

Glossary of Terms for the Teaching of Phonics

blend (vb) — to draw individual sounds together to pronounce a word, e.g. s-n-a-p, blended together, reads snap

cluster — two (or three) letters making two (or three) sounds, e.g. the first three letters of 'straight' are a consonant cluster

digraph/trigraph — two/three letters making one sound, e.g. sh, ch, th, ph, igh, ure, air, ear.

vowel digraph — two letters which, together, make one vowel sound, e.g. ai, oo, ow

split digraph — two letters, split, making one sound, e.g. a-e as in make or i-e in site. This can be referred to as the “magic e” effect if it helps children to learn the rule, but the term split digraph should be used alongside this.

ditty— in Read Write Inc. this refers to short phrases or captions for the children to read or write using their phonic knowledge. Once children are familiar with capital letters and full stops they should also use the term sentence.

grapheme — the written or printed representation of a sound/phoneme.

grapheme-phoneme correspondence (GPC) — the relationship between sounds and the letters which represent those sounds; also known as 'letter-sound correspondences'

mnemonic — a device for memorising and recalling something, such as a snake shaped like the letter 'S' or the short phrases that accompany the letter sounds in Read Write Inc. e.g. “snail in the rain”.

phoneme — the smallest single identifiable sound, e.g. the letters 'sh' represent just one sound, but 'sp' represents two (/s/ and /p/)

segment (vb) — to split up a word into its individual phonemes in order to spell it, e.g. the word 'cat' has three phonemes: /c/, /a/, /t/

sound buttons — a teaching technique to support children when reading or spelling a word. The buttons consist of a dot under the letter when there is one letter, one sound correspondence and a dash when the word contains a digraph or trigraph. Split digraphs are represented as a line joining the split letters underneath. For example;

fish night shame

VC, CVC, CCVC — the abbreviations for vowel-consonant, consonant-vowel-consonant, consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant, which are used to describe the order of letters in words, e.g. am, ham, slam.

