



Phonics Information for Parents/Carers

What is Phonics?

Phonics is a way of teaching children to read quickly and skilfully. They are taught how to:

- recognise the sounds that each individual letter makes;
- identify the sounds that different combinations of letters make such as /sh/ or /ee/;
- blend these sounds together from left to right to make a word.

Children can then use this knowledge to 'decode' new words that they hear or see. This is the first important step in learning to read.

Why Phonics?

Research shows that when phonics is taught in a structured way – starting with the easiest sounds and progressing through to the most complex – it is the most effective way of teaching young children to read. It is particularly helpful for children aged 5 to 7.

Almost all children who receive good teaching of phonics will learn the skills they need to tackle new words. They can then go on to read any kind of text fluently and confidently, and to read for enjoyment.

Children who have been taught phonics also tend to read more accurately than those taught using other methods, such as 'look and say'. This includes children who find learning to read difficult, for example those who have dyslexia.

(The information above is directly from the Department of Education's 'Learning to read through phonics: information for parents' document.)

Phonics Terminology

Phoneme - A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a word. It is generally accepted that most varieties of spoken English use about 44 phonemes.

Grapheme - A grapheme is a letter or group of letters representing a sound.

Oral Blending - Hearing a series of spoken sounds (phonemes) and merging them together to make a spoken word. No text is used.

Blending - Merging the individual phonemes together to read a word.

Segmenting - Consists of breaking words down into phonemes to spell.

Digraph - This is when two letters come together to make a phoneme. For example, /oa/ makes the sound in 'boat' and is also known as a vowel digraph. There are also consonant digraphs, for example, /sh/ for ship and /ch/ for chick.

Trigraph - This is when three letters come together to make one phoneme, for example, /igh/ for night.

Split Digraph - A digraph in which the two letters are not adjacent – e.g. make, bone. (This used to be known as 'magic e' but this phrase should not be used now.)

Homographs - Words that have the same spelling but differ in meaning and pronunciation, for example, a row of chairs or a row like an argument.

Homophones - Words with common pronunciations but different spellings, for example, to / two / too or there / their.



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Syllable - One or more letters representing a unit of spoken language consisting of a single uninterrupted sound.

Polysyllabic word - A word containing more than one syllable.

Adjacent Consonant - Two consonants next to each other in a word, for example, trip or bend. These used to be known as 'blends' but must not be now. They need to be taught as separate sounds.

Phonics at Home

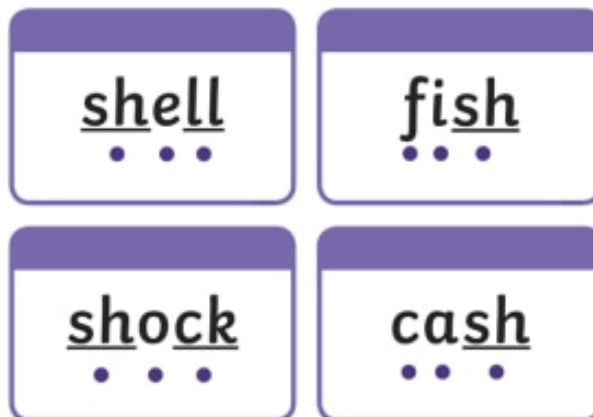
Tips for teaching your child the phonemes (sounds):

- It is important for a child to learn lower case or small letters rather than capital letters at first. Most early books and games use lower case letters and your child will learn these first at school. Obviously, you should use a capital letter when required, such as at the beginning of the child's name, e.g. Paul.
- When you talk about letters to your child, remember to use the letter sounds: a buh cuh duh ... rather than the alphabet names of the letters: ay bee see dee ee. The reason for this is that sounding out words is practically impossible if you use the alphabet names. For example, cat would sound like 'see ay tee' which does not sound like 'cat'.
- When saying the sounds of b, d, g, j and w you will notice the 'uh' sound which follows each, for example buh, duh... You cannot say the sound without it, however, try to emphasise the main letter sound.

There are a number of things that parents/carers can do to support early reading development:

- Let your child see you enjoying reading yourself.
- Immerse your child in a love of reading.
- Make time for your child to read their book to you.
- With all books, encourage your child to 'sound out' unfamiliar words and then blend from left to right rather than looking at pictures to guess the word.
- Regularly go over the phonemes (sounds) with your child so you can support them with the ones they struggle with.

