

# Lesson Book



# SAMPLE

Lessons to develop key foundational literacy skills

Joy Allcock

Foreword by Professor John Hattie

# ■ Foreword

My latest career move is so high in excitement, so pleasurable in action, and it has made retirement from my academic life a bountiful pleasure. I am now a grandad of four granddaughters (and a grandson on the way). It has rejuvenated my interest in learning because you experience the joy, awe, and delightful struggle of learning in every encounter. They are great teachers, love repetition, and have unbounded imagination and curiosity.

My eldest has started school this year, and I hope that her delight in learning continues. It is my worry that it may not, that the spark I see when she discovers new things will be extinguished. I worry that she will learn that she should be the passive one in the room—that her role is to watch teachers work, that engaging in boring, tedious tasks is the new norm, and that if she is not a high achiever, doesn't get it the first time, doesn't hand in her work on time, neat and long, then school is not for her. If only every teacher used resources such as the ones in this book.

Now that I have a sample of  $n=2$  in this age group, I experimented with the Key Foundations resources and was in awe of my grandchildren's engagement, learning, and 'can we do it again Grandad!' When they do not know they are being taught and think they are just having fun, there is magic in the air. But they certainly knew they were learning, and it was so evident that this learning led to increased engagement and wanting more of these tasks. Their (and my) joy was palpable.

This book has many rich and fun tasks that teach the fundamental skills for reading and writing. Allcock is clear about the focus of each set of activities, which are flexible enough to work at preschool and also to support children who start school without knowledge of the alphabet or with limited phonological awareness skills.

She also provides an observational checklist to measure learning—to identify the foundational literacy skills that children are confident with and to guide teachers towards areas that can be developed.

There is so much richness in the 114 lessons. They develop oral language skills, vocabulary and background knowledge, letter knowledge and letter-sound relationships, phonological and early phonemic awareness skills, and social and cooperative skills. Everything about Key Foundations makes sure that learning is fun, that developing language and phonological awareness is natural and cumulative, and that alphabet knowledge is learned easily and contextually.

The 'Queen' of spelling and early learning has done it again.

**John Hattie**

**Laureate Professor**

**Melbourne Graduate School of Education**

# ■ Author's note

Throughout my career, I have worked with children in a variety of situations — in hospitals, in early childhood settings, as a school-based occupational therapist, and as a literacy consultant. I am the mother of four and grandmother of six. Children have taught me a lot. Their tenacity and determination to overcome obstacles has always amazed and inspired me. They love learning and want to be successful.

I see this every day in my work in literacy, finding ways to help children become successful writers and readers. What I have learned is that getting things right at the start plays a huge part in future learning success.

Some children learn the foundational skills for literacy in their homes, and others do not. Between 2014 and 2016, I led a research study with Year 1 and 2 children, which showed that students who started school with knowledge of letter names and sounds and with good phonological awareness skills were much more likely to be successful readers at age 6. Other research studies have shown that these skills, alongside general language skills, are critical for literacy learning. These research findings were the catalyst for this book.

Children who start school without the foundational skills for literacy are at a disadvantage. We can level the playing field by simply including the right opportunities to develop these skills in early childhood and early primary settings. The difference it makes for a child to be ready for literacy learning when it is introduced cannot be overstated.

In the same way that block and water play lay the foundations for developing maths and science concepts, the activities in this book lay the foundations for understanding spoken and written words. In the same way that we teach children to recognise and name colours and shapes and link them to things in the environment, children learn to recognise and name letters and see how they are used.

I am a passionate believer in providing children with age-appropriate experiences that are fun and challenging, that stimulate thinking and curiosity, that develop language and communication skills, and that involve opportunities for multisensory learning – all the things that tap into and nurture their innate desire to learn.

Key Foundations was written with these things in mind. The lessons are fun, easy, and take just 10 minutes a day. They provide opportunities for intentional instruction for 4- to 6-year-old children, including English learners, to lay the foundations for later literacy learning.

If children start school with good foundational knowledge for all aspects of learning, including literacy, their learning journey will be easier and more successful. If they start school with gaps in foundational knowledge, we must fill them first and fast, to make sure all children are set up for success.

