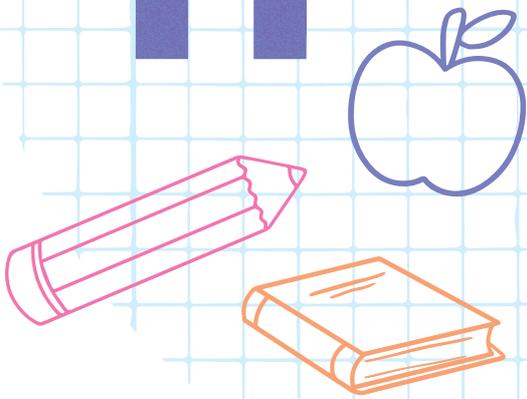


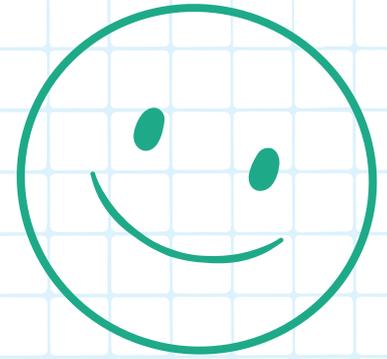
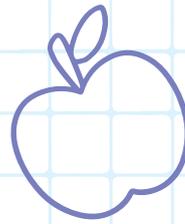
A Parent  
Guide

to the

# Phonics

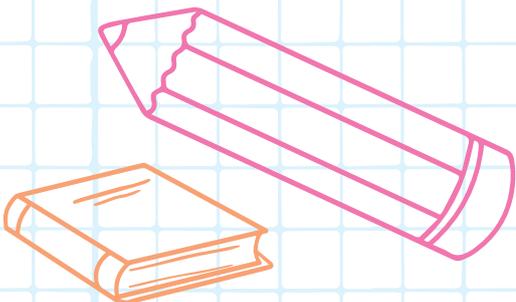


Screening Check



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# What is phonics?

**Phonics is a way of teaching children how to read and write.** It helps children recognise and use different sounds - they might blend sounds together to read words or segment whole words into sounds to spell them.

Your child will begin learning phonics in early years (nursery and reception) and phonics will remain a key focus throughout key stage one (years 1 and 2, when your child is aged between 5 and 7).

## What is the phonics screening check?

The phonics screening check is a statutory reading check that all year 1 children (aged 5 to 6) are expected to take during a particular week in June. Some year 2 children (aged 6 to 7) might also be checked; perhaps they didn't achieve the expected standard in year 1 or have not taken the check before. This check is designed to see whether your child has reached the expected level in their **decoding**, **segmenting** and **blending** skills.

## What is decoding?

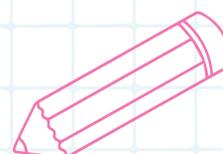
Decoding is the process of seeing a written word and being able to read it aloud. To decode, you need to be able to see a word and identify the sounds that make up the word. For example, seeing the word 'cat' and saying the sounds /c/ /a/ /t/. Decoding is about being able to recognise the sounds and say the word - it does not mean the person reading the word understands its meaning.

## What is segmenting?

Segmenting is the process of breaking a word down into individual sounds. This is mostly linked to spelling. For instance, we might want to spell 'plan' so we would segment it - /p/ /l/ /a/ /n/.

## What is blending?

Blending is a key reading skill. Once the sounds in a word have been identified (for example, /c/ /a/ /t/), they must then be blended together to form a whole word (for example, 'cat').



## Do all pupils take the check?

It is expected that all year 1 pupils take part in the check, unless they have no understanding of grapheme-phoneme correspondences (the way letters link to sounds). Headteachers will make the final decision about whether it is appropriate for a child to take the check. If your child isn't entered for the check, you will be informed by the school and have the decision explained to you.

## How can the check be adapted?

There are many ways the check can be adapted to ensure all children can demonstrate their decoding and blending skills.

There is no time limit on the check.

Teachers are able to edit the size of the text or the number of words presented to the child at once.

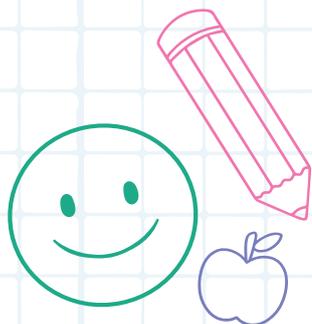
Braille materials can be ordered.

Coloured overlays can be used as needed.

## What happens during the screening?

Your child will complete the check one-to-one with their teacher. There is no time limit so your child can take as long as they need. Your child's teacher can even allow them a rest break, if needed. Usually, the screening takes around ten minutes.

Your child will be asked to use their decoding and blending skills to read some words. The format of the screening will be similar to other activities your child will be used to in phonics sessions - the only difference is that their teacher won't be able to help them.





### What is the structure of the check?

The check consists of 40 words - 20 real words and 20 pseudo-words (or alien or nonsense words). Your child will be presented with a booklet with four large words per page.

The words gradually get trickier. Your child will first be shown words made up of two or three sounds, such as 'it' and 'vap', then will move onto longer words with more complex sounds, such as the split digraph a\_e in 'maze'.

Some words will have a picture of an imaginary creature next to them; these are **pseudo-words**. The picture is provided so that your child knows the word won't make sense - instead, it is the name of the alien. It's also there so your child doesn't try to turn the nonsense word into a real word.

### Why are pseudo-words used?

We all encounter unfamiliar words in life; pseudo-words are used to check whether your child can decode unfamiliar words. They won't simply be reading words from memory. This means every child is in the same position; pseudo-words do not favour children with a good vocabulary knowledge or visual memory of words.

### What is the expected standard?

Your child will be scored out of 40 (as there will be 40 words to correctly decode). The Department for Education does not release the 'pass' mark until a few weeks after your child has completed the check.

### What happens if my child doesn't reach the expected standard?

If your child doesn't meet the expected standard, your school will be required to provide them with extra support in phonics. Children who do not meet the expected standard in year 1 will complete the check again in year 2. Don't worry if your child doesn't meet the expected standard; every child learns at different rates and schools will continue to support them in their reading development.

### How are the results of the screening used?

The data is submitted to the Department of Education, where it is used to collate information about the standards in phonics across the whole country.

By the end of the summer term, all schools are expected to report each child's results to their parents. They will also inform you if your child has met the expected standard.

Results of the phonics screening check will also be used by schools to analyse their own performance and for Ofsted to use during inspections.

## How can I help my child prepare for the screening?

The most important thing you can do as a parent is to read with your child. Listen to them read and read to them - both activities are incredibly valuable. If they hear you read, they are hearing how to pronounce unfamiliar words and are developing new vocabulary.

When you're listening to your child read, allow them time to attempt to decode unfamiliar words themselves. If they're struggling, you could help by pointing out the sounds in a word. For example, in the word 'treat' the sounds are /t/ /r/ /ea/ /t/.

Look around your home and other environments (such as on trips out) for reading opportunities. Can your child read signs? Can they read a menu in a coffee shop? Can they read an advertisement, poster or leaflet?

If your child is watching a film or the television, turn on the subtitles. They'll be hearing words pronounced and seeing them written down at the same time, which can be hugely beneficial for their reading and writing skills.

We have lots of fun games and activities you can play to prepare for the check over in our [phonics screening check category](#).

We hope you find the information on our website and resources useful. As far as possible, the contents of this resource are reflective of current professional research. However, please be aware that every child is different and information can quickly become out of date. The information given here is intended for general guidance purposes only and may not apply to your specific situation.