

SOUND
it OUT!

PRACTICE
BOOK

A RESEARCH-BASED PHONEMIC AWARENESS TOOL FOR THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM

 JRP JUST REWARDS PUBLICATIONS

Deirdre O'Toole



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Information for Parents and Guardians

This book can be used to help you and your child to recognise and practise the speech sounds (phonemes) of English. This is an important foundation in learning to read. When children are taught phonics, they learn to connect speech sounds with the letter or letters that spell them, e.g. the letters ‘ch’ spell the /ch/ sound at the beginning of the word ‘chair’ and at the end of the word ‘lunch’. A key word is provided for each sound.

Research shows that bringing children’s attention to how they form the sound in their mouth is beneficial for reading and spelling. This concept forms the basis of ‘Sound it Out’. To use this book, the adult should read the text in the speech bubble aloud to the child. The child should then say the sound while looking in the mirror provided, checking that they are forming the sound correctly by looking at the mouth photograph.

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/ă/

as in apple

Open your mouth and drop your jaw.
Keep your tongue low. Turn on your
voicebox and let the air flow out of
your mouth.



/ch/ as in chair

Push your lips out in a rounded shape.
Lift your tongue so that the tip and sides are touching the hard part behind your top teeth. Push out the air as your tongue drops.



JRP

JUST REWARDS PUBLICATIONS



Deirdre O'Toole

teacher's manual

A RESEARCH-BASED PHONEMIC AWARENESS TOOL FOR THE PRIMARY CLASSROOM



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introduction

Dear teachers,

I am delighted to share '*Sound it out!*' with you all, and I hope that it will be a useful resource for your teaching.

As outlined in the Primary Language Curriculum in 2015, phonemic awareness deserves attention. The research is clear: phonemic awareness is the foundation for reading and spelling, and explicitly teaching it will help to prevent future reading difficulties. Studies have shown, time and time again, that phonemic awareness instruction has positive, long-term effects on reading and spelling.

In my own teaching, I have found a shift in focus to phonemic awareness to be incredibly beneficial. Expanding my knowledge of phonetics and phonology has helped me teach beginning readers and support struggling readers even more effectively. I have used a Sound Wall in my classroom for several years and found it to be a valuable resource for both myself and the children. I am able to draw the children's attention to what is happening in their mouths as they pronounce a sound, which in turn helps them isolate and identify the sounds within words they read and write.

The beauty of a resource like '*Sound it out!*' is that it is extremely versatile. It can be used alongside any synthetic phonics programme and aligned with any scope and sequence, as a stand-alone resource to explore articulatory gestures during phonemic awareness instruction and as a reference for spelling.

I really hope you will enjoy using '*Sound it out!*' and find it to be beneficial for both yourself and the children you teach.

Dee

About the author...

Deirdre O'Toole is a primary school teacher in Co. Meath, who has been teaching since 2005. She is currently studying for her PhD in Literacy Education in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.

She believes that life is one long learning journey and is passionate about professional development for teachers. Deirdre is extraordinarily enthusiastic about early literacy, child-led play and making the classroom a fun place for the children to learn. She was the winner of the 'Science of Reading Teacher of the Year' award by Nessy in 2023.

Deirdre loves nothing more than a nice cup of tea and a chat. She has developed a slight addiction to purchasing picture books and may run out of room in her house sometime in the near future.



Start Here!

Sound it out! includes the following resources:

- **Teacher Guide** – provides information to support your phonemic awareness and phonics instruction. There is one full page dedicated to each phoneme, with information on how the sound is articulated, and the most common ways of spelling it.
- **Sound Wall cards** – for building a Sound Wall display in your classroom. There is one card for each phoneme in the English language.* Each card has a mouth photograph and a keyword picture.
- **Spelling cards** – also for the Sound Wall display. These cards should be placed underneath the photo/picture cards as each new letter-sound correspondence is taught.
- **Flipbook** – for teaching/focusing on a particular phoneme. On one side of the page is a large mouth photograph, which can be shown to the children. On the other side are instructions for the teacher.
- **Practice Book** – for children to practice pronouncing the sounds at home. There are mouth photographs for the children to copy and a mirror for them to observe their own mouth position. Information for parents is also included for each sound.

Sound it out! can be used in several ways:

1. As a stand-alone resource to support phonemic awareness instruction. Use the Sound Wall cards and Flipbook to explore what happens in the mouth as each sound is pronounced.
2. To complement your synthetic phonics programme.
As you introduce each new letter-sound correspondence, use the Sound Wall cards and Flipbook to explore what happens in the mouth as each sound is pronounced, then add the corresponding spelling card to your Sound Wall. '*Sound it out!*' does not follow any particular phonics sequence, which means you can use it alongside any phonics programme.
3. As a spelling reference.
As you introduce each new letter-sound correspondence in your phonics instruction, add the relevant spelling card underneath the Sound Wall card. You will soon build a display that can be used as a reference for spelling all of the sounds that the children have learnt so far.

