

# Letters and Sounds Phase One in Action



## A guide for Parents & Carers

First steps to reading and writing with your  
child

**Sure Start**  
Children's Centres

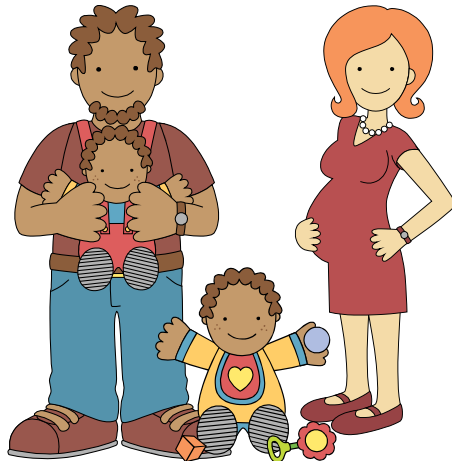


Where you see the  symbol you will find some suggested activities that will support your child in their learning.

## Introduction

Children learn a great deal from other people. As parents and carers you are your child's first teachers. You have a powerful influence on your child's early learning.

From a very early age your child will need to experience a wide range of activities and experiences with you to develop their early reading and writing skills, for example, singing and saying rhymes, making and listening to music, listening to them and joining in conversations, painting and pretend play. These activities will help your child take the first important steps towards reading and writing.



At your child's setting children take part in a high-quality communication, language and literacy development programme designed to promote your child's learning through a play based approach.

To support the teaching of communication, language and literacy development in settings and schools a phonics teaching programme called Letters and Sounds is used. It builds on the activities the children have already experienced in the setting.

The children learn through lots of play and activities and are encouraged to use their increasing phonics knowledge in freely chosen activities.

If you can be involved in helping your child we know it can make a big difference to your child's learning.

This booklet will give further information about the Letters and Sounds programme and the best ways to help your child's learning at home.



## Learning to read and write in the Early Years of the Foundation Stage

### Children's spoken language supports reading and writing

From a very early stage, children develop an awareness of the different sounds in our spoken language. They learn to use their voices to make contact with you and to let people know what they need and how they are feeling. As parents and carers you best understand your baby or young child's communications; you are key people in helping them develop their speaking and listening skills.

Children need lots of opportunities to talk with others as they develop and practise these skills. This helps to build their confidence and improves their ability to communicate with other people, this is a really important part of learning to socialise and will help your child feel confident when it comes time to make friends.

In order to make a good start to reading and writing, children need to be listened to and talked with.

Everyday activities such as preparing meals, tidying up, putting shopping away and getting ready to go out offer you the chance to talk to your child, explaining what you are doing. They hear the way language is put together into sentences for a purpose.

Books are a rich source of new words for your child – words you would not use in everyday conversations appear in books. Children need to have a wide stock of words (vocabulary) to understand the meaning of books – so read aloud and share books as often as you can. They will enjoy it and it will be so useful to them when they come across these words in their own reading, later on.

### **Ways you can support your children at home: talking and listening**

**Make time to listen to your child talking** – as you meet them from their setting or school, as you walk, or travel home by car, in the supermarket as you shop, at meal times, bath times, bedtimes – anytime!

**Switch off the TV, radio and mobile phones** – and really listen!

**Show them you are interested in what s/he is talking about** – look at your child, smile, nod your head, ask a question or make a response to show that you really have been listening.

**Make a collection of different toy creatures** e.g. a duck, a snake, an alien- say the sound it might make as you play together e.g. quack-quack, ssssssss, yuk-yuk- encourage your child to copy you.

**Listen at Home** – switch off the TV and listen to the sounds both inside and outside home – can your child tell you what s/he heard, in the order in which s/he heard it?

**Play-a-tune** – and follow me! Make or buy some simple shakers, drums and beaters – play a simple tune and ask your child to copy. Have fun!

**Use puppets** and toys to make up stories or retell known ones. Record your child telling the story and playback to them.

## The importance of speech sounds

As children grow older they begin to understand more about the sounds of our language and they are able to join in with rhymes, songs and stories, sometimes clapping, stamping and skipping. This is an important stage as the children's ears are learning to tune into all the different sounds around them. Playing with sounds and tuning your child's ears into sounds develops phonological awareness or the ability to discriminate different sounds. Over time this will help your child develop an understanding that words are made up of different sounds (phonemes) and they will be able to hear the different sounds in a word. Gradually they will learn to match sounds to letters (graphemes). This is phonic knowledge. They use this knowledge when they are reading and writing.

You may find it helpful to talk with the setting management to find out about phonics and how to say the sounds correctly with your child.



Sound talk – **Next step when your child is ready** (they can do the above well)

This is a very supportive activity to play with your child.

Try breaking down simple words when you are giving instructions or asking questions such as 'Can you find your h-a-t, hat?' 'Where is the c-a-t cat?' 'Sit on the s-ea-t seat' 'Eat your f-oo-d food' It is really important to say the sounds (phonemes) aloud, in order, all through the word.

