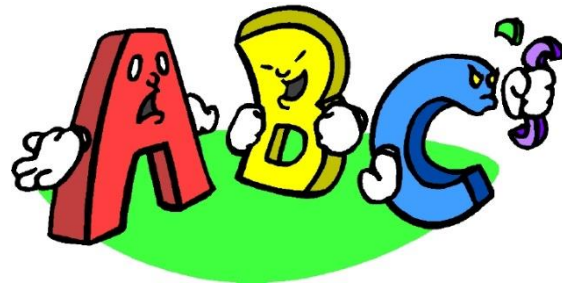# Phonics

**Phonics** is a method for teaching reading and writing of the English language by developing learners' phonetic awareness: the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate phoneme. Once learners have this phonetic awareness, they can match the corresponding sounds to spelling patterns (graphemes) that represent them.

The goal of phonics is to enable early readers to decode new written words by sounding them out, or in terms of phonics, blending the sound-spelling patterns.

# Phase 1 – The beginning

Phase One of Letters and Sounds 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 develop oral blending and segmenting skills.

Phase 1 is divided into seven aspects. Each aspect contains three strands:
Tuning in to sounds (auditory discrimination), Listening and remembering sounds (auditory memory and sequencing) and Talking about sounds (developing vocabulary and language comprehension).

It is intended that each of the first six aspects should be dipped into, rather than going through them in any order, with a balance of activities. Aspect 7 will usually come later, when   children have had plenty of opportunity to develop their sound discrimination skills.

## Aspect 1 - General sound discrimination - environmental

The aim of this aspect is to raise children's awareness of the sounds around them and to develop their listening skills Activities suggested in the Letters and Sounds DfE guidance include going on a listening walk, drumming on different items outside and comparing the sounds, playing a sounds lotto game and making shakers.

## Aspect 2 - General sound discrimination - instrumental Sounds

This aspect aims to develop children's awareness of sounds made by various instruments and noise makers. Activities include comparing and matching sound makers, playing instruments alongside a story and making loud and quiet sounds.

## Aspect 3 - General sound discrimination - body percussion

The aim of this aspect is to develop children's awareness of sounds and rhythms. Activities include singing songs and action rhymes, listening to music and developing a vocabulary of          different sounds.

## Aspect 4 - Rhythm and rhyme

This aspect aims to develop children's appreciation and experiences of rhythm and rhyme in speech. Activities include rhyming stories, rhyming bingo, clapping out the syllables in words and odd one out.

## Aspect 5 - Alliteration

The focus is on initial sounds of words, with activities including I Spy type games and matching objects which begin with the same sound.

## Aspect 6 - Voice sounds

The aim is to distinguish between different vocal sounds and to begin oral blending and segmenting. Activities include Metal Mike, where children feed pictures of objects into a toy robot's mouth and the teacher sounds out the name of the object in a robot voice - /c/-/u/-/p/ cup, with the children joining in.

## Aspect 7 - Oral blending and segmenting

In this aspect, the main aim is to develop oral blending and segmenting skills. To practise oral blending, the teacher could say some sounds, such as /c/-/u/-/p/ and see whether the children can pick out a cup from a group of objects. For segmenting practise, the teacher could hold up an object such as a sock and ask the children which sounds they can hear in the word sock.

The activities introduced in Phase I are intended to continue throughout the following phases, as lots of practice is needed before children will become confident in their phonic knowledge and skills.

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

As soon as each set of letters is introduced, children will be encouraged to use their knowledge of the letter sounds to blend and
sound out words. For example, they will learn to blend the sounds s-a-t to make the word **sat**. They will also start learning to segment
words. For example, they might be asked to find the letter sounds that make the word **tap** from a small selection of magnetic letters.

*See appendix 1 for the list of high frequency words to learn for each set.*
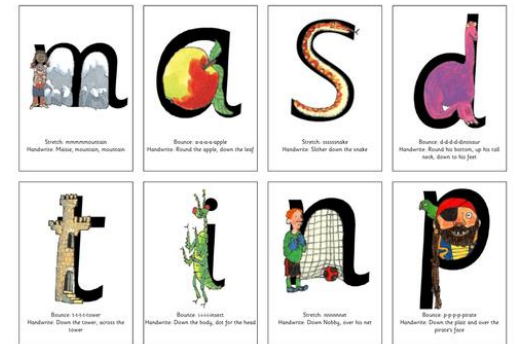
## Phase 3

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

During Phase 3, children will also learn the letter names using an alphabet song, although they will continue to use the sounds when decoding words.

