

Phonics

**‘The most important gift a school can give a
child is the power to read.’**

(Ofsted, Reading by six. how the best schools do it, 2009.)

Phonics at a glance

Phonics is...

Skills of segmentation
and blending



Knowledge of the
alphabetic code.

Synthetic phonics is simply the ability to convert a letter or letter group into sounds that are then blended together into a word.

Phonics Consists of:

- Identifying sounds in spoken words.
- Recognising the common spellings of each phoneme.
- Blending phonemes into words for reading.
- Segmenting words into phonemes for spelling.

Although there are 26 letters in the English alphabet, there are 44 speech sounds.

Sound	Common spelling	Spelling alternatives					
/b/	b ball		bb ribbon				
/d/	d dog		dd add	ed filled			
/f/	f fan		ff cliff	ph phone	gh laugh	lf calf	ft often
/g/	g grapes		gg egg	gh ghost	gu guest	gue catalogue	
/h/	h hat		wh who				
/j/	j jellyfish		ge cage	g giraffe	dge edge	di soldier	gg exaggerate
/k/	k kite		c cat	ch christmas	cc acclaim	lk folk	qu bouquet
			q(u) queen	ck back	X box		
/l/	l leaf		ll spell				
/m/	m monkey		mm summer	mb climb	mn autumn	lm palm	
/n/	n nest		nn funny	kn knight	gn gnat	pn pneumonia	
/ng/	ng ring		n sink	ngue tongue			

Some Definitions

A Phoneme

This is the smallest unit of sound in a word.

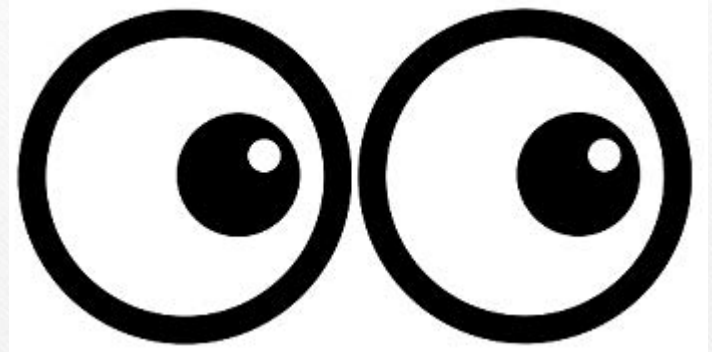


How many phonemes can you hear in

cat?

A grapheme

These are the letters that represent the phoneme.



Children need to practise recognising the grapheme and saying the phoneme that it represents.

The grapheme could be 1 letter, 2 letters or more! We often refer to these as **sound buttons**:

t

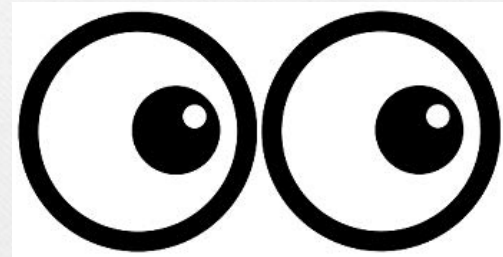
ai

igh

- A phoneme you hear



-
- A grapheme you see



A word always has the same number of phonemes and graphemes!

How to say the sounds

- Saying the sounds correctly with your child is extremely important
-
- What do you get if you add /uh/?
 - Hen
 - Din
 - Mat
-
- The clearer the sound, the easier it is for a child to blend together

This is where it gets tricky!

- Phonemes are represented by graphemes.
- A grapheme can consist of 1, 2 or more letters.
- A phoneme can be represented/spelled in more than one way (cat, kennel, choir)
- The same grapheme may represent more than one phoneme (me, met)

My Phase 3 Sound Mat

j 	n 	w 	x 	y 	z 	zz 	qu 
ch 	sh 	th 	ng 	ai 	ee 	igh 	oa 
oo 	oo 	ar 	or 	ur 	ow 	oi 	ear 
air 	ure 	er 					

twinkl www.twinkl.co.uk

My Phase 5 Sound Mat

ay 	ou 	ie 	ea 	oy 	ir 	ue 	ue 
aw 	wh 	ph 	ew 	ew 	oe 	au 	ey 
a-e 	e-e 	i-e 	o-e 	u-e 	u-e 		

Blending – a key skill for reading

Recognising the letter sounds in a written word, for example:

c-u-p

and then merging or ‘blending’ them in the order in which they are written to pronounce the word ‘cup’.

Segmenting – a key skill for writing

- ‘Chopping up’ the word to spell it out
- The opposite of blending
- Identifying the individual sounds in a spoken word (e.g. h-i-m , s-t-or-k) and writing down letters for each sound (phoneme) to form the word.

Segment and Blend these words...

- plest

- blom

- gris

Nonsense games like this help to build up skills –
and can be fun!

Once children are good with single phonemes...

- DIGRAPHS – 2 letters that make 1 sound

ll ss zz oa ai

- TRIGRAPHS – 3 letters that make 1 sound

- igh ure

- SPLIT DIGRAPHS - e-e a-e

Split digraphs

shape

like

these

Segmenting Activity

- Using 'sound buttons' can you say how many phonemes are in each word.
 - shelf
 - dress
 - cloak
 - shape

Did you get it right?

