

Parent Guide



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What is this resource and how do I use it?

Phonics terminology can be confusing for parents as well as children! This jargon buster is designed to help you to come to terms with unfamiliar words so that you can support your child at home. Read through our guide to familiarise yourself with the key terminology.

What is the focus of this resource?

Phonics Terms

Supporting Your Child

Curriculum Knowledge

Further Ideas and Suggestions

Once you have familiarised yourself with the key phonics terminology, why not help to support your child at home with some of our phonics activities available [here](#)?

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Phonics Jargon Buster for Parents

Phonics terminology can be confusing for parents as well as children! This jargon buster is designed to help you to come to terms with any unfamiliar words so that you can support your child at home. Read through our guide to familiarise yourself with the key terminology.

Adjacent Consonants

Adjacent consonants are two or more consonants that sit next to each other in a word but each consonant represents its own unit of sound. For example, in the word 'trap', the letters 't' and 'r' sit together and each one represents a different sound.

Blending

Blending is merging the individual sounds in a word together in order to read the whole word. For example, we can blend the sounds /f/ /i/ /sh/ to make the word 'fish'. Children are taught to orally blend in phase 1 in preparation for reading, where their teacher might say a word in its individual sounds and then the children blend the sounds together and say the word back. When children can recognise written sounds (graphemes), they will blend them to read words.

Consonants

There are 21 consonants in the alphabet - they are all of the letters apart from the vowels (a, e, i, o and u).

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CVC Words

CVC stands for consonant-vowel-consonant and is used to describe words with this letter formation, such as 'pig', 'net' and 'map'.

Digraph

A digraph is a grapheme that is made up using two letters to represent one phoneme (sound). For example, the phoneme /ch/ is represented by two letters.

Grapheme

A grapheme is a written representation of a phoneme (a unit of sound). Graphemes can be one, two, three or four letters long. For example, 'a' is a grapheme in 'can', 'ai' is a grapheme in 'rain', 'igh' is a grapheme in 'sigh' and 'eigh' is a grapheme in 'eight'.

Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondence

Grapheme-phoneme correspondence is the relationship between a phoneme and the grapheme used to represent it. Children are taught to identify what grapheme can be used for each sound and also what sound they say when they see a grapheme. This skill is vital for accurate reading and writing.

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Phonics Screening Check

The phonics screening check (or phonics screening test) is a test which is taken at school in Year 1 in order to ascertain a child's reading and phonics skills. Within the test, they are asked to read a series of words including real and 'pseudo words' to assess their understanding of the sounds and their ability to blend. In the lead up to the test, children will be taught up to phase 5 phonics which includes all of the sounds and skills which may be included in the test.

Phoneme

A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound within a word. For example, in the word 'cat', there are three phonemes: /c/ /a/ /t/. Phonemes can be represented by more than one letter, for example, in the word 'buzz', there are three phonemes: /b/ /u/ /zz/ - the /zz/ phoneme is represented by a grapheme containing two letters.

Pseudo Words

Pseudo words (also known as 'alien words', 'fake words' or 'nonsense words') are made-up and have no meaning. They are phonetically plausible, which means they can be sounded out with phonics. Pseudo words are used in the phonics screening check to assess a child's ability to sound out unknown words.

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Segmenting

Segmenting is a skill used in writing and spelling. It means breaking down a word into its individual sounds to be able to then write those sounds down in the correct order. Children are sometimes taught to count the phonemes (individual sounds) they can hear in a word to help them to make sure they represent each sound when attempting to write it.

Sound Bars

Sound bars are similar to sound buttons (see below) but they are used to represent a longer grapheme, such as a digraph or trigraph. This helps children to recognise a digraph or trigraph within a word and remember to read it as one individual phoneme (one unit of sound) rather than individual phonemes. For example:

rain

· _ ·

The word 'rain' is made up of three phonemes: /r/, /ai/ and /n/. The sound bar is used to show that 'ai' is a digraph and should be read as /ai/ rather than /a/ and /i/.

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Sound Buttons

In phase 2, children may be introduced to sound buttons to help them to differentiate between different sounds within a word. This is helpful when they are learning to read. For example, they may see a word written like this with a sound button under each phoneme:

c a t
• • •

This reminds them to say each sound before blending the word together. If they are struggling to read a word, they will be encouraged to add their own sound buttons to help to recognise and read each individual phoneme.

Tricky Words

Tricky words are words that your child will not be able to sound out using their knowledge of phonics so far. They are also called common exception words. As your child learns more and progresses through the phonics phases, tricky words will no longer be tricky as your child will have the skills to decode them. Each phonics phase contains different tricky words. For example, the word 'into' is classed as a tricky word because early phonics lessons teach that the phoneme 'o' makes the short /o/ sound (as in 'pot') instead of the long /oo/ sound like in 'moon'. However, in later phonics lessons, they will be taught about alternative spellings for sounds and therefore 'into' will become decodable.

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Trigraph

A trigraph is a grapheme (the written representation of a sound) made up of three letters to represent one sound. An example of this is in the word 'tight', where the letters 'i', 'g' and 'h' sit together to represent one sound - /igh/.

Vowels

There are five vowels in the alphabet: they are a, e, i, o and u.

Disclaimer: We hope you find the information on our website and resources useful. As far as possible, the contents of this resource are reflective of current professional research. However, please be aware that every child is different and information can quickly become out of date. The information given here is intended for general guidance purposes only and may not apply to your specific situation.