

## Early Reading using Letters and Sounds

Letters and Sounds is a systematic approach for teaching children to read using phonics. It is split into six phases, from starting to learn about sounds at nursery to becoming fluent readers around age 7. The phonic approach encourages us to directly link letters (graphemes) to sounds (phonemes), and to teach children pure sounds like ah, b, k when encountering the alphabet. So, children learn how to put sounds represented by letters or letter groups (like ch or igh) together to read words in a more straightforward way.

The relationship between the letter(s) and the sound is called a **letter-sound correspondence**, also known as a grapheme-phoneme correspondence (or GPC).

The information below outlines the letter-sound correspondences children will learn in different phases. There are a few "tricky words" introduced at each phase. These words are common and useful for early reading and writing, but children won't be able to decode them following the phonic rules taught up to that point. We help the children to learn them by reading them aloud together.

### Year Group expectations

#### Phase 1 Letters and Sounds

**Approx age:** 3– 4 | Nursery/Reception

Phase 1 supports children's developing speaking and listening skills and linking of sounds and letters. Activities are divided into seven groups:

- Environmental sounds
- Instrumental sounds
- Body percussion
- Rhythm and rhyme
- Alliteration
- Voice sounds
- Oral blending and segmenting.

#### Phase 2 Letters and Sounds

**Approx age:** 4–5 | First term of Reception

Phase 2 introduces simple letter-sound correspondences. As each set of letters is introduced, children are encouraged to use their new knowledge to sound out and blend words. For example, they will learn to blend the sounds **s-a-t** to make the word **sat**.

**Set 1:****s, a, t, p**

at, a, sat, pat, tap, sap, as

**Set 2:****i** as in it, is, sit, pit, tip**n** as in an, in, nip, pan, nap**m** as in am, man, mat, map, Tim**d** as in dad, and, sad, dim, Sid**Set 3:****g** as in tag, gag, sag, gas, pig**o** as in got, on, not, top, dog**c** as in can, cot, cop, cap, cod**k** as in kid, kit, Kim, Ken**Set 4:****ck** as in kick, sack, dock, sick, pocket**e** as in get, pet, ten, net, pen**u** as in up, mum, run, mug, cup**r** as in rip, ram, rat, rocket, carrot**Set 5:****h** as in had, him, his, hot, hut**b** as in but, big, back, bed, bus**f, ff** as in of, if, off, fit, fog, puff**l, ll** as in let, leg, lot, bell, doll**ss** as in less, hiss, mass, mess, boss**Phase 2 tricky words** the, to, no, go, I, into**Phase 3 Letters and Sounds****Approx. age:** 4–5 | Reception

In Phase 3 children build on the letter-sound correspondences learned in Phase 2. They learn consonant digraphs (sounds made up of two letters together such as 'ch' or 'll') and long vowel sounds (such as 'igh' or 'ai').

**Set 6:****j** as in jet, jam, jog, Jan**v** as in van, vet, velvet**w** as in wig, will, web**x** as in fox, box, six**Set 7:****y** as in yes, yet, yell**z** as in zip, zig-zag**zz** as in buzz, jazz**qu** as in quit, quick, liquid**Consonant digraphs:****ch** as in chip, chat, rich**sh** as in shop, shed, fish**th** as in thin, moth, that**ng** as in ring, thing, song**Vowel digraphs and trigraphs****ai** as in rain, tail, aim**ee** as in bee, leek, see**igh** as in high, sigh, might**oa** as in boat, toad, foal**oo** as in boot, food, moon**oo** as in book, wood, foot**ar** as in park, art, car**or** as in for, torn, fork**ur** as in hurt, fur, surf**ow** as in cow, owl, town**oi** as in coin, boil, oil**ear** as in dear, shear, year**air** as in fair, pair, hair**ure** as in sure, pure, manure**er** as in dinner, summer, letter**Phase 3 tricky words** as in he, she, we, me, be, was, you, they, all, are, my, her**Phase 4 Letters and Sounds****Approx. age:** 4–5 | Reception

Children will consolidate their knowledge during this phase and they will learn to read and spell words which have adjacent consonants, for example **trap**, **strong**, **milk** and **crept**.

**Phase 4 tricky words** said, have, like, so, do, some, come, were, there, little, one, when, out, what

## Phase 5 Letters and Sounds

**Approx. age:** 5–6 | Year 1

Children will learn some new graphemes for reading. They will also be taught alternative pronunciations for known graphemes. For example, they have already learned **ow** as in cow and will now learn **ow** as in blow.

In addition, they will learn alternative spellings for known phonemes. For example, the sound /igh/ has been learned as the grapheme **igh** as in night, but can also be spelled **y**, **ie** and **i-e**.

**New graphemes for reading:**

**ay** as in day, play, crayon  
**ou** as in cloud, sound, about  
**ie** as in pie, tie, cried  
**ea** as in sea, meat, read  
**oy** as in toy, enjoy, boy  
**ir** as in bird, shirt, first  
**ue** as in blue, true, glue  
**aw** as in paw, claw, yawn  
**wh** as in wheel, whisper, when

**ph** as in photo, dolphin, alphabet  
**ew** as in new, crew, flew  
**oe** as in toe, foe, tomatoes  
**au** as in Paul, launch, haul  
**a-e** as in make, game, snake  
**e-e** as in these, Eve, extreme  
**i-e** as in like, time, slide  
**o-e** as in home, bone, pole  
**u-e** as in rule, June, flute

**Phase 5 tricky words** oh, their, people, Mr, Mrs, looked, called, asked, could

## Phase 6 Letters and Sounds

**Approx. age:** 6–7 | Year 2

In Phase 6 children will read with increasing fluency. They will have learned most of the common letter-sound correspondences and can read familiar words automatically without needing to sound out and blend. Children will work on spelling, including prefixes and suffixes, doubling and dropping letters, and so on.