

Essential Letters and Sounds Glossary

Blend (vb) - To draw individual sounds together to pronounce a word: for example, s-n-a-p, blended together, reads 'snap'

Blending hands - Clap your hands (silently) as you blend the sounds together to say the whole word.

Consonant - A speech sound in which the breath channel is at least partly obstructed and which can be combined with a vowel to form a syllable (i.e. the letters b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, y, z).

Decoding - Extracting meaning from symbols. In the case of reading, the symbols are letters, which are decoded into words.

Decodable text - A text which is entirely decodable based on the sounds and graphemes that have been taught. A child will not encounter a 'tricky' or HRS word that they have not yet been taught, nor will they be asked to 'guess' what sound a grapheme represents. ELS includes linked decodable readers, to ensure that every child is able to decode independently and re-read the books until they achieve fluency. Children begin using decodable readers from the first days of teaching.

Digraph - Two letters making one sound: for example

Drum roll - Technique used when introducing a new grapheme/ spelling. This should be a two- to three-second drum roll on the children's laps. It allows the teacher to quickly see that all children are engaged and participating.

Encoding - Writing involves encoding: communicating meaning by creating symbols (letters to make words) on a page.

Grapheme - A letter or a group of letters representing one phoneme: for example ('though').

Grapheme Phoneme Correspondence (GPC)– The relationship between sounds and the letters which represent those sounds; also known as 'letter-sound' correspondence

Me, then you - To ensure that children can apply their understanding independently, we must always give them the information required. First, we show how to do/say something. Then they copy us, before repeating this by themselves. We repeat these steps, reducing our modelling as children's fluency and independence increases

Phoneme - The smallest single identifiable sound: for example, the letters 'sh' represent just one phoneme (/sh/) but 'sp' represents two (/s/ and /p/)

Phonemic Awareness - An ability to identify and make the sounds (phonemes) within words.

Phonics - A method of teaching beginners to read and pronounce words by learning to associate letters or letter groups with the sounds they represent.

Phonological Awareness - An awareness of the sound structure of spoken words: for example, rhyme, syllables, onset and rime, as well as phonemic awareness

Pseudo words - Words that do not make sense but are made up of decodable sounds

Robot arms - When sound-talking a word (orally segmenting it into the phonemes within the word), Reading Teachers and children use robot arms to physically make the link between the separating of the sounds. This assists children in hearing the separate sounds within the word and ensures that they do not form 'consonant clusters' or 'onset and rime', which are not part of the ELS programme. The word is said in 'robot talk' and then blending hands are used to blend the word.

Segment - To split up a word into its individual phonemes in order to spell it: for example, the word 'cat' has three phonemes /c/ /a/ /t/. Children are asked to count the individual sounds in the word to help them to spell it.

Sound-talk - Oral sounding out of a word: for example, c-a-t

Split digraph - Two vowels that make one sound but are split by one or more consonants: for example, <a-e style="box-sizing: inherit; padding: 0px; margin: 0px;">as in 'make' or <i-e style="box-sizing: inherit; padding: 0px; margin: 0px;">as in 'inside'. There are six split digraphs in the English language: <a-e style="box-sizing: inherit; padding: 0px; margin: 0px;">, <e-e style="box-sizing: inherit; padding: 0px; margin: 0px;">, <i-e style="box-sizing: inherit; padding: 0px; margin: 0px;">, <o-e style="box-sizing: inherit; padding: 0px; margin: 0px;">, <u-e style="box-sizing: inherit; padding: 0px; margin: 0px;">, <y-e style="box-sizing: inherit; padding: 0px; margin: 0px;">(as in 'type').</y-e></u-e></o-e></i-e></e-e></a-e></i-e></a-e>

Trigraph - Three letters making one sound: for example igh

Vowel Speech - sounds in which the breath channel is not blocked and does not cause friction when making vocal sounds (i.e. the letters a, e, i, o, u)

Vowel digraph - Two vowels that together make one sound: for example ai, ee, oa

VC - Vowel-consonant: for example, the word 'am'.

CVC - Consonant-vowel-consonant: for example, the word 'Sam'. (Consonants and vowels in these abbreviations can be digraphs and trigraphs too, for example the words 'ring')