

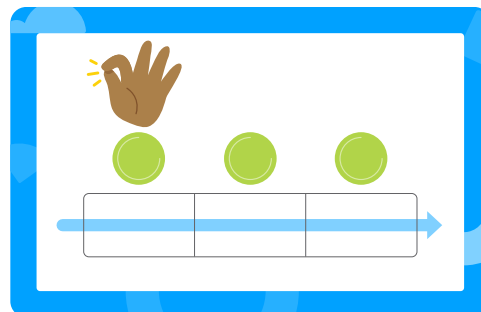
# Phoneme Awareness Word Games to Play with Students

Use any of these simple games at the beginning of a phoneme awareness lesson plan to give students fun ways to practice working with phonemes.

## 1. Tap It – Map It – Zap It!

This word play game, created by educator Judith Dodson, pulls together several activities into one. You'll need a sound mat (provided as Elkonin Boxes at the end of this packet) for each student to play along.

**How to Play:** Give students sound mats and tokens to use as markers. When you say a word, tell students to tap the sounds with their fingers, map the sounds with their sound markers on the arrow, and then zap the word by saying the whole word again.



For example, say the word *claw* and have students say its phonemes: /c/, /l/, /aw/. As they say each sound, they map the sound by moving a token from the top circle to the box below. Then, they zap or blend the sounds together by moving their finger along the bottom arrow while saying the whole word.

## 2. Secret Code

Play this game when lining up for lunch or transitioning into a learning activity.

**How to Play:** Say a word stretched out with every phoneme separated by about a second of time. Ask students to blend the phonemes and repeat the word back to you as a whole unit.

For example, you might say, “The **secret code** is /s/, /t/, /r/, /ē/, /t/.” Then your students say *street*.

## 3. Stand Up, Sit Down!

Play this whole-body game when the students need a stretch break.

**How to Play:** Say several words, some with the target phoneme and some without. Ask students to stand up when they hear a word with the target phoneme, and to sit down when they don't. Say the word and the sound together as a class after they stand up.

For example, you might say:

“Listen for the sound /ōō/ like in *moon*.”

Say several words, some with /ōō/ and others without the /ōō/ sound. For example, say *ball* [sit], *role* [sit], *spoon* [stand], *chair* [sit], *kick* [sit], *loon* [stand], *bank* [sit], *owl* [sit], and *boom* [stand].

Say the word and the sound together as a class after they stand up. “*Spoon*, /ōō/.”

# Phoneme Awareness Word Games to Play with Students

## 4. Let's Go Shopping

Use this word play game to help students learn to hear specific phonemes.

**How to play:** Tell students that they are going shopping and the only things they can buy are things that start with, end with, or have a middle sound that you provide. (Use just one of the criteria.)

For example, you might say:

“Let’s go shopping! We are going to buy things that begin with /s/. What should we buy?”

Students can give a variety of items like *stars*, *salt*, *sunshine*, and *celery* (it starts with the /s/ sound!).

## 5. Silly Words

Play this game at the beginning of the school year or as an icebreaker when children are learning each other’s names.

**How to Play:** Tell the students a specific sound and have them replace the sound at the beginning of their names or any other desired words.

For example, you might say:

“The silly sound is /b/. Change the first sound in your name to /b/. What is your new name?”

Ask students to share their name that now begins with the sound /b/ – like *Mary* becomes *Barry*, and *Sam* becomes *Bam*.

## 6. Kid Sounds

Play this word game when your students need a break from sitting in their seats!

**How to Play:** Place three or four students at the front of the room. Whisper the sounds of a word in their ears, one sound per student. Have the students say their sounds out loud in order. Ask the class to blend the sounds and say the word out loud. Change the sounds with new consonants and vowels as the students take turns standing up front.

For example, whisper one sound to each student: /b/, /ō/, /k/. Ask the students to say their sounds out loud in order. Then ask the whole class to blend the sound and say the word [book] out loud.

## 7. Slinky Sounds

This game uses a fun multisensory toy to encourage students to participate!

**How to Play:** Give students small slinkys to stretch out the sounds in words. Students stretch it just a little further with each sound. Then they put the slinky back together and stretch it out one more time quickly while repeating the full word.