**Joy Allcock, M.Ed. (Hons.)**

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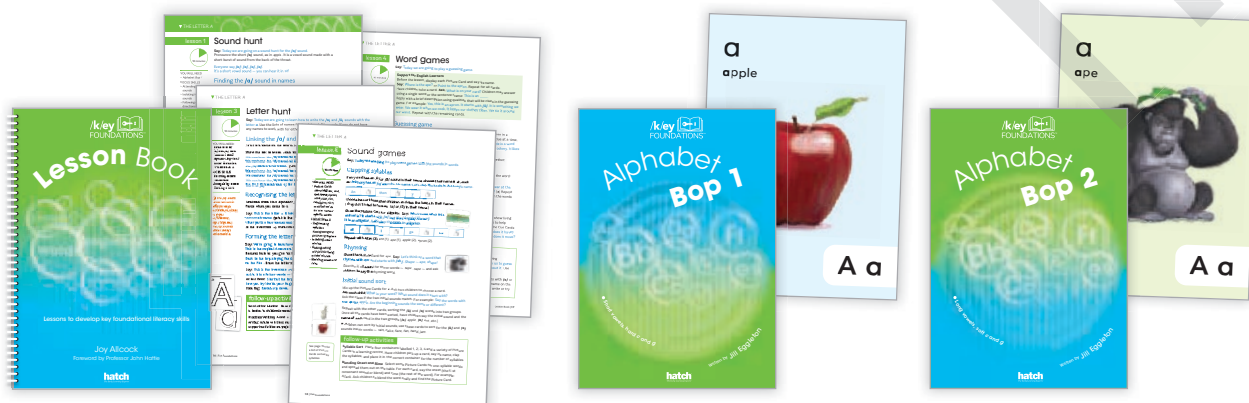
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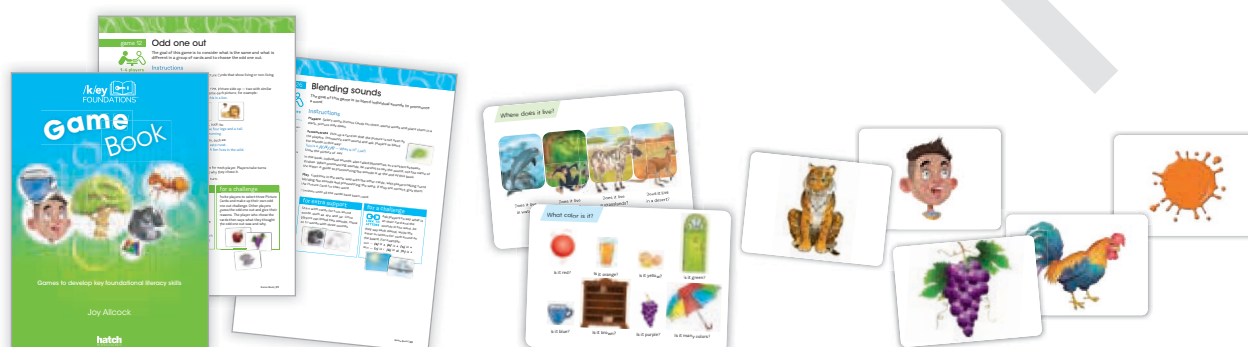
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# ■ Foundations for literacy success

Learning to read and write is a complex process that requires formal, explicit instruction. But before this formal instruction takes place, a lot can be done to ensure the platform for learning about print is in place.

**Children with skills and knowledge in the following areas are set up for success:**

## Oral language

**Vocabulary knowledge and oral language skills** that allow a child to describe, explain, and understand the world are the foundations upon which literacy skills are built. Developing children's background knowledge and oral language skills are the most important tasks for parents, families, and educators from birth onwards.

## Phonological awareness

Written English is an alphabetic language, based on using letters to record the sounds that make up words. **An awareness of sounds and sound patterns in words** (phonological awareness) lays the groundwork for understanding how the alphabetic code works. Playing with words and sounds — rhyming, clapping syllables, finding common sounds in words, blending syllables and sounds together to make words — these are critical skills for moving from the spoken to the written word.

## Book and print knowledge

Children's exposure to books teaches them that print carries meaning and represents the words that we say. They develop **a familiarity with how books work** — that we read from the front to the back of a book and from left to right on a page. As they become more familiar with books, children learn the difference between letters, words, and sentences, and to recognise and understand the purpose of simple punctuation such as full stops, question marks, and exclamation marks. This knowledge of print provides essential understandings and motivation for children to learn to read and write.

## Letter and letter-sound knowledge

Letters are the tools we use to record the words we read and write. It is necessary for young children to learn **to recognise the images of letters, to name them, and to know how to write them.**



Children also need to learn that letters are used to write or represent the sounds that make up words — this is known as the **alphabetic principle**. Making links between words and sounds, and sounds and letters, is laying the foundation for understanding the alphabetic principle and for learning about the alphabetic code.

When teaching **letter-sound relationships**, it is best to begin by focusing on those that are most common — the sounds that are commonly associated with consonant letters and the short and long vowel sounds for the vowel letters.

However it is also important for young children to learn that letters can represent more than one sound and that the same sound can be written with different letters. Because their own names and the names of their friends and family are very meaningful to young children, children's names can be used to show how letters and sounds are linked and how sounds can be written in different ways. For example, there could be children in the class with the same sound in their name — the **/k/** sound in **Jack, Katie, Chris, Carl, Rocco**. Showing children the different ways of writing the same sound in their names means that they are taught from the outset to **expect diversity in the way the code works**.

## Key Foundations

**Key Foundations targets these four key areas** with developmentally appropriate games and a disco very model that stimulates children's curiosity and sense of achievement. It can be used in primary or early childhood settings to teach the knowledge and skills that are critical for literacy success. Components include:

- **Lesson Book** 114 10-minute lessons plus assessment tools and teacher support materials
- **Alphabet Bops** 2 rhythmic, rhyming books for teaching letter names and sounds
- **Game Book** 45 games for responsive instruction, reinforcement, and practice
- **Cue Cards** 16 cards for developing oral language and cognitive skills
- **Picture Cards** 156 colourful cards for building phonological awareness, vocabulary, and more



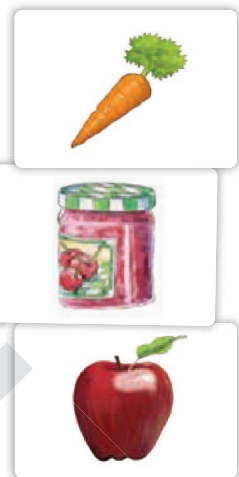
# Early literacy instruction in *Key Foundations*

The playful, game-like instruction in **Key Foundations** targets the key skills that build a foundation for future literacy success. Teaching these skills in a developmentally appropriate way prepares children for the future demands of more formal reading and writing instruction.

