

SECTION

1

ENGLISH SPEECH SOUNDS (PHONICS) AND BLENDING



READING

Phonics

INTRODUCTION

You are warmly welcomed to this section of the Intervention English Language lesson. This section covers reading. Reading is the process of taking meaning out of a print or text. To be able to read, you must have knowledge of sounds. Hence, it is appropriate to look at the relationship between letters and sounds. You are going to learn about English sounds and most especially, digraphs, how they are blended together and how they impact the reading of text.

You are already familiar with the vowel and consonant letters and sounds in the English Language.

In any language, reading begins with the recognition of sounds (phonemes) of letters (graphemes). Therefore, for effective reading to occur, one must first get use to the sound system of a particular language. The fundamental challenge or barrier to effective reading is one's inability to relate letters to sounds. As a learner, you are encouraged to make conscious efforts in this section to learn the sounds of the English Language in relation to phonics and digraphs to develop your reading proficiency and communication skills to be confident in using the language.

Now, let us consider how concepts like phonics and digraphs can help you read and write effectively as a student.

Try your hand on the activity below to assess your knowledge of vowels and consonants.

By the end of the lesson, you as the student will be able to;

1. Identify the digraphs in the sounds of the English Language
2. Blend sounds to read words

Key Ideas

- Phonics is a method of teaching and reading through sounds.
- Sounds are phonetic characteristics of letters. Sounds can be classified as vowels, consonants, diphthongs, digraphs, and so on.
- Digraphs are two letters that make a sound.
- Blending is the art of putting individual letter sounds (Consonants and Vowels) together to form words.

Activity 1.1

List the English alphabet and identify the letters which are vowels and those which are consonants.

ENGLISH SPEECH SOUNDS (PHONICS)**Phonics**

Phonics involves learning the sounds of a language by using listening skills and noting sound patterns. It is a word recognition strategy in which graphemes (letters) are associated with phonemes (sounds). Phonics is also a means of learning to read through the understanding of the relationship between the sounds in the spoken language and the letter(s) they indicate in the written language.

Activity 1.2

Watch the video below and practise the sounds aloud. List all the sounds you hear.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBuA589kfMg&list=RDCMU CRqWOUwTmLrkeYm9-k2w61A&start_radio=1

**Phonic Groupings in English Language**

The table below illustrates the Seven Groups of Phonics in English Language. The first three groups (group one (1) to group three (3)) constitute the short sounds

whereas the last four groups (group four (4) to group seven (7)) comprise the long sounds, including **digraphs** in English Language.

Table 1.1: Phonic Grouping

1.	s	a	t	i	p	n
2.	ck	e	h	r	m	d
3.	g	o	u	l	f	b
4.	ai	j	oa	ie	ee	or
5.	z	w	ng	v	oo	oo
6.	y	x	ch	sh	th	th
7.	qu	ou	oi	ue	er	ar

Examine the tables below. Observe the sounds in the various groups together with their physical characteristics, and some examples in words. Do you notice that some of the sounds have different physical characteristics? List the sounds with different physical characteristics in your notebook.

Table 1.2: Short Phonic Sounds

	GROUP 1		GROUP 2		GROUP 3	
S/N	Phonic Sounds	Examples in Words	Phonic Sounds	Examples in Words	Phonic Sounds	Examples in Words
1	s /s/	sun	ck /k/	kick	g /g/	got
2	a /a/	arm	e /e/	pen	o /o/	lot
3	t /t/	tip	h /h/	hat	u /u/	run
4	i /i/	ink	r /r/	rat	l /l/	lap
5	p /p/	pot	m /m/	mat	f /f/	fan
6	n /n/ / ŋ /	nip	d /d/	dog	b /b/	bat

Table 1.3: Long Phonic Sounds

	GROUP 4		GROUP 5		GROUP 6		GROUP 7	
	Phonic Sounds	Examples in Words	Phonics Sounds	Examples in Words	Phonic Sounds	Examples in Words	Phonic Sounds	Examples in Words
1	ai /ai/	rain	z /z/	zip	y /y/	yam	qu /kw/q/	quiz
2	j /j/	jam	w /w/	wind	x /ks/	box	ou /ou/	house
3	oa /oa/	road	ng /ng/	long	ch /ch/	rich	oi /oi/	boil
4	ie /ai/	pie	v /v/	van	sh /sh/	cash	ue /ue/	blue
5	ee /ee/	feet	oo /oo/	cook	th / th/	than	er /ə/	letter
6	or /or/	corn	oo /oo/	food	th / th/	thin	ar /ar/	shark

Look at the words below. How will you differentiate between the words **ship** and **sheep** in terms of pronunciation (how the words are spoken)?

