

Understanding Phonics

Session 1

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Session 1: Background Knowledge

Objectives

This 1½-hour workshop is intended for teachers who need some background knowledge about phonics. By the end of the workshop, the participants will understand:

- what phonics is;
- the relationship between phonics and phonetics;
- the limitations of phonics; and
- what the significant groups of letter sounds are.

Programme

Welcome and Introduction	10 min
Activity 1 ♦ Spelling and Pronunciation	10 min
Video Segment A & Activity 2 ♦ Phonics and Phonetics	25 min
Video Segment B & Activity 3 ♦ Phonics	10 min
Activity 4 & Activity 5 ♦ Limitations of Phonics ♦ Unpredictable Pronunciation and Spelling	15 min
Activity 6 ♦ Significant Groups of Letter Sounds	15 min
Conclusion	5 min
Total	90 min

Pre-workshop Preparation

- Before the participants arrive, write the objectives and programme for Session 1 on the board or transparencies.
- For this workshop, you will need copies of **Handouts E1-2, A1-6** for each participant.
- **Keys A1-6** which provide suggested answers to the activities are mainly for your reference. You may decide if it is necessary to make copies for the participants.
- After reading the description of the workshop and planning your session, you may also want to make transparencies of **Overheads 1-3** for ease of reference during the workshop.
- Set **Video Tape One** or **VCD One** for **Video Segments A & B**.
- Set the **Audio CD** for '**Unpredictable Pronunciation and Spelling**' for Activity 5.
- Copies of the '**English Letter Sounds**' card can be provided for each participant as a useful reference for Activity 6.
- Prepare large sheets of paper or write-on transparencies as well as markers for the participants for Activity 1.
- Since the participants may have varying levels of knowledge about the content, their responses in each activity will help you gauge how much explanation is required or if the video segments should be replayed. Walk around to listen to and look at the kinds of things the participants are discussing or writing. Make mental notes and pick up on some of the points the participants have brought up, either immediately after the activity, or at relevant points during the workshop.

Workshop Session 1

Welcome & Introduction

- Welcome the participants and explain your role as the facilitator:
 - ◇ You will help the participants meet the objectives of the workshop.
 - ◇ You will be introducing the activities and the video segments.
 - ◇ You will be keeping an eye on the time and helping the workshop run smoothly.

- Distribute Handout E1 and ask the participants to evaluate their prior understanding of phonics. Do not collect the evaluation forms from the participants.



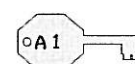
Activity 1

- Explain that as the participants will be enhancing their knowledge of how the sound and spelling system of English works, it may be useful to start off by giving them a chance to review what they know about spelling and pronunciation.
- Distribute Handout A1. Refer the participants to the two questions in Handout A1.
- Give large sheets of paper or transparencies to the participants. Ask them to discuss in groups and record on the paper or transparencies:
 - ◇ the functions of the 26 letters of the English alphabet; and
 - ◇ the problems they had with spelling and pronunciation when they were learning English.
- Do not comment on their answers. Display their work around the room. Encourage them to find out if they have a different view by the end of the workshop.

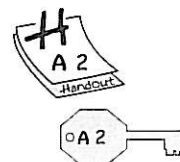


Video Segment A & Activity 2

- Tell the participants that they are going to watch a video segment from a phonics workshop for some primary school teachers.
- Ask the participants to note and record the explanation of the functions of letters, the relationship between phonics and phonetics, and letter-sound relationships in Handout A1.
- Play Video Segment A (length: 5 min) once through without any pauses.
- After viewing, invite the participants to share their answers to the questions for Activity 1. Refer to Key A1 for suggested answers.
- Tell the participants that they will consolidate their knowledge of the relationship between phonics and phonetics in Activity 2.

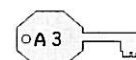


- Display Overhead 1. Ask the participants how many sounds there are in the word 'cash'. Then invite them to break the word into 3 pronunciation units: c, a, sh.
- Check if the participants are familiar with the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Invite them to transcribe the word 'cash' using the IPA. Display the phonemic transcription for 'cash' on Overhead 1.
- Distribute Handout A2 and ask the participants to discuss and complete Activity 2. Discuss and check the answers with the participants. Refer to Key A2 for suggested answers.
- Ask the participants to discuss why primary pupils should be taught phonics instead of phonetics. Refer to Key A2 for suggested answers.



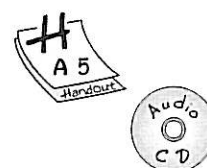
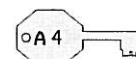
Video Segment B & Activity 3

- Tell the participants that they are going to watch another video segment from the same phonics workshop.
- Distribute Handout A3. Invite the participants to note and record the explanation related to the definition and limitations of phonics while they are viewing the video segment.
- Play Video Segment B (length: 3 min) once through without any pauses.
- After viewing, invite the participants to share their answers. Refer to Key A3 for suggested answers.



Activity 4 & Activity 5

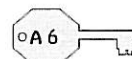
- Distribute Handout A4. Ask the participants to read aloud the words in each row and complete Part A in groups.
- Invite the participants to share their answers. Refer to Key A4 for suggested answers.
- Ask the participants to discuss the possible difficulties their pupils may have in reading aloud these words.
- Distribute Handout A5 and play the recording of the poem 'Unpredictable Pronunciation and Spelling' from the Audio CD. Ask the participants to note the pronunciation and spelling of the words in bold in the poem.



- Invite the participants to share what they think their pupils' greatest difficulties are when coming to grips with spelling and pronunciation.
- Ask the participants to discuss and complete Part B. They write down what teachers should be aware of when they teach phonics. Then invite them to share their views. Refer to Key A4 for suggested answers.

Activity 6

- Display Overhead 2. Invite the participants to read aloud the 5 words: cup, ten, head, phone, cash.
- Then ask the participants to read aloud the underlined part in each word. Tell the participants that each underlined part is called a letter sound.
- Distribute Handout A6. Read aloud the examples and then the underlined parts. Draw the participants' attention to the names of the 5 significant letter sound groups. Tell the participants that letter sounds are often grouped according to their pronunciation, spelling and/or position in words.
- Distribute copies of the 'English Letter Sounds' card and explain that it provides a quick reference for the English letter sounds. It can also help them complete Activity 6.
- Refer participants to the side on 'Spellings of Vowel Sounds' and ask them to find a few more examples for the short vowels (short a, e, i, o, u), long vowels (long a, e, i, o, u), and other vowels (e.g. long oo, or).
- Refer participants to the side on 'English Letter Sounds' and ask them to find a few more examples for initial consonants (e.g. d, s, th) and ending consonants (e.g. m, k, sh). Tell the participants that they can also include the consonant blends, e.g. 'st' which is a combination of the letter sounds 's' and 't'.
- Invite the participants to share their answers. Refer to Key A6 for suggested answers.
- Ask the participants to work on Part B in groups. They find a few more examples for each group of letter sounds. Refer to Key A6 for suggested answers.



Conclusion

- Ask the participants to reflect on what they have learnt in Session 1. Invite them to write down a few key terms introduced in this session.
- Display Overhead 3 and ask the participants if they have written down the same key terms.
- Encourage the participants to refer to the large sheets or transparencies prepared for Activity 1 and displayed around the room. Invite them to express if they have a different view on the functions of English letters now.
- Distribute Handout E2 and ask the participants to evaluate their own understanding of phonics now. Invite them to compare it with the evaluation form filled in at the beginning of Session 1.

