

This document has been created to support practitioners who aim to take a developmental approach to Literacy. Click on the images below and the hyperlinks to access the support resources available on the [Highland Literacy Blog](#).



As part of the Emerging Literacy suite of resources a [series of videos](#) have been created to support practitioners in taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy. The videos will take you through each aspect of Emerging Literacy exploring the theory, rationale and resources.

Use the [Expressive Language](#) and [Understanding of Language](#) continuums to track children's Oral Language development.

Oral Language



The [Words Up Key Messages](#) and [Words Up Key Message Videos](#) can be used to support Oral Language development of children working within the Early Level.

Access the '[Building Vocabulary for Better Literacy](#)' for vocabulary teaching resources.

Use the [Pre-Handwriting continuum](#) to assess children's fine motor, scissor and pre-writing skills prior to formal handwriting instruction

Pre-Handwriting Skills



Click on the [Pre-Handwriting Skills blog page](#) for practical classroom and home activities. The [Fine Motor Skills handout](#) provides practical starting points.

The [Concepts of Print](#) continuum can be used to assess learners' skills in book handling; picture and story comprehension; looking and recognising; and writing and story reading behaviours.

Concepts of Print



Each section of the continuum provides practical support strategies.

To assess learners use the [Phonological Awareness Screen](#) and [Picture Book](#).

Phonological Awareness



Once you have identified the gaps within the [Phonological Awareness continuum](#), click on the area the child is to develop on the [Phonological Awareness blog page](#) to access classroom activities.



To support schools in sharing the [Emerging Literacy](#) approaches and materials with families, a [family learning resource](#) has been created. This could be used with families during the Nursery – Primary 1 transition meeting or during a Family Literacy event. Each slide comes with comprehensive notes for the facilitator and links to suggested resources on the [Highland Literacy Blog](#).

Overview of Pre-school (4 year old) Skills



Secure



Emerging



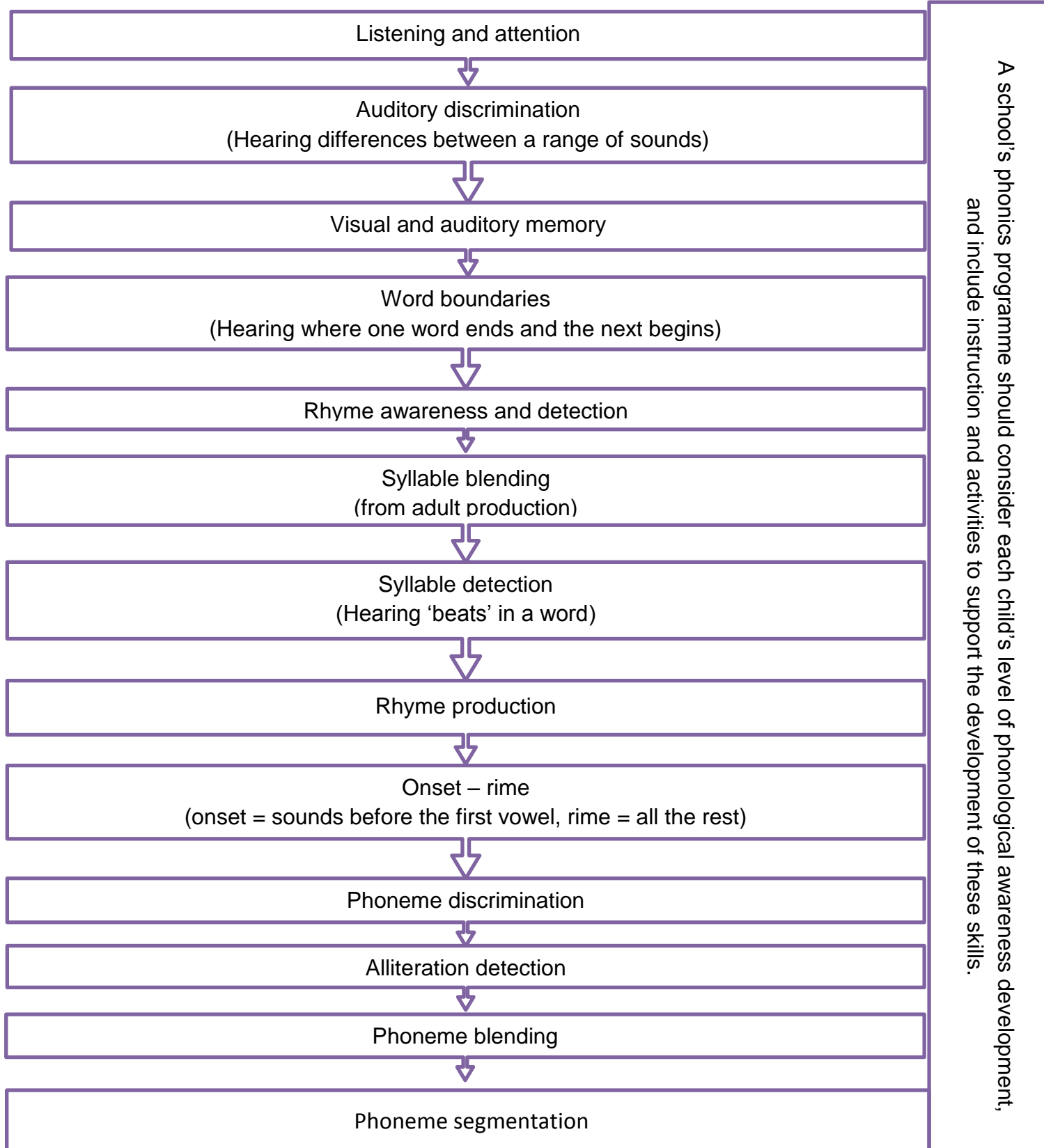
Area of Concern (please leave blank)

MOVEMENT	COORDINATION	ROUTINES	SOCIAL - EMOTIONAL	PLAY - IMAGINATION	UNDERSTANDING	EXPRESSION
Able to walk on tiptoes or heels, when asked, or along a line, 1 foot in front of the other	Handles crayons and brushes with reasonable control	Changes own shoes <i>placing on correct feet</i> ; Fastens and unfastens Velcro	Developing stable friendships	Shows imagination during small world play, sequencing events and stories	Follows 3 instructions to carry out an activity without visual cues	Uses well-formed sentences; may have some grammatical immaturities; 'falled'
Goes up and down steps with alternating feet, one foot on each step	Can draw using straight and curved lines	Dresses and undresses by themselves except for difficult fastenings	Generally cooperates with playmates and beginning to be able to negotiate	Takes turns and shares toys with other children	Listens and appropriately joins in talk about current activity with adults and other children	Easily understood although may still be some immaturities in speech sounds: eg: r, th, ch
Explores playground equipment. Uses slides and swings, may need a 'starter push'	Cuts along straight lines and beginning to cut around a shape	Generally gets clothes the right way out and round for dressing	Attempts to comfort playmates who are upset or hurt	Plays board game in small group : adult supported	Understands concepts like biggest, more, just one	Can describe an event in reasonable order
Jumps high with feet together, lands with more control from step	Can copy or continue a pattern using coloured beads, cubes, shapes	Helps to set table, serve and participate in social snack	Able to talk about the feelings of characters in stories: cross, scared, happy	Draws or paints recognisable pictures without prompting	Shows understanding of story by simple question or commenting	Uses language to gain information and give own ideas
Kicks a large ball with some accuracy	Can fit together pieces to construct models, layouts; Duplo, Popids, train track...	Helps adults clearing up and tidying nursery	Responds to unfamiliar adult with speech	In group play takes on different roles: doctor, shopkeeper, parent...	Understands position and adjectives: eg: behind, long, between	Starts, takes turns and stops, in longer conversations
Throw a small ball with some accuracy, catches large ball with 2 hands	Draws person showing some details	Accepts unpredicted changes to daily routines	Aware of more complex humour, laughs at jokes that are told	Adapts objects as props in imaginative play	Can follow spoken instructions without having to stop and look at the speaker	Uses more pronouns: 'I', 'me', 'my', 'mine', 'you', 'yours', 'he', 'she'
Able to balance on one foot, minimal body sway	Pours liquids with little spilling	Goes to the toilet and washes hands independently	Follows rules and likes pleasing others	Engages in make believe fantasy role play using dressing up, actions and different voices	Understands and follows instructions: first... next... last	Can sequence 3 to 4 pictures/photos logically and talk through the story
Hops on one foot or hops forward one step without other foot touching the ground	Completes jigsaws with 12 plus pieces	Can wipe/ blow own nose	Developing a sense of fairness	Uses and adapt the ideas of other children and adults in creative & imaginative play	Understands Why/How, Who, What happened questions	Asks questions starting with: Can...? Does...? Why...
Runs and changes direction smoothly, reciprocal/ swinging arm movements	Hand dominance developing	Can focus on a game, activity until completed and then move onto next one	Becoming aware of other children's emotions	Uses imagination to create and play with models eg: Duplo	Beginning to understand more abstract words: if... maybe... might...	Beginning to use plurals but may use 'mouses' etc
Pedals a tricycle including steering	Uses a fork and spoon and beginning to use knife to spread	Asks for help when needed	Developing self confidence	Is able to choose and plan play activities?	Aware of time in relation to daily routine: tonight, tomorrow	Can tell own name and age

Phonological Awareness Developmental Continuum

Phonological Awareness refers to sounds **not** letters, it is spoken **not** written

Be careful: The developmental order below is **not completely** linear as children continue to refine earlier skills whilst learning later skills. Remember to take a holistic view of each child and be flexible to skip or review stages as required.



Guidelines

This assessment is intended as a screening tool. If you expect difficulties at any level, then there are a number of further assessments you can do to probe underlying ability and areas of difficulties.

In order to promote consistency, please stick to the script on the assessment. Do not give any feedback about achievement to the child, instead use generic praise to keep the child motivated e.g. 'I can see you're working really hard' between sections. Be careful about giving non-verbal 'clues' to the child during the assessment items – looking, nodding etc.

If the child has not grasped the concept by the end of the trial items then consider adding in more trial items. During the trial items you can use gesture, signs and exaggeration to help the child understand. This is particularly important for children with ASN or EAL.

Some children may need the screen completed over more than one session due to the nature of the attention skills required and the rapidly changing concepts presented within the assessment.

If a child fails 2 sections in succession, then discontinue the assessment and score from here.

The assessment is designed to help you decide on which phonological awareness concept to target, and therefore there is a space to record this information at the bottom of the page.

All the tasks are done from adult production to minimise the impact for children with speech, language and communication needs or those with a restricted vocabulary.

Please note, this assessment is for phonological awareness, therefore the tasks involve manipulation of sounds and not letters/spelling. Make sure you remember to use the sound and not the letter name.

You will need:

5 bricks / cubes

4 counters

The accompanying picture book

A quiet space to work

Phonological Awareness Informal Assessment for school-aged children

Name:		Stage:		Date:	
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1. Listening and attention

Attends to adult led task for 10 or more minutes

If observed score 1

☐

2. Auditory discrimination

"Listen to these sounds ...m....m....they sound the same. Listen to these soundss....f....they sound different. Now listen to these sounds and tell me do they sound the same or different. If you can't remember the sounds, let me know and I will tell you again"

p...p ☐ g....th ☐ v....ee ☐ s...s ☐

If all 4 correct score 1

☐

3. Auditory memory

"Now let's practise remembering. Try to remember these words....car, bat, pencil.....(be careful space the words out evenly, then repeat with child) car, bat, pencil"

Now it's your turn to remember the words. Listen carefully to help you to remember the words, and try to remember on your first try. I can only tell you these words once"

ball, cat, van ☐ biscuit, pen, house ☐ hat, potato, cow ☐

If all 3 correct score 1

☐

4. Word boundaries

"Here are some bricks. Move a brick in front of you for each word you hear. Let's practise some together" (speak slowly and clearly, moving a brick for each word, remember to put the bricks back after each trial):

The car is red

My cat is sleeping

They played football

"Now you try. If you can't remember the sentence, let me know and I will tell you again"

The cow is big ☐ They went swimming ☐ I like carrots and peas ☐

If all 3 correct score 1

☐

5. Rhyme awareness and detection *See picture book*

"This is a cat. Which word rhymes with cat? Hat...banana? (*Pause for child to think*) Cat and hat rhyme. They sound the same at the end. This is a log. Which word rhymes with log? chair....frog? (*Pause for child to think*) Log and frog rhyme. They sound the same at the end. Now you try. If you can't remember the words, let me know and I will tell you again"

