





Phonics and Early Reading

16th September 2025

The more that you read,

The more things you will know.

The more that you learn,

The more places you'll go.

-Dr. Seuss

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- Here's how many words children would have heard by the time they were 5 years old with access to books:
 - Never read to - 4,662 words;
 - 1–2 times per week - 63,570 words;
 - 3–5 times per week - 169,520 words;
 - Daily - 296,660 words;
 - five books a day - 1,483,300 words.

What is phonics?

- Phonics is a method for teaching reading and writing to children in primary schools. Children link sounds (phonemes) and their written form (graphemes) in order to recognise and read words, using basic units of knowledge to “decode” new or unfamiliar words

How is phonics taught?

Words are made up of just 44 sounds in English. Here's a quick explanation of some of the key concepts.

- **Phoneme** - the smallest unit of sound as it is spoken.
- **Grapheme** - a written symbol that represents a sound (phoneme) that's either one letter or a sequence of letters
- **Digraph** - two letters that work together to make the same sound (ch, sh, ph)
- **Trigraph** - three letters that work together to make the same sound (igh, ore, ear)
- **Split digraph** (used to be called 'magic e') - two letters that work together to make the same sound, separated by another letter in the same word. This enables children to understand the difference in vowel sounds between, for example, grip/gripe, rag/rage, tap/tape.

Phonics phases

- There are 6 phonics phases. They are taught throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage and into KS1. If children have attended a nursery setting/childminder setting they will have started on phase 1 and some may have moved onto phase 2.
- Children develop and understand phonics differently, so we tailor our phonics teaching to suit the individual child.

Phonics phase 1

- Environmental sounds
- Instrumental sounds
- Body percussion (e.g. clapping and stamping)
- Rhythm and rhyme
- Alliteration
- Voice sounds
- Oral blending and segmenting

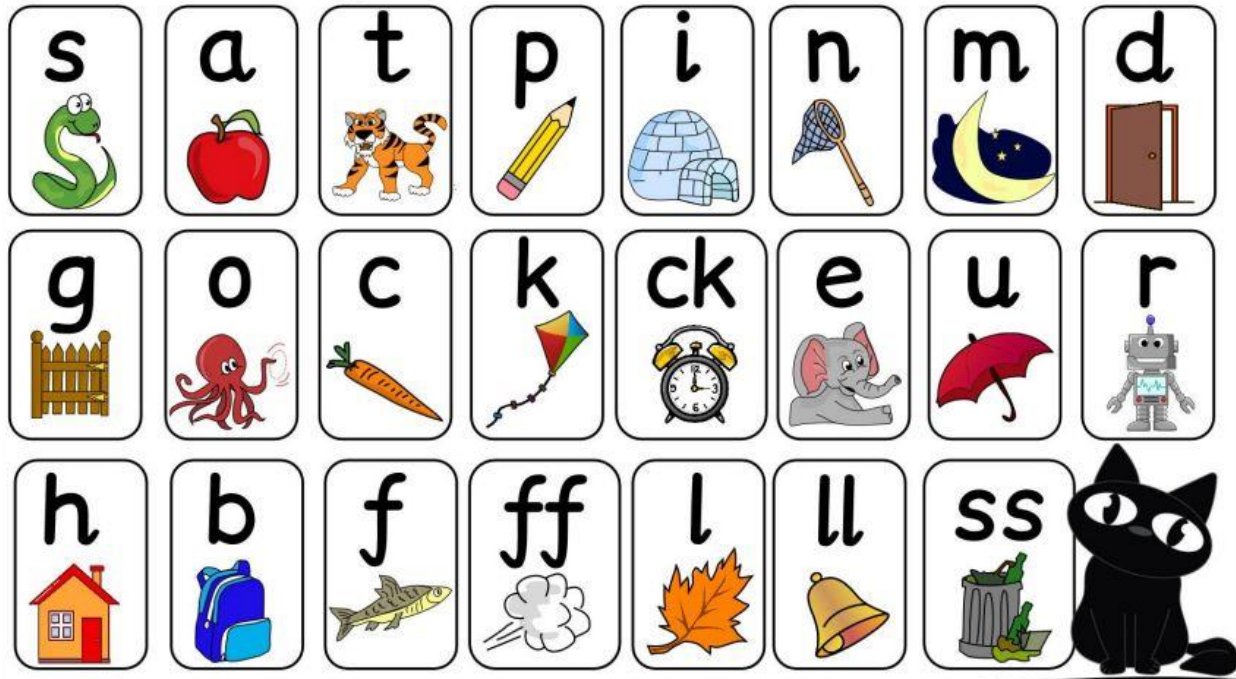
Phonics phase 2

- Children focus on learning the 19 most common single letter sounds
- Some children may have learnt these sound prior to joining reception so we also focus on blending the sounds together and pronouncing them correctly
- They are not necessarily taught in alphabetical order but in the order most commonly used e.g. s, a, t, p, i, n...
- Children will learn to blend and segment with the letters and read CVC words like dog, cat

