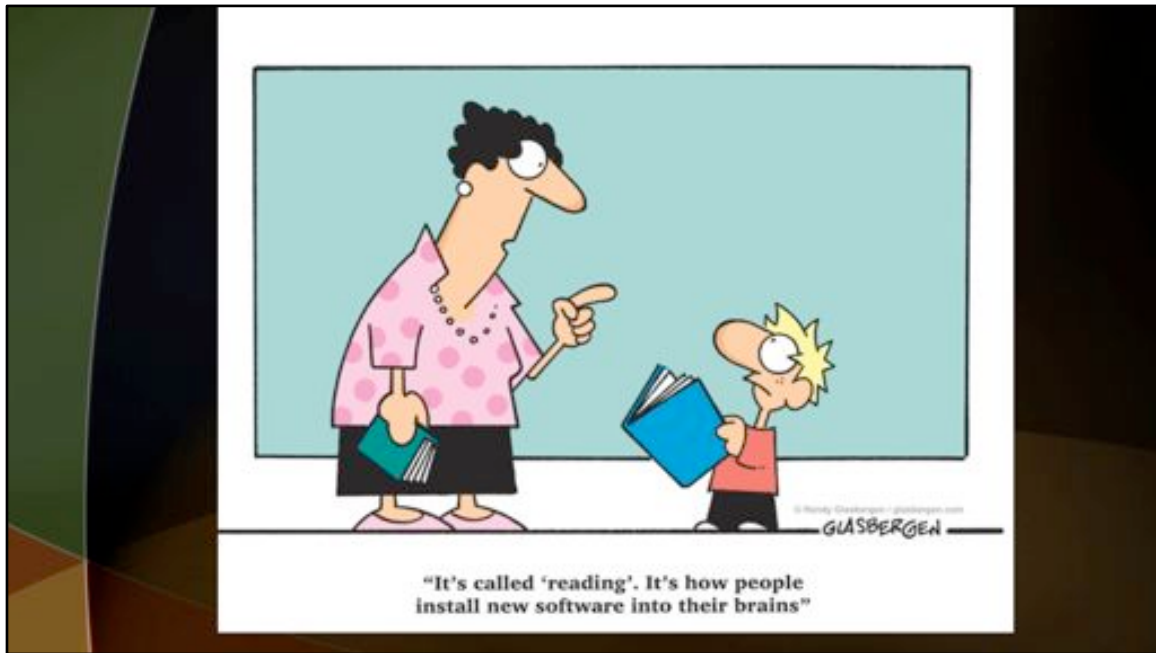


Welcome.

There are many kinds of written scripts. Some are alphabetic.
Some are alphabetic -- but they use very different methods to display sounds.

