

What is phonics?

Phonics is a way of teaching children how to read and write. It helps children hear, identify and use different sounds that distinguish one word from another in the English language. Phonics teaches children the correspondences between graphemes in written language and phonemes in spoken language and how to use these correspondences to read and write words. For example, the sound *k* can be spelled as *c*, *k*, *ck* or *ch*.

Phonics definitions

Phoneme: The smallest unit of a sound in a word *c-u-p* has 3 phonemes (sounds) *sh-i-p* has 3 phonemes (sounds) *s-t-r-o-ng* has 5 phonemes.

A phoneme can be represented by one letter e.g. *s*, *a*, *t*, or by more than one letter e.g. *sh*, *ch*, *air*, *igh*,

The same phoneme (sound) can be represented in more than one way e.g. *er*, *ir*, *ur* (*fern*, *bird*, *turn*)

Grapheme: The letters representing the phoneme (how to write the sound)

Digraph: Two letters, which make one sound e.g. *sh* / *ch* / *ph* / *ai* / *oi* / *air*

Trigraph: Three letters, which make one sound e.g. *igh* / *air* / *ear*

Split digraph: A digraph in which the two letters are not adjacent *a_e* / *e_e* / *i_e* / *o_e* / *u_e* *cake* / *eve* / *lobe* / *kite* / *cube* /

Blending (reading): Recognising the sounds in a written word and merging the sounds in the order that they are written to pronounce the word correctly. For example, when a child is taught the sounds for the letters *t*, *p*, *a* and *s*, they can start to build up the words: "tap", "taps", "pat", "pats" and "sat".

Segmenting / segmentation (spelling): Identifying the letters in a spoken word and writing each sound in order to write the word correctly. Children need a secure knowledge of the graphemes in order to be able to write independently