



Introduction to Phonics

The way children are taught to read, write, and spell in schools is called phonics. This glossary tells you about some of the terms you may hear used and some top tips to help you with phonics at home.

Word	What does it mean?
blend	Saying the individual sounds that make up a word and then merging or blending the sounds together to say the word – used when reading.
common exception words (CEWs)	Words that don't follow the general phonic rules. These words are taught with the child being made aware of where the differences are e.g. the, was, to.
consonant	Most letters of the alphabet (excluding the vowels – a, e, i, o, u).
CVC words	<p>Abbreviation used for consonant-vowel-consonant words, used to describe the order of sounds. Some examples of CVC words are: cat, pen, top, chat (because ch makes one sound).</p> <p>Other similar abbreviations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- VC words e.g. on, it, is- CCVC words e.g. trap, black- CVCC words e.g. milk, fast
digraph	<p>Two letters which together make one sound e.g. ee, oa, ea, ch, ay</p> <p>There are different types of digraphs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Vowel digraph: a digraph in which at least one of the letters is a vowel, e.g. boat, day.- Consonant digraph: two consonants which can go together, e.g. shop, thin.- Split digraph: (previously called magic or silent e) two letters, which work as a pair to make one sound, but are separated within the word, e.g. a-e as in cake.
grapheme	Written letters or a group of letters which represent one single sound

	(phoneme), e.g. l, sh, air.
phoneme	<p>A single sound that can be made by one or more letters, e.g. s, igh, ph.</p> <p>Top tip – when starting phonics, avoid using the letter names (see, ay, tee) and use the sounds instead (c, a, t). This will help your child with spelling and recognising letter sounds when reading. Letter names can be introduced more gradually.</p>
phonics	Phonics teaches children to listen to and identify the sounds that make up words. This helps them to read and write words.
pure sound	<p>Pronouncing each letter sound clearly and distinctly without adding additional sounds to the end e.g. f not fuh.</p> <p>Top tip – it is tricky to say some sounds without the ‘uh’ sound at the end – like b, d, v and g. Try to emphasise the main letter sound when talking about these letter sounds. Some are easier to say by dragging the sound out e.g. fffffff rather than fuh or mmmmm rather than muh.</p>
segment	<p>This is the opposite of blending (see above). Splitting a word up into individual sounds – used when spelling and writing.</p> <p>Top tip – play word games with your child that encourages them to build up words and recognise individual sounds in words.</p>
trigraph	Three letters which go together to make one sound e.g. ear, air, igh.
vowel	The letters a, e, i, o, u.