

Success Begins With
Get Reading Right

**Parents
Guide**



Get Reading Right™

**Teach Your Child
to Read and Spell**

www.getreadingright.com

First of all, what is synthetic phonics?

It is a technical name and nothing to do with being artificial. The synthetic part refers to synthesizing or blending sounds to make a word.

Phonics is a method of teaching children how spoken words are composed of sounds called phonemes and how the letters in words correspond to those phonemes. The process of reading involves decoding or 'breaking' words into separate phonemes, so that meaning can be gained. On the other hand, the process of spelling requires the writer to identify all the phonemes in a word and then use their knowledge of the phonemic code to write or 'make' the word.

English is essentially a code that can be encoded (written) and decoded (read). We need to teach children this code with as much emphasis as possible on the rules and regularities of the written language.

In the **Get Reading Right** books we call this process "Making and Breaking". We can make a word from the sounds and then break it apart again when we want to spell it. You will find that the teaching of spelling goes hand in hand with the teaching of reading; once you know the alphabetic code and how to listen for each phoneme then spelling becomes as easy as reading.

Written English is recognised as being a complex language. We have 26 letters but 44 phonemes in the spoken language. There are a huge number of letter combinations needed to make these 44 phonemes (a phoneme is the technical name for the smallest unit of sound and is a technical word your child should know). Other languages are more regular having fewer letters and fewer sounds which makes them easier to learn to read. The **Get Reading Right** books teach a group of phonemes together and right from the start, your child is making words and decoding simple consonant-vowel-consonant (c-v-c) words such as **c a t** and **d o g**. It is the speed, the efficiency and the effectiveness that characterises this approach.

At a glance: Synthetic phonics:

- Teaches all 44 phonemes
- Teaches all the ways each phoneme can be written
- Teaches children to blend phonemes in a word to read
- Teaches children to listen for sounds in words to spell
- Teaches children to look for phonemic clues when decoding irregular words
- Get Reading Right books help you to teach all of the above.

So what is wrong with the old way?

Across the English speaking world there is recognition that there are far too many children failing to learn to read as well as they should. The costs to the individual as well as to society as a whole are huge. Government reviews in the UK, Australia and the U.S. have all concluded that all children should be taught to read using a systematic, synthetic phonics approach because this approach minimizes failure and maximizes success.

Previous approaches to the teaching of reading often taught children spelling rules that subsequently turn out not to work. It can be a long time into a child's schooling that he/she even starts to decode (sound out) a word or actively use these skills to read words in books. Children who miss some early teaching, have some learning difficulties, or are young in for their year group often have trouble acquiring a systematic understanding of the phonemic code. It can be a hit or miss affair especially if the child changes schools or his/her language of instruction.

At a glance:

- The pace of teaching and learning was too slow
- All 44 phonemes were not taught systematically
- Children were not encouraged to use their phonic knowledge to spell new words
- Children were not taught the many ways that each phoneme can be written.

How does Synthetic Phonics differ from the 'old' type of phonics?

Synthetic phonics starts with 'phonemic awareness' which is hearing the different sounds in a word and the matching of these phonemes to single letters. At the same time it shows how these phonemes (sounds) can be 'blended' to produce words and the words can be 'segmented' to write..

Your child will learn simple letter to sound correspondence. This is when a phoneme is represented by a single letter as in the word /c/ /a/ /t/. When that's mastered your child will learn that sometimes one phoneme is represented by two letters (digraph); as in the word /ch/ /o/ /p/ ; where /ch/ is only one phoneme (sound).

Then after that, even though at first it may sound confusing, your child will learn that sometimes a single phoneme can be represented many different ways. Like the sound /ay/ in play. Your child will eventually learn that this phoneme can be written;

/ay/ as in the word **play**

/a-e/ as in the word **spade**

/ea/ as in the word **break**

/ey/ as in the word **hey**

/eigh/ as in the word **eight**

/a/ as in the word **later**

/ei/ as in the word **vein**

Finally your child will learn that sometimes a single (or more) letter may represent more than one phoneme; for example, the 'o' in /most/ and the 'o' in /hot/ or the 'ow' in /wow/ and the 'ow' in /tow/. We know this can be confusing but with the structure and regularity of synthetic phonics almost all children will pick this up.

