

Stage 2 (c age 5-6)

ENGLISH

Reading

I've tried in these pages to provide everything you need to teach your child to read, but here are some recommendations if you'd like further ideas, support and explanations. The [Jolly Phonics](#) books are often recommended and I used to use them, but they are expensive and, I think, not what you want if you are primarily interested in teaching reading. The most straightforward book I have used (and the one on which my own ideas are largely based) is Step by Step Reading by Mona Mcnee. Mona wrote this handy little book after teaching her Downs Syndrome son to read: the school had given up on him but she succeeded by using a phonic approach. She wanted to share her knowledge with other parents, not to make lots of money - which is why she makes the whole book and a huge variety of additional resources available on her website '[catphonics](#)'. I would strongly recommend that if you are interested in teaching reading by the phonic method, you visit her site and scroll down about three-quarters of the homepage where you will find a few excellent articles about this method of reading. You can find further resources (and instructional videos from Mona) at the website '[phonics4free](#)'

READING LEVEL 2

Aim 1: To recognise all capitals

Continue to check knowledge of capitals, and use the capitals matching game from age 4-5 to check/reinforce.

Aim 2: To introduce blending in one-syllable words (tent, pond, crab, club, pram etc)

You need to show how letters can be blended or run together into a smooth sound. There's no need to teach these separately as 'blends' as schools used to do: just deal with them as they crop up. Give plenty of practice with this as it's an important step in reading smoothly. You can use the same methods as before for teaching new words.

One tip is to start with words which blend at the end (such as ten -t, lam-p) as this is slightly easier than having to deal with the blend at the beginning (such as 'pr-am', 'dr-um' etc.).

If your child struggles, try giving him a card with the first three letters - have him read this then add a final letter card (e.g. give him 'ten' then have him add the 't' to make tent). This is why blends at the end are easier to start with.

You can print out blends flashcards [here](#)

You can find a word list for blended words [here](#).

Aim 3: To read simple phonetic words of more than one syllable (rabbit, camera etc)

This is just the next step after three and four letter words and doesn't usually present any problems, but it widens the child's reading vocabulary enormously.

Here you need to explain carefully that longer words are often made up of 'sections', each with its own vowel sound. We call these sections 'syllables' (e.g. rab -bit, cam- era, bas-ket). It might help at first to make separate cards for each syllable and have the child slide them together as he reads

them. Highlight the fact that there is a vowel in each: this helps tremendously with spelling strategies later on!

Use the same methods as for three letter words (flashcards, matching cards, simple 'books').

[Click here for flashcards for two syllable words.](#)

[Here is a list of simple two-syllable words.](#)

Aim 4: To read and illustrate simple phrases

One good way to progress from reading single words to reading several words together is this: write a phrase (not a full sentence) on a piece of paper and have the child read the phrase and draw a picture for it.

Make sure you only use words the child can easily read at this point, i.e. **Level 1 and 2**: three and four letter single syllable words, words with simple blends and longer simple words of two syllables (no 'magic e' words yet, or digraphs like 'sh' and 'oo'). And try not to choose something really difficult to draw!

For example, you could start with very simple Level 1 phrases (e.g. 'a big red bus', 'a sad man'), then include some blends (e.g. 'six fat slugs', 'ten black dots') and then some two-syllable words (e.g. 'a black kitten', 'a pink rabbit'). These can be as silly as you like.

[Here are some phrase sheets using Levels 1 and 2](#)

READING LEVEL 3

Aim 1: To know vowels have two sounds, and be able to read 'magic e' words.

Note: What I affectionately call 'magic e' is technically now known as the 'split digraph', just in case you want to look it up on google!

It's worth explaining 'magic e' here as it will crop up very soon in any real book your child tries to read. Make a set of cards with illustrations showing the 'long' sound of each vowel (e.g. an 'ice-cream' for long 'i', an acorn for long 'a', and so on) and practice saying them with your child (some children will already have picked this up and have no trouble: others need a bit of practice).

I like the idea from Jolly Grammar of illustrating the 'magic' as stars jumping over from the 'e' to the vowel and changing the vowel's sound (whilst losing its own). You can make a set of cards with the first part of the magic e words, but with the 'e's cut out separately. Then make some 'magic' (a shooting star from yellow card) to bridge the 'e' and the vowel it is changing. The child simply adds an 'e' to the base word and then adds the magic like a bridge linking the 'e' and the vowel: he says the new sound of the vowel and reads the word. It's quite a good way to make it visual and fix it in your child's mind.

For an easier option, simply make some flash cards: on one side write a 'magic e' word, on the other have the matching picture.

[Here is a list of 'magic e' words](#)

[Click here for some 'magic-e' flashcards to print off.](#)

Don't introduce soft 'c' and 'g' until your child is confident with the concept of 'magic e' (unless

your child has already noticed them already and is curious). You can teach these once you've covered soft c and g (that comes next).

***NB** there are two other types of silent 'e' the child will come across which seem to serve no purpose: 'e' added in the second syllable of a word (because not only each word but each syllable within a word ordinarily needs a vowel – e.g. 'litt-le'); and 'archaic e' (which used to have a purpose but is now redundant – e.g. 'are', 'there'). It's helpful if you know why they are there and can explain why they don't do 'the magic'!*

Aim 2: To know that c, g, s and y have alternative sound

Children get quite confused when they try to read real books and find single letters making different sounds. It helps to teach them to be on the lookout for these four letters which can be tricky. The 'y' sounds are particularly important since so many otherwise very easy words can trip up a child if he does not know that 'y' can say 'ee' at the end of a word (jelly, welly, bunny, tummy, runny).

