**Phonics Guide for Parents**

**Did you know?**

The English language has 26 letters, 44 sounds and over 100 ways to spell those sounds. It is one of the most complex languages to learn to read and spell.

**The jargon**

**Phonics** (also known as synthetic phonics) – the teaching of reading by developing awareness of the sounds in words and the corresponding letters used to represent these sounds.

**Phoneme –** any one of the 44 sounds which make up words in the English language.

**Grapheme –** how a phoneme is written down. There can be more than one way to spell a phoneme, for example ‘ay’ is spelt differently in ‘way’, ‘make’ and ‘fail’.

**Blending –** putting together the sounds in a word in order to read it.

**Segmenting –** breaking a word into its constituent sounds in order to spell it.

**What is Phonics?**

Phonics is a method for teaching reading and writing. It develops phonemic awareness – the ability to hear, recognise and use the sounds within a word. Learners are also taught the correspondence between sounds and graphemes that represent them. Phonics is the main way in which children are taught to read and write in the early years. Children will also be taught other skills, such as whole word recognition (tricky words), book skills and a love and enjoyment of reading.

Typically, children begin to develop the listening skills essential to phonics in their pre-school years. Some children begin to learn some letter sounds in pre-school, but most children will begin their main phonics learning once they start in Reception. This teaching continues throughout Year 1 and into Year 2 until the child is a confident and fluent reader. Once the children are fluent, the focus shifts to more comprehension and analysis skills.

At Hugh Joicey C of E First School, we use Read Write Inc as a systematic approach to the teaching of synthetic phonics.

**Read Write Inc**

Before your child can read, they need to learn to:

* Say the sound that is represented by each letter or group of letters – we call these Speed Sounds.
* How to blend the sounds together in a word to read it.

**What are Speed Sounds?**

In Read Write Inc, the individual sounds are called Speed Sounds – because we want your child to be able to read them effortlessly and speedily.

**Set 1**

To begin with we learn a sound a day. We use pure sounds so that your child will be able to blend sounds into words more easily. Letter-sound pictures are also used to help your child learn these sounds quickly.

e.g. Maisie Mountain is morphed into mmmmm



Set 1 sounds are taught in the following order:

**m, a, s, d, t, i, n, p, g, o, c, k, u, b, f, e, l, h, sh, r, j, v, y, w, th, z, ch, qu, x, ng, nk**

Once they have learnt the first five sounds, we teach children to blend them to make words. When we say words in pure sounds, we call it ‘Fred Talk’ – e.g. p-a-n, c-l-a-p.

**We never use letter names at this early stage.**

<https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/advice-for-parents/reading-at-home/phonics-made-easy/>

Scroll down to Ruth Miskin’s top tips for getting started with phonics. She will help you with tips on how to support your child with reading. Tip 1 details how to say the sounds correctly. The other tips are useful too!

The Oxford Owl website contains lots of other useful information about the teaching of reading and phonics, please take the time to have a look at some of the material on there.

When teaching a speed sound we either have to ‘stretch’ or ‘bounce’ it.

These first sounds should be stretched slightly. Try to avoid saying **uh** after each one, e.g. ‘mmm’ not ‘muh’, ‘sss’ not ‘suh’.

**m** – mmmountain (keep lips pressed together hard)

**s –** sssnake (keep teeth together and hiss – unvoiced)

**n –** nnnet (keep tongue behind teeth)

**f –** ffflower (keep teeth on bottom lip and force air out sharply – unvoiced)

**l –** llleg (keep pointed curled tongue behind teeth)

**r –** rrrobot (say rrrr as if you are growling)

**v –** vvvulture (keep teeth on bottom lip and force air out gently)

**z –** zzzig zzzag (keep teeth together and make a buzzing sound)

**th –** thhhank you (stick out your tongue and breathe sharply)

**sh –** shhhhhh (make a sh noise as though you are telling someone to be quiet)

**ng –** thinnngggg on a strinnnggg (curl your tongue at the back of your throat)

**nk –** I thinnkkk I stinnkk (make a piggy noise without the oi!)

The next sounds cannot be stretched. Make the sound as short as possible avoiding uh at the end of the word.