*A note on dialects

The phonemes in this guide are based on Irish English pronunciation (Hiberno English). There are a few differences between this dialect and others; however, these are very slight differences. Notes have been added where required.

This author is not a qualified Speech and Language Therapist or Linguist. While every effort has been made to include only factual material, there may be inaccuracies or mistakes. No liability will be accepted pertaining to the use of the information in this document. If you need specific advice, please seek a licensed professional.



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What is Phonemic Awareness and Why is it important?

Phonemic awareness is the *conscious* sensitivity to the individual phonemes in spoken language. A phoneme is the smallest unit of speech that when changed, can create a new word. The word 'bat' has three phonemes, /b/ /a/ /t/. Changing the medial phoneme creates a new word, such as 'but' or 'beet'.

Decades of research demonstrate that phonemic awareness impacts reading and writing development. Studies consistently show that instruction in phonemic awareness has a positive long-term effect (National Reading Panel, 2000). To master the alphabetic principle, understanding the relationship between letters and phonemes is essential. In order to be able to decode words, we must know letter-sound correspondences and apply the skill of blending the phonemes together to pronounce the words. In order to spell words, we must do the opposite: segment the phonemes in the words and apply our knowledge of letter-sound correspondences.

Articulatory gestures

Research has shown that drawing children's attention to the features of articulation and pronunciation of phonemes is helpful in phonemic awareness instruction. A focus on mouth positions, and the use of mouth pictures, have been shown to have a positive impact on reading and spelling (Castiglioni-Spalten & Ehri 2003; Boyer & Ehri 2011)

Coarticulation

"Children have not spoken the sounds in isolation and have not had to break words into their component phonemes; for them, the sounds exist only in combination with others."

– Louisa Cook Moats, Speech to Print

Phonemes are elusive. When we speak, we do so in a continuous stream of sounds, without breaks. Phonemes are squashed together in words, not spoken in isolation, and may sound a little different depending on their position in a word or on which phonemes come before or after them. Say the words 'down' and 'dress' aloud. Can you feel the difference in the /d/?

Articulation of isolated phonemes can be particularly difficult as they do not occur on their own in typical speech, e.g. 'stop' consonants such as /b/ and /t/. This is worth bearing in mind if a child is struggling to pronounce a certain sound.

Phonemic Awareness Skills

The skills involved in phonemic awareness progress along a continuum from easier to more difficult, roughly as follows:

1 Alliteration detection
 Identifying shared initial phonemes.

2 Oddity tasks
 Choosing the word with a distinct starting phoneme.

3 Isolation
 Isolating phonemes at different positions in words.

bath sun hat

4 Blending
 Combining phonemes to create words.

/m/ /a/ /n/ → man

It is easier to blend words that begin with continuous sounds than words that begin with stop sounds, e.g. pit.

5 Segmenting
 Breaking words into their individual sounds.

/r/ /e/ /d/ → red

Note: It is easier to blend and segment words with fewer phonemes. Begin with words with two phonemes, e.g. at, zoo, then move on to three phoneme words, e.g. cat, leg. Words with consonant clusters can prove difficult to blend and segment for many children, e.g. stop, camp.

6 Manipulation
 Modifying words by playing with phonemes.

Deletion	Addition	Substitution
pram -> ram	in -> bin	rap -> map
Delete /p/	Add /b/	Change /r/ to /m/

Phoneme deletion is a reliable indicator of reading difficulties in children.

Introducing a new letter-sound correspondence

1. Introduce the phoneme

- Do not show the print at first.
 - *“Listen to the sound and watch my mouth. /ssssss/ You can hear this sound at the beginning of the word sun and at the end of the word bus.*
- Draw attention to mouth position and clear articulation. Use the Sound Wall card and/or the flipbook as a reference. Mirrors can also be helpful so that the children can see what their mouth is doing.
 - *Open your mouth and put the tip of your tongue on the bumpy spot behind your top teeth. Make a hissing sound as you let the air out. Say /s/”*
 - *“Can you hold this sound until your breath runs out?” (Yes.)*
 - *Put your fingers on your throat. Is your voicebox on or off?” (Off)*
- Have the children come up with words containing the sound. The sound can be at the beginning, middle or end of the word.
 - sock, fist, press
- Look for items in the classroom. Make a sound table.
- Introduce an action, key word, song, story or alliterative sentence to go with the phoneme, as per your chosen phonics programme.



2. Oral blending

- Practise blending with the new sound. Point to the mouth position pictures on the sound wall or use the printable pictures if you wish. Note: because this is an oral activity, you can include sounds that you have not explicitly taught yet.

“Listen to the sounds and blend them together to make a word.”

/s/ /ee/ = see

/u/ /s/ = us

/s/ /e/ /ll/ = sell

/b/ /u/ /s/ = bus

3. Introduce the grapheme

- Introduce the letter shape and letter name.
 - *“This is the letter <s>. We use this letter to spell /s/.”*
- Is there any link between the sound and the name?
 - *“Can you hear the /s/ sound in the name of the word? /ēs/ The /s/ sound is at the end its name.”*
- Add the <s> grapheme card under the /s/ picture on your sound wall.



