

SECTION

1

ENGLISH SPEECH SOUNDS (PHONICS) AND BLENDING



STRAND: READING

Sub-Strand: 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 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 reading through sounds. Sounds are phonetic characteristics of letters. Sounds can be classified as vowels, consonants, diphthongs, digraphs, and so on. Blending is the art of putting individual letter sounds (Consonants and Vowels) together to form words.

Activity 1.1

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

ENGLISH SPEECH SOUNDS**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

1. Watch the video below and practise the sounds aloud. List all the sounds you hear.
2. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wBuA589kfMg&list=RDCMUQRqWOUwTmLrkeYm9-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	
	Phonic Sounds	Examples in Words	Phonic Sounds	Examples in Words	Phonic Sounds	Examples in Words
1	s /s/	snack	ck /k/	clock	g /g/	grow
2	a /a/	apple	e /e/	egg	o /o/	holiday
3	t /t/	treat	h /h/	happy	u /u/	sun
4	i /i/	imagine	r /r/	parrot	l /l/	light
5	p /p/	present	m /m/	mummy	f /f/	friend
6	n /n/	nice	d /d/	daddy	b /b/	baby

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 /ei/	brain	z / z/	zebra	y /y/	young	qu /kw/ /q/ queen
2	j /j/	jamp	w /w/	window	x /ks/	exit	ou /ou/ cloud
3	oa /oa/	loaf	ng /ng /	wing	ch /ch/	chair	oi /oi/ coil
4	ie /ai/	tie	V /v/	vim	sh /sh/	push	ue /ue/ glue
5	ee /ee/	meet	oo /oo/	pool	th / th/	that	er /er/ teacher
6	or /or/	horn	oo /oo/	foot	th / th/	think	ar /ar/ park

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)

ship /sh/ /ɪ/ /p/ (The short sound for 'i' is represented as /ɪ/)

sheep /sh/ /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, **ship** and **sheep** are similar as they both have the sounds /sh/ and /p/ at the beginning and final parts respectively. What makes the difference is the middle sounds, the short sound and the long sound. Therefore, they help us distinguish the words ship and sheep in spoken language (pronunciation) to avoid confusion in listening or spelling.

When practising, make sure you are clearly making 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
slip	_____
seat	_____
frog	_____
foot	_____
food	_____
park	_____

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 6** below.

Activity 1.5

Examine the sounds indicated in Table 1.2 and 1.3 (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:

flush = /f/ /l/ /u/ /sh/

thought = /th/ /ou/ /t/

learn = /l/ /ear/ /n/

2. Putting sounds together to form words. For instance, the sounds /h/+/a+/t/ will give us the word **hat**, the sounds /f/+/i+/sh/ form the word **fish**, the sounds /r/+/ei/+n constitute the word **rain**, and so on.

Activity 1.7

Put the sounds below together to create their corresponding words.

1. /f/ /i/ /sh/: _____

2. /t/ /a/ /s/ /k/: _____

What is your general observation about words and sounds after 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.

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 put together /br/ with the other sounds /a/, /n/, /d/ to read the word ‘brand’.

For example:

/sp/ + /oo/ + /n/ = **spoon**

/cl/ + /a/ + /ss/ = **class**

/fr/ + /e/ + /n/ + /ch/ = **French**

/spl/ + /e/, /n/, /d/, /i/, /d/ = **splendid**

The letters in the words **above** are blended to make the words *spoon*, *class*, *French*, *splendid*. They are blends because they are dragged together to form the words. The three-letter word ‘*spoon*’ is a blend of the sounds /sp/+**oo**+/n/.

Activity 1.9

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

1. black _____
2. brush _____
3. crab _____
4. snake _____
5. street _____
6. crest _____
7. swim _____
8. stick _____
9. frank _____
10. drum _____

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 Table 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	blank, blue, blind	12	pr	pray, prick, preach
2	cl	class, clip, clean	13	tr	truth, trace
3	fl	flag, flash, flower	14	sc	scot, scoop, score
4	gl	globe, glass, glue	15	sk	task, flask, gasket
5	pl	play, plant, plan	16	sm	smart, small, smite
6	sl	sly, slate, slap	17	sn	sneak, snack, snatch
7	br	brake, brand, brain	18	sp	spoon, spot, spank
8	cr	crate, crab	19	st	stick, best, stay
9	dr	dress, drop, drink	20	sw	swim, swing, sweet
10	fr	fried, frolic, fright	21	tw	twilight, twang, twice
11	gr	grace, grant, grass			

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

S/N	Three-Letter Blends	Examples in Words
1	scr	scramble, scratch, scream, scroll, screw
2	spl	splash, splinter, splendid
3	spr	spread, sprain, sprint, spree, sprang
4	str	strong, stripe, strike, street, strap
5	shr	shrank, shred, shrub, shrug
6	thr	three, throb, thrive, throw, 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 (-thr, -spl, -scr, -shr), 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. /shr/u/b/ = shrub).