This advanced code is taught only after the basic rules are mastered. At first the rules are regular, with no exceptions.

Another big difference you will notice is that the phonemes are taught at a faster, more efficient rate than ever before. No more "a letter a week". Your child may learn up to 8 phonemes in a week! Sounds like a lot, but they do cope! Children start to make their own words straight away. There is recognition that although English is complicated, there is a high degree of order to it, and this needs to be taught.

At a glance:

- The pace of teaching and learning is faster
- All 44 phonemes are taught in a particular order
- Children are encouraged to use their phonic knowledge to read and spell new words
- Children are taught all the ways that each phoneme can be written
- Children are taught that phonics can be used to read, write and to spell; that the code is reversible.

What do all these technical words mean?**What is a phoneme?**

It is the smallest unit of sound and a piece of terminology that children like to use and should be taught. At first it will equate with a letter sound but later on will include the digraphs.

What is a digraph?

This is when two or more letters come together to make a phoneme. /oa/ makes the sound in boat.

What is blending?

Blending is the process that is involved in bringing the sounds together to make a word or a syllable and is how /c/ /a/ /t/ becomes cat.

What is a consonant blend?

Previously, consonant blends were taught as if there was something special about them. Children were taught that /st/ was one phoneme, when actually it is two, /s/ and /t/. Think about it. Why teach /st/ when children already know /s/ and /t/, it just wastes time and clogs up children's memory. But note that sh is a digraph. It cannot be made by a process of blending the two letter sounds of /s/ and /h/ together. We need to teach the digraphs not the blends.

At a glance:

- It is not important to know all the jargon. It is important to try to use the same words your child is being taught at school.
- It is important to know how to pronounce each of the phonemes correctly
- Remember that teaching the old consonant blends just wastes time and energy with something your child already knows; it can also lead to confusion.

How do we know teaching synthetic phonics works?

Each of the governments mentioned has conducted systematic reviews of what works and what doesn't in the early teaching of reading. Each review came to similar conclusions and each government made recommendations that every child should be taught to read and spell using a synthetic phonics approach. Other recommendations were that every teacher be trained to teach reading using this method. Another important recommendation was that parents need to be shown how to use a synthetic phonics approach to help their children at home. In the UK every school has been instructed to use this approach from September 2006. One

study in Scotland showed that children taught using this approach were still ahead of their peers in reading and spelling some seven years later. In our experience we have had similar situations with whole schools enthusiastically adopting the approach once its effectiveness has been demonstrated.

At a glance: *There has been extensive research worldwide. You may like to look at:*

- Research conducted by St Andrews University in Scotland
- National Enquiry into the Teaching of Early Reading in Australia
- www.rff.org.uk
- www.childrenofthecode.org

So how do we start to help?

First we will start with the eight sounds represented by the letters: **s m c t g p a o**. You will be teaching these eight sounds all at once right from the start. It will be a gradual process so do not expect your child to get everything right the first time. Do not teach your child to say the letter names. These do not help with reading, despite all the effort put into teaching alphabet songs etc.

It is important that the pronunciation of the sounds is taught correctly from the start; each of the books has a table telling you exactly how the sound should be pronounced. For instance, it is necessary to make the sound for **m** as *mmm* and not as *M (the letter name)* or *muh*. This is important because teaching the wrong pronunciation can lead to problems reading later on. If you are still unsure how to pronounce each of the phonemes listen to the pronunciation on the Get Reading Right website.

There are many ways that you can teach these sounds in a fun way. As well as direct instruction there are a number of games and activities which can be used to reinforce what your child has learned. These games and all the cards you will need to play them can be found on the Get Reading Right website and some of them are mentioned in the appendix at the end of this guide. These games include “sound bingo” and even a version of Twister™, which children love.