## Oral language

- **Receptive and expressive language** — language children understand and can use
- **Vocabulary** — naming common items, learning new words
- **Description skills** — using words to explain what things look like, feel like, taste like, how they live, move, etc.
- **Comparison skills** — knowing what is the same and what is different
- **Categorisation skills** — knowing how things can be grouped
- **Association skills** — making connections between words, ideas, and background knowledge
- **Questioning skills** — answering and asking questions
- **Confidence with language** — oral language fluency

The lessons in **Key Foundations** help children to develop these skills in a developmentally appropriate and fun way. Learning to name things in their environment, describe and compare them, categorise them, and make associations between things develops children's confidence and fluency with oral language.



## Phonological awareness

- **Rhyming** — recognising and producing rhyming words
- **Syllabification** — segmenting and blending syllables
- **Isolating sounds** — recognising and correctly pronouncing the sounds in words
- **Simple blending** — compound words, onset and rime, words with two and three phonemes
- **Distinguishing similar sounds** — hearing the difference between similar words and phonemes

**Phonological and phonemic awareness is a key focus of Key Foundations.**

Engaging games explicitly teach these essential early literacy skills, which are incorporated into every lesson, every day. Practice and reinforcement are also woven throughout the lessons and the follow-up activities.



## Book and print knowledge

- **Interacting with a variety of texts** — books, songs, poems, etc.
- **Linking spoken and written text** — knowing that print represents spoken words
- **Understanding basic concepts of print** — knowing some organisational features of text, such as the parts and features of a book, directionality, and punctuation
- **Recognising that text has meaning** — engaging in read aloud and shared reading experiences for understanding and enjoyment

In the Key Foundations lessons, children participate in scaffolded shared reading experiences with the *Alphabet Bop* books and environmental print. Engaging experiences with a variety of texts help children understand that text is meaningful, give them many opportunities to apply the skills they have learned, and build their identities as readers.

## Letter and letter-sound knowledge

- **Letter knowledge** — recognising and naming all the letters of the alphabet
- **Understanding the alphabetic principle** — knowing that words are made up of sounds and sounds are written with letters
- **Linking letters and sounds** — knowing the most common letter-sound relationships
- **Recognising code diversity** — understanding that the same sound can be written in different ways (For example: *Jack, Katie, Chris, Carl, Rocco*) and that the same letter can be pronounced differently (For example: *apple* and *ape*, *circle* and *cat*).
- **Letter formation** — learning to form uppercase and lowercase letters correctly using a variety of activities and materials

The lessons in Key Foundations use children's names, catchy rhymes, and familiar vocabulary to help children recognise individual sounds and then identify the letters associated with those sounds. This unique approach makes the abstract idea of the alphabetic principle more concrete and meaningful for young learners. Letter-sound correspondences are reinforced throughout the lessons, and children apply their knowledge in a variety of oral, reading, and writing activities.



# Lesson structure

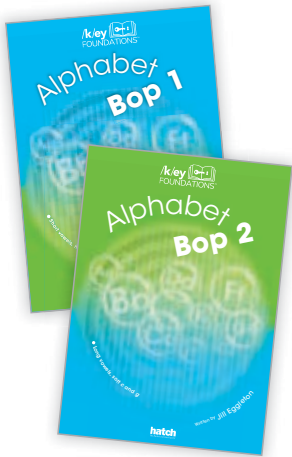
**When you teach the lessons from *Key Foundations*, you will be building the foundational skills children need to become readers and writers.**

This book uses the letters of the alphabet as a foundation for teaching letter recognition and the most common letter-sound relationships. Lessons also focus on developing phonological and phonemic awareness skills, expanding vocabulary knowledge, and enhancing children's oral language and thinking skills. For children who are learning to write their names, it shows the correct letter formation for uppercase and lowercase letters.

There are **114 lessons** in this book — five introduction lessons, five lessons for each of the vowel letters, and four lessons for every other letter. Each whole-group lesson has two follow-up activities that can be run with small groups throughout the day to review, reinforce, and practise the skills taught.

## lesson 1

### Sound hunt



**In the Sound Hunt lessons, children learn to recognise and isolate an individual sound (phoneme) by:**

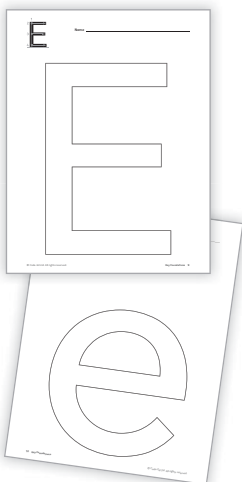
- Pronouncing an individual sound.
- Listening for the sound in children's names.
- Reading and singing the Alphabet Bop and listening for the sound in familiar words.

Support for English learners highlights any sounds that may be difficult for speakers of other languages. Follow-up activities encourage children to practise finding the sound throughout the day.

Note: For the vowel letters, there are two Sound Hunt lessons to introduce the short and long vowel sounds associated with these letters.

