

Glossary

alliteration Words are alliterative when they share a common onset, e.g. Lazy Lucy licks the lemon lollipop. Learners are sensitive to the alliteration in words when they have knowledge about onsets.

blending Blending is putting together sounds in words, so that they become a blended unit, e.g. c, a, t → cat.

chunking Chunking is breaking up words according to the chunks of sounds or syllables, e.g. spiders → spi / ders.

consonant blend A consonant blend refers to the blended sound represented by two or three consonant letters, e.g. blend, spring.

consonant digraph A consonant digraph refers to a single sound which is represented by two consonant letters, e.g. ship.

consonant letter The 21 consonant letters in the English alphabet are 'b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, y, z'.

consonant sound A consonant sound is a speech sound produced by a stoppage of breath, e.g. ball, photo.

function word A function word is a word which has little meaning on its own, but which serves a grammatical function in and between sentences, e.g. it, but, of, the.

International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) It includes a set of symbols to represent the speech sounds of all languages accurately.

letter-sound relationship Letter-sound relationship refers to the relationship between letters or combinations of letters and their sounds, e.g. the letter 'a' is pronounced in different ways in 'wash' and 'hat'.

Magic e The addition of the letter 'e' after a vowel followed by a consonant changes a short vowel sound to a long vowel sound. It also makes the letters 'a, e, i, o, u' say their own names, e.g. win → wine.

monosyllabic word A monosyllabic word is a word consisting of a single vowel sound, e.g. cat, horse.

multi-syllabic word A multi-syllabic word is a word consisting of more than one vowel sound, e.g. Peter, photograph.

onset An onset is the opening unit of a word or syllable that comes before the vowel sound, e.g. cat. Words with the same onset are alliterative.

phoneme A phoneme is the smallest unit of speech sound that is represented by the letter or letters of the alphabet, e.g. sh, i, p in 'ship'.

phonemic awareness Phonemic awareness is the understanding that words are sequence of phonemes (i.e. the smallest unit of speech sounds), e.g. c, l, ea, n → clean.

phonetics Phonetics is the study of speech sounds.

phonics Phonics is one way of teaching reading. It includes the teaching of the basic letter-sound relationships and the application of such knowledge to facilitate reading and spelling.

phonological awareness Phonological awareness is the understanding of the relationships between letters or combinations of letters and their sounds or sound units. It is the knowledge about phonemes, onsets and rimes, and syllables.

rhyme Words rhyme when they share a common rime (i.e. the ending unit of a word or syllable), e.g. away, day, play. Learners are sensitive to the rhyme in words when they have knowledge about onsets.

rime A rime is the ending unit of a word or syllable that includes the vowel and the following consonant sounds, e.g. cat. Words with the same rime rhyme.

schwa The schwa sound is the most frequently occurring vowel sound. It often appears in weak syllables, e.g. ago, postman. In connected speech, unstressed words (e.g. articles, prepositions) are often reduced to the schwa sound, e.g. He bought a book for Tom.

syllable A syllable is a chunk of sounds. It contains a single vowel sound or a group of sounds with only one vowel sound. It can be part of a word that contains a single vowel sound that is pronounced as a unit, e.g. there is one syllable in 'book' and there are two syllables in 'reading'.

tongue twister A sentence or expression with words or succession of words which are difficult to utter quickly and correctly, e.g. Six short snakes slide stealthily down the shaky stairs.

vowel letter The 5 vowel letters in the English alphabet are 'a, e, i, o, u'.

vowel sound A vowel sound is a speech sound made without audible stopping of the breath, e.g. cat, day.

word attack skill This refers to the ability to work out the pronunciation of unfamiliar words. Teaching phonics is one way of helping learners develop word attack skills.