Examples: ship, sheep

To answer this question, you need to first identify the sounds that form the letters **ship** and **sheep**. Here is an illustration to understand the relationship between letters (words) and sounds.

Word (written)	Sound (spoken)
lip	/l/ /ɪ/ /p/ (The short sound for 'i' is represented as /ɪ/)
leap	/l/ /ee/ /p/ (The ee letters change into the long sound)

In the demonstration above, you will see that the beginning and ending sounds of the words, **lip** and **leap** are similar as they both have the sounds /l/ and /p/ at the beginning and final parts respectively. What makes the difference is the middle sounds which are the short sound and the long sound. Therefore, the short and long sounds help us distinguish the words ship and sheep in spoken language (pronunciation) to avoid confusion in listening or spelling.

When practicing, make sure you are smacking a short and a long sound. For example, heat and hit should sound different. Peak and pick should sound different. Duck and dark – should sound different.

Activity 1.3

Identify the sounds in the words below and determine which of the seven groups (short or long sounds) they belong to.

Word	Sound	Short/Long Sound
sit	_____	
sea	_____	
fit	_____	
pool	_____	
look	_____	
bark	_____	

Activity 1.4

Watch the video under Activity 1.2 again and list the words with diphthongs.

Digraphs

The word digraph can be divided into two **syllables**. The first syllable is **di-** which means **two** and the second syllable, **graph** which also means **letter** or **write**. Therefore, the term digraph refers to two letters that combine to form one sound or **phoneme**.

Digraphs are two letters that give or constitute a sound. A digraph can either be a **consonant** (eg. **sh, th, among others**) or a **vowel** (eg. **ir, ar, er, and so on**).

To assess your progress in learning digraphs so far, kindly perform **Activity 1.5** below.

Activity 1.5

Examine the sounds indicated in Tables 2 and 3 (Short and long sounds - Page 4) above and write down all the digraphs in the spaces provided below.

Activity 1.6

Group the digraphs identified in **Activity 1.5** into **consonants** and **vowels**.

Consonant Digraphs _____

Vowel Digraphs _____

Decoding and Segmenting

To be able to use the digraphs effectively in reading as a learner, you need to pay attention to **the concepts of decoding and segmenting**. When /s/ and /h/ are together in a word, they make a new sound: /sh/. Note that /sh/ can appear at the beginning of a word, like you just learned with shop. It can also come at the end of a word, as in cash.

Examine this example as well. If you see the word “**cart**” in a printed text, you should read the word as /k/ /ar/ /t/. That is right because the three unique sounds that come together to create the word “**cart**” comprise /k/ /ar/ /t/. With the techniques below, you can use the idea of phonics for words and reading.

1. Learning words by sight, then looking out for the individual sounds that make up the word. Examples include but not limited to the following words:
 pot = /p/ /o/ /t/ cry = /k/ /r/ /ai/
 fan = /f/ /a/ /n/ set = /s/ /e/ /t/
2. Putting sounds together to form words. For instance, the sounds /h/+/æ/+/t/ will give us the word **hat**, the sounds /f/+/i/+/sh/ form the word **fish**, the sounds /r/+/e/+/n constitute the word **rain**, and so on.

Activity 1.7

Put the sounds below together to create their corresponding words.

a) /f/ /i/ /l/ /l/: _____

b) /t/ /a/ /n/ /k/: _____

What is your general observation about words and sounds after the lesson? As a student, your ability to grasp the knowledge and understanding of phonics, or the relationship between letters (words) and their sounds (phonemes), will impact your reading and communication skills. This will help develop your fluency and make you confident in English Language usage.

EXTENDED READING

1. Click any of the following links to read more on phonics:
 - a. <https://timeforphonics.co.uk/what-are-the-44-phonemes-in-the-english-language/>
 - b. <https://mrswordsmith.com/blogs/free-resources/what-is-a-grapheme>
 - c. <https://www.doe.mass.edu/massliteracy/skilled-reading/fluent-word-reading/phonics-decodin...>
 - d. https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/ela/bank/RF_PA_Segmenting.pdf
 - e. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc>

BLENDING OF SOUNDS

In this lesson, you will understand how two or three letters are put together (blend) to make a completely different sound. Blends and digraphs will help you to understand why some letters are dropped or changed into different sounds and why others remain the same.

