

Focus on Phonics

Year 1 Phonics Reading Check - information for parents

The statutory phonics reading check is for children in Year 1. Administered individually – probably by your child’s own teacher or one known to them - it consists of 40 words, and takes about 5 to 10 minutes.

The sole aim of the check is to measure how your child is progressing in phonics.

If the check shows that your child has gaps in their knowledge of letter-sounds and difficulties with blending them to read words, it will enable the school to provide extra support in the coming year.

If your child already reads well, they will still take the test. It will check whether they are using their phonic knowledge to read words, or have learnt lots of words from memory and now have a good sight vocabulary. That is why some nonsense (or alien / fake) words are included – to make sure children actually sound out all through the word to read it. The nonsense words will be shown to your child with a picture of a monster and they will be asked to tell their teacher what sort of monster it is by reading the word.

The check will spot any gaps in phonic knowledge and where additional support might be required.

There is already a lot of testing in schools, but despite this, a large number of children are still leaving primary school unable to read properly. This tests the very skill that underpins all the other reading skills such as reading fluency, reading with expression or reading comprehension. These are vital skills, and highly important so your child understands what they have read, but your child needs to learn how to actually read (decode) words first.

The table below shows the words used in previous checks. Words in red are ‘alien’ words. If your child is in Year 1, you might like to use this as a guide to how they might perform when they take the check at the end of Year 1.

The ‘threshold’ for the checks taken so far has been 32 words out of 40 – children reading 32+ words correctly were considered to have met the required standard.

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2012 Phonics Screening Check

Section 1 Words		Section 2 Words	
pib		kigh	
vus		girst	
yop		baim	
elt		yune	
desh		flods	
chab		groiks	
poil		strom	
queep		splaw	
stin		fair	
proom		flute	
sarps		goat	
thend		shine	
chip		crept	
jazz		shrubs	
farm		scrap	
thorn		stroke	
stop		index	
truck		turnip	
jump		waiting	
lords		portrait	

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2013 Phonics Screening Check

Section 1 Words		Section 2 Words	
fot		quigh	
keb		herks	
gan		jorb	
ulp		zale	
poth		bluns	
shan		skarld	
veen		splot	
quorg		strabe	
drap		toy	
flarm		spike	
lect		fuel	
voisk		name	
thin		props	
peck		spoilt	
torn		scram	
cheek		strike	
trap		panic	
snarl		second	
milk		tantrum	
moist		reaching	

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2014 Phonics Screening Check

Section 1 Words		Section 2 Words	
vol		jair	
teg		clain	
jat		yewn	
ind		tabe	
tull		clisk	
shog		thrand	
foid		strad	
thard		scroy	
frem		nigh	
cloin		brown	
bulm		main	
harnd		rude	
quiz		drink	
back		crowds	
doom		splat	
short		stripe	
freed		comic	
dress		giving	
fund		pumpkin	
think		fighters	

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2015 Phonics Screening Check

Section 1 Words		Section 2 Words	
fip		yair	
pon		blies	
hab		keam	
ulb		whape	
dack		braft	
chob		thrant	
nurt		sprop	
queet		strow	
plap		law	
froin		glued	
melp		zoom	
heent		rice	
shed		grand	
long		cloaks	
soil		scrap	
chart		strike	
crab		river	
fresh		diving	
wink		beehive	
shuts		midnight	

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2016 Phonics Screening Check

Section 1 Words		Section 2 Words	
lig		jigh	
mep		woats	
gax		rird	
emp		phope	
beff		glips	
shup		floost	
doil		splam	
charb		stribе	
frex		stair	
criff		haunt	
haps		lied	
barst		wove	
chin		drank	
deck		treats	
horn		scram	
queen		stroke	
tram		arrow	
press		forest	
self		wishing	
keeps		brighter	

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2017 Phonics Screening Check

Section 1 Words		Section 2 Words	
dat		tay	
cag		sloam	
rin		zued	
ept		meve	
jash		clend	
quib		braits	
coid		scrug	
quass		splue	
glog		high	
blard		feast	
disp		goal	
murbs		shape	
chum		trunk	
kick		groups	
reef		straw	
short		scribe	
blot		model	
greet		person	
dust		chapter	
parks		reptiles	

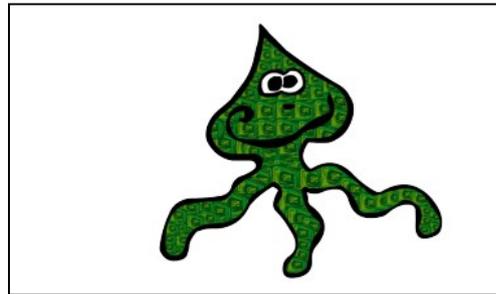
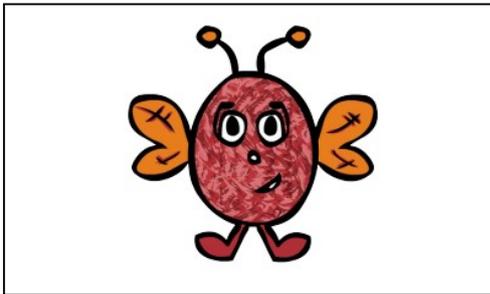
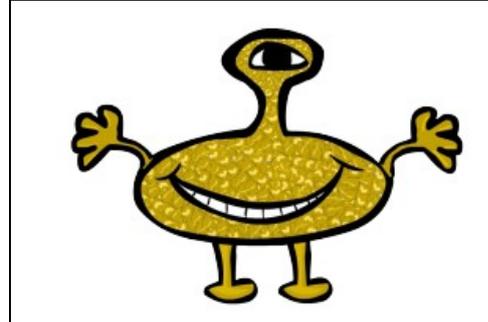
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2018 Phonics Screening Check

Section 1 Words		Section 2 Words	
reb		var	
wup		slirt	
jub		weaf	
eps		pobe	
vuss		flisp	
quob		braint	
zook		scrid	
chack		splote	
skap		twice	
blorn		gloom	
meft		turn	
veems		mode	
chop		blast	
sing		groans	
dart		spray	
shock		strike	
flat		delay	
skill		modern	
gift		saucers	
coins		charming	

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Friendly alien images – can be used alongside ‘alien’ words to indicate to your child that this will not be a word that they have heard before.



Some of the graphemes used in the check represent a number of different phonemes (sounds). When decoding a real word in the check, your child will be expected to select the correct phoneme for the word, for example the ‘ow’ in ‘blow’ should not be pronounced as the ‘ow’ in ‘cow’. However, when decoding a pseudo-word, all plausible alternative pronunciations are acceptable.

If you want to make up ‘alien’ words yourself, remember to use words that contain common spelling and pronunciation patterns. Children who have a strong visual memory may pick up bad spelling habits by decoding a non-word like ‘bac’ – it is best to use less familiar real words to avoid this problem. This will also have the advantage of expanding your child’s vocabulary at the same time, as you can discuss the meaning of the word once they have ‘decoded’ it using their phonic knowledge.