

# Facilitation Guide: Tips for Teaching Your Child About Phonemes

This resource outlines a presentation that can be given to caregivers of bilingual students. The presentation discusses a Colorín Colorado resource that caregivers can use to teach their children about phonemes, or the individual sounds that make up spoken words. In this presentation, the facilitator will walk participants through accessing the website and utilizing the resource. The guide also includes instructions for a supplemental activity, as well as a session handout that participants can use to reflect on the presentation and practice using the resource at home.

## Additional Resource

For more information, see our blog post [“Facilitation Guides for Working with EL Families”](#) by Sandy A. Schmitz, Ph.D.

# Tips for Teaching Your Child About Phonemes

A Facilitation Guide for Working with English-Learning Families

## Resource Overview

**Resource:** [Tips for Teaching Your Child About Phonemes](#)

**Author/Sponsor:** Colorin Colorado, an educational service of WETA

**Target Skill(s)/Topic:** At-home activities parents can use to help their child understand the connection between the letters of the alphabet and the sound associated with each letter.

**Iowa Early Literacy Standard (s):** Area 6: Communication, Language, and Literacy – Early Reading Experiences ([6.2.PS](#))

**Iowa Core Standard(s):** Reading Standards: Foundational Skills – Phonological Awareness ([RF.K.2](#), [RF.1.2](#))

**English Language Proficiency Standard(s):** [K.1, 1.1, 2-3.1](#)

## Facilitator Preparation

Prior to the training session, the facilitator will:

- Familiarize themselves with the website.
- Review the agenda and activities within the guide.
- Have information available for the participants regarding computer access in your community (i.e., public library, school buildings, churches, etc.)

## Learner Objectives

During the session, participants will learn:

- How to navigate the featured website so that they can access the information easily and use it independently.
- Effective strategies and activities to use when working with their children to teach letter sounds.

## Materials Needed

- Computer for facilitator with media projector
- Round or small tables to facilitate small group discussion
- Computers or tablets for participants to use
- Session handouts (one for each participant)
- Children’s book (for demonstration in Supplemental Activity)
- Chart paper and markers
- Tape and/or easel

## Suggested Agenda

*(Intended for an approximately 30-minute session)*

### Introduce the Topic *(2 minutes)*

Greet the participants and review the learner objectives for the session. Then, distribute the handout and explain how it will be used during the session. Emphasize the following points:

- Highlight some of the key points in the first paragraph:
  - Letters are the foundation or basis for all written words.
  - Letters are symbols for what we do with our mouth when we speak words.
  - It is important that children learn the sounds that are associated with letters.
  - Phoneme is another word for sound. The word phoneme is used often in this resource.
- This website will provide you with simple activities to do at home to help your child understand the connection between the letters and the sounds that go with those letters.

### Navigate the Website *(3 minutes)*

The facilitator will demonstrate important features of [the website](#):

- In the top left corner, there is a red box that reads “En español.” Demonstrate how to use that box to convert the text to Spanish. Have participants practice changing the text to Spanish.
- Show the participants the icon in the top right corner of the article that would allow them to print the article.
- Show the participants how to bookmark the website so that they can return to it easily on their home computers at a later time.
- Mention the box on the right side that is titled “Related”. Let the participants know that there are two other related web resources that they can explore at another time.

### Present the Content *(12 minutes)*

Allow participants to explore the website and discuss the content.

