

Phase 1

Phase One of Letters and Sounds concentrates on developing children's speaking and listening skills and lays the foundations for the phonic work which starts in Phase 2. The emphasis during Phase 1 is to get children attuned to the sounds around them and ready to begin developing oral blending and segmenting skills.

Phase 1 is divided into seven aspects. Each aspect contains three strands: Tuning in to sounds (auditory discrimination), Listening and remembering sounds (auditory memory and sequencing) and Talking about sounds (developing vocabulary and language comprehension).

It is intended that each of the first six aspects should be dipped into, rather than going through them in any order, with a balance of activities. Aspect 7 will usually come later, when children have had plenty of opportunity to develop their sound discrimination skills.

Aspect 1 - General sound discrimination - environmental

The aim of this aspect is to raise children's awareness of the sounds around them and to develop their listening skills.

Aspect 2 - General sound discrimination - instrumental sounds

This aspect aims to develop children's awareness of sounds made by various instruments and noise makers.

Aspect 3 - General sound discrimination - body percussion

The aim of this aspect is to develop children's awareness of sounds and rhythms.

Aspect 4 - Rhythm and rhyme

This aspect aims to develop children's appreciation and experiences of rhythm and rhyme in speech.

Aspect 5 - Alliteration

The focus is on initial sounds of words.

Aspect 6 - Voice sounds

The aim is to distinguish between different vocal sounds and to begin oral blending and segmenting

Aspect 7 - Oral blending and segmenting

In this aspect, the main aim is to develop oral blending and segmenting skills.

Phase 2

In Phase 2, letters and their sounds are introduced one at a time. A set of letters is taught each week, in the following sequence:

Set 1: s, a, t, p

Set 2: i, n, m, d

Set 3: g, o, c, k

Set 4: ck, e, u, r

Set 5: h, b, f, ff, l, ll, ss

As soon as each set of letters is introduced, children will be encouraged to use their knowledge of the letter sounds to blend and sound out words. For example, they will learn to blend the sounds s-a-t to make the word sat. They will also start learning to segment words. For example, they might be asked to find the letter sounds that make the word tap from a small selection of magnetic letters.

Tricky words

During Phase 2, the following tricky words (which can't yet be decoded) are introduced:

- the
- to
- I
- no
- go
- into

Phase 3

25 new graphemes are introduced (one at a time).

Set 6: j, v, w, x

Set 7: y, z, zz, qu

Consonant digraphs: ch, sh, th, ng

Vowel digraphs: ai, ee, igh, oa, oo, ar, or, ur, ow, oi, ear, air, ure, er

During Phase 3, children will also learn the letter names using an alphabet song, although they will continue to use the sounds when decoding words.

Tricky words

- | | |
|-------|--------|
| ◦ he | ◦ you |
| ◦ she | ◦ they |
| ◦ we | ◦ all |
| ◦ me | ◦ are |
| ◦ be | ◦ my |
| ◦ was | ◦ her |

Phase 4

Children will have begun reading straightforward two-syllable words and simple captions, as well as reading and spelling some tricky words.

In Phase 4, no new graphemes are introduced. The main aim of this phase is to consolidate the children's knowledge and to help them learn to read and spell words which have adjacent consonants, such as trap, string and milk.

Tricky words

During Phase 4, the following tricky words (which can't yet be decoded) are introduced:

- said
- have
- like
- so
- do
- some
- come
- were
- there
- little
- one
- when
- out
- what

Phase 5

Phase Five, children will learn more graphemes and phonemes. For example, they already know ai as in rain, but now they will be introduced to ay as in day and a-e as in make. Alternative pronunciations for graphemes will also be introduced, e.g. ea in tea, head and break.

With practice, speed at recognising and blending graphemes will improve. Word and spelling knowledge will be worked on extensively.

Tricky words

During Phase 5, the following tricky words (which can't yet be decoded) are introduced:

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| • oh | • looked |
| • their | • called |
| • people | • asked |
| • Mr | • could |
| • Mrs | |

Phase 6

At the start of Phase Six of Letters and Sounds, children will have already learnt the most frequently occurring grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs) in the English language. They will be able to read many familiar words automatically. When they come across unfamiliar words they will in many cases be able to decode them quickly and quietly using their well-developed sounding and blending skills. With more complex unfamiliar words they will often be able to decode them by sounding them out. At this stage children should be able to spell words phonemically although not always correctly. In Phase Six the main aim is for children to become more fluent readers and more accurate spellers.