

# An Introduction to Letters and Sounds

## What is the Letters and Sounds Programme?

The Letters and Sounds programme is a system for teaching children to read and develop their speaking and listening skills. It was published by the Department for Education in 2007 with the intention of helping children become fluent readers by the age of 7. The programme is divided into 6 overlapping phases which are taught from the Foundation Stage (birth to 5) to Key Stage one (ages 5-7).

More information about the Letters and Sounds programme can be found on the Department for Education website:

<https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/standard/publicationdetail/page1/DFES-00281-2007>

## A guide to Letters and Sounds Terminology

Before we give a brief outline of the different Letters and Sounds Phases we thought we'd put together a few definitions that you may find useful if you're unfamiliar with the Letters and Sounds programme or the practise of teaching phonics.

Term	Definition
<b>Phonics</b>	Refers to a practice of teaching children how to read and write by focusing on the relationship between sounds and the letters (or groups of letters) that they are represented by in the English language.
<b>Phonemes</b>	Phonemes are the smallest unit of sound in a language. They are not segments of words like syllables but rather they are 'speech sounds' that can be combined to form words. There are 26 letters in the English language but there are 44 phonemes.
<b>Graphemes</b>	A grapheme is a letter or a group of letters that spell a sound in a word. In other words a grapheme is a way of writing a phoneme
<b>GPC</b>	GPC stands for Grapheme Phoneme Correspondence and it refers to the ability to match a grapheme to its corresponding phoneme and a phoneme to its corresponding grapheme.
<b>Digraph</b>	A digraph is a grapheme containing 2 letters that makes a single sound
<b>Trigraph</b>	A trigraph is a grapheme containing 3 letters that makes a single sound
<b>Blending</b>	Blending refers to the technique of assembling the individual sounds that comprise a particular word.
<b>Segmenting</b>	Segmenting refers to the ability to divide a word in to its various sounds. In particular this involves breaking a word down into the phonemes that make it, deciding which graphemes represent those phonemes and then writing them down in the correct order.
<b>Decode</b>	Decoding involves reading a word by saying and then blending its individual sounds.