One of the key strategies we use to support the children is by asking them to add sound buttons/lines underneath words to help them identify the sounds they need to read, for example:



You can make this fun by using different writing materials like paint, crayons, felt tips as well as tracing the word on glitter or sand trays.



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Phonic Actions

To support children learning new sounds, we give each sound an action.



s for snake

ACTION:



Wiggle your hand like a slithering snake.



a for ant

ACTION:



Pretend to take a bite from an apple.



t for tiger

ACTION:



Tap on your wristwatch.



p for pig

ACTION:



Pop bubbles in the air.



i for insect

ACTION:



Use your fingers to show how Insect lands on the stick



n for newt

ACTION:



Make a pillow with your hands and take a nap.



m for meerkat

ACTION:



Hold up your meerkat paws, and smell the mangoes.



d for dog

ACTION:



Dig like a dog.



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g for gorilla

ACTION:



Beat your chest like a gorilla.



o for octopus

ACTION:



Draw a circle in the air with your finger.



c for crab

ACTION:



Make crab claws with your hands.



k for kangaroo

ACTION:



Make crab claws with your hands.

ck

ck as in back

ACTION:



Make crab claws with your hands.



e for elephant

ACTION:



Raise your hands to your mouth and call out an echo.



u for umbrella

ACTION:



Use your arms to make an umbrella above your head.



r for rat

ACTION:



Raise your rocket hands up into space.



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b for bear

ACTION:



Bounce a ball.



h for hen

ACTION:



Fan your mouth
as if you have
eaten a
hot chilli.



f for frog

ACTION:



Use your
fireman's hose
to put out
the fire.



l for lion

ACTION:



Rub your wrist
on your chin,
as if licking
your paw.



j for jellyfish

ACTION:



Juggle balls
in the air.



v for vulture

ACTION:



Play a violin.



w for worm

ACTION:



Roll your hands
over each other
like a washing
machine.



x as in fox

ACTION:



Make a cross
with your arms
like Agent Fox.



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y for yak

ACTION:

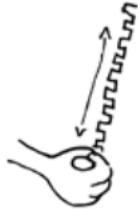


Hold your nose to block out the yucky smell.



z for zebra

ACTION:



Fasten your zip.



qu for quail

ACTION:



Place a queen's crown on your head.



ch for cheetah

ACTION:



Give yourself a cuddle as you chatter in the chill.



sh for sheep

ACTION:



Put your finger to your lips and say 'sh'.



th as in moth

ACTION:



Gently flap your hands like the wings of a moth in the day.



th as in the

ACTION:



Quickly flap your hands like a moth's wings at night.



ng as in lemming

ACTION:



Pull the rope to ring the bell.



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ee as in eel

ACTION:



Press your car horn to make the sound 'ee'.



ar as in alarm

ACTION:



Shake your hands above your head like an alarm clock.



oa as in goat

ACTION:



Row a boat.



or as in tortoise

ACTION:



Pull the cord to sound the horn.



oo as in rook

ACTION:



Look through your binoculars and shrug.



oo as in goose

ACTION:



Look through your binoculars and lean forward.



ai as in alien

ACTION:



Take your aim, and throw an acorn.



igh as in aye-aye

ACTION:



Rest your finger on your cheek and point to your eye.



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ear for earwig

ACTION:



Tug one of your ears.



ow as in owl

ACTION:



Rub your head as if you've had a bump.



ur for urchin

ACTION:



Twist the cap to free Urchin from the bottle.



oi as in oyster

ACTION:



Hide behind your arms, like an oyster's shell, then pop out!



air as in aeroplane

ACTION:



Fly your hand through the air like an aeroplane.



ure as in cure

ACTION:



Give a thumb's up for finding the cure!



er as in beaver

ACTION:



Tap your chin like you're trying to remember something.



ew as in unicorn

ACTION:



Put your finger on your head to make a unicorn horn.



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Useful Websites

The following websites will help you support your child at home with their phonics (most of them are free):

<https://www.readwithfonics.com/> - contains excellent videos and further guidance.

<http://www.phonicsplay.co.uk/> - contains free games for children to read real and pseudo words. Go to the Parents section and click on Interactive Games.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/breakthruChris> - contains lots of short videos to help you revise different phonemes with your child.

<http://www.letters-and-sounds.com/> - lots of games to choose from on the left-hand side of the webpage. Please focus on Phase 2, 3 and 4 games on this website.

http://www.familylearning.org.uk/phonics_games.html - various games to choose from.

<http://www.ictgames.co.uk/> - The English section has a range of fun interactive activities.