



**PHONICS**

# Phonics Parents Guide

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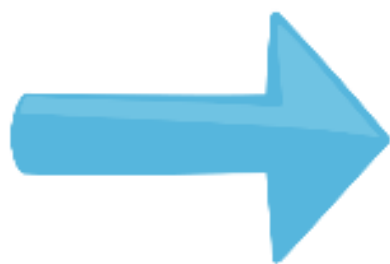


# What is phonics?

Let's start at the beginning...

Each one of the 26 letters in the alphabet has its own 'sound'. This is very different to how a letter is 'said' in the alphabet. For example:

'a' in 'arrow'



arrow

'b' in 'bat'.



bat

Of course phonics is not that simple! There are more than 26 sounds in English language, in fact there are 44 sounds in total. Some of these sounds are made up of 2 or 3 letters. 2 letter sounds are called digraphs and three letter sounds are called trigraphs.

digraph



scout

trigraph



earth

It gets a bit more complicated than that too!

For example the 'n' sound, like in 'nail' is also spelt 'kn' like in 'knot' or 'gn' like in 'gnome'.



The sound that children struggle to spot the most when breaking down words into its individual sounds is the 'split digraph'. Like a normal digraph, this is when two letters work together to make one sound, however with a split digraph, they are separated and have a letter in the middle.

Fortunately 'split digraphs' always end with an 'e' which does make them a little easier to spot!

Examples of split digraphs include:



bone



cake

# The phonics codebreaker

Phoneme - a sound as it is said

Grapheme - a sound that is written

Digraph- two letters that work together to make the same sound

Trigraph - Three letters that work together to make the same sound

Split digraph - Two letters that work together to make the same sound, separated by another letter

# Why is phonics the best method for teaching my child to read?

Phonics makes learning to read easier, simpler and crucially gets children reading quicker. This helps to increase a child's confidence and instil a love of reading from an early age. Rather than memorising 1,000's of words individually, children are instead taught a phonics 'code'.

This code helps children work out how to read 95% of the English language.

If you didn't learn to read using phonics it can seem very complicated, but once the concept of words being made up of just 44 sounds is understood, children are able to make remarkably quick progress in their reading.





# How is phonics taught in schools?

Children start to learn to read as soon as they start school at the age of 5. Many children start before however.

The first lesson in phonics is teaching children to recognise and differentiate between different sounds. This typically starts by asking children to listen to sounds that you can hear, such as the sounds that animals make, or sounds you hear when you go outside.

As schooling progresses children are then taught simple, single letter sounds from the alphabet, before moving on to learning about digraphs, trigraphs and split digraphs.

Phonics is often used in listening and writing lessons as well as reading lessons. Often for example, children in schools are taught and encouraged to spell phonetically before they spell correctly, as this shows an understanding of how words are made up of sounds, and that different letters make certain sounds.

To make learning fun, schools and teachers will often teach sounds through multi sensory activities such as singing or dancing or by playing games, both physical and online. All children learn differently so it is vital that teachers make learning as varied as possible.

Practising sounds as they are taught in school when at home is one of the biggest ways children improve their reading. From my experience, children who are read to at home, or read at home themselves, even for just a few minutes a week, make really noticeable improvements compared to those who do not.



# Why is reading and learning to read so important?

Reading is one of the first things that children learn when they start school. It is the foundation of all education. When children can read, other subjects then become available to them and independent learning can begin. Those who are unable to read well will find themselves at a constant disadvantage throughout their education.

Reading doesn't only have educational benefits but social ones as well. Reading with your child can be one of the most exciting, memorable and special times for you as a parent. It is not everyday you can help teach your child a skill they will use every single day for the rest of their lives!

Learning to read also helps to instil confidence, independence and self belief that will massively help your child's all round development.



## 5 tips to help your child fall in love with reading

1. Choose books that your child is genuinely interested in.

This may sound obvious, but asking a child to read about robots if they love trains isn't going to have the same impact!

2. Pick a quiet and appropriate time to read

Creating a relaxed environment can really help to ease the pressure some children face when asked to practice their reading.

*\*Be patient here! It is not uncommon for children to correctly read a word and then 30 seconds later be unable to read it. Go through the process from the beginning, sound it out, blend it together. In time they will recognise high frequency words and will not need to go through that process any more.*

### 3. Talk about the story

It is important to make reading more than just about 'practicing reading'. Remember that books are stories! Talk about what is happening in the story 'what do you think this book is going to be about?' 'What do you think will happen next?' are great questions to engage your child in the storybook.

### 4. Identify tricky words first before you start reading

Once you start to read regularly you will learn the words that they will find tricky depending on their level. Reading the trickier words together before you start reading will give your child confidence when they see that word during the story.