Which word rhymes with mouse? House...shoe

☐

Which word rhymes with boat? Sun....coat

☐

Which word rhymes with star? Car....ball

☐

If all 3 correct score 1

☐

6. Syllable blending

"I'm going to talk like a robot. See if you can put the words back together for me. We can do some together first to practise. Tay....ble (*pause*) table. Com...pu....ter (*pause*) computer. Bis....cit (*pause*) biscuit. Now you try. If you can't remember the words, let me know and I will tell you again"

a...pple (*apple*)

☐

ra....bbit (*rabbit*)

☐

trou....sers (*trousers*)

☐

If all 3 correct score 1

☐

7. Syllable detection *See picture book and get counters*

"Now it's your turn to talk like a robot and split words into syllables. We can do some together first to practise. Umbrella....um...bre...lla (*move a counter onto each circle for every syllable, you do not need to count the total number at the end*). Jumper....jum...per (*move a counter onto each circle for every syllable*) Now you try. If you can't remember the words, let me know and I will tell you again"

rocket (ro...cket)

☐

butterfly (bu...tter...fly)

☐

chicken (chi...cken)

☐

If all 3 correct score 1

☐

8. Rhyme production

"Rhyming words sound the same at the end. Here are some words that rhyme; fox, socks, box, locks, wox, mox, pox. Now you try to think of one or two words that rhyme with the words that I say, they don't have to be real words but they do have to sound the same at the end. If you can't remember the words, let me know and I will tell you again"

Log, frog, mog

☐

cat, bat, mat

☐

far, car, bar

☐

If all 3 correct score 1

☐

Phonological Awareness Informal Assessment for school-aged children

9. Onset-rime

"I can take sounds and blend them together to make a word. Listen; b...ook (*pause*) book, tr...ain (*pause*) train, j...elly (*pause*) jelly. Now you try to blend the sounds I say together. If you can't remember the sounds, let me know and I will tell you again"

d....og (*dog*) ☐ ch.....eese (*cheese*) ☐ sn....ake (*snake*) ☐

If all 3 correct score 1 ☐

10. Phoneme discrimination and alliteration

"Now we are going to think about the sounds at the beginning of words. Let's do some together to practise. Does ssssssun begin with sssss? (*Exaggerate sounds and use gestures for practise items*) yes, sssssun begins with sssss. Listen, sssssun. Does baby begin with mmmm? No, baby begins with b. Listen, baby. Now it's your turn. If you can't remember the words, let me know and I will tell you again"

Does fire begin with fffff? ☐ Does pig begin with nnnnn? ☐
Does shoe begin with t? ☐ Does key begin with k? ☐

If all 4 correct score 1 ☐

11. Phoneme blending

"I can put lots of sounds together to make a real word. Listen; h...a....t (*pause*) hat, s...p...oo...n (*pause*) spoon, d...o...g (*pause*) dog. Now you try to blend the sounds I say together. If you can't remember the sounds, let me know and I will tell you again"

p...e...n (*pen*) ☐ s...n...a...ck (*snack*) ☐ v...a....n (*van*) ☐

If all 3 correct score 1 ☐

12. Phoneme segmentation See picture book

"Now we are going to split words into sounds. Let's practise some together. This is a book (*pause*) b..oo..k, this is a cup (*pause*) c..u..p, this is a stick (*pause*) s..t...i..ck. Now you try to split the next words into sounds. If you can't remember the words, let me know and I will tell you again"

bed (*b...e...d*) ☐ frog* (*f...r...o...g*) ☐ pig (*p..i...g*) ☐

*if child says fr, then prompt to try again

If all 3 correct score 1 ☐

Phonological Awareness

Informal Assessment

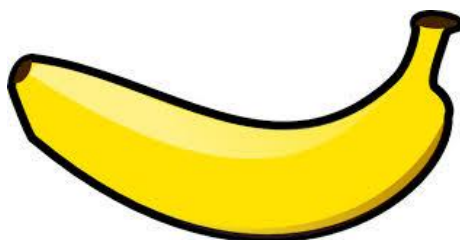
Picture Book

Phonological Awareness

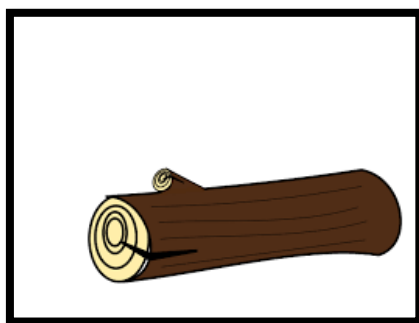
Informal Assessment

Picture Book

Rhyme awareness and detection practice item 1:



Rhyme awareness and detection practice item 2:



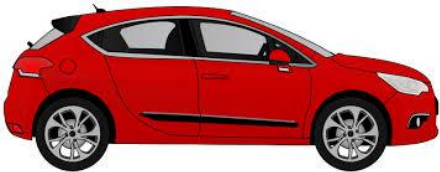
Rhyme awareness and detection item 1:



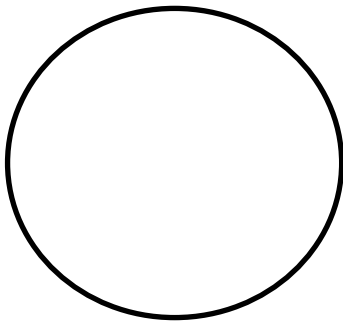
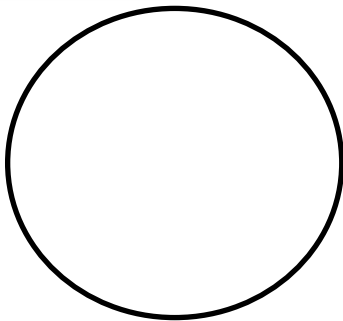
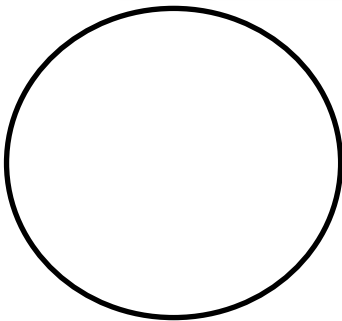
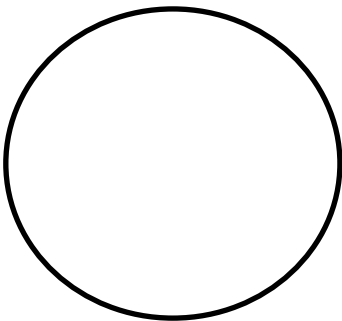
Rhyme awareness and detection item 2:



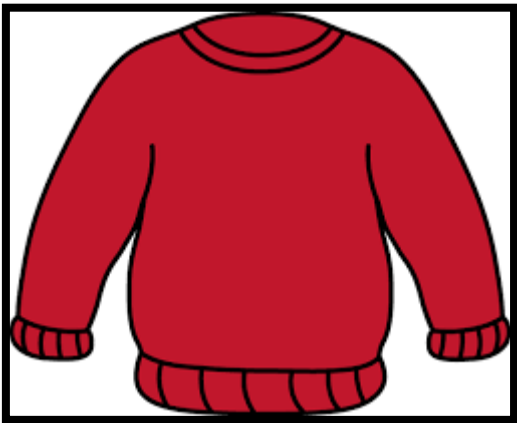
Rhyme awareness and detection item 3:



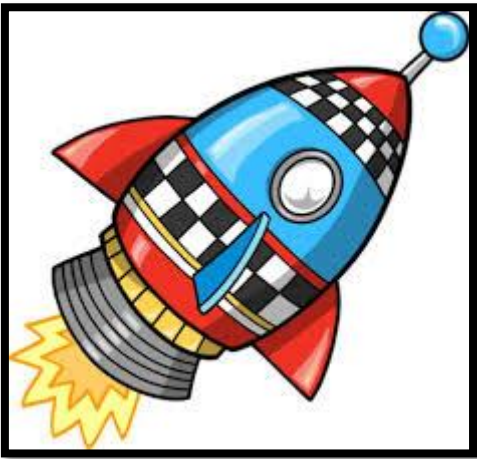
Syllable detection practice item 1:



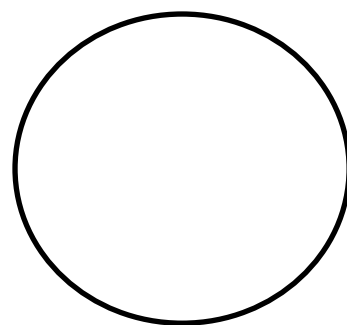
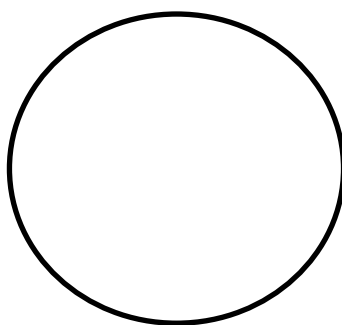
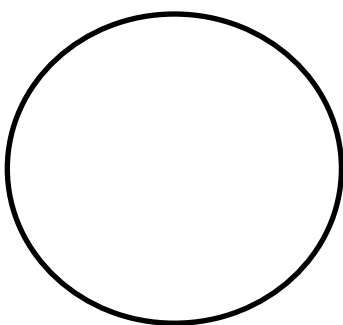
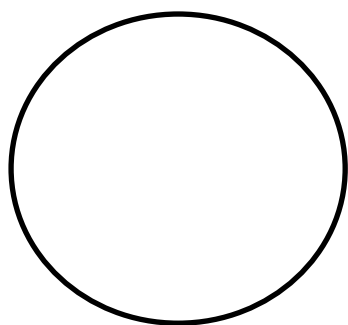
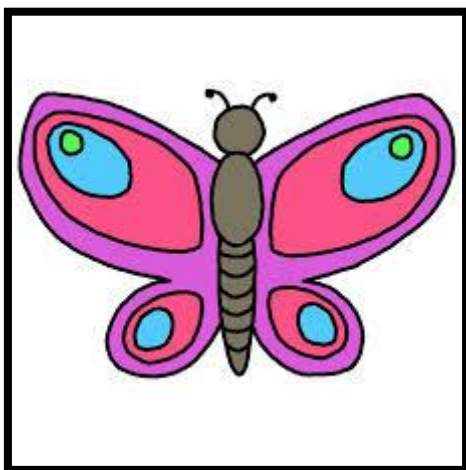
Syllable detection practice item 2:



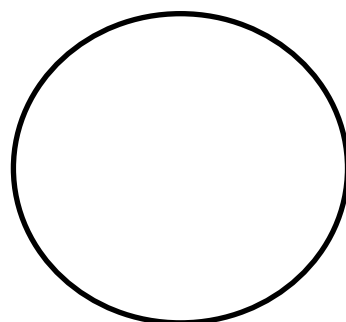
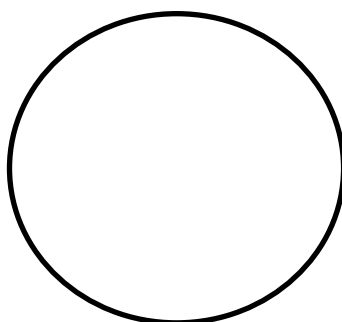
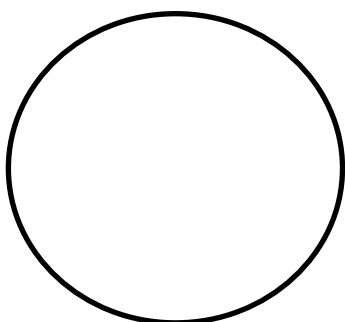
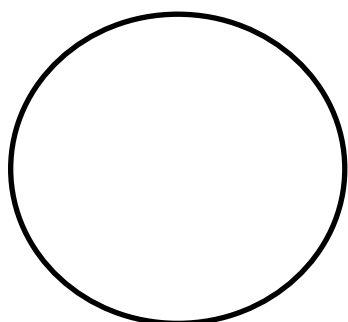
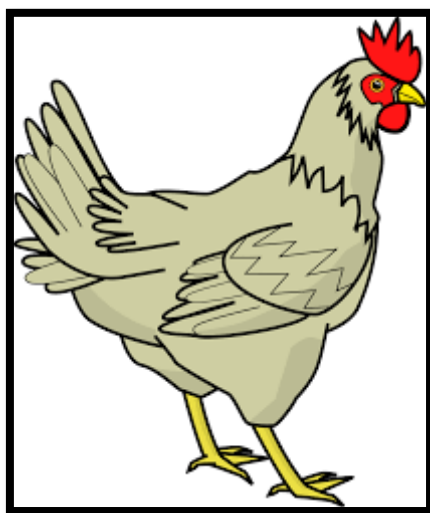
Syllable detection item 1:



