

# Phonics definitions

**phoneme:** A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound, e.g. a, g, p.

**grapheme:** A grapheme is the letter shape.

**digraph:** A digraph is two letters snapped together to make one sound, e.g. 'ck' as in muck, 'ss' as in miss, 'ff' as in huff, 'll' as in pill.

**vowel digraph:** A vowel digraph is two letters which, together, make one vowel sound, e.g. 'ai' as in rain, 'ee' as in feet, 'oa' as in load.

**split digraph:** A split digraph is two letters, split, making one sound, e.g. a-e as in 'make' or i-e in 'kite'.

**trigraph:** A trigraph is three letters snapped together to make one sound, e.g. 'igh' as in light, 'ear' as in fear, 'air' as in hair.

**segmenting:** Segmenting is splitting a word into individual phonemes in order to spell it, e.g. c-a-t, b-u-s, d-u-ck.

**blending:** Blending is to draw individual sounds together to pronounce a word, e.g. t-a-p → tap, m-i-ll → mill, r-u-n → run.

**consonant blend:** Also referred to as adjacent consonants or consonant clusters, are composed of two or three consonant graphemes that precede or follow a vowel within a syllable, e.g. st-op, str-ing at the beginning or ki-nd, ra-mp at the end.

## Other useful definitions

**VC, CVC, CCVC, CVCC:** the abbreviations for vowel-consonant, consonant-vowel-consonant, consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant, consonant-vowel-consonant-consonant, which are used to describe the order of letters in words, e.g. in, hop, clam, went.

**decodable:** A word which can be segmented and blended.

**common exception words:** These are words which cannot be segmented and blended, e.g. the, to, all, said, could.

**alien/pseudo:** These are words which are made up, e.g. reb, hish, dreet. Words like these are included in phonics to help develop a child's phonic knowledge.