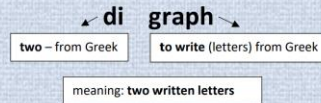


What is a digraph?

A **digraph** is when two letters represent one speech sound in a word (phoneme).



A **consonant digraph** is when two letters represent a consonant sound, e.g.

the letters s+h spell the sound /sh/ in the word 'ship'.

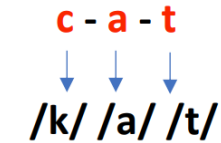
A **vowel digraph** is when two letters represent a vowel sound, e.g.

the letters a+i spell the sound /ae/ in the word 'rain'.

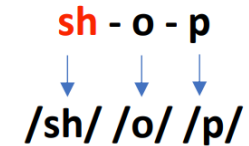
What is a grapheme?

A grapheme is a **spelling** of a sound (phoneme) in a word. A grapheme can be spelled by 1- 4 letters.

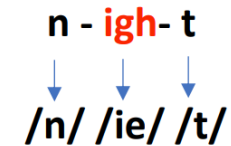
1-letter grapheme: each sound is spelled by 1 letter:



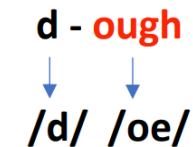
2-letter grapheme: a sound spelled by 2 letters:



3-letter grapheme: a sound spelled by 3 letters:



4-letter grapheme: a sound spelled by 4 letters:



What is a phoneme?

A phoneme is smallest unit of sound in a word, e.g. the word 'cat' has three phonemes /k/ /a/ /t/.

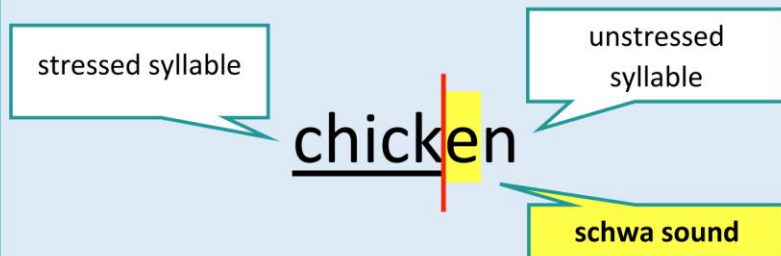
Why do we need phonemes?

The English Alphabetic Code is based on the 44 phonemes in the English language. The letters of the alphabet represent those sounds with 175 letter combinations. Yes, it's complicated!

When we teach reading, we need to show how the alphabetic code works: that the **letters** on the page **spell sounds in words**.

What is a schwa?

A schwa is a weak vowel sound in an unstressed syllable



'e' is a schwa because it is a weak vowel sound in an unstressed syllable. It gets swallowed up when we pronounce the word 'chickin' or 'chick'n'. We need to teach children to use their 'spelling voice' in order to spell the word correctly and not as they hear it.

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Phonology, phonological awareness, phonemic awareness, phonics

What's the difference?

Phonology – an area of linguistics that deals with speech sound systems and sound patterns of spoken language

Phonological awareness – the ability to break down words into smaller parts: syllables (mag-net), alliteration (Bobby beetle bounced..), onset and rime (m-at) and phonemic awareness (m-a-t)

Phonemic awareness – the ability to identify and manipulate individual sounds in words (to blend, segment and manipulate sounds orally)

Phonics – the teaching of:

- letter/sound correspondences for reading and spelling (c-a-t = /k/ /a/ /t/)
- blending of individual letters/sounds for reading 'm a t'
- segmenting of individual sounds/letters for spelling 'm a t'

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How to teach blending

Method 1

'Decode and blend'

"Say the sounds and read the word."

/m/ /a/ /t/ → "mat"

m a t

Learner says the sounds in the word one at a time, pointing to each sound. Then he/she moves finger under the whole word, blending all the sounds into the word.

Greater load on working memory

Method 2

'Stretch and blend'

"Stretch the sounds and push them together to read the word."

"mmmmaaat" → "mat"

m a t

Teacher points to the first letter/sound, asking learner to say the sound and stretch it until the finger reaches the next sound in the word. Teacher moves finger under the whole word, as learner blends all the sounds into the word.

Lesser load on working memory

Method 3

'Add and blend'

"Blend the first two sounds, then add the next sound."

m a t

"ma"

m a t

"ma" + "t" → "mat"

Teacher conceals third letter/sound. Teacher moves finger under the first two sounds and asks the learner to blend just two sounds, e.g. "m"+"a" = "ma". Teacher repeats 'ma'. Teacher reveals last letter/sound and asks learner to add 't'. Teacher points under the whole word as learner reads 'mat'.

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