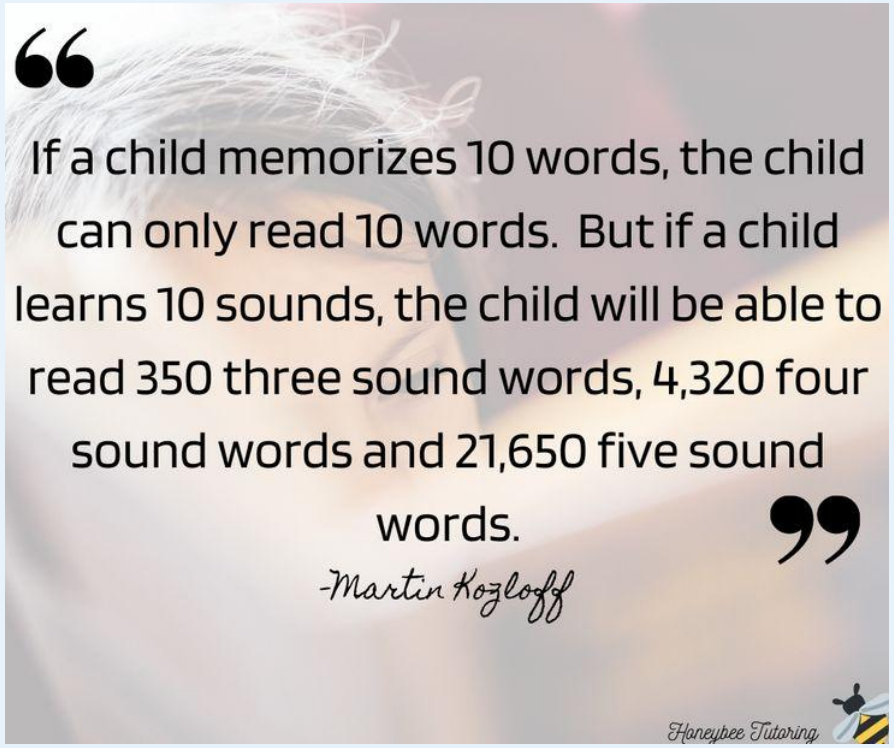
Year 1 Phonics

Unlocking Letters & Sounds



What is phonics?

Phonics teaches children how spoken sounds are represented by letters and combinations of letters.

Hear it

Children learn to hear and identify the sounds in spoken words.

For example: c-a-t has three sounds.

Read it

Children learn the graphemes that represent those sounds and use them to read words.

Write it

Children use the same sound knowledge to segment words and spell them.

The two big skills

Blending helps us read.

Segmenting helps us spell.

Some key phonics words

You may hear these words when we talk about your child's reading.

Phoneme

The smallest unit of sound in a word.
ship → /sh/ /i/ /p/

Grapheme

A letter or group of letters representing a sound.
Examples: sh, i, p.

Digraph

Two letters making one sound.
Examples: sh, ch, ai, ee.

Trigraph

Three letters making one sound.
Examples: igh, air, ear.

Blend

Putting sounds together to read a word.
/s/ /t/ /o/ /p/ → stop.

Segment

Breaking a word into sounds to help spell it.
ship → /sh/ /i/ /p/.

Common exception word

A word with an unusual spelling that cannot be fully decoded using the phonics patterns children have been taught.
Examples: said, was, the.

What does phonics look like in practice?

Children use their sound knowledge to work out words they may not have seen before.

ship

/sh/ /i/ /p/

3 sounds, 3 graphemes

rain

/r/ /ai/ /n/

3 sounds, 3 graphemes, 4 letters

cheep

/ch/ /ee/ /p/

3 sounds, 3 graphemes, 5 letters

Blending

Children look at the graphemes, say the sounds and blend them together: /sh/ /i/ /p/ → ship.

Important

We encourage children to look closely at the word rather than guess from the picture.

Where should children be right now?