- Ask participants to divide into small 3 to 4-member table groups.
- Have each table select a “Tip” to read and discuss. Ask each participant to spend about 2 minutes reviewing the “Tip” individually. Next, ask the small group to talk to each other for about 5 minutes about what they noticed in their section of the web resource. Comments should focus on the guiding questions provided below.
  - **Guiding questions:**
    - Tip 1: Focus on one sound at a time.
      - *Why are sounds like /s/, /m/, and /f/ good sounds to start with? (These sounds are very distinct and can be exaggerated easily.)*
      - *What is something you can do to help your child focus on a sound? (Show them how to make the sound. Describe what is happening in your mouth when you make the sound.)*
    - Tip 2: Make the learning memorable.
      - *What can you do to make this learning more fun? (Have fun with the letters and sounds. Make up gestures to go with them.)*
      - *What are “alliterative words”? (These are words where the sound you are focusing on repeats itself over and over, i.e. “Sally sits on the sidewalk in the sun.)*
    - Tip 3: Help your child listen for the sounds.
      - *How can you help your child listen for sounds? (Ask them questions that involves listening for sounds, i.e. Do we hear /s/ in the word “sun?”)*
      - *How will this help my child listen for sounds? (When you ask these questions orally with your child, it helps them to really listen for and hear sounds that occur in words.)*
    - Tip 4: Apply letter-sound skills to reading.
      - *How can you put these skills to work? (Use a book to help your child make connections between letters, sounds and words.)*
      - *What can you do as you read together? (As you read together, find places in the book that have the sounds and letters that you have worked on together.)*
  - Have each group record at least 2 key points from their discussion about the section.
  - Reconvene the larger group and have one person from each small group share at least one key point from their section with the larger group. Offer additional explanations of each point when necessary, using the information in italics with each of the guiding questions listed above. Keep the conversation moving along at a good pace so that the sharing time lasts about 5 minutes.
  - Briefly summarize the key points and suggestions the participants noted for each tip. You can keep this time short by recording participants’ key points as they share. To record responses, either write them on chart paper for display on a wall or easel or type them on to your computer and project on to the screen.

## Reflection/Follow-up (10 minutes)

- In their small groups, have the participants talk (no more than 5 minutes) about one activity that they will do from this resource. Have them write that activity on the session handout. Encourage them to discuss why they have chosen the activity and how they plan to implement it. Possible responses include:
  - *I am going show my child how make sounds when we are talking about letters and sounds.*
  - *I plan to make up some silly gestures to use when my child and I are working on letter sounds.*
  - *I am going to point out the sounds and letters that we have talked about when we are reading a book each night.*
- Talk briefly with participants (no more than 5 minutes) about reflecting on the activity after practicing with their child. Suggest they ask themselves these questions:
  - *Did my child enjoy the activity?*
  - *Was I able to make this fit in to our daily routine?*
  - *What did my child learn from doing this activity with me?*
  - *If the activity does not go well, do not be discouraged. Review the suggestions on the website to see if there is something that could be done differently.*

## Supplemental Activity (up to 10 minutes)

If you are able to host the session for a longer time (40 minutes instead of 30 minutes), you could consider demonstrating some of the strategies discussed in the resource.

- **Tip 1: Focus on one sound at a time.**
  - Demonstrate how to exaggerate a sound. Use the sentences provided in the resource. Model for participants how to describe how a sound is made. Use a mirror if available.
- **Tip 2: Make the learning memorable.**
  - Demonstrate the gestures that were mentioned in the resource—"munching mouth" and "slithering snake". Give some examples of sentences that have repeated sounds or alliterative words.
- **Tip 3: Help your child listen for sounds.**
  - Model some questions that participants could ask to help their child listen for sounds. Examples of these questions are: *Do we hear /f/ in "fish?" Do we hear /f/ in "cow?"*
- **Tip 4: Apply letter-sound skills to reading.**
  - Model reading a book with the participants. Find places in the book to point out specific letters and sounds.

## Concluding the Session (3 minutes)

- Check with participants to see if there are any questions.
- Thank them for their participation in the session.
- Make sure that they have the information regarding access to computers or tablets in your community.

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## Session Handout

## Resource Overview

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## Notes

Things to remember when using the website:

Key Ideas from the resource:

## Follow-Up Activity

Choose at least one activity to try with your child. Then, reflect on how it went.

- What activity did you choose?
- Did your child enjoy the activity?
- Were you able to fit this activity into your daily routine?
- What did your child learn from this activity?