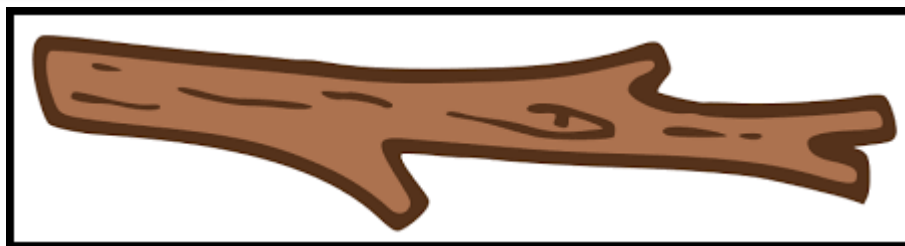
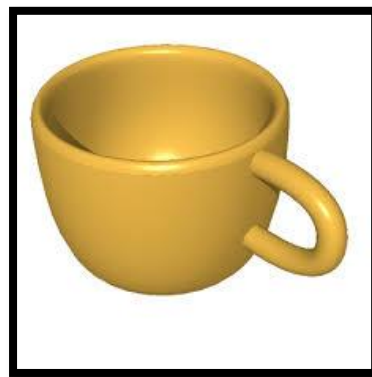
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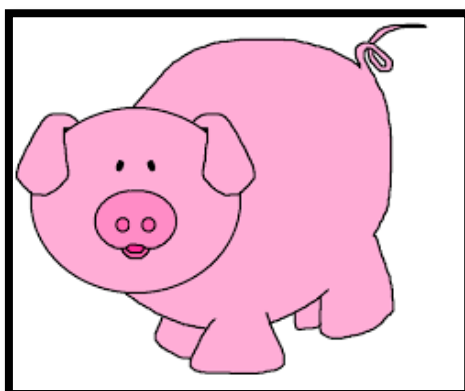
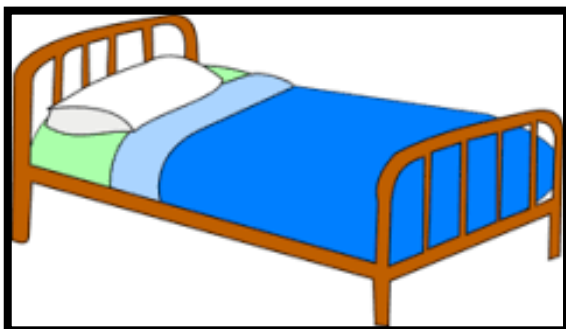
Syllable detection item 3:



Phoneme segmentation practice items



Phoneme segmentation items



Year Group:	
1. Listening and attention	
2. Auditory discrimination	
3. Auditory memory	
4. Word boundaries	
5. Rhyme awareness and detection	
6. Syllable blending	
7. Syllable detection	
8. Rhyme production	
9. Onset-rime	
10. Phoneme discrimination and alliteration	
11. Phoneme blending	
12. Phoneme segmentation	
Score /12 DATE:	
Score /12 DATE:	
Score /12 DATE:	

Word Boundaries

hearing where one word ends and where another word begins

Hop, Skip and Jump

1. Adult to say a sentence aloud: 'Today is Tuesday'
2. Adult to say sentence aloud a second time, modelling a hop/skip/jump for each word that they say
3. Child(ren) to hop, skip or jump each time they hear a word in the sentence
4. Adult to lead counting the number of words in the sentence, saying the sentence again with each hop/skip/jump.



Cube Tower

1. Adult to say a sentence aloud: 'Today is Tuesday'
2. Adult to say sentence aloud a second time, putting a cube on the tower for each word that they say (cubes should go left to right)
3. Child(ren) to be given cubes
4. Child(ren) to put a cube on their tower each time they hear a word in the sentence
5. Adult to lead counting the number of words in the sentence, saying the sentence again pointing to each cube in the tower.



Counting Grids

1. Adult to say a sentence aloud: 'Today is Tuesday'
2. Adult to say sentence aloud a second time, modelling putting a counter into the grid for each word that they say

BLANK GRID FOR WORD BOUNDARIES

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

3. Child(ren) to be given grid and counters
4. Child(ren) to put a counter into the grid each time they hear a word in the sentence
5. Adult to lead counting the number of words in the sentence, saying the sentence again, pointing at each counter in the grid



Phonological Awareness

Word Boundaries – Classroom Activities

Pat Pat

1. Adult to say a sentence aloud: 'Today is Tuesday'
2. Adult to say sentence aloud a second time, modelling a pat on their thighs for each word that they say
3. Child(ren) to tap their thighs time they hear a word in the sentence
4. Adult to lead counting the number of words in the sentence, saying the sentence again with each tap.



One More Step

1. Adult to layout a sequence of mats (e.g. number cards, shape disks, colour disks or hula-hoops) on the floor
2. Adult to say a sentence aloud: 'Today is Tuesday'
3. Adult to say sentence aloud a second time, modelling taking one step each time on the mats for each word that they say
4. Child(ren) to take a step on a mat, following the route set out by the adult, each time they hear a word in the sentence
5. Adult to lead counting the number of words in the sentence, saying the sentence again with each step.

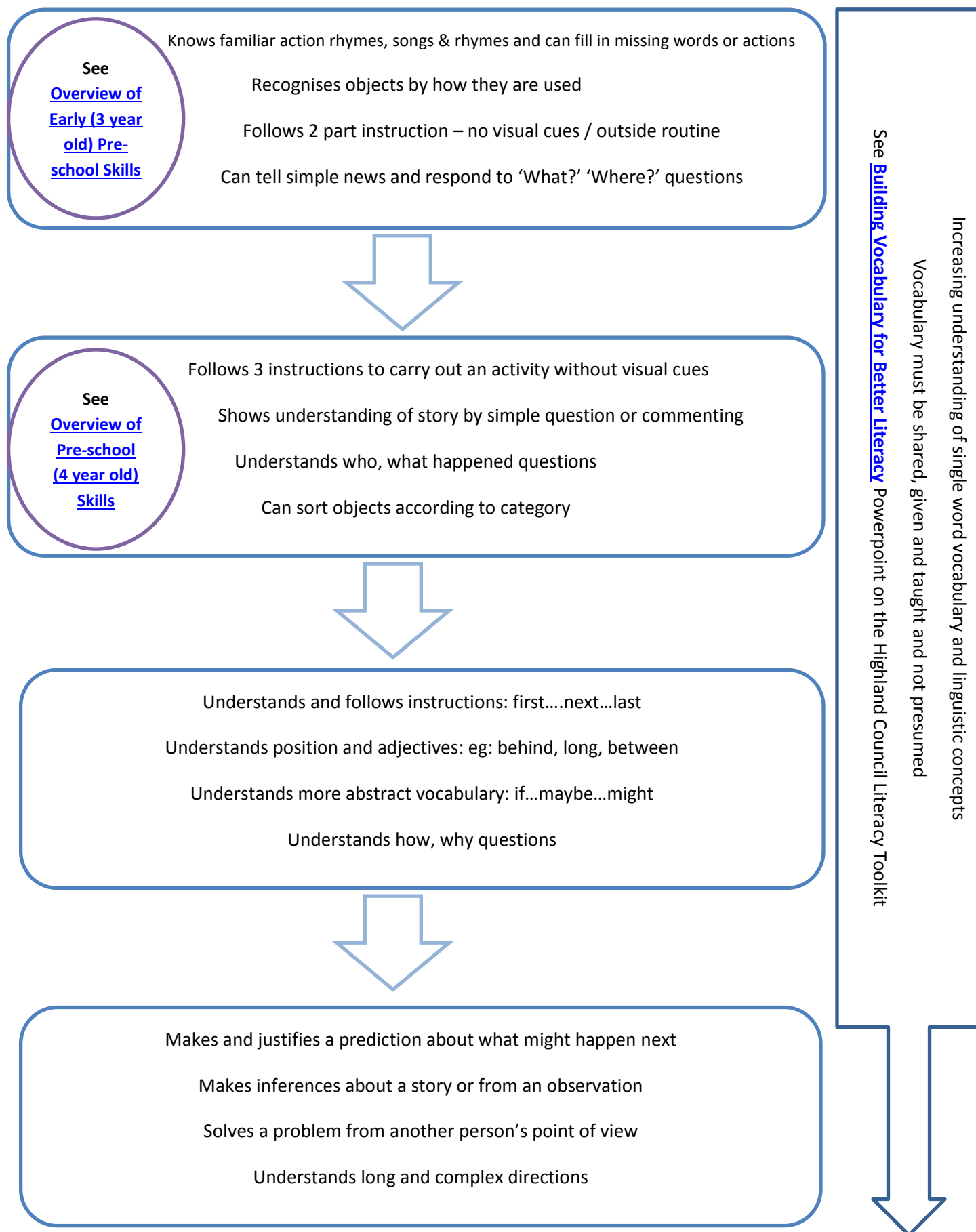


Musical Mania

1. Adult to say a sentence aloud: 'Today is Tuesday'
2. Adult to say sentence aloud a second time, modelling the use of a music instrument for each word that they say
3. Child(ren) to be given a music instrument which they can shake/strike (e.g. maracas or drum)
4. Child(ren) to shake/strike their instrument each time they hear a word in the sentence
5. Adult to lead counting the number of words in the sentence, saying the sentence again with each shake/strike.



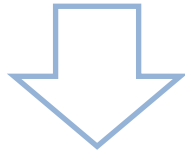
Understanding of Language – Developmental Continuum



Expressive Language – Developmental Continuum

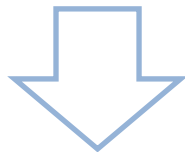
See [Overview of Early \(3 year old\) Pre-school Skills](#)

- Can express needs and wants using phrases / 4 to 5 word sentences
- Able to use pronouns (I, he) plurals and some 'ing' words
- Tells others what to do; 'don't do that', 'give it to me', 'it's mine'
- Talks about pictures/ stories in their own words and can link to own experiences

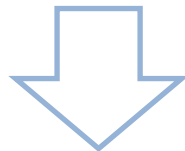


See [Overview of Pre-school \(4 year old\) Skills](#)

- Uses well-formed sentences; may have some grammatical immaturities; 'failed'
- Can use language to describe a scene
- Uses language to gain information and give own ideas
- Starts, takes turns and stops, in longer conversations

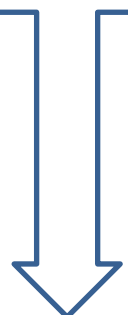


- Talks about the past, present and future using the correct verbs
- Uses a range of conjunctions to link ideas
- Can describe an event in a reasonable order
- Can sequence 3 to 4 pictures / photos logically and talk through the story



- Generates complex sentences to describe and explain ideas
- Can generate a verbal story in a reasonable order
- Makes inferences about a story or from an observation
- Makes and justifies a prediction about what might happen next

Increasing use of more complex and sophisticated vocabulary
Vocabulary must be shared, given and taught and not presumed
See [Building Vocabulary for Better Literacy](#) Powerpoint on the Highland Council Literacy Toolkit



First words

- now I'm saying words too

Your child may...

Understand everyday words and actions.

Understand when you have a cross or happy voice.

Understand simple requests. (e.g. Give me teddy)

Use a few words at first, and then learn more.

Use words like 'hello' and 'bye'.

Use lots of sounds, but speech often isn't clear.

Get your attention by pointing, making noises and using words.

Pretend when playing. (e.g. feeding teddy)

Copy your actions and some words. (e.g. in songs)



Developed by Speech and Language Therapy,
Care and Learning



First words - now I'm saying words too

Try...

Quiet time to talk



- Your child needs to hear you speak.
- Young children find it difficult to listen to your voice when it's noisy.
- Turn off things like the TV, phones and music.

Face to face



- Sit or bend down so your child can see you talking.
- This makes it easier for her to listen and copy.
- Take the dummy out. Your child may have something to say.

Pause and wait



- Wait for a few seconds.
- Let your child show you what he is interested in.
- Talk a little about it.
- Watch and listen again to see what he does.

Copy and add words



- Keep what you say short and simple.
- Say the main word again and again.
- Your child can then learn that word.



Developed by Speech and Language Therapy,
Care and Learning



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Words together

- let's keep talking

Your child may...

Understand longer requests without help. (e.g. Show me Mummy's hair)

Understand some words like 'big' and 'in' and what objects are used for. (e.g. Which do you eat?)

Understand some questions. (e.g. What...?, Is...?)

Use 2 to 4 word sentences and may ask 'what's that?'

Keep learning new words.

Use 'p b t d m n w h' with vowels in words; and be learning other sounds.

Have a conversation with her toys.

Listen to a simple picture story.

Stop what he is doing to listen to you.



Developed by Speech and Language Therapy
Care and Learning



Words together - let's keep talking

Try...

Play and talk together



- Have fun playing together.
- Talk about what you are doing.
- Keep it simple.
- Your child will then learn the words.

Face to face



- Sit or bend down so you are face to face when you talk with your child.
- Say the words when giving choices (e.g. Do you want an apple or a pear?).

