



# Phonics

In school, we follow the Letters and Sounds programme. Letters and Sounds is a phonics resource published by the Department for Education and Skills which consists of six phases.

## 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.



## Phase 3

By the time children reach Phase 3, they will already be able to blend and segment words.

**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

Sounds	Word example	Sounds	Word example	Sounds	Word example
j	jam	sh	shin	oo (short)	cook
v	vet	th	thick	ow	now
w	win	ng	song	ar	star
x	box	ai	train	air	hair
y	yes	igh	sight	ear	hear
z	zip	oa	boat	er	term
zz	buzz	oi	coil	ur	curl
qu	quick	oo (long)	boot	or	fork
ch	chop	ee	tree	ure	pure

### Tricky words:

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

## Phase 4

By Phase 4, children will be able to 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 5

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
ay	day	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.

## Useful webpages

<http://www.letters-and-sounds.com>

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