



PARENTS' GUIDE TO PHONICS: A GLOSSARY OF KEY TERMS

Phonics help children learn to read by teaching them to say the sounds that letters or groups of letters represent. It sounds simple, but it can be incredibly daunting when you are faced with technical vocabulary like split digraphs, phonemes or graphemes! Below, we breakdown key terms into a handy glossary to help you aid your child at home.

Adjacent consonants

Two or three consonants next to each other that represent different sounds. For example, bl in black. Notice here that bl makes the two different sounds b and l, whereas ck makes the single sound ck.

Blending

Blending involves merging the sounds in a word together in order to pronounce it. This is important for reading. For example, j-a-m blended together reads the word jam.

Consonant

The letters of the alphabet (apart from the vowels a, e, i, o and u).

Consonant digraph

A digraph that is made up of two consonants (sh in shop).

CVC words

An abbreviation for consonant-vowel-consonant. This is a simple way of indicating the order of the graphemes in words. For example, it (VC), cat (CVC), bench (CVCC).

Digraph

A grapheme made up of two letters that makes one sound (sh in fish).

Grapheme

A grapheme is simply a way of writing down a phoneme. A grapheme can be one letter (s), two letters (ir), three letters (igh) or four letters in length (ough).

Grapheme-phoneme correspondences (GPCs)

Knowing your GPCs means being able to hear a phoneme and knowing what grapheme to use to represent it. This is helpful for spelling. Conversely, it also means seeing a grapheme and knowing the phoneme that relates to it, which is important for reading.

Phoneme

The smallest unit of sound in a word. There are around 44 phonemes in English and they are represented by graphemes in writing. Phonemes are usually shown as symbols between two forward slashes. For example, /b/ or /ch/.

Segmenting

Segmenting involves breaking up a word that you hear into its sounds. This helps with spelling because if you know what graphemes represent the sounds in the word, you can write it! For example, the word jam is segmented into the sounds j-a-m.

Split digraph

A digraph that is split between a consonant (a-e in make). A split digraph usually changes the sound of the first vowel. For example, compare the pronunciation between hug and huge.

Tricky words

Words that are commonly used in English, but they have complex spelling patterns which make them difficult to read and write. For example: said, of and was.

Trigraph

A grapheme made up of three letters that makes one sound (igh in high).

Vowel

The letters a, e, i, o and u.

Vowel digraph

A digraph that is made up of two vowels (ea in sea).