Pause and wait



- Wait...Count to 10 in your head.
- Give your child a chance to talk.
- Let him talk about whatever he wants to.

Copy and add words



- Show you understand by repeating back your child's words clearly.
- Add new words instead of asking 'What's that?' This will help her learn.



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Talking together

- chatting with you is fun

Your child may...

Understand longer requests, without help. (e.g. Get your bag and put it on the table)

Understand more describing and place words. (e.g. dirty, beside)

Understand more questions in context. (e.g. Where...?, Can...?)

Use at least 4 word sentences, and tell you how he feels.

Use mostly fluent speech, but may stumble over some words.

Start using 'c/k, g, s, f'.

'v, sp, st, r, l, sh, j, ch, th' may be difficult.

Talk about pictures in her own words.

Join in when playing.

Listen and talk to other children during play.



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Talking together - chatting with you is fun

Try...

Play and talk together



- Have fun playing outdoors and indoors.
- Talk to each other about what you are doing.
- Let your child take charge of the game.
- Sometimes copy him.

Pause and wait



- Wait... count to 10 in your head before saying something else.
- It can take children a long time to think of what they want to say.

Copy and add words



- Listen to your child.
- Copy what she says but in the correct way.
- Add words to what she says.

Be careful with questions



- It's best to talk to your child about what he is interested in.
- Most questions don't teach words they only test. Try starting with 'I wonder....' instead of 'What....'



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Chatting now

- talking helps me learn

Your child may...

Understand complex requests without help. (e.g. Give big teddy an apple and a fork)

Understand lots of describing and place words. (e.g. long, behind).

Understand more difficult questions. (e.g. What happened?, Who?)

Use long sentences, but still make some mistakes. (e.g. He falled)

Use words like 'I, she, his, your'.

Use most speech sounds correctly, but still find some difficult. (e.g. r, l, sh, j, ch, th)

Tell you what happened and sometimes what is going to happen.

Join in make believe play.

Start and take a few turns in conversations.



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Chatting now - talking helps me learn

Try...

Play and talk together



- Have fun playing, singing, and looking at books together.
- Make your words sound interesting. This helps your child to listen.

Pause and wait



- Wait.... Give your child time to think and then tell you his idea.
- It can take children a long time to plan what to say.

Copy and add words



- When you child says "it" or "that" say the word she meant. Then say the same word in a sentence.

Be careful with questions



- Don't ask questions to teach new words. Instead say the words again and again in different sentences.



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Listening and talking together

Try...

Repeat and revisit



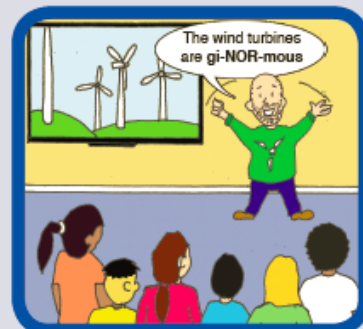
- It is crucial that the adult explains and then repeats new vocabulary across a range of experiences.
- Children need to hear and experience a new word many times before they understand and use it.

Give thinking time



- Wait...count to 7 in your head before saying something else.
- Encourage children to ask for clarification.
- It can take some children a long time to process, plan and do.

Use gestures meaningfully



- Using gesture helps children to concentrate and reinforces new learning.
- When you use gesture, it gives more time for thinking.

Be careful with questions



- It is important to balance comments with questions, particularly for new learning.
- Questions can develop problem solving when they are simple enough to understand.

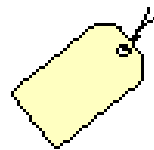


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Care and Learning
www.bumps2bairns.com www.highlandliteracy.com



Step 1

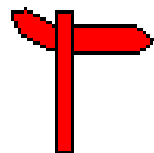
How we learn new words



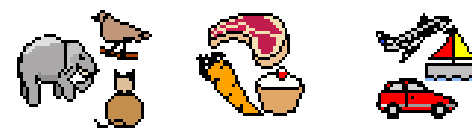
What is it?



What do we do with it?



Where do we find it?



What sort of thing is it?

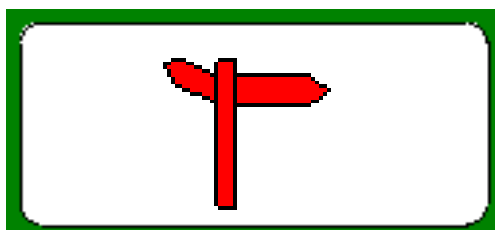


Clap the beats in the word



What sound does it begin with?

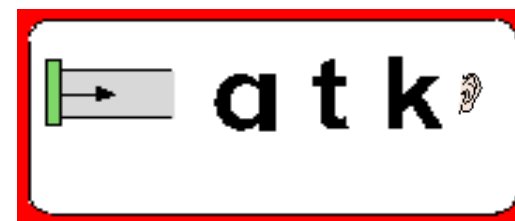
Step 2



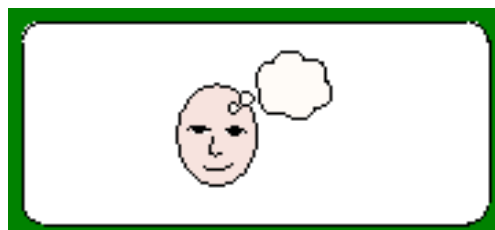
Where do we find it?



What category? What do you already know? What does it link with?



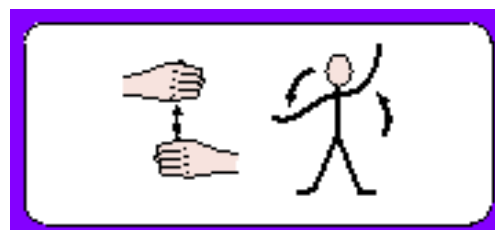
What sound does it begin with?



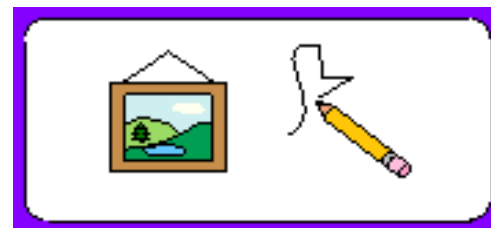
What does the word mean?
Tell me about it.



What do we do with it?



Can you do an action?

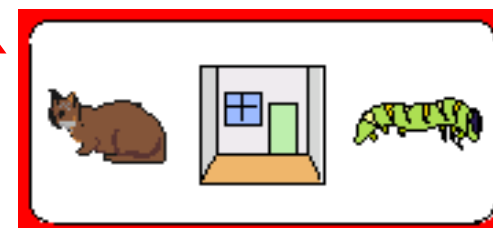


What does it look like? Draw a picture.



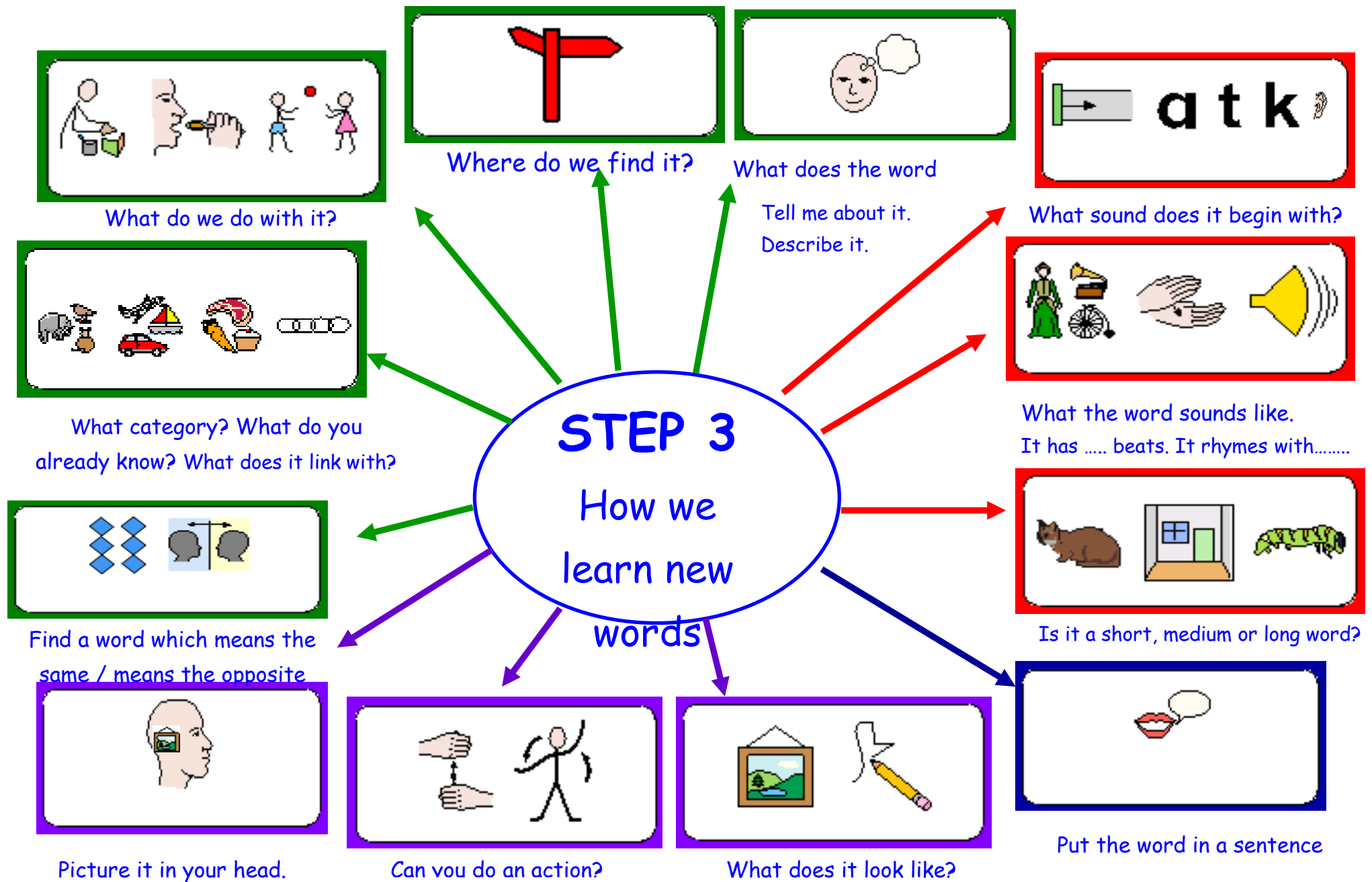
What the word sounds like.

It has beats



Is it a short, medium or long word?

How we
learn new
words



In Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings practitioners support children's **movement** and **coordination** skills through providing developmentally appropriate play experiences both indoors and outdoors. ELC settings promote children's gross and fine motor movements, their scissor skills and their opportunities to make marks.



[CLICK HERE](#)
[Fine Motor](#)
[Handout](#)

[CLICK HERE](#)
[Scissor Skills](#)
[Handout](#)



[CLICK HERE](#)
[Pre-Writing Skills](#)
[Handout](#)

[CLICK HERE](#)
[Messy Play](#)
[Handout](#)

In the early stages of primary school it is recommended that all children continue to have regular opportunities to develop their fine and gross motor skills through play based experiences. These could be developed during soft start and through small group/ whole class adult guided activities. **[The Pre-Handwriting Continuum](#)** can be used to support ongoing observation.



Before children are explicitly taught how to form the letters of the alphabet, it is recommended that they develop the pencil control concepts which underpin handwriting. Teachers in early primary can assess children's pencil control skills using the pencil control screen and plan for pencil control development using the ideas from the **[Pencil Control Concepts Toolkit](#)**.



[CLICK HERE](#)
[Pencil Control](#)
[Screen](#)

[CLICK HERE](#)
[Pencil Control](#)
[Screen – Picture](#)
[Book](#)



[CLICK HERE](#)
[Pencil Control Concepts Toolkit](#)
Shape Formation; Shape Manipulation; Directionality;
Fluidity of Movement; Fine Motor Skills;
Pressure Control; Pencil Grip

Once children are secure in the pencil control concepts which underpin the explicit teaching of handwriting, the **[Teaching Letter Formation Guidance](#)** and the **[Grapheme Guidance](#)** can be used to support teachers in planning for cognitive handwriting instruction. Schools can use this alongside their handwriting programmes.

