



Foundation Stage - reading & writing information

- **Little & Often** - children will learn much more easily if they are exposed to the new learning *every day*. Reading and practising phonics is much more beneficial if you try for 5-10 minutes *every day* rather than a longer period once or twice a week.
- **Many words are not phonetic** - there are lots of words which you just have to learn by sight. These are ones which don't follow 'normal' phonetic patterns. The, said, there are just a few examples. You cannot 'sound' out sight words, you have to *spell* them.
- **Digraphs/trigraphs** - are 2 (di) or 3 (tri) letters (graph) which make one sound. For example, igh in the words night and light. Here it is **very** important that children are saying the letter names which make up the sound. The sound oa, (coat) is not using individual sounds o and a, as the word is not c-o-a-t.
- **Sounds or letters** - in the early days of learning to read and write, words generally have the same number of letters as sounds. Hop has 3 letters, and 3 sounds. However, as children learn more and more digraphs & trigraphs this changes. The word shop has 4 letters, but 3 sounds (sh-o-p), and the word church has 6 letters, but only 3 sounds (ch-ur-ch).
- **Placement can be important** - sounds have lots of different ways that they can be written. For example, the sound ay can be a (acorn), ai (rain), ay (day), eigh (eight), etc. But there is usually a pattern as to where these are used. 'ai' doesn't come at the end of words, but in the middle (rain, main, sail), and 'ay' tends to come at the end (pay, day, may, way). Of course, compound words, suffixes and prefixes changes this, but that is not something to worry about in Reception.
- **Rhyming helps** - children are naturally attracted to rhymes from a young age and developing their ability to hear and make rhymes is important from before they start school. This is because knowing which words rhyme can help with spelling. If you can spell 'all', then you can spell ball, fall, call, wall, hall.
- **'Sounding out' has a shelf-life** - although at the very beginning of their phonics journey children are encouraged to 'sound out' in order to build sounds for reading, this should not become a habit that they hang on to for too long. Within a few months they should be able to sound out most words in their heads, and then just say the word aloud.
- **What to write** - on the whole, children will copy whatever writing you are doing, and will always want to write for a real purpose. So, asking them to write the shopping list, or writing a note to Grandma will usually gain their interest. Early



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in Reception, their list may consist of bd (bread), ez (eggs), mk (milk). It will then move on to include the middle sounds - bred, egz, mlk etc.

- **Letter formation** - correct letter formation from the start is really important. It is very difficult to change the habits of incorrect letter formation later. There are no letters that begin at the bottom, and most 'round' letters use an anti-clockwise movement, not clockwise. Similarly, the 'r' group of letters must start at the top and go down, and back up before going over.
- **Letter families** - letters are grouped into families for ease of learning to form them correctly;



Although this may seem like an awful lot of information the children really do take it all in their stride, and it does come as second nature very quickly. We are always here to help you in any way we can.