OK Let's Get Started!

Step 1 – Learning the phonemes

Lay out each of the letters s m c t g p a o on a magnetic board or use letter tiles. Demonstrate how to pronounce each phoneme as you push the letter up onto a line.



Then push each phoneme down again asking your child to say the sound as you do this.

When your child knows how to pronounce each of the phonemes; move on to step 2.

Step 2 – Blending the phonemes to make words

Right from the start we want children to put the sounds together to spell a word. It needs to be a physical well as a spoken activity. Have your child move the magnetic letters or letter tiles together and make the first words in the books. The code is a reversible one so that spelling progress goes alongside reading progress. Children soon realise that if they can “break it” then they can “make it”. The letter tiles or magnetic letters enable the whole process to be separated from the early struggle to control a pencil and to produce something that is legible. Instructions for this are contained in the directions at the front of each book.

Have a list of consonant-vowel-consonant words ready that you can make from the focus phonemes. (Available at www.getreadingright.com) Ask your child to make each of the words using the magnetic letters. Make sure your child moves each letter up to the line as it is being said aloud.

For example, ask your child to make the word ‘c a t’. Stretch out each of the letters as you say the word.



Demonstrate with a hand movement that reading is a left to right process.

c a t

m a p



Continue to model the process of pushing the magnetic letters together to make words. Lots of practice, on lots of occasions is the key to this kind of learning. It is helpful to stretch out the word so your voice suggests the blending of the sounds to make the word. Then say the word at normal speed. Once your child has some success pronouncing and writing the first group of sounds, she will be very pleased that she will soon start to read simple whole words.

Step 3 – Manipulating the sounds in words.

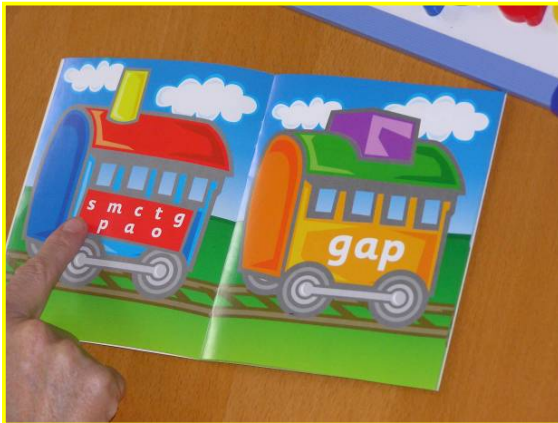
Your child needs to be able to hear these first eight sounds at the beginning; at the end, and in the middle (for the vowels) of the words. Do activities such as “can you make the word ‘c a t’ with your letter tiles?” and “Show me how to make ‘m a t’ with your letter tiles.” Practise with your child identifying the position of each of the phonemes in the word. If your child removes all letters and begins to make the entire word, ask “if I say ‘cat’ and then say ‘mat’ which phoneme changes?”

We call this “segmenting”; the ability to do this is a very high predictor of reading success.

Step 3 - Teaching your child to blend phonemes to read words.

Start with the Train book. Read the instructions on the inside cover.

Find a comfortable, quiet place to read. Open the practice page where the sounds are listed and check that your child can recognise and pronounce each of the target phonemes. Try varying the order on a daily basis.



Point to each separate letter and ask your child something like; “What does your mouth say when you see this?”

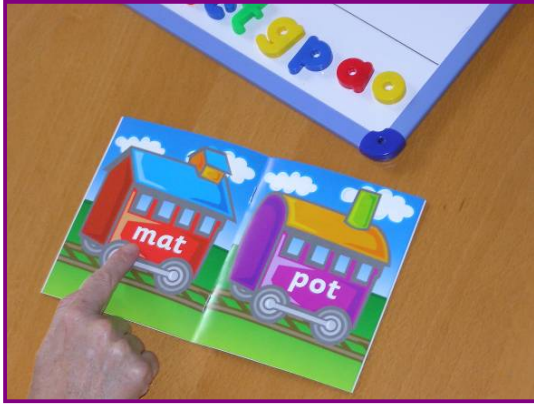
When you are confident that your child knows how to pronounce each of the phonemes; move on to blending them together to read the words on pages 3 – 12.