## lesson 2

### Letter hunt



**In the Letter Hunt lessons, children begin to associate the sound they have learned with a letter of the alphabet through:**

- Linking the sound to the letters in children's names.
- Reading and singing the Alphabet Bop and associating initial sounds with letters.
- Learning to recognise the uppercase and lowercase letter forms.
- Learning the correct formation of the uppercase and lowercase letters.

Follow-up activities allow children to practise finding the letters in their environment, forming the letters in developmentally appropriate ways, and applying their letter sound knowledge to reading using the small-group Pre-Decodables.

## lesson 3

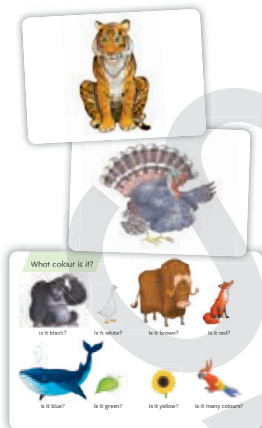
# Word games

**In the Word Games lessons, children build oral language, background knowledge, and phonological awareness by:**

- Using the initial sound and clues to guess the words on the Picture Cards.
- Blending syllables and sounds and isolating the initial sounds in words.
- Participating in activities that support describing, comparing, and categorising.

Follow-up activities help children practise giving descriptive clues and encourage them to create art and written messages according to their developmental level.

Note: Suggested clues are provided, as well as support for using the Picture Cards to build core vocabulary among English learners.



## lesson 4

# Sound games

**In the Sound Games lessons, children play a variety of games that build phonological and phonemic awareness, including:**

- Clapping the syllables in names and other words.
- Sorting words into groups with the same number of syllables.
- Recognising and generating words that rhyme.
- Blending and segmenting compound words.
- Blending syllables and onset-rimes.
- Identifying beginning and final sounds
- Matching words with the same initial sounds.
- Discriminating between similar sounds.

Follow-up activities reinforce phonological awareness skills with engaging games that can be used throughout the day.

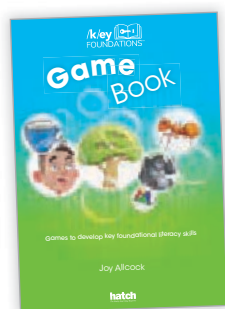


## more games

# Game book

**The Game Book included with Key Foundations provides 45 additional small-group activities for responsive instruction, reinforcement, and practice, which support the following oral language and phonological and phonemic awareness skills:**

- Vocabulary and background knowledge
- Describing
- Comparing
- Categorising
- Syllables
- Rhyming
- Blending
- Segmenting
- Initial sounds
- Final sounds
- Long and short vowel sounds





# ■ THE LESSONS

## Getting started

Work through the **five introduction lessons on pages 9–13** to introduce children to the different games and activities they will meet each week. Then teach the **letter-focused lessons on pages 14–122** consecutively or in any order you choose.

Observe children as they participate in the learning games and follow-up activities, and track their progress using the **checklists on pages 147–150**.

Use the **additional information and support activities on pages 124–145** to provide responsive instruction in developmental and foundational literacy skills for English learners or any children in need of extra support.



## lesson 1



10 minutes

## YOU WILL NEED

- Alphabet Bop 1 or 2

## FOCUS SKILLS

- Attending to sounds
- Isolating initial sounds
- Following oral directions

**i** Make sure the letter **t** is pronounced /t/ and not /th/, as in Ethan, Theo, Cathy. If children suggest these names, say, "You have a **t** in your name, but it doesn't sound like /t/."

## Sound hunt

**Say:** Today we are going on a sound hunt for the /t/ sound.

The /t/ sound is a short sound with no voice. Take care not to pronounce it 'tuh'. Say *top* but stop before saying *op* — that is the /t/ sound.

Everyone say /t/: /t/, /t/, /t/.

It's a popping sound with a puff of air — it's like /d/ with no voice.

## Finding the /t/ sound in names

**Ask:** Does anyone here have a /t/ sound in their name?

If you have a child with a /t/ sound, write their name(s) on the board and point out the sound in the following way:

Tia has the /t/ sound in her name, and we write her name like this.

Work with initial sounds unless children suggest names with the sound elsewhere (*Victoria, Pranit*). If no one has a name with a /t/ sound, ask children if they know anyone who has that sound in their name.

Keep the children's names on the board for Lesson 2.

## Finding the /t/ sound in words

Read and chant the *Alphabet Bop 1* or *2* for sounds.

**Say:** Put up your hand when you hear the /t/ sound.

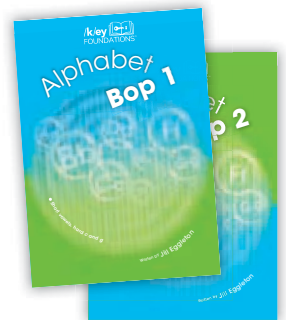
At the end, ask: Who can remember what picture went with the /t/ sound? (tie/tail) What other things can you think of that have a /t/ sound?

Repeat what each child says in the following way:

Ten — We can hear a /t/ at the start of *ten* — /t/, *ten*.

If the word doesn't have a /t/ sound (*dog*, for example), say:

There are other sounds in *dog*. Listen — /d/ /o/ /g/.