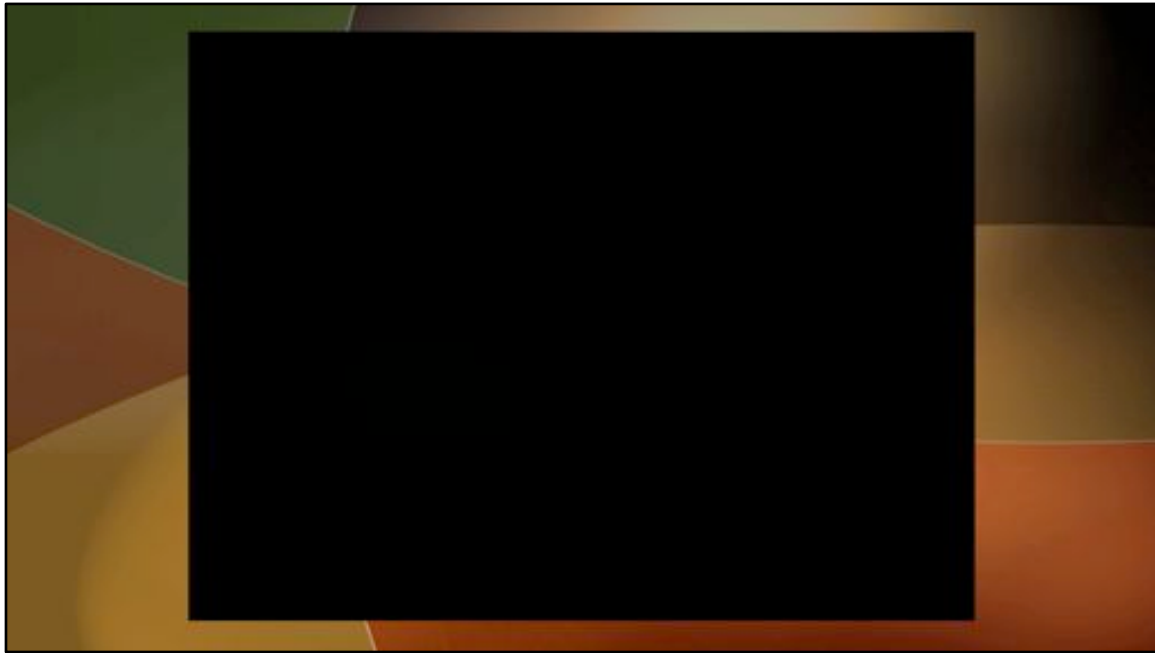
IMAGE SOURCE:

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Chart_of_world_writing_systems.svg



Even though this is a modern take on technology – it is TRUE that reading rewires the brain and that reading needs to be “installed” by instruction. Reading is not a natural skill. Mankind existed for thousands of years with only the spoken word. If reading were natural – there would be no non-literate people in the world.

IMAGE SOURCE: www.glasbergen.com



G. Reid Lyon was the chairperson of the US National Reading Panel (see: <http://www.readingrockets.org/article/318/>), when they released a report on the state of reading in the USA (2000). Australia held a similar national inquiry into reading in 2005 (http://research.acer.edu.au/tll_misc/5/). Both – endorsed the massive scientific evidence that working with sounds was the foundation stone of good reading.

This video is helpful in the way that it clarifies the TERMS, phonemic awareness and “phonics”.

VIDEO SOURCE: http://www.readingrockets.org/atoz/phonemic_awareness/ (5 minutes) “The Reading Process”. It is video No. 22 out of 23 short, excellent videos on this page of the Reading Rockets website (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs).

Fantastic website.

What is phonemic awareness?

- ▶ *Phonemic awareness* is the ability to notice, think about, and work with the individual sounds, or phonemes, in *spoken words*.
- ▶ Phonemic awareness activities and assessment should precede detailed work with the *printed word* – often known as “phonics”.
- ▶ Today's talk is mostly about this earlier, oral-aural stage.

