PHONICS & READING · KINDERGARTEN–GRADE 2 · QUICK REFERENCE

PHONICS (Sounds · Rules · Syllables)

Grades K–2 | 4 pages

Every letter sound, digraphs and blends, short and long vowels, silent e and the vowel teams, bossy r and the sliding vowels, the spelling rules and silent letters, the six kinds of syllables and how to divide big words, the schwa and the big endings, prefixes, suffixes and the three spelling changes, sight words and fluency.

1 Letter sounds | 2 Long vowels | 3 Bossy r & patterns | 4 Syllables | 5 Prefixes & suffixes | 6 Reading

1 LETTER SOUNDS

kindergarten · one letter, one sound (to start)

Consonants

Letter	Sound	Key word	Letter	Sound	Key word
b	/b/	ball	n	/n/	net
c	/k/	cat (soft /s/ before e, i, y: city)	p	/p/	pig
d	/d/	dog	qu	/kw/	queen
f	/f/	fish	r	/r/	run
g	/g/	goat (soft /j/ before e, i, y: gem)	s	/s/	sun (/z/ in is, has)
h	/h/	hat	t	/t/	top
j	/j/	jam	v	/v/	van
k	/k/	kite	w	/w/	web
l	/l/	lamp	x	/ks/	box
m	/m/	man	y	/y/	yes (a vowel at the end: my, happy)
			z	/z/	zip

Doubles and ck

ff, ll, ss, zz after a short vowel at the end of a short word: off, bell, kiss, buzz (the "floss" rule). **ck** after a short vowel: duck, back; **k** after anything else: book, milk. **c** before a, o, u; **k** before e, i: cat, kit.

Short vowels

Letter	Sound	Key word
a	/ă/	apple, cat
e	/ĕ/	egg, bed
i	/ĭ/	igloo, pin
o	/ŏ/	octopus, hot
u	/ŭ/	up, cup

A vowel alone in a **closed** syllable (a consonant after it) is short: c-a-t.

Blending and splitting

- **Blend:** say each sound, then slide them together: /s/ /a/ /t/ → sat. Stretch it: sssaaat.
- **Split (segment):** hear a word, tap each sound: dog = /d/ /o/ /g/, three taps.
- **CVC words** (consonant-vowel-consonant): cat, pen, sit, hop, mud. Change one sound to make a new word: cat → cot → cut.
- **Rhymes** share the ending: cat, hat, mat. Hearing rhymes and first sounds comes before letters.

MEMORY TRICK

Say the sound, not the name

b says /b/, not "bee." Keep sounds short and clean: /t/ not "tuh." Vowels can be held; most consonants cannot.

Two letters, one sound (digraphs)

Digraph	Sound	Examples
sh	/sh/	ship, fish
ch	/ch/	chip, much (also /k/ school, /sh/ chef)
th	/th/ unvoiced, /th/ voiced	thin, bath · this, that
wh	/w/	when, whip
ck	/k/	duck
ng	/ng/	ring, song
nk	/ngk/	pink, bank
ph	/f/	phone (Greek)

Blends keep both sounds

Kind	Examples
s-blends	st sp sn sm sk sl sw: stop, spin, snap, small, skip, slip, swim
l-blends	bl cl fl gl pl: blue, clap, flag, glad, plum
r-blends	br cr dr fr gr tr pr: brag, crab, drum, frog, grin, trip, press
ending blends	-st -nd -mp -nt -lk -ft -sk: nest, hand, lamp, tent, milk, lift, desk
three letters	str spr scr spl squ thr: strap, spring, scrub, split, squid, three

2 LONG VOWELS: SILENT E, VOWEL TEAMS & OPEN SYLLABLES

grade 1 · units 2, 4, 5

Silent e (magic e, VCe)

Pattern	Short → long	More
a_e	cap → cape, hat → hate	make, game, late
i_e	kit → kite, bit → bite	ride, time, five
o_e	hop → hope, not → note	home, rope, bone
u_e	cub → cube, tub → tube	mule, use, cute
e_e	pet → Pete	these, eve

The e at the end is silent and makes the vowel say its **name**. One consonant between them: hop/hope, but hopping keeps the short vowel (two consonants).

Open syllables and y

A syllable that **ends in a vowel** is open and the vowel is long: go, me, hi, no, ba-by, o-pen, mu-sic. **y** at the end says /ī/ in a one-syllable word (my, fly, why) and /ē/ at the end of a longer word (happy, baby, funny).

