

Phonic Spelling Assessment Introduction

Do we need a test?

For many children, it is possible to assess their growing phonic knowledge and skills in spelling while observing them in phonics lessons and during guided and independent writing. However, it is sometimes useful or necessary to check children's decoding or encoding separately. This test is designed to help with the assessment of phonic knowledge and skills for spelling, and can be used alongside the alien word decoding tasks to support assessment against the *Letters and Sounds* phonic phases.

Is there a shorter assessment?

You can use any phonically regular words corresponding to the phonic phases to check children's progress. This is a very swift way of checking if a child is likely to be spelling at Phase 2, 3, 4 or 5:

Working 1-1 with a child, ask them to spell the following words one at a time:

pan, plan, plant, plain...

Then ask: *Can you write any other ways of spelling the /ai sound?*

Listen and watch:

Is their oral segmentation correct, even if the letters they write are wrong?

Can they find the correct graphemes if given access to a wall display or phoneme card, but cannot remember the letters without?

Can they spell using magnetic letters if they cannot write the letters?

NB. If a child appears to have difficulties segmenting the first two words, check oral segmentation using the *Letters and Sounds* assessment of oral blending and segmentation.

Administering the test:

You can use this 'test' in a number of ways, including:

- Working 1-1 with a child, asking them to write each word in turn – or make it using magnetic letters – stopping when the level is clearly beyond the child's phonic skills or knowledge. This is particularly useful for children at the earliest stages of phonics as you can check their oral segmentation and which letters they *think* they are writing/selecting, rather than just assessing an end product. If the test is administered 1-1, it can be useful to note what the child says, to put alongside their spelling attempts eg. they may sound out the word sit as /s/i/t/, but write *sap*, or ask '*How do you do a /t/?*'
- Group or class administration as a test, encouraging children to work independently and make their best attempt at each word. This enables you to gain a regular snapshot of all children's phonic spelling, but this form of administration would be inappropriate with very young children and children with special needs. NB. If the test is administered as a class or group, every effort should be made to prevent children sounding out themselves so loudly that others can hear, and from copying one another's work;
- The test can be administered in one sitting or in two halves (1-6, 7-12) over two days in the same week if concentration is likely to be a problem.
- Words should be pronounced clearly several times, and repeated in a sentence. If a child has obviously misunderstood (eg. writes 'dog' instead of 'sit'), they should be asked to write the correct word. Encourage children to make any changes to their spellings clearly eg. crossing out the mistake and rewriting the whole word;

Marking the test:

As this assessment is designed to cover Phases 2 – 5, some of the words may be beyond a pupil's current phonic level, and may also be beyond the level s/he has been taught. However, we are interested in their attempts, and what that tells us about their growing spelling abilities.

Check each attempt at a word against the criteria for each Letters and Sounds phonic phase, and come to an overall 'best fit' judgement of the phonic phase at which the child is spelling. For those unfamiliar with the phases, a guidance document for assessing each word is included with these resources.

Phonic Spelling Assessment Test Administration Instructions

Introduction:

Say something like...

You are going to have a go at spelling some words. Have a go at them all and do your best. Some of the words might be a bit hard, but just have a go and do as much as you can.

I want you to try on your own, so I'm not going to help you sound out or write the words this time. You try sounding them out and writing them by yourself.

During the test:

Give general praise for effort and encouragement throughout eg. *Well done. You're having a really good go. Remember to listen for all the sounds/phonemes*

BUT avoid giving any hints eg. Do **not** say: *Can you hear the last sound?* or *Remember, two letters, one sound!*

Word by word prompts:

1. **sit** Have a look at the picture. What do you think the man will do? He will **sit**. That's the first word I'd like you to write down: '**sit**'.
2. **peg** The washing is kept on the line with a **peg**. (Phase 2)
3. **shell** At the seaside I found a **shell**. (Phase 2)
4. **tent** We went camping in a **tent**. (Phase 2 graphemes, Phase 4 skill)
5. **clap** He did well so we gave him a **clap**. (Phase 2 graphemes, Phase 4 skill)
6. **rain** We got wet in the **rain**. (Phase 3)
7. **chick** A baby hen is called a **chick**. (Phase 3)
8. **goat** This animal is called a **goat**. (Phase 3)
9. **peach** This fruit is called a **peach**. (Phase 5 – or 3, if spelt peech)
10. **spoon** Mummy Bear stirred the porridge with a **spoon**. (Phase 4)
11. **boatman** I looked through my telescope and saw a **boatman**. (Phase 3, two syllables)
12. **.starlight** At night you can see the **starlight**. (Phase 4, two syllables)
13. **plane** You fly in the sky in a **plane**. (Phase 3/4/5/6 depending on response)
14. **phone** My friend rang me on the **phone**. (Phase 3/5/6 depending on response)

