



Phonics at a Glance



Information for parents

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Letters and Sounds



Phonics at a glance

Phonics is ...

Skills

of segmentation
and blending



Knowledge

of the alphabet
code



Phonics consists of:

- Identifying sounds in spoken words
- Recognising the common spellings of each phoneme
- Blending phonemes into words for reading
- Segmenting words into phonemes for spelling

Some Definitions

a 'phoneme' *(you hear)*

This is the smallest unit of sound in a word



How many phonemes can you hear in 'cat'?

a 'grapheme' *(you see)*

These are the letters that represents a phoneme



A word always has the same number of phonemes and graphemes!

Children need to practise recognising the grapheme and saying the phoneme that it represents.

The grapheme could be 1 letter, 2 letters or more!

We refer to these as **sound buttons** : **t** **ai** **igh**





The 44 phonemes:

/b/	/d/	/f/	/g/	/h/	/j/	/k/	/l/	/m/	/n/	/ng/
/p/	/r/	/s/	/t/	/v/	/w/	/y/	/z/	/th/	/th/	/ch/
/sh/	/zh/	/a/	/e/	/i/	/o/	/u/	/ae/	/ee/	/ie/	/oe/
/ue/	/oo/	/ar/	/ur/	/au/	/er/	/ow/	/oi/	/air/	/ear/	/ure/



This is where it gets tricky!

- Phonemes are represented by graphemes.
- A grapheme can consist of 1, 2 or more letters.
- A phoneme can be represented / spelled in more than one way;
e.g. cat, kennel, choir
- The same grapheme may represent more than one phoneme (e.g. me, met).

Blending

- Recognising the letter sounds in a written word, for example : c - u - p
- And merging or 'blending' them in the order in which they are written to pronounce the word 'cup'

Segmenting

- 'Chopping Up' the word to spell it out
- The opposite of blending
- Identifying the individual sounds in a spoken word, for example : h - i - m, s - t - o - r - k, and writing down letters for each sound (phoneme) to form the word 'him' and 'stork'
- This can also be used to support, when writing.

Segment and Blend these words

- | | |
|--------|---------------|
| • drep | d - r - e - p |
| • blom | b - l - o - m |
| • gris | g - r - i - s |
| • shup | sh - u - p |

Nonsense games like this help to build up skills - and are fun!



Letters and Sounds

Once children are good with single phonemes ...

- DIGRAPHS are introduced - these are 2 letters that make 1 sound :

ll ss zz oa ai

- and TRIGRAPHS - these are 3 letters that make 1 sound :

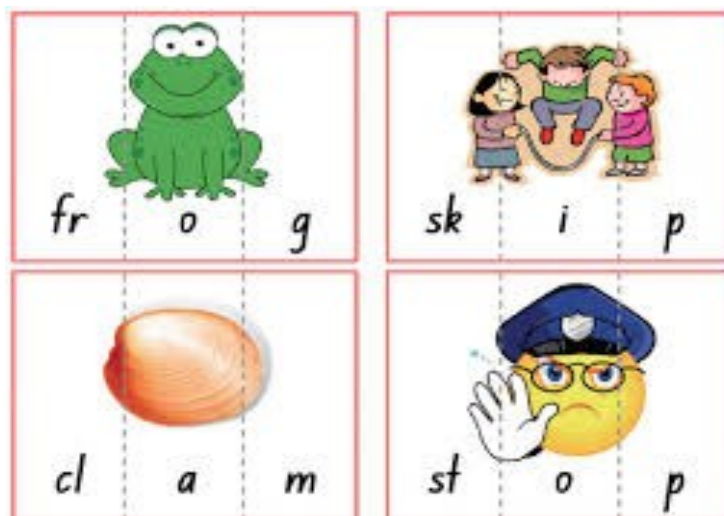
igh dge



Segmenting Activity

Use 'robot arms' to say how many phonemes in each word :

- shelf : sh-e-l-f 4 phonemes
- dress : d-r-e-ss 4 phonemes
- sprint : s-p-r-i-n-t 6 phonemes
- string : s-t-r-i-ng 5 phonemes



Tricky Words

Words that are not phonically decodable, eg. was, the, I

Some are 'tricky' to start with but will become decodable once we have learned the harder phonemes, eg. out, there

Blending and Segmenting Games

Children who can segment and blend sounds easily are able to use this knowledge when reading and spelling. Segmenting and blending individual sounds can be difficult at the beginning. Our recommendation is to begin with segmenting and blending syllables. Once familiar with that, students will be prepared for instruction and practice with individual sounds.