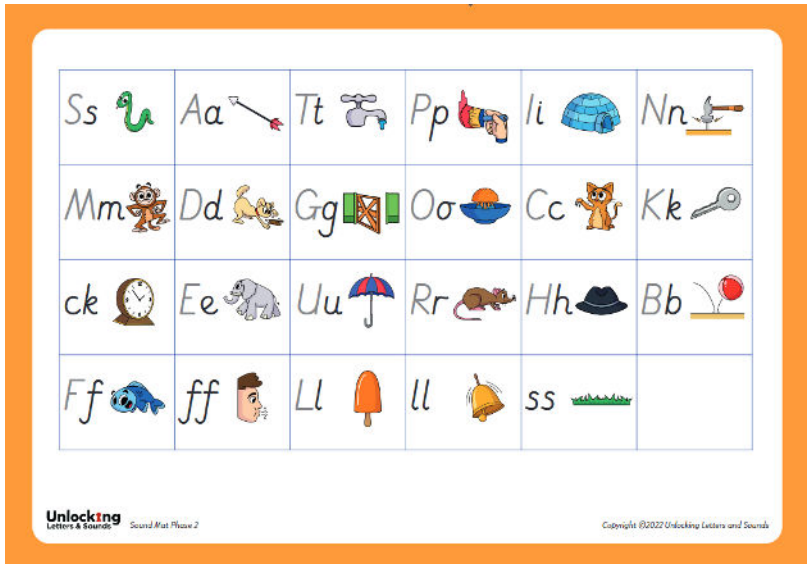
At the start of Year 1, children will be at different points — and that is normal.

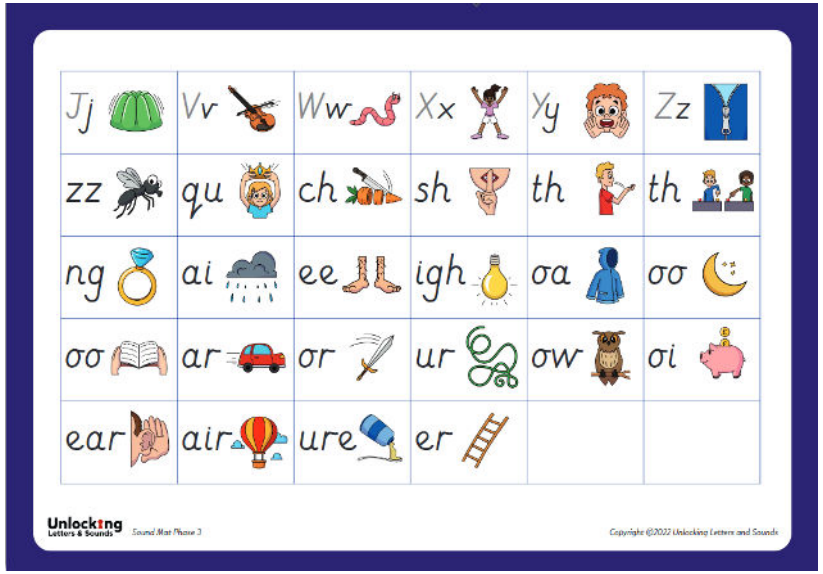
We would expect children to be developing confidence with...

- recognising and saying the taught phonemes
- recognising common graphemes
- blending sounds to read words
- segmenting simple words for spelling
- reading simple decodable books
- applying phonics when writing unfamiliar words

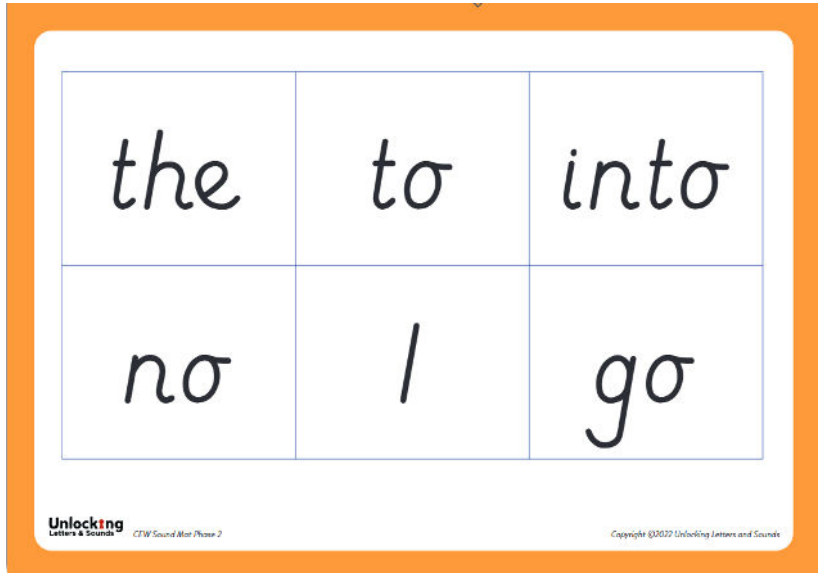
Some children may still need...

