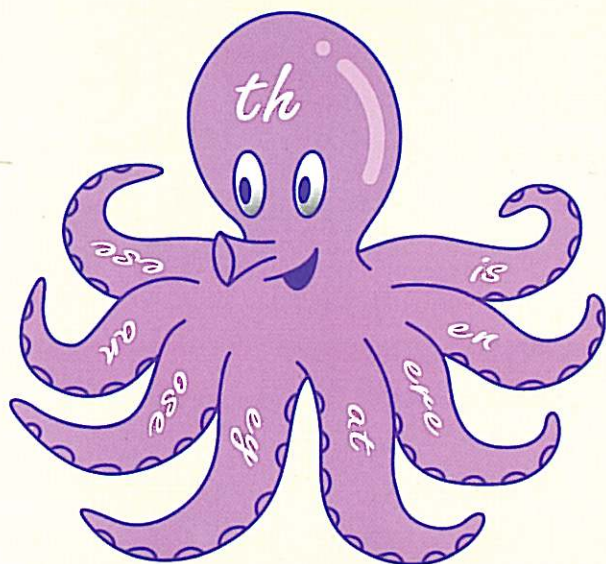




Phonics in ELT

What is PHONICS?

- Phonics usually refers to a 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.



Why is PHONICS taught?

Phonics can help learners

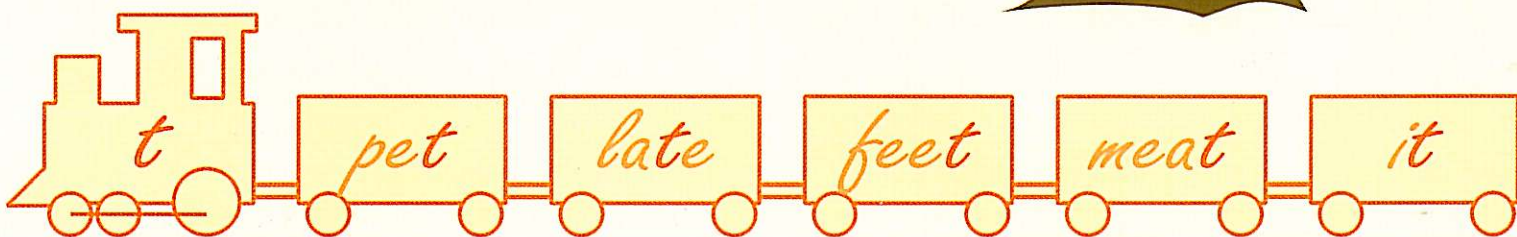
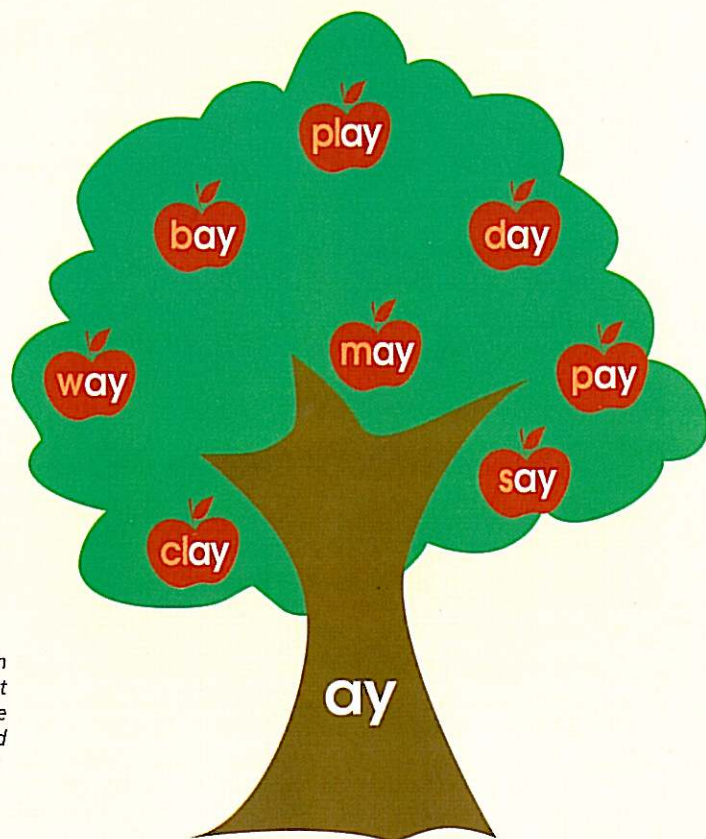
- recognize the relationships between letters/ combinations of letters and their sounds;
- develop some enabling skills in reading aloud;
- work out the sounds of unfamiliar words;
- develop their confidence and proficiency in reading; and
- improve their spelling.

