

P . A . T.

PHONOLOGICAL AWARENESS TRAINING

A New Approach to Phonics

Level 2a: Vowel Patterns

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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, e.g. Rhymeworld (Huxford, Reason & Wilson, 1998). 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.

The materials can be used effectively with whole classes, small groups and with individual children who may need additional opportunities and practice. The recommended 10-15 minute daily session can provide work in reading spelling and writing and is an ideal phonics programme for use in the 'Literacy Hour' as recommend by the National Literacy Project.

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 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 aims 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 role 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).

Working with PAT Level 2A - Vowel Patterns

PAT 'Vowel Patterns' is intended to provide activities which will help children to move on from successful work with rime units towards a greater sensitivity to the phonemes within the rime units. In effect this means helping children to be able to detach the vowel elements in the rime from the final consonants.

If they are to become skilled readers, children need to develop 'phonemic awareness', i.e. sensitivity to individual sounds within words. This programme is intended to aid the transition from rime awareness to phonemic awareness.

Whilst for some children simply learning basic sound / symbol associations is sufficient to set them on the road to fluent reading and spelling, other children may need to follow a different route, moving from larger units (rimes) to smaller units (phonemes).

Work with larger units (rimes) has helped many children to begin to learn to read and spell. However at some stage children must be able to deal with phonemes as easily as they work with rimes. This programme is designed to help children to move on from what they have already mastered with rime units (if they have worked successfully in PAT Levels 1 and 2), to increased awareness at a phonemic level, particularly with vowels.

Maintaining a focus on vowel patterns means that the irregularities of English spelling must be considered, with the recognition that similar spellings do not guarantee similar sounds, as for example in 'meat', 'great' and 'sweat'.

Whilst this programme is designed to increase children's knowledge of how particular sounds may be represented in words, it is not intended to be a comprehensive spelling guide embracing all possible vowel combinations and variations. The emphasis here is on familiar and frequent vowel patterns, as opposed to a wide range of irregularities in the English language.

The programme begins with work on short vowels and it is important that children complete these first. The progression then moves to doubling the vowels e.g. 'ee' and 'oo', before moving on to some commonly occurring vowel digraphs. It is important that children are helped to see the vowel patterns developing rather than trying to learn various combinations in isolation.

Work on the worksheets should generate some interesting points for discussion and it will be time well spent debating what is and isn't acceptable in specific instances. For example if a child produces 'speak', 'sneak' and 'squeak' and also wishes to include 'steak' in the list, this is clearly not acceptable even though the 'eak' unit is the same in terms of spelling. Words must conform to the sound pattern and not to the spelling pattern.

In cases where the sound patterns are similar but the spelling patterns differ e.g. 'street' and 'neat', these are dealt with separately to avoid confusion, as far as possible.

The Sentences for Dictation and the Spelling Assessments provide contexts for words to ensure that appropriate spellings are being used.

References

Adams, M. J. (1990) "Beginning to Read", M.I.T.

Goswami, U. & Bryant, P. (1990) "Phonological Skills and Learning to Read", Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Huxford, L. Reason, R. & Wilson, J. (1998) "Rhymeworld", Heinemann.

Treiman, R. (1991) "The Role of Intra Syllabic Units in Learning to Read" , Reiben, L. & Perfetti, C. (Eds) "Learning to Read, Basic Research and its Implications", Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

PAT Level 2a

Worksheet 1

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

cl fl sn tr ch sl gl

-at

-ap

-an

-ad

PAT Level 2a

Reading List 1

cat

clap

clan

sad

flat

slap

ran

dad

bat

trap

flan

mad

pat

snap

can

glad

chat

flap

man

chap

Sentences for Dictation 1

1. Dad has a flat cap.
2. The cat fell into the trap.
3. 'Do not pat the cat' said the man.
4. Ann has a map.
5. Tom ran to get the bat.

Sentences for Dictation 2

1. We went on a trip on a ship.
2. The lid is on the bin.
3. The zip is split.
4. Fit the lid on the tin.
5. The dog bit him on the chin.

Sentences for Dictation 3

1. Mum has a job at the shop.
2. Sam got a hot dog.
3. The frog was not on the log.
4. Dad can chop the wood.
5. 'Stop that dog!' said Mum.

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PAT Level 2a

Spelling Assessment A (1 - 5)

Instructions:

Say to the child/children:
"I want you to spell some words. First I will say the word and then I will use that word in a sentence. I will say the word again and then you will write it. **Do not try to write the word before you hear it in the sentence.**"

1	queen	The queen lives in a castle.	queen
2	peel	I will peel the orange.	peel
3	been	Where have you been?	been
4	sleep	He fell into a deep sleep.	sleep
5	whip	The man cracked the whip.	whip
6	shell	He found a shell on the beach.	shell
7	creep	She saw the cat creep along the wall.	creep
8	drop	Don't drop your books.	drop
9	trot	A horse can trot.	trot
10	need	I need to go home.	need