Alliteration Explained: Spotting Matching Starting Sounds in Reception

Key points

- Alliteration is when words start with the same sound—like 'big bouncy ball' or 'silly snake'—and it's different from rhyming, which is about ending sounds.
- In Reception, children learn alliteration as part of developing phonological awareness (the ability to listen to and notice sounds in words), which is a foundation for phonics.
- Activities like listening to nursery rhymes, tongue twisters and silly sentences help children's ears learn to spot matching sounds.
- There's no pressure to teach this at home: bedtime stories, songs, and everyday chat already help your child notice these patterns.
- When your child starts pointing out words that sound the same, it shows their listening skills are developing just as they should.

Things to try at home

- Read nursery rhymes and picture books together, and pause to giggle at funny tongue twisters like 'Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers' or 'silly snake slithered slowly'.
- Play a quick listening game: say three words aloud (such as cat, car, table) and ask your child to clap, jump or nod when they hear words that start with the same sound.
- Make silly sentences together: 'The purple penguin plays' or 'The fat fish floats fast'—make them as funny as you like and see if your child joins in.
- Spot alliteration around the house or outside: when you see things (a bouncy ball, big book, fast fish), say them together and listen to the matching sounds.

Find out more

- GOV.UK's Early Years Foundation Stage guidance explains how phonological awareness supports children's learning in Reception.
- Your child's Reception teacher or school, who can share what activities they do in class and suggest ideas for home.
- Your local library or children's centre, which often has story times and listening activities that include nursery rhymes and tongue twisters.