

**P. A. T.**

**PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS TRAINING  
A New Approach to Phonics  
LEVEL TWO**

**BY**

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*Acknowledgements: Sue Allsworth; Typing  
Ros Greenhill; Design of the Record Sheet  
Dr Clive Fetter; Production of camera-ready copy*



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## INTRODUCTION

The P.A.T. (Phonological Awareness Training) programme is designed to help children to read, spell and write phonically regular words. The programme covers a very precise aspect of literacy development and should not be regarded as a complete reading programme.

Children need to experience a wide variety of picture books, stories, poems and rhymes to develop literacy skills. This programme is designed to be used alongside these and not to replace them.

The programme aims to train children to read and spell words by making analogies. By this method, children who have some knowledge of single sound/symbol associations of the alphabet, can learn to spell and read many words through using commonly occurring "rimes". These materials do not deal with irregular words, spelling rules or words of more than one syllable. The aim is to give children a quick and easy entry to reading and spelling. In addition to this we have found that when children have been encouraged and reminded to use a joined cursive style of writing when completing the worksheets, handwriting has improved considerably. The daily 10 minute programme can provide intensive work on reading, spelling and handwriting all within the same activity.

These activities are suitable for children aged 7 years and upwards. They are particularly useful for children with Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia).

### How PAT differs from traditional phonics teaching

Traditional phonic programmes usually follow an order of instruction which start with single sounds for individual letters building up to simple consonant-vowel-consonant words (c-v-c) and progressing through initial consonant blends; silent "e" words; vowel digraphs and so on. Whilst some children appear to take this progression in their stride, others find particular difficulty with the "magic 'e'" stage, whilst other children don't seem to be able to progress beyond the single letter/sound stage. Word endings feature at a later stage within the traditional phonics teaching framework and it may be that children with severe literacy difficulties could take a long time — if ever, to reach these.

Research into the development of phonological awareness (Treiman 1991; Goswami 1990) suggests that children's development of phonological awareness follows a rather different pattern to that outlined in traditional phonics programmes. From first developing an awareness of utterances being made up of a sequence of separate words, the child then becomes aware of syllables within words. The next step would appear to be onsets and rimes where the onset is the first phoneme in a single syllable word (e.g. s, tr, str) and the rime is the remainder of the syllable.

Finally the stage of individual phonemes is achieved. Although children will learn about single sound/letter relationships through the early stages of writing and spelling, their ability to be able to hear individual sounds in words is a long way down the developmental pathway.

There now seems to be an overwhelming argument for ensuring that children are not only aware of onsets — rimes at an early stage, but also that they learn to use these for learning to read and spell. There appear to be many advantages in this approach:

- it limits all one syllable words to one blend only;
- it avoids a great deal of confusion over vowel sounds which are the most difficult for early readers to discriminate;
- it can avoid many of the problems associated with the "magic 'e'" rule — e.g. "in" and "ine" can be treated as two completely separate units of sound without the child having to adapt or modify any earlier knowledge.

Marilyn Jager Adams writes that "the key to phonic awareness seems to lie more in training than in age or maturation". The purpose of this programme is to help children to develop that awareness by a route which follows a developmental progression rather than the traditional phonic teaching order of the past.

### **How PAT was developed**

PAT was developed in a small scale project with children who were experiencing persistent difficulties with learning to read. In many cases the children had succeeded in learning all the individual letter sounds and symbols, but still failed to make progress.

The project set out to use principles from recent psychological research on the development of phonological awareness, to train the children to adopt different strategies for reading and spelling. The exercises are designed to develop an awareness of onset and rimes. Each set of exercises focuses on 4 rimes and aim to develop the child's ability to generate single syllable words which end with these rimes. (Words with the same rimes are also rhyming words.)

The materials were first used by a mother working at home with her son who has specific learning difficulties. This was followed by use of the materials in First, Middle and Secondary schools with teachers, non-teaching assistants and parents helping children to work through the programme. Because the emphasis is placed on the **process** of reading and spelling, rather than the content, the PAT programme is directly applicable to a wide age range.

There are no pictures, line drawings or cues of any kind because the child is learning to focus on sounds and to develop a problem solving approach to generating words. Pictures would deflect from the task by providing external reminders for the child, whereas the objective is for the child to develop his/her own strategies for remembering.

### **Advantages**

The particular advantages of this programme appear to be:

- There are no words to learn for either reading or spelling.
- There is a relatively small requirement for memory skills to make progress but the programme does appear to help develop memory.
- The child plays an active rôle in generating words and therefore has more control over the learning process rather than having to respond to the print.
- The short time required to implement the programme (approximately 10 minutes daily).
- After the very early stages of the programmes, a very small amount of adult input is needed.

It must be remembered that Phonological Awareness is only one aspect of the development of literacy skills. Syntactic and semantic elements of literacy also need to be developed. A large scale research project carried out in Cumbria (Hatcher, 1994) indicated that daily teaching programmes for children with reading difficulties, which combined both phonological training and language/reading activities, achieved better results than those which were only focusing on developing either phonics or reading. In view of this, a recommended programme for a 30 minute session for a child working with a teacher, non-teaching assistant or parent would include the following elements:

- 10 minutes : PAT Programme
- 10 minutes : Independent writing involving planning, structuring and writing one or more sentences, depending on ability.
- 10 minutes : Reading two short simple stories with one story to be carried over to the next session. (Use four books per week with the books being used on a rotating programme daily, e.g. one book changed, one book carried over to the next day.) Encourage the child to be involved in choosing which books are to be read.

**PAT Worksheet 1**

**EXAMPLE**

Level Two

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

**st**

**tr**

**dr**

**tw**

**sl**

- and

- eat

- ice

- ink

*st - and*

*tr - eat*

*tw - ice*

*dr - ink*

*stand*

*treat*

*twice*

*drink*

*band*

*beat*

*dice*

*mink*

*hand*

*heat*

*mice*

*pink*

*land*

*meat*

*nice*

*sink*

*sand*

*seat*

*rice*

*wink*

# Placement Sheet A

Level Two

stand      treat      price      school      think

fly      place      crest      trick      brake

match      hand      pleat      rice      stool

drink      shy      space      best      snatch

No. Correct 20

Time .....

## Reading List 1

Level Two

sand

treat

nice

drink

land

meat

slice

wink

seat

link

spice

pink

stand

heat

twice

think

band

beat

price

sink

# Sentence Dictation Sheet 1

*Level Two*

1. Do not stand on the seat.
2. He put his hand in the sand.
3. The drink is in the sink.
4. He had a slice of meat.
5. She had a pink band on her hat.

RIME  
DISPLAY  
SHEETS

1 - 20

**e**

**c**

**o**