



Aga Khan Education Board
for the United Kingdom | akeb@iuk.org

Every Step, *together*

An introduction to phonics

2021

What is Phonics?

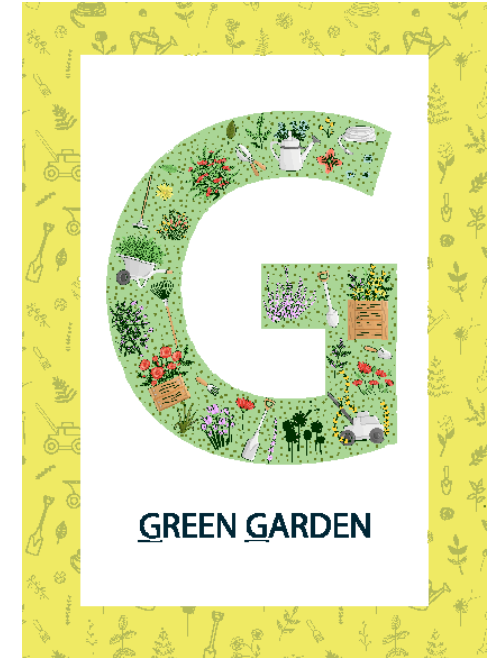
- Children are taught to read by breaking down words into separate sounds or 'phonemes'. There are around 40 different sounds.
- They are then taught how to blend these sounds together to read the whole word.

Phase 1 phonics

Children are taught about:

- Environmental sounds
- Instrumental sounds
- Body percussion (e.g. clapping and stamping)
- Rhythm and rhyme
- Alliteration
- Voice sounds
- Oral blending and segmenting (e.g. hearing that d-o-g makes 'dog')

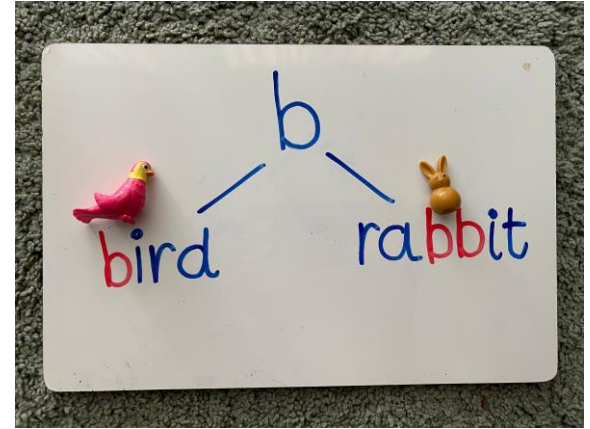
Typical activities include 'listening' walks, playing and identifying instruments, action songs, learning rhymes and playing games like *I Spy*.



Phase 2 phonics

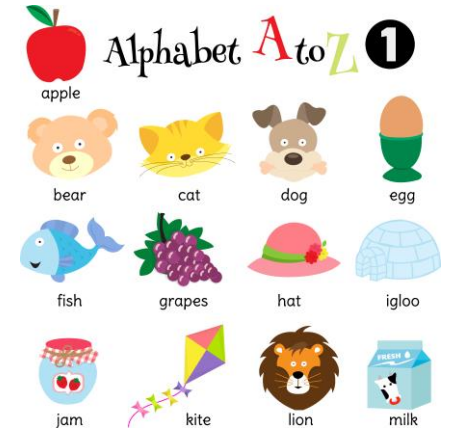
- Children begin to learn the sounds that letters make (known as phonemes). There are **44** sounds in all.
- They will focus on learning the 19 most common single letter sounds.
- They also learn some high frequency “tricky words”, such as ‘the’ and ‘go.’

By the end of Phase 2, children should be able to read some vowel-consonant (VC) and consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) words, and to spell them out.



