

Helping your child at home

A guide to supporting your child's
learning in reading and phonics.



Getting Started

Sharing books - Always remember that we teach phonics to help our children learn to read and write and in order to do this successfully they need to love books! The best way to help your child is to read as many books as possible in both English and your child's home language. Read anything that your child is interested in (including magazines, menus, etc). You don't have to read all (or any) of the words each time. Remember to use silly voices, make sound effects, pull faces, act things out, talk about what you can see, talk about what you both think and feel and have fun!

Unofficial homework - Encourage your child to tell you what they have done at school today. Sharing new songs and rhymes is something that you can easily do when you are busy with something else e.g. cooking, cleaning, driving in the car.

Give everything a name - Build your child's vocabulary in both English and their home language by talking about interesting words and objects. For example, "Look at that aeroplane! Those are the wings of the plane. Why do you think they are called wings?"

General tips to support reading

Once is never enough! - Encourage your child to re-read favorite books and poems as well as their school reading scheme book. Re-reading helps children read more quickly and accurately.

Dig deeper into the story - Ask your child questions about the story you've just read. Say something like, "Why do you think he did that?" (you could use the 'questions to get more from your child's reading book' for some varied ideas.

Take control of the television - It's difficult for reading to compete with TV and video games. Encourage reading as a distraction free activity.

Be patient - When your child is trying to sound out an unfamiliar word, give him or her time to do so. Remind your child to look closely at the first letter or letters of the word.

Pick books that are at the right level - Help your child pick books that are not too difficult. The aim is to give your child lots of successful reading experiences.

I read to you, you read to me - Take turns reading aloud at bedtime. Kids enjoy this special time with their parents.

One more time with feeling - When your child has sounded out an unfamiliar word, have him or her re-read that sentence. Often kids are so busy figuring out a word they lose the meaning of what they've just read.

Games to play with your Reception/Key Stage One child

Oral Blending games

Robotic talking - Words are made up from sounds and children need to be able to hear these sounds individually. Sometimes when you are playing you can say words as if you were a robot (saying the sounds separately) and see if your child can work out what you are saying. Stick to short simple words that only have a few sounds in them. Make sure you are saying the letter sounds (p-i-g) not the letter names (pee-eye-gee). E.g.

Pass that p-i-g to me.

Sit d-ow-n.

Point to your t-ee-th.

Hop like a f-r-o-g.

As your child becomes familiar with this robot talking, see if they can say words in robot talk themselves?

I spy - Say the rhyme 'I spy with my little eye something beginning with _____' allow your child plenty of opportunities to guess what you have chosen, for example, 'something beginning with t' could be a tree, toy, tent or train.

Point out print everywhere - Talk about the written words you see in the world around you. Ask your child to find familiar words on each outing such as 'McDonald's', 'Coke' or 'Family Mart'.

Playing with words - Encourage your child to sound out the word as you change it from mat to fat to sat; from sat to sag to sap; and from sap to sip.

Phoneme recognition games

Looking for letters - Ask your child to look for English letters whilst you are out and about. Can they find letters from their own name, letters they have learnt in school or letters that specific words begin with?

Fast letter sorting - You will need:

A large piece of paper with three hoops drawn on (see example)

12 small pieces of card with letters written on (4 sets of 3 letters)

Choose 3 sets of letters - 2 which the child knows and one new one. Spread the letter tiles out on the table making sure they are all the correct way up. Encourage your child to sort the letters into the correct hoop using both hands, saying each letter as they move it.

Letter discrimination You will need: A 3x3 grid (see example)

Write the letter you are learning with your child onto half of the spaces (for example c). Fill the rest with other letters. Ask your child to cover all the c's with a counter as quick as they can.

Ladder letters

You will need: A ladder template (see example)

Make a pile of letter tiles (use a mixture of known and new letters). Place a counter at the bottom of the ladder and move up a rung for every letter they can read correctly. This game can be changed to covering spots on a ladybird, petals on a flower - go with your child's interests if possible.

Letter sound bingo. You will need: A 3x3 grid for each player (see example) & counters or coins

Write some of the letters into the spaces on each card, making each card slightly different. The 'bingo caller' says each letter in turn and the players cover the letter up. The winner is first to fill their board. To make this game easier for new readers, show them the letter for them to match.

Tricky word games

Bingo – You will need: A board for each player (see example) and counters or coins and the list of words your child is currently learning, for example their spelling list.

Write some of the words into the spaces on each card, making each card slightly different. The 'bingo caller' says each word in turn and the players cover the words up. The winner is first to fill their board. To make this game easier for new readers, show them the word for them to match.

