



Phonics Information for Parents

Introduction

Phonics is recommended as the first strategy that children should be taught to help them read. It runs alongside other teaching methods such as whole class reading to help children develop vital reading skills and hopefully give them a real love of reading.

Children now need to know the name of each letter, known as the **grapheme**, as well as the **phoneme**, which is the sound it makes. Children can then use their phoneme knowledge to segment and blend words to help them read. The reason English can become challenging to learn is that it has around 44 phonemes but around 120 graphemes or ways of writing down those 44 phonemes. So some graphemes are made up from more than one letter. Some have 2 letters making one sound, some 3 and even some with 4. Another challenge is that some graphemes can represent more than one phoneme. For example 'ch' makes different sounds in these words: chip, school, chef.

Below is a glossary of terms which you may find useful as well as lists of websites we would recommend. You can use these with your child to help them develop their Phonics.

Helpful Websites

www.mrthorne.com

www.phonicsplay.com

www.youtube.com

www.letters-and-sounds.com

www.topmarks.co.uk

<http://www.ictgames.com/literacy.html>

<https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/home/reading-owl/expert-help/phonics-made-easy>

<https://www.turtlediary.com/games/phonics.html>

<https://www.phonicshero.com/phonics-app/>



Glossary:

Blend (vb) — to draw individual sounds together to pronounce a word, e.g. s-n-a-p, blended together, reads snap

Cluster — two (or three) letters making two (or three) sounds, e.g. the first three letters of 'straight' are a consonant cluster

Digraph — two letters making one sound, e.g. sh, ch, th, ph.

Vowel digraph — two letters which, together, make one vowel sound, e.g. ai, oo, ow

Split digraph — two letters, split, making one sound, e.g. a-e as in make or i-e in site

Grapheme — a letter or a group of letters representing one sound, e.g. sh, ch, igh, ough (as in 'though')

grapheme-phoneme correspondence (GPC) — the relationship between sounds and the letters which represent those sounds; also known as 'letter-sound correspondences'

Phoneme — the smallest single identifiable sound, e.g. the letters 'sh' represent just one sound, but 'sp' represents two (/s/ and /p/)

Segment (vb) — to split up a word into its individual phonemes in order to spell it, e.g. the word 'cat' has three phonemes: /c/, /a/, /t/

VC, CVC, CCVC — the abbreviations for vowel-consonant, consonant-vowel-consonant, consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant, which are used to describe the order of letters in words, e.g. am, ham, slam.



Phonics Phases of Learning

Phase 1

Phase One 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) and 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

Phase 3

By the time they reach Phase 3, children will already be able to blend and segment words containing the 19 letters taught in Phase 2.

Over the twelve weeks which Phase 3 is expected to last, twenty-five new graphemes are introduced (one at a time).

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



Phase 4

When children start Phase Four of the Letters and Sounds phonics programme, they will know a grapheme for each of the 42 phonemes. They will be able to blend phonemes to read CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words and segment in order to spell them.

Children will also have begun reading straightforward two-syllable words and simple captions, as well as reading and spelling some tricky words.

In Phase 4, no new graphemes are introduced. The main aim of this phase is to consolidate the children's knowledge and to help them learn to read and spell words which have adjacent consonants, such as trap, string and milk.

Phase 5

Children entering Phase Five will already be able to read and spell words with adjacent consonants, such as trap, string and flask. They will also be able to read and spell some polysyllabic words.

In Phase Five, children will learn more graphemes and phonemes. For example, they already know ai as in rain, but now they will be introduced to ay as in day and a-e as in make.

Alternative pronunciations for graphemes will also be introduced, e.g. ea in tea, head and break.

With practice, speed at recognising and blending graphemes will improve. Word and spelling knowledge will be worked on extensively.

Phase 6

At the start of Phase Six, children will have already learnt the most frequently occurring grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) in the English language. They will be able to read many familiar words automatically. When they come across unfamiliar words they will in many cases be able to decode them quickly and quietly using their well-developed sounding and blending skills. With more complex unfamiliar words they will often be able to decode them by sounding them out.

At this stage children should be able to spell words phonemically although not always correctly. In Phase Six the main aim is for children to become more fluent readers and more accurate spellers.