Activity 1.8

Watch the video below and practice after the presenter. Observe the pairing of the sounds (consonant + vowel)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N2eidSZC9sQ>



What is peculiar about the sounds of the letters? (Clue: Are they sounded together or separately?)

A **blend** refers to two or more letters which are spoken together. In other words, it is a skill that helps you read when you are challenged with unfamiliar words. Therefore, you will need to blend most of the words that you come across to read them correctly. For instance, the word ‘brand’ contains a two-letter blend. Can you see it? The sound ‘br’ at the beginning of the word is a blend. The word ‘brand’ is not pronounced ‘ba ra nd’. The reason is that, the ‘b’ and ‘r’ are blended together /br/ with the other sounds /a/, /n/, /d/ to read the word ‘brand’.

For example:

/a/ + /n/ = an

/m/ + /a/ + /n/ = man

/s/ + /i/ + /n/ = sin

/c/ + /a/ + /p/ = cap

The letters in the words **above** are blended to make the words *an*, *man*, *sin*, *cap*. They are blends because they are dragged together to form the words. We can also blend the two phonemes /a/ + /m/ to form the word ‘am’. Also, the three-letter word ‘man’ is a blend of the sounds /m/ + /a/ + /n/.

Activity 1.9

Segment the following words into individual sounds (Clue: consult your sound chart in lesson one)

1. at _____
2. am _____
3. sat _____
4. ball _____
5. cry _____
6. pit _____
7. mop _____
8. cup _____
9. nap _____
10. tag _____

How do you feel after completing this activity? Do not worry if you missed some of the blends in the activity. You will improve as the lesson progresses. However, your ability to blend words successfully will help you build your confidence and improve your reading skills.

Consonant Blends

A consonant blend is when two or three consonants are right next door to each other, and each give their own sound. In other words, each sound is still pronounced separately. For example, the word “spin” has a consonant blend of /s/ and /p/.

Your ability to recognise that the sound /k/ is the beginning consonant of the word ‘cat’ (blends as: /k/+/a/+/t/= /kat/) is key. Similarly, the sound /sp/ is the initial consonant sounds in the word ‘spoon’.

Now, read the letter blends and their corresponding examples given in Tables 1.4 and 1.5 below.

Table 1.4: Some Two-Letter Consonant Blends in English Language

S/N	Two-Letter Blends	Example in Words	S/N	Two-Letter Blends	Example in Words
1	bl	blot, blur, bled	12	pr	prince, proud, pray
2	cl	climb, clap, clay	13	tr	train, trophy, trash

S/N	Two-Letter Blends	Example in Words	S/N	Two-Letter Blends	Example in Words
3	fl	fly, flew, flip	14	sc	scar, scarf, score
4	gl	glow, glad, glory	15	sk	skin, skip, sky
5	pl	plus, place, plate	16	sm	smell, smash, smart
6	sl	sly, sleeve, sleep	17	sn	snow, snake, sneak
7	br	brag, break, brave	18	sp	spider, spin, spit
8	cr	cry, crown, crib	19	st	sting, stamp, star
9	dr	drill, draw, dream	20	sw	sweet, sweater, sweep
10	fr	fry, friend, freeze	21	tw	twins, twist, twelve
11	gr	green, great, grade			

Table 1.5: Some Three-Letter Consonant Blends in English Language

S/N	Three-Letter Blends	Examples in Words
1	scr	scrub, scratch, screen
2	spl	split, spleen, splint
3	spr	sprout, sprinkle, spray
4	str	stray, straw, straight
5	shr	shrink, shrimps, shrill
6	thr	thrill, thread, throat

Activity 1.10: Play the blend game below with a friend. List the total number of correct words you come up with at the end of the game.

Label four sides of a die with the following word families (-at, -pl, -ag, -dr), and then label the remaining two sides with “Lose a Turn” and “Roll Again”.

Have your friend roll the die. If it lands on a word family space, he/she must produce a word for that family and record it on his or her piece of paper or notebook. He or she must also say the sounds in the word and blend the sounds to make the word (e.g. /c/ + /a/ + /t/ = cat).

If he/she lands on “Lose a Turn,” the die is passed to the next person. If he/she lands on “Roll Again,” he/she rolls again and gets another turn. The person who records the most words at the end of the allotted time wins.