At this point, you don't need to teach that 'c' *always* changes its sound when it is followed by e, i, or y, and that 'g' only *sometimes* does so, but it helps if you are aware of it. It'll come up later in spelling rules. Just point it out whenever it crops up if your child is trying to read 'real' books and he'll soon get the hang of it.

To teach this, I pencil the alternative sounds in small letters on the alphabet chart/book/cards we are using (in bold as follows):

c can say **s** (as in city)

g can say **j** (as in gym)

s can say **z** (as in has)

y can say **ee**, short **i** or long **'i'** (as in jelly, pyramid and cycle)

Reinforce this whenever it crops up as your child tries to read. Knowing the alternative sounds of 'y' is really essential when trying to read as 'y' only uses its consonant sound at the beginning of a word or syllable, so most of the time it is using one of its vowel sounds.

[Here](#) are some flashcards for alternatives sounds of c, g and s

[Here](#) are some flashcards for the alternatives to 'y'

Click [here](#) for a list of c, g and s words, and [here](#) for a list of 'y' words.

Aim 3: To read and illustrate simple phrases with new sounds

Continue with the same format as before, but expand to use magic e words and new sounds for c, g, s and y. Practice 'magic e' before moving onto new letter sounds (e.g. a big pink cake; a snake with a rake; jelly in a welly etc.)

Click [here](#) for some phrase worksheets for Level 3 words

READING LEVEL 4

Aim 1: To learn the first set of digraphs

Note: if you are not used to the terms phoneme, grapheme and digraph and trigraph, [here](#) is a good explanation of them and how they relate to reading. If you want something more official, [here](#) is the government guide to teaching 'higher phonics'.

Symbol-sound combinations are currently referred to as GPC's- i.e. 'grapheme-phoneme correspondences'. Personally I don't use these technical terms with my young children when teaching reading (I just call each digraph a 'sound' and say, 'This is how we write this sound: 'oo' says 'ooo'.) Don't confuse things right now by trying to explain that the same sound can be spelled several different ways (long a can be a-e, ai, or ay): that will come in later with spelling.

You can introduce the digraphs in any order you like, but it makes sense to start with the most common. I tend to start with these six as just knowing these will give the child a good skill base from which to decode hundreds more words:

oo, ee, th, sh, ch and ar

To teach these, I simply make a card for each digraph with the digraph written clearly on the front, and a second set of cards with pictures of words containing the digraphs. Make sure the words are *easy* words which he can read (such as *moon, bee, bath, shop, chip, car*). Starting with the first digraph, give him the card and matching pictures and read them with him until he can understand the new sound.

When he's got the hang of a new sound, simply repeat the same three steps that you used before:

- make a set of cards with a suitable word on one side, and a picture on the back – have him read the word and check the picture
- make two sets of cards, one with words and one with pictures to match up
- make a small 'book' containing words to practice the particular digraph he is learning

When he has learned two digraphs, try giving him the original cards and mix them all up so that he has more of a challenge in sorting them (if you write the digraph on the back of the picture he will be able to self-check his work). If this is not a challenge, give him three sets mixed up and so on.

Click [here](#) for word lists for these six digraphs

[Here](#) is a set of flashcards for the first six digraphs

Note: It is highly possible that your child may 'get' reading before he has completed even half of these GPCs (many children pick up reading without studying them directly at all). If he's already reading, studying these letter combinations may suddenly appear very tedious: it is better to simply encourage him to read as much as possible and point out unfamiliar letter combinations as he comes across them. Perhaps you /he could make a note of them in a book or on a chart.

All the GPCs will be covered in spelling at 7+.

Aim 2: To read and illustrate phrases with words using new digraphs

As before, once your child is confident with a new digraph, introduce it into your 'six fat slugs' phrase illustration game. Each newly learned digraph will expand the amount of words you can use enormously. Don't forget to start using 'the' quite soon as this is a most essential word and best learned very early on.

[Here](#) are some phrase worksheets for Level 4 words.

Writing

Aim: To practice and master pre- handwriting patterns

For handwriting I like the hand created by Christopher Jarman: it is neat, simple and elegant, and Jarman takes you right from pre-writing patterns through letter families in print to cursive with plenty of practice in each. His books are sadly out of print, but you can get this one, '[The Development of Handwriting skills](#)' second hand for about £1.50. Also, you can download the 'Jarman' font so that you can produce your own worksheets (he also offers 'Jardotty' which is the same font but written in dots so your child can go over it more easily). These are both available free on the 'Net.

For my own children, I just copied the page they needed, stuck it on card and laminated it. Then they would go over the patterns, letters or words with a whiteboard marker (my children have all quite enjoyed this exercise).

Just work on the patterns little and often once your child is ready (often later for boys than girls). Working through these systematically lays a good foundation and avoids establishing bad habits which can be difficult to correct later on.

If your child is obviously ready to move on, start practising the first set of letter families in a simple print (see English Age 6-7)

Using language

Aim: To memorise poems

Choose some easy rhyming verses. Read the poem for a few days then see if your child can supply the rhyming words. Encourage him to learn the whole poem and illustrate it. Then he can show off his work and recite the poem for someone. Keep these in a nice hard back book and he'll have his own poetry book which will be a treasury for him later on. Make this enjoyable, not a chore!

If you're looking for another book to extend your collection, try the [Walker Book of Poetry for Children](#), out of print but you can find it for pennies second hand.