J	O	T	Y	

## Capital Letters

Have the student read letters aloud.

1. R M H B E
2. K A G S N
3. O I C U X
4. Y J D F Q
5. L T Z P W
6. V F E O Q

## Teacher Evaluation

All letters correct (tick here): \_\_\_\_\_

Letters missed (write here): \_\_\_\_\_

# Syllable Segmentation *(cont.)*

Note: The student does not see a copy of this test.

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Practice

Tell the student, 'I want you to tap your finger for each syllable you hear in the word that I say. For instance, if I say "cat", you tap once. If I say "kitty" (kit-ty), you tap twice.'

Give the following examples, but do not exaggerate syllables when saying test words.

'dog' (one tap)

'number' (two taps)

'not' (one tap)

'many' (two taps)

## Test Words

Read clearly and precisely.

	Number of Syllables	Student Response	Correct	Incorrect
1. the	1	_____	_____	_____
2. people	2	_____	_____	_____
3. name	1	_____	_____	_____
4. before	2	_____	_____	_____
5. answer	2	_____	_____	_____
6. men	1	_____	_____	_____
7. animal	3	_____	_____	_____
8. because	2	_____	_____	_____
9. why	1	_____	_____	_____
10. banana	3	_____	_____	_____
			<b>Total Correct</b>	<b>Total Incorrect</b>

# Onset and Rime Blending

Onsets and rimes are ways of breaking down syllables into smaller units. The onset is the beginning consonant sound, and rimes are the vowels plus consonant sounds. This division is frequently taught and explained with phonics patterns, which are also called phonograms or word families, such as the '-at' family with hat, cat, sat etc.

Note that the onset (beginning consonant) is changed to form a new word. This is also called 'consonant substitution'. From a phoneme-awareness perspective, this is a very important introduction about the importance of a single phoneme. If the student is aware of the onset, then later when phonics instruction teaches students to read different graphemes to form new words, the instruction will go much more easily.

Because blending onsets and rimes is easier than segmenting them, it is important that students take Test 4A before Test 4B.

## Directions

Make one photocopy of the test for you as the teacher to use. The student should not see (or be given) a printed copy of Test 4A.

Write the student's name and the date on the copy. Speak clearly so that the student can hear you well, but do not speak too slowly or exaggerate the time between words.

## Scoring

Write the student's response on your copy. Then total the number of correct and incorrect answers.

## Teaching Suggestions

Use phonograms (word families or phonic patterns) like sat, cat, rat, fat, mat etc. to show how onset can change the sound and meaning of a word. For a more complete list of phonograms, see *Dr Fry's Phonics Patterns* (also published by Hawker Brownlow Education).

Have students practise a few minutes each day until the skill of onset and rime blending is mastered.