Demonstrate with the word ‘gap’ on page 3. Point to the letter ‘g’ and say /g/ then to ‘a’ and say /a/ and finally to the ‘p’ and say /p/ then run your finger along the bottom of the word ‘gluing’ each of the phonemes together saying ‘gap’.



Ask your child to do exactly the same process on pages 4 to 12. Encourage your child to blend each of the phonemes and then read the word. If your child gets stuck;

a gentle reminder of the phoneme that each letter represents will help. Then run your finger along the word and say it slowly out loud.



What does this word say? Well done. I like the way you sounded each phoneme out and then glued that word together.

Once each word has been read, it's time to move on to the "Make it to Break it" page.

Make sure that your child cannot see the list of words on the page. This page is like a mini spelling test. This is an important activity because it teaches children that the phonemic code is a reversible one. In other words, if you can read a word, you can spell it.

Say the word slowly, stretching it out slightly. Ask your child to make the word using magnetic letters or letter tiles.



Can you make the word 'gap'? What does it start with? What else can you hear? What sound can you hear at the end?

The make and break page is also a great place to practice a different skill and that is getting the words fluent. We also use this page as a "Quick read" page so we ask the child to read as quickly as possible in order to get the reading fluent as well as accurate.

Praise Your Child

Your child needs feedback that he is being successful in learning the strategies that will make him an accomplished reader. These are small steps for you and are probably automatic but for a child these steps are huge and represent a real achievement. Once the child has started to understand the process and is putting the words together, there is often a strong sense of accomplishment that acts as its

own reward. Repetition for young children is the key to making progress. For the older child, it is often important to relearn previous ideas about reading that are either wrong or unhelpful. If a child knows a skill on three days consecutively then you can take it that the skill is well learned; so do not make the mistake of trying to go too fast.

In what order do I teach the sounds?

The Get Reading Right books provide you with the order in which they should be tackled. Keep the books somewhere separate from the child's access and keep them fresh by producing a book at a time.

At first the code is the simple or basic one with the child only being presented with consonant-vowel-consonant (c-v-c) words with three phonemes. Once the majority of the twenty six letters have been covered, then we make the smallest next step which is the double letters which do not change the sound e.g. // ss zz . This introduces the child to the notion that life in reading is not always going to be so straightforward and they will soon be learning more advanced material!

The next group of letters, taught across two levels of the books, introduces a new set of phonemes where a new sound (phoneme) is made from the combination of two letters that they have already been learned e.g. *sh ch th* Because all the focus has been on the sounds the children soon learn that putting two familiar letter symbols together can produce something entirely new.

The order for the phonemes (note that we did not say letters!) in the books is the same as recommended by the UK government. What is important is that the order chosen has "fidelity" i.e. nothing is missed out and all the code is covered. Follow the order of the books and the structure will be preserved.

At a glance:

The **Getting Started** series 1 has thirty books divided into six levels. There are four phonic books and one Camera book at each level.

First level *s m c t g p a o*

Second level *r l d b f h i u*

Third level *v w y z j n k e*

Fourth level *// ss ff zz*

Fifth level *sh ch th wh*

Sixth level *ck ng qu x*

Do not show your child all the books at once. It is best to introduce each book one at a time so that each book will be fresh and novel.

Hey! Not all words can be so easily decoded!