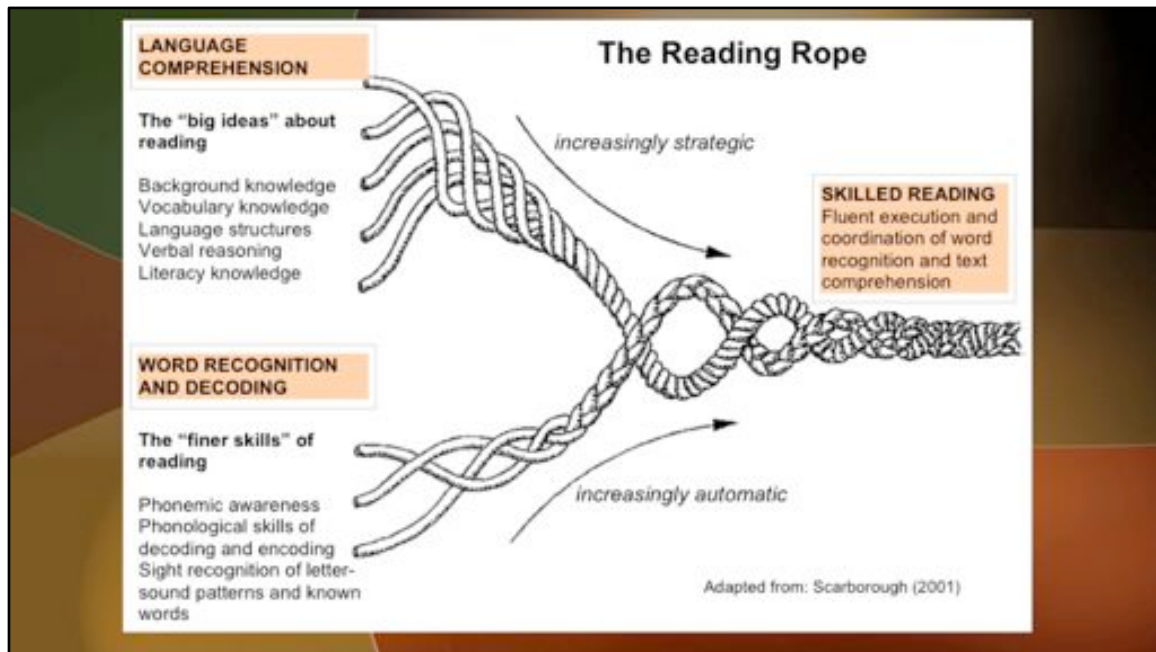
Phonemic Awareness is a “sharp listening” skill.

It is needed to focus the learner's / readers' attention on the smallest components of words.

These fine components are needed for speech, reading and writing.

There is no point in teaching sound-letter correspondences (PHONICS) if learners aren't yet “tuned in” to phonemes. They must be able to “spot the sound”.

Phonemic Awareness is a PREREQUISITE for the teaching of “phonics”.



Reading is an interwoven “rope” of skills, many of which are “top-down”. We are inclined to emphasise top-down in ELT. We “set the scene”, we prepare the vocab., we check that the writing is at the learners’ level, we ask questions about “what comes next” and what’s possible – and we assume knowledge of cause and effect and literary conventions. We also assume a lot of cultural knowledge.

BUT – we assume far too much about the “bottom-up” skills involved in reading.

Can the learners hear/see/read the differences between ‘goal’ and ‘gold’?

SOURCE: Scarborough, H.S. (2001). Connecting early language and literacy to later reading (dis)abilities: Evidence, theory and practice. In Neuman, S.B. and Dickinson, D.K. (eds), *Handbook of Early Literacy Research* (pp. 97 – 110). New York: Guilford Press.



Here are some of the many, many scripts in use around the world. Some are alphabetic, some are not.
 “Alphabetic” doesn’t necessarily mean the “ABC”. That is the Romanised alphabet. There are many other alphabets, e.g. Arabic.
 GRAPHIC: a composite of many smaller images from www.omniglot.com

Scripts are more than visual formats

They can affect the ways in which:

- ▶ their users think about language
- ▶ their users will attempt to process new written texts
- ▶ visual processing occurs
- ▶ neurological pathways are laid down in the brain

Scripts 'tune' their users in many ways – both practically and neurologically. It takes time to “install new software” with a new script and a new sound system.

Different writing systems vary in the ways that they:	represent linguistic units meaning syllables consonants vowels	are laid out on the page vertically horizontally directionality spaces between 'words'	make use of symbols 26 letters 3,000 characters mixed systems e.g. Japanese
	are taught in national schools memorisation role of classics large classes testing regimes competition textbook-use teachers	represent syntactical differences verb tenses contextual clues cause and effect gender	represent vowels and consonants (alphabetic scripts) e.g. Arabic & Hebrew emphasise consonants

Here are some of the many ways in which different scripts can operate. Each script sets up 'expectations' in the minds of its readers. Learning a new script is a very significant cognitive challenge – far more than we probably realise.