## follow-up activities

**Be a Sound Hunter** Tell children: Let's all be sound hunters today and see how many things we can find that have a /t/ sound. If you find something, tell your friends!

**I Spy** Have children play I Spy using things in the classroom that start with the /t/ sound.

Make the *Alphabet Bop* books available for children to read throughout the day.

## lesson 2



### YOU WILL NEED

- Name list from Lesson 1
- *Alphabet Bop 1 or 2*
- Letter Formation Printables: T, t

### FOCUS SKILLS

- Matching letters and sounds
- Recognising letters
- Forming letters

# Letter hunt

**Say:** Today we are going to learn how to write the /t/ sound with the letter t. If you do not have any names to work with for the /t/ sound, go on to the second activity.

## Linking the /t/ sound to the letter t

Point to a name on the board. **Say:** Whose name is this?

Show the link between t and the /t/ sound in the following way:

We can hear the /t/ sound at the start of Tia's name. (Circle the T.)

We can hear the /t/ sound inside Victor's name. (Circle the t.)

We can hear the /t/ sound at the end of Matt's name. Matt has two t's for the /t/ sound in his name. (Circle the tt.)

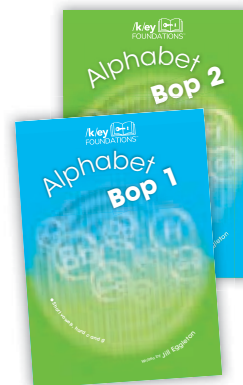
We can hear the /t/ sound at the end of Pranit's name. (Circle the t.)

## Recognising the letters T and t

Read and chant the *Alphabet Bop 1* or *2* for letters.

Pause when you come to t.

**Say:** This is the letter t. It looks like this at the start of someone's name (point to the capital T), and like this in other parts of our names and in lots of other words (point to the lowercase t). Then continue with the *Alphabet Bop*.



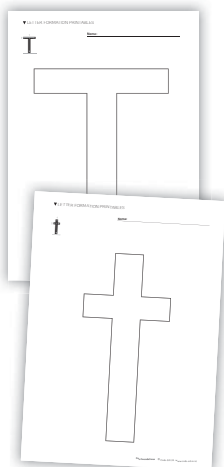
## Forming the letters T and t

**Say:** We're going to learn how to write the letter t.

This is the capital T we use at the start of people's names.

Demonstrate as you give instructions: Start at the top, line down. Back to the top, line across. Now you try it with your finger on the floor. Draw the letter several times, chanting: Down, across.

**Say:** This is the t we use inside and at the end of our names and in lots of other words — it is in between a short letter and a tall letter. Demonstrate as you give instructions: Start at the top, line down. Part way down, line across. Now you try it with your finger on the floor. Draw the letter several times, chanting: Down, across.



## follow-up activities

**Be a Letter Hunter** Have children hunt for the letter t in the environment — in books, in children's name labels, in signs, etc.

**Practise Writing T and t** Have children play with forming the letters by writing rainbow letters on the Letter Formation Printables or using any of the support activities on page 145.

## lesson 3



### YOU WILL NEED

- Picture Cards: oval, rectangle, square, star, tiger, toothbrush, tree, triangle, turkey, turtle; assorted cards representing shapes

### FOCUS SKILLS

- Building knowledge and vocabulary
- Blending syllables
- Matching letters and sounds
- Categorising
- Recognising shapes
- Creating



See page 154 for Picture Cards that represent shapes.

# Word games

**Say:** Today we are going to play a guessing game.

### Support for English Learners

Before the lesson, display each Picture Card and say its name.

**Say:** *Where is the tiger?* or *Point to the turtle.* Repeat for all cards.

Have children take a card. **Ask:** *What is on your card?* Children may answer using a single word or the sentence frame: *This is a \_\_\_\_.*

Reply with a brief description using qualities that will be clues in the guessing game. For example: *Yes, this is a turtle. It is an animal. It walks slowly. It can swim. It has a shell.* Repeat with the remaining cards.

## Guessing game

Choose a Picture Card and use the clues on the back to lead children in a guessing game. Tell children the initial sound first. Then give one clue at a time, pausing after each clue until the word is guessed. For example: *This is a word that starts with /t/. It is a big wild cat. It lives in the jungle. It is orange, white, and black. It has stripes.*

If someone guesses correctly, say each syllable and blend them together:

*Yes, ti/ger — tiger!*

*Say it with me: ti/ger — tiger!*

If no one guesses correctly, let children blend the syllables to guess the word: *Here is a hint: It sounds like ti/ger. What's the word? Tiger!*

Show the Picture Card for *tiger*. Ask children: *What sound do you hear at the start of tiger? (/t/) What letter can we use to write the /t/ sound? (t)* Repeat with the other cards. Always give the initial sound first. Start with the words that are most familiar.

## Categories

After the words have been guessed, display the Picture Cards and ask children: *Which of these are living creatures?* (tiger, turkey, turtle) *What are some other living creatures you know?* Give other clues if necessary, such as wild animals, farm animals, pets, insects, big animals, small animals, etc.

## follow-up activities

**Finding Shapes** Display these Picture Cards: *square, rectangle, triangle, oval, star.* Ask children what other shapes they know. Draw those shapes on small cards (circle, diamond, etc.) Invite children to match assorted Picture Cards to the shape cards. Ask what other things they know that are those shapes.

