

Phonics for parents

We understand that some of the language we use to teach phonics at school can be quite confusing! Here is a guide to some of the technical language we use to teach your children with explanations of what the words mean. If you'd like any further clarification on any of these terms please speak to your child's teacher who will be happy to help.

On the next page of this document are some ideas for phonics games that you can play with your child at home to support them with their in school learning.

- **Phoneme**
 - Phonemes are the smallest unit of speech-sounds which make up a word. For example, there are three phonemes in the word **sit** /s/-/i/-/t/
- **Grapheme**
 - Graphemes are the written representation of sounds
- **Blending**
 - The process of 'pushing together' phonemes in the correct order to read whole words.
- **Segmenting**
 - This involves the breaking down of words into their phonemes in order to spell the word. It is the reverse phonic skill to blending, and also called spelling.
- **Digraph**
 - Two letter grapheme that makes one sound. For example /sh/ represents one phoneme in 'shop' and the vowel digraph /oa/ represents one phoneme in 'boat'
- **Trigraph**
 - Three letter grapheme that makes one sound. For example /igh/ represents one phoneme in 'night' and 'air' represents one phoneme in 'fair'.
- **Quadgraph**
 - Four letters coming together to represent one phoneme/sound. The 'eigh' representing /ay/, in 'eight' is a quadgraph.
- **Split digraph**
 - A split digraph is where another letter comes in between the two graphemes of a single phoneme/sound, for example, the 'K' in 'make' separates the digraph /ae/, creating split digraph /a_e/. This is occasionally referred to as a 'magic e'.
- **Schwa**
 - The 'uh' sound that must not be added onto phonemes. For example, a child saying 'muh' for the 'm' phoneme will struggle to blend correctly /muh/a/n/
- **CVC word**
 - This stands for 'consonant, vowel, consonant' word, for example /c/a/t/.
 - Consonants can also be represented by digraphs and trigraphs, for example a CVC word could also be /b/oa/t or /sh/i/p.
 - Words can also be CCVC, CVCC, CCCVC and so on.
- **Consonant blend / cluster**
 - This is a sequence of consonant phonemes in a word and is the focus of Phase 4 phonics, for example, /s/t/i/ck/ or /b/e/n/ch/
- **Ascender letter**
 - Tall letters (b, d, h, k, l, t)
- **Descender letters**
 - Letters that drop below the writing line (f, g, j, p, q)

Games to play at home

- Using the sound cards/flash cards:

Use the sound cards or create your own flashcards and see how quickly your child can say them. If they find tricky focus on a couple of sounds, write words with that sound in and get your child to sound them out and then blend them.

- Buried Treasure:

Buried treasure is a great game for spotting 'real' and 'alien' words, putting the alien words in the bin and the real words in the treasure chest. Words can be written on scrap pieces of paper and can focus on any sound. Eg. /oa/ - real words - boat, goat and alien words - goath, toan

- Alien Words:

Challenge your child to create their own alien words for a particular sound. Eg. /oi/ - toin foin
woith doit

- I spy:

Play I spy around the house or outside and see if the children can sound out the items they want to spy. Use a sound mat to support them.

- Oral blending:

Write down words with particular sounds for children to orally blend. This means breaking the word down and then reading the whole word Eg. t - ai - l - tail.

- Picture Cards:

Draw or print picture cards for a particular sound (eg. /ou/ sprout, house, mouse, sound, loud) and have the children find them and sound the words out or write them down.

- Phoneme Spotter:

Give your child a piece of writing or sentences with lots of a particular sound in. Eg. I can see you are in a green tree (ee sound). Have the children find the particular sound and underline it. These can be written yourself or there are lots online - or even just using a magazine or newspaper!

- Spellings:

Simple spellings of the sound you are helping your child with is a great activity. If you are learning the /ea/ sound get your child to spell lots of /ea/ words - bead pea, treat, meat etc.

- Unscramble:

Write a word or sentence down and then chop it up into phonemes or words, and see if your child can rebuild it. This can be done as a race against you, or to beat a timer to add to the fun.