Chinese script – based on syllables

- ▶ Logographic – graphemes in which meaning is paramount, e.g. \$, 8, %, &
- ▶ Morpho-syllabic – each character is a spoken syllable with a distinct meaning.
- ▶ Monosyllabic – mostly open-ended syllables
- ▶ Semantic element – a suggestion of meaning; 'to do with ...'
- ▶ Phonetic element – a suggestion of sound; 'sounds like ...'

Chinese operates at the level of the SYLLABLE, not the phoneme. Chinese is MONOSYLLABIC.

In English, a slight change of phoneme will mean a change in meaning, but that subtle change in sound may not 'register' in a listener without fine-tuned phonemic awareness.

There couldn't be two writing systems that are MORE DIFFERENT than Chinese and English!

Memory is vital in reading and writing Chinese

- ▶ Often, more is understood in a text than can be read aloud.
- ▶ Reading aloud is based on a memory of sounds.
- ▶ The phonemic awareness of Chinese-background learners of English is often insufficiently fine-tuned for the needs of English phonology.
- ▶ This can affect these students' acquisition of pronunciation, auditory discrimination skills, oral reading and writing.

The major difference for Chinese learners of English – is the changing role of MEMORY in learning words – and the increasing roles of ANALYSIS and sound-symbol relationships.

Pronunciation can be reconstructed in English – it does not have to be committed to memory, one word at a time.

Learners may be trying to remember the shape of English words – an unnecessary load on memory – and rather inefficient as so many English words can look alike.

Far too many Chinese-background learners of English will approach English words VISUALLY – even some very well-educated ones. *The two scripts require completely different approaches.

Any student who describes English words as “boring”, “ugly worms” or “chicken guts” – is probably unaware of their decodability. If it all seems to be “really hard work” on the page – they are probably lacking an awareness of sound.

Sound-work with non-alphabetic learners of English

- ▶ An entirely new area of need in teaching English reading.
- ▶ Not the same as 'sound work' with young English-speaking children – who already have large vocabularies and can recognise familiar spoken words.
- ▶ English learners need a reasonable spoken vocabulary for 'sound work' to have meaning.
- ▶ We need to increase the oral, conversational vocabulary of our learners *before* we put too much emphasis on reading and writing complex texts.

*****This is what's meant by a "paradigm shift" in our practice!

English learners USED TO COME FROM MAINLY ALPHABETIC BACKGROUNDS. They no longer do.

The majority of our teaching materials assume an alphabetic-background learner.

Some come in with directional differences (Arabic, Persian, Dari etc.) a different notation of vowels (Arabic, Persian, Dari etc.), several writing systems combined (Japanese), diacritics (Vietnamese, Khymer), logographic characters (Chinese) etc. etc. There is no ready resource – not yet, anyway. English-language "phonics" books assume a large English vocabulary, and are for very young learners. English-language youngsters take 3 or 4 years of schooling to develop their reading skills. Older learners may want to move quickly – sometimes too fast to fully grasp the full range of sounds and how they can be written.

Phonemes are the smallest sounds in English – a quiz

- ▶ How many sounds (or phonemes) are there in English? **44**
- ▶ How many vowel phonemes are there? **20**
- ▶ How many consonant phonemes are there? **24**

There are countless way to *spell* – but only 44 *sounds*.

Our knowledge of print can get in the way of our perception of *individual sounds*. We have reached 'automaticity'.

[ANIMATION OF ANSWERS]

How did you go?

The popular numbers 26 and 5 relate to letters, or “graphemes”.

English uses the 26 letters to ‘capture’ the 44 different sounds in its written script.

Other languages have fewer/more “phonemes” and fewer/more “graphemes” to write them with.

****This is where the THRASS CHART can be helpful for learners who might be ‘overwhelmed’ with the prospect of 44 sounds. It is reassuring to know that EVERY sound is “on there somewhere”. This seems particularly so for boys.

The “Key words” for each sound also help a lot.

ALL the sounds are on the chart – it is like a “Periodic Table of Sounds”.

However, not all the SPELLING CHOICES are there – there are too many, given the disparate origins of English words.