During Phase 3, the following tricky words (which can't yet be decoded) are introduced:

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

# Phase 4

When children start Phase Four of the Letters and Sounds    phonics programme, they will know a grapheme for each of the 42 phonemes. They will be able to blend phonemes to read CVC (consonant-vowel-consonant) words and segment in order to spell them.

Children will also have started reading straightforward two-syllable words and simple captions, as well as reading and spelling some tricky words.

In Phase 4, no new graphemes are introduced. The main aim of this phase is to consolidate the children's knowledge and to help them learn to read and spell words which have adjacent            consonants, such as trap, string and milk.

During Phase 4, the following tricky words (which can't yet be decoded) are introduced:

- said
- have
- like
- so
- do
- some
- come
- were
- there
- little
- one
- when
- out
- what

# Phase 5

Children entering Phase Five will already be able to read and spell words with adjacent consonants, such as trap, string and flask. They will also be able to read and spell some polysyllabic words.

In Phase Five, children will learn more graphemes and phonemes. For example, they already know ai as in rain, but now they will be introduced to ay as in day and a-e as in make.

Alternative pronunciations for graphemes will also be introduced,
e.g. ea in tea, head and break. With practice, speed at recognising and
blending graphemes will improve. Word and spelling knowledge will be worked on extensively.

Tricky words
During Phase 5, the following tricky words (which can't yet be decoded) are introduced:

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

# Phase 6

At the start of Phase Six, children will have already learnt the most frequently occurring grapheme–phoneme correspondences (GPCs) in the English language. They will be able to read many familiar
words automatically. When they come across unfamiliar words, they will in many cases be able to decode them quickly and  their well-developed sounding and blending skills. With more complex unfamiliar words they will often be able to decode them by
sounding them out.

## Phase 2 Set 1 Letters and Words

In Set 1, the first four letters are introduced and seven words can be used for segmenting and blending (high frequency words are shown in *italics*):

S,a,t,p at, a, sat, pat, tap, sap, as

## Phase 2 Set 2 Letters and Words

Set 2 includes four new letters. As each new letter is learnt, children
will be able to sound out several new words:

i it, is, sit, sat, pit, tip, pip, sip.

n an, in, nip, pan, pin, tin, tan , nap

m am, man, mam, mat, map, pam, tim, sam

d dad, and, sad, dim, dip, did, sid.

## Phase 2 Set 3 Letters and Words

Set 3 introduces four new letters, with 28 new decodable words suggested, including four high frequency words, shown in italics below:

g tag, gag, gig, gap, nag, sag, pig, dig.

o got, on, not, pot, top, dog, pop, mog.

c can, cot, cop, cap, cat, cod.

K kid, kit, kim, ken

## Phase 2 Set 4 Letters and Words

Set 4 introduces four new graphemes, with 36 new decodable words suggested. For the first time, some of the suggested words contain two syllables, such as pocket, sunset etc., which some young children might find too difficult at this stage. Personally, I would leave these out if they cause problems. At this stage, it is more important for children to experience success at sounding out short words. Their ability to decode longer words will improve as their short-term memory develops.

At this point, two "tricky words" (not fully decodable at this stage) are taught: **the** and **to**.

ck kick, sock, sack, dock, pick, sick, pack, ticket

e get, pet, ten, net, pen, peg, met, men, neck

u up, mum, run, mug, cup, sun, tick, mud, sunset.

r rim, rip, ram, rat, rag, rug, rot, rocket, carrot

## Phase 2 Set 5 Letters and Words

Set 5 introduces seven graphemes (three of which are doubled letters), with 69 new decodable words suggested.

New "tricky" words: **no**, **go** and **I**.

**h** had, him, his, hot, hut, hop, hum, hit, hat, has.

**b** but, big, bet, bad, beg, bud, bun, bus, bit, bat.

**f ff** of, if, off, fin, fit, fig, fog, puff, huff, fan, fat

**l, ll** lap, let, leg, lot, lit, bell, fill, tell, sell, bill

**s, ss** less, hiss, mass, mess, boss, fuss, hiss, kiss.

## Glossary

*Schwa*—Schwa is often added to the end of a phoneme due to the children not using the pure phonemes. This could be due to bad habits or dialect. This can affect the children's segmenting and blending of words and therefore, their spelling.

*Phoneme* – Phonemes are the smallest units of sounds in a language. They can be made up of individual letters, or groups of letters. Phoneme is a piece of terminology that children like to use and are taught.

*Digraph* – 2 or more letters make a phoneme like, ai in rain.

*Blend* – Blending is the process of bringing the sounds together to make a word or syllable and is how d/o/g becomes dog.