

Phonics

The 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.

Graphemes

A grapheme is a symbol of a phoneme. It is a letter or group of letters representing a sound.

Segmenting and blending

Segmenting consists of breaking words down into phonemes to spell. Blending consists of building words from phonemes to read. Both skills are important.

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/ and /ch/.

Trigraph

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

Split digraph

A digraph in which the two letters are not adjacent – e.g. **make**

Abbreviations

VC, CVC, and CCVC are the respective abbreviations for vowel-consonant, consonant-vowel-consonant, consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant, and are used to describe the order of graphemes in words (e.g. *am* (VC), *Sam* (CVC), *slam* (CCVC), or *each* (VC), *beach* (CVC), *bleach* (CCVC)).

Phase 1

Phase One of 'Letters and Sounds' concentrates on developing children's speaking and listening skills and lays the foundations for the phonic work which starts in Phase 2. The emphasis during Phase 1 is to get children attuned to the sounds around them and ready to begin developing oral blending and segmenting skills. Phase 1 is divided into seven aspects.

Each aspect contains three strands:

- Tuning in to sounds (auditory discrimination)
- Listening and remembering sounds (auditory memory and sequencing)
- Talking about sounds (developing vocabulary and language comprehension)

Phase 2

In Phase 2, letters and their sounds are introduced one at a time. A set of letters is taught each week, in the following sequence:

Set 1: s, a, t, p

Set 2: i, n, m, d

Set 3: g, o, c, k

Set 4: ck, e, u, r

Set 5: h, b, f, ff, l, ll, ss

The children will begin to learn to blend and segment to help begin reading and spelling. This

will begin with simple words. VC and CVC words.

Alongside this, children are introduced to tricky words. These are the words that are irregular. This means that phonics cannot be applied to the reading and spelling of these words.

The tricky words introduced in phase 2 are:

to	the	no	go	l
----	-----	----	----	---

Phase 3

By the time children reach Phase 3, they will already be able to blend and segment words containing the 19 letters taught in Phase 2. In Phase 3 twenty-five new graphemes are introduced (one at a time). This phase starts in term two of Reception through the term one of Year 1.

Set 6: j, v, w, x

Set 7: y, z, zz, qu

Consonant digraphs: ch, sh, th, ng

Vowel digraphs: ai, ee, igh, oa, oo, ar, or, ur, ow, oi, ear, air, ure, er, ay

Sounds	Word example
sh	shin
th	thick
ng	song
ai	train
igh	sight
oa	boat
oi	coil
oo (long)	boot
ee	tree
ay	play

Sounds	Word example
oo (short)	cook
ow	now
ar	star
air	hair
ear	hear
er	term
ur	curl
or	fork
ure	pure

we	me	be	was	no	go
my	you	they	her	all	are

Phase 4

By Phase 4, children will be able to represent each of 42 phonemes with a grapheme. They will blend phonemes to read CVC words and segment CVC words for spelling. They will also be able to read two syllable words that are simple. They will be able to read all the tricky words learnt so far and will be able to spell some of them. This phase consolidates all the children have learnt in the previous phases

Tricky words:

said	so	she	he	have	like
some	come	were	there	little	one
they	all	are	do	when	out
what	my	her			

Phase 3 and 4 are often taught alongside each other at the rate of the child's ability.

Phase 5

This phase is forced on in year 1. Children will be taught new graphemes and alternative pronunciations for these graphemes, as well as graphemes they already know. They will begin to learn to choose the appropriate grapheme when spelling.

New graphemes for reading:

Sound	Word example	Sound	Word example	Sound	Word example	Sound	Word example
ow	snow	oy	boy	wh	when	a_e	make
ou	out	ir	girl	ph	photo	e_e	these
ie	tie	ue	blue	ew	new	i_e	like
ea	eat	aw	saw	oe	toe	o_e	home
				au	Paul	u_e	rule

Tricky words:

oh	their	people	Mr	Mrs	looked
called	asked	water	where	who	again
thought	through	work	mouse	many	laughed
because	different	any	eyes	friends	once
please					

Phase 6

In phase 6, the focus is on learning spelling rules for word endings (these are known as suffixes). The children will learn how words change when you add certain letters. There are 12 different suffixes taught:

-s -es -ing -ed -er -est -y -en
-ful -ly -ment -ness

Phonics at home

Tips for teaching your child the 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, eg. **Paul**.
- ◆ When you talk about letters to your child, remember to use the letter sounds: **a buh cuh duh e ...** 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. **eg. cat, would sound like: see ay tee**
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Play short fun games e.g. I Spy. Roll the dice how many times can you form the letter, or can you a given number of items that begin with...
- ◆ Get your child to be the teacher.

Useful webpages

<http://www.phonicsplay.co.uk>

Alphablocks videos

A short clip of 'Song of sounds' can be found on Youtube.

If you cannot remember the correct pronunciation, type 'sounding out phonics letters' into Youtube.