When beginning readers sound out words, they slowly say each sound in a word (c-a-t-), and then say the sounds quickly together to "read" the word (cat). In reading, teachers call this blending because sounds are being blended together. Blending (combing sounds) and segmenting (separating sounds) are skills that are necessary for learning to read.

Developing a child's phonological awareness is an important part of developing a reader. Many research studies indicate that kids who have weak phonological awareness also have weak reading skills.

The figure below shows how the teaching of segmenting and blending should progress, starting at the sentence level, moving to syllable, and finally to individual phonemes. Be sure to provide lots of practice at the easier level before moving on.

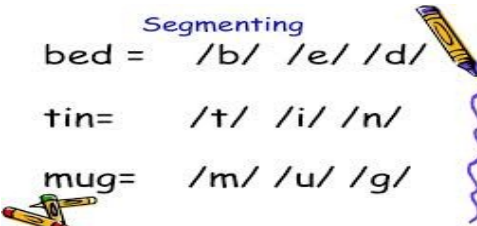
When to use :	o	Before reading	•	o	After reading
How to use :	•		•		•

Segmenting

bed = /b/ /e/ /d/

tin = /t/ /i/ /n/

mug = /m/ /u/ /g/




Letters and Sounds

Why teach blending and segmenting ?

- Teaching the skills of segmentation in isolation or in combination with blending instruction helps with successful reading development.

Examples : Blending games / Guess-the-word games

Objective: Students will be able to blend and identify a word that is stretched out into its component sounds.

Materials required: Picture cards of objects that students are likely to recognise such as sun, bell, fan, flag, snake, tree, book, cup, clock, plane.

Activity: Place a small number of picture cards in front of children. Tell them you are going to say a word using “Snail Talk”, a slow way of saying words (eg. /ffffffllllaaaag/).



They have to look at the pictures and guess the word you are saying. It is important to have the children guess the answer in their head so that everyone gets an opportunity to try it. Alternative between having one child identify the word and having all children say the word aloud in chorus to keep children engaged.

‘Robot Talk’ Game

- Listen to the word
- Can you hear the sounds in the word?
- Make the word using the sound cards.
- Now ‘robot talk’ the sounds that make the word, ‘just like me!’



Sound Blending Using Songs

You can use songs to support blending. The following activity is to the tune of “If You’re Happy and You Know It, Clap Your Hands.”

If you think you know this word, shout it out!

If you think you know this word, shout it out!

If you think you know this word,

Then tell me what you’ve heard,

If you think you know this word, shout it out!



Letters and Sounds

After singing, say a segmented word such as /k/ /a/ /t/ and your child can provide the blended word “cat.”

Segmenting Cheer Activity

Learn the “Segmenting Cheer”. Each time you say the cheer, change the words in the third line. Have children segment the word sound by sound. Begin with words that have three phonemes, such as *ten, rat, cat, dog, soap, read, and fish*



Segmentation Cheer

Listen to my cheer.

Then shout out the sounds you hear.

Sun! Sun! Sun!

Let's take apart the word sun.

Give me the beginning sound. (Children respond with /s/.)

Give me the middle sound. (Children respond with /u/.)

Give me the ending sound. (Children respond with /n/.)

That's right!

/s/ /u/ /n/ - Sun! Sun! Sun!



Not all Children will Learn at the same Rate

Your child should be supported whatever their rate of learning. There is a very close link between *difficulty with phonics* and *hearing* so, if your child is making progress more slowly than might be expected, it would be worth having their hearing checked.

From a very early stage, children develop awareness of different sounds in spoken language. They develop understanding that spoken words are made up of different sounds (phonemes) and they learn to match these phonemes to letters (graphemes). Phonics is about children knowing their letters link to sounds (graphemes to phonemes), for example, **c** as in 'cat', **ll** as in 'fell', **ee** as in 'sheep'.

Children use this phonic knowledge when they are reading and writing. This approach has been shown to provide a quick and efficient way for most young children to learn to read words on the page, fluently and accurately. We want children to develop this skill so that it becomes automatic. This also greatly helps them with their spelling.

At St. Paulinus we use a systematic phonics programme called 'Letters and Sounds', we also use 'Jolly Phonics'.

Letters and Sounds is divided into six phases, with each phase building on the skills and knowledge of previous learning. There are no big leaps in learning. Children have time to practise and rapidly expand their ability to read and spell words. They are also taught to read and spell 'tricky words', which are words with spellings that are unusual or that children have not yet been taught.