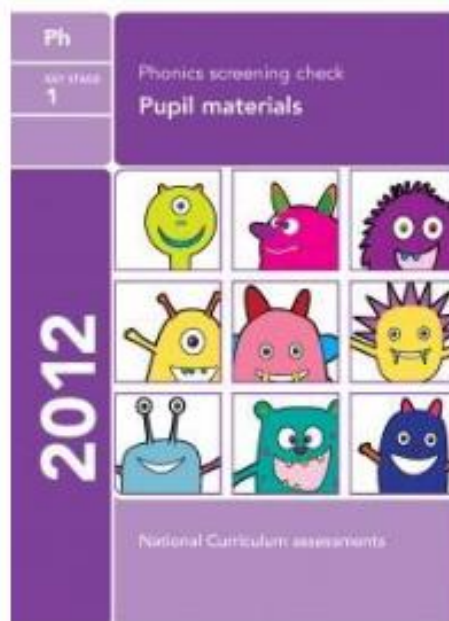
### 5. Give them time to decipher the words

Giving your child time to decipher the words and not rushing them will increase their confidence. It is important for children to learn the process of how to read words. That is how phonics works. Ask them to take their time, sound it out and blend it back together.



# What is the Phonics Screening Check? (England)

The Phonics screening check is a compulsory assessment that all children in Year 1 in England must take. It is used to assess a student's phonic decoding skills. To pass a student must correctly read around 32/40 words correctly. The 40 words in the check are split into sections progressing from simple word structures to trickier words with five or six letters.



The often confusing thing about the screening check is that 20/40 of the words that children are expected to read are 'nonsense words', alien words that have no meaning. This is so that the check tests a child's ability to phonetically decode words and to ensure they don't just know the word in the check already. The aim of the check isn't to test how many words a child can read, but to ensure children have the phonics skills they need to learn new words in the future.

## Screening check: Answer sheet

First name:	
Last name:	

Screening check responses: Please tick the appropriate box for each word. The use of the comment box is optional.

Section 1				Section 2			
Word	Correct	Incorrect	Comment	Word	Correct	Incorrect	Comment
tie				via			
bin				ound			
vap				teg			
ull				fape			
geck				snemp			
chom				blunt			
tord				sprin			
thazz				strok			
blan				day			
steck				slide			
hild				neut			
quemp				phone			
shin				blank			
gang				trains			
week				strap			
chil				scribe			
grit				rusty			
start				finger			
best				dentist			
hooks				staring			

Total correct

The check is administered by your child's teacher during the designated phonics screening week. The words are the same all across the country. Schools are sent the screening check through the post in a sealed box and teachers are not allowed to open the test until the start of that week. Your child will be scored against a national average which has been 32/40 since 2012. The mark will be told to schools at the end of June and can be released to parents if requested. Individual children's results will not be published.

## The words



- The words are a mixture of real and nonsense words which can be decoded using a taught phonics strategy. Non-words are accompanied by an alien picture to help the children know when the word is not 'real'. There are practice words to warm the children up, and there is a break after 20 words. The children can segment (sound out) and blend the words to read them- they do not need to read them on sight. Correct blending of the words is important.

- clump

strom



- turnip

drenk



# THE PHONICS SCREENING

The process will be very similar to the way we check their key words in school, so the children should not be worried in any way.

The screening is very straight forward and should only take 5 to 10 minutes per child and we aim to do it in the most comfortable manner possible .

The children will work 1-1 with a teacher and will read aloud 40 words. The children will be very familiar with the process and will know the teacher well who is administering the check.

If, during the screening, we feel that a child may need a little break, then we will pause the screening and continue once they have had a rest.



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS...

When will I find out my child's mark?

We will send this home with their end of year report in July, once the pass mark has been released.

What if my child does not pass the screening?

They will continue with their phonics learning and retake the screening in Year 2.

What else can I do to support my child?

## Phonics packs:

Use the flash cards, little and often to help your child to be secure in recognising all sounds they have been taught and practise the important skills of decoding and blending.

Sounds to be in phonics pouch from resource pack:

s a t p i n m d g o c k ck e u r h b f ff l ll ss (Phase 2 flash cards on yellow card)

j v w x y z zz qu sh th ch ng ai ee oo oa ar or igh ow ur oi ear er air ure  
(Phase 3 flash cards on blue card)

All Phase 4 blends (on purple card)

ay ou ea ie au wh oy ir ph ew oe ey a-e e-e (Phase 5 flash cards on red card)

Can you make this sound when you are shown the flash card?

“a-e” as in cake “e-e” as in even

Practise making these words using your flash cards.

Parent to say these words and child to make them using phonic cards and then write them down.

cake snake game theme  
even

Words to read using sounds:

Child to read these words that have been made

Can you read these words?

take shame came Pete evening



Monster words

Can you read these ‘monster’ words?

Draw your sound buttons to help you ☺

yaze zale strabe flebe kreze

Dear Parents,

Please can you sign this slip of paper after your child has been completed each job and if you are able to also write a little comment afterwards about how they got on with it that would be really helpful ☺

Thank you for your continued support.

Perhaps the most important thing to take away from all this is that the screening check doesn't tell teachers anything that we don't already know!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ksblMiliA8>