For example, say the word *phone*. Have students stretch their slinkys out as they say each phonemes /f/, /ō/, /n/. Then put the slinky back together and repeat the whole word, *phone*.

# Phoneme Awareness Word Games to Play with Students

## 8. Elkonin Sound Boxes

Play this multisensory game with manipulatives, small tokens like little crackers, paper squares, or game pieces that make good visuals and help young children see the segmentation as they separate sounds in words. You'll need to print an Elkonin sound box (provided in this packet) for each student.

**How to Play:** Give each student a set of small tokens and a small grid of squares on a piece of paper (Elkonin boxes shown right). Say a target word and ask the students to segment its phonemes. Have students say each phoneme and move one token into a separate box. Repeat this with each phoneme in the word.

For example, say “*cat*, /c/, /ă/, /t/” and have the students repeat what you said “*cat*, /c/” while moving a token into one square of the grid; “/ă/” moving a second block into the grid; and “/t/” moving the last token into the grid.



## 9. Eat Your Sounds

Play this game at snack time! This is a fun opportunity to choose sounds that the class has been working on or that the students need practice identifying.

**How to Play:** Give each student a set of healthy snacks, like raisins or Cheerios. Ask them to segment the sounds of the word, eating a snack item for each sound.

For example, say the word *mouse* and its phonemes /m/, /ow/, /s/. Have the students repeat the phonemes slowly while eating a snack item for each one and then say the word.

Another option is to organize treats on a piece of paper before eating them. You would say a word and then ask students to segment the word onto a clean piece of paper (or placemat), using their treats to show each phoneme.

Then you might say:

“Eat the /m/.”

“Eat the /ow/.”

“Eat the /s/.”

## 10. Picture Clues

Provide pictures for students to identify and isolate a target phoneme.

**How to Play:** Show students two pictures — one with the target phoneme and one without. Ask students to pick the image where the word for that image includes the target phoneme.

For example, show a picture of a *house* and *bike*. Ask students to name the picture that begins with /b/.

# Phoneme Awareness Word Games to Play with Students

## 11. Touch Arm and Spell

This multisensory game gets students moving as they learn that phonemes are parts of a whole word.

**How to Play:** For a given word, tell students to say and lightly tap each phoneme separately down their arm, beginning at the shoulder. Then for the same word, tell students to blend the sounds together to say the whole word while sweeping the other hand from their shoulder down their arm.

For example, say the word *bird*. Start at your shoulder and move down the arm, say and tap the sounds /b/, /er/, /d/ with your other hand. Then, sweep your hand down your arm while saying the whole word *bird*.



## 12. I'm Thinking

Create simple riddles that start with the phrase “I’m thinking ...” and ask students to hunt for specific phonemes.

**How to Play:** Ask a question that requires students to think of a word with a matching phoneme.

For example, you might say:

“I’m thinking of something good to eat. It starts with /p/.” Then your students say a word that begins with the sound /p/ — like *pizza*, *pickles*, or *pineapple*.

Or, you might say,

“I’m thinking of something in the room that ends with /er/. It is in your desk.” Your students might answer with words like *eraser*, *marker*, *sticker*, etc.

## 13. Punch It Out

Get ready to move and give each student plenty of space to punch out the sounds!

**How to Play:** Tell students the sound that they will “punch out.” Have them say the phonemes in a word, and when they get to that special sound, they can punch the air with their hand in a fist and their thumb sticking up.

You might say:

“Punch out the sound /ŭ/.

*Mug*. /m/, /ŭ/ (the arm extends and the thumb goes out) /g/.”

When students say the target sound, they extend the arm and punch their thumb out.

# Phoneme Awareness Word Games to Play with Students

## 14. Tap Head, Waist, Knees

This activity gets kids up and moving around, which can be a really enjoyable thing!

**How to Play:** To help students isolate the middle sounds of words, use three-sound words and tap your head for the beginning sound, your waist for the middle sound, and then reach down to your knees for the end sound.

Tell students that you will separate the phonemes in the word *moose* by tapping your head, waist, and knees in order with the phonemes.

For example, you might say,

“Let’s separate the phonemes in the word *moose*. What’s the word?”

