

Phonics

In school, we follow the Letters and Sounds programme 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 (the way it is written). 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 by squashing the sounds together. 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. ma**k**e (taught in year 1)

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).

Tricky words

There are some words which don't follow the usual rule and cannot be blended or segmented e.g. the. These words just have to be learned by sight.

High Frequency words

These are words which are commonly used and is helpful if children recognise them by sight and to spell them without having to sound them out, such as **and**, **said**, **was**.

Phase 1 (taught in nurseries/pre-schools and Reception)

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 (taught in Reception)

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.

The tricky words introduced in phase 2 are:

to	the	no	go	I
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Phase 3 (taught in Reception)

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. 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

Tricky words:

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

Phase 4 (taught in Reception and Year 1)

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 5 and 6 are taught in year 1 and 2.

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 rather than the alphabet names of the letters. 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 we don't say it with 'uh' sound at the end, e.g. s is not s-uh but ssss.

Useful webpages

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

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

www.ictgames.com/literacy

Useful Apps (just beware of letter formation of many apps won't be cursive)

Jolly phonics

Hairy phonics

Phonics play

YouTube has useful videos: jolly phonics songs and pronunciations of the sounds.