

Training and
Development Team

Juniper Education



Phonics for Parents



Introduction

It is expected that all pupils will be taught to read using phonics. In order to be able to support them effectively that means that parents also need a knowledge and understanding of basic phonics. That is particularly important at this current time when the majority of children are not in school.

This short presentation covers a few basic principles about phonics. The full presentation can be found at

What is phonics?

- Definition of phonics: *a method of teaching people to read by correlating sounds with symbols in an alphabetic writing system* (Oxford Dictionary).
- It is about teaching children **the code for how the English language works**.
- **Learning phonics** helps children with their **reading** and with their **spelling**.

Phoneme

- A **phoneme** is the **smallest unit of sound in a word**.
- There are around **44 phonemes** in the English language.
- Each **letter of the alphabet** represents at least one phoneme, for example s, t, b, a, m, v, e, j.
- Other phonemes include the names of the **vowels**: a, e, i, o, u and sh, ch, th, ng, air, ear, ure, ar, or and ur.
- Some of the phonemes can be shown in several different ways: er – **herd**; ir – **firm**; ur – **turn**; ear – **learn**; or – **word**.

Enunciation

- **Enunciation** is the **way we say the phonemes** – it is really important and may be different to what you learnt.
- It is important to **make the sound as pure as possible**.

Grapheme

- A **grapheme** is the **written form of a phoneme**. It can be a single letter or several letters.
- A **grapheme with two letters** is called a **digraph** – *ch, oa*.
- A **grapheme with three letters** is called a **trigraph** – *igh, air*.
- A **split digraph** has a **vowel digraph separated by a consonant**, for example:
 - **roe** - **rode** or **robe**
 - **due** - **duke** or **dune**

Blending or Synthesising #1

- As soon as children recognise a few of the letters and link them to the phoneme they represent they can put these letters together to make words – this is called **blending** or **synthesising**.
- This can be done **orally** (without using written letters) as well as for **reading** and is called **decoding**.

Segmenting or Chopping

- Phonics can also be a useful strategy for spelling.
- Children need to be able to separate a word into its different phonemes and then write them down in order to spell the word.
- It can take some children a while to remember how to record the different phonemes.
- For example, they might know that dog is made up d-o-g but then have to think about how to write the 'd'.
- Giving children a copy of the alphabet can help with this.

How you can help

- To help develop **blending** and **segmenting** skills **play** some **phoneme games**.
- The next pages have some ideas of games to play.



What's in the box?

- Put some objects in a box.
- Out of sight of your child, take something out of the box and **sound talk** it.
- For example, *“I have got a c– a – t.”*
- Ask your child to **blend** the letters together and say “cat”.



Phoneme Hunt

- Choose a **letter** of the **alphabet** and see how many objects you can see which start with the letter.
- For example, how many objects can you see beginning with the letter p.

Reading! Reading! Reading!

- And don't forget to read lots of **stories** and **rhymes** with your children, sometimes asking them to fill in the missing words and sound them out.

Reading Books

- In EYFS and Year 1, your child will probably have a reading book which links to the phonics they are working on in school.
- The first time they read the book they may need to focus on the words, maybe sounding a few of them out to work out what they say.
- It is important to reread the book to check they have understood it and can talk about it and also to make sure they are able to read it fluently.

Reading with your child #1

- Try to find a quiet place and a few minutes when you won't be disturbed.
- Practise sounds and words with them if you know what they are working on.
- Encourage your child to use their phonic skills when they come to a word they cannot read, as long as it is a decodable word and they know the graphemes it contains.
- Give them a few seconds to try before stepping in to help or to tell them the word.

Reading with your child #2

- If a word is used a lot in a book or if it is a word which is difficult to sound out encourage them to remember the word – maybe look for it on different pages.
- Ask questions and talk about the story as well as listening to your child read.
- Continue to share a range of story books and other texts with your child – we want them to learn that reading is an enjoyable thing to do.

Resources to support you

There are lots of websites with games and activities to support your child with reading and phonics. Here are just a few of them:

- www.phonicsplay.co.uk
- www.phonicsplaycomics.co.uk
- www.ictgames.com
- www.letters-and-sounds.com
- www.teachyourmonstertoread.com
- Juniper Education has produced a pack of activities available that cost £40 – you can buy them from <https://junipereducation.org/product/resources-to-support-the-teaching-of-phonics/>.

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CONTACT US AT:

training@junipereducation.org