Other Consonant Blends

Here are more two-letter consonant blends. These combinations are considered to be adjacent consonants and blends as they combine to make slightly different sounds than the typical initial consonant blends or final letter combinations where each consonant gives its sound. Since we do hear two sounds, they are considered blends. Below is an example:

Table 1.6: Two-letter consonant blends

Complex initial consonant blends: qu (/kw/)	Complex final consonant blends: nk (/nk/)
queen	blink
quick	ink
quack	wink
quiet	link
quit	bank

You have just been introduced to some consonants blending in words. Now, practise the following.

Activity 1.11

Read the following sentences and identify words with two-letter consonant blends:

1. The class played flag football on the muddy ground.
2. The black dog followed its friend to the market square.
3. The smoke spread over within a twinkle of an eye.
4. The street was crowded with many of the flood victims.
5. The strong boy in the train was given a dirty slap this morning.
6. Gyan cannot pray but can play good football.

Blending Digraphs

You have just learned how to blend some phonemes to read words. This time around you are going to extend your knowledge to cover how to blend digraphs to read words. Do you remember what digraphs are? Tell your friend what you know about digraphs.

Activity 1.12

Watch the video below and perform the activities to revise your knowledge of digraphs.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xnXNHnWD-uo>

1. List ten examples of two-letter words from the video.

2. Write the digraphs in the words you have listed.

You should have refreshed your memory on digraphs and blends. We are now going to learn how to blend digraphs to read words successfully.

A **digraph** refers to two letters producing one sound. For example, the letter /**sh**/ in the word 'fish' is a digraph. The distinction between a digraph and a blend is that, we cannot hear the two letters that are combined in a digraph as they represent a different sound altogether. For instance, the letters **c** and **h** together make the sound /**ch**/ in English. Hence, you cannot single them out as /**c**/ /**h**/ in reading. In a word like 'ship' the /**s**/ and the /**h**/ are put together to make the special sound /**sh**/.

Examples:

1. phone **ph-** at the beginning of the word
2. farm **ar-** in the middle of the word
3. match **ch -** at the ending of the word

Activity 1.13

Identify all the digraphs in the following words, and determine whether they are in the beginning, middle or ending part of the words.

1. queen _____
2. block _____
3. split _____
4. thick _____
5. chip _____

Table 1.7: Some English Digraphs

Consonant Digraphs				Vowel Digraphs			
S/N	Digraph Spelling	Phoneme/ Sound	Examples in Words	S/N	Digraph Spelling	Phoneme/ Sound	Examples in Words
1	ch	/tʃ/	Chief, chain, fetch	1	ee	/i:/	seal, eel, see
2	ck	/k/	sick, tick, thick	2	oo	/ʊ/	foot, pull, bull
3	ng	/ŋ/	swing, lung, hang	3	oo	/u:/	wood, food, stool
4	ph	/f/	graph, trophy, phone	4	ai	/ie/	train, chain, fail
5	qu	/k, kw/	queen, quick, quit	5	ay	/eɪ/	lay, hay, clay
6	sh	/ʃ/	shape, shake, harsh	6	aw	/ɔ:/	flaw, yawn, hawk
7	th	/θ/	three, thrill, thank	7	ea	/i:/	heat, peak, beak
8	th	/ð/	than, the, that	8	ea	/e/	fed, bread, lead,
9	wh	w	while, wheel, wheat	9	ie	/i:/	sieve, chief, brief
10	mb	m	bomb, limb, dumb	10	ie	/aɪ/	tie, dye, pry

Consonant Digraphs				Vowel Digraphs			
S/N	Digraph Spelling	Phoneme/ Sound	Examples in Words	S/N	Digraph Spelling	Phoneme/ Sound	Examples in Words
11	kn	n	knit, knee, knife	11	oa	/oʊ/	goat, coat, loaf
12	wr	r	wright, wrap, write	12	oi	/ɔɪ/	boil, toil, void
				13	ou	/aʊ/	owl, proud, brow
				14	oy	/ɔɪ/	soy, loitre, oyster
				15	ow	/oʊ/	howl, fowl, flower
				16	ow	/aʊ/	now, sow, wow
				17	or	/ə/	author, doctor, teacher
				18	ue	/u:/	blue, flu, flew
				19	ui	/u:/	fruit, flute, suit
				20	ar	/ɑ:/	cart, mart, fart
				21	er	/ə/	preacher, father, trader

You are now going to blend vowels and consonant digraphs to read words. Read the following words aloud.

