



OEYC  
Phonics Workshop  
Booklet



## **Why is Phonics Important?**

Phonics assists children in learning how to read and spell.

Written language can be compared to a code, so knowing the sounds of letters and letter combinations helps children to decode words as they read. Applying this knowledge also helps children to know which letters to use as they write words.

Learning phonics in English can be complicated as there are around 44 phonemes (units of sound) but there are around 120 graphemes (how a sound is written). As we only have 26 letters of the alphabet some graphemes are made up of more than one letter. To make it even more complex some graphemes can represent more than one phoneme e.g 'oo' in 'moon' makes a long sound and 'oo' in 'good' makes a short sound.

Many parents worry that they are not saying sounds correctly. It is important that the sounds are pure without the 'uh' at the end. There are many clips on websites such as Youtube that demonstrate how to pronounce speech sounds, a good place to start is: [Jolly Phonics Letter Sounds \(British English\)](#)

## **Notes:**

## Useful Resources

### Websites:

[www.wordsforlife.org.uk](http://www.wordsforlife.org.uk)

Includes tips for getting boys to read and songs and rhymes for young children.

[www.bookstart.co.uk](http://www.bookstart.co.uk)

Provides information about the national Bookstart scheme and the Bookstart packs that your child will receive as a baby and at age three to four. It also gives information about sharing books with your child. You can find out about Bookstart events in your area, which you can attend with your child.

[www.oxfordowl.co.uk/](http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/)

Sign up for free and then have access to some eBooks

### Books:

Oi Frog & Oi Dog by Kes and Claire Gray

Who's in the Loo by Jeanne Willis & Adrian Reynolds

Have you Ever Ever Ever? By Colin McNaughton

The Cat in the Hat Dr. Seuss

Fantastic Daisy Artichoke by Quentin Blake

Anything by Julia Donaldson, Jez Alborough, Nick Sharratt

## How do Children Learn Phonics – Where do we start?

From a very early age children need to experience a wide range of activities and experiences to develop their language as well as their listening skills. It is important for children to be exposed to a wide vocabulary through having conversations, listening to stories, singing rhymes, making and listening to music, engaging in pretend play and exploring paint and other materials.

### The importance of speech sounds

As children grow older they begin to understand more about the sounds of language and they are able to join in with rhymes, songs and stories by clapping, stamping and skipping. This is an important stage as they are learning to tune in to the different sounds around them.

Playing with sounds and tuning a child's ears into sounds will develop phonological awareness, that is, the ability to discriminate different sounds. Over time, this will help a child to develop an understanding that words are made up of different sounds (phonemes) and they will be able to hear the different sounds in a word. Gradually they will learn to match sounds to letters (graphemes). This is phonic knowledge. They will need to use this knowledge when reading and writing.



## Phonics Activities at Nursery

We follow the Letters and Sounds programme which provides activities that promote speaking and listening, phonological awareness and oral blending (putting sounds together). Phase 1 usually lasts throughout the whole of nursery however for some children who are ready we move on to phase 2.

### Letters and Sounds – Phase 1

In this phase, your child will be learning to:

- have fun with sounds
- listen carefully
- develop their vocabulary
- speak confidently to you, other adults and other children
- tune into sounds
- listen and remember sounds
- talk about sounds
- understand that spoken words are made up of different sounds.



Phase 1 consists of seven interlinking parts:

- environmental sounds
- instrumental sounds
- body percussion
- rhythm and rhyme
- alliteration (words that begin with the same sound)
- voice sounds
- oral blending and segmenting

## Useful Terminology

**Phonemes** – the smallest unit of speech sounds which make up a word.

**Graphemes** – the written representation of sounds.

**CVC** – A consonant-vowel-consonant word, such as **cat**, **pin** or **top**. You may also come across the abbreviation **CCVC** for consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant words such as **clap** and **from**. Also **CVCC** for words such as **mask** and **belt**.

