

Phonological Awareness for Literacy (PAL) Clinic

What is the PAL Clinic?

The PAL program was developed at the University of Queensland to be run by speech pathology students under the supervision of qualified speech pathologist. The program is strongly based on research. La Trobe Communication Clinic has been running the PAL program since 2004.

The aims of the program at La Trobe are to:

- Improve a child's phonological awareness skills including identifying sounds in words, breaking up words into individual sounds, combining sounds into words
- Improve the child's ability to know which letters make which sounds
- Help children to understand the relationship between phonological awareness skills, letter-sound knowledge, word reading and word spelling.

What is Phonological Awareness?

Phonological awareness is the understanding that words are made up of smaller parts (e.g. syllables and sounds). A very strong relationship exists between phonological awareness and the development of reading and spelling skills.

Children with phonological awareness difficulties may:

- be confused about the difference between letters and sounds
- have difficulty in recognising the same letters/sounds in different words
- tend to have difficulty with sound-letter correspondence, especially for vowels
- be slow at sounding out words when they read, and forget what they've sounded out before getting to the end of the word
- guess words from the initial letter
- alter the sound sequence, e.g. clamp > camalp
- leave out syllables when spelling, e.g. pa-rar-dise > paradise
- have difficulty identifying the sounds in consonant clusters, and omit or add letters when spelling, e.g., stamp > stap, cold > clold

Assessment

All children are invited to attend a pre-PAL program assessment which generally happens in February/March each year.

The assessment involves a number of tasks that assess the child's knowledge of letter/sound links, phonological awareness and reading fluency. On completion of the assessment the family are informed of the recommended PAL stage.

Children will then be invited to attend the program based on their availability and the number of spaces available. Sessions generally offered on a Tuesday, Thursday or Saturday for 5 weeks in May.

Therapy

The PAL program at La Trobe Communication Clinic involves 5 weekly 3-hour sessions across consecutive weeks (a total of 15 hours of instruction). Children normally commence with Stage 1, and depending on need may attend further blocks of intervention to continue through more advanced stages.

Stage 1: focuses on simple words with regular spelling (2-3 sound words)

Stage 2: focuses on more complex words (i.e. those requiring advanced segmentation, blending and manipulation skills) with regular spelling.

Stage 3: focuses on the reading and spelling of multisyllabic words where the spelling is not always regular. Rules for syllable breaking, and the addition of grammatical morphemes are included in this stage.

The program involves student clinicians who work under the supervision of a qualified Speech Pathologist. Children work at their own pace through a mixture of group and one-to-one work. Group sizes are small.

Parents should note that the PAL program is not a comprehensive literacy program. It does not go beyond the word level and it targets very specific skills. These skills are fundamentally important for the acquisition of effective reading and spelling skills, but some children with literacy difficulties will have moved beyond the skills targeted by PAL.

Eligibility

This program is recommended for children in Grades 2 – 6 with a specific reading disability; that is children with unexpected reading difficulties in view of their other abilities.

It is not recommended for children with a significant language delay or disorder, moderate to severe visual or auditory impairment, intellectual disability, or behavioural problems.

Children are assessed before they commence the program in order to confirm that the program will suit their needs.

Fees

Service	General	Concession
Assessment	\$60	\$30
Review	\$60	\$30
5 Week Program	\$600	\$300

- Medicare or private health insurance do not give rebates for LCC fees.
- You will be charged a lower concession price if you bring a valid Health Care Card
- Talk to us if you have problems paying the fees
- For other programs different fees will apply – contact the clinic for further information.

Registration

To register for the *PAL Program* please contact clinic reception between 9:00 am - 4:00 pm Monday to Friday, or download application forms from our website:

- Request for Service
- Client Consent
- PAL Client Information

These forms should be completed, signed and returned to the clinic.

Clients will be admitted to clinic if they meet the eligibility guidelines and agree to the fee schedule and attendance requirements. No client will be refused services based on gender, race, religion or sexuality.

How Appointments are Arranged

Once your child's application is accepted, you will be contacted when an appointment becomes available. A waiting list may apply.

Please feel free to contact us to check how the waiting list is progressing.

Other Clinic Services

La Trobe Communication Clinic also offers the following speech pathology & audiology services:

- A preschool speech and language clinic
- A child fluency (stuttering) clinic
- An adolescent and adult fluency (stuttering) clinic
- A voice clinic for children and adults
- Audiology clinic for children and adults

About Us

The mission of La Trobe Communication Clinic is to:

- Provide speech pathology services that are informed by client need and best practice
- Achieve excellence in clinical education
- Create research opportunities for Discipline of Speech Pathology students and staff.

How to Contact Us

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The clinic is located on the Bundoora Campus of La Trobe University and is accessible by public transport and by car.

There is free car parking facilities for clients in Car Park 11. Your car registration details need to be provided to the administration staff **PRIOR to or on ARRIVAL** to your appointment.

Our administration staff will provide you with an appointment card and map/directions.

Want to Know About Other Service Providers?

The Speech Pathology Australia website has a search option for public and private speech pathologists at the following address:

<http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au>