That's right. They can't. But so many can, and at this stage in your child's education, we concentrate on the ones that can. That's not to say that we don't introduce words in the beginning that your child will need in order to read simple texts and write simple sentences. We try to include tricky words that are not easily decodable. Later on of course they will become decodable in almost all cases. We call these tricky words, 'Camera' words. Encourage your child to **look** at the word,

think about what phonemes they already know and decide which part of the word is “tricky” , **cover** it and then **write** or make the whole word. The child can then be involved in **checking** whether he is correct. It is important to remember that very few words need to be learned in this way. The first strategy children should use to read unfamiliar words is by breaking the word into phonemes and blending them in order to read.

What are 'Camera' Words?

Camera words are a group of words in the English language that children like to use in their speech and in their writing that cannot easily be decoded at the level that the child is operating. Children want to read and spell these words right at the beginning of their schooling. Knowing a small bank of these tricky words helps children to begin to read and write sentences that make sense and encourage them to communicate in writing right from the start.



At **Get Reading Right** we recognise that even when we expose children to phonetically regular words and teach the phonemic code rules there are going to be words that are exceptions that are useful to learn. These words are introduced and taught in a fun, lively way in our “Camera books”. Camera books look different to the phonic word books. Children soon see and then learn the difference between the two.

It is a good idea to visit these books regularly and to keep the learning fun and exciting. This can be done through playing lots of games. See our website for great game ideas like how to play camera word skittles, bingo, snap and Go-Fish! Each level of the series contains one camera book with six camera words per book. When it comes to spelling, there is no make or break only a spelling test. Do not attempt to teach using a “sound it out” strategy although do use your child’s knowledge of some of the phonemes.

We have English as our second language. Can this approach help us?

Yes it most certainly can, but some extra issues need to be thought about.

First of all take some guidance on how the sounds should be made. The website does this for you but a native speaker can also help ensure that the parent gets this right before the child is given the material. Correct pronunciation of the phonemes is important. Your child will be taught the correct pronunciation at school. Do not get over concerned about your dialect, your child will soon learn to accommodate to this.

You may notice that you do not know the meaning of some of the words, even though they are short ones and you have a good level of English. Do not worry about this; it happens because we have chosen as many words as we can that can be made from our list of phonemes and many of these words are not common English words in day to day use There is a picture dictionary on the website that can be printed off which will enable you to be a step ahead of your son or daughter. It will be

good for your vocabulary as well as for theirs! Please note that the pictures are meant for you. They are not to be used in the teaching of decoding skills. We want the child to learn to read, not guess from the pictures. This is in line with the advice from the DfES document Letters and Sounds.



If your written language is a strongly visual one (idiographic) such as Chinese, then do remember that the child has to decode the words by using a knowledge of phonemes. Children do not learn to read by memorizing words; especially words that can be decoded easily. Children that are over reliant on remembering by sight, soon come to a halt despite early progress.

Series Two "On My Way"

Series One books, "Getting Started" introduce the basic code to children and some of the easier aspects of the advanced code. Our Series Two books "On My Way" take children even further into the advanced code. Children begin to read full sentences and are introduced to capital letters, full stops, question and exclamation marks. This series has three-five word sentences using a variety of punctuation. Notice just how far, and how quickly, your child has already developed with his/her reading.

Capital letters

This will be where knowledge of letter names becomes useful. Your child needs to know the names of the letters and that sentences start with a capital letter. They will also learn that names of people start with a capital letter too. It is important to teach your child that a capital letter makes no difference to how a word is sounded out.

Punctuation marks

Speech marks, full stops, question marks, exclamation marks and commas are the punctuation marks that have been used in the sentences in this series. Make sure that your child can understand why they are used and the names of these punctuation marks.

Becoming fluent and reading for meaning

Model for your child how a sentence should be read using expression in your voice; remember the aim is to get information from the words not just to decode them. Ask your child to read a sentence more than once so that he/she becomes **fluent** in the reading as well as **accurate**. The aim is to be able to do this quickly as well as accurately. Do comment on the meaning of what has been read and make sure that any unfamiliar vocabulary is explained.

ccvc/cvcc/vcc

Level 7 of the books should be very straightforward for both of you. We are now introducing words containing more than 3 phonemes but the process is essentially the same as before. If your child can read these words quickly and confidently you might want to refer to words with more than one syllable that can be decoded in a straightforward manner for example; *picnic*, *anthill*, and *lunchbox* are all examples of these. Show your child where to divide the sounds up into syllables (we call this segmentation).