Let’s not forget though, that 84% of English words ARE predictable.

Phonemic awareness

– how tuned-in are you?

- ▶ Is there an /l/ in *talk*, in *palm*, in *salmon*. No
- ▶ Think of the word '*pink*'. Now think of *pink* without the /k/.
Do you hear *pin* or something else? ping
- ▶ How many sounds can you hear in *box*? 4
- ▶ How many sounds can you hear in *pitch*? 3
- ▶ What is the 4th sound in the word *faxed*? / s /
- ▶ What is the 3rd sound in *squabble*? / w /

We so often think of words in terms of *spelling* rather than *sounds*.

[ANIMATION] TESTED AURALLY FIRST.

Let's see how our own knowledge of sounds measures up. THIS IS AN ADULT-LEVEL QUIZ.

If we want learners to hear the tiniest of sounds, then we must be able to as well.

*****This test should really be done in the absence of print.

ALL PHONEMIC AWARENESS activities are all done WITHOUT WRITTEN words.

Make the sounds short and sharp, e.g. /b/. Don't turn them into syllables, e.g. /buh/.

Many consonants have voiced-unvoiced partners - /p/ and /b/, /f/ and /v/, /th/ and /t/, /d/ and /t/, /s/ and /z/, /sh/ and /zh/, /k/ and /g/. Make one, get one free!

A Practical Sequence – all oral/aural

1. SYLLABLES

= the “beats” in words

Our mouth opens every time because there's a vowel in every syllable.



Counting syllables – tap, clap – how many?

How many syllables in students' names?

Reverse syllables in two-syllable words

Cut off syllables from two-syllable words – what's left?

TEST: Can learners hear and 'play' with syllables?

It's useful to have a “stock” of words to use.

Use the students' names, Australian cities, classroom vocabulary, recent words etc.

Learners don't have to know the words – they can still hear/count the syllables – BLAH, BLAH, BLAH.

IMAGE: a still from an animation available at:

<http://www.learninggamesforkids.com/vocabulary-games/syllables/syllable-lesson.html>

2. ISOLATE SOUNDS - in single-syllable words

Initial sounds: In the word 'chair', what is the first sound?

Final sounds: In the word 'dog', what is the last sound?

Medial sounds (more difficult):

In the word 'bill', what is the middle sound?

Odd-man-out and minimal pairs

Which word begins differently? man mop not

Which word ends differently? bin pin pit

Same or different? tip - tin peg - leg Ron - run

TEST: Can learners 'spot the sound' and 'spot the difference'?

It's useful to have lists of single-syllable words with the sounds in initial, medial and final positions.

These can be found on "articulation" / speech therapy web-pages.

Minimal pair lists are also easily found on the internet.

Onset-rime work is also valuable.

The 37 most common rimes in small English words are:

-ack, -all, -ain, -ake, -ale, -ame, -an, -ank, -ap, -ash, -at, -ate, -aw, -ay

-eat, -ell, -est

-ice, -ick, -ide, -ight, -ill, -in, -ine, -ing, -ink, -ip, -ir

-ock, -oke, -op, -or, -ore

-uck, ug, ump, -unk

****When adding consonants willy-nilly, be aware that some "words" might be inappropriate ...

3. SEGMENTING and BLENDED

segmenting = s-t-r-e-t-c-h-i-n-g and counting
blending = combining sounds

How many sounds can you hear in 'cat'? 3

How many sounds can you hear in 'bath'? 3

What word is this? /b/ /l/ /ow/

What word is this? /s/ /t/ /o/ /p/



TEST: Can learners count and combine individual sounds?

Again, a list of single-syllabled words is useful. Stretching and blending.
We can “concertina” short words – stretching some ourselves and asking learners to stretch others.
Longer words – can wait until PHONICS instruction, when they can take words apart, syllable-by-syllable.

IMAGE: free clip art from: <http://www.dreamstime.com>

4. MANIPULATING SOUNDS (more difficult)

Can learners 'cut off' and 'switch' the sounds in words?

