

# Phonics practice at home in Year 1

This guide will explain some of the phonics teaching that your child will receive at school in Year 1. It includes practical ideas for you to help your child practise their phonics using some simple resources.

We hope this will help you support your child's phonics learning at home.

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## What is phonics?

Phonics is about knowing how letters in words link to sounds. For example, the letter 'b' in 'bat' makes a /b/ sound and the letters 'ee' in 'tree' make a long /ee/ sound.

At school, children learn to use this knowledge to help them read and write. They learn that by saying the sounds and running or blending them together, they can read the words on a page (b-a-t makes 'bat'; t-r-ee makes 'tree'). They also learn that if they break a spoken word up into separate sounds then they can start to spell it (the word 'cat' is spelt c-a-t).

Phonics has been shown to be a quick and effective way for young children to learn to read and start to spell words they want to write.

## Phonics terms

### Phoneme

A sound within a word. For example, 'bag' has three separate phonemes /b/ /a/ /g/ and so does the word 'rain' /r/ /ai/ /n/.

### Grapheme

This is a letter or group of letters that represents a sound in a word when it is written down. For example: the letter 'b' is the grapheme that makes the /b/ sound; 'ai' is a grapheme that makes a long /ai/ sound.

### Digraph

This is a **grapheme** where two letters together make one sound. For example, 'ai' in 'rain' is a digraph.

### Trigraph

This is a **grapheme** where three letters together make one sound. For example, 'igh' in 'light'.

### Split digraph

This is when two letters that make one sound are 'split up' by another letter in-between them. For example, 'i-e' in the word 'like'.

## Blending

This is the process used to read a word. It involves 'saying the sounds' and then 'blending' or running them together to say the whole word. For example, the sounds /r/ /ai/ /n/ blend together to make the word 'rain'.

## Segmenting

This is the reverse process of **blending** and is used to spell a word. You segment or break a word into the separate sounds. For example, to spell the word 'seed', first you segment it into the sounds /s/ /ee/ /d/ and then you write the letter or letters for each of those sounds.

## Tricky words

These are common words that children will meet a lot when reading, but they have at least one letter or a group of letters that make an unusual or unfamiliar sound. For example, the word 'their' is a tricky word because the 'eir' **grapheme** is not one that the children will know.

## Overview of Year 1

In Reception, children learn the letter sounds and the sounds made by groups of letters, such as ch, sh, ai, oa, or, oi, ear. In Year 1, children learn more graphemes (ways of writing sounds) so that they can read and spell more words correctly.

In Year 1:

- ▶ Children learn that a number of different graphemes can make the same sound. For example, the graphemes 'ai' (**rain**), ay (**play**) and a-e (**take**) all make the long /ai/ sound.
- ▶ Children learn that some graphemes make different sounds in different words. For example, the letter 'i' usually makes the /i/ sound (such as in the word 'in'), but it makes the /igh/ sound in the word 'find'.
- ▶ Children practise blending to read words with the new graphemes. Many of these are digraphs (two letters that make one sound). It is important that when children see these two letters together they say the one sound and not the two separate letter sounds.
- ▶ Children practise segmenting to spell words with the new graphemes.

## Phonics practice at home in Year 1

Children need lots of practice at recognising graphemes so they can remember them and spot them easily in the words they read. At school, your child practises graphemes and phonemes daily to make sure that they are stored in their memory. Practising at home will really help your child to remember the graphemes and their sounds.

Children also need to develop the skill of blending to read so that it becomes automatic. Your child will practise blending to read words every day at school, but you can help your child by practising at home as well.

Your child may bring home some simple resources. This will include **Grapheme cards**, showing the graphemes they need to practise, and **Word cards** showing words containing these graphemes. They may also bring home **Sentences** to read and **Tricky word cards** to practise.

## Practising graphemes and their sounds

Below are some practice activities you can do with your child at home, using **Grapheme cards**. Your child will be familiar with some of these activities from school. Others are games you can play with grapheme cards to vary the practice and make it more fun.

During all activities, remember to give lots of praise and encouragement. Encourage your child to show off their phonics knowledge and tell them how impressed you are! Keep each practice session short – always stop before your child gets bored. Ten minutes is often enough.

### Quick-fire graphemes

- ▶ Hold up each **Grapheme card** in turn and ask your child to say the sound.
- ▶ If your child does not remember the sound, point to the grapheme and say the sound.
- ▶ Show the card again and ask your child to repeat the sound.
- ▶ Once you have been through all the cards, mix them up and repeat the activity showing the graphemes in a different order.

### Your turn

- ▶ Put all of the **Grapheme cards** face down on the table.
- ▶ Ask your child to choose a card to turn over and say the sound.
- ▶ If your child says the correct sound, they win the card.
- ▶ If not, it's your turn to have the **Grapheme card**. Hold it up and say the sound. Ask your child to repeat the sound.
- ▶ Put the card back on the table face down and move the cards around a bit.
- ▶ Continue the game until your child wins all the cards.

### Grapheme hopper

This is a good activity once your child seems fairly good at recognising a set of graphemes.

- ▶ Arrange the **Grapheme cards** in a line across the table or on the floor, with the letters showing.
- ▶ Use a pointer (for example, a pencil, knitting needle, lolly stick) to jump from card to card, encouraging your child to say the sound as soon as you land on it.
- ▶ Keep up a rapid pace to encourage quick recall.

## ‘Finders keepers’

- ▶ Spread the **Grapheme cards** out on the table, face up.
- ▶ Say the sound to go with one of the graphemes and ask your child to find the correct card.
- ▶ If your child finds the correct grapheme, they keep the card. If not, it remains on the table.

## Practising blending to read words

The following activities can be used to practise blending using the **Word cards** your child brings home. Remember your child should ‘say the sounds’ and ‘blend’ the words to read them.

Doing activities like these mean that your child will reread the words a number of times. Rereading words helps children to build confidence in word reading.

Once your child has said the sounds and read a word a few times, they will probably begin to recognise it automatically without needing to blend. This is a good thing and should be encouraged.

Remember to give lots of praise and encouragement and keep each session quite short.

### Lucky dip

- ▶ Put the **Word cards** in a net/bag/pot/box.
- ▶ Ask your child to pick a card from the container.
- ▶ Ask them to say the sounds and blend the word on the card. If your child reads the word correctly, they keep the card.
- ▶ If your child gets stuck on a word, point to each grapheme and say the sounds and then blend the word for them.
- ▶ Ask your child to repeat the process.
- ▶ The **Word card** then goes back in the container so it can be picked and read again.
- ▶ Repeat until all the words are read successfully.

### Find it, read it

For this activity you need **Grapheme cards** and the corresponding **Word cards**.

- ▶ Place all the **Word cards** face up on the table.
- ▶ Show a **Grapheme card** and ask your child to say the sound and then find a word with that grapheme in it.
- ▶ Once your child has found the word, ask them to say the sounds in the word and blend to read it.
- ▶ You could say the word in a phrase or sentence to show what it means, as this will help develop your child’s vocabulary.

## Quick read

Use this game when your child seems fairly confident at reading the words.

- ▶ Place the **Word cards** face down on the table.
- ▶ Ask your child to turn over the cards and read the words as quickly as they can. Remember, if your child recognises a word instantly, they do not need to sound it first.
- ▶ If your child likes to be competitive, you could use a timer and time how long it takes to read all the words or see how many words they can read in a set time.