

Free Phonics Essentials

Terms & Rules

to teach



by Splendidmoms

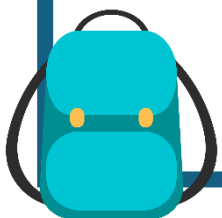
Phonics Essential Terms & Rules

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Importance of Phonics

- **Phonics:** It is the system of teaching reading and spelling that emphasizes the relationship between sounds (phonemes) and their written symbols (graphemes).

How does phonics work?

- Children learn to recognize the sounds of individual letters
- They learn to identify the sounds of different combinations of letters, like "sh" or "oo"
- They learn to blend these sounds together to make words
- They use these skills to decode new words they hear or see.

Why is phonics important?

- It helps children learn to read and write
- It helps children hear, identify, and use different sounds that distinguish one word from another
- It helps children decode words as they read
- It helps children become strong, independent readers.

- **Phonemic awareness:** it is the ability to identify and manipulate individual sounds (phonemes) in spoken words. It includes skills like isolating the beginning sound of a word, blending sounds to make a word, or substituting sounds to create new words.
- **Phonological awareness:** the ability to recognize and manipulate the spoken parts of words. It involves understanding that words are made up of smaller *units of sound*, such as syllables, onsets, rimes, and phonemes. Includes skills like rhyming word recognition and identifying the number of syllables in a word.

Phonics - Terms

- **Phoneme:** It is the smallest unit of *sound* that can distinguish words from one another.
Example: The word “ship” is made of these phonemes- /sh/ /i/ /p/. The word ship has four letters, but it has three phonemes. The word king has three phonemes : /k//i//ng/.
- **Grapheme:** One or more letters that represent one sound.
Example: letter **b** is grapheme that represents the sound /b/, like wise **ch**, **th**, **oi**, **oy** are also graphemes.
 - A grapheme can represent more than one phoneme (sound).
Example: the letter **g** has two sounds /j/ and /g/ as in giraffe and goat.
- **Morpheme:** A morpheme is the smallest unit of a word that contains meaning.
Example: The word "incoming" has three morphemes "in-," "come," and "-ing."
- **Blending:** “*Blending*” means combining individual sounds (phonemes) together to form a word. When you "blend" sounds, you put them together to say a word, like saying "c" "a" "t" to make "cat". It helps in reading.
- **Segmenting:** “*Segmenting*” means breaking a word down into its individual sounds. When you "segment" a word, you separate it into its individual sounds, like saying "cat" as "c" "a" "t". It helps in writing.
- **Long Vowel Sound representation:** Long vowels can be represented by a horizontal line above the vowel: ā, ē, ī, ō, ū.
- **Short Vowel Sound representation:** The short vowels can be represented by a curved symbol above the vowel: ă, ě, ĭ, ǒ, ŭ.

- **Vowels:** Vowels are speech sounds that are produced without any significant constriction or blockage of airflow in the vocal tract. In the English language, the vowels are the letters **A, E, I, O, U** (and sometimes Y, when it functions as a vowel).
 - *Short vowels* : short vowel is pronounced quickly
(ĭ as in sit, ȯ as in hot, ŭ as in cup)
 - *Long vowels*: Long sound of a vowel is vowel name itself. . (ē as in me , team, ī as in kite, ō as in home, coat and ū as in cube)
- **Consonant:** They are the letters of the alphabet that are not vowels.
- **CVC word:** CVC words are simple, three-letter words that follow the pattern C=Consonant, V= Vowel, C= Consonant.
Example: cat, bed, sit, dog, cup.
- **CVCe word:** Words that contain a consonant, vowel, consonant, and a silent e at the end.
Example: cake, the final "e" plays a crucial role in making the vowel sound long.
- **Consonant clusters:** It is a group of two or more consonants that appear together in a word, without any vowels in between them.
Example: **br** in “bricks” and **mp** in “lamp” and **str** in “string”.
- **Beginning blend:** It refers to consonant cluster that appear at the beginning of a word.
Example: **bl** in “blue” **fr** in "friend“, **cr** in "croak“, **spl** in "splash".
- **Ending blend:** It refers to consonant cluster that appear at the end of a word.
Example: **nd** in “sand” , **sk** in "task“, **st** in "fast“, **nt** in "went".