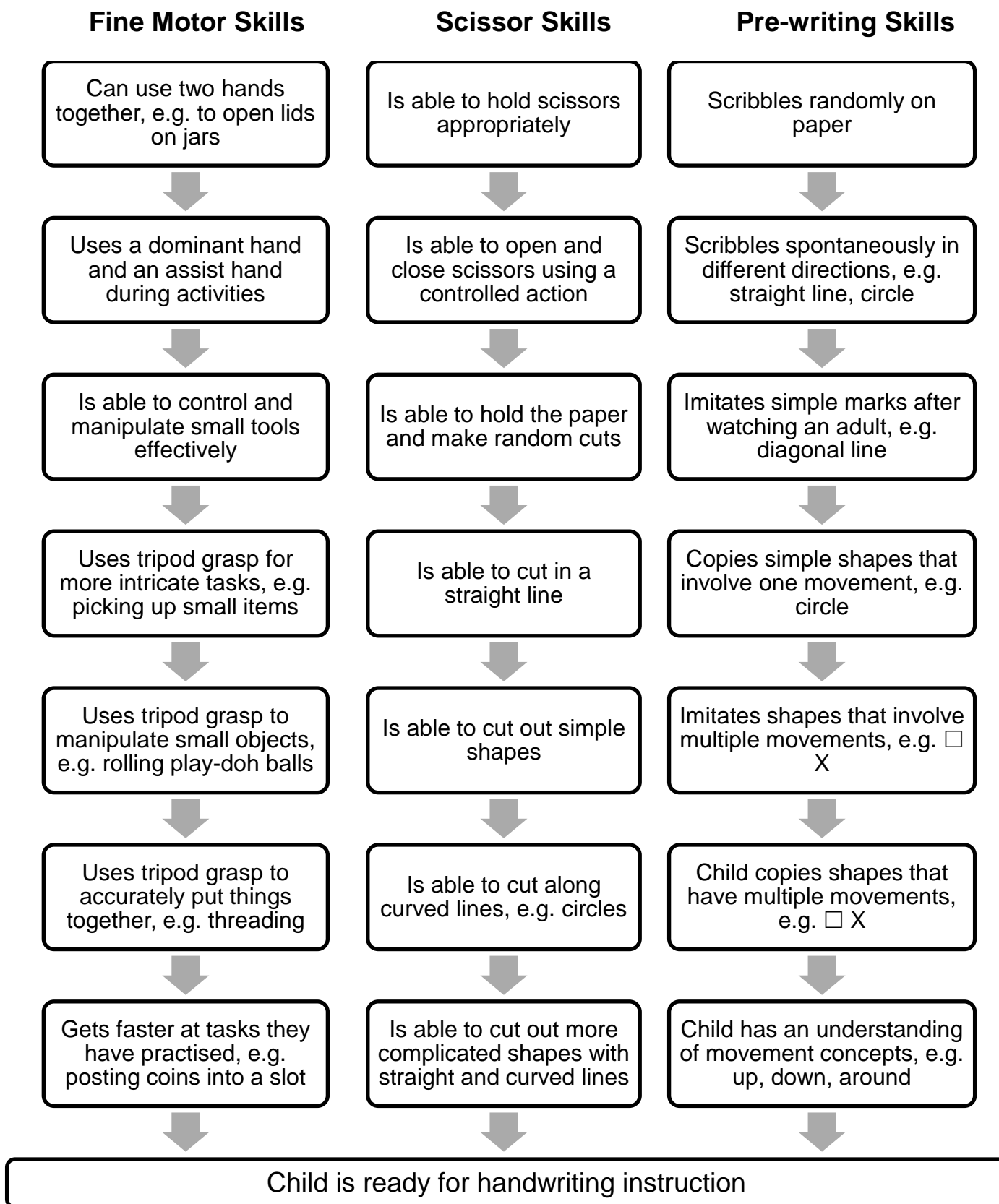


[CLICK HERE](#)
[Grapheme Guidance](#)



[CLICK HERE](#)
[Teaching Letter Formation Guidance](#)

Pre-Handwriting – Developmental Continuum



- Occupational Therapy advice sheets available on skill development for each of these areas
- A child's posture and seating during pre-writing activities can impact on their performance
- It is important that a child has lots of opportunity to develop their gross motor & co-ordination skills

Fine Motor Skills

[illegible]

[illegible]

Pre-writing Skills

[illegible]

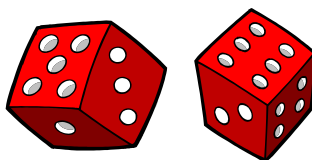
BOX OF TOYS

You may find it useful to have toys and activities handy in a plastic box. They are then ready to be taken out where there is an opportunity to play.

Some of the smaller items can be stored in small plastic jars, containers or pencil cases - you could use this as a chance to practice screwing lids, opening containers and doing zips.

Here is a list of suggested items for your box:

- Building blocks, eg Duplo / Lego
- Large and small threading beads
- Hama beads
- Play-dough
- Animal fun pegs
- Tennis ball
- Tweezers or small tongs
- Plastic straws (cut in half)
- Small pom-poms
- Counters or coins
- Wind up toys
- Games with small pieces or a dice, eg travel games
- Card games, eg snap, matching pairs
- Various craft items; coloured paper, card, tissue paper, stickers, ink stampers and ink pad
- Small squeezable paint and glue bottles
- Cotton buds



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- **How often should we carry out activities?** The key is little and often. It will depend on your schedule, but 20 minutes, 5 times a week would be ideal. It does not have to be activities from this booklet, any activity that gets the fingers moving will do!
- **How long should I keep going for?** Keep going! Children's skills constantly develop so supporting their development is an ongoing process. Try to make it part of your day-to-day routine rather than seeing it as a separate activity programme.
- **How many activities should we complete?** Aim for quality not quantity. It is better to do 2 activities well rather than rushing through 10. Also, it is best to end before boredom kicks in to leave your child wanting to play again another day.
- **Is there anything else I can do?** Make sure that you carry out activities that build up your child's overall strength and stamina. Going to the playpark, ball games, swimming, etc.



Guidelines

This screen has been designed to support teachers in identifying children's strengths and gaps in the pencil control skills which underpin the teaching of handwriting. Teachers can use the information gained from the screen to plan for children's secure pencil control development. The screen can be administered as individual sections or as a whole.

The screen assesses the following skills:

1. Shape formation
2. Shape manipulation
3. Directionality
4. Fluidity of movement
5. Fine motor skills
6. Pressure control
7. Pencil grip.

The first five skills above have suggested tasks within the screen. Some of the tasks are thinking-looking-doing tasks, and some tasks use a pencil. Pressure control and pencil grip are observational aspects which should be observed alongside the first four skills. There is a script to support you when using the screen. The resources needed for the screen are listed below; this includes the accompanying picture book.

Whilst the outcome of the screen will provide teachers with information about children's strengths and gaps in pencil control skills, it is recommended that children also have the opportunity to consolidate all pencil control skills as part of formal handwriting instruction.

You will need:

- ❖ The accompanying picture book which includes various activities
- ❖ Photocopy of pg.6 and pg.7 from the accompanying picture book for each child
- ❖ A pencil
- ❖ A4 blank paper
- ❖ 4 pipe cleaners/ straws (Q1a)
- ❖ 2 triangles and 1 square photocopied and cut out from picture book (Q2a – pg.2)
- ❖ 2 circles and 1 rectangle photocopied and cut out from picture book (Q2b – pg.2)
- ❖ Cut out car map from picture book (Q3a – pg.5)
- ❖ Toy car (Q3a)
- ❖ 1 counter (Q3b)
- ❖ 10 coins and a coin box (Q5a)

Name:				Stage:		Date:	
Score							
Section 1: Shape Formation	Section 2: Shape Manipulation	Section 3: Directionality	Section 4: Fluidity of Movement	Section 5: Fine Motor Skills	Section 6: Pressure Control	Section 7: Pencil Grip	
/4	/4	/4	/6	/1	/1	/1	

Section 1: Forming Shapes

Part 1: Thinking – Looking – Doing:

1a) Show the child a picture of a triangle (accompanying picture book pg.3) and provide them with the four pipe cleaners or straws.

“(pointing to the triangle) This is a triangle. Here are some pipe cleaners/ straws. I would like you to make a triangle, like the one in the picture.”

If they can do this, score 1

☐

1b) Provide the child with four pipe cleaners or straws.

“I would like you to make a different shape this time. This time I would like you to use the pipe cleaners/ straws to make a square.”

If they can do this, score 1

☐

Part 2: With a pencil:

1c) The child will need a photocopied strip of the blank boxes (accompanying picture book pg.6) and a pencil.

“(pointing to the cross in picture book) This is a cross. I would like you to draw a cross inside this box (pointing to the first box).”

If they can do this, score 1

☐

Also see section 6 and 7 for observational checklist for pressure control and pencil grip.

1d) The child will need a pencil.

“(pointing to the second blank box) Draw a circle inside this box.”

If they can do this, score 1

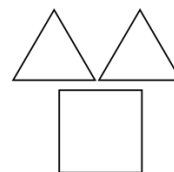
☐

Also see section 6 and 7 for observational checklist for pressure control and pencil grip.

Section 2: Shape Manipulation

Part 1: Thinking – Looking – Doing:

2a) You will need to photocopy the two triangles and the square from the picture book (pg.2). The child will need these and the shape outline from Q2a (pg.3) of the picture book. Lay out the cut shapes with the square on the bottom and the two triangles above pointing upwards.

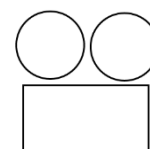


“(pointing to the cut out shapes) You have two triangles and a square. (pointing at the black shape outline in the picture book) Here you have a shape which has been made by putting these shapes together. I would like you to put the triangles and the square together to make the shape.”

If they can do this, score 1

☐

2b) You will need to photocopy the two circles and the rectangle from the picture book (pg.2). The child will need these and the shape outline from Q2b (pg.3) of the picture book. Lay out the shapes with the rectangle on the bottom and the two circles above.



“(pointing to the cut out shapes) You have two circles and a rectangle. (pointing at the black shape outline in the picture book) Here you have a shape which has been made by putting these shapes together. I would like you to put the circles and the rectangle together to make the shape.”

If they can do this, score 1

☐

Part 2: With a pencil:

2c) The child will need a sheet of blank A4 paper and a pencil. The children will draw four rectangles, one inside the other.

“I would like you to draw a big rectangle on this piece of paper with your pencil. (Pointing to the first rectangle): I would like you to draw another rectangle inside this rectangle. (Pointing to the second rectangle): I would like you to draw one more rectangle inside this rectangle. (Pointing to the third rectangle): I would like you to draw one last rectangle inside this rectangle.”

If they can do this, score 1

☐

Also see section 6 and 7 for observational checklist for pressure control and pencil grip.

2d) The child should use the reverse side of the paper they used for Q2c. They will also need a pencil. You are going to ask the child to draw a circle and ask them to stop half way through. You are assessing whether or not they are able to stop.

“I would like you to draw a circle slowly (when they’re half way through)... and stop”

If they can do this, score 1

☐

Also see section 6 and 7 for observational checklist for pressure control and pencil grip.

Section 3: Directionality

Part 1: Thinking – Looking – Doing:

3a) The child will need the road map from the picture book (pg.5) and a small toy car.

“You have a map and a toy car. I’m going to ask you to drive the car around the map.

“(pointing to the bottom right hand corner) I would like you to start here. Drive the car up the road past all of the buildings. (Stop) Now drive to the see saw in the park”.

“(pointing to the centre of the roundabout) This park is in the middle of a roundabout. I would like you to drive the car around the roundabout. (Stop) Now drive the other way.

“(pointing to the top left hand corner) I would like you to start here. Drive the car down the road, past the farm and keep driving straight across to the end of the road.”

If they can do all three, score 1

☐

3b) The child will need the page from the picture book with the bold line (pg.4) and a counter.

“Put the counter at the top of the page.”

“Put the counter at the bottom of the page.”

“Put the counter on the line.”

“Put the counter somewhere below the line.”

“Put the counter somewhere above the line.”

If they can do all five, score 1

☐

Part 2: With a pencil:

3c) The child will need a copy of the maze from the picture book (Q3c – pg.6) and a pencil.

“I am going to give you instructions to help you get from the triangle to the circle in this maze.”

“(point to the triangle at the top left) Start here. Draw a line down. (Ask them to stop just before they get to the end.”

“Draw a line along to the right. (Ask them to stop just before the first turn.”

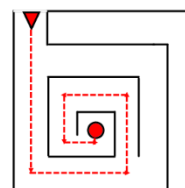
“Draw a line up.” (Ask them to stop just before they hit the edge)

“Draw a line along to the left.” (Ask them to stop just before they hit the edge)

“Draw a line down.” (Ask them to stop just before they hit the edge).

“Draw one more line along to the right”. (Ask them to stop as they reach the circle).

If they can do this, score 1

☐


Also see section 6 and 7 for observational checklist for pressure control and pencil grip.

3d) The child will need a copy of the maze from the picture book (Q3d – pg.6) and a pencil.

“Start here. (point to the smiley face.) Complete the maze by following the arrows to get you to the circle.”

