

Systematic phonics glossary of terms

Alphabetic principle: the idea or understanding that letters of the alphabet represent specific sounds in speech.

Analytic phonics: an approach in which the sounds associated with letters are not pronounced in isolation. Children identify the phonic element from a set of words in which each word contains the particular element under study. For example, the teacher and students discuss how the following words are alike: pat, park, push, and pen.

Automaticity: the automatic processing of information as, for example, when a reader or writer does not need to pause to work out words as they read or write.

Blend: to join sounds together. *See also* segment.

Choral reading: the teacher and the students read the same passage at the same time.

Consonant blend (cluster): a set of two or three consonant letters that when pronounced, retain their sound. Blends are found either at the beginning or end of a word. For example, "split" has "spl" as a consonant blend or cluster.

Content (of a text): the ideas or information contained within a text. *See also* context.

Context: the surrounding text, topic, conditions, or activities that affect how we understand specific words, sentences, and ideas within a text. *See also* content.

Decoding skills: The ability to translate written words into the sounds of spoken language.

Diagnostic assessment: assessment that aims to identify a pupil's current strengths and weaknesses so as to determine the most helpful teaching strategies and content to move the pupil forwards. It can be distinguished from tracking or monitoring where the aim is just to check progress. Diagnostic assessment aims to make teaching more efficient.

Digraph: Two successive letters that represent a single sound. Common consonant digraphs in English include "ch" as in "chips", "ng" as in "king", "ph" as in "phone", "sh" as in "shoe", "th" (voiceless) as in "thing" and "th" (voiced) as in "the", and "wh" as in "wheel".

Common vowel digraphs in English include "ai" as in "rain", "ay" as in "day", "ea" as in "teach", "ea" as in "bread", "ea" as in "break", "ee" as in "free", "ei" as in "eight", "ey" as in "key", "ie" as in "piece", "oa" as in "road", "oo" as in "book", "oo" as in "room", "ow" as in "slow", and "ue" as in "true".

Dialogue: speech in written form. In the context of early reading, dialogue means direct speech using speech marks.

Diphthong: a sound made by combining two vowels, specifically when it starts as one vowel sound and goes to another, like the oy sound in oil. Diphthongs are sometimes called 'gliding vowels'.

Expressive vocabulary: the words and concepts that a student is able to use in their spoken language. *Contrast with* receptive vocabulary.

Fluency: the ability to speak, read, or write rapidly and accurately, focusing on meaning and phrasing without having to give laborious attention to the individual words or the common forms and sequences of the language.

Grapheme: a written unit, consisting of one or more letters that represents one phoneme, for example, *f*, *th*, *o*, *ee*.

Grapheme–phoneme relationships: see phoneme–grapheme relationships.

High utility non-decodable word: a frequently used word that is not decodable, based on the expected prior knowledge of a learner. Also called a high frequency word or sight word.

Language comprehension: a student's ability to derive meaning from written and oral language.

Letter–sound relationships: see phoneme–grapheme relationships.

Letter manipulatives physical objects that aid understanding of concepts or processes by allowing learners to physically demonstrate and see the concept or process. For example, a learner might use magnetic letters as a manipulative to create and sound out consonant blends.

Morpheme: the smallest unit of meaning in a word, for example, "-ing". Knowledge of morphology contributes to learning the common rules and conventions that govern how English words are written, such as knowing about prefixes and suffixes or plurals (*see also* prefix and suffix).

Morphology: the study of words, how they are formed, and their relationship to other words in the same language.

Orthography: knowledge about the conventional spelling system of a language – how letters combine to represent sounds and form words.

Phoneme: A single unit of speech sound which, when combined with other sounds, form a meaningful unit. There are approximately 44 phonemes in English.

Phoneme–grapheme relationships: the relationships between spoken sound units and the written symbols that represent them.

Phonemic awareness: the ability to hear, differentiate, and attend to the individual sounds within words. A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in a spoken word. For example, "frog" has four sounds as does the word "box".

Phonics: An approach to teaching reading that focuses on the sounds represented by letters in words (*see also* decoding skills).

Phonological awareness: an overall understanding of the sound systems of a language, for example, an awareness that words are made up of combinations of sounds.

Phonology: study of the sound patterns that occur within languages.

Prefix: a prefix is a morpheme that is added at the front of a word and changes its meaning, for example, *undoes* and *return*.

Reading comprehension: the understanding and interpretation of what is read. To be able to accurately understand written material, students need to be able to decode what they read; make connections between what they read and what they already know; and think deeply about what they have read.

Receptive vocabulary: the words and phrases a student recognises when they read them or hear them spoken. A student's receptive vocabulary will generally be greater than their expressive vocabulary. *See also* expressive vocabulary.

Rime: the sound that follows the onset (initial sound) in a syllable, for example, *sh-op*, *scr-ap*, *f-ish*.

Segment: to separate sounds out. *See also* blend.

Semantics: the study of the relationship between words and how we draw meaning from those words.

Split digraphs: have a consonant letter between the two vowel letters as in the word "rule".

Suffix: a morpheme that is added at the end of a word and changes its meaning or function, for example, *playful* and *farmer*.

Systematic phonics: The teaching of letter-sound relationships in an explicit, organised, and sequenced fashion, as opposed to incidentally or on a "when-needed" basis. Also known as *structured literacy*.

Word recognition: refers to the presumed mental storage, retrieval, and use of a person's sight words. Without word recognition, every word would have to be decoded through phonics every time it was read.

Written language features (in contrast to visual language features): text features that consist of verbal elements in written texts. This includes all kinds of language features, including vocabulary, sentence structures, and figurative language.

Vowel team: Combinations of vowel letters used to represent a single vowel sound. This includes vowel digraphs but also combinations of two or more letters (e.g., *igh* for /ɪ/).