

# Methodology module: Teaching phonics



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Naomi Jenkins studied English Language and Anthropology at Durham University, qualifying as a teacher with a BA (Ed) Honours degree in 1994. She went on to teach English as a foreign language to young learners in Spain, specialising in pre-school teaching. Upon her return to the UK, she taught in various primary schools, later working with children with profound special needs. Naomi has also experienced the other side of the classroom as a parent of young children.

*Phonics is not a magic cure-all. However, [...] for most children, [it is] one necessary ingredient in the complex process of learning to read. As an ingredient, it comes in varying doses and levels of purity; and, if used too much, or in isolation, it can ruin the dish.*

John Holden

## What is phonics?

Teaching phonics is recognised educationally as an essential part of the teaching of reading and writing. Using phonics, children learn a relatively small number of letter-sound correspondences, rather than words as a whole. This then gives them a clear way of approaching new words. Research from around the world shows that phonics is a very effective way of teaching children the mechanics of reading.

The question is how to incorporate a phonics programme into an English language learning classroom, where pupils may be having difficulties learning the sounds and letters of their own language. This module is intended to help you rethink your approach to incorporating phonics instruction into your teaching programme.



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## What are the benefits of phonics instruction for English language learners?

### Confidence

Pupils' confidence increases when they are empowered with skills that help them successfully read, pronounce and spell English.

### Memory

Pupils are able to remember the word more effectively when they associate the meaning and the pronunciation with the written word.

### Literacy

Phonics instruction builds pupils' vocabulary and print awareness for comprehension of texts.

### Pronunciation

Incorporating phonics instruction provides focused training on the sounds of the English language.

### Spelling

Pupils' spelling improves by applying encoding strategies (putting sounds together), a key part of explicit phonics instruction.

### Independence

Pupil autonomy develops by providing strategies to help them pronounce and write words on their own.



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## Incorporating phonics into the English language learning classroom

English language learners require instruction that provides sufficient opportunities for them to hear and discriminate the words and sounds of English, to increase their vocabulary and to practise their oral English skills. Pupils have to learn how the sounds of spoken English are represented by letters or groups of letters.

For these pupils, understanding the relationship between letters and sounds is critical, since some of the sounds will be new to them – sounds they won't have heard or spoken as meaningful units of speech. Although some level of basic phonics instruction is appropriate, it must be carefully planned and paced in order to be effective. English language learners require much more oral language development with a focus on listening and speaking.

Keeping this in mind there are elements that should be included in any approach to phonics instruction:

- **Progress** – The programme should introduce a defined initial group of consonants and vowels, enabling pupils, early on, to read and spell many simple CVC (Consonant-vowel-consonant) words before gradually moving on to more complex phonic knowledge and skills and covering the major grapheme/phoneme correspondences.
- A **multi-sensory approach** so that pupils see, hear, say and write each letter sound through activities designed to secure essential phonics knowledge and skills.
- **Blending** of phonemes, in order, from left to right, 'all through the word' for reading.
- Teaching **exceptions** – high frequency words – that do not conform completely to grapheme/phoneme correspondence rules.
- **Segmenting** words into their individual sounds and writing them down using a range of graphemes.





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## Phonics in *English World*

*English World* teaches pupils how to sound out words, blend sounds to read words and segment the sounds in the words in order to spell them accurately.

The different phonemes in English are presented in Levels 1–4. Pupils hear each sound and practise it through classroom activities and rhymes which help them to develop good pronunciation.


The corresponding workbook page for classroom teaching presents the rules for writing English correctly, while workbook exercises practise the spelling of words containing the target phoneme.

The teacher's DVD-ROM complements the printed material with interactive phonics activities. In the interactive phonics feature, pupils progress from individual sounds to blends and then to whole words.







The *Phonics Record Sheets* provide a mixture of activities to review phonic awareness by testing pupils' ability to identify phonemes and write them down using a range of spelling patterns. As pupils build their phonic awareness, they also revisit phonemes from previous units and levels.

*English World* recognises that pupils develop good pronunciation through exploring and experimenting with sounds and words. Pupils can then use this knowledge to 'decode' new words that they hear or see. This is the first important step in learning to read.

