

Phonics - Glossary

Phoneme - The smallest unit of sound. There are approximately 44 phonemes in English (it depends on different accents). Phonemes can be put together to make words.

Grapheme - A way of writing down a phoneme. Graphemes can be made up from 1 letter e.g. p, 2 letters e.g. sh, 3 letters e.g. tch or 4 letters e.g. ough.

GPC - This is short for Grapheme Phoneme Correspondence. Knowing a GPC means being able to match a phoneme to a grapheme and vice versa.

Digraph - A grapheme containing two letters that makes just one sound (phoneme).

Trigraph - A grapheme containing three letters that makes just one sound (phoneme).

Oral Blending - This involves hearing phonemes and being able to merge them together to make a word. Children need to develop this skill before they will be able to blend written words.

Blending - This involves looking at a written word, looking at each grapheme and using knowledge of GPCs to work out which phoneme each grapheme represents and then merging these phonemes together to make a word. This is the basis of reading.

Oral Segmenting - This is the act hearing a whole word and then splitting it up into the phonemes that make it. Children need to develop this skill before they will be able to segment words to spell them.

Segmenting - This involves hearing a word, splitting it up into the phonemes that make it, using knowledge of GPCs to work out which graphemes represent those phonemes and then writing those graphemes down in the right order. This is the basis of spelling.

Letters and Sounds

Phase 1

Phase 1 is absolutely vital. It is the one phase that shouldn't come to an end. These skills should continue to be developed throughout KS1 and KS2. Phase 1 develops children's abilities to listen to, make, explore and talk about sounds. This phase is split into 7 aspects that are explored and developed through games.

Phase 2

GPCs need to be introduced in systematic way.

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 f l l s s

It is very important that you pronounce these phonemes clearly and correctly. If you don't, children may find it very difficult to blend them together.

When introducing GPCs, ensure you introduce them with the sounds, pictures, actions and lots of practise for forming the letter. You can form the letter with a finger in the air, on the palm of the hand, on the back of another child, on a rough surface like the floor. All these experiences will need to come before trying to write the letter on a whiteboard or piece of paper.

Phase 3

Phase 3 continues in the same way as Phase 2 and introduces more new GPCs. By the end of Phase 3 the children will know one way of writing down each of the 44 phonemes.

Set 6 - j v w x

Set 7 - y z zz qu

Consonant digraphs - ch sh th ng

Vowel digraphs (and trigraphs) ai ee igh oa oo ar or ur ow oi ear air ure er

Make sure that you are very confident about what the term CVC means. It refers to words with a consonant phoneme, a vowel phoneme and then a consonant phoneme - it is not referring to letters. Therefore **hot, bed, boat** and **ship** are all CVC words but **cow** and **toy** are not.

Phase 4

The main challenge in this phase is to help children to blend and segment words with adjacent consonants e.g. **truck, help**. These adjacent consonant phonemes can both be heard when you say the word which makes them different from a digraph where there are two letters that make just one sound. Be careful, lots of people get these confused, including some published materials.

Children with speech and language difficulties can find Phase 4 very tricky. If children struggle to hear all the sounds in a word encourage them to think about the movements that their mouths are making. Looking in mirrors can help with this.

Phase 5

These 4 weeks introduce some new GPCs in the same way as in previous phases. Five of these GPCs are known as split digraphs. They are **a_e, e_e, i_e, o_e, u_e**. These used to be taught as magic e but now it is recommended that children learn to recognise these in the same way as other graphemes but simply explaining that in these particular graphemes the two letters work as a team but they aren't directly next to each other.