

Teaching Phonics

In 2006 Sir Jim Rose completed his independent review of the teaching of early reading. The review report provided clear recommendations on what constitutes 'high quality phonics work'.

The 'simple view of reading'

The Rose Report makes a number of recommendations for the teaching of early reading.

It makes clear that there are two dimensions to reading - 'word recognition' and 'language comprehension'.

High-quality phonic teaching secures the crucial skills of word recognition that, once mastered, enable children to read fluently and automatically. Once children are fluent readers, they are able to concentrate on the meaning of the text.

The 'simple view of reading' shows that both dimensions are necessary to achieve fluent reading. However, the balance between word recognition and language comprehension shifts as children acquire secure and automatic decoding skills and progress from 'learning to read' to 'reading to learn' for purpose and pleasure. The ultimate goal of learning to read is comprehension.

Phonics: Key concepts and skills

Concept 1

Sounds (phonemes) are represented by letters (graphemes)

English is an alphabetic language - unlike Chinese, for example, where whole words are represented by characters.

Concept 2

A phoneme can be represented by one letter (grapheme) or by a group of 2 or more letters. (e.g. 'sh', 'igh', 'eigh')

Concept 3

The same sound (phoneme) can be represented (spelt) more than one way.

cat

kennel

choir

Concept 4

The same grapheme (spelling) may represent more than one phoneme

m**ea**n - d**ea**f

cr**ow**n - fl**ow**n

field - tr**ie**d

Key skill 1 - blending

Merging phonemes together to pronounce a word

In order to read an unfamiliar word, a child must attribute a phoneme to each letter or letter combination in the word, and then merge them together to pronounce the word.

Key skill 2 - segmentation

Hearing individual phonemes with a word.

e.g. "crash" has 4 phonemes - c-r-a-sh

In order to spell, a child must segment a word into its component phonemes and choose a letter or letter combination to represent the phonemes.

Blending and Segmenting are reversible skills

The sounds of English

British spoken English is generally reckoned to use 44 sounds, or 'phonemes'.

| sounds | words with spelling alternatives | sounds | words with spelling alternatives |
|--------|---|--------|--|
| /s/ | snake glass palace house cents scissors | /igh/ | night tie behind sky bike eider |
| /a/ | apple | /ee/ | eel eat emu sunny key chief sardines |
| /t/ | teddy letter skipped | /or/ | fork dawn sauce chalk oars snore four |
| /i/ | insect cymbals | /z/ | zebra jazz fries cheese breeze |
| /p/ | pan puppet | /ng/ | gong jungle |
| /n/ | net bonnet knot gnome engine | /ngk/ | ink uncle |
| /k/ | kit cat duck chameleon bouquet | /v/ | violin dove |
| /e/ | egg head said | /oo/ | book should |
| /h/ | hat | /oo/ | moon blue flute crew fruit soup move |
| /r/ | rat arrow write rhinoceros | /ks/ | fox books ducks cakes /gs/ exam |
| /m/ | map hammer thumb welcome | /ch/ | chairs patch /chu/ picture |
| /d/ | dig puddle rained | /sh/ | sheep chef station magician admission |
| /g/ | girl juggle guitar ghost catalogue | /th/ | thistle |
| /o/ | orange watch qualify salt | /th/ | there |
| /u/ | umbrella son touch thoroughfare | /kw/ | queen |
| /l/ | ladder shell | /ou/ | ouch owl plough |
| /ul/ | kettle pencil hospital camel | /oi/ | ointment toy |
| /f/ | feathers cliff photograph laugh | /yoo/ | unicorn statue tube new pneumatic |
| /b/ | bat rabbit building | /er/ | mermaid birthday nurse earth world |
| /j/ | jug cabbage gerbil giraffe fridge | /uh/ | (schwa) mixer humour theatre |
| /y/ | yawn | /ar/ | artist father palm half calves |
| /ai/ | aid tray table sundae cake prey | /air/ | hair hare bear where |
| /w/ | web wheel | /eer/ | deer ears adhere cashier |
| /oa/ | oak bow yo-yo oboe rope dough | /zh/ | television treasure courgettes collage |

How do I know what I should be teaching the children that I'm working with?

It is essential to start where the children are. You need to assess the precise level of children's knowledge and skills.

Alphabetic knowledge

What single letters do children recognise?

What groups of letters ("ee", "ch", "igh" etc) do children recognise?

Blending

Can children blend orally - ie if an adult uses "robot talk" to say a word, can children hear what word is being sounded out?

Can children blend to read - ie if children see a written word, can they say the sounds made by each letter and put these together to make a word?

What complexity of words can children read?

Segmenting

If an adult says a word, can the children say each sound that makes up that word?

What complexity of words can children segment?

Use the school schemes of work for phonics and spelling to decide where children need to go next.

