

# Completing Phonics Activities with Young Children

In the early years, young children will be developing many phonics skills, which will help them learn to read and write. For example, they will be learning to listen to identify different sounds, hear and identify rhyming words and words that start with the same letter sound (alliteration), say the individual sounds in words and blend them together, and identify letter sounds in words to help them read and write words and sentences.

There are many different stages or phases of phonics development. Phase 1 skills include listening to and identifying sounds, identifying rhyming words and words that start with the same sound. Children then progress to the next phonic phases, which include identifying individual sounds in words and blending and segmenting them to read and write words.

Letter sounds, rather than letter names, are taught initially. For example, children would learn the sound 't' rather than the letter name 'tee'. 'Pure sounds' should be used when children are listening to and saying sounds. This means, where possible, the 'uh' or 'er' sounds after letters should not be said. For example, 'f' should be pronounced as 'ffff' rather than 'f-uh' or 'f-er'. Don't worry if you are unsure - check with a teacher if you are not sure about how to pronounce any of the sounds.

Children will be taught to say, hear, identify, read and write the different sounds. Here is the typical sequence of letter sounds taught throughout early years:

**Phase 2:** s, a, t, p, i, n, m, d, g, o, c, k, ck, e, u, r, h, b, f, ff, l, ll, ss.

**Phase 3:** j, v, w, x, y, z, zz, qu, ch, sh, th, ng, ai, ee, igh, oa, ar, or, ur, ow, oi, ear, air, ure, er.

## Reading Using Phonics

Encourage children to sound-out words they do not recognise (for example, sounding-out the word 'bus' as 'b-u-s'). You could also sound out words for children to blend the sounds together to read the word - for example, sound out the word 'ant' as 'a-n-t' for children to blend the sounds together, responding with 'ant'. Try covering parts of a word with your finger to make sounding out easier - splitting a word up into smaller sounds can help children to sound out a word.



## Writing Using Phonics

Encourage children to listen carefully as you say a word. As you speak, emphasise each sound in the word – splitting the words up into sounds for children to hear more easily, e.g. 'b-u-ck-e-t'. Don't worry if children don't identify all the sounds in a long word – just encourage them to write the sounds they can hear. Repeat longer words a few times, emphasising different parts of the word each time. You could use a sound mat to show children how to write the sounds they identify.

As you work together, give the children lots of praise and positive feedback. Encourage children to have a go at sounding out new words or to write the sounds they can hear. Praise the children's efforts and thank them for working with you. Ask the teacher about reward systems you could use with the children, such as stickers.

## Questions to Ask

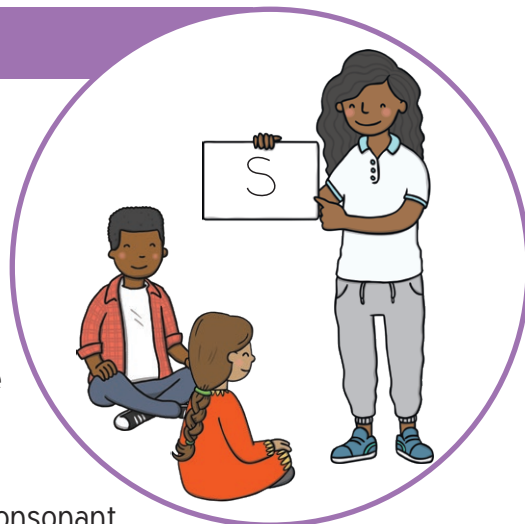
This is not an exhaustive list – but could be useful when thinking of questions to ask when completing phonics activities with young children. Try choosing just a couple of questions to ask.



- Listen – what sounds can you hear?
- What do you think is making that sound?
- What sounds can you hear at the start of the words: sun, sand and sea?
- Can you think of a word that rhymes with ...?
- What sounds can you hear in the word ...?
- Can you write the ... sound?
- What other sounds can you hear in the word ...?
- Can you sound out this word?
- What word do these sounds make?

## Handy Vocabulary

Here is a list of useful terms you may hear when completing phonics activities with children:



### blend –

Saying the individual sounds that make up a word and then merging or blending the sounds together to say the word.

### CVC words –

Abbreviation used for consonant-vowel-consonant words, used to describe the order of sounds.

### digraph –

Two letters which make one sound, e.g. ee, oa, or sh.

### grapheme –

Written letters, or a group of letters, which represent one sound, e.g. a, l, sh or ck.

### phoneme –

A single sound that can be made by one or more letters, e.g. s, k, oo, ph or igh.

### pure sound –

Pronouncing each letter sound clearly and distinctly, without adding additional sounds to the end, e.g. 'fff' not 'fuh.'

### segment –

Splitting a word up into individual sounds – the opposite of blending (see above).

### tricky words –

Words that are difficult to sound out, e.g. said, the, because.

### trigraph –

Three letters which go together to make one sound, e.g. ear, air or igh.