**Creating** Ask children to draw a picture of something that starts with /t/. Encourage them to talk about their work and to write their name on the picture. If they are ready, they may also dictate words for you to write or try writing their own label or message.

## lesson 4

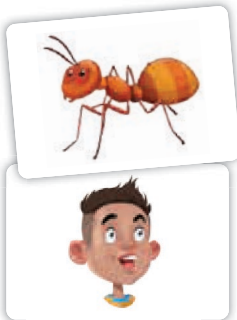


### YOU WILL NEED

- Picture Cards: *tiger, toothbrush, tree, triangle, turkey, turtle*; assorted cards for final sounds /t/ and /d/, one- to four-syllable words, and rhyming words

### FOCUS SKILLS

- Segmenting syllables
- Recognising and producing rhymes
- Isolating final sounds
- Distinguishing and pronouncing similar sounds



See pages 151 and 154 for lists of Picture Cards sorted by syllables, rhyming groups, and final sound.

# Sound games

**Say:** Today we are going to play some games with the sounds in words.

## Clapping syllables

If any child has a /t/ sound in their name, choose their name first, such as: Tamati has two /t/ sounds in his name. Let's clap the beats in Tamati's name.

Ta		ma		ti	
----	--	----	--	----	--

Choose two or three other children and clap the beats in their names. (They don't need to have a /t/ in their name.)

Show the Picture Card for *turtle*. **Say:** Who knows what this animal is? It starts with /t/ just like (Tia/Tim)! It is a turtle. Let's clap the beats in *turtle*.



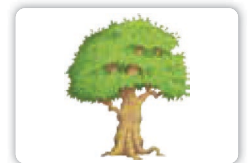
tur		tle	
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Repeat with *tiger* (2), *toothbrush* (2), *tree* (1), *triangle* (3), *turkey* (2).

## Rhyming

Show the card for *tree*. **Say:** Let's think of some words that rhyme with *tree*. I can think of ... me — *tree, me!*

If children can't think of words, give them the first sound for these words: *he, see, bee, pea, key*. For example: This word rhymes with *tree* and starts with /h/. (*he*)



## Final sound sort

Select some Picture Cards for words that end with /t/ and /d/. Have children say each word and sort them by the final sound.

Once all the cards have been sorted, have children say the name of each Picture Card and pronounce the last sound (*ant* /t/, *coat* /t/; *head* /d/, *leopard* /d/, etc.)

## follow-up activities

**Syllable Sort** Place four containers labelled 1, 2, 3, 4 and a variety of Picture Cards in a learning centre. Have children pick up a card, say its name, clap the syllables, and place it in the correct container for the number of syllables.

**Rhyming Odd One Out** Select several rhyming pairs of Picture Cards. Show two cards that rhyme and one that doesn't rhyme, such as *tree, key, jam*. Have children say each word and choose the one that does not rhyme.



# ■ TEACHER SUPPORT MATERIALS

The teacher support materials in this section provide helpful background information about the skills and knowledge that pave the way for literacy learning and ideas for supporting children's development in each area. Also included are simple assessments as well as a variety of useful references.

## Foundations for literacy

(pages 144—160)

- Oral language
- Phonological awareness
- Book and print knowledge
- Letter and letter-sound knowledge
- Literacy delays and difficulties
- Supporting English learners

## References

(pages 182—193)

- Cue Cards
- Picture Cards
- Pre-Decodables
- Glossary
- Letter-sound relationships

## Child development

(pages 130—143)

- Development and learning
- Developmental milestones
- The learning journey
- The senses
- Sensory motor integration
- Perceptual motor integration
- Cognitive development

## Observation & assessment

(pages 161—181)

- Observing children
- Developmental skills checklist
- Foundations for literacy checklist
- Phonological and phonemic awareness
- Grapheme knowledge
- Letter formation

# Child development

What children learn in the early years is astonishing. In a few years, they move from being completely dependent on others to being capable of using and understanding language as well as mastering complex tasks such as riding a bike, reading, and writing.

## Development and learning

Successful learning depends on having opportunities to acquire and integrate the following groups of skills, and lots of practice using them.