- shelf = sh – e – l – f = 4 phonemes
-

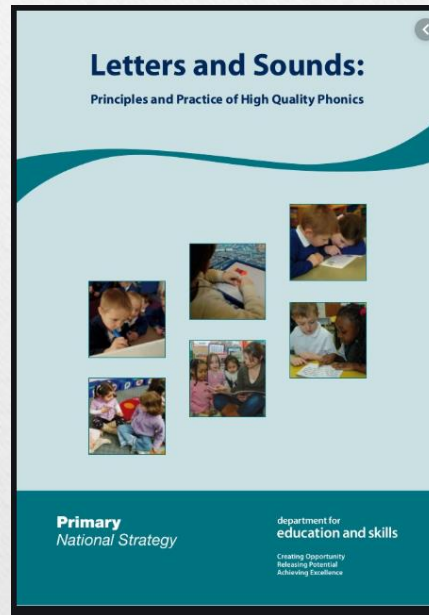
- dress = d – r – e – ss = 4 phonemes

- cloak = c – l – oa – k = 4 phonemes

- shape = sh – a – p – e = 3 phonemes

Letters and Sounds

The Letters and Sounds scheme is divided into six phases, with each phase building on the skills and knowledge of previous learning.



Lesson format

In each year group, phonic lessons follow the same format:

- **Revise:** The children will revise previous learning.
- **Teach:** New phonemes or high frequency or tricky words will be taught.
- **Practise:** The children will practise the new learning by reading and/or writing the words.
- **Apply:** The children will apply their new learning by reading or writing sentences.

Tricky Words/ Common Exception words

- Words that are not phonically decodeable

e.g. was, the, I
- Some are 'tricky' to start with but will become decodeable once we have learned the harder phonemes

e.g. out, there

What does quality phonics learning look like in school?

- Daily
- Fast pace
- Inclusive
- Varied multi-sensory activities
- Clear and correct enunciation of phonemes
- Timely and appropriate feedback
- Consistency of vocabulary eg sound buttons, split digraphs, sounds, etc.

Phonic learning is fun!

The children learn and practise their phonemes in lots of fun ways:

- Sound talking and rhyming.
- Playing games – table games or interactive games on the computer.
- Using phoneme frames, “sound buttons” and whiteboards to spell words.
- Sorting phonemes.
- Making words with phonemes.
- Being phoneme “detectives”.
- Reading and writing sentences. Silly sentences are great fun!

Phase 1

- Instrumental sounds
- Body percussion
- Rhythm and Rhyme
- Alliteration
- Voice sounds
- Environmental sounds
- Oral blending and segmenting

Phase 2 (Reception term 1)

- In this phase children continue practising what they have learned from phase 1, including 'sound-talk'.
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- They are taught the phonemes (*sounds*) for a number of graphemes (*letters*).
 - Which phoneme is represented by which grapheme and that a phoneme can be represented by **more than one letter**, for example, /sh/ as in **sh- o -p**.
 - VC and CVC words

Phase 2

- Sounds are introduced in sets

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- Set 1: s a t p
 - Set 2: i n m d
 - Set 3: g o c k
 - Set 4: c k e u r
 - Set 5: h b f ff l ll ss

Phase 3 (Year R and beginning Year 1)

The purpose of this phase is to:

- teach more graphemes, most of which are made of two letters, for example, 'oa' as in **boat**

ai, ee, igh, oa, oo, ar, or, ur, ow, oi, ear, air, ure, er

- practise blending and segmenting a wider set of CVC words, eg **fizz, chip, sheep, light**
- learn all letter names and begin to form them correctly
- read more tricky words and begin to spell some of them
- read and write words in phrases and sentences.

Phase 4 (Year 1)

- Children continue to practise previously learned graphemes and phonemes and learn how to read and write:
 - **CVCC** words: **tent, damp, toast, chimp.** For example, in the word 'toast', **t = consonant, oa = vowel, s = consonant, t = consonant.**
 - **CCVC** words: **swim, plum, sport, cream, spoon.**
- They will be learning more tricky words and continuing to read and write sentences together.
 - **Tricky words - said, so, do, have, like, some, come, were, there, little, one, when, out, what**

Phase 5 (Year 1)

- The children will learn new graphemes for reading and spelling.
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- They will learn best fit spellings.
E.g. ai, a-e, ay all make the same sound in words
 - They will continue to read and spell tricky words.

Phase 6 (Year 2)

- Recognising phonic irregularities and becoming more secure with less common grapheme – phoneme correspondences.
- Applying phonic skills and knowledge to recognise and spell an increasing number of complex words.
- Introducing and teaching the past and continuous present tense –
 - look look**ed** look**ing**
- Investigating and learning how to add prefixes and suffixes
 - **un**happy happ**ier** happ**iest**
- Teaching spelling of longer words (compound words)
- Finding and learning the difficult bits in words

Phase 6 (cont)

- Teaching spelling of longer words (compound words)
- Finding and learning the difficult bits in words

The work in all phases needs to be supplemented and backed up by high quality speaking and listening opportunities to :

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- further develop auditory discrimination,
 - further develop auditory memory and sequencing,
 - increase vocabulary and language comprehension.

These are essential skills for fluent readers and writers.

Supporting phonics at home

- Play 'I spy'
- Play with magnetic letters, using some two-grapheme (letter) combinations, eg: *r-ai-n = rain* blending for reading

rain = r-ai-n segmenting for spelling

- Help your child learn their spellings (play dough, paint, posters, water, pasta, sand)
- Spot graphemes in books
- Praise your child for trying out words and value their use of their phonic knowledge
- Help your child learn the tricky words by playing games eg pairs
- Look for phonic games
- Play pairs with words and pictures

REMEMBER: Phonics is not the only thing needed to become a fluent reader and writer.

Please continue to read with your child each night and encourage them to:

- Sound out
- Re-read to check it makes sense.
- Use pictures for clues.
- Ask questions and talk about the book.

And most importantly ENJOY READING!

Useful websites

www.letters-and-sounds.com

www.phonicsplay.co.uk

www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups/the-alphablocks-guide-to-phonics

www.topmarks.co.uk

To hear how to pronounce sounds try this website:

<https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/reading-owl/phonics-made-easy/easy/>