

# Phonics

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**‘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...

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**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.

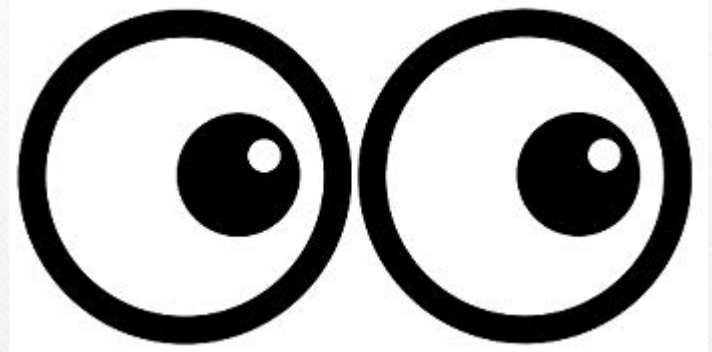


How many phonemes can you hear in

**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**

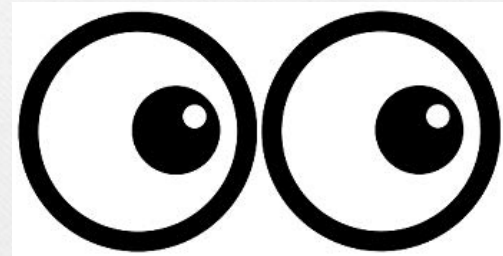
**igh**



- 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
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- 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](https://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:

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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

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- blom

- gris

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

# Once children are good with single phonemes...

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- 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

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shape

like

these

# Segmenting Activity

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- 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
- 

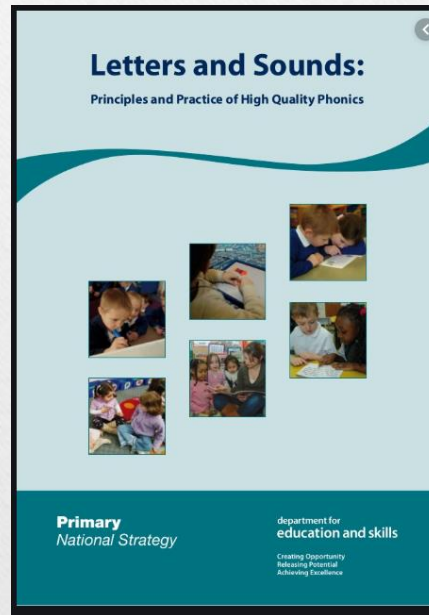
- dress = d – r – e – ss = 4 phonemes

- 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

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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?

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- 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)

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- 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

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- 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](http://www.letters-and-sounds.com)

[www.phonicsplay.co.uk](http://www.phonicsplay.co.uk)

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[www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups/the-alphablocks-guide-to-phonics](http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbeebies/grownups/the-alphablocks-guide-to-phonics)

[www.topmarks.co.uk](http://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/>