1. block, blank, blink
2. brief, breach, bread
3. crib, cry, crystal
4. snap, sniff, snail

Activity 1.14

Blend the jumbled letters below to form words:

1. mar
2. tca
3. amy
4. nva
5. tha
6. tis

How do you feel after going through this activity? As usual, do not worry about the number of words you have missed. With time, you will improve.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Thank you for your concentration to date.

You are now provided with a series of questions to help you assess your level of progress made so far with English Language sounds, including digraphs. Just relax and enjoy this phase of your learning process.

1. Make an audio of your voice, pronouncing 10 of the sounds with examples. Share your audio with a friend to review.
2. Look through your notebook and identify ten (10) words with digraphs and ten others without digraphs. List them.
3. Write the names of the images in the table and write the digraph of the word.

S/N	Image	Name of Image	Digraph
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

4. Underline five words containing digraphs in the paragraph below.

Why are people so different? This a critical question most people seek answers to. The answer, however, lies in two terms: nature and nurture. Nature refers to the influence of the genes that people inherit. Nurture refers to environmental influences, beginning with the health and diet of the embryo's mother and continuing lifelong, including family, school, community, culture, and society.

5. Blend the green letter sounds in the box with the red letter sounds in the table to form **three letter** word list and read them aloud. You may choose one or two sounds from the green box where necessary.

s	a	t	i	p	n
---	---	---	---	---	---

at	an	ap	in	ip	it
sat				pip	
		tap			nit
	ant				
			pin		

Note: Consult your dictionary where necessary

6. Use any five (5) of the words you formed in the table above in sentences.
7. Complete the table below with examples of three letter blends.

S/N	Two-Letter Blends	Phoneme/ Sound	Examples in Words
1	sc	/sk/	
2	sp	/sp/	
3	sn	/sn/	
4	st	/st/	
5	sh	/sh/	

8. Read the passage below and underline all the two-letter consonant blends.

These three cats are so playful. They are always seen running around the green grass in their home. Before the arrival of these cats, the green grass was a home to many pests such as lizards, crickets and mice who

were so much of a nuisance us. Now, our green grassy compound has become a lovely place to take an afternoon nap. The little brown cats have so many skills in running and chasing after each other. They love to brush their tiny tails against the trees that grow on the green grass. It is always a joy to watch them play about during the day. How beautiful it was to realise that these cats were not just playing about but were actually driving away the pests from our compound. It is important to keep a pet in your home.

EXTENDED READING

1. Click on any of the following links to read more on blends and digraphs:
 - <https://study.com>
 - <https://scholarwithin.com>
2. MacCary, M. (2021). *Handbook for Reading*. Ebeka Book Production

GLOSSARY

1. **Grapheme:** A grapheme consists of a letter or a group of letters. It refers to a unit of writing which correspond to a single sound. A grapheme is simply the way we represent or label a phoneme. Examples include the letters, t-a-p (tap) for the phonemes /t/ /a/ /p/.
2. **Consonant:** Any sound that is not the dominant sound of a syllable. Examples: /g, k, b, d, m, t, p/.
3. **Vowel:** It is the dominant or loudest sound of a syllable. Examples: / o, a , e, i, /
4. **Syllable:** A syllable refers to part of a word that contains a single vowel sound and which is pronounced as a unit. For instance, the word cat has one syllable [/kat/] and reading has two syllables [/bis/ /kit/].
5. **Decoding:** Decoding is the act of translating a word from print to speech (spoken) through the use of sound-symbol indicators or labels.
6. **Segmenting:** It is the process of identifying the individual phonemes in a word. Segmenting is an oral task or activity rather than written
7. **Phoneme:** Phoneme refers to the **smallest unit of sound** in the English language, and can be blended together to create words. An example of phoneme is /t/ /a/ /g/ for the word **tag**. A phoneme is labelled by a **grapheme**.
8. **Grapheme:** A grapheme consists of a letter or a group of letters. It refers to unit of writing which correspond to a single sound. A grapheme is simply the way we represent or label a phoneme. Examples include the letters, t-a-p (tap) for the phonemes /t/ /a/ /p/.
9. **Syllable:** A syllable refers to part of a word that contains a single vowel sound and which is pronounced as a unit. For instance, the word cat has one syllable [/kat/] and reading has two syllables [/bis/ /kit/].

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Ghana Education
Service (GES)



List of Contributors

Name	Institution
Benjamin Ornon Akrono	Islamic Girls SHS, Suhum
Fati Issifu	Buipe Girls' Model School
Lawrenda Osei-Anim	Accra Girls SHS