

Targeted support in Phases Two and Three

At the end of Phase Two, some children may still not have grasped the basic skill of blending or segmenting, or they may be struggling to retain the letter sounds introduced in Phase Two. These children are likely to struggle in Phase Three without additional support to develop these key skills.

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 develop the specific skills of blending, segmenting or letter recognition.

Children who have difficulty recalling/retaining the letter sounds introduced in Phase Two

Some children may struggle to recall the Phase Two letter sounds or they may seem to know them for a time but then not retain them. These children need a great deal of repetition to link letters to sounds and ensure that this learning moves into their long-term memories. ‘Little and often’ is the best way to achieve this: five to ten minutes of practice every day will work better than one or two longer sessions a week.

First, use your ongoing **Letter recognition record sheets** and/or the **Phase Two Letter recognition check** to identify exactly which letters each child knows and which need to be secured. Select the letters they need to consolidate and set a clear target with a realistic timeframe for learning them.

Target: Children can consistently recognise the focus letters (list the letters) and say the sounds.

Practise the letters daily for about 5 to 10 minutes using the **Mnemonics** and the **Quick-fire letters** activity (p.64) as described below. You might start with some letters that the children seem already to know and just one or two of the focus letters. This will help build confidence and ensure the children are not overloaded with too much to remember at one time. Add a new focus letter to the set each day using the **Mnemonic**. (If the children start to struggle with retaining the letter sounds, stop adding new ones for a day or two and practise the ones already introduced until they are more secure.) Regularly return to practise other letters, even those they seem to have mastered, as this helps ensure information is properly retained.

► **Quick-fire letters:** Show the letter side of each **Mnemonic** and ask the children to say the sound. If necessary, show the picture side as a visual prompt, encouraging the children to say the word and the sound (for example, *Say rrrrrrocket /r/; Say d-d-d-d-duck /d/*). Then continue, showing the letter side again. Change the order of the letters each time you practise to make sure the children are responding to the letters and not just saying the sounds rote. Focus on achieving an instant response to the letter side of all the **Mnemonics**.

► **Multi-sensory activities:** Multi-sensory activities can help to link letter shapes to their sounds and support their retention in the memory. You might ask the children to finger trace a focus letter shape on the **Mnemonic**, write the letter ‘in the air’ using large gestures, or finger write it on a rough/tactile surface such as the carpet. Say the letter formation pattern as they do this, linking it to the picture **Mnemonic** and sound (for example, *Round the e-e-elephant’s face and down his trunk*). Say the sound each time they complete the letter.

Each time a new focus letter is added, give the children a copy of the relevant **Mnemonic** to take home so they can practice at home as well.

► **Continued reinforcement:** Keep practising the target letters every day, even when the children seem to know them, to ensure they are really secure and recognised instantly. You can vary the activity to keep the children engaged and motivated, for example, use the **Stepping stones game** (p.64) or another letter recognition activity from the teaching guidance, or use **Grapheme cards** in simple games such as **Your turn** (see **Phonics practice at home in Reception**). Keep the activities fast-paced, making sure there is a clear focus on the children instantly recognising the letters and saying the sounds.

Assess children’s recognition of the letters and update the **Letter recognition record sheets** as they become secure. Use evidence from outside of these sessions to ensure the letters are recognised consistently, for example, in the daily phonics lessons, in other classroom activities and when reading the **My Letter and Sounds Phonics Readers**.

Children who have difficulty blending CVC words with single letters

Some children may still find blending CVC words with single letters difficult at the end of Phase Two or at the start of Phase Three. Children who are slow to develop this key skill will need additional daily practice to help them. Use the **Phase Two Blending checks** and your ongoing daily assessments to help you identify where the problem lies. For example, some children may say the sounds slowly, which makes it difficult to blend them, or they may have difficulty holding the three sounds in their head.

Note: If a child is actually having difficulty recognising the letters in a word (saying the correct sounds), they will need more practice at letter recognition before or as well as blending.

In the blending practice sessions, use words that include only letters that are secure so the focus is solely on blending. For example, the **Phase Two Word cards** provide lots of words that contain just the first eight letters that could be used to begin with.

Target: Children will be able to blend CVC words made up of single letters.

