

Phonics for Parents and Carers

TERM	MEANING
Blending	Saying the individual sounds that make up a word and then merging or 'blending' the sounds together to say the word. (Used when reading.)
Consonant	Most letters of the alphabet (excluding vowels: a,e,i,o,u).
CVC words	Abbreviation used for consonant-vowel-consonant words. (Used to describe the order of sounds.) Some examples of CVC words include the following: cat, pen, top. Other similar abbreviations include: • VC words (vowel-consonant words). Examples: on, is, it • CCVC words (consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant words) Examples: trip, flat, this • CVCC words (consonant-vowel-consonant-consonant words) Examples: milk, fast, bark.
Digraph	Two letters which together make one sound. Examples: ee, oa, ea, ch, ay The following are different types of digraphs: • Vowel digraph: a digraph in which at least one of the letters is a vowel. Examples: boat, day, book • Consonant digraph: two consonants that can go together. Examples: shop, chip, thin • Split digraph (previously called 'magic e'): two letters, which work as a pair to make one sound, but are separated within the word, such as a-e, e-e, i-e, o-e, u-e. Examples: cake, line, rule.
Grapheme	Written letters or a group of letters which represent one single sound (phoneme). Examples: a, i, sh, air, ck.
Letters and Sounds 2007	A government document detailing the teaching of phonics in the following six phases: • Phase 1: Split into seven aspects, which focus on hearing and talking about environmental sounds and letters. • Phase 2: Learning 19 letters of the alphabet, along with the first five tricky words, and using them to read and spell simple words and captions. • Phase 3: Learning the remaining letters of the alphabet, some two and three-letter digraphs, and the next set of tricky words. Reading and writing captions and sentences.

	- Phase 4: Learning to blend and segment longer words, including words with adjacent consonants and more than one syllable. Reading and writing sentences using these longer words along with the next set of tricky words. - Phase 5: Learning alternative spellings and pronunciations for phonemes, including common usage words. Reading and writing sentences using these words along with the next stage of tricky words. - Phase 6: Learning longer words and spelling rules.
Phoneme	A single sound that can be spelled by one or more letters (graphemes). Examples: s, k, z, oo, ph, igh.
Pure sound	Pronouncing each letter sound clearly and distinctly without adding additional sounds to the end. For example, 'fffff' not 'fuh'.
Segment	Breaking down the sounds of a spoken word into phonemes (individual sounds) in order to spell it. (Used in both spelling and writing.)
Tricky words	Words that are not fully decodable, either because they have an irregular spelling pattern or because the words frequently appear in texts for children who have not yet learned all the grapheme-phoneme correspondences needed to decode the word. These words are more difficult to sound out but nevertheless give some information on pronunciation. When teaching children to read an irregular/tricky word, you should ask the child to sound out the parts of the word they know (e.g. in the word 'was', they can sound out 'w' and 's'). Next, point out the irregular or tricky bit of the word (e.g. the 'a' in 'was' sounds like /o/) and encourage them to sound out and blend the word (/w/ /o/ /z/). We do not teach children how to read tricky words by a whole-word sight approach.
Trigraph	Three letters which together make one sound. Example: ear, air, igh, dge, tch.
Vowel	The letters a, e, i, o, u.