- regular practice with earlier sounds
- support to blend without adding extra sounds
- help to remember particular graphemes
- repeated reading to build fluency
- encouragement to apply phonics independently
- time — confidence develops through practice

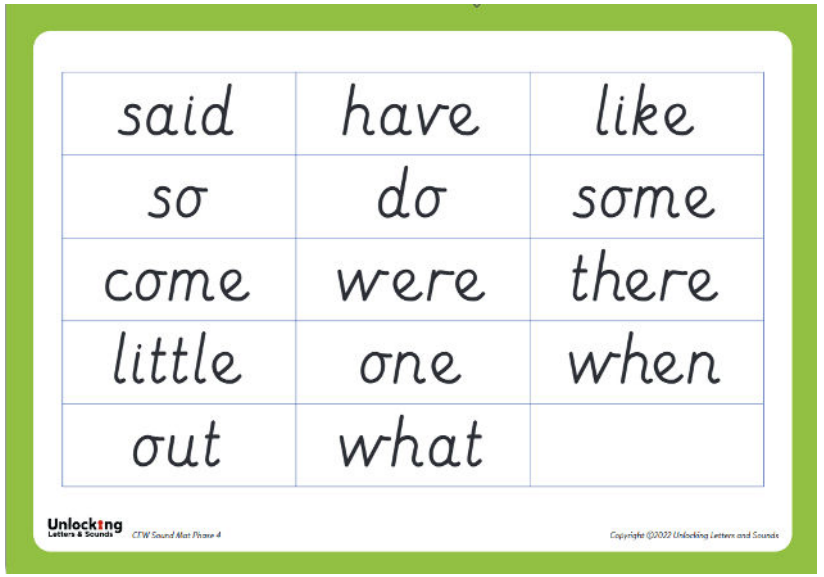




Where should children be right now?







What will we be doing in Year 1?

The aim is to build secure phonics knowledge and use it fluently when reading and writing.

1

Teach & revisit

New graphemes and alternative ways of representing sounds are taught and regularly reviewed.

2

Blend

Children practise blending to read words, including unfamiliar words.

3

Segment

Children use phonemes to help them spell words and write sentences.

4

Apply

Children use phonics in books, writing and across the curriculum.

5

Build fluency

Repeated practice helps children read words more quickly and confidently.

6

Review & support

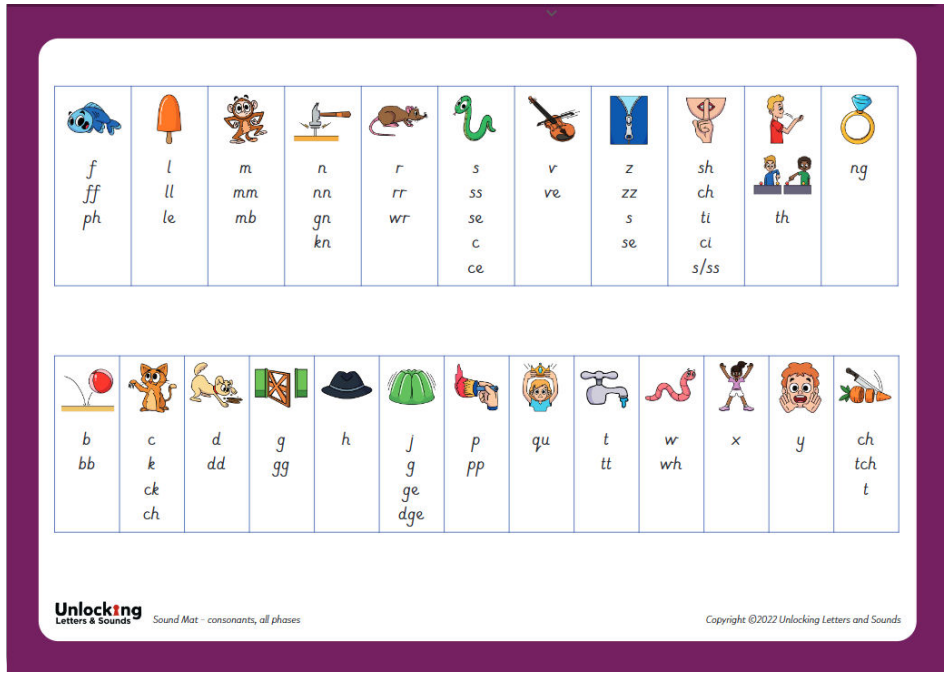
Assessment helps us identify gaps and provide extra practice where needed.

