

Using Phonics to Teach Your Child To Read

Teaching your child to read is an incredible gift that opens doors to knowledge, imagination, and lifelong learning. Phonics, a method that connects sounds with written symbols, is a proven and effective approach to reading instruction. By understanding the relationship between phonemes (sounds) and graphemes (letters and letter combinations), children can decode words and develop reading fluency. This guide will provide a step-by-step explanation of how to use phonics to teach your child to read, equipping them with the skills needed to become confident and proficient readers.

Section 1: Understanding Phonics

1.1 The Definition and Importance of Phonics

Phonics is a method that teaches the relationship between sounds and written symbols. It has great importance in helping children decode words, develop fluency, and enhance reading comprehension.

1.2 Phonemes and Graphemes

Introduce the concept of phonemes as the individual speech sounds in words and graphemes as the written representations of those sounds. Familiarize yourself with the different phonemes and the corresponding graphemes in the English language.

In the English language, there are approximately 30 to 40 phonemes, or distinct speech sounds, that can be represented by various graphemes, or written symbols. **It's important to note that there can be variations in the number and classification of phonemes based on different dialects and accents.** However, the following is a commonly accepted list of phonemes and their corresponding graphemes in Standard English:

Consonant Sounds:

Plosives (Stop Consonants):

- /p/ - graphemes: p (as in "pen"), pp (as in "apple")
- /b/ - graphemes: b (as in "bat"), bb (as in "rabbit")
- /t/ - graphemes: t (as in "top"), tt (as in "letter")
- /d/ - graphemes: d (as in "dog"), dd (as in "middle")
- /k/ - graphemes: k (as in "cat"), c (as in "kite"), ck (as in "back")
- /g/ - graphemes: g (as in "goat"), gg (as in "egg")

Fricatives:

- /f/ - graphemes: f (as in "fish"), ff (as in "cliff"), ph (as in "phone")
- /v/ - graphemes: v (as in "van"), ve (as in "give")
- /s/ - graphemes: s (as in "sun"), ss (as in "pass"), c (as in "ceiling"), sc (as in "science"), ce (as in "pencil")
- /z/ - graphemes: z (as in "zebra"), zz (as in "pizza"), s (as in "is")
- /ʃ/ - graphemes: sh (as in "ship"), ch (as in "chef"), ti (as in "nation"), ci (as in "special")
- /ʒ/ - graphemes: s (as in "treasure"), z (as in "measure"), g (as in "genre"), ge (as in "rouge")
- /h/ - graphemes: h (as in "hat")
- /θ/ - graphemes: th (as in "thin")
- /ð/ - graphemes: th (as in "then")

Affricates:

- /tʃ/ - graphemes: ch (as in "cheese"), tch (as in "catch"), tu (as in "picture")
- /dʒ/ - graphemes: j (as in "jam"), g (as in "gem"), dg (as in "badge")

Nasals:

- /m/ - graphemes: m (as in "mat"), mm (as in "summer")
- /n/ - graphemes: n (as in "net"), nn (as in "running")
- /ŋ/ - graphemes: ng (as in "long"), n (as in "sink")

Lateral:

- /l/ - graphemes: l (as in "leaf"), ll (as in "bell")

Approximants:

- /r/ - graphemes: r (as in "rat"), rr (as in "mirror")

Vowel Sounds:

Short Vowels:

- /æ/ - graphemes: a (as in "cat"), ai (as in "rain")
- /ɛ/ - graphemes: e (as in "pen"), ea (as in "bread"), ai (as in "said")
- /ɪ/ - graphemes: i (as in "sit"), y (as in "gym")
- /ɒ/ - graphemes: o (as in "hot"), oa (as in "boat")
- /ʌ/ - graphemes: u (as in "cup"), o (as in "love")

Long Vowels:

- /eɪ/ - graphemes: a (as in "gate"), ai (as in "wait"), ay (as in "play")
- /i:/ - graphemes: ee (as in "bee"), ea (as in "tea"), e (as in "she")
- /aɪ/ - graphemes: i (as in "bike"), y (as in "cry"), ie (as in "pie")
- /əʊ/ - graphemes: o (as in "go"), oa (as in "boat"), ow (as in "blow")
- /ju:/ - graphemes: u (as in "use"), ew (as in "new"), u-e (as in "cute")

Diphthongs:

- /aʊ/ - graphemes: ow (as in "cow"), ou (as in "house")
- /ɔɪ/ - graphemes: oi (as in "coin"), oy (as in "boy")

Please note that the graphemes provided are examples, and some phonemes have alternative grapheme representations. Additionally, English spelling can be complex and inconsistent due to historical reasons and borrowed words from other languages.

