

EYFS · PRE-K / RECEPTION / K

Sound Bags

Phase 1 phonics staple

What sound bags are

A sound bag is a small fabric bag containing a few objects. The adult takes them out one by one, naming them. Children name them too, hear the sounds, talk about what they're for, find connections. It sounds simple. It is. It's also one of the most consistently effective phonological awareness activities in EYFS, used across multiple phonics schemes. The children love it because they don't know what's coming next.

How to run a sound bag session

<p>Set the scene</p> <p>Children sit in a small circle. 'Today's bag has 5 things in it. We're going to find out what they are.'</p>	<p>One at a time</p> <p>Reach in slowly. Pull out one object. Don't name it immediately — let children guess. 'What is it? What's the first sound?'</p>
<p>Hear the sounds</p> <p>Stretch the word. 'sssssssock.' What sound starts the word? Other words that start with that sound?</p>	<p>Talk about it</p> <p>What's it for? Have you got one at home? What does it remind you of? Build vocabulary and shared experience.</p>
<p>Repeat and review</p> <p>After all 5 are out, children take turns picking one. 'What does this start with?' 'What is it?' 'What's it for?'</p>	

12 themed bag ideas



#	Theme	What might be in it
1	Same first sound — /s/	sock, scarf, spoon, soap, snake (toy)
2	Same first sound — /b/	ball, brush, banana (plastic), book, bear
3	Same first sound — /p/	pen, pencil, plate, pillow, plant pot
4	Rhyming objects	hat & bat, cat & rat (toys), dog & log, ring & string
5	Body parts	hat (head), sock (foot), glove (hand), mirror (face)
6	Sounds at home	spoon (kitchen), brush (bathroom), book (lounge)
7	Outdoor things	leaf, stick, stone, conker, acorn
8	From a story	objects from a current class book
9	Big and small (size)	ball (big and small), bear (big and small)
10	Soft and hard	sponge, stone, fabric, wood block, foam
11	Quiet sounds	tissue, feather, paper, ribbon, wool
12	Loud sounds	rattle, bell, drum, maracas, whistle

Differentiating across the year

AUTUMN: Focus on names of objects. Vocabulary. Talking about them. Don't push for sounds yet. SPRING: Add 'what sound does it start with?' Connect to alliteration. Some objects with same first sound to highlight pattern. SUMMER: More targeted phonics — 'this object starts with /s/. What other things start with /s/?' Connect to letters now visible in classroom. The SAME activity, scaled up, lasts the year. You're not 'doing different things' — you're going deeper.

Common pitfalls

1. TOO MANY OBJECTS. 5 max. Children's attention spans for this are 5-10 minutes. Don't pad.
2. RUSHING. The slow reveal IS the point. Don't dump everything out at once.
3. ADULT



DOMINATING. Let children name. Let them propose what's coming next. Let them lead the noticing. 4. NOT REPEATING. Use the same bag two sessions in a row. Children deepen their thinking second time. 5. SKIPPING IT WHEN BUSY. This is a 10-minute activity that builds skills underpinning a year of phonics. Make time.

