

# Phonics in Action

## Diagnostic Checks



**Phonics in Action**

**A Systematic, Synthetic Phonics Approach  
To Teaching Reading, Writing, and Spelling**



### Step 1 – Establish rapport

Try to put the student at ease. They may be scared stiff. Try to make it seem a normal part of the lesson, say you are just checking their reading.

### Step 2 – Current reading Level

Use a standardised or other reliable test of reading achievement to assess present reading level. If you do not have access to a published test of reading achievement and do not have money to buy anything, there are free, downloadable measures on the internet e.g., Schonell Word Reading Test to gain an approximate idea of reading level. The Schonell Test has been around for many years and gives an approximate indication. It is a rough baseline. Is the student making typical progress or are they behind? In the resource book, there is a link to the test

<https://assessment.tki.org.nz/media/files/QRS-files/SchonellReading>

### Step 3 – Phonics decoding skills

The **Phonics Check** (adapted from Bryant, 1975) in your resource book is a check like this one – it will indicate what decoding skills the student has and needs to have.

#### Phonics Check – BTBDS

consonant-vowel-consonant (cvc)		split digraph	consonant digraphs	vowel + r	vowel digraphs	multi-syllable and Latin-based
buf	nuv	fute	cho	fler	staw	cosnuv
cos	pof	yode	shi	smar	plew	relhime
dit	quig	bime	wh	blor	cleef	defev
fev	rel	nepe	thade		troob	gaction
gac	san	cabe	phune		spail	prefute
huz	tup				groy	uncabeness
jod	vom				groaf	exyoded
kib	wix					sanwixable
lek	yeg					bufkibber
maz	zad					vomazful

In the Phonics Check, there are 50 made-up words. It uses made-up words because to read the words the student must decode; they cannot guess from memory. The phonics check probes many of the basic decoding skills covered in this course.

Section 1 has words with a 3-letter Consonant-Vowel-Consonant CVC pattern. If the student can read these, they should be able to read real words like *sat*, *dog*, *web*, and *zip*. Section 2 has words that check the split digraph rule. If the student can read these, they should be able to read real words with a split vowel digraph like *cake* and *bone*. Section 3 has words that check consonant digraphs. If the student can read these, they should be able to read real words with digraphs like *chick*, *shop*, *them*, *fish*.

Section 4 has words that start with consonant clusters followed by vowel sounds that are r-affected or 1-sound vowel digraphs. If the student can read these, they should be able to read real words with these patterns, like *sleep*, *cloak*, *straw*, *start*, *cloy*. Section 5 has two-syllable words and Latin-based words. If the student can do these, they should be able to read multi-syllable and Latin-based real words, like *trombone*, *transportable*, *construction*.

#### Step 4 – Alphabet Check

Keep it simple and initially check just the 26 lower case sounds. The check might go like this, “Hello, thanks for helping me with this today, what I would like you to do is say the sound of each letter.” Make a note of tricky sounds such as reading the letter sound “g” as /jeh/ instead of /geh/ - be sure not to let the student see you scoring because it may make them even more anxious.

r	o	n	l	m	y	t	v	k
p	z	i	a	j	u	s	h	b
c	g	w	d	f	x	q	e	

If the student does find some sounds tricky, here is a quick suggestion to revise tricky sounds - this chart has some of the common tricky sounds -the picture is a cue to help them remember the sounds – y-yak, v-vase, l-leaf, h-house, q-queen, w-web, u-umbrella, g-glasses



#### Step 5 – GKR Phonemic Awareness Check

This is a listening task. There is no reading involved. The student needs to think in their mind of the phonemes in words. The student either needs to decompose the spoken word into phonemes or bring the phonemes together to create the spoken form of the word.

## 1. Bringing the phonemes together to create the spoken form of the word

e.g., the teacher says the word NICE slowly, e.g., n-ie-s and the student says the word, “nice”.

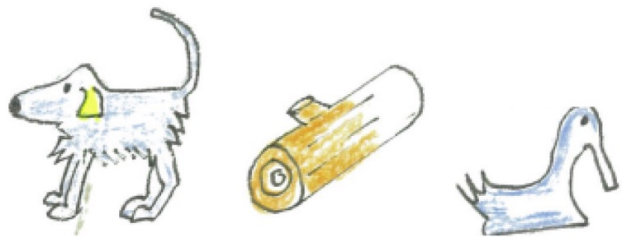
What word is N-I-CE = NICE, T-OO = TOO, H-E = HE, R-A-KE = RAKE, T-R-AI-N = TRAIN, P-L-A-NE = PLANE, F-U-NN-Y = FUNNY.

## 2. Segmentation - decomposing the spoken word into phonemes




The teacher says the word normally and the student’s job is to separate the phonemes in the word, e.g., “What are the two sounds in **no**?” (answer = n-oe).

What are the 2 phonemes in NO (n-oe), 2 in AT (a-t), 2 in UP (u-p), 3 in KEEP (k-ee-p), 3 in MAN (m-a-n), TEETH (t-ee-th), 4 in INTO (i-n-t-oo)

If they find these tasks tricky – e.g., one student said the two sounds in “up” were up and down - your resource book has some drawings you can use to build up awareness –e.g., for blending, you say the sounds, e.g., /deh-oh-geh/ - the student points to the drawing they think that matches /deh-oh-geh/.



# Decoding Skills Check

Alien Words		
		
buf	fute	cosnuv
cos	yode	relhime
dit	bime	defev
fev	nepe	gaction
gac	cabe	prefute
huz	fune	uncabeness
jod	cho	exyoded
kib	shi	sanwixable
lek	whe	bufkibber
maz	thade	vomazful
nuv	staw	
pof	plew	
quig	fler	
rel	smar	
san	blor	
tup	cleef	
vom	troob	
wix	spail	
yeg	groy	
zad	groaf	
		Score — / 50

# GKR Phonemic awareness check

This is a listening check. The student has to listen to the word and separate in their mind the phonemes in the word. Read the questions aloud. For **blending** say the word NICE slowly, e.g., n-ie-s and the student tells you the word, “nice”.

## Blending

What word is N-I-CE = NICE, T-OO = TOO, H-E = HE, R-A-KE = RAKE, T-R-AI-N = TRAIN, P-L-A-NE = PLANE, F-U-NN-Y = FUNNY.

For **segmentation** say the word normally and their job is to tell you the phonemes in the word, e.g., you say to the student, “What are the two sounds in **no**?” (answer = n-oe).

## Segmentation

What are the phonemes in NO (n-oe), AT (a-t), UP (u-p), KEEP (k-ee-p), MAN (m-a-n), TEETH (t-ee-th), INTO (i-n-t-oo)

# Alphabet Check

Keep it simple and initially check just the 26 lower case sounds. The check might go like this, “Hello, thanks for helping me with this today, what I would like you to do is say the sound of each letter.” Make a note of tricky sounds such as reading the letter sound “g” as /jeh/ instead of /geh/ - be sure not to let the student see you scoring because it may make them even more anxious.

r	o	n	l	m	y	t	v	k
p	z	i	a	j	u	s	h	b
c	g	w	d	f	x	q	e	