- **Digraph:** A digraph is a combination of two letters that together represent a single sound.
- **Consonant digraph:** It is a combination of two consonant letters that together represent a single sound (phoneme) in a word.
Example: ph as in "phone" (represents the /f/ sound), *sh* as in "ship".
- **Vowel digraph/vowel team:** It is a combination of two vowel letters that together represent a single sound (phoneme).
Example: ea as in "team" (represents the **long/e/** sound), *oa* as in "boat" (represents the **long /o/** sound).
- **Split vowel digraph:** A split digraph occurs when the two vowels that make up the digraph are separated by one or more consonants. Generally, the consonant splits the vowel a,e,i,o or u and the final e (there are only five: **a_e, e_e, i_e, o_e, u_e**)
 - *Example: a_e* in cake, *e_e* in complete, *o_e* in drove, *i_e* in invite.
- **Trigraph:** A trigraph is a combination of three letters that together make one single sound (as in 'ire', 'igh', 'ear').
 - *Example: hear, height.*
- **R Controlled vowels:** The vowel sounds that are influenced or controlled by the letter **r** that follows them.(also known as "bossy r").
Example : ar in "star", *ir* in "bird".
- **Diphthong:** It is a complex vowel sound that begins with one vowel sound and glides into another within the same syllable.
Example: ou as in "out" (starts with /a/ and glides to /u/).
- **Syllable:** a word or part of a word which contains one vowel sound
Example: cat has one syllable- **cat**.
banana has three syllables- **ba-na-na**.
happy has two syllables- **hap-py**.

- **Onset:** It refers to the initial consonant or consonant cluster which occurs before the vowel sound in the word or syllable.
Example: in the word cat, the onset is the consonant "c". In the word jump, the onset is "j".
- **Rime:** A rime refers the vowel and any consonants that follow it after the onset within the word or syllable.
Example: In the word cat , the rime is "at", in the word jump, the rime is "ump".
- **Affixes:** Affixes are groups of letters added to a word to change its meaning or grammatical function. They can be added to the beginning, middle, or end of a word.
- **Prefix:** An affix added to the beginning of a word to alter its meaning.
Example: "un-" in "undo" (reverses the action).
- **Suffix:** An affix added to the end of a word to change its meaning or part of speech.
Example: "-ness" in "happiness" (turns an adjective into a noun).
- **High-frequency vs. sight words:** While the terms are often used interchangeably, high-frequency words are simply words that appear frequently in text, while sight words are those that are learned by sight recognition. Common examples include words like "the," "a," "is," "and," "to," "of," and "that". Learning sight words helps improve reading fluency and comprehension because readers can quickly recognize these common words, rather than having to sound them out every time. Any word can be made a sight word by learning it and just recognizing it by sight (without decoding) while reading.
- **Tricky words or Red Words :** Red Words are irregular words that do not follow a particular pattern of phonics. These words can also be high-frequency words or sight words.

Phonics - Rules

- **Double final consonant:** Also called as FLOSS rule is, If a word has one syllable with one short vowel and ends in letters **f, l, s or z** the final consonant will be doubled.
Example : pass, fill, staff, buzz.
(Exception : bus)
- **Hard c & g:** The hard sound of c is /k/ and g is /g/. When letter c and g are followed by vowel **a, o or u** the sound is hard.
Example: cat, goat.
- **Soft c & g:** The soft sound of c is /s/ and g is /j/. When letter c and g are followed by **e, i or y** the sound is soft.
Example : cent, gym.
- **Vowel e after I, U and V:** English words never end with **i, u or v** so add a **silent e** to the words ending with **i, u or v**.
Example: tie, due, have.
- **Kite and Cat Rule(c & k):** Letter c and k are often used to represent similar sound /k/. To know which letter to use for /k/ sound look at the sound next to the /k/ sound.
 - If the letter next to /k/ sound is **"a", "o", or "u"**, use letter c.
Example : cat, cot, cut
 - If the letter next to /k/ sound is **"e", "i", or "y"**, use letter k .
Example: Kettle, kite
 - If the letter next to /k/ sound is a **consonant**, then use letter c.
Example: crop, clap

- **Final /k/:** At the end of the spelling
 - If the /k/ sound comes right after a vowel team or a consonant then use, **-k**.
Example: week, bank.
 - If the /k/ sound comes right after one short vowel use, **-ck**.
Example: back.
 - If the /k/ sound comes right after long vowel sound use **-ke**.
Example: joke.

- **Pitch Rule(ch & tch):**
 - Use "tch" when the /ch/ sound is at the end of a syllable and is preceded by a short vowel.
Example: "match", "pitch".
 - Use "ch" when the /ch/ sound is preceded by a long vowel, vowel team, diphthong or consonant.
Example: "search", "church".

