

Tip Sheet: Play Games to Support Word Awareness

FOR PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

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

WHY?

Phonological awareness is the ability to hear and manipulate sounds in language. It happens at many levels, including at the word, syllable, and individual sound level. Children develop **word awareness** before developing phonological awareness at other levels. Playing games will draw children's attention to words and word parts, and support their awareness developing word.

WHAT?

Word awareness is the ability to distinguish between words and the understanding that words have meaning. But some parts of words have meaning, too—the smallest parts of a word that has meaning is called a **morpheme**. For example, in the word **cats** there are two parts that have meaning, or two morphemes. **Cat** has meaning, but the suffix **-s** has a meaning also. It lets us know there is more than one cat.



HOW?

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

- Play games with compound words. Compound word picture cards can be purchased or made with index cards. For example, draw pictures on individual index cards, such as a flower on one card and a pot on another. Ask children to combine the pictures to create a new word – flowerpot. Draw a flowerpot on the back of the index cards so the children can flip them over and see the new compound word. Some other words that work well are: cupcake, snowman, baseball, football, basketball, butterfly, and pancake.
- Support children in sorting pictures that show single items, such as one cat, and more than one of the same item, such as a picture of three cats. Ask children to talk about their categories and emphasize the **-s** sound at the end of the plural words.
- Talk about “action words,” such as **dance**, **run**, **walk**, and **hop**. Tell the children that when we add **-ing** to these action words, it means you are doing the action right now. For example, act out an action word, such as dancing. Ask the children, “What am I doing?” When they reply “dancing,” repeat it and emphasize the **-ing** ending.
- During afternoon circle time, talk about what the group did yesterday and what they did today. Emphasize the **-ed** forms of the words and explain that it means it's something that already happened.



TEACHER TIP

After children are familiar with activities like working with compound word picture cards, transition the cards to a center time activity.