

Phonics terms

This is a list of some of the terms we use when teaching children phonics.

Phoneme A smallest unit of sound in a word -
a, sh, ou

Grapheme A letter or group of letters that
represent a phoneme

c	a	t
b	ir	d
f	i	sh
kn	igh	t

There is always the same number of
graphemes and phonemes in a word.

Digraph Two letters representing a sound
such as 'ch', 'sh' etc.

Vowel digraph Two vowels representing a sound
such 'ai' 'ee' 'oa' etc.

Split digraph Where the digraph is split by
another letter in between, as in 'oe'
in 'home' and 'ie' as in 'bike'

Trigraph A trigraph is a three-letter
grapheme where three letters

represent one phoneme (e.g. 'eau' in *bureau*, and 'igh' in *night*).

Four letter grapheme

a four-letter grapheme uses four letters to represent one phoneme (e.g. 'eigh' representing the /ai/ phoneme in *eight* and in *weight*).

Segment

segmenting a word into its phonemes and choosing a grapheme to represent each phoneme. This is what happens when a child is spelling a word.

Blend

Blending or merging the individual phonemes together to pronounce a word. This is what happens when a child is trying to read an unfamiliar word. In the word 'thin', the child would blend 'th-i-n' not 't-h-i-n'.

Polysyllabic

A word that has more than one syllable. The children can be encouraged to clap the syllables and when trying to spell will be encouraged to split the word up into smaller sections. For example, desktop should be thought of as two

parts, 'desk' and 'top' and camping as
'camp' 'ing' and wellingtons should be
'well' 'ing' 'tons'

CVC, CVCC, CCVC Think of Carol Vorderman! -
CVC is Consonant-Vowel-Consonant
(cat)
CVCC is Consonant-Vowel-
Consonant-Consonant (bend)
CCVC is Consonant- Consonant-
Vowel-Consonant (drip)

Consonant cluster a group of consonants which have no
intervening vowel. In English, for
example, the groups /spl/ and /ts/
are consonant clusters in the word
splits.
Examples include: *thr, spl, cr, br,*
bl, scr at the beginning of words and
nd, ld, lp and *st* at the end of words

**Adjacent
consonants**

Adjacent consonant is a more
general term, often referring to
consonants that are adjacent (i.e.
next to in writing) to other
consonants.

GPC

Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondence

What letter or combination of letters can be used to represent a sound.

Initial

First

Medial

Middle

Final

Last

Sound buttons

When using these, a phoneme comprising one letter uses a small 'button' and for a phoneme comprising more than one letter use a longer 'button' or dash.

Suffix

A word ending - as in 's, es, ed, ing, ful, ly, ness'

Prefix

Added at the beginning of a word - as in 'un, dis'