- **Bridge Rule(ge & dge):**
 - If the /j/ sound comes right after a short vowel use **dge**
Example: bridge.
 - If the /j/ sound comes long vowel, vowel team, diphthong or consonant use **ge**
Example: huge, large.

- **Plurals s & es:**
 - To make a noun plural add **-s** to the end
Example: roofs, things.
 - If a word ends in **s, x, z, ch** or **sh** use **-es** to the end.
Example: bushes, buses.

- **"S" pronounced /z/:** When the "s" comes between two vowels, read s with /z/ sound.
Example: rose, use.

Adding Suffixes: When adding suffixes to words, there are few rules to follow to ensure the proper spelling and pronunciation.

▪ **Consonant Doubling:**

- If one-syllable word ends in a single consonant and is preceded by a single vowel, you double the consonant before adding a vowel suffix.

Example: big-bigger, jump-jumped.

- Do not double the consonant when adding a consonant suffix.

Example: mad-madly.

▪ **Dropping silent e:**

- If a word ends in an **e**, drop the **e** before adding vowel suffixes.

Example: make-making.

- Do not drop e for consonant suffix.

Example: cute – cutely.

▪ **Changing y to i:**

- If a word ends in **-y** and is preceded by a consonant, change the **y** to **i** before adding most suffixes (except when the suffix starts with an **i**).

Example: study – studied
play – playing.

▪ **Vowel Team:**

ai/ay: is long vowel a sound

- the vowel team “ai” is usually found in the beginning or middle of a word.

Example: aid, rain, mail.

- The vowel team “ay” is found at the end of the words.

Example: day, way.

ee/ey : is long vowel e sound

- The vowel team “ee” is usually found in the middle of the word.
Example: think green, teen, sneeze (Exception bee, tree)
- The vowel team “ey” is usually found at the end of the word.
Example: key, monkey, trolley, kidney.

ei/ie : is long e sound

- Use vowel team "ie" in most cases.
Example: chief, believe.
- Use vowel team "ei" when the combination follows the letter "c".
Example: ceiling, receive.

oa/ow/oe: is long vowel o sound

- the vowel team “oa” is found in the beginning or middle of words.
Example: boat, road.
- The vowel team “ow” is found at the end of the word
Example: : snow, grow.
- The vowel team “oe” is also found at the end of the words but is least common.
Example: toe, foe.

[Note: There are other vowel teams like ea, ie, oo, ow, and ou, ew, ue, ei, ey, and ui. which do not follow any rule. Also, these vowel teams has more than one sound like **ea**- has three sounds /ē/ (long e as in "eat"), /ĕ/ (short e as in "bread"), and /ā/ (long a as in "break"). There is no rule that dictates which may be used. The best practice is to make a list of words based on vowel team that have same sounds for reading. Engage students in blending, reading, writing, sorting, word search to reinforce the sound and spelling pattern].

▪ Diphthongs:

oi/oy:

- “oi” is usually found in the beginning or middle of words.
Example: coin, oil.
- “oy” is found at the end of the words.
Example: boy, toy.

ou/ow:

- “ou” is found in the beginning or middle of the word
Example: out, loud.
- “ow” is found at the end of the word
Example: snow, grow.
- “ow” comes in the middle of the word if followed by ‘l’ or ‘n’.
Example: brown, growl, owl, town.

Breaking the Rules: When Phonics Doesn't Play Fair

Phonics is a fantastic tool for learning to read, but let's be honest—English loves to break its own rules! While most words follow predictable phonics patterns, there are always exceptions that can leave learners scratching their heads. Here's a look at some of the trickiest rule-breakers in the English language.

Common Exceptions to Phonics Rules

◆ **Irregular Vowel Sounds** – Some words just refuse to play by the rules! Take *said* and *does*, for example. These words contain vowel teams that don't follow the usual pronunciation patterns.

◆ **Silent Letters** – Ever wonder why we write *knife*, *honor*, or *gnat* with extra letters we don't pronounce? Silent letters like *k*, *h*, and *g* are just another quirk of English that make reading a bit more challenging.

◆ **Multiple Pronunciations** – Depending on where you live or the context of a sentence, some words can sound completely different. For example, is it *root* or *rout*? *Aunt* or *ant*? The answer? It depends!

Tips for Teaching Phonics Without the Confusion

Teaching phonics doesn't have to be frustrating! Here are some fun and effective ways to help learners navigate these tricky exceptions:

✓ **Make it fun with games and interactive activities** – Learning through play helps reinforce phonics rules (and their exceptions) in an engaging way.