It's important to approach phonics instruction systematically and sequentially, building upon the foundational knowledge of letter-sound relationships to develop strong reading skills in children.

1.3 Phonics vs. Whole Language Approach

Differentiate between phonics and the whole language approach. While whole language focuses on meaning and context, phonics provides systematic and explicit instruction on letter-sound relationships.

A child's auditory vocabulary often far exceeds their written or reading vocabulary. That is children are earlier exposed to language and have a far greater list of words they can use verbally. Phonics helps them associate the sounds of the words with the actual meaning of the words they have previously heard and understand.

Section 2: Phonics Instruction Techniques

2.1 Letter-Sound Correspondence

Begin by teaching the basic letter sounds. Present each letter of the alphabet and its corresponding sound. Utilize visual aids such as alphabet charts, flashcards, or letter tiles to reinforce letter-sound associations.

2.2 Blending

Guide your child in blending individual sounds together to form words. Start with simple, three-letter words like "cat" or "dog" and gradually progress to more complex ones. Encourage your child to sound out each letter and then smoothly blend the sounds together to pronounce the word.

2.3 Segmenting

Teach your child to segment words into individual sounds. Demonstrate how to break a word like "cat" into its separate sounds (/c/ /a/ /t/) and then blend them together to form the word. Practice segmenting with various words of increasing complexity.

2.4 Phonemic Awareness

Promote phonemic awareness by engaging your child in activities that focus on individual sounds within words. Encourage them to identify and manipulate sounds, such as recognizing the beginning, middle, and ending sounds of words or blending and segmenting individual phonemes.

2.5 Word Families

Introduce word families, which are groups of words sharing a common sound and letter pattern (e.g., the "-at" family: cat, hat, sat). Teach your child to recognize these patterns, making it easier for them to read and spell words within the same family. Engage them in word family activities and games.

2.6 Sight Words

Incorporate sight words, which are commonly used words that cannot be easily decoded using phonics alone. Provide sight word flashcards or use word games to help your child recognize and memorize these words.

2.7 Decodable Texts

Introduce decodable books that contain words and sentences aligning with the phonics skills your child has learned. Gradually increase the complexity of the texts as their skills progress. Reading decodable texts allows them to practice decoding skills in a meaningful context.

2.8 Contextual Reading and Comprehension

Encourage your child to apply their phonics skills in reading and comprehending texts. Provide opportunities for independent reading, reading aloud, and discussion of the content. Help them connect phonics skills with understanding

the meaning of words and sentences.

Section 3: Phonics Implementation Strategies

3.1 Multi-Sensory Approach

Engage your child's senses by incorporating auditory, visual, and kinesthetic activities. Use manipulatives, such as letter tiles or sandpaper letters, to enhance the tactile experience of learning letter-sound relationships.

3.2 Games and Activities

Make phonics instruction fun and interactive by incorporating games and activities. Play word-building games, create phonics scavenger hunts, or design phonics-based board games to reinforce letter-sound knowledge.

3.3 Technology Resources

Explore digital resources and educational apps that support phonics instruction. Use interactive phonics games, online reading programs, or phonics-based websites to supplement your teaching.

3.4 Parent Involvement and Support

Involve parents in the phonics learning process. It is best if parents can reinforce phonics skills at home. Share progress updates, recommend reading materials, and offer suggestions for phonics-related activities with other interested parents.

Teaching your child to read using phonics is a powerful and effective method. By systematically teaching letter-sound relationships and providing opportunities for practice and application, you can help your child become a proficient reader. Remember to be patient, supportive, and make learning enjoyable. Reading opens a world of possibilities, and with the foundation of phonics, your child will have the tools to unlock the magic of reading.

For additional information look over both:

[Reading Head Start](#) and
[Children Learning Reading](#)

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