

Phonics Glossary

adjacent consonants	Two (or three) consonant letters representing two (or three) sounds, e.g. tw, str, bl. (Also known as a consonant cluster or blend.)
blending	The process of using phonics for reading. Children identify and blend the phonemes in order to hear and say (discern) a whole word. (Also known as decoding or synthesising.)
code	The English Alphabetic Code is the correlation between the sounds of speech and the individual letters or groups of letters used to represent those sounds in print. A 'piece of code' refers to a letter-sound correspondence or grapheme-phoneme correspondence.
common exception word (CEW)	A high frequency word with an unusual letter-sound correspondence, e.g. one, their, because. These words are taught by decoding the familiar part and pointing out the unusual part.
consonant digraph	Two consonant letters which represent one sound.
CVC, CCVC, CCVCC	These represent the consonant and vowel sounds in word structures. For example, a CVC word = h-e-n, b-oa-t or ch-i-p.
decoding	See blending
digraph	Two letters which together represent one sound, e.g. ai, ea, mb. There are different types of digraph – vowel, consonant and split.
encoding	See segmenting
grapheme	A letter or group of letters representing one sound (phoneme).
phoneme	The smallest unit of sound in a word. Represented in print using slash marks, e.g. /a/.
quadgraph	Four letters which together represent one sound, e.g. igh, ough.
schwa	An unstressed syllable. It is common for people to pronounce various graphemes as an /uh/ sound in natural speech.
segmenting	The process of using phonics for spelling and writing. Children listen to the whole word and break it down into constituent phonemes, choosing the corresponding grapheme to represent each phoneme. For example, 'lunch' can be segmented as l-u-n-ch. (Also known as encoding.)
split digraph	Two letters, which work as a pair to represent one sound, but are separated within the word, e.g. a-e in cake; o-e in note.
synthesising	See blending
trigraph	Three letters which together represent one sound, e.g. igh, eer.
vowel digraph	A digraph in which at least one of the letters is a vowel, e.g. ee, oi, or.