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 own sound. Since we do hear two sounds, they are considered blends. Examples are shown below.

Complex initial consonant blends: /qu/	Complex final consonant blends: /nk/
quench	sank
quip	sink
quake	sunk
quarter	link
quest	wink

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 three-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 on 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 three-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. 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. graph *ph- /f/* at the end of the word
2. cart *ar- /ar/* in the middle of the word
3. chip *ch- /ch/* - at the beginning of the word

Table 1.6: Some English Digraphs

Consonant Digraphs			Vowel Digraphs		
S/N	Digraph Spelling	Examples in Words	S/N	Digraph Spelling	Examples in Words
1	ch	chair, rich, watch, catch	1	ee	feet, beep, beef, meet
2	ck	snack, pack, crack, rack	2	oo	cook, wool, good, book
3	ng	wing, ring, sing, bring	3	oo	hook, pool, cool fool
4	ph	photo, phlegm, Philip	4	ai	paint, brain, wait, stain
5	qu	quite, quiet, equip,	5	ay	pay, say, day, may
6	sh	shoe, shop, ship, sheep	6	aw	pawpaw, law, draw
7	th	thin, three, think, theme	7	ea	sea, meat, team, teacher
8	th	there, this, these	8	ea	tread, read, dead
9	wh	whale, white, which,	9	ie	field, brief, grief
10	mb	comb, thumb, womb	10	ie	pie, die, dried
11	kn	knead, know, knock	11	oa	boat, oat, oath
12	wr	wrong, wreath, wreck	12	oi	boil, oil, coil, avoid
			13	ou	house, mouse, mouth, out
			14	oy	toy, boy, troy
			15	ow	tow, bow, mow

Consonant Digraphs			Vowel Digraphs		
S/N	Digraph Spelling	Examples in Words	S/N	Digraph Spelling	Examples in Words
			16	ow	cow, how, bow
			17	or	monitor, actor, projector
			18	ue	clue, argue, glue
			19	ui	juice, recruit, pursuit
			20	ar	park, art, part
			21	er	teacher, mother, driver,

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. quiz _____
2. black _____
3. splash _____
4. teeth _____
5. chap _____

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

1. black, blossom, blur, blue
2. brick, brush, brood, thread, tread
3. cream, crease, tried, trick
4. snack, sneak, snick
5. teacher, heat, field, feel

Activity 1.14

Blend the jumbled letters below to form words:

1. epbe
2. ainst
3. wdra
4. ddear
5. gfier
6. ierdd
7. ichr
8. racck
9. hootp
10. khnit
11. kkonc
12. wckre

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 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 all the sounds with examples. Share your audio with a friend to review.
2. Look through your notebook and identify ten (15) 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
a.			
b.			
c.			
d.			
e.			

4. Underline all 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 four 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
rats				clip	
		taps			spit
	pant				
			span		

Note: Consult your dictionary where necessary

6. Use any five (10) of the words you formed in the table above in sentences.
7. Complete the table below with examples of three letter blends.

S/N	Three-Letter Blends	Examples in Words
a.	scr	
b.	spl	
c.	spr	
d.	str	
e.	shr	
f.	thr	

8. Read the passage below and underline all words with two 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 home to many pests such as lizards, crickets and mice who

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

GLOSSARY

1. **Decoding:** Decoding is the act of translating a word from print to speech (spoken) through the use of sound-symbol indicators or labels.
2. **Segmenting:** It is the process of identifying the individual phonemes in a word. Segmenting is an oral task or activity rather than written
3. **Phoneme:** Phoneme refers to the **smallest unit of sound** in the English language, and can be blended to create words. An example of phoneme is /t/ /a/ /g/ for the word **tag**. A phoneme is labelled by a **grapheme**.
4. **Grapheme:** A grapheme consists of a letter or a group of letters. It refers to a unit of writing which corresponds 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/.
5. **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/].
6. **Consonant:** Any sound that is not the dominant sound of a syllable. Examples: /g, k, b, d, m, t, p/.
7. **Vowel:** It is the dominant or loudest sound of a syllable. Examples: / o, a, e, i, /

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List of Contributors

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