Websites - word and sentence level activities

Online games for children

<http://www.phonicsplay.co.uk/>

great games - can link to Letters and Sounds, select letters used in each game

<http://www.tutpup.com/>

A very addictive site. You can register your class, and then the children can make up their own user name and compete with other children across the world. Spelling matches (different levels) and also maths. Awards given to motivate children.

www.starfall.com

phonic games and phonic stories

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/wordsandpictures/cvc/index.shtml>

links to old NLS so would use in different terms

<http://www.ictgames.com/literacy.html>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/ks1bitesize/literacy/>

http://www.kented.org.uk/ngfl/games/literacy_menu.html

<http://www.lgfl.net/lgfl/leas/greenwich/accounts/aspects/sencoproject/web/Resources/ks1/>

The adventures of Stan and Pat - online animation

Websites - word and sentence level activities

Teacher / T.A. Resources

<http://www.communication4all.co.uk/HomePage.htm>

<http://www.societyforqualityeducation.org/stairway/readingmaterial.pdf>
hundreds of sentences for dictation or reading practice, linked to phonics

<http://www.adrianbruce.com/reading/games.htm>

http://bogglesworldesl.com/phonics_monsters.htm

<http://www.phonicsinternational.com/>

Phonic and Spelling Games

Sound Jump **Aim: grapheme identification**

Equipment: grapheme cards, - one for each child

Game

- Children sit in circle, give every child a card which is placed on the floor in front of them.
- Each child identifies their phoneme (sound), with help from others if necessary.
- Teacher calls out a phoneme and the child with corresponding grapheme (letter) jumps up quickly
- Meanwhile the rest of the class has to try to point to that grapheme before its owner has jumped up!

Box of sounds **Aim: grapheme & initial sound identification**

Equipment: grapheme cards, - one for each child, objects with initial sounds to match cards

Game

- Children sit in circle.
- Look at the objects and identify initial sounds. Place objects in centre of circle.
- Pass a box grapheme cards around the circle singing "Box of sounds, pass it round, pass it round, pass it round. Box of sounds pass it round, what sound is it?" ("London bridge is falling down" tune)
- Child holding box at the end of the song takes out the top card, identifies sound and places it next to corresponding object.

Bag of objects **Aim: grapheme & initial sound identification**

Equipment: grapheme cards, objects with initial sounds to match cards, bag for objects

Game

- Children sit in circle.
- Look at grapheme cards, identify sounds and arrange in centre of circle
- Pass a bag of objects around the circle singing "Bag of objects, pass it round, pass it round, pass it round. Bag of objects pass it round, what's in the bag?" (London bridge is falling down" tune)
- Child holding bag at the end of the song takes out an object, identifies it and it's initial sound, then places it next to the corresponding card.

Alliteration (initial sound) match **Aim: grapheme & initial sound identification**

Equipment: grapheme cards, - one for each child, alliteration cards

Game

- Children sit in circle, give every child a card which is placed on the floor in front of them.
- Each child identifies their phoneme (sound), with help from others if necessary.
- Teacher looks at an alliteration card and calls out the subjects (e.g. whales in the water)
- Child with corresponding grapheme card calls out the sound and holds up their card.

Noughts and crosses **Aim: grapheme identification**

Equipment: whiteboard, 3 coloured markers

Game

- Divide class into 2 groups (e.g. name them 2 different colours), and sit them apart.
- In black, draw a noughts & crosses grid and write in 9 graphemes/digraphs.
- A member from first team calls out a phoneme from the square he wants to go first.
- Someone else from his team has to call out a word with a corresponding initial sound.
- Teacher then rubs out the grapheme and replaces it with a smiley face in that team's colour.
- Continue with other team until either team win by winning 3 smiley faces in a row.

Stepping Stones **Aim: grapheme identification**

Equipment: grapheme cards

Game

- Place cards in a large circle
- Children step from card to card while singing "walk around and find a sound, What will I stop on?"
- Going round the circle, each child jumps back off their card and immediately calls out the sound.

Say a sound **Aim: grapheme & initial sound identification**

Equipment: alliteration cards

Game

- Hold up alliteration card while children sing the rhyme
- Starting with the adult, everyone has to think of something beginning with the sound on the card

Find a sound Aim: grapheme & initial sound identification

Equipment: grapheme cards in a box

Game

- Children sit in a circle
- The box of cards are passed around the circle while singing: "pass the sound box round and round etc what can you find?"
- Child identifies the phoneme and then finds something in the room beginning with that sound and places the card next to the object/ brings it back to the circle

Who can cross the river? Aim: grapheme identification & cvc blending

Equipment: white board, marker pens

Game

- Draw a river across the board. Write 3 letters at the top (ones which make up a cvc word)
- Draw a crocodile in the river and a child's name next to the cvc word
- Sing "who can cross the river, who can cross the river, who can cross the river and reach the other side?"
- Child has to identify sounds and blend to make the cvc word
- When child is successful, then sing ".....has crossed the river and reached the other side". Write child's name on other side of river.
- **ALTERNATIVE VERSION:** lay out 2 ropes to represent river. Place 3 carpet squares as stepping stones across the river, place 3 grapheme cards - one on each carpet square.
- Child sounds out the phonemes as s/he steps across the river, then blends the sounds together to hear the word.

