



Supporting your
child with phonics



In order to read successfully, children need two skills; phonics and language comprehension. They need to be able to decode by blending the sounds in words to read them and they need to be able to understand what the word means and the context within which it appears.

Phonics is a means to an end. The sooner that children can recognise the sounds (phonemes), the letters (graphemes) that represent them and blend them together in order to read words, the sooner they can read for understanding, purpose and pleasure.

Language development

Understanding is developed through language. The exploration and explicit teaching of new vocabulary, ideas, information and increasing knowledge and understanding of the world will develop comprehension. If children understand something that they hear, they will understand it when they read. Therefore, phonics and language development should go hand-in-hand. However, for beginner readers, phonics takes the lead as the prime approach to reading.

Talk! Talk! Talk! Talk about people, places, events, stories, information and ideas. Encourage children to question and explore themes, problems and issues. Use books, photographs, paintings, films, role-play and creativity to generate discussion and vocabulary.



What is phonics?

Phonics:

- a method of teaching children to connect the letters of the alphabet to the sounds that they make and blend them for reading;
- a method of teaching children to identify the individual sounds (phonemes) within words and segment them for spelling.

The 26 letters of the alphabet represent the sounds in English speech sounds. These letters and combinations of these letters make 44 sounds.

Definitions

Speech sounds are called **phonemes**. These are the smallest units of sounds within words. The letters, or groups of letters which represent phonemes, are called **graphemes**. Phonemes can be represented by graphemes of one, two or three letters:

t sh (digraph) igh (trigraph)

Consonant digraphs are made up of two consonants that make one sound:

sh ch th ck ng ll ss ff wr wh kn gn

Vowel digraphs are made up of two vowels or a vowel and a consonant that makes one sound

oo ee oa ow ou or ar er ue oi ai

44 Phonemes ~ British Received Pronunciation Consonant Phonemes

| Consonant phonemes | Sample word on THRASS chart | Vowel phonemes | Sample word on THRASS chart |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| /b/ | bird | /a/ | ant |
| /c/ | cat | /e/ | bed |
| /d/ | dog | /i/ | tin |
| /f/ | fish | /o/ | frog |
| /g/ | gate | /u/ | bull |
| /h/ | hand | /ai/ | snail |
| /j/ | jam | /ee/ | tree |
| /l/ | leg | /igh/ | light |
| /m/ | mouse | /oa/ | boat |
| /n/ | net | /oo/ | moon |
| /p/ | panda | /oo/ | book |
| /r/ | rain | /ow/ | cow |
| /s/ | sun | /oi/ | coin |
| /t/ | tap | /ar/ | car |
| /v/ | voice | /or/ | fork |
| /w/ | water | /ur/ | fur |
| /y/ | yawn | /air/ | hair |
| /z/ | zip | /ear/ | ear |
| /sh/ | shark | /ure/ | pure (not THRASS chart) |
| /ch/ | chair | | |
| /th/ | thumb | | |
| /th/ | feather | | |
| /ng/ | king | | |

There are about 144 different ways to spell these sounds. (See more examples on a THRASS chart)

It is very important that these phonemes are articulated precisely and accurately. Phonemes should be enunciated as a pure, clean sound. There should be no extra /er/ sound. This is known as a schwa. If children hear and say the schwa, it makes blending for reading difficult. If a child hears cuh-a-tuh when trying to read cat, the blended word will make no sense.

Most consonants should be pronounced in a continuous manner – e.g. ssssss mmmmmm llllllll nnnnnn shshshsh rrrrrr zzzzzzzz vvvvvv. Some can't be said like this e.g. /c/ /t/ /p/ /b/ /d/ and /g/) but /c/ /t/ and /p/ should be enunciated without the voice. Phonemes wwwwww and yyyyyyy are less easy and need practice.

See this link for an example of pure sounds:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCI2mu7URBc>

Segmenting and Blending: Segmenting and blending are reversible key phonic skills.

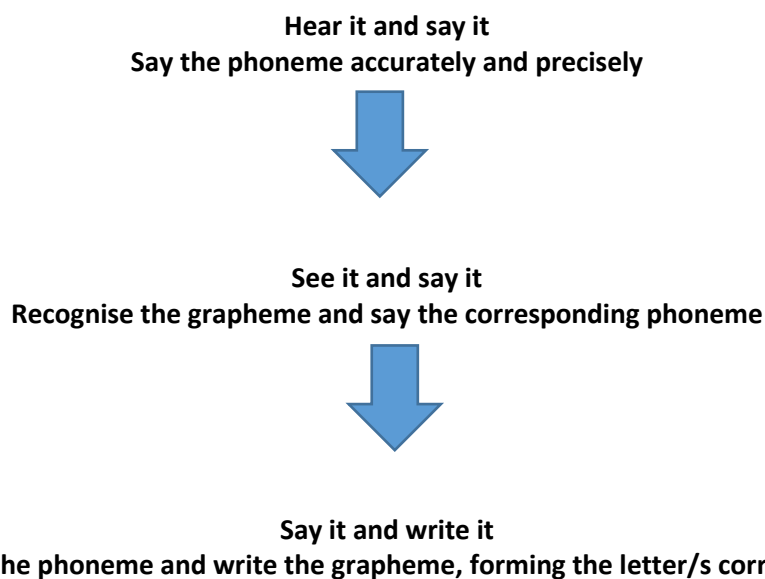


- Segmenting ('chopping', 'robot arms') consists of breaking words down into their separate phonemes to spell; s p e ll.
- Blending consists of building (synthesising) words from their separate phonemes c –a- t cat

Decoding

Decoding is the process of blending each phoneme in a word, in order to read the whole word.

Teaching a new GPG (grapheme phoneme correspondence):



Tricky words

If the word is decodable at the phase the child is working in, they should decode it. If not, the word is a tricky word and should be taught in the same way as any other phonic decoding with a focus on the tricky element;

eg Oral segmenting with phoneme buttons s a i d

We know /s/ and we know /d/ but the /ai/ is the tricky bit. It says /e/ So the word says s e d (orally segment) Therefore the child needs to lock in the ai part of said.

We hope you have found this useful. If you have any other questions, please contact your child's class teacher.