Notes:

- If children require more explanation, direct them to the picture and repeat the word clearly.
- Ensure the target word is at the **end** of any sentence you use.

Assessing Phonic Phases using the York Spelling Test

Use the child's attempts at spelling to provide evidence towards an assessment of their phonic phase for segmentation. Use the evidence from all attempted words to decide on the likely overall phonic phase. The notes below may help you decide.

| Target spelling | | Some common responses | Contribution to assessment information |
|-----------------|-----------|--|---|
| 1 | sit | s, t, d, etc st sit | Check oral segmentation (L+S p204-5) and GPC knowledge (L+S p 200-2) Evidence of Phase 2 spelling |
| 2 | peg | p, b, d, g etc. pg | Check oral segmentation and GPC knowledge as above Evidence of Phase 2 spelling |
| 3 | shell | sel sell shell | Check GPC knowledge of digraphs (L+S p.205) May be indicator of Phase 2 Evidence of within Phase 3 – knows some digraphs |
| 4 | tent | tet ten tent | Evidence of Phase 2 or 3 Evidence of Phase 4 skill of additional consonants. |
| 5 | clap | cap lap calp clap | Evidence of Phase 2 or 3 Check oral segmentation and auditory memory Evidence of Phase 4 skill of additional consonants. |
| 6 | rain | Ran rAn rayn rain | Might be Phase 2 – does not know long vowels OR might be Phase 5 – knows alternative pronunciation of 'a' Evidence of Phase 3 (if only uses 'ay' for /ai/) or Phase 5. Evidence of Phase 3 (or 4 or 5 or 6) |
| 7 | chick | jic chic chik chikc chick | Check discrimination of sounds eg. j/ch/sh. Indicator of Phase 2 Phase 2/3. Evidence of Phase 3 – check grapheme knowledge Evidence of Phase 3 (or 4 or 5 or 6) |
| 8 | goat | gt gait goot got gaot goat | Check oral segmentation and GPC knowledge Might be Phase 2 – does not know long vowels, OR might be Phase 5 – knows alternative pronunciation of 'o'. Evidence of Phase 3 – check grapheme knowledge Evidence of Phase 3 (or 4 or 5 or 6) |
| 9 | peach | pj pch pich peeck peetch peach | Evidence of Phase 2. Evidence of Phase 3 (or Phase 4 or Phase 5) Evidence of Phase 6 |
| 10 | spoon | sn sun soon poon spun spoon | Evidence of Phase 2 Evidence of Phase 3 - not Phase 4 Evidence of Phase 4 skill of additional consonants. Evidence of Phase 4 (or 5 or 6) |
| 11 | boatman | bmn botman bot man boaman bowman boat man boatman | Evidence of Phase 2 Can segment into syllables Indicator of Phase 2 (+) Evidence of within Phase 3 – check oral segmentation of two syllable words Evidence of Phase 3 (or 4 or 5 or 6) |
| 12 | starlight | slt sarllt sar llt sarlit star llt sdarllt star light / liet / lite | Evidence of Phase 2 Can segment into syllables Indicator of Phase 2 (+) May be using capital 'l' for /ie/ grapheme Evidence of Phase 4(+) Evidence of Phase 4, 5 or 6 |
| 13 | plane | pn pan pAn plan plain plane | Evidence of Phase 2 Evidence of Phase 4 skill of additional consonants. May be using Phase 5 knowledge of alternative pronunciation of 'a' Evidence of Phase 4 or 5 Evidence of Phase 5 or 6 |
| 14 | phone | fon foan foan fone, fown, foen, phon, phoan, phown phone | Evidence of Phase 2 Evidence of Phase 3 (or Phase 5) Evidence of Phase 5 Evidence of Phase 5 or 6 |