Speaking and listening are the foundations for reading and writing.

## Letters and Sounds Phase I

In this ongoing phase your child will be learning to:

- Have fun with sounds
- Listen carefully
- Develop their vocabulary
- Speak confidently to you, other adults and other children
- Tune into sounds
- Listen and remember sounds
- Talk about sounds
- Understand that spoken words are made up of different sounds

Phase I consists of seven interlinking parts:

Environmental sounds

Instrumental sounds

Body Percussion

Rhythm and Rhyme

Alliteration (words that begin with the same sound)

Voice Sounds

Oral blending and segmenting

You can help your child develop in each of these by trying some of the ideas below. Remember that all these activities should be fun and interactive. Give your child lots of encouragement and cuddles as you play alongside. Smiles and praise will help develop a sense of achievement and build confidence.

**This is all oral – (spoken) your child will not yet be expected to match the letter to the sound. The emphasis is on developing the ability to distinguish sounds and create sounds.**

## Environmental sounds:



- Go on a listening walk – when walking down the road make a point of listening to different sounds– cars revving, people talking, birds singing, dogs barking. When you get home try and remember all the sounds you heard. You could try taping the sounds to listen to again or try reproducing them yourselves using your voice or instruments
- Make sounds using a range of found props such as running a stick along a fence, tapping on the bin lids
- Invent a secret family ‘knock’ for entering rooms
- Play sound lotto. Commercial sound lotto can be purchased from many children’s toy stores but making your own from your sound walk would be far more rewarding.

## Instrumental sounds:



- Make your own musical instruments using cardboard rolls, tins, dried peas, beans, stones. Shake these loudly, softly, as you are marching, skipping, stomping. Play Guess what’s inside the instrument
- Sing known songs loud and then soft, stretch words in known songs and add new words or sounds
- Listen to range of music with your child from rap to classical. Encourage your child to move in response to the variety of musical styles and moods

## Body Percussion:



- Learn some action rhymes such as ‘wind the bobbin up’.
- Play some commercially produced tapes and CDs to clap along with familiar rhymes and to learn new ones.
- Listen to the sounds your feet make when walking/running/skipping: slowly, softly, fast, stomping hard, in flip flops, boots, high heels
- Different types of claps, Clap your hands softly, fast, make a pattern for your child to follow do the same clapping your thighs or stomping with your feet. Tap your fingers. Click your tongue
- Invent a special family clap routine for when someone does something really well

## Rhythm and Rhyme:



- Get into the rhythm of our language; bounce your child on your knee to the rhythm of a song or nursery rhyme, march or clap to a chant or poem
- Help your child move to the rhythm of a song or rhyme
- Read or say poems, songs, nursery songs and rhyming stories as often as you can, try to use gestures, tap regular beats and pauses to emphasise the rhythm of the piece
- Add percussion to mark the beats using your hands, feet or instruments

- Try out some rhythmic chanting such as 'Two, four, six, eight, hurry up or we'll be late' or 'Bip bop boo, who are you?'



### Alliteration (words that begin with the same sound)



- Alliteration is a lot of fun to play around with; your child's name can be a good place to start e.g. Say Gurpreet gets the giggles, Milo makes music, Naheema's nose, Carl caught a cat, Jolly Jessie jumped, Tina is talking, encourage other family members to have a go eg Mummy makes marvellous muffins
- Emphasise alliteration in songs and stories i.e. 'Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers'
- Play around with familiar songs to emphasise alliteration such as 'Old MacDonald had some sheep, shoes, shorts, with a sh,sh here and a sh sh there
- Identify the odd one out e.g. cat, cup, boy, car
- Make up little nonsense stories together using lots of alliteration
- Collect items from the park, the garden and around the house that start with the same sound
- When shopping think about items you are buying and say 'A tall tin of tomatoes!' A lovely little lemon!' Encourage your child to do the same



### Voice Sounds:



- Repeat your infants vocalisations
- Make fun noises or nonsense words
- Say words in different ways (fast, slow, high, low, using a funny voice
- 'Sing' known songs using only sounds i.e. la, la, la and ask your child to guess the song
- Vary your tempo and pitch when reading stories
- Make voices for characters when reading stories
- Read or tell sound stories. Your local library or book store will be able to point out some very good books that encourage sound making as you read the story. This is huge fun and can involve all the family.



### Oral blending and segmenting:



This is all oral (spoken). Your child will not be expected to match the letter to the sound at this stage. The emphasis is on helping children to hear the separate sounds in words and to create spoken sounds

Oral blending and segmenting is a later skill that will be important when it comes time to read and write. Being able to hear the separate sounds within a word and then blend them back to understand that word is really important.

