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Phonics glossary

Your child's school may have given you lots of information about helping your child progress on their reading journey at home. Here are some definitions of words your child's teacher may have used.

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.
consonant	Most letters of the alphabet (excluding the vowels: a,e,i,o,u).
CVC words	Abbreviation used for consonant-vowel-consonant words, used to describe the order of sounds. Some examples of CVC words are: cat, pen, top Other similar abbreviations include: - VC words e.g. on, is, it. - CCVC words e.g. trip and flat. - CVCC words e.g. milk and fast.
digraph	Two letters which together make one sound, e.g. ee, oa, ea, ch, ay. There are several different types of digraph: - Vowel digraph: a digraph in which at least one of the letters is a vowel, for example; boat or day . - Consonant digraph: two consonants which can go together, for example, shop or thin . - Split digraph (previously called magic e): two letters, which work as a pair to make one sound, but are separated within the word, such as a-e, e-e, i-e, o-e, u-e. For example, cake or line .
grapheme	Written letters or a group of letters which represent one single sound (phoneme), e.g. a, l, sh, air, ck.
Letters and Sounds 2007	A Government document detailing the teaching of phonics. There are 6 phases described: Phase 1: This is split into 7 aspects, which focus on hearing and talking about environmental sounds and letter sounds. Phase 2: Learning 19 letters of the alphabet, along with the first 5 tricky words and using them to read and spell simple words and captions. Phase 3: Learning the remaining letters of the alphabet, some 2 and 3 letter digraphs, along with the next set of tricky words. Reading and writing captions and sentences.



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	<p>Phase 4: Learning to blend and segment longer words, including words with adjacent consonants and more than one syllable. Reading and writing using these and the next tricky words, within sentences.</p> <p>Phase 5: Learning alternative spellings and pronunciations for phonemes, including their common usage within words. Reading and writing using these and the next tricky words, within sentences.</p> <p>Phase 6: Learning longer words and spelling rules.</p>
phoneme	A single sound that can be made by one or more letters (graphemes), e.g. s, k, z, oo, ph, igh.
pure sound	Pronouncing each letter sound clearly and distinctly without adding additional sounds to the end, e.g. 'ffff' not 'fuh.
segment	This is the opposite of blending (see above). Splitting a word up into individual sounds – used when spelling and writing.
tricky words	Words that are difficult to sound out, e.g. said, the, because.
trigraph	Three letters which go together make one sound, e.g. ear, air, igh, dge, tch.
vowel	The letters a, e, i, o, u.