

Phonics and Early Reading

September 2026

The more that you read,

The more things you will know.

The more that you learn,

The more places you'll go.

—Dr. Seuss

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 decode and read words.

How is phonics taught?

- ▶ **Phoneme** - the smallest unit of sound as it is spoken. English words are made from just 44 different phonemes.
- ▶ **Grapheme** - a written letter or letters that represents a sound (phoneme). Some graphemes can make more than one sound depending on the word it is in. This can make learning to read and write very tricky!
- ▶ **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 many will have moved onto phase 2.
- ▶ Children develop and understand phonics differently, so we tailor our phonics teaching to suit the individual child.

Phase 1

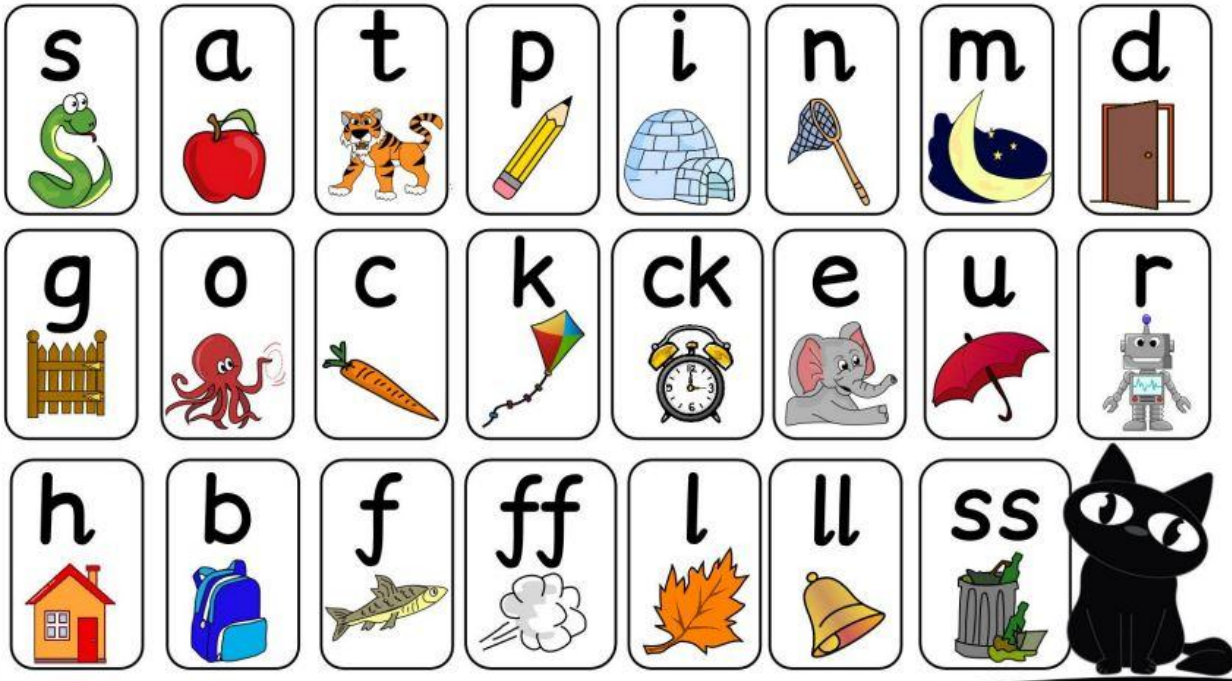
- ▶ Environmental sounds
- ▶ Instrumental sounds
- ▶ Body percussion (e.g. clapping and stamping)
- ▶ Rhythm and rhyme
- ▶ Alliteration
- ▶ Voice sounds
- ▶ Oral blending and segmenting

