

Notes for Parents

What is Phonics?

The alphabet provides us with a 'code' for making written words. Phonics teaches children to read by helping them to crack this alphabetic code. It teaches children that different sounds are represented by different written letters or groups of letters. So, for example, the /s/ sound is represented by the letter **s** and the /sh/ sound is represented by the letters **sh**.

Decoding words

Decoding means reading a word by saying the sounds and then joining, or 'blending', those sounds together to form the word.

So, the letters in the written word **sat** prompt the reader to make three sounds – **s-a-t** – which are blended together to make the word **sat**.

It is important when helping children learn to read in this way that you say the sounds clearly, keeping them short and sharp.

Sounds in words

Some sounds are represented by more than one letter, e.g. the sounds /ch/ or /sh/ or /oo/. For example, the word **chip** can be broken down into three sounds – **ch-i-p** – and the word **sitting** can be broken down into five sounds – **s-i-tt-i-ng**.

Some sounds can be represented in several ways, e.g. the /ai/ sound in **train** is represented by the letters **ai** but can also be represented by the letters **ay** (**day**) or **ey** (**they**). Some letters or groups of letters can represent more than one sound, e.g. the letters **oo** in **book** and **cook** are pronounced different in the **moon** and **spoon**.

Children are introduced to all the different rules over time.

Tricky words

Some words in the English language are difficult to decode because some of the letters don't sound as you would expect – tricky words include some common words like: **the, to, you, said**. These 'tricky' words are introduced to children gradually and advice on how to help children with them is provided.

Remember!

As children learn to read, the process of decoding becomes automatic – so they do not need to 'sound out' every word as they read. They should only need to use their decoding skills to work out new or difficult words.