Matching pairs – You will need: Small pieces of card or paper with the words your child is currently learning written on each. Each word will need to be written twice so you can search for a matching pair. Turn all the cards face down on the table. And take turns to turn over two. When a matching pair is found that player can keep them. The winner is the person with the most pairs at the end of the game.

Snap – Make a set of cards with words your child is learning written on. Ensure that each word is written on two separate cards. Shuffle up the cards and share them out. Each player takes turns to turn over their card, put it down and read the word. If it matches the previous card played, the first person to notice shouts 'snap!' and wins the pile. This game is best used to practise words your child knows fairly well, rather than new ones, as it's quite fast-paced.

Once your child knows a word reliably, you can take it out of the current pack of cards and bring in a new word. Every so often, play a game with the 'old' cards, so that your child doesn't forget them. It's a good idea to try and discard a known word and add a new word every day, once your child is getting the hang of learning new words.

Further ideas...

Be your child's #1 fan – Ask your child to read aloud what he or she has written at school or for their homework. Be an enthusiastic listener.

Create a book together – Fold pieces of paper in half and staple them to make a book. Ask your child to write sentences on each page and add his or her own illustrations.

Make up stories on the go – Take turns adding to a story the two of you make up while riding in a car or bus. Try making the story funny or spooky.

Questions and Prompts to support your child:

Decode Accurately:

Children learn to use a range of strategies to read with understanding.

- Do you see a word you know?
- Can you sound out the word?
- Do the pictures give you any clues?
- What would make sense or sound right?
- What would you expect to see at the beginning of...?
- Can you see a word inside the word?
- Does the sentence make sense?

Seek, find and understand:

Children locate information and give a literal response to the text.

- Where or when did the story take place?
- What did she/he/it look like?
- Who was s/he? Can you name the ...?
- Where did she/he/it live?
- Who are the characters in the book?
- What happened next?
- How many...?
- Describe what happened at ...?
- Who spoke to ...? What did they say?
- Can you tell me why...?
- Find the meaning of ...?

Read between the lines:

Children learn to infer, deduce and refer to the text.

- Why is xxx important?
- How do we know?
- What does this tell you about how the character is feeling?
- Have you ever had the same experience? How did you feel?
- Who do you know who is like ...?
- What do you think is happening here?
- What happened in this part of the story? What might it mean?
- Through whose eyes is the story told?
- Do you know what might happen next?
- What could this tell us about the character?
- If you were the character, what would you do now?
- What examples can you think of to support this?

Structure:

Commenting on presentational features (particularly non-fiction)

- Where could you find out about xxx in this book?
- Is there another way?
- Which is quickest?
- How many levels of headings or subheadings does this book have?
- Are they statements or do they ask questions?
- Which engage the reader more effectively?
- How do the headings help you scan the text?
- What's the difference between the index and the contents?
- If you wanted to find out about xxx, how would you do it?
- What's the best place to look for information about ...?

Language:

Why did the write use that word/phrase/image or sentence?

- Discuss the use of italics, bold, repetition, simile or exclamation marks, headings, bullet points captions etc. Comment on the effect.
- As a reader, how do you feel about...?
- How has the author created this feeling?
- Which words and phrases tell you that the author is describing ...?
- What words or phrases tell you about the author's attitude?
- Why has the author used repetition? What is the effect?
- How has the author been humourous?

The Writer:

Writer's purpose and point of view.

- Can you tell what the author thinks?
- Why did the author choose this setting?
- What do you think the author's purpose is? How do you know?
- What impression do you think the author wants to give of this character?
- Whose viewpoint is being expressed here?
- What does the writer want you to think, do or believe?

The text and the world:

How the text fits into its social, historical, cultural or literary heritage or context?

- Can you think of another story with a similar plot, or theme?
- Where is the story set? What does that tell you about the story?
- What does this book tell you about the way of life of its characters?

Phonics

In school, we follow the Letters and Sounds programme. Letters and Sounds is a phonics resource published by the Department for Education and Skills which consists of six phases.

The Terminology

Phoneme

A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a word. It is generally accepted that most varieties of spoken English use about 44 phonemes.

Graphemes

A grapheme is a symbol of a phoneme. It is a letter or group of letters representing a sound.

Segmenting and blending

Segmenting consists of breaking words down into phonemes to spell. Blending consists of building words from phonemes to read. Both skills are important.

Digraph

This is when two letters come together to make a phoneme. For example, /oa/ makes the sound in 'boat' and is also known as a vowel digraph. There are also consonant digraphs, for example, /sh/ and /ch/.

Trigraph

This is when three letters come together to make one phoneme, for example /igh/.