They will learn some tricky words like I, no

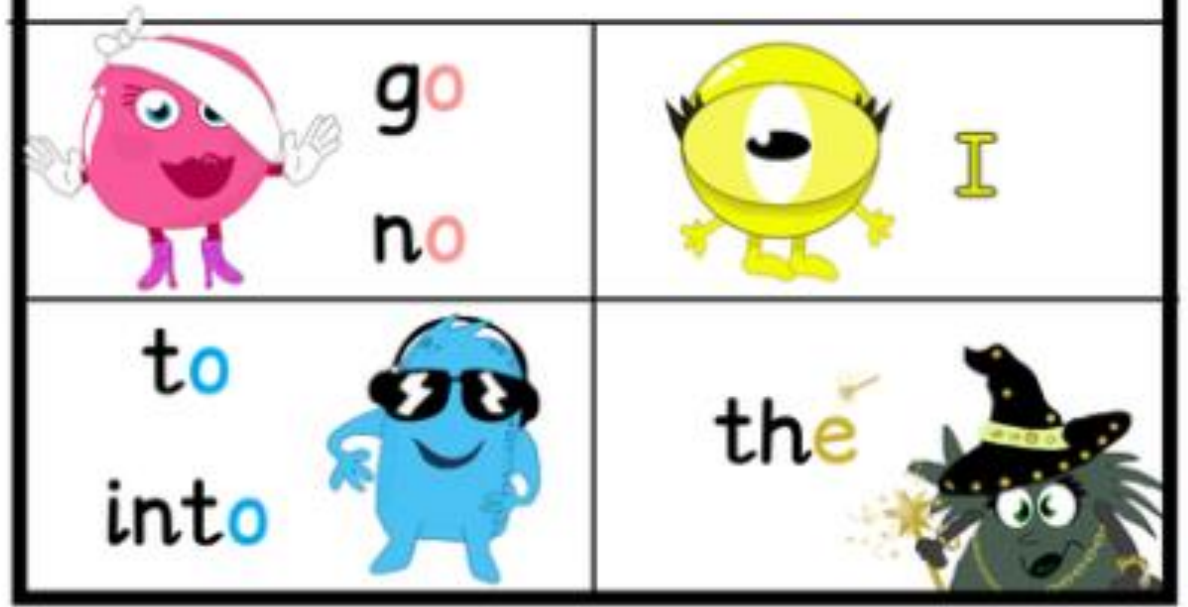
Phase 2

My Phase 2 Sound Mat



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Phonics

Tricky Words PHASE 2



Enunciation

- It is vital that the sounds are pronounced accurately. This will help children when segmenting and blending words.
- We refer to the sound of the letter as the 'phoneme' and we also discuss 'letter names' e,g, ABC. When sounding out it is important children say the pure sound and are not schwaring e.g. mmm not muh.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCI2mu7URBc>

Phonics Phase 3

- Phase 3 introduces children to the remaining, more difficult and/or less commonly used phonemes. There are around 25 of these, depending on which scheme is followed, mainly made up of two letters such as /ch/, /ar/, /ow/ and /ee/.
- Children are taught to recognise more tricky words, including 'me,' 'was,' 'my,' 'you' and 'they'. They learn the names of the letters, as well as the sounds they make.

Phase 3

My Phase 3 Sound Mat



Macmillan
Phonics

Tricky Words

PHASE 3



we be me
he she



Phonics phase 4

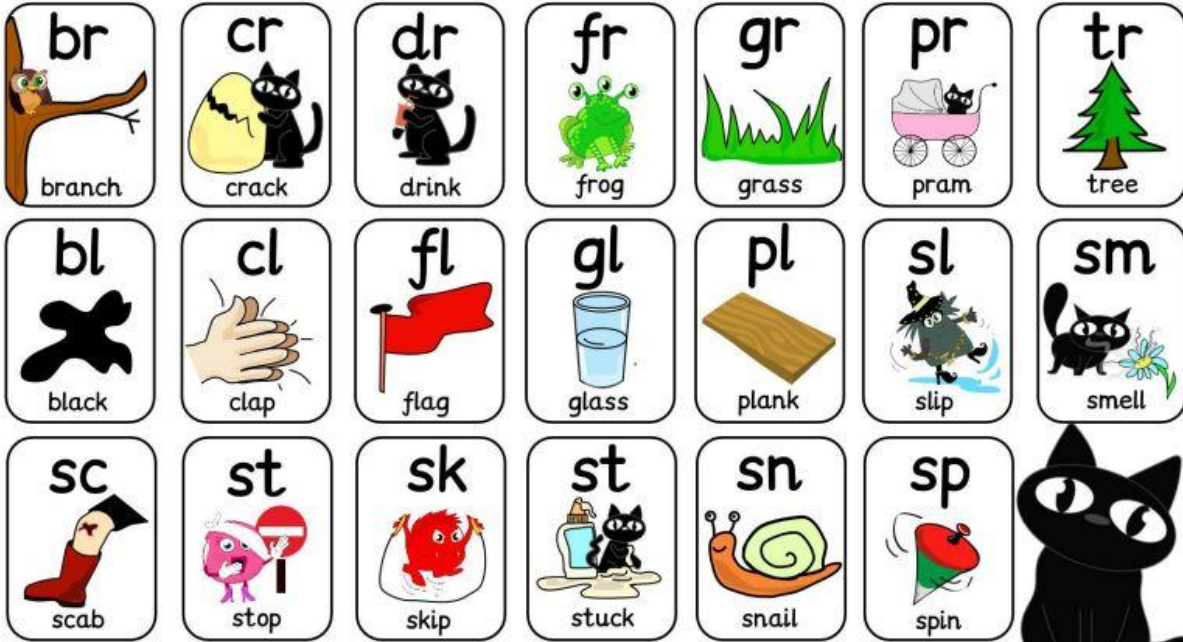
By phase 4, phonics teaching is about consolidating and refining their knowledge, introducing more spelling patterns and tricky words, and increasing vocabulary

