

How to help your child prepare for the screening and boost confidence



Some practical tips and ideas to help boost your child's confidence ready for the phonic screening...

Worried that your five or six year old is way too young to be tested at school? Don't be! The Year 1 Phonics Screening Check was designed to identify which pupils need additional support with certain areas of decoding phonics as they progress. Teachers are assessing pupils on a daily basis - it's part of the job! This test is simply a formalised extension of this, and it's really nothing to be concerned about. That said, a little focus on phonics at home will help your child recall the strategies they already know, and boost their confidence so they feel fully prepared.

1. **Adapt I spy.** All kids love playing I spy, so just extend the game a little by asking them to spy things that begin with a particular sound (/ch/ or /sh/, for example) or pick words with a certain sound in the middle or end.
2. **Use the sound button technique** It can be very daunting to see a word that you're unfamiliar with, but by the time your child is at the end of Year 1 they'll have lots of phonics decoding strategies, it's just practice that's needed so that they'll feel confident to use them. When your child comes across a new word in their reading, write it down and together mark 'sound buttons' under each sound, for example:



This will help them to identify the individual sounds and feel confident about blending them to make the word.

3. **Be prepared for odd creatures!** Nonsense words (or 'pseudo words') will feature in the Check (for example, 'bim' and 'tox'), to see whether children can apply phonics rules correctly. In the test these words may be accompanied by a picture of an imaginary creature, to suggest that the word is the name of the creature featured. Why not make the most of the opportunity and ask your child to draw pictures of new species, or perhaps aliens? Then they can think up funny names for them and write them down using their phonics knowledge.
4. **Use story books.** Of course, reading is really all about stories and enjoying them! It's vital not to lose sight of this when your child is using phonics to learn to read, so keep going with the bedtime stories. When you're reading aloud to your child, ask them to read one sentence per page. This will ensure they're coming into contact with words they probably won't have read before and they'll have to use their phonics decoding skills; they'll be motivated to do so as they'll be enjoying the story.

Make sure you come along to year 1 phonic screening workshop - we will notify you about the most up to date information about the screening and share a range of activities and games to support the teaching of phonics