Students say: “*Moose*.”

Motion for students to tap their head, waist, and knees as they sound out the word.

Say, “What are the sounds?”

Students say: “/m/” as they tap their heads; “/ōō/” as they tap their waists; and, “/s/” as they touch their knees.

Then ask students, “What’s that middle sound?” As they say “/ōō/,” they move their hands back to their waists.

## 15. Pull the Sounds Out of Your Mouth

When we speak, the words come out of our mouth. So this activity, pulling the phonemes out of your mouth, makes a lot of sense to children. To help students segment the words into phonemes, we can pretend we are pulling the sounds out of our mouths.

**How to Play:** Starting at your lips, pretend to grasp each isolated sound as you move your thumb and forefinger in a pulling movement away from your mouth.

For example, you might say,

“Let’s try to separate the sounds of the word *soft* by pulling the phonemes out of your mouth. The word is *soft*. What’s the word?”

Students say: “Soft.”

You say, “This blanket is soft. What are the sounds in “soft”?”

Together, you and the students pull the sounds out as you say each phoneme, “/s/, /ŏ/, /f/, /t/.”

Complete the activity by asking students to repeat the whole word *soft* one final time.

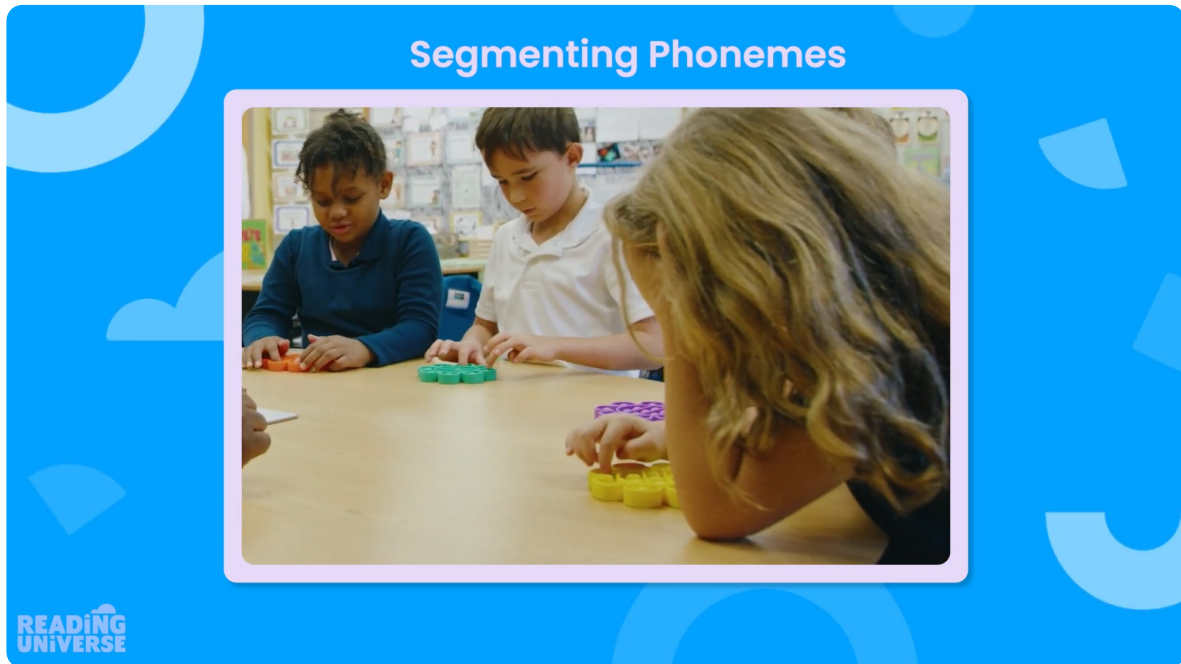


# Phoneme Awareness Word Games to Play with Students

## 16. Segment with Small Manipulatives

Little crackers, paper squares, a pop-it toy, or game pieces make good, touchable visuals that can help young students “see” the segmentation as they separate the sounds of words.

**How to Play:** Ask students to say the sounds one at a time as they move a cracker or press a pop-it for each sound.



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