Use the following activities and strategies to develop blending to read words. Model blending words first so the children can hear how to say the letter sounds in a way that makes it easy to blend, for example, say each sound clearly (without adding /uh/) and at an appropriate speed. Pause to see if the children blend the sounds and say the word, and if not, say the sounds again, followed immediately by the word. Ask the children to copy what you did so they learn to say the sounds in a way that helps them blend.

Start sessions with a quick oral blending activity to encourage the children to listen and blend together a sequence of sounds (for example, *Tog says s-i-t*). You will find ideas for oral blending activities in the teaching guidance (p.44 and p.65).

Use **Grapheme cards** or plastic letters to make words for the children to blend. Show three letters that will make a word (for example, d, i, p) and ask the children to say each sound. Push the letters or cards together to form the word and point to each letter, encouraging the children to say the sounds more quickly to assist blending. Run your finger under the word and check the children say the word. Model the process again, if necessary. Repeat, making more words for the children to sound and blend.

Use **Grapheme cards** to blend VC words and then CVC words. For example, use the cards to make the word 'an'. Ask the children to say the sounds and blend the word. Then add an extra letter to make 'man'. Ask the children to say the sounds and blend the new word. Try saying the first sound louder so the children remember to say it first. Repeat with other examples (for example, up and cup; in and pin or tin; it and sit or kit; at and mat or rat).

Practise reading the **Phase Two Word cards**, using the sound buttons. Touch each sound button as you say the sound and then run a finger under the word from left to right as you blend it. Give each child or pair a few words to read in this way. If they say the sounds too slowly, repeat the sounds, saying them in a way that assists blending.

Some children might find it easier to blend the first two letters, hold the middle vowel sound and then add on the last letter (for example, *s a saaaaa d sad*). Cover the last letter of a word on a **Word card** with your hand or finger until they have blended the first two letters and then quickly reveal the last letter so they can blend it onto the end.

Once children start to blend words successfully you could continue to practise using blending practice activities such as **Matching words and pictures** (p.67) or use **Phase Two Word cards** in simple games such as **Pairs** or **In the pot** (see **Phonics practice at home in Reception**).

You could also give the children copies of some of the **Word cards** to take home for additional practice.

Assess children's progress in blending CVC words using evidence from reading the **My Letters and Sounds Phonics Readers** as well as in the daily phonics lessons.

Children who have difficulty segmenting words

Many children find segmenting difficult and all children should continue to practise this skill in Phase Three. However, children who are still having difficulty with segmenting simple CVC words into Phase Three may need additional practice to develop this skill.

Target: Children will be able to segment words and spell CVC words with Phase Two letters.

Use the following activities to build up from oral segmenting to spelling CVC words.

- **Oral segmenting:** Make sure the children can orally segment words as breaking spoken words into separate sounds is the first step in learning to spell them. Use 'Tog' and the **Talk like a robot** activity (p.44) to review orally segmenting CVC words. Then practise the skill using activities such as **Tell Tog**, **Chop the word** or **Finger spelling** (p.65).

Use a **Three-box phoneme frame** and some counters to add a multi-sensory element when orally segmenting words. Say a CVC word for the children to orally segment. Ask them to push a counter onto the phoneme frame as they say each sound.

► **Building words:** Once children begin to orally segment words, introduce choosing letters to represent the sounds. At this stage, use a **Phoneme frame** with **Phoneme frame letters** or plastic letters rather than writing the letters, as this allows the children to focus on choosing the right letters to represent the sounds without having to worry about how to form the letters or holding a pencil correctly. Moving letters onto a phoneme frame also adds a multi-sensory element to support the segmenting to spell process. Provide the children with a **Three-box phoneme frame** and a set of **Phoneme frame letters** that can be made into lots of words (for example, t, n, p, m, a, i). Say words for the children to orally segment and build on their phoneme frame (tip, tin, tan, tap, nap, nip, pin, pit, pat, pan, man, map, mat).

You could also use the **Word chain** activity (p.69) at this point.

► **Spelling and writing words:** Once children can build CVC words on a phoneme frame, they can start to segment the sounds and write the letters on a phoneme frame. See the **Whiteboard words** activity (p.68 and p.153). The children should have the letter side of the **Mnemonics** to refer to when choosing and writing the letters. You could limit the choice of letters to begin with. For example, displaying just five letters (such as, l, i, t, n, p) and asking the children to segment and write the words (lip, pit, tin, pin, tip, lit).

Assess children's progress through these stages.