Vowel teams

Long sound	Teams	Examples
long a	ai, ay, eigh, ei, ey	rain, play, eight, vein, they
long e	ee, ea, ie, ey, y	feet, eat, field, key, happy
long i	igh, ie, y, i_e	night, pie, my, time
long o	oa, ow, oe, o_e	boat, snow, toe, home
long u	ue, ew, u_e	blue, few, cute

ai in the middle, **ay** at the end (rain / play). **oa** in the middle, **ow** at the end (boat / snow). **ee** is the most reliable team; **ea** is usually long (eat) but sometimes short (bread, head).

MEMORY TRICK

When two vowels go walking

"When two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking": b**oa**t says o, r**ai**n says a. True for most teams (not oo, ou, oi, au).

Long vowel without a helper

Pattern	Examples
-ild, -ind	wild, child, mild · kind, find, mind
-old, -olt, -ost	cold, gold, told · bolt · most, post (but cost, lost)
open syllable	he, she, we, go, so, no

Reading long words with vowel teams

Word	Split
rainbow	rain · bow
teacher	teach · er
playground	play · ground
sunlight	sun · light

Contractions

Two words squeezed with an apostrophe where letters left: is not → isn't, can not → can't, I am → I'm, it is → it's, we will → we'll, do not → don't, they are → they're, I have → I've.

3 BOSSY R, SLIDING VOWELS & OTHER PATTERNS

grade 1 · units 6–8

Bossy r (r-controlled vowels)

Pattern	Sound	Examples
ar	/ar/	car, farm, star
or, ore	/or/	corn, fork, more, store
er	/er/	her, fern, water
ir	/er/	bird, girl, first
ur	/er/	turn, fur, church
war, wor	/wor/, /wer/	warm, war · word, work, world
air, are, ear	/air/	hair, care, bear
ear, eer	/eer/	hear, near, deer, cheer

The r changes the vowel: a-r is not /ă/ + /r/. **er, ir, ur** all say /er/: "her first turn."

Vowels that slide (diphthongs and oo)

Pattern	Sound	Examples
oo	/oo/ long or /oo/ short	moon, food, zoo · book, look, good
ou, ow	/ow/	cloud, out, house · cow, now, town (ow also says /ō/: snow)
oi, oy	/oy/	coin, boil · boy, toy (oy at the end)
ew, ue	/oo/ or /ū/	new, grew, chew · blue, glue, true
aw, au	/aw/	saw, draw · haul, August
all, alk	/awl/, /awk/	ball, call, tall · walk, talk, chalk

MEMORY TRICK

ou in, ow out

ou and **oi** live in the middle (cloud, coin); **ow** goes at the end or before n and l (cow, town, owl); **oy** goes at the end (boy).

Spelling rules and silent letters

Rule	Examples
soft c = /s/ before e, i, y	city, cent, cycle, ice, face
soft g = /j/ before e, i, y	gem, giant, gym, page
-tch after a short vowel	catch, witch, match (but much, such, rich, which)
-dge after a short vowel	badge, edge, bridge, judge
silent letters	kn: knee, know · wr: write, wrist · mb: lamb, climb · gh: light
-s / -es	cats, dogs (/z/) · boxes, dishes, benches (after s, x, sh, ch)
-ed says /ed/, /d/ or /t/	wanted · played · jumped
-ing	jump → jumping; hop → hopping; hope → hoping
compound words	sun + set = sunset; cup + cake = cupcake

4 THE SIX KINDS OF SYLLABLES

grade 2 · units 2–3 · the key to long words

Six syllable types

Type	Clue	Vowel sound	Examples
Closed	ends in a consonant	short	cat, nap-kin, rab-bit
Open	ends in a vowel	long	go, ba-by, o-pen
Silent-e (VCe)	vowel, consonant, e	long	cake, in-vite
Vowel team	two vowels together	team's sound	rain, boat, feet, out
R-controlled	vowel + r	bossy r	car, bird, cor-ner
Consonant-le	consonant + le at the end	/ul/	ta-ble, lit-tle, can-dle

MEMORY TRICK **CLOVER**

Closed, con-**L**e, **O**pen, **V**owel team, silent **E**, **R**-controlled: the six kinds in one word.