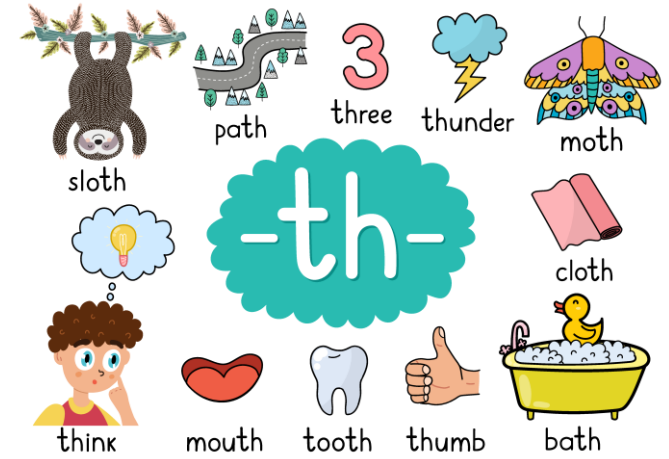
Phase 3 phonics

- Introduces the remaining, more difficult and less commonly used phonemes.
- There are around **25** of these and they are needed to be able to read and form useful words.
- Children are also taught to recognise more tricky words, including 'me,' 'was,' 'my,' 'you' and 'they'.
- They learn the names of the letters, as well as the sounds they make.
- Activities might include learning mnemonics (memory aids) for tricky words, practicing writing letters on mini whiteboards, using word cards and singing songs like the Alphabet Song.



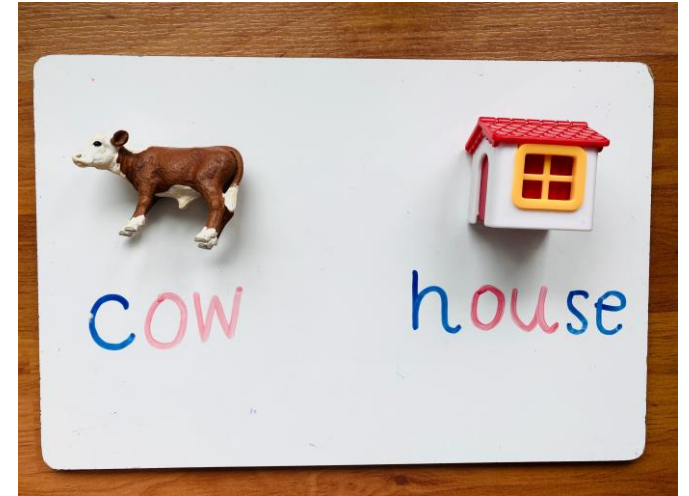
Phase 4 phonics

- This phase is about consolidating and refining what the children know, introducing more spelling patterns and tricky words as well as increasing vocabulary.
- They will practise reading and spelling CVCC words (such as 'bump', 'nest', 'belt,' 'milk').
- They will practise reading and spelling high frequency words and writing sentences.
- They will also learn more tricky words, including 'have,' 'like,' 'some' and 'little'.



Phase 5 phonics

- Children learn different ways of spelling each sound and alternative pronunciations for these: for example, learning that 'ow' makes a different sound in 'snow' and 'cow'.
- They become quicker at blending, and start to do it silently.
- They will learn more tricky words, including 'people,' 'water' and 'friend'.
- They also learn one new phoneme: /zh/, as in 'treasure.



Ways to help your children at home

Robotic talking – Words are made up from sounds and children need to be able to hear these sounds individually. Sometimes when you are playing you can say words as if you were a robot (saying the sounds separately) and see if your child can work out what you are saying. Stick to short simple words that only have a few sounds in them. Make sure you are saying the letter sounds (p-i-g) not the letter names (pee-eye-gee).

E.g.

- Pass that p-i-g to me.
- Sit d-ow-n.
- Point to your t-ee-th.
- Hop like a f-r-o-g.

As your child becomes familiar with this robot talking, see if they can say words in robot talk themselves.

I spy – Say the rhyme 'I spy with my little eye something beginning with _____', allow your child plenty of opportunities to guess what you have chosen, for example, 'something beginning with **t**' could be a tree, toy, tent or train.

Point out print everywhere – Talk about the written words you see in the world around you. Ask your child to find familiar words on each outing such as 'McDonald's', 'Coke' or 'Family Mart'.

Looking for letters – Ask your child to look for English letters whilst you are out and about. Can they find letters from their own name, letters they have learnt in school or letters that specific words begin with?

General Tips to support reading

Once is never enough! – Encourage your child to re-read favorite books and poems, it will help them to read more quickly and accurately.

Dig deeper into the story – Ask your child questions about the story you've just read. Ask something like, "Why do you think he did that?" or "What do you think will happen next?"

Take control of the television – Encourage reading as a distraction-free activity.

Be patient – When your child is trying to sound out an unfamiliar word, give them time to do so.

Pick books that are at the right level – Help your child pick books that are not too difficult. The aim is to give your child lots of successful reading experiences.

I read to you, you read to me – Take turns reading aloud at bedtime. Kids enjoy this special time with their parents.

One more time with feeling – When your child has sounded out an unfamiliar word, have him or her re-read that sentence. Often kids are so busy figuring out a word they lose the meaning of what they've just read.