Levels 8-12 cover just five new phonemes of the advanced code, these are sometimes known as the “long vowels”.

- Level 8. /ee/ as in sheep and treat
- Level 9. /ie/ as in pie and night
- Level 10. /oa/ as in boat and home
- Level 11. /ai/ as in pain and cake
- Level 12. /ue/ as in blue and spoon

As you will see there are many ways to write each of these phonemes and it is important that your child establishes this stage accurately. Other games that can be used to support the learning alongside the books are suggested on the website.

The practice page, with its slightly altered colouring, identifies the grapheme that will make the sound. The child has to learn that although there are a number of ways to make the sound only one will be the correct or accepted way of doing it. Visual memory is used to remember which one is correct.

You may notice that some camera words can now be fully decoded. Do see if your child notices this and congratulate him/her on this. Prompt if it is not noticed.

Supporting the advanced code.

Game 1: Looking Good!

For this game you will need to download and print a copy of the vowel digraph word lists and a copy of the “Looking Good” grids for each vowel digraph. E.g. /ai/ /ee/ /ie/ /oa/ and ew/ Start with /ai/. Ask your child to spell *hay*. Have your child write the word using the letter choice for each column. (See below) Sounding the word out as he does so. Discuss which one “Looks Good”. If he doesn’t know; point out which is the correct spelling for ‘hay’. If your child points to an incorrect spelling and says that it is the correct way to write ‘hay’; say something like, “Yes that does sound out ‘hay’ but we have all agreed to spell it like this.”

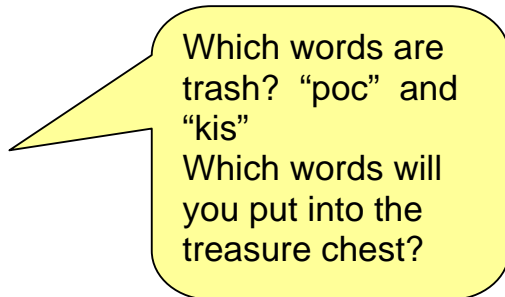
a baby apron	ai rain	ay day	a_e cake
ha ×	hai ×	hay ✓	ha_e ×

The words in blue help children to decide on the most likely choice.

Which word “Looks Good”?
Cross out all the incorrect spellings and highlight the good.

Game 2: Trash or Treasure

Have the correct words and a number of incorrect alternatives on cards. You can download these on coins from the www.getreadingright.com. These can be pulled from a bag (or even a sand tray or water tank) and then allocated to Trash or Treasure. The word is put in the "Treasure" box if it is sounded out and makes a 'real' word or is placed in the "Trash" if it is sounded out and is not a 'real' word.



For more games and activities to teach the advanced code; look on www.getreadingright.com under "Resources".

Onto the rest of the code

By now your child should be writing sentences using the words and skills that she has. We would expect phonetic attempts at the spelling of new and more complex words. Praise your child for this. Corrections need making only to those words and phonemes that have already been taught. Continued errors in an area suggest the need to go back and have some targeted practise.

Series three "Enjoying the ride" is in preparation. This will include more and longer sentences plus entertaining stories using the vocabulary that children have mastered. These stories are up to 250 words long and are designed to encourage fluency and the beginning of comprehension skills. Each book comes with guidance on how to include comprehension as a major part of the shared reading experience with your child. This series will take you further into the advanced code but, as always, the emphasis will be on the regularities of the language.

Learning to read is not only about successful decoding of words. We want our children to love books, literature and writing. The **Get Reading Right** books aim to provide a solid foundation for reading development. Take every opportunity to enjoy books and to encourage written communication. This way reading becomes a pleasure that will last a lifetime.

With best wishes

Get Reading Right