**t –** (tick tongue behind teeth – unvoiced)

**p –** (make distinctive p with lips – unvoiced)

**k –** (make a sharp click at the back of throat)

**c –** (as above)

**h –** (say h as you breathe sharply out – unvoiced)

**ch –** (make a short sneezing sound)

**x –** (make a c and add a s – unvoiced)

You will find it harder to avoid saying uh at the end of these sounds:

**d –** (tap tongue behind teeth)

**g –** (make a soft sound in throat)

**b –** (make a short, strong b with lips)

**j –** (push lips forward)

**y –** (keep edges of the tongue against teeth)

**w –** (keep lips tightly pursed)

**qu –** (keep lips pursed as you say cw – unvoiced)

The short vowels should be kept short and sharp:

**a –** a-a-a (open mouth wide as if to take the bite of an apple)

**e –** e-e-e (release mouth slightly from a position)

**i –** i-i-i (make a sharp sound at the back of the throat – smile)

**o –** o-o-o (push out lips, make the mouth in o shape)

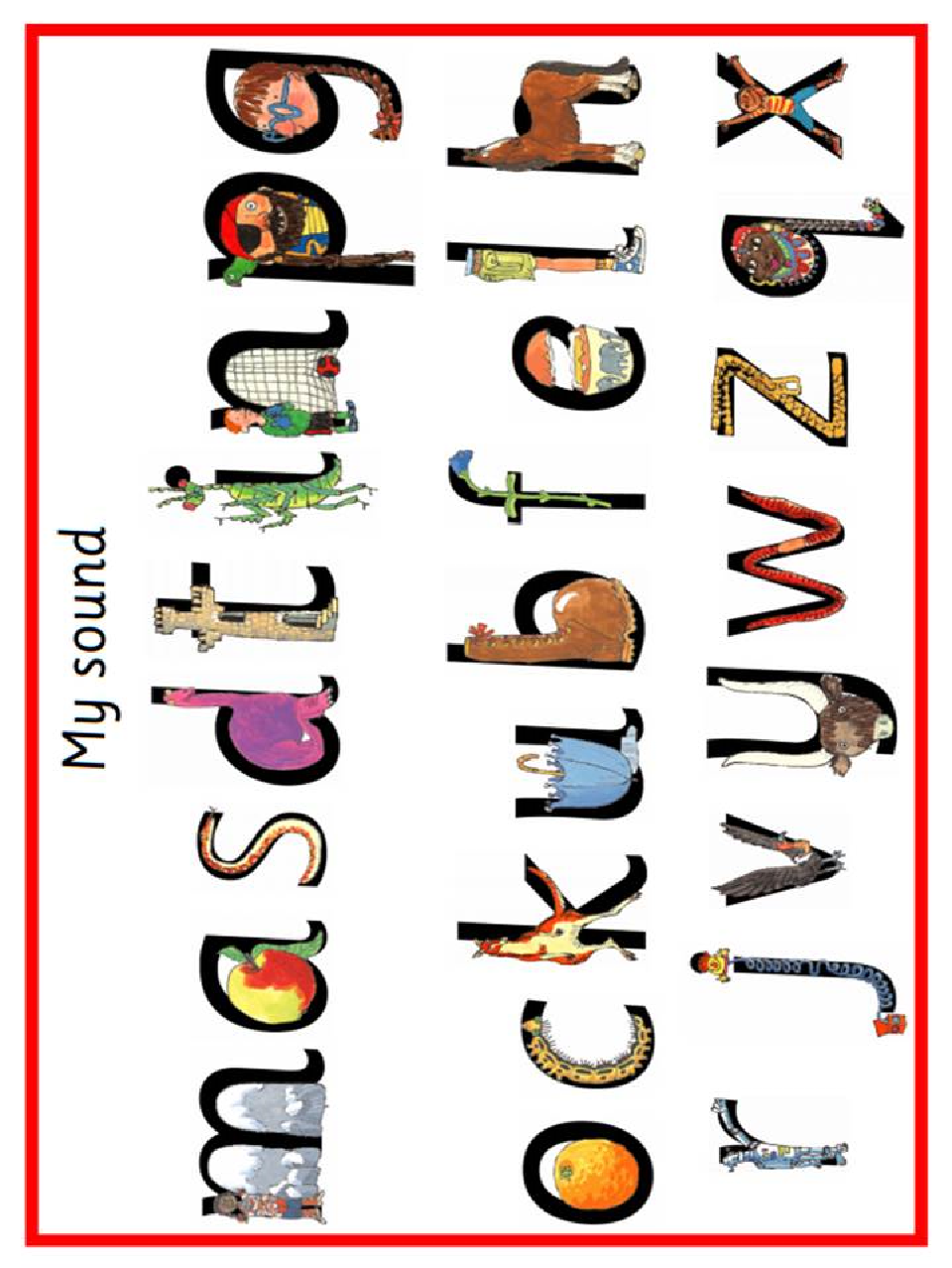
**u –** u-u-u (make a sound in the throat)