**1 PHONICS**

**a** hat 


**1 Read and match.**


     


1 hat 2 man 3 cat 4 fan 5 mat 6 van


**2 Look and write.**


fan hat fan cat


1 It is a \_\_\_\_\_ on the mat. 

2 It is a \_\_\_\_\_ on a van. 

3 It is a \_\_\_\_\_ on a hat. 


4 It is a mat on a \_\_\_\_\_. 

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Unit 1 Hello, Mr Jolly!  /10

Phonics  
Level 1



**9 PHONICS**

**igh** night 

**1 Look and write.**

1 \_\_\_\_\_ 2 \_\_\_\_\_ 3 \_\_\_\_\_

4 \_\_\_\_\_ 5 \_\_\_\_\_

**2 Read and write.**


1 I hope I got the answers \_\_\_\_\_


2 Everest is the \_\_\_\_\_est mountain in the world.

3 We can see the moon at \_\_\_\_\_

4 It is not right to \_\_\_\_\_

5 You should not look at the sun because it is too \_\_\_\_\_

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Unit 9 Chinese inventions  /10

Phonics  
Level 4


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All six levels of *English World* focus on the spelling of words and recognising spelling patterns. The approach prepares pupils for learning to read by developing their phonic knowledge and skills.

Teachers can use the *English World Spelling Bee Booklet* to help pupils:

- identify the tricky bit in a word
- develop strategies for spelling longer words
- develop guidelines for making choices between spelling alternatives.

## Home Study Activities

 **Stripes: Levels 3 and 4 Spellers**

**Level 3 Spellers**


**Read it, hide it, spell it!**

- 1 Choose a word from your Pupil's Book or Dictionary and say it out loud. Make sure you pronounce it correctly.
- 2 Spell the word. Touch each letter with a pen or pencil and say the letters out loud.
- 3 Cover the word and try to see the word in your mind.
- 4 Write the word on a piece of paper.
- 5 Uncover the word and check it letter by letter against the word you wrote.
- 6 If your spelling is correct, try a more difficult word. If it is wrong, repeat the process until you get it right and remember, no cheating!

**Level 4 Spellers**

**Chopped-up words**


- 1 Write at least five words that you find difficult to spell on separate pieces of card. Make sure you leave a small space between each letter.
- 2 Get one envelope per word and write the correct spelling on the back of the envelope.
- 3 Now cut up the cards so that each letter is separate.
- 4 Put the chopped-up words into the envelope with the corresponding word written on the back.
- 5 Now, without looking at the back of the envelope, take out the individual letters and try to spell the word as quickly as possible. You can set yourself a 20-second time limit per word.
- 6 Check the correct spelling with the word on the back of the envelope.

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## Spelling Bee Word lists

 **BEE Aware!**

**Level 2**

**The long u sound**

The long u vowel sound has a variety of spellings. The most common is oo, but the sound can also be spelt using u\_e, ue, ui, ew, oe and ou.

oo	u_e, ue	ui	ou	ew	oe
balloon	blue	fruit	soup	new	shoes
boot	cube	suit	through		
broom	flute				
moon	glue				
pool	huge				
school	Tuesday				
spoon					
zoo					


\* To practise spelling the long u sound, try giving the children a mini Spelling Bee using the words above.

**Shhhh! Silent Letters**

**Silent gh**

When the letters gh follow a vowel, they are often silent. Write the following words on the board and ask the children to try to identify the silent letters:

*bright, eight, eighteen, through, tight, light, night*

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## Action points

Please find implementation tips for the classroom below. Choose some of the following ideas to use in your phonics lessons:

### Sound drills

- Use hand gestures to ensure pupils hold continuous sound (such as /mmm/). To show continuous sounds, bring the fingertips of both hands together and pull them apart slowly as if stretching a piece of string.
- To mime 'quick and quiet' stop sounds (such as /d/) create a small gap between your thumb and index finger and close it while voicing the sound.

### Blending sounds

- Do not stop between sounds.
- Put up a finger for each sound you say.
- After pupils have sounded out the word or said the word by parts, go back and ask your pupils to just say the whole word (/m/ /ʌ/ /d/, mud).

### Reading

- Put pupils into small groups.
- Less able pupils should be in the smallest groups.
- Vary practice activities and ask pupils to do repeated readings of the rhymes using:
  - Silent reading – children read silently to themselves.*
  - Individual turns – children take turns to read out to the class.*
  - Partner reading – children read with a partner.*
  - Choral reading – the class or a group reads out loud together.*
- While pupils are working independently, do spot checks to support individual learning needs.

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## Reflection notes

After teaching, reflect on the following questions to determine how you teach:

- What in your own teaching of reading and spelling do you find works best, and what causes you the most difficulty?

- How do you explain to pupils why letters don't always represent the sound we expect?

- Which of the recommendations in this article will have the most impact on your teaching?

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