

Terminology

Phoneme: The smallest unit of sound that can be identified in words. We also use the term 'sound'. There are 44 phonemes or sounds in the English language.

Grapheme: A letter or group of letters used to represent a sound in writing. The way graphemes are used to represent sounds in our written language is known as the alphabetic code.

Decode: To break down ('sound out') a written word into sounds then blend the sounds together to read the word.

Digraph: A grapheme made of two letters that represent one sound. An example is the 'sh' in 'shop'. Your child may use the mantra 'two letters, one sound' when they spot a digraph.

Schwa: This is the name for the most common sound in English. It is the unstressed sound that we find in many words and can be spelled in many ways. It makes an 'uh' sound, which varies according to accent. Examples include: thu, better, carrot, balloon.

Split digraph: A vowel digraph that is split by a consonant. Examples include 'a-e' as in 'cake' (**ai** sound); 'e-e' as in 'athlete' (**ee** sound), 'i-e' as in 'time' (**igh** sound), 'o-e' as in 'bone' (**oa** sound) and 'u-e' as in 'tube' (**yoo** sound).

Trigraph: A grapheme made of three letters to represent one sound. An example is the 'igh' in 'sight'. Your child may use the mantra 'three letters, one sound' when they spot a trigraph.