

Phonics

Phonics is a great programme that we use in school to teach children how to read. However, we understand that it can be confusing to a lot of us because we were not taught how to read like this in school. We've put this quick guide together to help you understand it more, so that you'll be better placed to help your child whilst they're learning from home. We don't want to overwhelm you, so if you need clarification, just email us!

Keywords

Phonemes: all the single sounds in English. There are 44 in the English language, but 120 different graphemes or ways of making these sounds/phonemes.

Graphemes: the letters which make up a phoneme. For example, 'c' and 'h' together makes the phoneme 'ch' which you can hear in the word 'child'.

Digraphs: graphemes with 2 letters, but only one sound/phoneme for example - 'th', 'ch', 'ph', 'oa' etc. There are different digraphs in each phase that are taught in a particular order.

Trigraphs: graphemes with 3 letters but one sound. These are: 'igh', 'ure', 'air', 'ear'. Children need lots of practise finding these in whole words.

Split-digraphs: these are also known as 'magic e'. The 'e' makes the vowel say its name. For example, listen to how the 'i' changes in 'sit' when you add the 'e' in 'site'. These are taught in Phase 5.

Blending: this is a very important skill for reading. It is where children identify each sound in a word before blending or merging them to form the word.

Segmenting: this is when children use sounds learnt in phonics to spell or write words.

Tricky words: these are all the words in English which do not follow the 'phonics' rules for example, 'said'. The tricky part in this word is the 'ai'.

Syllables: these are the parts of words we pronounce. They are the natural breaks in a given word which can be clapped out or identified by feeling how many times your chin drops when saying them. The word 'sit' has one syllable, whereas 'sitting' has two. Many words have just one syllable and children are encouraged to break down words into their syllables if a word is multi-syllabic.

Phonics in Year 1

In Year 1, the children continue to build upon the phonics they learnt in Reception. There are 6 phases overall. However, in Year One we usually work through phases 2, 3, 4 and 5. Phonics breaks down reading into three sections:

- 1) Grapheme Phoneme Correspondences (GPCs): these are all the basic sounds/phonemes in English. In phonics rather than referring to letter names we say their sounds. These are taught in a particular order starting with 's a t p i n'.
- 2) Blending: children are taught to sound out each phoneme and then blend or merge them together to make the word. This is where you notice if your child is spotting sounds, particularly digraphs and trigraphs in words. **If the word is long or 'multi-syllabic' then children are encouraged to break the word down into its syllables.**
- 3) Segmenting: this is the opposite to blending and we teach children to say the word before breaking it down to then spell it.

Below, we've broken down the typical '4-part' phonics lesson (which would usually last for about 15-20 minutes).

We've also included links to various websites (e.g. PhonicsPlay). Just click on any of the words like this: [link](#)

1) Recap/practise

Begin each phonics session by going through all the sounds that have been previously learnt. Almost every child in Year One has completed phase 3 and 5 now. However, all children vary in how much practise they need. The best way to check which sounds to practise most is by going through all of phase 2, 3, 5 sounds and noting down the phonemes your child is finding hard to recall. Then, you can focus more on these ones in the future.

2) Teach

This is the section of the lesson where you will teach 2 new phonemes or recap 2 or 3 which are still needing practise. Show the phoneme you are targeting first and ask your child to say it. You can get them to say it in different voices to keep it fun. Then ask them to write it down from memory as many times as they can in 10 seconds. Challenge them to beat previous scores too!

3) Practise

This is the fun bit! Now practise the sounds taught during the Teach section through games and activities. We love playing 'Pictionary', where the children read a word which includes the taught sound. They then draw a picture to match it. We also love playing splat where we segment a given word and use a fly swatter to splat each grapheme to spell out the word. We will attach some pictures of possible activities including the ones which can be found on [PhonicsPlay](#) in the 'phonics ideas' document.

4) Apply

Now your child will 'apply' the sounds they have learnt by reading or being read sentences which include the words with the sounds. For example, if they have been taught the phoneme 'igh', the sentence may read like this: 'Can a bird fly higher than a tree?'