



# Phonics

## A Parent's Guide



## What is synthetic phonics?

It is a technical name and nothing to do with being artificial. The synthetic part refers to synthesizing or blending sounds to make a word. Phonics is a method of teaching children how spoken words are composed of sounds called phonemes and how the letters in words correspond to those phonemes.

The process of reading involves decoding or 'breaking' words into separate phonemes, so that meaning can be gained. On the other hand, the process of spelling requires the writer to identify all the phonemes in a word and then use their knowledge of the phonemic code to write or 'make' the word.

English is essentially a code that can be encoded (written) and decoded (read). We need to teach children this code with as much emphasis as possible on the rules and regularities of the written language.

Written English is recognised as being a complex language. We have 26 letters but 44 phonemes in the spoken language. There are a huge number of letter combinations needed to make these 44 phonemes (a phoneme is the technical name for the smallest unit of sound).

## Letters and Sounds

Letters and Sounds is a government produced synthetic phonic teaching programme. Throughout the six phases children will be taught the 44 phonemes starting with the most familiar grapheme for each phoneme first. It is important to remember that there are alternative spellings to these graphemes. Each phoneme has a name, a sound and an action. Please see the attached information.

## Technical Vocabulary

### What is a phoneme?

It is the smallest unit of sound and a piece of terminology that children like to use and should be taught.

### What is a digraph?

This is when two or more letters come together to make a phoneme e.g. /oa/ makes the sound in boat.

### What is blending?







Blending is the process that is involved in bringing the sounds together to make a word or a syllable and is how /c/a/t/ becomes cat.



## Phase One

Phase One 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:

-  General sound discrimination - environmental
-  General sound discrimination - instrumental sounds
-  General sound discrimination—body percussion
-  Rhythm and Rhyme
-  Alliteration
-  Oral blending and segmenting

## Phase Two

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 begin reading and spelling. This will begin with simple words. Alongside this children are introduced to tricky words. These are the words that are irregular words. That means that phonics cannot be applied to the reading and spelling of these words. The tricky words introduced in phase 2 are:

|    |     |    |    |   |
|----|-----|----|----|---|
| to | the | no | go | I |
|----|-----|----|----|---|

## Phase Three

By the time they reach Phase 3, children 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:

|     |      |     |     |    |     |
|-----|------|-----|-----|----|-----|
| he  | she  | we  | me  | be | was |
| you | they | all | are | my | her |

#### Phase Four

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   | do   | when  | have   | like |
| some | come | were | there | little | one  |
| what | out  |      |       |        |      |

By this point children would be expected to be reading CVC words at speed along with the tricky words from the previous phases. It is important that children are taught that blending is only used when a word is unfamiliar.

#### Phase Five

Children will be taught new graphemes and alternative pronunciations for these graphemes and graphemes they already know. They will begin to learn to choose the appropriate grapheme when spelling. The children will be automatically decoding a large number of words for reading by this point.

Tricky words:

|        |       |        |    |     |        |
|--------|-------|--------|----|-----|--------|
| oh     | their | people | Mr | Mrs | looked |
| called | asked | could  |    |     |        |

New graphemes for reading:

|               |                |                 |                  |
|---------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| <b>ay</b> day | <b>oy</b> boy  | <b>wh</b> when  | <b>a-e</b> make  |
| <b>ou</b> out | <b>ir</b> girl | <b>ph</b> photo | <b>e-e</b> these |
| <b>ie</b> tie | <b>ue</b> blue | <b>ew</b> new   | <b>i-e</b> like  |
| <b>ea</b> eat | <b>aw</b> saw  | <b>oe</b> toe   | <b>o-e</b> home  |
|               |                | <b>au</b> Paul  | <b>u-e</b> rule  |

By this phase children should be reading words fluently and no longer be blending and segmenting familiar words. The real focus throughout the phase is to not only learn the new graphemes for reading but also to learn to read words with alternative pronunciations. Children also will need to learn alternative spellings for each phoneme.

#### Phase Six / Year 2 Spelling

In phase 6 children will be reading longer and less familiar texts independently and fluently. It is crucial that at this point children are now reading to learn and reading for pleasure. At this point it is important that comprehension strategies are develop. In spelling children are introduced to the adding of suffixes and how to spell longer words. Throughout the phase children are encouraged to develop strategies for learning spellings.