If they can do this, score 1

☐

Also see section 6 and 7 for observational checklist for pressure control and pencil grip.

Section 4: Fluidity of Movement

Part 1: Thinking – Looking – Doing:

4a) The child will need the printed out zig-zag pattern from the picture book (Q4a – pg.7).

“Start here (*point at the left hand side of the zig-zag*). I would like you to use your finger to follow the zig-zag pattern between the two zig-zagged lines, from this side across to the other side.”

If they can do this, score 1

☐

4b) The child will need the printed out loop pattern from the picture book (Q4b – pg.7).

“Start here (*point at the left hand side of the loop*). I would like you to use your finger to follow the loop pattern between the two loops, from this side across to the other side.”

If they can do this, score 1

☐

4c) The child will need the printed out infinity (figure of 8) pattern from the picture book (Q4c – pg.7).

“Start here (*point to the square*). Use your finger to go up the hill towards the triangle and follow the loop pattern. Keep going until I say stop. (*Stop the child after they’ve done it a few times*)”

“Start here (*point to the triangle*). Use your finger to go down the hill towards the square and follow the loop pattern. Keep going until I say stop. (*Stop the child after they’ve done it a few times*)”

If they can do this, score 1

☐

Pa

Part 2: With a pencil – In each of the tasks below, the adult should observe the following:

- Is the child able to do the task without stopping?
- Is the child able to complete the pattern, staying between the two lines?
- Is the child writing with a dynamic grasp, i.e. small movements using the fingers, as opposed to whole arm movements?

4d) The child will need the printed out zig-zag pattern from the picture book (Q4d) and a pencil.

“Start here (*point at the left hand side of the zig-zag*). Use the pencil to draw a line between the two zig-zag lines. I want to see if you can do it without stopping.”

If they can do this, score 1

☐

Also see section 6 and 7 for observational checklist for pressure control and pencil grip.

4e) The child will need the printed out loop pattern from the picture book (Q4e) and a pencil.

“Start here (*point at the left hand side of the loop*). Use the pencil to draw a line between the two loops. I want to see if you can do it without stopping.”

If they can do this, score 1

☐

Also see section 6 and 7 for observational checklist for pressure control and pencil grip.

4f) The child will need the printed out infinity pattern from the picture book (Q4f) and a pencil.

“Start here (*point to the square*). Use your pencil to draw a line, going up the hill towards the triangle and keep going until you get back to the square.”

“Start here (*point to the triangle*). Use your pencil to draw a line, going down the hill towards the square and keep going until you get back to the triangle.”

If they can do this, score 1

☐

Also see section 6 and 7 for observational checklist for pressure control and pencil grip.

Section 5: Fine Motor Skills

Part 1: Thinking – Looking – Doing:

5a) The child will need ten coins and a money box.

Lay the coins out on a table in a line.

“I would like you to post the coins into the money box one at a time.”

- Is the child using their tripod grasp (thumb, forefinger and middle finger) to pick up and post the coins?
- Do they manipulate the coin in their fingers to get it at the right angle for posting?

If they can do this, score 1

☐

Section 6: Pressure Control

During the “with a pencil” aspects in sections 1 – 4, reflect on the following:

Does the child use an appropriate level of pressure when writing (not too light or not too heavy)?	Section 1 Shape Formation	Section 2 Shape Manipulation	Section 3 Directionality	Section 4 Fluidity of Movement

If they demonstrate appropriate pressure in all four sections, score 1

☐

Section 7: Pencil Grip

During the “with a pencil” aspects in sections 1 – 4, reflect on the following:

	Section 1 Shape Formation	Section 2 Shape Manipulation	Section 3 Directionality	Section 4 Fluidity of Movement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A grip which is comfortable / relaxed looking. A dynamic grasp where the pencil is controlled by the fingers with small movements. <i>(It does not have to be a tripod grasp, but it should not be a “fist” grasp or a fingertip grasp.)</i> Smooth, controlled movements. 				

If they demonstrate an efficient pencil grip in all four sections, score 1

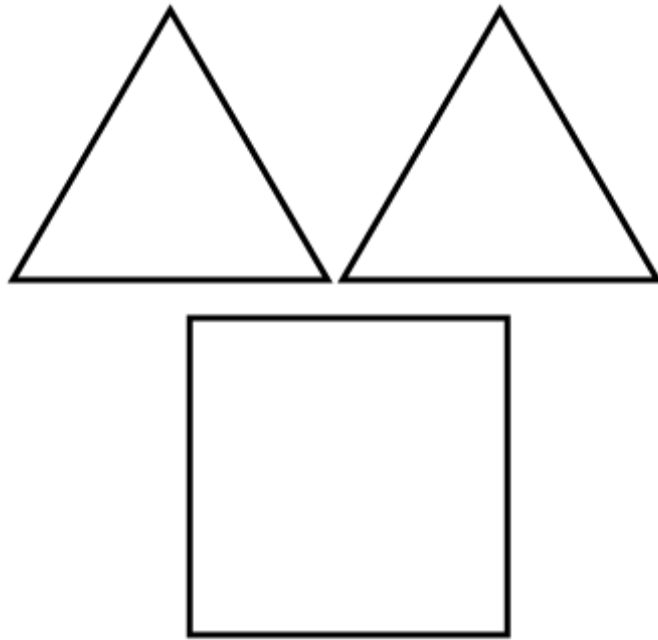
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Pencil Control Skills Screen *for school-aged children*

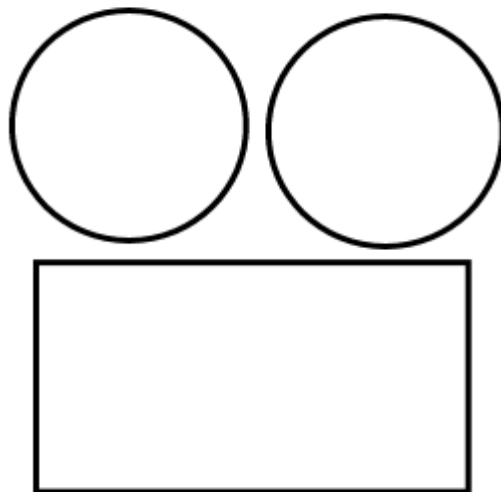
Accompanying Resources

Page 2	Reusable – print and cut out (ideally on card or laminated)
Page 3	Reusable – print and cut out (ideally on card or laminated)
Page 4	Reusable – print and cut out (ideally on card or laminated)
Page 5	Reusable – print in colour and cut out (ideally on card or laminated) – You may wish to blow up to A3
Page 6	One per child – print on paper (can be back to back with page 7)
Page 7	One per child – print on paper (can be back to back with page 6)

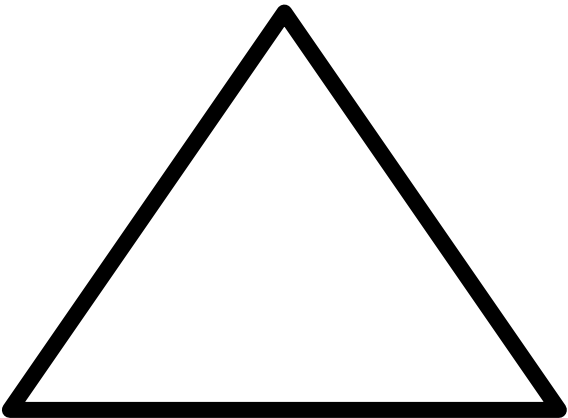
Cut out the shapes – for Q2a)



Cut out the shapes – for Q2b)



Q1a)



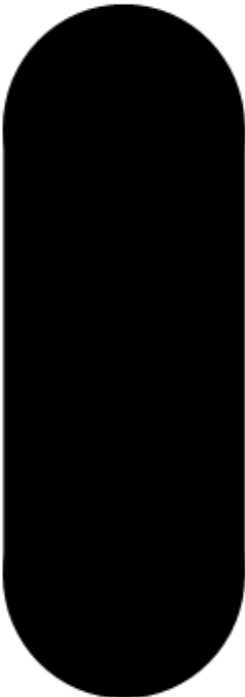
Q1c)



Q2a)



Q2b)



Q3b)



Q3a)

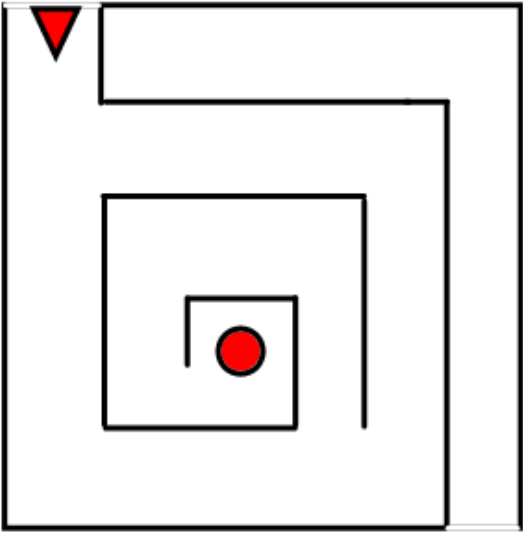
Map available from Between 3 Sisters: <http://between3sisters.com/?s=Printable+road+map>



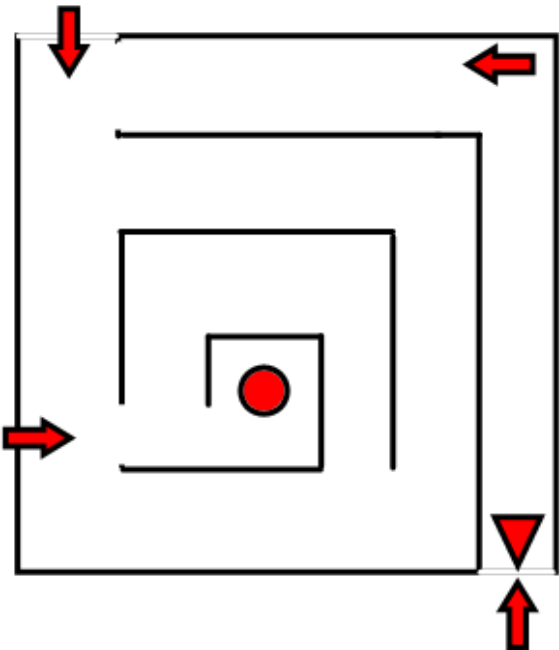
You will need a photocopy of this page for each child.
Q1c & Q1d)

Box 1	Box 2

Q3c)



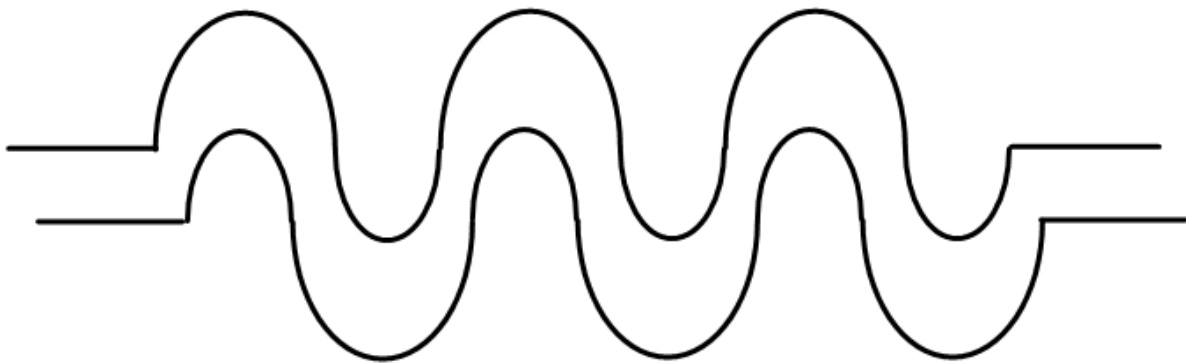
Q3d)



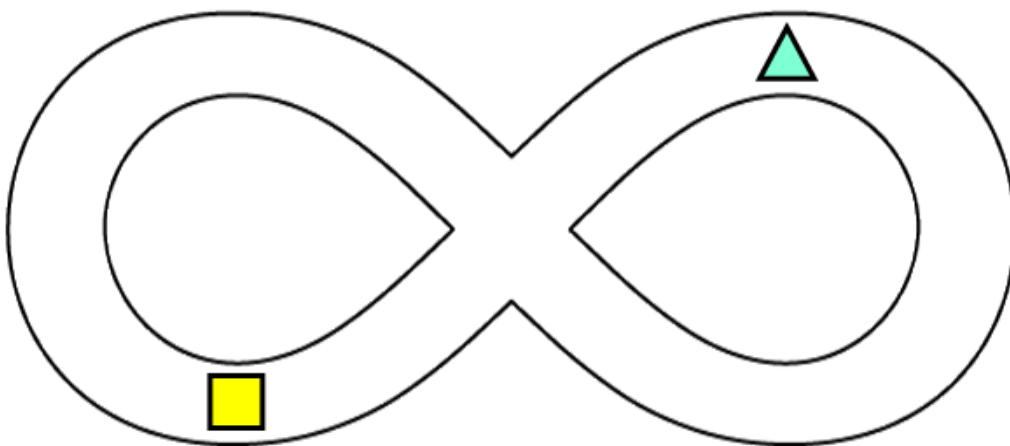
**You will need a photocopy of this page for each child.
Q4a and 4d)**



Q4b and 4e)



Q4c and 4f)



Concepts of Print – Developmental Continuum

“Concepts of Print” includes a wide range of knowledge and understanding that children build up over time with appropriate input.