Initial: In the word 'mat', change /m/ to /s/.

Final: In the word 'mat', change /t/ to /p/.

Medial: In the word 'mat', change /a/ to /i/.

Can learners 'cut off' parts of blends?

Say 'step' without the /s/.

Say 'best' without the /t/.

Say 'frog' without the /r/.

TEST: Can learners hear, 'cut off' and switch sounds?

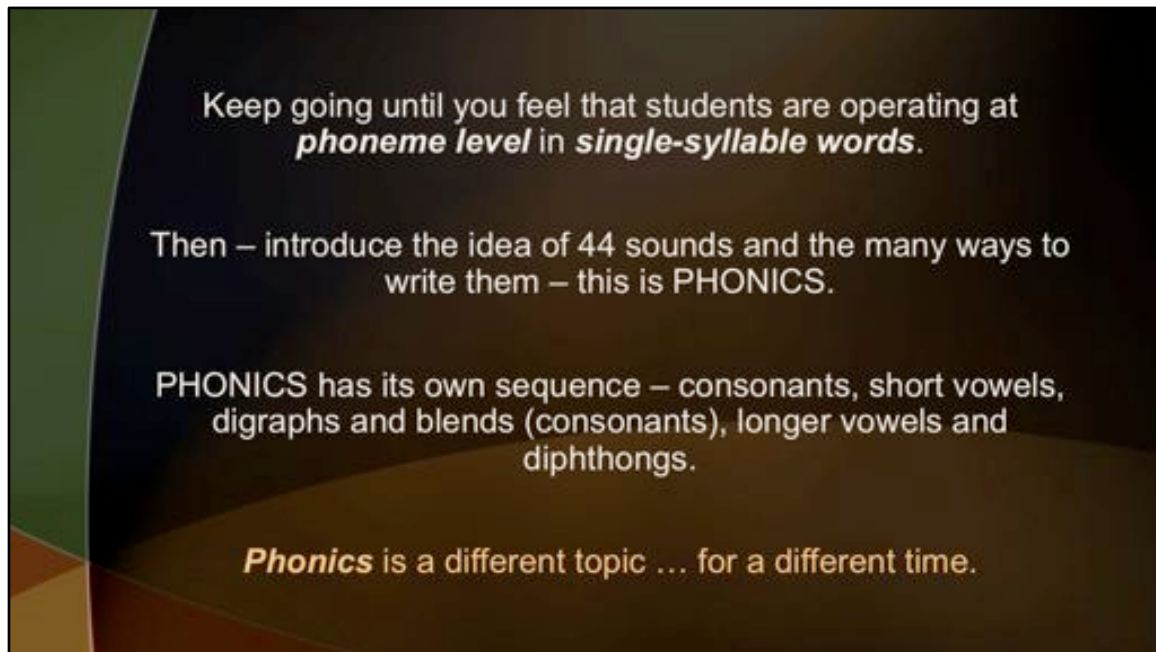
This is a difficult skill, but a very important transition-to-phonics skill.

It will probably continue into the phonics work.

This is where PA and Phonics overlap.

Even if the words are unknown (or non-words), learners should still be able to distinguish individual sounds.

This is quite difficult with the second-half of consonant blends.



Step Two in reading English => Phonics. [No time today to give more than a “taste” of phonics.]