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

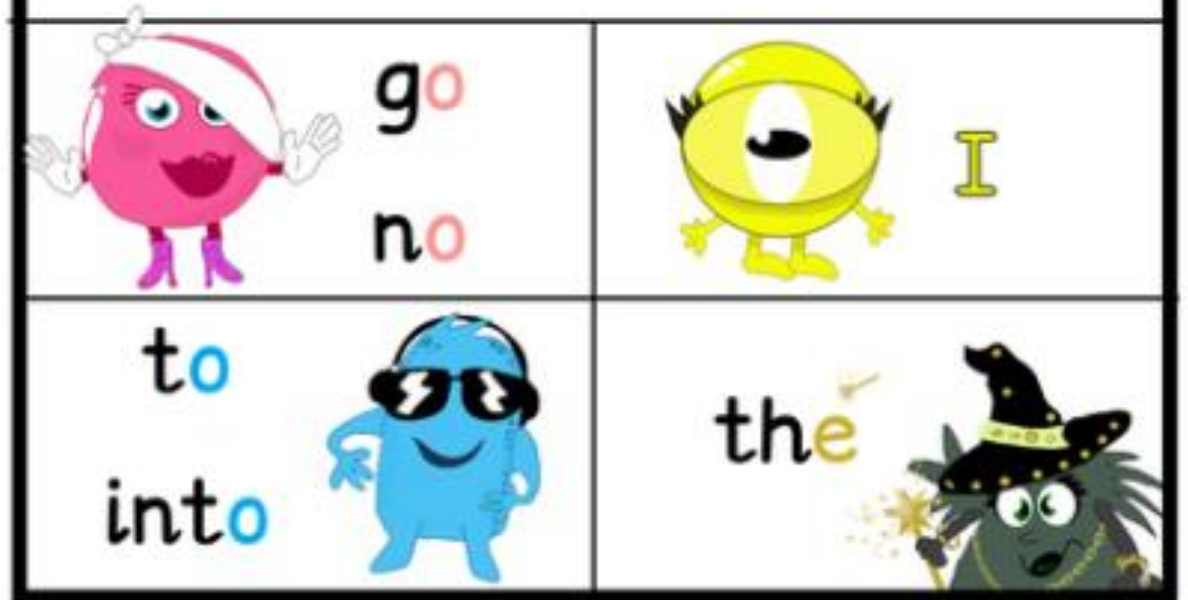
Phase 2

My Phase 2 Sound Mat



Moonster
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.

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



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Tricky Words

PHASE 3



we be me

he she

my



they

was her
all



Phonics phase 4

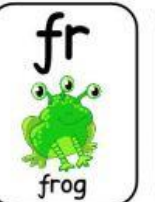
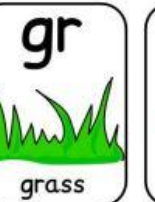
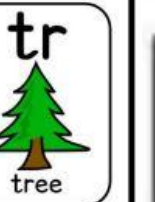
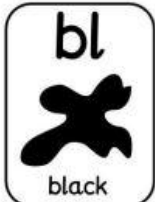
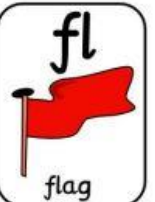
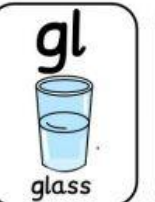
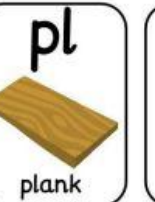
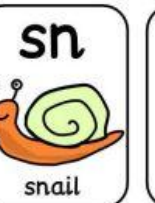
By phase 4, phonics teaching is about consolidating and refining their knowledge, introducing more spelling patterns and tricky words, and increasing vocabulary

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

 br branch	 cr crack	 dr drink	 fr frog	 gr grass	 pr pram	 tr tree
 bl black	 cl clap	 fl flag	 gl glass	 pl plank	 sl slip	 sm smell
 sc scab	 st stop	 sk skip	 st stuck	 sn snail	 sp spin	

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Tricky Words

PHASE 4

 so	 do	 out	 like
have	when	some	come
		what	said
		were	

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

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

- ▶ Take place every day
- ▶ Introduce a new grapheme or phoneme
- ▶ Introduce High Frequency Words
- ▶ The foundation for everything else that we teach in school!
- ▶ Most importantly we try to make them fun and very interactive!

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

How can you help at home?

- ▶ **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?

- ▶ 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!

Questions

