

# fonics<sup>TM</sup> Parent Guide



readwithfonics

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## What is phonics?

Let's start at the beginning...

Each one of the 26 letters in the alphabet has its own 'sound'. This is very different to how a letter is 'said' in the alphabet. For example:

'a' in 'a row'



'b' in 'b at'.



Of course phonics is not that simple! There are more than 26 sounds in English language, in fact there are 44 sounds in total. Some of these sounds are made up of 2 or 3 letters. 2 letter sounds are called digraphs and three letter sounds are called trigraphs. For example

digraph



scout

trigraph



earth

It gets a bit more complicated than that too!

For example the 'n' sound, like in 'nail' is also spelt 'gn' like in 'gnome' or 'kn' like in 'knot'.



nail



knot



gnome

Still with us?! Good!

The sound that most children struggle to see when decoding words and breaking them down into sounds is the 'split digraph'. This is when two letters work together to make one sound, however they are split by having a separate letter in the middle.

Fortunately 'split digraphs' always end in an 'e' which make them easier to spot.

Examples of split digraphs include:



bone



cake

So that's it! We appreciate there has been a few new words chucked at you there you may have never heard of, so below is a little phonics codebreaker to help us out before we go any further!

## Phonics codebreaker

Phoneme – a sound as it is said

Grapheme – a sound that is written

Digraph– two letters that work together to make the same sound

Trigraph – Three letters that work together to make the same sound

Split digraph – Two letters that work together to make the same sound, separated by another letter



## Why is phonics the best method for teaching my child to read?

Phonics makes learning to read easier, simpler and crucially gets children reading quicker. This helps to increase a child's confidence and instil a love of reading from an early age. Rather than memorising 1,000's of words individually, children are instead taught a code.

This code helps children to break down, sound out and blend together words, allowing them to read 95% of the English language.

If you didn't learn to read using phonics it can seem very complicated, but once the concept of words being made up of just 44 sounds is understood, children are able to make remarkably quick progress in their reading.





## How is phonics taught in schools?

Children start to learn to read as soon as they start school at the age of 5. Many children start before however.

The first lesson in phonics is teaching children to recognise and differentiate between different sounds. This typically starts by asking children to listen to sounds that you can hear, such as the sounds that animals make, or sounds you hear when you go outside.

As schooling progresses children are then taught simple, single letter sounds from the alphabet, before moving on to learning about digraphs, trigraphs and split digraphs.

Phonics is often used in listening and writing lessons as well reading lessons. Often, children in schools are taught and encouraged to spell phonetically before they spell correctly, as this shows an understanding of how words are made up and that different letters make certain sounds.

To make learning fun schools and teachers will often teach sounds through multi sensory activities such as

singing or dancing or by playing games, both physical and online. All children learn differently so it is vital that teachers make learning as varied as possible.

Practising sounds as they are taught in school at home is one of the factors in children improving their reading. From my experience, children who are read to at home, read at home and practice their sounds at home, even for just a few minutes a week, make really noticeable improvements compared to those who do not.

## Why is reading and learning to read so important?

Reading is one of the first things that children learn when they start school. It is the foundation of all education. When children can read, other subjects then become available to them and independent learning can begin. Those who are unable to read well will find themselves at a constant disadvantage throughout their education.

Reading doesn't only have educational benefits but social ones as well. Reading with your child can be one of the most exciting, memorable and special times for you as a parent. It is not everyday you can help teach your child a skill they will use every single day for the rest of their lives!

Learning to read also helps to instil confidence, independence and self belief that will massively help your child's all round development.



## 5 tips to help your child fall in love with reading

1. Choose books that your child is genuinely interested in.

This may sound obvious but asking a child to read about robots if they love trains isn't going to have the same impact!

2. Pick a quiet and appropriate time to read

Creating a relaxed environment can really help to ease the pressure some children face when asked to practice their reading.

3. Talk about the story

It is important to make reading more than just about 'practicing reading'. Remember that books are stories! Talk about what is happening in the story 'what do you think this book is



going to be about?’ ‘What do you think will happen next?’ are great questions to engage your child in the storybook.

#### 4. Identify tricky words first before you start reading

Once you start to read regularly you will learn the words that they will find tricky depending on their level. Reading the trickier words together before you start reading will give your child confidence when they see that word during the story.

#### 5. Give them time to decipher the words

Giving your child time to decipher the words and not rushing them will increase their confidence. It is important for children to learn the process of how to read words. That is how phonics works. Ask them to take their time, sound it out and blend it back together.

Be patient here! It is not uncommon for children to correctly read a word and then 30 seconds later be unable to read it. Go through the process from the beginning, sound it out, blend it together and in time

they will recognise high frequency words and will not need to go through that process any more.

Don't forget to give them positive praise for their effort!

## How can readwithfonics.com help your child with their reading?

- We make learning to read fun!

By turning lessons into games children learn without even realising.