✓ **Use phonics worksheets** – Structured practice can help solidify patterns, even when exceptions come into play.

✓ **Integrate phonics into daily life** – Reading signs, menus, or even grocery lists can be great real-world practice.

✓ **Encourage positive reinforcement** – Celebrate progress, even with tricky words! A little praise goes a long way.

✓ **Find helpful resources** – There are plenty of books, apps, and online tools to support phonics learning. Keep exploring new ways to make it fun!

While phonics is a great foundation for reading, understanding the exceptions makes learning even stronger. The key is to embrace the quirks of English and turn them into learning opportunities!

My Sound Chart - 1

Letter Sounds

Aa apple	Bb bell	Cc cat	Dd duck	Ee elephant
Ff fish	Gg grapes	Hh hat	Ii igloo	Jj jelly
Kk kite	Ll lotus	Mm mug	Nn nib	Oo octopus
Pp pot	Qq quill	Rr rabbit	Ss snake	Tt tree
Uu umbrella	Vv van	Ww watch	Xx xylophone	Yy yak
		Zz zebra		

Long Vowel Sounds:

ā cake	ē eagle	ī time	ō pole	ū mute
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My Sound Chart - 2

Blends and Digraphs

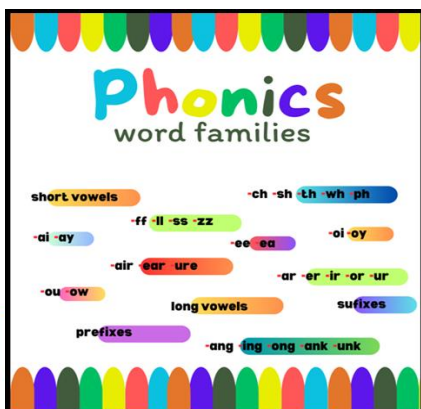
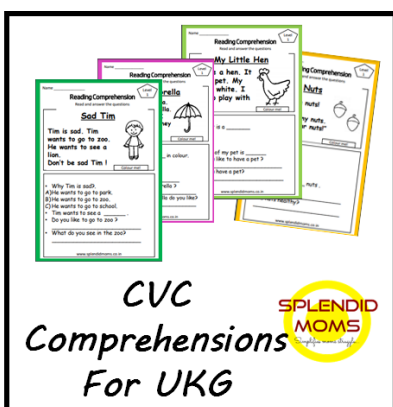
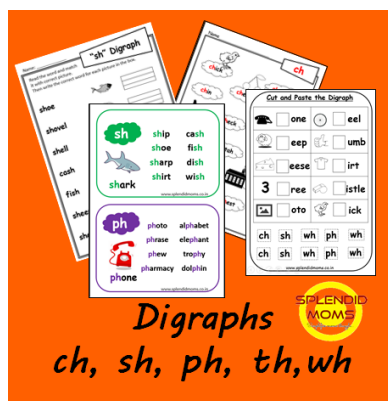
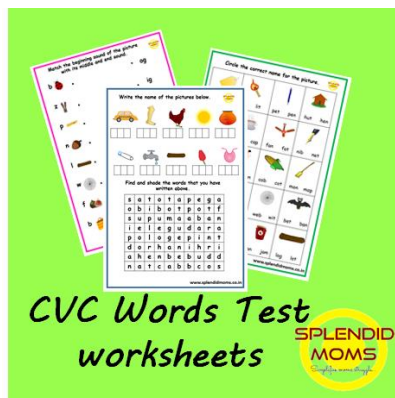
bl block	br brick	cl clock	cr crab	dr drum	fl flag
fr frog	gl gloves	gr grapes	pl plane	pr prize	sc scooty
sk skull	sl slide	sm smile	sn snail	sp spoon	st star
sw swan	tr tree	tw twin	kn knife	wr wrist	squ square
scr screw	spl splash	spr spray	str strap	dge bridge	tch switch
ch chick	sh sheep	ph phone	wh wheel	th thumb	th this

My Sound Chart - 3

Vowel Teams and more

ai chain	ay tray	au audio	aw yawn	ea pear
ea leaf	ea bread	ee cheese	ei reindeer	ei vein
eigh eight	ew screw	ey key	ey they	ie tie
ie piece	igh light	oa boat	oe toe	oi coin
oy boy	oo book	oo spoon	ou house	ou soup
ow bow	ow cow	ui juice	ue glue	ue statue
ar car	or torch	er hammer	ir shirt	ur turtle

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