In Phase 4 phonics, children will, among other things, practise reading and spelling CVCC words ('bump', 'nest', 'belt,' 'milk', etc)

- Practise reading and spelling high frequency words
- Practise reading and writing sentences
- Learn more tricky words, including 'have,' 'like,' 'some,' 'little'
- Read words with more than one syllable e.g. sandpit, postman

Phase 4

My Phase 4 Sound Mat



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Phonics

Tricky Words PHASE 4



Phonics phase 5

- Children learn new graphemes (different ways of spelling each sound) and alternative pronunciations for these: for example, learning that the grapheme 'ow' makes a different sound in 'snow' and 'cow'.
- They should become quicker at blending, and start to do it silently.
- They learn about split digraphs (the 'magic e') such as the a-e in 'name.'
- They'll start to choose the right graphemes when spelling, and will learn more tricky words, including 'people,' 'water' and 'friend'. They also learn one new phoneme: /zh/, as in 'treasure.'

Phase 5

By the end of Year 1, children should be able to:

- Say the sound for any grapheme they are shown
- Write the common graphemes for any given sound (e.g. 'e,' 'ee,' 'ie,' 'ea')
- Use their phonics knowledge to read and spell unfamiliar words of up to three [syllables](#)
- Read all of the 100 high frequency words, and be able to spell most of them
- Form letters correctly

Phase 5

National Curriculum Sound Mat

dge bridge	g gem	c city	kn knee	gn gnome	wr write	y cry
le apple	il pencil	el camel	al hospital	al ball	o won	ey donkey
W-a witch	W-or worm	W-ar ward	s saw	ti train	i lion	

National Curriculum Sound Mat

aw saw	au author	air chair	ear beard	are care
ph phone	wh wheel	e he / she	o open	y happy

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Tricky Words

PHASE 5

oh	could	people
their	Mr	Mrs
asked	called	looked

Phonics phase 6

- Phase 6 phonics takes place throughout Year 2, with the aim of children becoming fluent readers and accurate spellers.

By Phase 6, children should be able to read hundreds of words using one of three strategies:

- Reading them automatically
- Decoding them quickly and silently
- Decoding them aloud

Phonics lessons in school

- Most importantly we try to make them fun and very interactive!

What we do in school

- Develop vocabulary through conversation and picture books
- Daily phonics lessons
- Storytime
- Opportunities to ask questions about stories

Reading activities

How do picture books encourage reading?

- Develop vocabulary
- Opportunity to answer questions and check understanding
- Initiates conversations with children about own experiences
- Allows children to tell their own version of a story

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Angry Red A



Green Froggy



Yellow I



Miss Oh No



U-Hoo



Cool Blue



Brown Owl



Ghosts



Tricky Witch



The Black Cats

How can you help at home?

Here are more ways you can reinforce phonics learning at home:

- **Team up with the teacher.** Ask how you can highlight phonics and reading outside of class, and share any concerns you have.
- **Listen to your child read daily.** If your child stumbles on a word, encourage them to sound it out. But if they still can't get it, provide the word so they don't get discouraged.
- **Boost comprehension.** Ask questions like, "What do you think will happen next?" or "What did he mean by that?"
- **Revisit familiar books.** It's okay if your child wants to re-read favourite books from earlier years. In fact, it's actually beneficial!
- **Read aloud.** Choose books on topics that excite your child, and read with gusto, using different voices for each character.
- **Spread the joy.** Show your child how much you value reading by having plenty of books and magazines around the house. You'll teach phonics as well as cultivate a lifelong love of reading.

How can you help at home?

- Hold a conversation – Any conversation can develop vocabulary
- Play phonics games – initial letter sounds, rhyming, alliteration
- Read regularly- A couple of pages each night is more beneficial than trying to read the whole book in one night
- Revisit the book – Don't read it only once
- If using picture books, encourage your child to tell the story, talk about the characters, answer questions.
- When sounding out, no schwaring!

Speech and Language

- If your child is not pronouncing all words correctly, it is important to model back to them what should have been said. The more they hear the correct language the more they will begin to copy this.

Questions