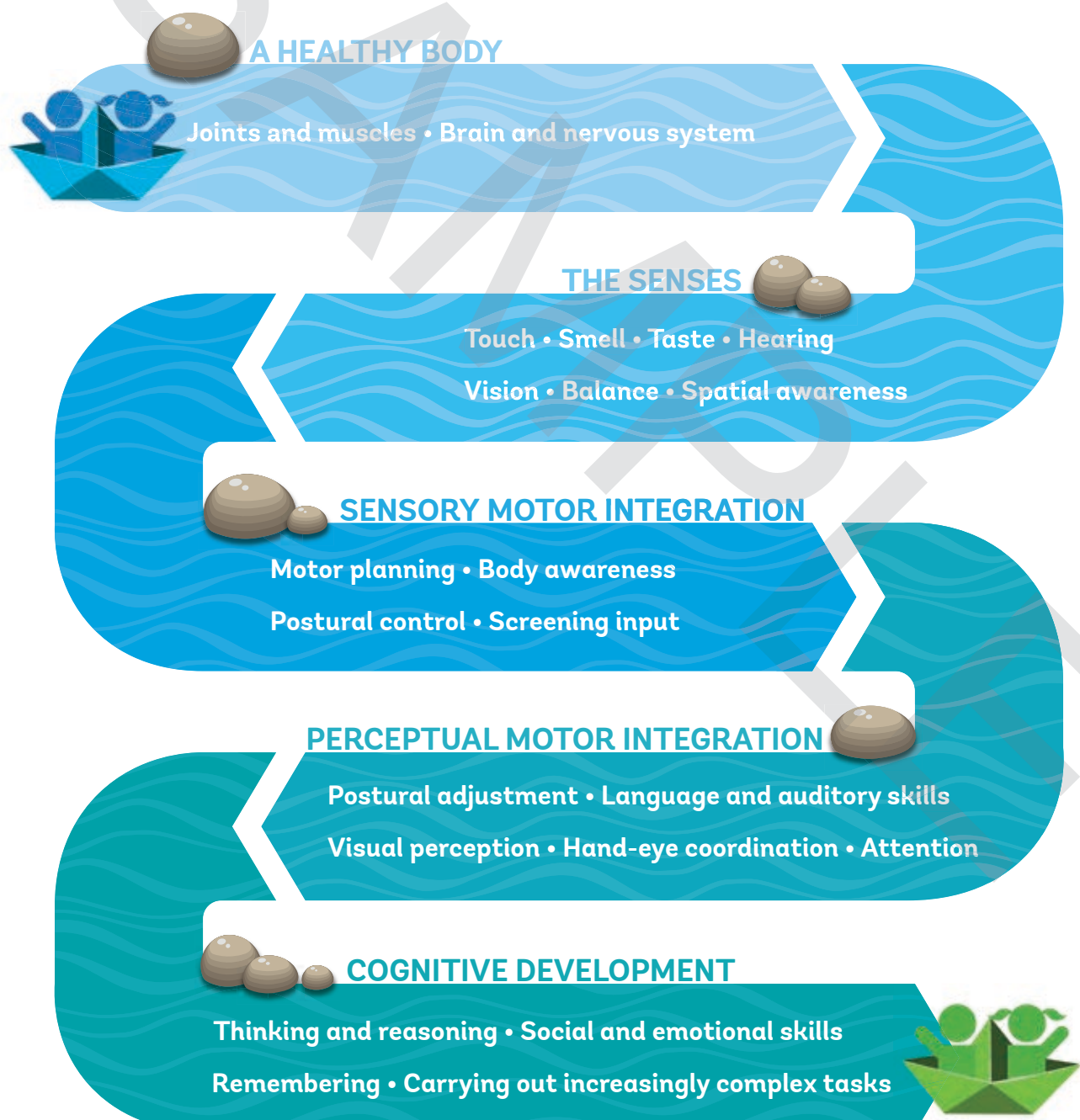
- **Gross motor skills** are performed by **the large groups of muscles that control our arms, legs, and torso**. They allow us to roll, sit, stand, walk, run, keep our balance, and change the position of our body. Children need to master control of their gross motor skills to be confident with whole-body movements such as walking, running, and jumping.
- **Fine motor skills** are performed by **the small muscles in our hands and wrists**. They allow us to do things like use eating utensils, manipulate toys, brush our teeth, get dressed, use scissors, and carry out intricate tasks like threading a needle and manipulating a pencil. Fine motor skills are complex and are built on mastery of gross motor skills.
- **Cognitive skills** are the skills our brains use for **thinking, learning, problem-solving, understanding, remembering, reasoning, and paying attention**. As children develop these skills, they learn to pay attention, to stay on task, to complete tasks, to follow multi-step directions, and to remember how to do things they have done before.
- **Language skills** allow us to **communicate with others**. By hearing language spoken and used, we learn to understand it and to speak and use it ourselves. We also learn to recognise and use non-verbal language — gestures and body language — to communicate with others. Young children's receptive language (what they understand) is greater than their expressive language (what they can communicate).
- **Social and emotional skills** are the skills that help us **interact with others**, build relationships, and understand and respond to the feelings of others. These skills help children to pick up on social cues or rules and to function appropriately in social settings.



# The learning journey

Children are hardwired to explore, to experiment, and to learn. The environments they grow up in provide the opportunities and experiences that move them along their learning path.

Healthy bodies and emotionally safe learning environments encourage children to engage and experiment with new learning experiences. As they interact with their environments, children develop the skills and abilities needed to integrate and interpret the information they receive. This **developmental process** allows them to move about in the world safely and efficiently using gross and fine motor skills, to communicate and interact with others using language and social and emotional skills, and to use reasoning and problem-solving strategies to understand the world around them.





# Foundations for literacy

The skills that young children have developed and their experiences with the world provide the platform for the development of literacy.

