

Parent Guide



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What is this resource and how do I use it?

Do you feel baffled by blending or flustered by phonemes? Don't panic! If your child is learning phonics, they'll come across a range of terms to describe sounds and what they look like. Use this jargon buster to find out what these terms mean and see examples of each, so you're prepared next time your child talks about phonics.

What is the focus of this resource?

Phonics Terms

Supporting Your Child

Curriculum Knowledge

Further Ideas and Suggestions

We have lots of phonics resources in [this category](#) at the [Parents Hub](#). Our phonics step-by-step guides take you through what your child will cover in [phase 1](#), [phase 2](#), [phase 3](#), [phase 4](#), [phase 5](#) and [phase 6](#). If your child is taking the phonics screening check, use [this guide](#) to find out more.

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Phonics Jargon Buster for Parents

Do you feel baffled by blending or flustered by phonemes?

Don't panic! We have compiled a list of the terms your child is likely to come across in their phonics lessons. Your child will learn the technical terms below, so it's important to have an idea of what they are talking about in order to support them. Teachers might also use these terms when discussing your child's progress or when giving an insight into your child's school curriculum, so you'll understand more about what they are talking about with this glossary.

Adjacent Consonants

Adjacent consonants are two or more consonants that sit next to each other on a word but each consonant represents its own unit of sound. For example, in the word 'flat', the letters 'f' and 'l' sit together and each one represents a different sound.

Blending

Children are taught to blend in order to read. Blending is merging all of the individual sounds in a word together in order to read the whole word. For example, we can blend the sounds /f/ /o/ /g/ to make the word 'fog'. Children are taught to orally blend 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.

Vowels

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

Consonants

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

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 (the way a sound is written down) 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.

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 'cash', there are three phonemes: /c/ /a/ /sh/ - the /sh/ phoneme is represented by a grapheme containing two letters.

Pseudo Words

Pseudo words are words which 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.

Split Digraph

A split digraph is a digraph (two letters to represent one sound) which has been split by another letter. For example, in the word 'time', the grapheme 'ie' has been split but it still makes the same sound.

Segmenting

Segmenting is a skill used in writing and spelling. It means breaking up 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.

Tricky Words

Tricky words are high frequency words - words your child will come across often - that they 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.

For example, the word 'me' is classed as a tricky word because early phonics lessons teach that the sound of short /e/ (as in 'bed') is represented by the grapheme 'e'. However, in later phonics lessons, they will be taught about alternative spellings for sounds and therefore 'me' will become decodable.

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/.