It is commonly divided into four elements, each of which develop independently:

- Book handling
- Picture and story comprehension
- Looking and recognising
- Writing and story reading behaviours.

At all times, ages and stages:

- Keep enjoying reading, or look as though you do!
- Look out for signs of what the child enjoys, rather than worry about what they “should” be reading with you
- Don’t force reading together – it is OK to leave it if the child is losing interest
- Read with expression – try out different voices etc. You may feel silly, but the child won’t think so
- Adapt to the child’s varying activity levels – short episodes are fine, so is moving around if they need to
- Use books as part of daily routines - bed time, bath time, nap – whenever fits!
- Model the use of reading and writing in day to day tasks – let children see you write lists, consult texts (including online, e.g. emails), etc.

Book Handling



What you might see	Some ideas to help
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lifting and dropping books • Opening and closing books • Exploring the feel of paper, crushing, tearing, etc. • Mouthing or chewing books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is OK for babies and young children to mouth and “tear” books – this is exploring • Use rubber/plastic books, e.g., at bath time • Offer books that “do” things – textures, sounds, tabs, etc • Model opening and exploring
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting to look through pages • Actively exploring books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let children turn pages and explore, help them if they want – don’t worry about doing it “right” • Encourage the child to explore for themselves
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding the front and back of a book • Getting a book right way up • Understanding direction to turn pages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Model and label “right way up”, talk about how you know, make mistakes for fun • Follow the child’s exploration, talk about what they are learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding that print goes from left to right • Understanding that print goes from top to bottom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let the child help read the book, turning pages, pointing to pictures, etc.

Picture and Story Comprehension

What you might see	Some ideas to help
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paying attention to pictures • Having some favourite pictures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about pictures, what they show, and what people are doing in them • Carefully watch what the child is interested in. Pause and wait for your child to comment, then talk about it with them using short sentences • It is OK to say the same things about the pictures over and over – this is how children learn
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making appropriate noises for pictures • Pointing to a picture if asked • Pointing to pictures to make a point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give positive feedback on responses and reactions • Comment, and expand on, on the child's comments • Prompt picture finding • Talk about the story while you read • Lots of repeating, over and over with the same books and pictures • Be careful not to ask too many questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excited reactions related to story • Verbally labelling pictures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use simple questions to discuss what is being read – who, where, what happened? • Use stories with clear, repeated patterns that the child can follow • Be patient with child's comments and questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic sequencing of events, beginning, middle, end • Filling in the next word 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell simple, repeating and predictable stories, including stories with actions (or songs and rhymes) • Use sequencing language in day to day life (first, next, now, etc.) • Try out pauses in a familiar story to see if the child can predict what's next; "The dog went"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anticipating familiar story events • Asking "why" questions • Acting out characters • Using stories help to make sense of strong feelings, e.g., fears • Pretend play based on stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relate stories to real life experiences • Be patient if the child asks lots of questions • Build stories together out of day to day experiences • Talk about "events of the day" • Look at photos from the day, make up a story or diary

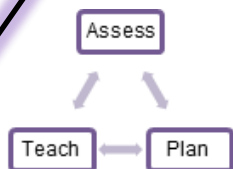
Looking and Recognising

What you might see	Some ideas to help
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Picking out a favourite book • Knowing that books have stories in them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even if you are bored with it, the child is not! • Start to offer simple choices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the difference between words and pictures • Recognising logos, labels, etc. • Understanding that print is made of separated words • Noticing letters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the child sees you reading for real purposes • Read “the world around you” with the child – point out signs, labels, etc. • When reading together, point out differences between pictures and text
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeing that words are made up of letters • Seeing that sentences are made up of words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For preschool children don’t worry about forcing this • Point out words as you see them on signs, labels, etc • Support child’s attempts to scribble words • Comment as you write things for them on request • Respond to requests “what does that say?” • Label the letters/words as you write
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Detecting the starts of sentences • Identifying some individual letters • Becoming aware of punctuation marks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above

Writing and Story Reading Behaviours

What you might see	Some ideas to help
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bringing a book (or pointing) to request a story Interacting with elements of a book 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Even if it is inconvenient, look pleased and make time Use books to respond to child's interests – finding pictures of XYZ, model finding information etc. Let the child choose books, can be from a restricted list Have some routine times for looking at books together (but don't worry if sometimes the child has other plans)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trying to repeat words from stories Babbling along while adult reads Enjoying "book speech", such as rhymes Scribbling pictures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the child babbles along, or pretends to read, respond with pleasure and reinforce this Let them have a "turn" Use books with short, repeated phrases, rhymes or songs that the child can "join in"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Picking up a book and pretending to read Writing "notes" for people, lists, etc. Using reading/writing in pretend play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage all these when they happen Write notes back Incorporate reading/writing into pretend games – e.g., playing shop or farm, etc. Co-operate in building a story Tell stories together as well as reading them Let the child "add" to your notes, cards, lists, etc.





Northern Alliance



Principles of Effective Phonics Teaching - June 2017

The systematic teaching of Phonics should be developed within a Literacy, Language and Communication rich environment in which children develop their listening and talking, reading and writing skills through a range of child initiated and engaging adult led learning experiences. This should also include practitioners and families reading to and with children, supporting their exploration of texts.

Phonics teaching is a key piece of the literacy, language and communication jigsaw.



Systematic Phonics teaching should be developed in combination with recognising phonically irregular words, print awareness and comprehension skills.

Phonics teaching follows a developmental approach.



Teachers should use their professional judgement as to the appropriate introduction and pacing of systematic phonics teaching, using the 'Assess – Plan – Teach' cycle.

Phonics teaching develops the connection between sounds and letters.



Phonics teaching should: develop grapheme/phoneme correspondence.

Phonics teaching should develop word building and deconstruction skills.

Phonics teaching applies blending and segmenting skills in reading and writing.



Phonics teaching should provide engaging opportunities to practise blending and segmenting skills by reading and writing at word and sentence level.

Building the Foundations

Concepts of Print, Oral Language, Phonological Awareness and Pre-Handwriting skills should underpin effective learning and teaching of phonics as foundational reading and writing skills. Research tells us Phonics teaching should build on and consolidate these foundational skills. The Emerging Literacy materials will support the development of foundational reading and writing skills.

Terminology

Phoneme = the individual sounds within a language	Grapheme = the individual letters within a language
Phoneme blending = putting individual sounds together	Phoneme segmentation = splitting words into individual sounds
Phonically irregular words = words which cannot be read by using phonics e.g. said; these are often commonly used high frequency words	
Systematic teaching = phonics instruction is systematic when all the major grapheme-phoneme correspondences are taught and they are covered in a clearly defined sequence	



Northern Alliance



Principles of Effective Phonics Teaching - June 2017

Practitioners and schools can use the challenge questions below, linked to [How Good Is Our School 4 \(HGIOS 4\)](#), as part of ongoing self-evaluation to support them in embedding the Principles of Effective Phonics Teaching.

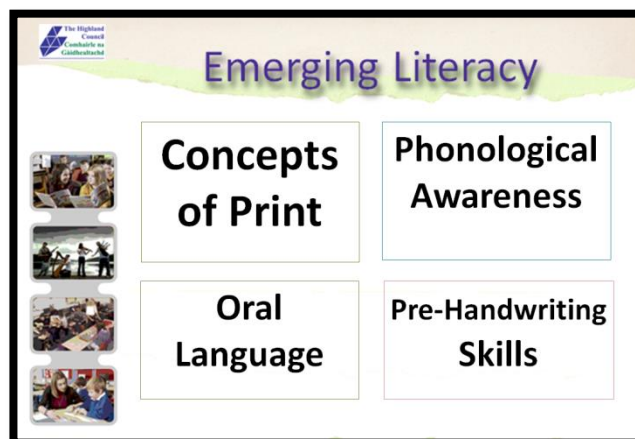
Theme	Challenge Question(s)
Leadership of Phonics Linked to HGIOS 4: Q.I. 1.2 – Leadership of Learning	❖ How are staff supported to collaboratively plan for phonics learning across the school?
Learning, teaching and assessment of Phonics Linked to HGIOS 4: Q.I. 2.2 – Curriculum Q.I. 2.3 – Learning, teaching and assessment Q.I. 2.4 – Personal Support	❖ What assessment tools are used to identify the needs of learners? ❖ How are the differentiated needs of all learners planned for and met through the appropriate use of support materials, including digital technologies? ❖ How do you ensure that learners are effectively applying their phonics skills through a variety of engaging learning experiences? ❖ How does the school plan for progression in literacy to ensure that knowledge and skills are built upon appropriately over time?
Family Engagement Linked to HGIOS 4: Q.I. 2.5 – Family Learning	❖ How does the school work with families to support their child's learning of phonics?
Transitions in Learning Linked to HGIOS 4: Q.I. 2.6 – Transitions	❖ How does the school share phonics information at key transition points in each learner's journey?
Equity and Excellence Linked to HGIOS 4: Q.I. 3.2 – Raising attainment and achievement	❖ How does the school track the progress of each learner and ensure that appropriate interventions are in place to remove any barriers to learning?

Emerging Literacy across the Northern Alliance: The Rationale

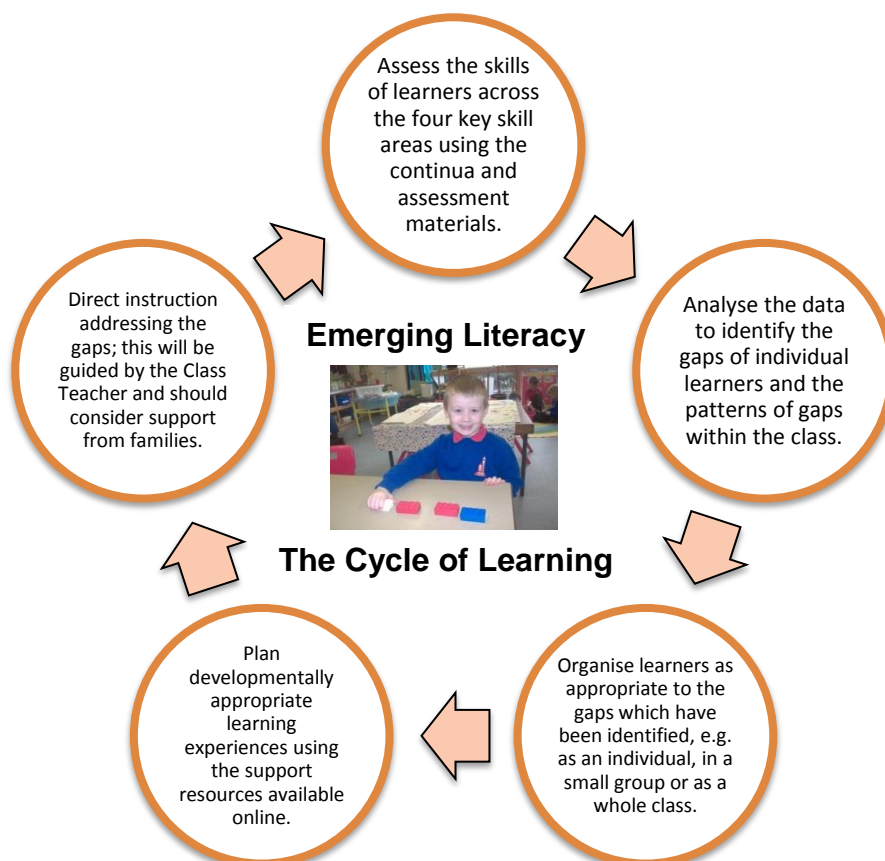
Research shows that children's individual differences in key emerging literacy skills are an underlying factor in the variation of attainment across the curriculum. The many skills involved can be classified into four key skill areas: concepts of print, oral language, phonological awareness and pre-handwriting. **Research** also shows that children make the most progress when teachers ensure that literacy teaching and learning reflects the developmental status of the children that they teach.

