

Language of Literacy

Phoneme

The smallest part of spoken language that makes a difference in the meaning of words. English has about 41 phonemes. The word "if" has two phonemes (/i/ /f/). The word "check" has three phonemes (/ch/ /e/ /ck/). Sometimes one phoneme is represented by more than one letter.

Phonemic Awareness

The ability to hear, identify, and manipulate the individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words.

Phonological Awareness

The understanding that spoken language is made up of individual and separate sounds. A broad term that includes phonemic awareness in addition to work with rhymes, words, syllables, and onsets and rimes.

Grapheme

The smallest part of written language that represents a phoneme in the spelling of a word. A grapheme may be just one letter, such as b, f, p, s, or several letters such as ch, sh, ea, igh.

Phonics

The understanding that there is a predictable relationship between phonemes (the sounds of the *spoken* language) and graphemes (the letters and spellings that represent those sounds in *written* language).

Syllable

A word part that contains a vowel or in spoken language a vowel sound.

Onset and Rime

Onsets and rimes are parts of spoken language that are smaller than syllables but larger than phonemes. An onset is the initial consonant(s) sound of a syllable. The onset of bag is b-; of jam is j-. A rime is the part of a syllable that contains the vowel and all that follows it. The rime of bag is -ag, of jam is -am.

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