

Tip Sheet: Play Games to Support Word Awareness

FOR PRESCHOOL PARENTS

For additional support on this topic, visit <https://bit.ly/QTGames> to view a short video.

WHY?

Phonological awareness is the ability to recognize the different sounds in our language. Children with good phonological awareness skills develop into better readers. Phonological awareness skills develop at the word, syllable, and individual sound levels. Children usually recognize words before they are able to recognize smaller units of sound. You can play games with your child to support their developing **word awareness**.

WHAT?

When children have word awareness, they:

- know that words are made up of letters,
- know that words have parts,
- understand that words have meaning, and
- can distinguish between different words.

Some **parts** of words have meaning, too—the smallest part of a word that has meaning is called a **morpheme**. Let's look at the word **cats** – **cat** + **s**.



The word **cats** has two parts that have meaning, or two morphemes. **Cat** has meaning, and the suffix **-s** also has meaning. It lets us know there is more than one cat.

HOW?

Here are some ways to support your child's developing word awareness:

- Play games with compound words, such as **cupcake** or **starfish**. Say each part with a long pause in between, such as, "Cup...cake." Have your child put the two parts together to make the compound word, "cupcake."
- Draw pictures on individual index cards, such as a flower on one card and a pot on another. Ask your child to combine the pictures to create a new word – flowerpot. Some other words that work well are: snowman, baseball, football, basketball, butterfly, and mailbox.
- Do an action with your child, such as **dance** or **twirl**, and ask, "**What are we doing?**" Emphasize the **-ing**: "**We're dancing!**" Stop and then ask, "**What did we just do?**" Emphasize the **-ed**: "**We danced!**"
- At a snack or meal time, you can emphasize that **-s** at the end often means more than one by asking, "**Do you want one or two slices?**" Encourage your child to say either "one slice" or "two slices."