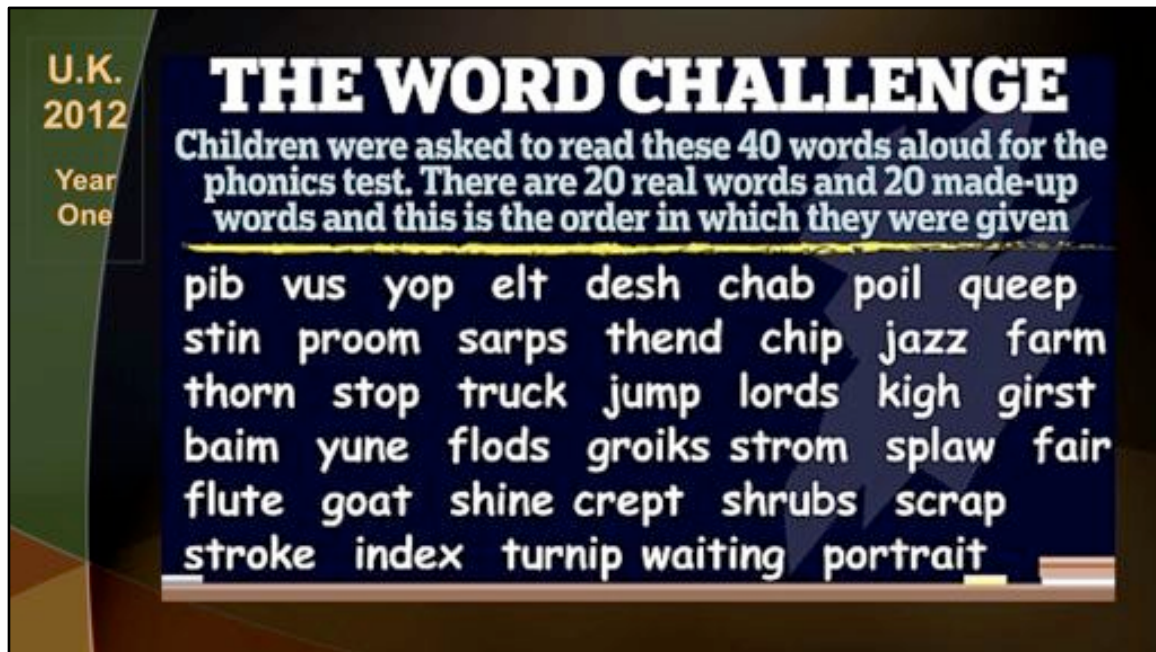
“Phonics” can mean different things to different people. Choose your programme wisely.

It has its own sequence:

Consonants > consonants and short vowels > consonant digraphs and blends > longer vowels > diphthongs

Even young L1 children have difficulty with /th/ and some blends.

From here onwards, we proceed on multiple fronts – more PA, vocab. work, stories, phonics ...



A TASTE OF PHONICS – next step after PA.

The UK now tests all 6-year-olds at the end of Year One, on their PHONOLOGICAL SKILLS – their knowledge of sound-letter correspondences. This was the actual test in 2012. The test is comprised of real and non-words. SOURCE OF IMAGE: “Daily Mail, 7 September, 2012.

What is the rationale for the non-words? (The popular press and non-teachers didn't 'get' it, unfortunately.)

The following slide shows some youngsters doing a practice test. How would your students go on this one? PSEUDOWORDS are a very useful diagnostic tool – they should also be FUN (if you can read them, that is). Anyone can make up some simple CVC pseudowords.



Gorgeous little kids reading real and non-words.

It is a training video, and it makes some interesting observations about accents and acceptability – e.g. “bath” in northern and southern UK accents.

Could be worth showing in class! Look at the EFFORT involved in the early stages of reading.

We have probably all forgotten how painstakingly hard it was to learn to read. In fact, fluent readers rarely remember learning to read at all.

SOURCE: <http://vimeo.com/39441143>. “Year One Phonics Screening Check Training Video” (on Vimeo). (12 mins full programme)(UK Department for Education, 2012).



***"Children of the Code" is a massive website, full of short videos about reading (over 100 videos) – every person interviewed is a renowned researcher in the scientific study of reading. Brilliant resource!

***Can't go past "Reading Rockets" website – U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

When looking for "sound work" – many Phonics sources are too simplistic – look for "articulation" and "speech therapy" sources. They can have great word lists.

[Don't use any "Phonics" resources that are based on 26 letters!] Remember - there are 44 (or 40+) sounds.