

Phonics Phase 6

A Guide for Parents

Most children will progress to Phase 6 of the Letters and Sounds phonics programme in year 2. They will have taken the Phonics Screening Check at the end of year 1 and teachers will have a good idea whether they are ready to move on or need further work and/or consolidation of their existing skills. The aim of Phase 6 is for children to build on their existing phonic skills and become better, more accurate spellers and more fluent readers. Spelling will always lag behind reading, as it is more difficult. By the time they start Phase 6, children will have already learnt to read and write the most frequently occurring sounds in the English language and to read many familiar words without needing to sound them out first. When a word is unfamiliar, they will often be able to work it out quickly by saying the sounds and blending them together silently.

During Phase 6, children will revise the sounds they have learnt during Phase 5, especially the vowel sounds as these can be difficult to remember – for example, the sound ‘ay’ can appear in several different forms: **play**, **wait**, **cake**, **weigh**, **great**.

They learn how to change regular verbs into the simple past tense by adding the suffix ‘-ed’, for example walk/walked, jump/jumped, bake/baked. (A regular verb follows the ‘ed’ rule; an irregular verb changes in a different way, e.g. fly/flew, sing/sang.)

Children are taught to find the tricky part of spellings and use strategies (such as mnemonics, analogies and syllables) to memorise these parts, e.g. ‘**big** elephants **can** **always** understand **small** elephants’ to remember the spelling of the word ‘because’.

They learn how to form comparative and superlative adjectives, and how some words change their spelling when this is done, e.g. big/bigger/biggest, happy/happier/happiest.

By the end of Phase 6, the aim is that children become fluent readers who have good levels of comprehension and recognise on sight most of the 200 high-frequency words (see [200 High-Frequency Words for Phase 6](#)).

Support your child by helping them to learn and recall the spelling rules they are taught. Show a word and ask your child to tell you how to make it, for example, plural or past tense.

Children learn how prefixes and suffixes (letters before and after words, such as ‘un-’ or ‘-ful’) change the meaning or purpose of a word, and they also learn how the spelling of some words changes when suffixes are added.

They learn how to create plurals of regular nouns by adding -s or -es (irregular nouns change in a different way to make the plural, e.g. child/children, woman/women).

They learn how to use an apostrophe for contraction, e.g. do not/don’t, cannot/can’t.

Children learn how to spell common homophones (words that sound the same but have a different spelling and meaning), e.g. their/there/they’re, two/to/too.

Practise reading and writing words where new rules are used, encouraging your child to think about the rules they know and decide which rule applies to the word in front of them.

When your child receives phonics homework from school, make sure you are supporting them to complete this. Set some time aside every day to work on reading and phonics. Your child's teacher will be able to help you if you are unsure what to do.

Most importantly, keep reading with your child every day. Let them read to you, but also make sure that you are reading more complex books to them and they are continuing to hear stories and other texts read aloud.

Keep working through your child's 'high-frequency' word list - play different games to keep things interesting. There are lots of ideas in [Ten Ways to Practise Phase 6 Phonics](#).

While many schools follow the Letters and Sounds programme, some follow other schemes, so it is worth checking with your child's teacher if you are unsure how best to support them.