Pairs Aim: grapheme identification

Equipment: grapheme cards - 2 sets (select no more than 5- 8 different letters)

Game

- Sit children in horse shoe in front of you
- Identify phonemes with group as you hold up the cards, then place them upside down in a grid pattern in centre of horse shoe facing the children.
- Facing into the horse shoe so the group can all see, let each child turn over 3 cards, identifying phonemes as each card is turned over. Ensure cards are replaced in same position if not "won".
- Winning cards are placed in front of successful children.

"Sound jump" game could be played at end of game.

Pick a letter **Aim: grapheme & initial sound identification**

Equipment: grapheme cards, - one for each child, in a box

Game

- Sit children in a circle and give first child the box.
- Child picks a card from the box, identifies phoneme (sound) and thinks of something beginning with that phoneme.
- Pass box to next child and repeat. Try to keep the pace fast.

I spy with my little eye **Aim: grapheme & initial sound identification**

Equipment: grapheme cards in a box, and objects/pictures with initial sounds to match graphemes.

Game

- Sit children in a circle and place objects in centre.
- Give first child the box.
- Child picks a card from the box, and says, "I spy with my little eye something beginning with (says sound on card) and looks for a corresponding object. Collects object and places it with card in front of him.
- Continue game round circle.

Medial Vowels **Aim: grapheme & medial sound identification**

Equipment: objects -with cvc construction (in basket), the 5 vowel grapheme cards

Game

- Sit children in horse shoe in front of you
- Identify vowel graphemes and place in horse shoe, facing children
- Pass basket of objects while singing abcdefg etc. Child holding basket on "z", chooses an object, says its name then segments its sounds to identify its middle sound. The child then places the object underneath the correct vowel. Repeat until all objects have been placed.
- This game could be ended by writing the spelling of an object on board and asking a child to read the word by blending the sounds then collecting the object and placing it back in the basket.

This game could also be adapted to focus on initial or final sounds.

Initial Sound Bingo **Aim: grapheme & initial sound identification**

Equipment : selection of objects with different initial sounds, A4 boards divided into 3 columns, basket, grapheme cards to match object's initial sounds

Game

- Each child has a board on which they place any 3 grapheme cards in the 3 columns. Each child identifies their graphemes
- Teacher holds up an object for the children to name it and identify its initial sound. Child with corresponding card claims object and places it next to its letter.
- First child with 3 objects is the winner..... but who will be second, third etc?

Initial Sound Jump Up Aim: grapheme & initial sound identification

Equipment: grapheme cards

Give each child a grapheme card. You say a word and the child with the grapheme representing the initial sound must jump up before the other children point to it. If the children seem receptive to continuing, repeat with different selection of graphemes.

Alliteration Generation Aim: generation of alliteration words

Equipment: selection of objects to pass around circle and grapheme cards to match initial sounds, basket

- Lay objects in centre of circle and explain that the first child will pick a card from a pile handed to him (in a basket) identify the sound, then find the object which begins with the same sound. Encourage the group to call out other words, which begin with same sound.
- The object will then be passed around the circle with each child saying ".....(cat) begins with cer and(child thinks of another word which begins with the same sound) collar begins with cer. "
- The next child begins by repeating "cat begins with cer and (adds his own word)". Words can be repeated.
- Repeat game with another object.

Initial letters/sounds Basketball

(A fun way to revise letters and sounds!)

Need - a soft ball, a bin or hoop to throw the ball through

Divide the class into 2 teams. Each team sends a player to the front and the teacher says a letter or a sound. The first of the 2 players to say a word that starts with the letter or sound gets to have a throw. If they get the ball in the goal (the bin or hoop) the team scores a point.

VARIATIONS

Basketball Final letters/sounds

Played as above but students must give a word that ends with the letter or sound.

Basketball Antonyms

Played as above but students must give an antonym for the word given by the teacher.

Basketball Synonyms

Played as above but students must give a synonym for the word given by the teacher.

Beat the Buzzer Aim: spelling game

Equipment - a soft ball

Players sit in a circle. One player starts by throwing the ball to another player and calling out a 3 letter word, e.g. HAT.

The player with the ball has to say 3 words beginning with the 3 letters of the word, e.g. horse, apple, tower.