When is PHONICS taught?

Learners can be taught phonics

- at an early age;
- when they can recognize some words through listening or sight reading;
- when they need some enabling skills to carry out reading aloud activities; and
- when they need to achieve accuracy in spelling¹.

¹ At an early stage of learning a new language, too much stress on accuracy in spelling can be intimidating to the learners. In writing activities which target at fluency and confidence building, remember that the expression of ideas is more important than accurate spelling. Therefore approximation in spelling should be tolerated while other activities focus more on accuracy.



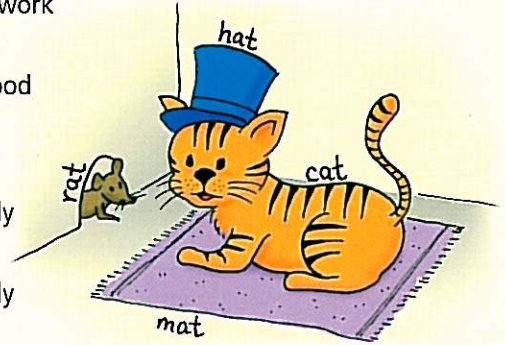
How is PHONICS taught?

PLANNING STAGE

Teachers may

- select, as far as possible, single-syllable words from texts with which children will become familiar e.g. course books, story books used in shared reading etc. to work out an inventory of letter sounds to cover in each term/school year;
- decide on the sequence of letter sounds they wish to teach so as to ensure a good coverage of the different letter-to-sound correspondences;
- plan to teach one to two letter sounds per week if the learners are young²;
- introduce the consonant letters first and then the vowels since consonants usually have only one sound for each letter;
- focus on the consonants at the beginning of words, then at the end and finally in the middle;
- focus on one way of reading and writing each vowel sound at a time since the vowel letters are more complicated and there are several ways in which they can be written; and
- include short phonic learning activities e.g. games and action rhymes frequently as part of the English lessons.

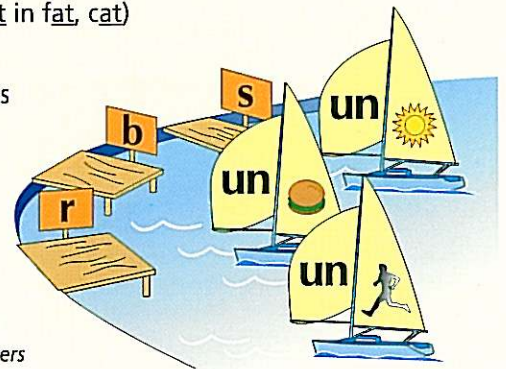
This is a cat wearing a hat sitting on a mat watching a rat.



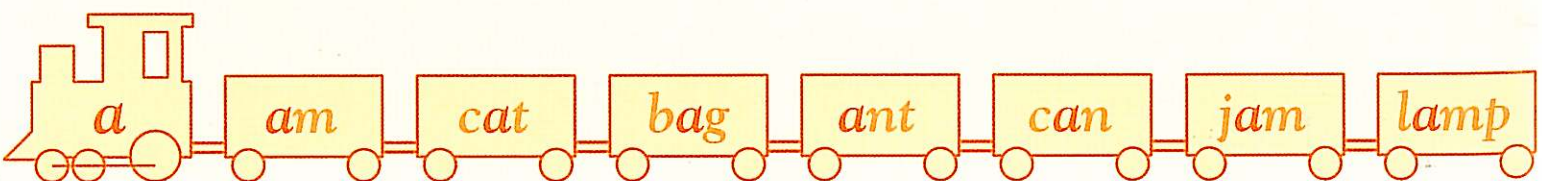
TEACHING STAGE

Teachers may

- use the single-syllable words selected from texts with which children are familiar to introduce a particular letter sound;
- develop learners' phonological awareness from whole to parts;
- provide opportunities for learners to hear and identify the focused sound and to relate it to the letter(s) e.g. by using pictures of familiar objects or by framing the relevant letter(s) in the words in a big book;
- help learners make a collection of words with the focused letter-to-sound correspondence, including words from other sources;
- help learners read aloud some of the words focusing on the particular letter sound;
- train learners to say the first letter sound loudly before moving on to the other sounds of the same word;
- model the skills of blending which involve running the letter sounds together to make a word;
- get learners to read aloud words with the same phonological unit (e.g. at in fat, cat) and apply this knowledge in reading aloud unfamiliar words;
- provide opportunities for learners to practise their phonic skills in contexts and through games, rhymes and other interesting activities; and
- help learners develop the strategy of analogy i.e. applying their knowledge and skills to work out how to read and spell an unfamiliar word by comparing it to the words they have learnt.