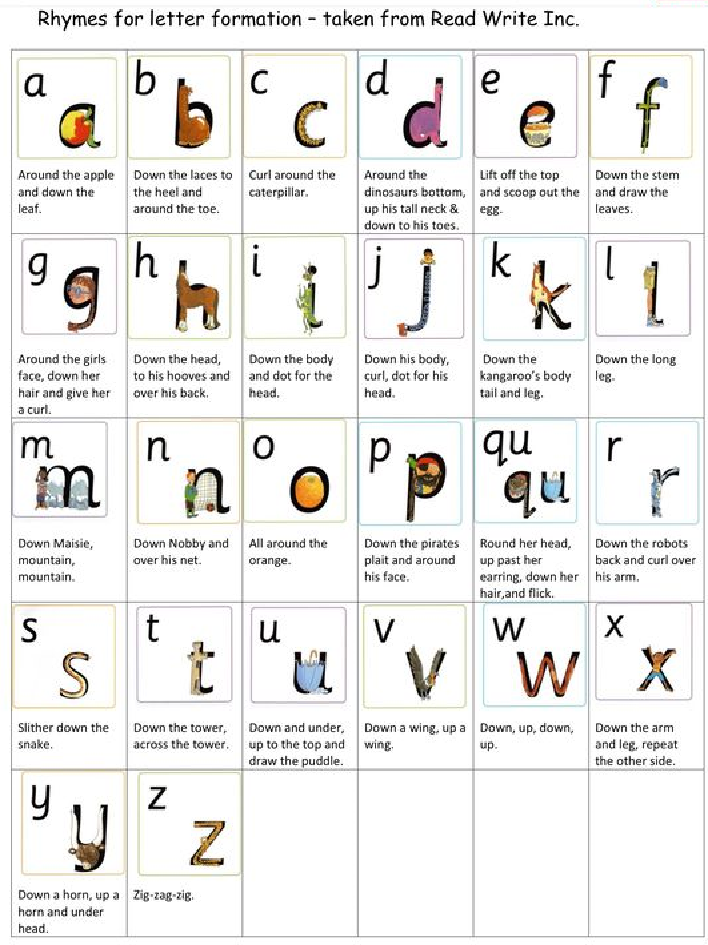
**Set 2/3**

Once your child knows all Set 1 sounds by sight and sound and uses them to blend to read words, we start teaching Set 2 initially and then Set 3 long vowel sounds. Your child will learn that most vowel sounds have more than one spelling. The average time it takes to learn and use correctly all these corresponding long vowel sounds in reading and writing is 2 years.

**The Year 1 Phonics Screening Check**

In June, all Year 1 children are expected to complete the Year 1 Phonics Screening Check. The aim is to check that a child is making progress in phonics. They are expected to read a mixture of real and nonsense words. Nonsense words are designed to test pure phonic ability rather than knowledge of words. If a child has not met the expected standard, schools must give additional support to help the child make progress in Year 2.



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