**Segment** – to split up a word into its individual phonemes in order to spell it, e.g. the word 'cat' has three phonemes: /c/, /a/, /t/

**Blend** – to draw individual sounds together to pronounce a word, e.g. s-n-a-p, blended together, reads snap

**Digraph** – two letters making one sound, e.g. sh, ch, th, ph

**grapheme-phoneme correspondence (GPC)** – the relationship between sounds and the letters which represent those sounds; also known as 'letter-sound correspondences'

## Body percussion.

- Learn some action rhymes, such as 'Wind the bobbin up'.
- Play some commercially produced music. Clap along to familiar rhymes and learn new ones.
- Listen to the sounds your feet make when walking, running or skipping: slowly, softly, fast, stomping hard, in flip flops, boots, high heels.
- Try different types of clapping: clap your hands softly, quickly and make a pattern for your child to follow. Do the same clapping your thighs or stamping your feet. Tap your fingers. Click your tongue.



## Rhythm and rhyme.



- Get into the rhythm of language: march or clap to a chant or poem.
- Help your child move to the rhythm of a song or rhyme.
- Read or say poems, songs, nursery songs and rhyming stories as often as you can. Try to use gestures, tap regular beats and pause to emphasise the rhythm of the piece.
- Add percussion to mark the beats using your hands, feet or instruments. Try out some rhythmic chanting such as 'two, four, six, eight, hurry up or we'll be late' or 'bip bop boo, who are you?'

## Mark Making

Your child will notice adults around them reading and writing and they will want to copy them. Mark-making is the first step towards writing. Mark making in the early stages is closely linked to physical development. The more opportunities your child has to develop large and small movement in their arms, hands and fingers, the easier it will be to make marks with a variety of tools. Activities such as digging; 'painting' outdoor surfaces with water and a large brush, sweeping and swishing a scarf through the air in different shapes, will help develop large motor movement and the muscles in the shoulders and elbows that are needed to use a pencil effectively. Small or fine motor movement will be needed to develop an effective pencil grip (tripod). Hanging out the washing and playing with pegs, using a pegboard and picking up grains of rice with fingers and tweezers will help develop the pincer grip needed for writing. In the early stages of learning to write, your child will like to experiment, making marks on paper with a variety of writing tools such as brushes, pens, pencils and felt-tip markers. They will often include drawings with their writing. Sometimes you will write for them. It is a good idea at this stage to use lower-case letter when you write for your child, introducing capitals only for names.



## Helping Your Child at Home



**Talking and listening** – Make time to listen to you child talking – as you meet them from their setting or school, as you walk or travel home by car, in the supermarket as you shop, at meal times, bath times, bedtimes ... any time!

**Switch off the TV, radio and mobile phones** – and really listen!

Show that you are interested in what they are talking about – look at your child, smile, nod your head, ask a question or make a response to show that you really have been listening.

**Make a collection of different toy creatures** – for example, a duck, a snake, an alien, say the sound it might make as you play together (for example, 'quack-quack', 'ssssss', 'yuk-yuk') and encourage your child to copy you.

**Listen at home** – switch off the TV and listen to the sounds both inside and outside the home. Can your child tell you what sounds they heard, in the order in which they heard them?

**Play-a-tune – and follow me!** Make or buy some simple shakers, drums and beaters, then play a simple tune and ask your child to copy.

**Have fun!** Use puppets and toys to make up stories or retell known ones. Record your child telling the story and play it back to them.



Research has shown that one of the biggest indicators of success in a child's life is whether or not they have books in the home.

## Ways to support your child at home:

### Environmental sounds.



- Go on a listening walk. When walking down the road, make a point of listening to different sounds: cars revving, people talking, birds singing, dogs barking. When you get home, try to remember all the sounds you heard. You could try taping the sounds, to listen to them again, or try reproducing them yourselves, using your voices or instruments.
- Make sounds, using a range of props, such as running a stick along a fence or tapping a lid.
- Play 'sound lotto'. A commercial version of this can be purchased from many children's toy shops.

