Phonological Dyslexia

A poor ability with phonological skills is one of the most important identifiers and causes of dyslexia.
75% of people with dyslexia show signs of a phonological processing problem.
Many definitions of dyslexia include a problem with phonological skills.
The International Dyslexia Association define dyslexia as
"…a deficit in the phonological component of language…"

What is it?

Phonological awareness is the ability to identify and manipulate the sounds of language.
A phonological learning disorder is a difficulty working with sounds and linking them to the letter symbols they represent.



What are the difficulties?

It is important to understand the types of challenges these students will face throughout the day.

1. Manipulating Sounds In Your Head

Say these letter sounds aloud. c … a … t
Close your eyes.
Can you remember the first sound?
What would be left if you took away the first sound?
A student with weak phonological skills would struggle with this task because they have got to hold the sequence of sounds in their head and change them.

2. Sound Discrimination

Discriminating between short vowel sounds will cause difficulty.
Listen to the vowel sounds in the middle of these words "bet … bit".
It is common to mix up 'i' and 'e'.

3. Rhyming

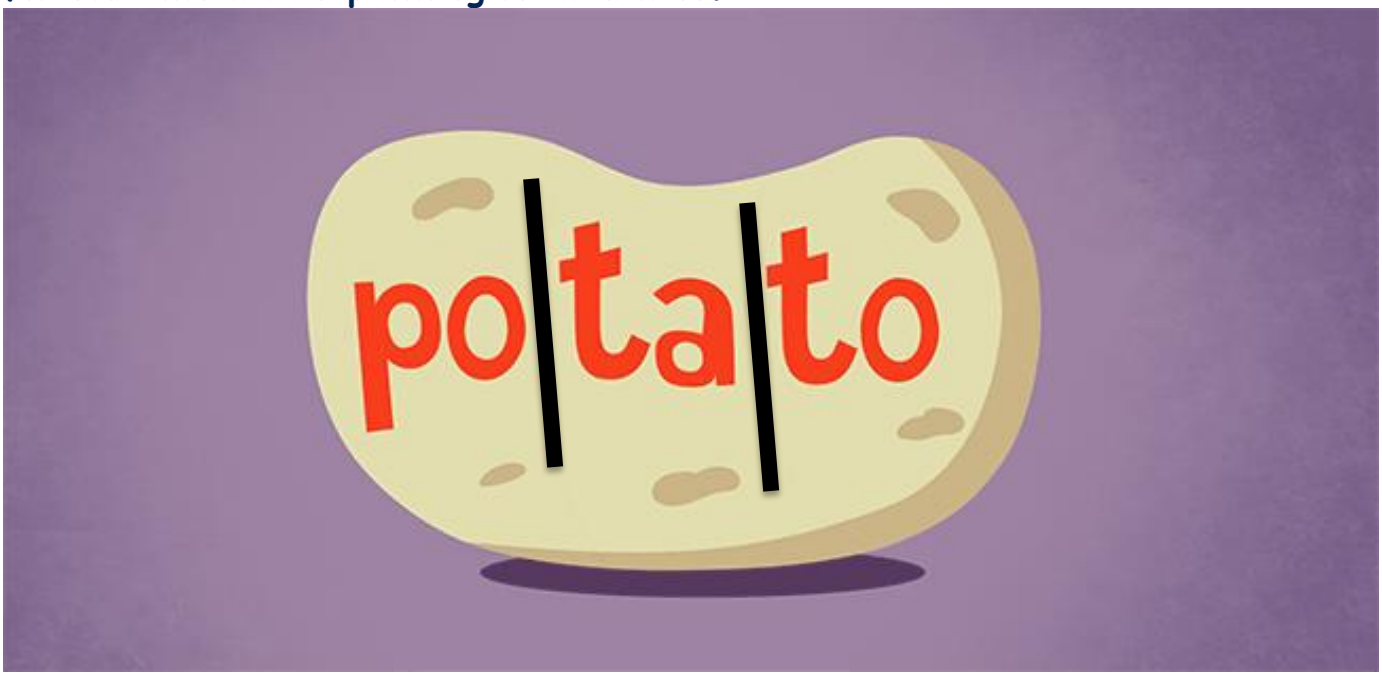
Listen to this word "hop".
Can you think of a word that it rhymes with?
"stop drop flop"
Identifying words that rhyme will be difficult.

4. Phoneme Isolation

Which sound do you hear at the start of these words?
"find" "friend"
Separating out individual sounds will be difficult to do.

5. Syllable Division

Listen to this word
"potato"
Can you split this word into separate syllables?
po-ta-to
Identifying the different components of sound in a multisyllabic word is difficult for students with a phonological weakness.



6. Blending Sounds

Listen to these sounds
"h…e…l…p"
Blending sounds into a whole word will be harder and cause these sorts of problems:
Missing out or forgetting one of the sounds, e.g. hep
Matching a sound to the wrong letter symbol, e.g. halp
Mixing up the sequence, hlep
It's completely forgotten and a random word is guessed!

7. Mixing Up Similar Sounding Words

A phonological difficulty can make it hard to tell the difference between similar sounding words.
allocate instead of accolade
pacific instead of specific
probably instead of properly



8. Finding The Right Word

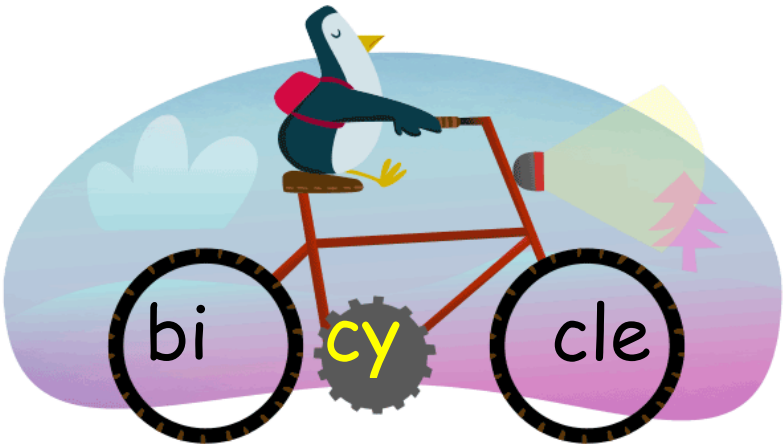
People with a phonological difficulty often can't think of the right word for what they want to say.
This means they often have difficulty expressing ideas spontaneously.

5 Helpful Strategies for Phonological Dyslexia

Phonological development is often helped by linking pictures or actions to sounds and letters.
These act as memory cues because they can be more easily remembered.

1. Use Pictures

Say this word aloud.
"bicycle"
There are three sounds that are difficult to separate.
Associate the word with a picture.
Draw a wheel around each sound.
bi-cy-cle
Funny pictures are more memorable.



2. Use Actions

Say this word aloud.
"skipping"
Relate an action to the sound then do it.
This helps to strengthen the link.
Skip and say the separate sounds – "skip-ping-skip-ping"



3. Smaller Chunks

When blending a sequence of sounds, break up the word into two parts.
Cover the final letter.
Sound out the first part.
Ch…u…n…chun
Stretch out the last sound and reveal the final letter.
Chunnnnn ….k

4. Speech Therapy Techniques

Use a mirror so the student can see the shape they are forming.
This helps to develop phonological understanding.



5. Own Voice Dictations

Record your voice saying a word you find difficult to pronounce.
Record someone else saying the same word.
Listening back to helps to hear the difference.
Those with a phonological difficulty will usually need longer exposure to language.