

Phonics

Phonics is a method of teaching children to read and write. Phonics works by breaking words down into individual sounds. There are 44 different sounds in the English language. Learning to read and write with phonics is therefore a bit like learning a code, after learning just a few sounds, you will be able to use this code to read and write hundreds of words. The more sounds you know, the more words you will be able to work out how to read and write. Not all words are phonetically decode-able however and we call these "tricky words" that need to be memorised.

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 'arrow' 'b' in 'bat'.



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.

digraph



trigraph



It gets a bit more complicated than that too! For example the 'n' sound, like in 'nail' is also spelt 'kn' like in 'knot' or 'gn' like in 'gnome'.



Still with us? Good!

The sound that children struggle to spot the most when breaking down words into its individual sounds is the 'split digraph'. Like a normal digraph, this is when two letters

work together to make one sound, however with a split digraph, they are separated and have a letter in the middle.


Fortunately 'split digraphs' always end with an 'e' which does make them a little easier to spot!

Examples of split digraphs include:



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

The phonics codebreaker

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Phoneme | A spoken sound |
| Grapheme | A sound when used in writing |
| Blending | Blending phonemes or digraphs together to make words |
| Di-graph | Two letters that make one sound. For example c + h = ch |
| Tri-graph | Three letters that make one sound. For example i + g + h = igh |
| Split di-graph | Vowel sound that has been split. For example a + e = a_e = cake |
| Blend | Two separate sounds which can be blended together to make a word easier to read. For example fl |
| Cluster | Three separate sounds which can be blended together to make a word easier to read. For example spr |
| Alien Word | A made up word which helps the children to practise the skill of reading. |
| Sound Button | Can be drawn underneath words to help the children to blend the sounds. Phonemes have a .  Di-graphs and tri-graphs have a ____ |

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

Phonics makes learning to read and write easier, simpler and crucially gets children reading and writing quicker. This helps to increase a child's confidence and instil a love of reading and writing from an early age. Rather than memorising 1,000's of words individually, children are instead taught a phonics 'code'. This code helps children work out how to read 95% of the English language.