As they learn to write and read an alphabetic language such as English, children need to be taught **specific skills and knowledge that will allow them to understand how written words work.**

## Oral language

- Understanding and using oral language — pronouncing words, forming sentences, explaining ideas, responding to prompts and questions, formulating questions, and understanding spoken language
- Expanding their background knowledge, spoken vocabularies, and their use of words to communicate in different situations
- Using language to describe, compare, and categorise

## Phonological awareness

- Recognising and manipulating sounds and sound patterns in words
- Recognising and producing rhyming words
- Recognising, blending, and segmenting syllables
- Recognising, distinguishing, and pronouncing all sounds of English
- Identifying sounds in different positions in words
- Blending two, three, and four sounds together to make words
- Segmenting two- to four-sound words into individual sounds
- Manipulating sounds to make new words (deleting sounds — *farm* without the /f/ is *arm*; adding sounds — *star* with a /t/ on the end is *start*; substituting sounds — swapping the /a/ in *cat* with /o/ makes *cot*)

## Book and print knowledge

- Engaging with a wide variety of books and texts
- Understanding that print represents spoken words
- Expressing their own ideas by drawing, dictating, and writing

## Letter and letter-sound knowledge

- Understanding that words are made up of sounds, and letters are used to represent those sounds (the alphabetic principle)
- Recognising, naming, writing, and pronouncing every letter and knowing that many letters and spelling patterns can be pronounced in different ways
- Sounding out and writing words by segmenting them into sounds and writing each sound with an appropriate spelling pattern
- Decoding words by pronouncing graphemes in sequence, from left to right through the word, and then blending the sounds together
- Knowing how to write every sound of English at least one way, and that most sounds can be written in different ways



# Phonological awareness

**Phonological awareness** is an awareness of sounds and sound patterns in spoken words. **Phonemic awareness** is a sub-category of phonological awareness that involves an awareness of the individual sounds in words.

Most young children are not aware that spoken words are made by putting sounds together in a particular order, and they don't need to have or use this knowledge until they begin to read and write in an alphabetic language.

In alphabetic languages, each sound in a word is written with a letter or letters. This is known as the **alphabetic code**. Children learning to read and write in an alphabetic language need to learn to recognise, pronounce, and manipulate the sounds of the language (phonological and phonemic awareness) before they can truly understand how the letters of the alphabet create a code to represent them (the role of letters and letter-sound knowledge).

The sounds of the language are the key for understanding how to use the alphabetic code. Phonological and phonemic awareness skills are therefore foundational skills for literacy. They are auditory skills that develop from hearing and playing with the sounds in spoken words.

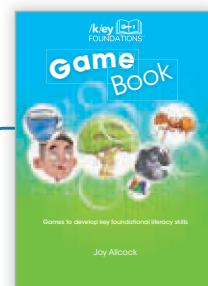
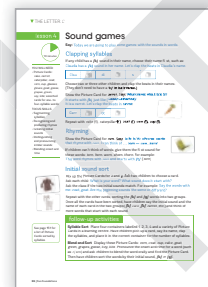
Different languages have different sounds. English has more than 40 sounds, whereas most Pacific languages, for example, have fewer than 20 sounds. Multilingual children may need additional support and practice to recognise, differentiate, and pronounce the sounds of English.

## support activities

**P.A. Every Day** Children acquire phonological and phonemic awareness skills at different times and at different rates. The best way to help children develop these skills is through playful yet systematic exposure and practice. *Key Foundations* incorporates phonological awareness skills into every lesson, every day. In addition, you can use any opportunity to practise phonological awareness skills. For example: **You can get your lunch first if you have two claps in your name. Make a line behind the person whose name rhymes with cake.** (Jake) **Group 1 will be everyone who has a /t/ sound in their name.**

**Sound Games** The **Sound Games Lessons** in this book focus on specific phonological and phonemic awareness skills, including segmenting syllables, rhyming, isolating sounds, distinguishing similar sounds, and blending. Additional support activities for these and other more advanced skills can be found in the **Key Foundations Game Book**:

- Hearing syllables in words: **Games 17–20**
- Recognising and producing rhyme: **Games 21–24**
- Blending sounds to make words: **Games 25–28**
- Segmenting words into sounds: **Games 29–32**
- Identifying initial and final sounds: **Games 33–40**
- Discriminating between sounds: **Games 28, 33, 34, 37, 38, 41–45**
- Manipulating sounds: **Games 35, 36, 39, 40**



# Informal observation and assessment

Assessment is the process of gathering information, reviewing the information, and then using that information to plan activities that are linked to children's abilities and needs.

Teachers are constantly observing children as they play and work. Observational assessments simply provide a focus for observing specific tasks and skills that are important for children to acquire on their learning journey. As well as guiding instruction, information gathered in this way can be shared with parents and families, providing crucial information about their child's growth and development.

## Observing children

The **Developmental Skills Checklist** provides an overview of the developmental skills children acquire between the ages of 4 and 6. Children can be observed during normal daily activities, and any issues can be addressed using the support activities on pages 132–137.

The **Foundations for Literacy Checklist** provides information about the specific skills children need for learning to read and write. Children can be observed during play or other classroom activities such as the following:

- *Oral language skills* can be observed at any time when the child is playing and talking with other children or talking with an adult.
- *Phonological and phonemic awareness* can be observed during the *Key Foundations* lessons or whenever these skills are the focus of an activity.
- *Book and print knowledge* can be observed during any reading activity.
- *Letter and letter-sound knowledge* can be observed by playing alphabet games or by observing children as they write the letters in their names and other letters during classroom or play activities.

## Using the checklists

Make a copy for each child and write the date you are observing the child in the Date 1, 2, or 3 column. In that column, tick the skills the child demonstrates at this time. If the child is still to develop some skills, leave these boxes empty and complete them at a later date.

Use the comments sections to record any observations about the development of the particular skills in each section of the checklists. You may wish to date each comment.

**The checklists are also available digitally on the Code-Ed website.**