



Song of Sounds parent guide

Learning the letter sounds:

Phonics helps children learn to read and write by teaching them the letter sounds (known as phonemes), rather than letter names, for example, the sound that 'c' makes, not the alphabetic name.

There are 42 sounds in the English language that can be heard in words. These include the 26 sounds in the alphabet but also some more complex sounds that are made up of 2 or even 3 letters e.g. 'sh' in the word 'shark' or 'oo' in the word 'moon' or 'igh' in the word 'night'.

Your child will be taught these letter sounds during the early stages of their learning. The letter sounds are not introduced in alphabetical order. The first group has been chosen because when put together they make more simple three-letter words than any other letters!

**s a t p i n m d g o c k e u r h b f l j v w x y z
qu ch sh th ng nk ai ee igh oa oo oo ar or er
ow oi air ear ure**

Sounds with more than one way of being written are taught first in one form only, for example, the sound 'ai' (train) is introduced first with the alternatives 'ay' (play) and 'a-e' (cake) being taught later.

For each sound in the Song of Sounds there is an action which helps the children remember the sound the letter makes and the song is sung every day! As the letter sounds

are taught, it would be hugely beneficial if you can practice these sounds with your child every day.

Learning to write the letter shapes:

This is the writing of each letter – how it looks on the page. It's very important that your child learns to hold a pencil correctly. If the hold starts incorrectly it's difficult to get it right later on. Children will then begin to practise how to form each letter shape correctly as they learn their sounds, starting in the right place and moving their pencil in the right direction.

It's worth noting that many of the letter shapes will be taught with a joining tail at the end to make it easier to transfer into joined writing once they're ready.

Blending sounds together for reading:

Blending is the process of saying the sounds in a word and then running them together to make the word e.g. c-a-t is cat. It is a technique that your child will need to learn, and it improves with practice. To help your child practise it's helpful to reinforce the idea that the sounds must be said quickly to hear the word, e.g. b-u-s. It's also easier if the first sound is said slightly louder, e.g. b-u-s.

Identifying the sounds in words for writing

To begin to write independently your child will need to be able to hear the sounds in words and to write the individual letter shapes for these sounds. This is called segmenting as children segment words into their sounds. Before writing a whole word your child needs to practise recalling the letter shape for each sound spoken aloud, so have a go at calling out sounds for your child to match to the correct letter shape. Then ask your child to listen for the sound(s) in simple three-letter words and write down the letter shapes for each sound. These are the first steps towards your child becoming an independent writer.

Tricky words

In the English language some words cannot be sounded out or spelt correctly by listening for the sounds in them. These are called the 'tricky words', and have to be learnt. For example if a child gets stuck on 'was' it doesn't help if they sound it out and blend it, as the 'a' in the word makes an 'o' sound and is therefore an irregular word. This is why tricky words are sometimes known as irregular words. As your child becomes more fluent at reading and writing, he or she will be taught how to read and spell these tricky words.

Supporting your child's phonics journey at home

The Song of Sounds is a phonics programme that teaches children their letter sounds (phonemes) through a song and a huge range of games and activities that help them to learn. The song teaches the children the letter sounds and how to read and write them. The tune, colourful pictures and actions for each letter sound all help the children to learn quickly. The 26 letters of the alphabet are covered first, followed by two- and three-letter sounds e.g. sh, air.

As well as having fun with the song, there's a huge amount of activities you can do using the the Big Cat reading books, flashcards and the phoneme finder, which help with that all important practice. Here are suggestions for lots of lively ideas based around active play for you and your child to enjoy together, to help ensure that phonic practise is fun and engaging.

The song

Song of Sounds Stage 1 Song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdWOstqf3hU>

Song of Sounds Stage 2 Song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=by8fWpqUkiw>

Song of Sounds Stage 3 Song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O4jzH9hu8vI>

- (Sing to the tune of 'Skip to my lou my darling) - ask your school or nursery for a copy of the song words for your child's stage!

- Practise singing the song as much as you can, but practise in different ways to keep it interesting for your child. Here are some ideas....
- Sing the song EVERYWHERE - at home, in the car, at Granny's house, during bathtime etc.
- You sing a song lyric and ask your child to perform the corresponding action. The swap over so your child sings and you perform the action. Make sure you make some mistakes – children love it when grown-ups get it wrong.
- This time, perform an action and ask your child to sing the song lyric. To make this even more challenging, you could perform an action and your child should say the sound! Again, take turns with your child to make it lots of fun.
- Sing a jumbled up version of the song – you sing the first word e.g. 'sharks' and your child must complete the lyric e.g. 'on the shore sh sh sh'.
- Use the song to help you with chores e.g. play musical get dressed in the morning (every time you stop singing they must freeze!) play musical tidy up, sing-a-long at bathtime/mealtimes/bedtime, can they get dressed before the song finishes etc.
- You could even challenge your child to sing the song backwards!