'Short' vowel

/ă/

Open your mouth and drop your jaw. Keep your tongue low. Turn on your voicebox and let the air flow out of your mouth.



'Short' vowel /ă/

Consonant or Vowel?	Vowel
How does my mouth make the sound?	The tongue is low, near the front of the mouth. Lips are unrounded and the jaw is open.
Continuous or Stop?	Continuous
Voicebox on or off?	On

Beginning

apple, ant, axe, and, after

Middle

cat, bag, hand, back, have

Keyword:

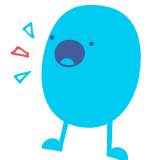
apple

IPA symbol:

a

Most common spellings:

a



Sound Rules:

This sound is not heard at the end of words in English.

Spelling Rules:

The letter <a> spells short /ă/ in closed syllables, i.e. when it is followed by a consonant in the same syllable, e.g. bat.

consonant digraph /ch/

Push your lips out in a rounded shape. Lift your tongue so that the tip and sides are touching the hard part behind your top teeth. Push out the air as your tongue drops.



Consonant digraph /ch/

Consonant or Vowel?	Consonant
How does my mouth make the sound?	Lips are rounded, the front and sides of the tongue are touching the hard part behind the front teeth, and a puff of air is released as the tongue drops.
Continuous or Stop?	Stop
Voicebox on or off?	Off
Voiced partner	/j/

Beginning

chimp, chip, chain, chin, cheese

Middle

crunchy, teacher, watches, orchard, munching

End

lunch, peach, ouch, pitch, match

Keyword:

chair

IPA symbol:

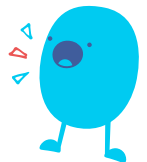
tʃ

Type of phoneme:

palatal affricate

Most common spellings:

ch, tch

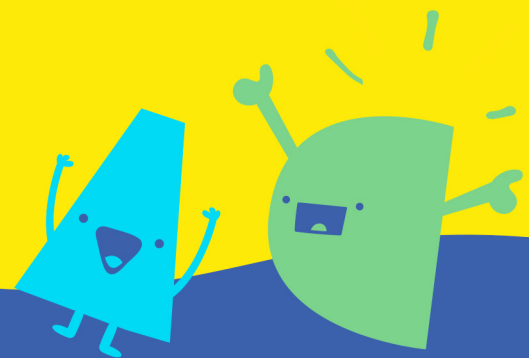
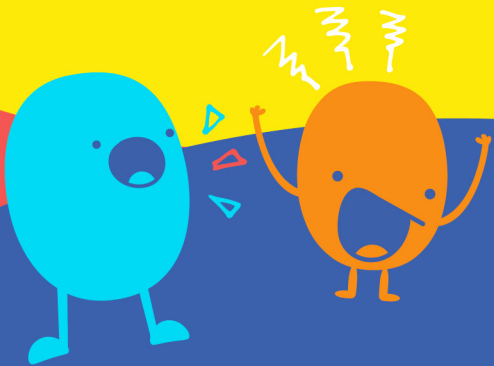


Spelling rule:

<ch> is the most common spelling for this sound. Use <tch> after a short vowel, e.g. match. (Exceptions to this rule are much, such, rich, and which.)

SOUND it OUT!

flipbook





Information for teachers

Using the Flipbook to support phonemic awareness instruction

This Flipbook can be used as a resource to support your phonemic awareness instruction. On one side of the page is a large mouth photograph, which can be shown to the children. On the other side are instructions for you, the teacher, to describe how to form the sound. Using the photographs as a reference, explore what happens in the mouth as each sound is pronounced.

Using the Flipbook to complement your phonics instruction

As you introduce each new letter-sound correspondence, use the Flipbook alongside the Sound Wall cards to explore what happens in the mouth as each sound is pronounced, then add the corresponding spelling card to your Sound Wall. 'Sound it out!' does not follow any particular phonics sequence, which means you can use it alongside any phonics programme.



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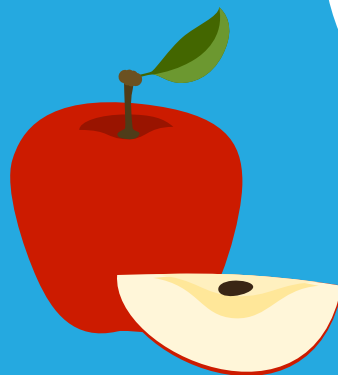
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/ă/ as in apple

This is a 'stretchy' sound. Say it again, and stretch it out until you run out of breath.



Open your mouth and drop your jaw. Keep your tongue low. Turn on your voicebox and let the air flow out of your mouth.

'Short' vowel /ă/

Consonant or Vowel sound?

Vowel

How does my mouth make the sound?

The tongue is low, near the front of the mouth. Lips are unrounded and the jaw is open.

Continuous or Stop?

Continuous

Voicebox on or off?

On