² There is not a fixed number of letter sounds to be taught every week. Teachers should consider the maturity and learning experience of the learners in making judgement. More mature learners should be able to handle more letter sounds each week.



English Letter Sounds

Letter	Sound	Examples
a	short a	am cat black
a	short o	wash what watch
a	schwa uh	ago away alone
a-e	long a	ate make name
ai	long a	aim rail train
al	or	always talk salt
ar	ar	arm start far
au	or	August caught taught
aw	or	saw paw claw
ay	long a	day May play
b	b	ball bird crab
c	hard c (=k)	car come music
c	soft c (=s)	cent cinema once
ch	ch	chair child which
d	d	door ride said
e	short e	egg tell bed
e	long e	eve me she
ea	short e	head health wealth
ea	long e	eat clean sea
ee	long e	see street tree
er	schwa uh	water father farmer
ew	long oo	drew flew grew
ew	long u	few new dew
f	f	fell after leaf
g	hard g	go again big
g	soft g (=j)	giant larger George
h	h	head here home
i	short i	into live hill
ie	long i	pie tie die
i-e	long i	five side kite
j	j	jam jelly January
k	k	keep take talk
l	l	like milk kneel
m	m	mother some ham
n	n	not under own
ng	ng	song sing bring

Letter	Sound	Examples
o	short o	off doll fox
o	short u	son won ton
oa	long o	boat coat road
o-e	long o	bone nose 'smoke
oi	oi	oink coin boil
oo	short oo	look book good
oo	long oo	moon school too
or	or	fork horse sport
ou	ou	loud about house
ow	long o	snow slow pillow
ow	ou	owl cow town
oy	oi	boy toy enjoy
p	p	picture open jump
ph	f	phone photo graph
qu	qu	queen quick quiet
r	r	round three friend
s	s	so sister bus
s	z	as was his
sh	sh	ship should fish
t	t	to late rabbit
th	voiced th	this they with
th	unvoiced th	thin thick teeth
u	short oo	put push pussy
u	short u	up but cup
ue	long oo	blue glue true
ue	long u	duel fuel Tuesday
u-e	long oo	use rule rude
u-e	long u	cube tune cute
v	v	van over give
w	w	walk awake work
wh	w	what where when
x	x	exit next box
y	y	yes year young
y	short i	only many happy
y	long i	cry why reply
z, zz	z	zero zoo buzz

Spellings of Vowel Sounds

Circle the most highly regular sound-spelling correspondences in each of these groups.



Sound	Letter	Examples
short a	a	am cat black
short e	e	egg tell bed
	ea	head health wealth
short i	i	into live hill
	y	only many happy
short o	a	wash what watch
	o	off doll fox
short u	o	son won ton
	u	up but cup

Sound	Letter	Examples
long a	a-e	ate make name
	ai	aim rail train
	ay	day May play
long e	e	eve me she
	ea	eat clean sea
	ee	see street tree
	ie	pie tie die
long i	i-e	five side kite
	y	cry why reply
	oa	boat coat road
long o	o-e	bone nose smoke
	ow	snow slow pillow
	ew	few new dew
long u	ue	duel fuel Tuesday
	u-e	cube tune cute

Sound	Letter	Examples
ar	ar	arm start far
oi	oi	oink coin boil
	oy	boy toy enjoy
short oo	oo	look book good
	u	put push pussy
long oo	ew	drew flew grew
	oo	moon school too
	ue	blue glue true
	u-e	use rule rude
or	al	always talk salt
	au	August caught taught
	aw	saw paw claw
ou	or	fork horse sport
	ou	loud about house
schwa uh	ow	owl cow town
	a	ago away alone
er	er	water father farmer

You may consider teaching the most highly regular sound-spelling correspondences first.

The most highly regular sound-spelling correspondences are:

short a : a	long a : a-e
short e : e	long e : e
short i : i	long i : i-e
short o : o	long o : o-e
short u : u	long u : u-e

Information from:
Crystal D., 1987. *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Language*.
UK: Cambridge University Press. p.215

PHONICS IN ELT

This leaflet is prepared to provide a quick reference to teachers on what phonics is and how it can be used to enhance learning. The list of "English Letter Sounds" is for teachers' reference only. It is not a prescribed list for learners.

Phonics is a useful tool to help learners gain proficiency in reading aloud and spelling. However, it may not always help learners make sense of a reading text, particularly in a second or foreign language environment. Teachers also need to help learners develop skills in reading for meaning.