This has to be done before the player who threw the ball counts to 12 and then says buzz, i.e. 1, 2,11, 12, BUZZ.

A player is out if he doesn't Beat the Buzzer.

As the game progresses the counting can be shortened to 10 or even 8.

Older players can be given a 4, 5 or 6 letter word instead of a 3 letter word.

Down the Ladder Aim: study common letter patterns

Students can work in teams or individually. Each team or student needs a ladder to write in (a page with a ladder drawn on it) The letter pattern is written on the top step of the ladder.

Teams then race to be the first to 'Climb Down the Ladder' by filling the ladder with words that rhyme. Teams either have one person as the recorder or pass the ladder around so each person writes a word.

Simple letter patterns, e.g. at, ill, am, ug, en, op.

More difficult letter patterns, e.g. ight, atch, unch, ound.

Flash Words Aim: revise spelling words

Equipment - a set of cards with the letters of the alphabet on them.

Each child is given a card with a letter of the alphabet. (If there are fewer than 26 students, some students may be given 2 cards.)

When the teacher calls out a word, students who have a letter in the word race to the front of the room and arrange themselves into the correct spelling order.

Obviously words that contain 2 or more of the same letter can't be used.

HINT - Have students swap cards after each word, so some students aren't stuck with uncommon letters like 'z'.

Leave out a Letter Bingo Aim: revise spelling words

(Each student can use their own spelling words!)

Each student makes their own Bingo card by listing 8 words each with a letter missing and replaced by a dash.

Students can use spelling words or words being studied in class, e.g. theme words, words with prefix or suffix being studied. Teacher then calls out letters of the alphabet and if a student has that letter missing in one of their words, it is written into the word.

Only one letter can be written in at a time.

Teacher keeps a record of letters called.

First child to complete all of their words calls "Bingo" and is the winner. Teacher checks that all the letters were called and spelling is correct.

Password

(A challenging game that can be adapted to the level of the students!)

Think of a word to be the "Password". Write it on a piece of paper.

Students have to guess what the word is but the only clue that they are given is the first and last letters and the number of letters in between, e.g. p _ _ _ t.

Students write down as many words as they can that fit the pattern. Students score 1 point for each word and 5 points if they have the password.

For older students choose a longer word.

Students can be divided into teams or pairs for this game.

Pineapples Aim: revise spelling words

Children stand in a circle. Teacher gives a word for the children to spell and nominates the person to start. Children give one letter at a time going in a clockwise direction. The child who is after the person who says the last letter says 'Pineapples'. The next child is out and sits down. If a child says a wrong letter, he is out and sits down also.

Next person must give the correct letter.

When the word is completed, teacher then gives the next word and play continues around the circle. Last child standing is the winner.

Poison Letters Aim: revise spelling words

Children stand in a circle or stand behind their seats. A letter is nominated to be the poison letter. (A vowel or a common letter like 't', 's' or 'n' makes the game go faster. Teacher gives a word for the children to spell and nominates the person to start. Students go around the circle or the class giving one letter at a time. When a person says the Poison Letter, they sit down as they are out. If a student says an incorrect letter he is also out and sits down. Continue around the circle with the teacher giving more words. Last person standing is the winner.

HINT - To make the game more interesting, nominate 2 or 3 Poison Letters.

Stepping Race

(Makes students think about words, sounds and letters!)

Equipment: A word card or picture card for each student.

Students stand in a row about 57 yards away from a finish line. (Class could be divided into teams and one student from each team could play.)

Each student is given a card (word card or picture card)

Students are asked to take a step forward if their word (or name or the name of their picture) has a certain quality, e.g. Take a step forward if your word has a 'th' sound. Take a step forward if your word has the letter 'e'. Take a step forward if your word has 2 syllables. Take a step forward if your word is a noun.

The first student to reach the line is the winner.

Where's the Sound?

(Students identify the position of a sound in a word)

Teacher tells the sound that students are to listen for, e.g. sh.

Teacher says a word containing the sound, e.g. shell, fishing or wash.

Students close their eyes and put their hands

on their head if the sound is at the start of the word

on their waist if the sound is in the middle of the word

on their bottom if the sound is at the end of the word.

Repeat for more words with the same sound or for a new sound.

Word Chain

(A simple but challenging game that practices Spelling Skills!)

First player says a word, e.g. baseball. Next player must give a word that begins with the last letter of this word, e.g. little. baseball, little, egg, giant, table.

No word is allowed to be repeated. Children can make written Word Chains also.

See who can make the one with the most words.

Variation Word Chain Categories

A more difficult version!

Played as above but this time words must belong to a specific category, e.g.

fruits and vegetables tomato, orange, eggplant, turnip.

This makes the game more difficult and certainly makes children think.

Children can make written Word Chains also.