

YOUR GOAL THIS WEEK

Play I Spy Sounds with your child 5 to 6 times this week.

Pick one sound · 5 to 10 minutes · No materials · Anywhere works

Why this works: Before a child can read a word, they have to hear the sounds inside it. That skill is called phonological awareness, and it is one of the strongest predictors of how easily a child learns to read. This game turns it into a hunt, and the repetition across the week is what takes it from fleeting to automatic. One note before you start: /m/ means the sound, not the letter name.

HOW TO PLAY

1 Pick Your Sound

Choose one sound for the whole session. Stretchy sounds are the easiest to hunt: /m/, /s/, /f/, /l/. Say the sound cleanly, /m/ rather than “muh,” and stick with it.

2 Spy It

Two ways to play. You say a sound and they hunt for it: “I spy something that starts with /p/!” Or you point to a few objects and they name the shared sound: “Pillow, plant, picture: what do those all start with?” Both build the same skill.

3 Let Them Move

When they find one, send them to grab it, touch it, or point to it. The physical search keeps them engaged, and engagement is what makes practice sustainable. Celebrate every find and model any misses playfully.

WATCH OUT FOR

Switching sounds too often

One sound per session. The repetition is doing the work; resist the urge to hop around. It’s supposed to feel like a lot of the same thing.

Turning it into a quiz

No wrong answers. If they miss, model it: “Pppillow! /p/!” Redirect with play, not correction.

Skipping the stretch

Exaggerate the sound when you say it: “Pppppillow!” That mouth movement is part of what makes it stick.

QUICK START IDEAS *Try one of these to get started today*

Room Sweep

Look around wherever you are and find three things that share a sound. Kitchen? Try /m/: milk, mug, mat, microwave.

“I spy a mug, a mat, and a microwave. What sound do they all share?”

Go Grab It

Say a sound and send them on a mission to find something in the room that has it. Great for wiggly kids; the movement makes it memorable.

“Can you go grab something that starts with /b/?”

Odd One Out

Ready for a challenge? Say three things: two share a sound, one doesn’t. Which one doesn’t belong?

“Pillow, plant, table: which one doesn’t start with /p/?”