To make this practical, teachers need sustainable ways to assess the skill level of pupils, and also a range of approaches to teaching that can support the development of the four key skill areas.

Classroom teachers in Highland have been working with Allied Health Professionals (AHPs), including Occupational Therapists and Speech and Language Therapists, as well as other specialists, to provide assessment and teaching materials that can enable teachers to respond to the literacy needs of each learner in their class. These are set out as developmental continua in each of the four key skill areas. This approach is now being embedded within the seven local authorities across the Northern Alliance.



The Process of Taking a Developmental Approach to Emerging Literacy



Emerging Literacy across the Northern Alliance: The Cycle of Learning

Emerging Literacy: Across the Early Level

Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)

In Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings, Early Years Practitioners (EYPs) should promote development of the four key skill areas through developmentally appropriate child initiated play based emerging literacy experiences. Nursery 4 children in Highland will have a [4 year old Developmental Overview](#) completed before they transition into school. In addition to Highland, some of the other local authorities across the Northern Alliance are using these to support children in Early Learning and Childcare.

Primary 1

At the beginning of Primary 1, if you are using the Developmental Overviews, it is recommended that you address any yellow (still developing) or blank (not yet developed) gaps. The [bumps2bairns](#) site can be used to support practitioners in addressing gaps.

On Primary 1 entry, the assessment materials linked to the developmental continua can be used to identify learners' strengths and skills gaps in the four key skill areas. Whilst ensuring that children have opportunities to address key skills gaps in concepts of print, oral language and phonological awareness, teachers should use their professional judgement as to the appropriate introduction and pacing of systematic phonics teaching. [The Northern Alliance Phonics Principles](#) can support practitioners in the teaching of phonics. Similarly key skills gaps in pre-handwriting should be addressed with appropriate differentiation. Teachers should take account of fine motor skills, scissor skills and pencil control skills when introducing formal handwriting instruction.

The '[Northern Alliance: Emerging Literacy – Where to Start?](#)' guide for practitioners includes links to the Emerging Literacy resources to support the development of the four key skill areas. The [Northern Alliance: Emerging Literacy Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#) guidance provides answers to frequently asked questions practitioners may have when taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy. The [Emerging Literacy Training Videos](#) can also be used to support practitioners.

Emerging Literacy: Beyond Primary 1

Where children are making less than expected progress in Literacy and English, this may be explained by gaps in development within the four key skill areas. Teachers can use the continua and screening tools to assess the gaps, and suggested activities to plan for developmentally appropriate learning experiences. It is recommended to involve families in this process, and follow school policy with regards to [Staged Intervention](#).

Family Engagement and Involvement

To support schools in sharing the [Emerging Literacy](#) approaches and materials with families, a [family learning resource](#) has been created. This could be used with families during the Nursery – Primary 1 transition meeting or during a Family Literacy event. Each slide comes with comprehensive notes for the facilitator and links to suggested resources on the [Highland Literacy Blog](#). The classroom based Emerging Literacy activities are appropriate for sharing with families to support literacy learning within the home environment.

The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) guidance has been created to support practitioners in taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy. The FAQ guide sits alongside '[Northern Alliance: Emerging Literacy Practice Guidance](#)'.

The FAQ guide has been organised into five themes based on the feedback from practitioners when taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy. The FAQ guide will be updated periodically to reflect the needs of practitioners.

Frequently Asked Questions

(click the hyperlinks below to navigate to the relevant section in the FAQ guide)

1. [Emerging Literacy – Theory and Rationale](#)
 - [What is Emerging Literacy?](#)
 - [How to take a whole-school approach to Emerging Literacy?](#)
2. [Emerging Literacy – Assessment](#)
 - [When do we begin the assessments?](#)
 - [How do we organise assessments?](#)
3. [Emerging Literacy – Planning](#)
 - [How does Emerging Literacy 'fit' as part of our school's literacy framework?](#)
 - [How do we use the assessment information to plan for learning?](#)
 - [When do we re-assess?](#)
4. [Emerging Literacy – Resources](#)
 - [What resources do we need?](#)
5. [Emerging Literacy – Family Learning](#)
 - [How do we share Emerging Literacy with families?](#)

The questions and associated answers within this guidance are suggestions based on ongoing dialogue with and feedback from practitioners. Practitioners should use their professional judgement as to the needs of the learners in their environment.

1. Emerging Literacy – Theory and Rationale

What is Emerging Literacy?

Emerging Literacy has been created to support practitioners to effectively differentiate early literacy learning by matching the teaching and learning of literacy, language and communication to the needs of each child. Informed by the developmental knowledge of Educational Psychologists (EPs), Occupational Therapists (OTs) and Speech and Language Therapists (S<s), Emerging Literacy has classified the many foundational reading and writing skills into four key skill areas: concepts of print, oral language, phonological awareness and pre-handwriting.

Years of international research has identified foundational skill areas which predict literacy attainment, not just in the first year in school but into later primary and beyond. It is a simple fact that children come into school with a wide range of levels and security of these skills – some of which may be due to previous learning experience, but much is related to normal (biological) variation in development.

Taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy supports practitioners to identify the strengths and gaps of each learner within these key skill areas as well as providing planning support to address the identified skill gaps.

How to take a whole-school approach to Emerging Literacy?

Schools who have taken a whole-school approach to Emerging Literacy have prioritised the developmental knowledge of all staff to better outcomes for all children and young people.

Across the Early Level of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy has supported children universally.

In Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings, Early Years Practitioners (EYPs) have promoted early literacy, language and communication skills through developmentally appropriate child initiated play experiences.

Within Primary 1 settings Class Teachers have used the assessment tools universally to identify strengths and gaps, addressing the foundational reading and writing skill gaps. Emerging Literacy supports Primary 1 practitioners to effectively differentiate their school's literacy framework, matching the teaching and learning to each learner.

Beyond the Early Level taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy has allowed for effective targeted support for children and young people. Teachers in Primary 2 and beyond have used the tools to identify strengths and gaps in the key early literacy skill areas, targeting the identified gaps to support each child on the school's literacy framework.

Additional Support Needs Teachers (ASNTs) have worked alongside class teachers to provide targeted support in addition to the universal support provided in the classroom to address the key early literacy skill gaps.

2. Emerging Literacy – Assessment

When do we begin the assessments?

In ELC settings across Highland ongoing monitoring of early literacy skills are documented in the [4 year old Developmental Overview](#). In addition to Highland, some of the other local authorities across the Northern Alliance are using these to support children in Early Learning and Childcare.

Across the Northern Alliance staff in ELC settings are integrating the Emerging Literacy key skill areas into child initiated play experiences. There should be no formal assessments for Emerging Literacy in ELC. Emerging Literacy key skills areas can be observed through play experiences.

If you are using the 4 year old Developmental Overview, it will transition from Nursery to Primary 1. When there are gaps in the Developmental Overview P1 teachers have found that setting up experiences in which children need to demonstrate the skills within the Developmental Overview as a useful observation process at the beginning of Primary 1 to inform their planning.

In Primary 1 teachers have found the process of completing the Phonological Awareness screen, observing the components of the Pre-Handwriting continuum and transferring this information onto the tracking documents for all children as a useful baseline of skills at P1 entry.

Beyond Primary 1 teachers have found the process of completing the Phonological Awareness screen, observing the components of the Pre-Handwriting continuum and transferring this information onto the tracking documents for identified children who are not making the expected progress, or have been identified as having persistent literacy difficulties, as providing an overview of the strengths and gaps in foundational reading and writing skills.

How do we organise assessments?

Schools who have taken a whole-school approach to Emerging Literacy have prioritised the assessment process to identify the strengths and gaps of each child. Class Teachers have found conducting the assessment processes themselves has provided information not only on the strengths and gaps of each child in key skills, but also information on how each child approaches the demands of the assessment.

Phonological Awareness Screen

Schools who have taken a whole-school approach to Emerging Literacy have seen Senior Management Teams (SMTs) and ASNTs providing support for Class Teachers to conduct the Phonological Awareness screen through releasing teachers from class to conduct the screen individually with children. In some schools teachers have been able to conduct the screen in a quiet space within the classroom through soft start.

Pre-Handwriting Overview

Class Teachers have found that the skills within the Pre-Handwriting continuum can be observed through setting up fine motor skills, scissor skills and pencil control (pre-writing) experiences within small groups. Class Teachers have found that the experiences can be set-up during soft start or during a focused literacy time. Teachers have found the observations can be completed directly onto the Pre-Handwriting Tracker.

3. Emerging Literacy – Planning

How does Emerging Literacy ‘fit’ as part of our school’s literacy framework?

A school’s literacy framework aims to develop the literacy, language and communication skills in children and young people. Experience shows that for literacy learning a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach benefits some, holds some back and leaves some behind. There is also a risk that children can “do” the phonics and make recognisable letters in P1/2, but without sufficiently secure foundations, their literacy skills are vulnerable to the increased demands of later learning – this is part of the explanation of the well-known dip in attainment in later primary.

The Emerging Literacy approach is intentionally designed to be compatible with any programme, with one proviso; it is not itself a programme (in the “do this, then do this” sense), but instead a series of supports and resources for reflective teaching so that teachers can work out what to do for a given class – which is likely to be different to a previous class or a class next door. What this does mean is that teachers are supported to use their judgements about the timing and pacing of phonics and handwriting instruction – so that those able to forge ahead are suitably challenged, and those children who need it can work to secure foundational skills for later attainment.

How do we use the assessment information to plan for learning?

Teachers have found that once the initial assessments have been completed and the information has been added to the tracking sheets, analysing the tracking sheets allows for teachers to plan experiences which are matched to the learning needs of each child.

There is not a one-size-fits-all solution to planning. In some schools they may identify that they need to do work on developing the tripod grasp with the majority of their children, in another school they may find that they have got a group who have secure pencil control and a group who have yet to develop a tripod grasp. Through analysis of the tracking sheets, teachers can plan their experiences based on the information which is available through assessment information. This may mean that teachers are working with a whole cohort, a small group or an individual for different areas of early literacy development.

When do we re-assess?

The screening tools and trackers have been created to support practitioners in their professional judgement when differentiating the early literacy, language and communication experiences of school years children.

Schools have found it most beneficial to gathering the information initially for Phonological Awareness through the screen and Pre-Handwriting through observations, with subsequent assessments only assessing the areas in which gaps were identified in earlier assessments:

e.g. If a child has an identified gap in ‘Word Boundaries’ in Phonological Awareness, following a block of learning in ‘Word Boundaries’ the teacher can assess to see if the child is secure in this area through using the ‘Word Boundaries’ part of the screen. This information could then be updated on the Phonological Awareness tracker.

4. Emerging Literacy – Resources

What resources do we need?

The '[Northern Alliance: Emerging Literacy – Where to Start?](#)' guide for practitioners includes links to the Emerging Literacy resources to support the development of the four key skill areas. This includes the resources to support assessment, tracking and learning activities. The [Emerging Literacy Training Videos](#) provide an overview of the available resources.

In addition to the resources which have been created and published on the Highland Literacy Blog, there are additional suggestions which practitioners have found supportive in taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy.

Schools who have taken a whole-school approach to Emerging Literacy have prioritised the creation and sharing of resources among colleagues to support all children who benefit from developing foundational literacy skills.

Concepts of Print

Schools have ensured that they have a selection of texts which children find interesting and engaging. Schools have been encouraged to connect with their local Network Librarian.

Oral Language

Schools have used the [Words Up Key Message Videos](#) and '[Building Vocabulary for Better Literacy](#)' resources to support the development of Oral Language across the school.

Phonological Awareness

Schools have found the creation of resource boxes for each of the stages of the phonological awareness continuum including the activity suggestions (and any other relevant resources which they have available) as a useful support resource when planning and delivering on areas of phonological awareness.

Pre-Handwriting

ELC settings and schools have found that centralising the resources which promote the development of fine motor skills, scissor skills and pencil control (pre-writing) skills allows for practitioners to effectively plan for, provide access to and deliver pre-handwriting experiences. The handouts available on the Pre-Handwriting page detail inexpensive things which centres and schools may already have, things which may be in the home environment and things which can be purchased for a small price.

5. Emerging Literacy – Family Learning

How do we share Emerging Literacy with families?

Schools who have taken a whole-school approach to Emerging Literacy have developed approaches to family learning so that families understand how taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy can support each and every child. Schools have found it useful to share:

- the “Why?” of Emerging Literacy
- the foundational reading and writing skills which impact on later attainment
- how families can support at home.

The [Emerging Literacy Family Learning Resource](#) has been created to support schools when working with families. Schools have delivered this through Nursery/Primary 1 transition events, literacy workshops, soft start learning together sessions and using the activities that are being developed in class as home learning activities.

**Taking a developmental approach to Emerging Literacy
Practice Guidance – Background Research Articles: July 2017**

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