Split digraph

A digraph in which the two letters are not adjacent - e.g. make

Abbreviations

VC, CVC, and CCVC are the respective abbreviations for vowel-consonant, consonant-vowel-consonant, consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant, and are used to describe the order of graphemes in words (e.g. am (VC), Sam (CVC), slam (CCVC), or each (VC), beach (CVC), bleach (CCVC).

Phase 1

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 begin developing 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)

Talking about sounds (developing vocabulary and language comprehension)

Phase 2

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 help begin reading and spelling. This will begin with simple words.

Words using set 1:

at	sat	pat	sat	sap
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Words using set 1 and 2:

(+i)	(+n)	(+m)	(+d)
it	an	am	dad
is	in	man	sad
sit	nip	mat	dim
pit	pan	map	din
pip	pin	Pam	did
sip	tan	Tim	Sid
tip	nap	Sam	and
	tin		dip

Words using set 1-3:

(+g)	(+o)	(+c)	(+k)
------	------	------	------

tag	got	can	kid
gag	on	cot	kit
gig	not	cop	Kim
gap	pot	cap	Ken
nag	top	cat	
sag	dog	cod	
gas	tot		
pig	pop		
dig	mog		

Words using set 1-4:

(+ck)	(+e)	(+u)	(+r)
kick	get	up	rim
sock	pet	mum	rip
sack	ten	run	ram
dock	net	mug	rat
pick	pen	cup	rag
sick	peg	sun	rug
pack	met	mud	rot
tuck	men		

Words using set 1-5:

(+h)	(+b)	(+f and ff)	(+l and ll)	(+ss)
had	but	of	lap	less
him	big	if	let	hiss
his	back	off	leg	mass
hot	bet	fit	lot	mess
hut	bad	fin	lit	boss
hop	bag	fun	bell	fuss
hum	bed	fig	fill	hiss
hit	bud	fog	doll	pass
hat	beg	puff	tell	kiss
has	bug	huff	sell	Tess
hack	bun	cuff	Bill	

Alongside this, children are introduced to tricky words. These are the words that are irregular. This 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
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Phase 3

By the time children reach Phase 3, they 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

Sounds	Word example	Sounds	Word example	Sounds	Word example
j	jam	sh	shin	oo (short)	cook
v	vet	th	thick	ow	now
w	win	ng	song	ar	star
x	box	ai	train	air	hair
y	yes	igh	sight	ear	hear
z	zip	oa	boat	er	term
zz	buzz	oi	coil	ur	curl
qu	quick	oo (long)	boot	or	fork
ch	chop	ee	tree	ure	pure

Tricky words:

we	me	be	was	no	go
my	you	they	her	all	are

Phase 4

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	she	he	have	like
some	come	were	there	little	one
they	all	are	do	when	out
what	my	her			

Phase 5

Children will be taught new graphemes and alternative pronunciations for these graphemes, as well as graphemes they already know. They will begin to learn to choose the appropriate grapheme when spelling.

New graphemes for reading:

Sound	Word example	Sound	Word example	Sound	Word example	Sound	Word example
ay	day	oy	boy	wh	when	a_e	make
ou	out	ir	girl	ph	photo	e_e	these
ie	tie	ue	blue	ew	new	i_e	like
ea	eat	aw	saw	oe	toe	o_e	home
				au	Paul	u_e	rule

Tricky words:

oh	their	people	Mr	Mrs	looked
called	asked	water	where	who	again
thought	through	work	mouse	many	laughed
because	different	any	eyes	friends	once
please					

Phase 6

In phase 6, the focus is on learning spelling rules for word endings (these are known as suffixes). The children will learn how words change when you add certain letters.

There are 12 different suffixes taught:

-s -es -ing -ed

-er	-est	-y	-en
-ful	-ly	-ment	-ness

Phonics at home

Tips for teaching your child the sounds:

It is important for a child to learn lower case or small letters rather than capital letters at first. Most early books and games use lower case letters and your child will learn these first at school. Obviously you should use a capital letter when required, such as at the beginning of the child's name, eg. Paul.

When you talk about letters to your child, remember to use the letter sounds: a buh cuh duh e ... rather than the alphabet names of the letters: ay bee see dee ee . The reason for this is that sounding out words is practically impossible if you use the alphabet names. eg. cat, would sound like: see ay tee

When saying the sounds of b, d, g, j and w you will notice the 'uh' sound which follows each, for example buh, duh... You cannot say the sound without it, however, try to emphasise the main letter sound.

Useful webpages

<http://www.letters-and-sounds.com>

<http://www.phonicsplay.co.uk>