

Phonics in the Nursery Phase

Phase	Phonic Knowledge and Skills
<i>Phase One</i> (Nursery/Reception)	Activities are divided into seven aspects, including environmental sounds, instrumental sounds, body sounds, rhythm and rhyme, alliteration, voice sounds and finally oral blending and segmenting

Phase One of Letters and Sounds concentrates on developing children's speaking and listening skills and lays the foundations for the phonic work which starts in Phase 2. The emphasis during Phase 1 is to get children attuned to the sounds around them and ready to begin developing oral blending and segmenting skills.

Phase 1 is divided into seven aspects. Each aspect contains three strands: Tuning in to sounds (auditory discrimination), Listening and remembering sounds (auditory memory and sequencing) and Talking about sounds (developing vocabulary and language comprehension).

It is intended that **each of the first six aspects should be dipped into**, rather than going through them in any order, with a balance of activities. **Aspect 7 will usually come later**, when children have had plenty of opportunity to develop their sound discrimination skills.

Aspect 1 - General sound discrimination - environmental

The aim of this aspect is to raise children's awareness of the sounds around them and to develop their listening skills. Activities suggested in the guidance include going on a listening walk, drumming on different items outside and comparing the sounds, playing a sounds lotto game and making shakers.

"In Nursery, we play lots of games to support listening and tuning into sounds. We make connections through songs, rhymes and stories as well."

Aspect 2 - General sound discrimination - instrumental sounds

This aspect aims to develop children's awareness of sounds made by various instruments and noise makers. Activities include comparing and matching sound makers, playing instruments alongside a story and making loud and quiet sounds.

"In Nursery, we have access to musical instruments indoors and outdoors. Children are encouraged to explore and make sounds using a range of materials. We add musical sounds to stories, songs and rhymes and use e.g. claves to help us to tap out the rhythm in words, such as our names and key words linked to a familiar text or topic."

Aspect 3 - General sound discrimination - body percussion

The aim of this aspect is to develop children's awareness of sounds and rhythms. Activities include singing songs and action rhymes, listening to music and developing a sounds vocabulary.

"In Nursery, we learn a range of key action-based chants and songs which encourage body percussion."

Aspect 4 - Rhythm and rhyme

This aspect aims to develop children's appreciation and experiences of rhythm and rhyme in speech. Activities include rhyming stories, rhyming bingo, clapping out the syllables in words and odd one out.

"In Nursery, we have fun with rhyming, changing the words to once familiar nursery rhymes, sharing books and playing games, e.g. making rhyming strings."

Aspect 5 - Alliteration

The focus is on initial sounds of words, with activities including I-Spy type games and matching objects which begin with the same sound.

"In Nursery, adults model use of alliteration during play, e.g. super starfish, lovely ladybirds and make up funny phrases using alliteration. We make connections during play and through focused sessions on the initial sounds in words."

Aspect 6 - Voice sounds

The aim is to distinguish between different vocal sounds and to begin oral blending and segmenting. Activities include Metal Mike, where children feed pictures of objects into a toy robot's mouth and the teacher sounds out the name of the object in a robot voice - /c/-/u/-/p/ cup, with the children joining in.

"In Nursery, we explore and experiment with different voice sounds to support speech sound production and clarity of speech. Such sounds are used to accompany group reading sessions and within modelled within continuous provision, e.g. role play and sensory activities."

Aspect 7 - Oral blending and segmenting

In this aspect, the main aim is to develop oral blending and segmenting skills.

To practise oral blending, the teacher could say some sounds, such as /c/-/u/-/p/ and see whether the children can pick out a cup from a group of objects. For segmenting practise, the teacher could hold up an object such as a sock and ask the children which sounds they can hear in the word sock.

"In Nursery, opportunities to support the development of this skill are utilised in-the-moment, e.g. 'Put on your c-oa-t' and 'Touch your h-ea-d' etc and through pre-planned activities as appropriate to a child's developmental stage."

The activities introduced in Phase 1 are intended to continue throughout the following phases, as lots of practice is needed before children will become confident in their phonic knowledge and skills.

Lifted and adapted from Letters and Sounds website😊