### Instrumental sounds.



- Make your own musical instruments, using cardboard rolls, tins, dried peas, beans, stones. Shake these loudly, softly, as you are marching, skipping or stomping. Play 'Guess what's inside the instrument'.
- Sing known songs loudly and then softly, stretch words in known songs and add new words or sounds.
- Listen to a range of music with your child.
- Encourage your child to move in response to variety of musical styles and moods.

## Moving on....

Once children are secure in phase 1 we will then move on to phase 2. The purpose of this phase is to teach at least 19 letters and move children on from oral blending and segmenting to blending and segmenting with letters. There is a recommended order for teaching the sounds. This is so that children can begin to use them to read and spell words (24 words can be made from the letters s,a,t,p,i,n alone)

### Letter progression

Set 1: s a t p

Set 2: i n m d

Set 3: g o c k

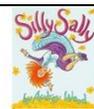
Set 4: ck e u r

Set 5: h b f, ff l, ll ss

In this phase children will also begin to learn some high frequency words. High frequency words are those words which occur most frequently in written material, e.g. "and", "the", "as". They are often words that have little meaning on their own, but contribute a great deal to the meaning of a sentence. Some of the high frequency words can be sounded out e.g. "it" however; many of the high frequency words are not phonically regular and need to be learnt by sight. These words are sometimes called tricky words or sight words.

In reception children will work on Phase 2 and then on to phase 3 and possibly 4.

## Alliteration (words that begin with the same sound).



- Alliteration is a lot of fun. Your child's name can be a good place to start, for example, say: 'Carl caught a cat', 'Jolly Jessie jumped'. Encourage other family members to have a go, for example: 'Mummy munches muffins', 'Daddy is doing the dishes'.
- Emphasise alliteration in songs and stories, for example: 'Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers'.
- Play around with familiar song, such as 'Old MacDonald had some sheep, shoes, shorts, with a sh sh here and and sh sh there', to emphasise alliteration.
- Identify the odd one out, for example, cat, cup, boy, car.
- Make up little nonsense stories together using lots of alliteration.
- Collect items that start with the same sound from the park, the garden and around the house.
- When shopping, think about items you are buying and say: 'a tall tin of tomatoes', 'a lovely little lemon'. Encourage your child to do the same.

### Voice sounds

### Boing boing

### Wheeeeeeee!

### MOOOOO

- Make fun noises and nonsense words and say words in different ways (fast, slowly, high, low, using a funny voice)
- 'Sing' known songs using only sounds (for example, 'la, la, la') and ask your child to guess the song.
- Vary your tempo and pitch when reading stories.

## Oral blending and segmenting.

This is all oral (spoken). Your child will not be expected to match the letter to the sound at this stage. The emphasis is on helping children to hear the separate sounds in words and to create spoken sounds. Oral blending and segmenting is a skill that will be important when the time comes for your child to read and write. Being able to hear the separate sounds within a word and then blend them together to understand that word is really important.

Blending is a vital skill for reading. The separate sounds (phonemes) of the word are spoken aloud, in order, all through the word and are then merged together into the whole word. This merging is called blending. For example:

c-a-t → cat.

Segmenting is a vital skill for spelling. The whole word is spoken aloud, then broken up into its separate sounds (phonemes) in order. For example:

cat → c-a-t.

## Sound Talk

Try breaking down simple words when you are giving instructions or asking questions, such as

“Can you find your h-a-t (hat)?”

“Where is the c-a-t (cat)?”

“Eat your f-oo-d (food).”

Find real objects around your home and practise ‘sound talk’. First, just let them listen, then see if they will join in, for example, saying:

“I spy a p-e-g – peg.”

“I spy a c-u-p – cup.”

“Simon says – touch your ch-i-n – chin.”

It is really important to say the sounds (phonemes) aloud, in order, all through the word. Prior to this, your child should have experienced lots of the environmental, instrumental and body percussion, rhythm and rhyme.