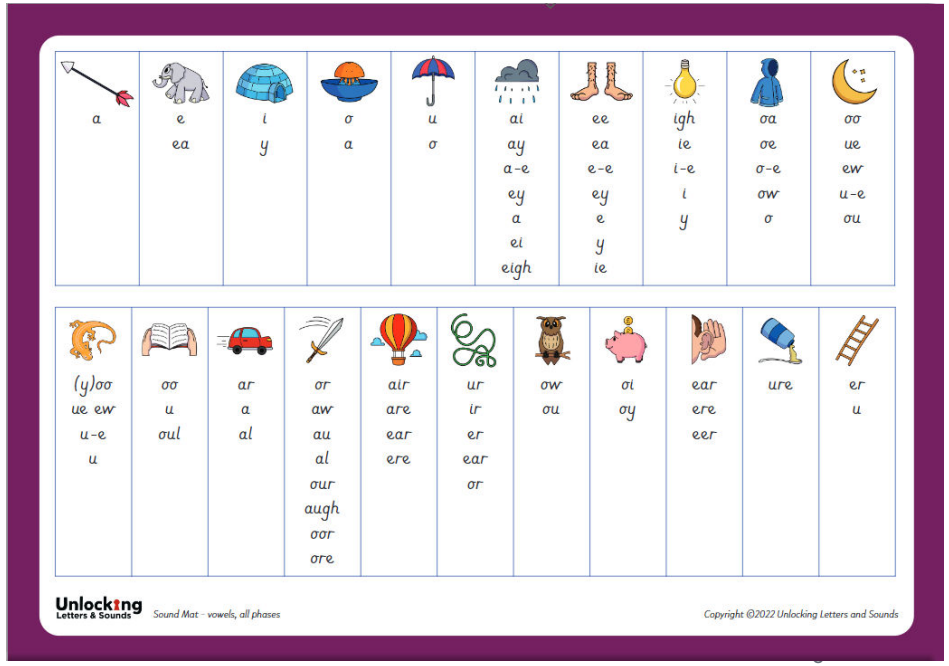
What will we be doing in Year 1?

oh	their	people	Mr	Mrs
looked	called	asked	water	where
who	again	thought	through	mouse
work	many	laughed	because	different
any	eyes	friends	once	please

Unlocking Letters & Sounds CEW Sound Mat Phase 5

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The Year 1 Phonics Screening Check

A short check of how well children can decode words using their phonics knowledge.

What is it?

A statutory check carried out in England in Year 1.

It checks whether children can decode words using their phonics knowledge.

It is normally completed individually with a familiar adult.

When is it?

The check takes place in the June, with a specified alternative week for children who cannot take part at that time.

Schools have flexibility over when during the week children complete it.

What does it involve?

Children read a list of words to an adult.

The list includes real words and pseudo-words (sometimes called 'alien words').

The check usually takes around 10 minutes.

Most important

It is not a test that children need to revise for. The best preparation is good, regular phonics teaching and reading practice.

Why are there 'alien words'? 👽

Pseudo-words make sure children are using phonics — not simply recognising a memorised word.

A real word

ship

A child may already know this word from reading it before.

They can use phonics to decode it: /sh/ /i/ /p/ → ship.

A pseudo-word

chumf

This is not a real word — so the child cannot rely on memory.

They have to use the graphemes and blend the sounds.

How can I help at home?

Little and often is much more helpful than a long practice session.

📖 Read

- Read the school reading book regularly.
- Re-read familiar books to build fluency.
- Share a story for pleasure every day where possible.
- Let your child hear you read too.

🔤 Practise

- Revisit the sounds your child is learning.
- Encourage them to sound out unfamiliar words.
- Blend the sounds together rather than guessing.
- Keep practice short and positive.

💬 Talk & play

- Spot sounds on signs and packaging.
- Play 'I spy' with sounds.
- Make up silly words.
- Ask your child to find a particular grapheme.
- Celebrate their effort!

A useful phrase

'Let's say the sounds and blend them together.'

Reading at home: two important jobs

Phonics helps children learn to read — and stories help children become readers.

1. Practise the phonics reading book

These books are carefully matched to the phonics your child has been taught.

Encourage your child to:
- sound out unfamiliar words
- blend the sounds
- re-read sentences
- read the book more than once to build fluency

2. Read stories for pleasure

Choose books you and your child enjoy.

You can:
- read aloud to your child
- talk about characters and events
- ask questions
- enjoy the pictures
- revisit favourite stories

They do not need to decode every word.

Both matter

Phonics develops decoding. Shared reading develops language, vocabulary, comprehension and a love of books.

Keep it positive 💚

Confidence matters just as much as accuracy.

DO

- Praise effort and persistence.
- Give thinking time.
- Encourage children to use their sounds.
- Re-read books they enjoy.
- Celebrate small steps.

TRY

- 'What sound does this grapheme represent?'
- 'Can you spot a digraph?'
- 'Let's say the sounds slowly.'
- 'Now blend them together.'

AVOID

- Turning reading into a battle.
- Asking children to guess from pictures.
- Comparing your child with another child.
- Long practice sessions when they are tired.

Thank you!

Questions?