



# A Parent's Guide to Jolly Phonics

Jolly Phonics is a thorough foundation for reading and writing. It uses the synthetic phonics method of teaching letter sounds in a way that is fun and multi-sensory. Children learn how to use the letter sounds to read and write words.

The **five** basic skills for reading and writing are:

1. Learning the letter sounds
2. Learning letter formation
3. Blending
4. Identifying sounds in words
5. Spelling the tricky words

## Learning the letter sounds

In Jolly Phonics the 42 main sounds of English are taught, not just the alphabet. The sounds are in seven groups. Some sounds are written with two letters, such as *ee* and *or*. These are called diagraphs. *oo* and *th* can each make two different sounds, and in *book* and *moon*, *that* and *three*. To distinguish between these two sounds, the diagraph is represented in two forms. This is shown below:

1. s, a, t, i, p, n
2. c k, 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



Each sound has an action, which helps children remember the letter(s) that represent it. As a child progresses you can point to the letters and see how quickly they can do the action and say the sound. As a child becomes more confident, the actions are no longer necessary.

Children should learn each letter by its sound, not its name. For example, the letter **a** should be called **a** (as in *ant*) not **ai** (as in *aim*). Similarly, the letter **n** should be **nn** (as in *net*), not **en**. This will help in blending. The names of each letter can follow later.

The letters have not been introduced in alphabetical order. The first group (s a t i p n) has been chosen because they make more simple three-letter words than any other six letters. The letters **b** and **d** are introduced in different groups to avoid confusion.

Sounds that have more than one way of being written are initially taught in one form only. For example, the sound ai (rain) is taught first, and then alternatives a-e (gate) and ay (day) follow later. Examples can be found in the Jolly Phonics Word book.

### Learning letter formation

It is very important that a child holds their pencil in the correct way. The grip is the same for both left-handed and right-handed children.

The pencil should be held in the 'tripod' grip between the thumb and first two fingers. If a child's hold starts incorrectly, it is very difficult to correct later on.

### What is Blending?

Blending is the process of saying the individual sounds in a word and then running them together to make the word. For example, sounding out d-o-g and making dog. It is a technique every child will need to learn, and it improves with practice. To start with, you should sound out the word and see if a child can hear it, giving the answer if necessary. Some children take longer than others to hear this. The sounds must be said quickly to hear the word. It is easier with words like b-u-s, t-o-p, c-a-t and h-e-n. There are lists of suitable words in The Phonics Handbook and the Jolly Phonics Word Book.

## Identifying sounds in words

The easiest way to know how to spell a word is to listen for the sounds in that word. Even with the tricky words, an understanding of the letter sounds can help.

Start by having your child listen for the first sound in a word. Games like I-Spy are ideal for this. Next try listening for the end sounds, as the middle sound of a word is the hardest to hear.

Begin with simple three-letter words such as cat or hot. A good idea is to say a word and tap out the sounds. Three taps means three sounds. Say each sound as you tap.

Rhyming games, poems and the Jolly Songs also help tune the ears to the sounds in words. Other games to play are:

- Add a sound: Q: what do I get if I add a *p* to the beginning of *ink* A: *Pink*, other examples are m-ice, b-us, etc.
- Take away a sound: Q: what do I get if I take away *p* from *pink*? A: *Ink*. Other examples as above, and f-lap, s-lip, c-rib, d-rag, p-ant, m-end, s-top, b-end, s-t-rip, etc.

