

# Targeted support in Phase Four

At the start of Phase Four, there are likely to be some Phase Three digraphs and trigraphs that children still have difficulty recognising. These are consolidated further during Phase Four. However, if children continue to struggle with the consonant digraphs (sh, ch, th, ng) and the vowel digraphs introduced first (ai, ee, igh, oa, oo), they are likely to need additional support or practice. Similarly, children who are struggling to read CVC words containing digraphs are likely to need additional practice to ensure they continue to progress in reading.

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The guidance below suggests strategies and activities that can be used in targeted, small-group (or one-to-one) sessions with a teacher or trained teaching assistant to help secure knowledge of digraphs and develop blending of words with digraphs.

**Note:** it may be appropriate to combine recognition of digraphs and blending to read words into the same session. Children who struggle with blending to read words with digraphs often need more practice at recognising the digraphs so they can recognise them easily in words. In this case, each session should include a short grapheme recognition activity followed by a blending activity using words with the same graphemes.

## Children who have difficulty recognising digraphs or remembering their sounds

Some children struggle with the idea that two letters make one sound. They need to see the digraphs repeatedly to link the two letters to the sound they represent. ‘Little and often’ is the best way to ensure the necessary level of repetition. Provide short daily practice sessions to secure the most common digraphs. Set a realistic timeframe for learning them.

**Target:** Children can recognise at least 10 of the Phase Three digraphs, or recognise the consonant digraphs and at least 6 vowel digraphs.

Review the digraphs in groups, starting with the consonant digraphs: sh, ch, th, ng. Once the children can recognise those, introduce ai, ee, igh, oa and oo, and then the vowel digraphs ending with ‘r’: ar, or, ur. Keep practising digraphs, even if the children seem to know them, to ensure they are secure.

Use the picture side of the **Mnemonic** supported by appropriate actions to help the children link the two letters to the sound. For example, for ‘ch’, make a beak shape with your fingers and make a *ch, ch, ch* sound like a chick. (See **Multi-sensory ideas for introducing the consonant digraphs and vowel digraphs** pp.149–150).

Use the grapheme side of the **Mnemonic** to focus on the two letters that make the one sound. Remember to use the letter names when doing this. Draw attention to the letters that go together to make the sound. For example, the 'c' in 'ch' is round like the chick, while the 't' in 'th' stands tall like a thumb; the sounds for ai, ee, igh, oa sound like the name of the first letter.

Practise the digraphs daily using the **Mnemonics** and the **Quick-fire phonemes** activity (p.151). Show the grapheme side of each **Mnemonic** and ask the children to say the sound. If necessary, show the picture side as a visual prompt. Focus on achieving instant response to the grapheme side.

Give the children copies of the relevant **Mnemonics** to take home so they can practice at home as well.

Assess children's recognition of the digraphs, updating the **Grapheme recognition record sheets** as they become secure.

## Children who have difficulty blending to read CVC words containing digraphs

Sometimes children have difficulty blending words with digraphs. Use the **Phase Three Blending checks** and your ongoing daily assessments to help you identify the problem. Often children have difficulty recognising digraphs or trigraphs in words so they say the individual letter sounds instead. This shows that they need more practice at recognising the digraphs. Identify which digraphs the children do not recognise in words and ensure they practice these before they read words.

**Target:** Children can blend and read CVC words containing digraphs they know.

Begin each session with a short **Quick-fire phonemes** activity (p.151). Use **Grapheme cards** for the digraphs they will need to recognise in words in the session. Make sure they are ones the children are fairly familiar with as they need to recognise digraphs instantly on sight in order to 'see' them in words.

Use the following activities and strategies to develop blending to read words with digraphs.

Use **Grapheme cards** (or plastic letters that include digraphs) to build words containing the digraphs. For example, start with sh, ch, th and add two letters after each to make a word (such as, shop, chat, thin); or start with a vowel digraph and add a letter before and after it to make a word (for example, w ai t, f ee d, f ar m). Ask the children to sound and blend the words you make them. This helps to make the digraphs more visible and also focuses attention on where the digraphs appear in words.

Set out some **Phase Three Word cards** with the digraphs you have practised. Show one of the **Grapheme cards** and ask the children to say the sound. Then ask them to spot the word card(s) with that digraph/sound. Underline the digraph and ask the children to sound-talk and read the word.

Continue to practise reading the **Phase Three Word cards**. Use the word cards with sound buttons to begin with and then introduce those without. You can use the blending practice activities from p.152 or you will find ideas for games to practise blending in the **Phonics practice at home in Reception** download.

Assess children's progress, noting which digraphs children are now recognising in words and which need further reinforcement.