**Blending – is a vital skill for reading.** The separate sounds (phonemes) of the word are spoken aloud, in order, all through the word e.g. the adult would say **c – a – t = cat.**

**Segmenting – is a vital skill for spelling.** The whole word is spoken aloud, then broken up into its separate sounds (phonemes) in order, all through the word . For example the adult would say **cat = c – a – t**



## The importance of mark making

Your child will notice the adults around them reading and writing and they will want to copy them. Mark making is the first step towards writing. Mark making in the early stages is closely linked to physical development. The more opportunities your child has to develop large and small movement in their arms, hands and fingers the easier it will be to make marks with a variety of tools.

Activities such as digging, 'painting' outdoor surfaces with water and a large brush, sweeping, swishing a scarf through the air in different shapes will help develop large motor movement. Small or fine motor movement will be needed to hold pencils and pens correctly. Hanging out the washing and playing with pegs, using a peg board, picking up grains of rice with fingers and tweezers will help develop the pincher grip needed for writing.

In the early stages of learning to write, your child will like to experiment making marks on paper with a variety of writing tools such as brushes, pens, pencils and felt tip markers. They will often include drawings with their writing. Sometimes you will write for them. It is a good idea at this stage to use lower case letters when you write for you child introducing capitals only for names.



### Other things to do at home

Turn off the TV so you can listen to and talk with your child

Read or share books every day with your child

Set up a place where your child can experiment with mark making both outside and inside using gloop, paint, pens, stamps, stencils onto a variety of surfaces such as paper, cardboard, material

Collect a variety of pencils, pens and keep them handy for your child, character stationery can help to encourage your child to mark make

Create a special writing bag to keep little writing tools in for travelling in the car or visiting the doctors, change the contents regularly



### What to do if your child is reluctant to read/write at home.

Relax!

It is important not to worry if your child shows no inclination to write at home; the important thing is to keep on sharing books and talking together. There is no need to insist that your child does some writing – more often than not they will choose to do so when they have a real reason to.

### Reading

Make sure your child sees you reading.

Read **to** your child. Show you like the book - bring stories to life by using loud/soft/scary voices – let yourself go!

Spread books around your house for your child to 'dip into'.

Let your child choose what **s/he** would like to read – books, comics, catalogues

Read favourite books over and over again!– enjoy!

### Writing

Make sure your child sees you writing.

Compose an email together inviting a friend over to tea.

Make words together using magnetic letters.

Make up a story together about one of his/her toys – you write for them – repeat the sentences as you write – when complete they can draw pictures to go with it.

Buy stickers of a favourite film or TV programme – and make a book about it.



## Useful websites and leaflets for more information

[www.parentscentre.gov.uk/foragegroup/3to5years/readandwritetogether](http://www.parentscentre.gov.uk/foragegroup/3to5years/readandwritetogether)

This link to the Parents Centre Website gives some really good ideas about how you can enjoy sharing books with your child and tells you a bit more about phonics.

[www.parentscentre.gov.uk/foragegroup/5to7years/alittlereadinggoesalongway](http://www.parentscentre.gov.uk/foragegroup/5to7years/alittlereadinggoesalongway)

This link gives ideas about how to help your child as she is learning to read.

[www.read-count.org/index.asp](http://www.read-count.org/index.asp)

A website for you and your child to explore together – it will give you some ideas about reading with your child and has online games for young children to play with you and on their own, it also has ideas for games to play away from the computer. The Basic skills website will keep you updated on a range of literacy developments [www.basic-skills.co.uk](http://www.basic-skills.co.uk)

[www.bookstart.co.uk](http://www.bookstart.co.uk)

This website provides information about the national Bookstart scheme and the Bookstart packs that your child will receive as a baby, a toddler and at age three to four. It also gives information about sharing books with your child and you can find out about Bookstart events in your area which you can go to with your child.

‘Learning Together’ leaflets – ‘The road to reading’ and ‘Making their mark – children’s early writing’ (There are also other leaflets covering a range of topics). You can get the leaflets from Early Education, 136 Cavell Street, London, E1 2JA. Telephone 020 7539 5400. You can also download them from the website [www.early-education.org.uk](http://www.early-education.org.uk)

[www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk](http://www.talktoyourbaby.org.uk)

This website provides lots of information for parents and carers of babies and young children, and suggestions of activities, features, DVDs, books and events that are both useful and fun. You can have their free newsletter emailed to you directly.

[www.ican.org.uk](http://www.ican.org.uk)

This website provides lots of information for parents and teachers on the importance of speaking and listening skills for young children’s development. Although aimed at early communication development there is a lot of very useful information and materials such as *Chatter Matters* that can be downloaded from the website and some free materials can be ordered.

[www.nationalliteracytrust.org.uk/familyreading/parents](http://www.nationalliteracytrust.org.uk/familyreading/parents)

A wealth of information about how to make reading and writing fun for you and all your family. Promotes their campaign to make ‘Every home a reading home’ Many links to further websites.