Pronunciation guide

Guide on how to pronounce pure sounds:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCI2mu7URBc>

When children are learning to read and write, it is much easier for them if you say the sounds in a very 'pure' way. E.g. 'c' rather than 'cuh', 'mmm' rather than 'muh'. This makes it much easier for children to blend sounds together to read words as it is easier for them to put c-a-t together than 'cuh'-a'-tuh'. Saying the sounds in this pure way also helps children to hear sounds in words much easier which helps them to write.

Reading practise

Once your child knows even just a handful of letter sounds, it's great to help them practise reading at home. The initial stage of reading involves 'sounding out' words, e.g. saying the letter sounds in a word and then blending them together to make a word e.g. d-o-g = dog. The more your child practises this skill, the more confident at reading they'll become.

Very quickly they'll progress to reading simple texts, and should have gone on to decodable reading books, such as those within the Big Cat Letter and Sounds series. These phonic reading books have been written especially for children who are beginning to learn phonics at nursery or at school, and help the children to develop the skills of decoding and blending. By targeting specific phonemes and tricky words, increasing in difficulty, they ensure systematic progression with reading.

Top tips to help with reading:

Point to each letter shape one at a time as your child says the sounds aloud a few times, getting quicker and quicker.

Say the sounds out loud to your child, getting quicker and quicker.

If after a few attempts they still can't read it, tell them the word and practise another one. You can always come back to it later.

With letter sounds that contain two or more letters, e.g. sh, air, it might be helpful if you draw an imaginary line under the 'sh' or 'air' so that they see it as one sound and don't sound out each letter.

Always be positive and encouraging – if they believe they can do it, then they will.

Writing practise

To write independently children need to be able to hear the individual letter sounds in words and write them down in the correct order, e.g. dog = d-o-g. This is really difficult for them at first so practise is vital to help them master this tricky skill.

Top tips to help with writing:

- Start with straightforward two- or three-letter words e.g. it, dog, pan.
- Make sure the words you choose contain only letter sounds they already know.
- Make sure the words are regular, so not the tricky words, for example don't choose 'was' as the 'a' sounds like an 'o'!
- Say the word aloud for your child, nice and slowly accentuating each letter sound, and focus on one letter at a time.
- As they develop and they begin to want to write independently e.g. a thank-you letter, encourage them to go for it using the sounds they know. It might not be correct, for example, 'Thankyoo for a luvlee dai', but praise them for doing it on their own. This is the first stage of your child becoming an independent writer.

Creative play to practice the phonemes and tricky words

Of course phonics practice is not solely limited to school and the more opportunities you can grab in everyday life the better, as it will encourage your child to make links to phonics and reading and writing in the everyday environment around them. Here are a few suggestions but we're sure you can think of plenty more....

Road Signs / Notices in the environment

Your child will be at the stage where they're constantly asking 'What does that say' – encourage them to identify letter shapes that they know in the environment and have a go at reading regular words that you know they could tackle or tricky words that you know they've come across. Lots of road signs and shop names will be irregular, but tell your child what the words say to satisfy their curiosity and ask them to identify letter shapes they know.

I Spy

This traditional car game lends itself perfectly to children who are beginning to master phonics. Find something that you can both see out of the window and ask your child to think of what it could be based only on the first letter sound. Remember to swap roles to keep the game going.

Phoneme Detectives

At bedtime, ask your child to pick a story from their bookshelf and be a letter detective, finding as many examples of a specific letter shape as they can, for example 's'. You could also play this game hunting for tricky words, for example 'the'.

Cutting and Sticking

Why not make a collage of the letter shapes they've been learning. Look through some newspapers or magazines together, cut out any specific letter shapes you've been concentrating on and stick them to make a collage.

Anagrams

To practise the tricky words your child's been learning, why not create some tricky-word anagrams for them to unscramble, for example, you could write 'etyh' and your child has to work out that it says 'they'.

Wordsearches

Make a wordsearch for your child containing all the tricky words they've been learning. Then draw a grid for them to make their own wordsearch for you to solve.

Guess the Tricky Word

Challenge your child to guess which tricky word you're thinking of, as you give them clues, for example, 'I begin with w and I have a tricky sound in the middle.'