

Term	Meaning
Adjacent consonants	Two or three consonants next to each other that represent different sounds. For example, bl in black. Notice here that bl makes the two different sounds b and l, whereas ck makes the single sound ck.
Alien words	These are made up nonsense words which the children can only read by sounding them out. There are a number of these words in the Year 1 phonic screening check and therefore schools teach the children that they may encounter made up 'alien words.' Some examples are words such as brond (b-r-o-n-d) and fruch (f-r-u-ch)
Blending	Blending involves looking at a written word and merging the sounds together in order to pronounce it. This is important for reading. For example, j-a-m blended together reads the word jam.
Common exception words	Words that appear commonly in both texts and spoken language, but which can't be decoded using normal phonics rules. This could be because they don't follow normal spelling rules or contain unusual letter combinations. E.g. because, said
Consonant	The letters of the alphabet (apart from the vowels a, e, i, o and u).
Consonant digraph	A digraph that is made up of two consonants (sh in shop and th in bath)
CVC words	A consonant-vowel-consonant word, such as cat, pin or top.
CCVC words	Consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant words such as clap and from.
CVCC words	Consonant-vowel-consonant-consonant words such as mask and belt.
Digraph	A grapheme made up of two letters that makes one sound (sh in shop and ch in much).
Grapheme	Graphemes are the written representation of sounds. A grapheme may be one letter (f), two letters (ir), three letters (igh) or four letters in length (ough).
Grapheme-phoneme	Knowing your GPCs means being able to hear a phoneme and knowing what grapheme to use to represent it. This is helpful for spelling. It also means seeing a grapheme and

correspondences (GPCs)	knowing the phoneme that relates to it, which is important for reading.
Oral Blending	This involves hearing phonemes and being able to merge them together to make a word. Children need to develop this skill before they will be able to blend written words.
Oral Segmenting	This is the act of hearing a whole word and then splitting it up into the phonemes that make it. Children need to develop this skill before they will be able to segment words to spell them.
Phoneme	Phonemes are the smallest unit of speech-sounds which make up a word. If you change a phoneme in a word, you would change its meaning. For example, there are three phonemes in the word sit /s/-/i/-/t/. If you change the phoneme /s/ for /f/, you have a new word, fit. If you change the phoneme /t/ in fit for a /sh/, you have a new word, fish – /f/-/i/-/sh/. There are around 44 phonemes in English and they are represented by graphemes in writing.
Schwa	Schwa is the name for the most common sound in English. It is the unstressed sound that we find in many words; it makes an 'uh' sound, which varies according to accent. Adding a schwa to a phoneme means it is not a pure sound e.g. 's' becomes 's-ugh' etc.
Segmenting	Segmenting involves breaking up a word that you hear into its sounds. Writing graphemes to represent the sounds in the word means children can spell words. For example, the word jam is segmented into the sounds j-a-m.
Split digraph	A digraph that is split between a consonant (a-e in make). A split digraph usually changes the sound of the first vowel. For example, compare the pronunciation between man and made.
Tricky words	Words that are commonly used in English, but they have spelling patterns which make them difficult to read and write using introductory phonic knowledge. For example, said, of and was.
Trigraph	A grapheme made up of three letters that makes one sound (igh in high).
Vowel	The letters a, e, i, o and u.