- A complete resource

Our resource is used by over 10,000 teachers around the world to help their students learn to read. Readwithfonics.com starts with simple sounds and continues through to teaching the different spelling combinations. Readwithfonics.com is unique and unrivalled in it's way of doing this. No other resource can help take your child from a non reader to being able to read words, sentences and books, from start to finish!

- Children are in control of their own learning

With readwithfonics.com children have their own game, their own score and their own level. This allows them to learn at their own pace and in their own time.

- Traditionally students are scored out of 100%

Traditional students are marked out of 100%. At Fonics we believe this creates a negative mindset as children always see how far off the perfect score they are. At [readwithfonics.com](http://readwithfonics.com) children are rewarded points for every correct answer. Points add up which enables them to increase their level. Like this, children are always working to try and find the correct answer, instead of worrying about getting the answer wrong.

- Made by a teacher for teachers, parents and students

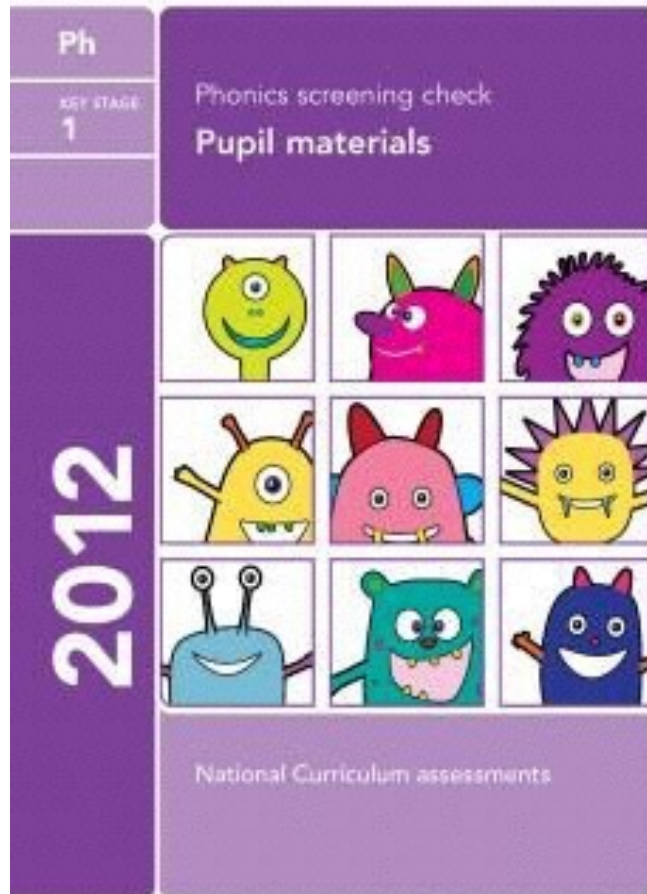
[Readwithfonics.com](http://Readwithfonics.com) was created by primary school teacher Sophie Cooper after her first hand experience in the classroom. The website is designed to help teachers make their lessons more efficient, to make learning more fun for children and to help inform parents on how their child is being taught in schools, to give them a great resource to use at home. We also want to help give parents by giving them tips and hints for reading at home with their children.



## What is Phonics Screening check (England)?

The Phonics screening check is a compulsory assessment that all children in Year 1 in England must take. It is used to assess a student's phonic decoding skills. To pass a student must correctly read around 32/40 words correctly.

The 40 words in the check are split into sections progressing from simple word structures to trickier words with five or six letters.



The often confusing thing about the screening check is that 20/40 of the words that children are expected to read are ‘nonsense words’, alien words that have no meaning. This is designed specifically to test a child’s skills in phonetically decoding words to ensure they have the skills to learn new words in the future and that they don’t just know the word in the check by memory.

The check is administered by your child’s teacher

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Sample: Answer sheet

YEAR  
**1**

**Phonics**

### Screening check: Answer sheet

First name: \_\_\_\_\_

Last name: \_\_\_\_\_

Screening check responses: Please tick the appropriate box for each word. The use of the comment box is optional.

Section 1				Section 2			
Word	Correct	Incorrect	Comment	Word	Correct	Incorrect	Comment
tea				too			
bin				found			
vap				leg			
up				fape			
pack				snamp			
churn				blunt			
tond				apron			
thaw				stork			
blan				day			
neck				side			
kid				next			
quamp				phone			
shin				blank			
gang				trains			
week				strap			
chil				scribe			
git				rusty			
start				finger			
best				dentist			
books				starling			

Total correct: \_\_\_\_\_

during the designated phonics screening week. The words are the same all across the country. Schools are sent the screening check through the post in a sealed box and teachers are not allowed to open the test until the start of that week. Your child will be scored against a national average which has been 32 since 2012. The mark will be told to schools at the end of June and can be released to parents if requested. Individual children's results will not be published.

There are past phonics screening checks from 2012 – 2015 on our website [www.readwithfonics.com](http://www.readwithfonics.com)

Perhaps the most important thing to take away from all this is to not stress out, and certainly don't let your child feel anxious about the check in anyway. If a child can read, this check is easy.