

Useful Phonics Websites for Parents and Carers

<http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/question/index/3> - Has lots of information and guidance for parents/carers

<http://www.letters-and-sounds.com/> - Has lots of information, printable resources for each of the Letters and Sounds phonic phases, and also links to games aligned with each phase.

<http://www.phonicsplay.co.uk/ParentsMenu.html> - Offers a selection of interactive games for all phonic phases. Mostly simple games.

www.ictgames.com/literacy.html - Has a great selection of games that link well with games in Letters and Sounds.

<http://www.ngfl-cymru.org.uk/vtc/ngfl/ngfl-flash/alphabet-eng/alphabet.htm> - Letter names come up in alphabetical order

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/wordsandpictures/index.shtml> - Activities for all phases

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/ks1bitesize/literacy/phonics/index.shtml>
- 'Deep Sea Phonics' game with choice of difficulty (some HFWs, some vowel blends, very varied).

<http://www.bigbrownbear.co.uk/magneticletters/> - Make any words with this useful game.

http://www.phonicsinternational.com/hear_the_sounds/hear_the_sounds_1.htm - Useful page which demonstrates pronunciation of all sounds.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ksbIMiliA8> – youtube video guide to pronunciation of all sounds.

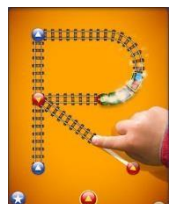


Useful Apps for tablets:

<http://www.nessy.com/hairyletters/> - Useful app with interactive activities which we use at school.



<http://www.letterschool.com/> - a good app for practicing letter formation. You can purchase the full version, or download the free version (LetterSchool Lite), which contains all the features of the full version for a subset of letters and numbers, at <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/letterschool-lite/id481067676>.



So, what exactly is phonics?

Words are made up from small units of sound called phonemes. Phonics teaches children to be able to listen carefully and identify the phonemes that make up each word. This helps children to learn to read words and to spell words.

In phonics lessons children are taught three main things:

- **Phonemes:** Each letter in the alphabet has a 'name' (a = ay, b = bee, c = see, etc), but spoken English uses about 44 sounds (phonemes). These phonemes are represented by letters (graphemes). In other words, a sound can be represented by a letter (e.g. 's' or 'h') or a group of letters (e.g. 'th' or 'ear'). These sounds are taught in a particular order. The first sounds to be taught are s, a, t, p.
- **Blending:** Children are taught to be able to blend. This is when children say the sounds that make up a word and are able to merge the sounds together until they can hear what the word is. This skill is vital in learning to read.
- **Segmenting:** Children are also taught to segment. This is the opposite of blending. Children are able to say a word and then break it up into the phonemes that make it up. This skill is vital in being able to spell words.

What makes phonics tricky?

In some languages learning phonics is easy because each phoneme has just one grapheme to represent it. The English language is a bit more complicated than this. Obviously we only have 26 letters in the alphabet so some graphemes are made up from more than one letter, such as *ch th oo ay*. These are all digraphs (graphemes with two letters), but there are other graphemes that are trigraphs (made up of 3 letters, e.g. *igh*) and even a few made from 4 letters (e.g. *ough*).

Another slightly sticky problem is that some graphemes can represent more than one phoneme. For example *ch* makes very different sounds in these three words: chip, school, chef!

So why bother learning phonics?

In the past people argued that because the English language is so tricky, there was no point teaching children phonics. Now, most people agree that these tricky bits mean that it is even more important that we teach phonics and children learn it clearly and systematically. A written language is basically a kind of a code. Teaching phonics is just teaching children to crack that code. Children learn the simple bits first and then easily progress to get the hang of the trickier bits.

How is phonics taught?

Phonics sessions are very structures and last for approximately 10 minutes per day. Children are then given the opportunities to explore what they are learning in phonics in independent or adult-led activities throughout the school day. Phonics forms a part of how we teach reading, but it is also important to help children become fluent readers by teaching them to recognise key words by sight.