

What is Letters & Sounds?

Letters and Sounds is a phonics resource published by the Department for Education and Skills in 2007. It aims to build children's speaking and listening skills in their own right as well as to prepare children for learning to read by developing their phonic knowledge and skills. It set out a detailed and systematic programme for teaching phonic skills for children starting by the age of five, with the aim of them becoming fluent readers by the age of seven.

There are six overlapping phases. The table below is a summary based on the Letters and Sounds guidance for practitioners and teachers for more information visit: www.gov.uk

Phase	Phonic Knowledge and Skills
Phase One Nursery and Reception	<i>Activities are divided into seven aspects, including environmental sounds, instrumental sounds, body sounds, rhythm and rhyme, alliteration, voice sounds and finally oral blending and segmenting.</i>
Phase Two Reception – up to 6 weeks	<i>Learning 19 letters of the alphabet and one sound for each. Blending sounds together to make words. Segmenting words into their separate sounds. Beginning to read simple captions.</i>
Phase Three Reception – up to 12 weeks	<i>The remaining 7 letters of the alphabet, one sound for each. Graphemes such as ch, oo, th representing the remaining phonemes not covered by single letters. Reading captions, questions and sentences. On completion of this phase, children will have learnt the 'simple code', i.e. one grapheme for each phoneme in the English language.</i>
Phase Four Reception – 4 to 6 weeks	<i>No new grapheme-phoneme correspondences are taught in this phase. Children learn to blend and segment longer words with adjacent consonants, e.g. swim, clap, jump.</i>
Phase Five Throughout Year One	<i>Now we move into the 'complex code'. Children learn more graphemes for the phonemes that they already know, plus different ways of pronouncing the graphemes they already know.</i>
Phase Six Throughout Year Two and beyond	<i>Working on spelling, including prefixes and suffixes, doubling and dropping letters etc.</i>

Glossary of terms

Phoneme – the smallest single identifiable sound, e.g. the letters ‘sh’ represent one phoneme (one sound), but ‘sp’ represents two phonemes s and p.

Grapheme – a letter or a group of letters representing one sound, e.g. sh, ch, igh, ough

Diagraph – two letters making one sound

Triagraph – three letters making one sound e.g. igh, ear, air

Consonant Diagraph – comprises two consonants which together make one sound e.g. th, ng, sh, ch

Vowel Diagraph – comprises two vowels which, together, make one sound, e.g. ai, ee, oo

Split Diagraph – two letters, split, making one sound, e.g. a-e as in make or i-e in site.

Grapheme-Phoneme-Correspondence (GPC) – the relationship between sounds and the letters that represent those sounds; also known as letter-sound-correspondences.

Mnemonic – a device for memorising and recalling something, such as snake shapes like the letter ‘S’

Segment – to split the word into its individual phonemes in order to spell it, e.g. the word cat has three phonemes /c/, /a/, /t/

VC, CVC, CCVC, CVCC – the abbreviations for vowel-consonant, consonant- vowel-consonant, consonant-consonant-vowel –consonant and consonant-vowel- consonant-consonant e.g. am, ham, slam and tent