



# Floppy's Phonics Sounds & Letters Guide



Teach the knowledge of the alphabetic code (the letter/s-sound correspondences) and the three core skills and their sub-skills

**Skill one: Decoding**  
(reading: blending or synthesising)

**Skill two: Encoding**  
(spelling: oral segmenting and selecting graphemes)

**Skill three: Handwriting**

**Sub-skill without print:**

Adult says the separate sounds " /sh/ /o/ /p/ ".

Children 'discern' or 'hear' the whole word 'dress' then say the whole word "shop".

Try not to say the sounds with an added 'schwa' or 'uh' sound on the end – say the sounds as close as possible to 'real speech sounds'.

If in doubt, to work out how to say the individual sounds, start with a whole spoken word and say it very, very slowly but as close as possible to the natural way of saying the word – and the individual sounds will become distinguishable as real speech sounds.

Note that vowel sounds are often low and loud compared to consonant sounds. Avoid monotone 'robot talk' as this may result in all the sounds having the same volume and pitch unlike real speech sounds.

**Sub-skill without print:**

Adult says the whole word "pen" very slowly so that the separate sounds start to become evident and then models how to orally segment (split up) the word into its separate sounds " /p/ /e/ /n/ ".

Children repeat the whole word "pen" and then repeat the separate sounds " /p/ /e/ /n/ ".

Eventually the Children can do this independently for any short words building up to longer words.

Begin to do the oral segmenting process with left hand, palm facing, to tally the sounds to thumb and fingers.

Make sure that Children know which is their left hand and right hand for this process. If everyone faces the same way, this is much easier.

**Do not repeat the whole word after saying the separate sounds. The last thing children should say and hear are the separate sounds to support their spelling – not the whole word.**

**Sub-skill:**

Hold the pencil with the correct tripod grip.

To make this child-friendly and fun, say "Froggy legs" [thumb and index finger] **grip the pencil at the end with the log under** [the middle finger].

Sit at a correct-height desk with good posture and practise writing or drawing on paper.

Use an incentive such as a beanbag frog or picture to place on the table of the children as a reminder.

Provide normal thickness pencils as small hands cannot grip fat pencils well enough.

**Sub-skill with print:**

Point to pre-printed graphemes that have been taught to date: "See the graphemes (letters or letter groups) and say the sounds."

Make sure that this routine is very frequent using Grapheme Flash Cards, Say the Sounds Posters

Avoid loud calling out as this will lead to the 'schwa' or 'uh' being added. Provide opportunities for slower-to-process or reserved Children to do this in quiet places and small groups or one to one.

**Sub-skill with print:**

Say the separate sounds as close to possible as real speech sounds that have been taught to date:

"Hear the sounds, point to the graphemes."

"Hear the sounds, write the graphemes."

Use Grapheme Tiles for Children to select when they cannot write well enough.

Children can air-write the graphemes as they begin to learn letter formation.

Introduce 'quickfire' activities for Children to write the graphemes on whiteboards or paper once they can handwrite.

**Air-writing for directionality of letter shape formation:**

When modelling air-writing, **do not face** the children and air-write in reverse, instead **face the same way as the children** and model the air-writing in the correct direction for both you and them.

Display an alphabet poster, or alphabet letter shapes, as a visual aid for upper and lower case letter shapes – with writing lines. Provide a small version to take home.

**Finger-tracing:** Use the index finger of the writing hand to trace pre-printed letter shapes.

**Pencil-tracing:** Trace pre-printed grey or dotted letter shapes with a pencil.

**Copying:** Copy letter shapes with finger or pencil.

### Core skill for decoding (blending):

1. Glance at (scan) the printed word from left to right to 'recognise' any letter groups.
2. Use the index finger to point directly under each grapheme (letters and letter groups) whilst saying the sounds as close to real speech-sounds as possible from left to right of the printed word.
3. Say the whole word whilst running the index finger left to right beneath the whole printed word.
4. Modify the pronunciation of the blended sounds into the real word's pronunciation if necessary.

If children cannot 'hear' the word when they have said the sounds, train them to have more attempts automatically – building up the speed and fluency at which they say the sounds.

Then, if necessary, the adult can say the sounds as close as possible to real speech and, sometimes, the child is then able to hear the word. Tick, or acknowledge, the letter/s-sound correspondences that the learner knew.

Make sure that there are supportive Frieze Posters nearby so that the Children can see the mnemonic prompts to remind them of the sounds.

Avoid doing too much for the children – this results in 'learned helplessness' - children may never get sufficient practice and independence to progress.

Do not restrict slow-to-learn pupils with only words consisting of **three letters and three sounds**. Model longer words, and provide longer words, as part of their daily practice as well as simple words.

### Core skill for encoding (spelling-with editing):

1. Adult stands and faces the same way as the children, to their 'left', and models how to raise the left hand, palm facing, to tally the separate sounds on to thumb and fingers.
2. Say the focus word slowly and tally each sound identified to thumb and fingers in turn.
3. Then, count how many sounds are identified and write 'sound dashes' top left of board or paper (draw the lines from left to right). The sound dashes are used to account for a grapheme per sound, but also act as **writing lines**.
4. Select Grapheme Tiles, or magnetic letters, or **write the graphemes** whilst saying each separate sound from beginning to end.
5. Finally, sound out and blend all-through-the word (as if blending it for the first time) to check the spelling. Then 'tick' the spelling.
6. If a sound and grapheme is missing, demonstrate how to use an 'arrow head' in the correct place to add the missing grapheme.

### Core skill for handwriting:

1. Correct tripod pencil grip (– be vigilant!)
2. Correct posture sitting at desk
3. Slightly slanted paper, use free hand to hold paper steady
4. Say the sounds whilst writing graphemes or words – making links between graphemes and sounds
  - Provide plenty of examples of letters, words and sentences on writing lines for learning correct position.
  - Provide writing lines for practising letter formation - mainly paper and pencil exercises.
  - Have very high expectations for pencil hold, letter formation and writing activities.

**NB:** Mini whiteboards can be fit-for-purpose for 'quick-fire show me' activities but they are **not suitable** for sustained writing beyond graphemes and word level and learning how to hand-write well.