

Parent's Guide to the Year 1 Phonic Screening Check



2026



What is the phonics screening check?

The phonics screening check is a short assessment to confirm whether individual children have learnt phonic decoding. The checks consist of **40 words and non-words** that your child will be asked to read one-on-one with a teacher.

When does it happen?

Schools will be able to administer the check at any time that suits them during the week starting the

8th June 2026

How long does the check take?

Every child is different, but most children take between four and nine minutes to complete the assessment.

What are 'non-words'?

The check will contain a mix of real words and 'nonsense words'. We use 'nonsense words/alien words' when we teach phonics, so your child should be familiar with the concept. 'Nonsense words' are important because 'words' such as 'vap' or 'jound' are new to all children. Children cannot read the nonsense words by using their memory or vocabulary, they have to use their decoding skills. This is a fair way to assess their ability to decode.

What is the pass mark?

The threshold has been 32 words out of 40. The pass mark for 2026 is unknown to teachers and will be revealed after the screening check in June.





What happens if a child does not meet the standard?

The screening check will identify children who have phonic decoding skills below the level expected for the end of Year 1 and who therefore need extra help. Schools will be expected to provide extra help and children will then be able to retake the assessment in Year 2.










What does the test look like?

Sample materials are available on the education.gov.uk website. Below is an example from the 2012 Phonics Screening Test. All papers from 2012 to 2019 are available online.

Nonsense words

Section 1	
stin	
proom	
sarps	
thend	

Real words

Ph screening 1	Phonics screening check Pupil materials		
2012			
			
			
	National Curriculum assessments		

Section 2
fair
flute
goat
shine

Further sounds and their pronunciation

ea: cup of <u>tea</u>
oi: spo <u>il</u> the boy
a-e: make a cake
i-e: nice smile
o-e: phone home
u-e: huge brute
aw: <u>yawn</u> at <u>dawn</u>
are: <u>share</u> and <u>care</u>
ur: <u>purse</u> for a <u>nurse</u>
er: a <u>better</u> <u>letter</u>
ow: <u>brown</u> <u>cow</u>

ai: snail in the rain

oa: goat in a boat

ew: chew the stew

ire: fire fire!

ear: hear with your ear

ure: sure it's pure?

tion: (celebration)

tious / cious:
(scrumptious /
delicious)

e: he me we she be



The websites 'Oxford Owl' and 'Mr Thorne does phonics' on YouTube have audio links you can use to hear the correct pronunciation of the sound, as well as a range of resources.



Mr Thorne Network
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How can I help my child at home?

- Practice the sounds with your child.

Initial sounds

s	a	t	p	i	n	m	d	t	o
g	c	k	u	b	f	e	l	h	sh
r	j	v	y	w	th	z	ch	qu	x
ng	nk								

Further sounds and their pronunciation



Try timing your child to see how quickly they can recall all the sounds and try to beat their fastest time!

ay: may I play

ee: what can you see

igh: fly high

ow: blow the snow

oo: poo at the zoo

oo: look at a book

ar: start the car

or: shut the door

air: that's not fair

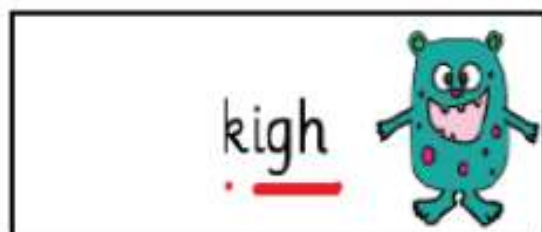
ir: whirl and twirl

ou: shout it out

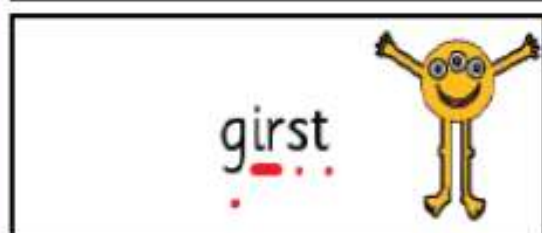
oy: toy for a boy

How can I help my child at home?

- Practice a mix of non-words and real words.



Ask your child to draw 'sound buttons' underneath each sound, to show they can correctly identify each one.



Say all the sounds individually then put the word together.



k - igh = kigh

g - ir - s - t = girst

b - ai - m = baim








Some real word examples

REAL WORDS

argue	invite	pursue	sort
bead	jaunty	queue	sphinx
chew	ladder	quiet	statue
drawer	lawn	quit	theft
escape	main	renew	threw
evening	moan	repeat	thundering
fairground	pew	rocker	tie
flute	pie	rule	trash
fork	pole	scratch	turning
golf	prophet	seventh	use
gran	proud	shelving	value
handstand	prune	sighting	woe

Nonsense words/Alien word examples

aib		dea		gainty		hurp
arfue		deesh		gam		jea
		dephew		gaunty		jea
bew		deplied		gawn		jole
bleme		descroy		geck		joudest
blied		dess		gick		
bountain		dest		glese		
bup		dis		gloy		koe
				goot		
chawn		enroy		gowl		lort
cheme		escape		grize		maunch
chound		exglode		grune		melp
cleam				hess		mept
clied		foast		hinner		mip
curt		frelt		hoost		mirst
dack		fup				

nass		reshied		sweast		vuse
numper		rube		swoat		wab
nurn		scaub		teb		wheck
penue		scloe		thid		whem
phantob		scray		thimney		
phopics		shar		thirt		yass
phot		shag		thrair		zie
phream		snill		thrist		zoil
phrew		spratch		thrunk		zort
poil		spraw		thru		
puge		sprew		toam		
quair		stame		tockney		
quig		stod		vaw		
quiss		stolphin		vurf		
		stroe				