Dividing big words

- **VC/CV:** two consonants between vowels: split between them: rab/bit, nap/kin, bas/ket. First syllable closed, short vowel.
- **V/CV:** one consonant: try splitting before it (open, long): ti/ger, o/pen, ro/bot. If that sounds wrong, try **VC/V** (closed, short): cab/in, riv/er, lem/on.
- **VCCCV:** keep the blend or digraph together: pump/kin, hun/dred, ath/lete.
- **Consonant-le:** count back three: ta/ble, pur/ple, lit/tle, mid/dle.
- **Three syllables:** find the vowels first, then divide: fan/tas/tic, won/der/ful, ba/na/na.
- Every syllable has **one** vowel sound. Count the vowel sounds to count the syllables.

Divide and read WORKED

rabbit → rab | bit	*VC/CV, both closed*
music → mu | sic	*V/CV, open then closed*
candle → can | dle	*consonant-le*
remember → re | mem | ber	*open, closed, bossy r*

The schwa and big endings

Pattern	Says	Examples
schwa (ə)	a lazy "uh" in an unstressed syllable	a-bout, pen-cil, sof-a, wag-on
-tion	/shun/	nation, station, action
-sion	/zhun/ or /shun/	vision, television · mission
-ture	/cher/	nature, picture, future
-le	/ul/	little, apple
-ous	/us/	famous, nervous
-ure	/yer/	pure, cure

Special plurals and ough

child → children, man → men, foot → feet, mouse → mice, sheep → sheep, leaf → leaves, baby → babies. **ough** says many things: though (/ō/), through (/oo/), rough (/uf/), cough (/of/), bought (/aw/), bough (/ow/).

5 PREFIXES, SUFFIXES & SPELLING CHANGES

grade 2 · unit 5

Prefixes (go in front, change the meaning)

Prefix	Means	Examples
un-	not, opposite	unhappy, untie, unlock
re-	again, back	redo, rewrite, return
dis-	not, opposite	dislike, disagree, disappear
pre-	before	preview, preheat, preschool
mis-	wrongly	misspell, misread
non-	not	nonstop, nonsense

Suffixes (go on the end, change the job)

Suffix	Means	Examples
-ful	full of	helpful, careful, joyful
-less	without	hopeless, careless, fearless
-ness	state of being	kindness, darkness, happiness
-ly	in that way (adverb)	quickly, softly, happily
-ment	result of	payment, movement, agreement
-er, -est	more, most	taller, tallest; bigger, biggest
-er, -or	one who	teacher, farmer, actor
-y	full of	rainy, sunny, sleepy

Three spelling rules for endings

- **Doubling (1-1-1):** one syllable, one vowel, one final consonant → double it before a vowel suffix: hop → hopping, big → bigger, run → runner. Not before a consonant suffix: sad → sadly.
- **Drop the e:** silent e drops before a vowel suffix: hope → hoping, bake → baker, nice → nicest. Keep it before a consonant suffix: hope → hopeful.
- **Change y to i:** consonant + y → i before a suffix: happy → happier, cry → cried, baby → babies. Keep the y before -ing: crying. Vowel + y keeps the y: play → played.

Apply the rules WORKED

stop + ed → stopped	*1-1-1: double*
smile + ing → smiling	*drop the e*
carry + es → carries	*y → i*
play + ing → playing	*vowel + y, no change*
help + ful → helpful	*consonant suffix: no change*

Greek and tricky spellings

Spelling	Sound	Examples
ph	/f/	phone, graph, elephant
ch (Greek)	/k/	school, chorus, Christmas, echo
ch (French)	/sh/	chef, machine, Chicago
y in the middle	/ĭ/	gym, myth, system
gh	/f/ or silent	laugh, enough · light, night
eigh, ei, ey	/ā/	eight, weigh · vein · they, obey
ie / ei	/ē/	field, chief, piece · receive, ceiling (after c)

Homophones

Sound alike, spelled apart: **to / too / two · their / there / they're · its / it's · hear / here · right / write · know / no · sea / see · one / won · wear / where · blue / blew · son / sun.** The meaning picks the spelling.

MEMORY TRICK **i before e**

i before e, except after c, or when sounding like a as in neighbor and weigh. (Weird words break it: weird, seize, their.)

6 READING LIKE A READER

K–2 · fluency, sight words, stories

Sight words that break the rules (read whole)

Group	Words
K	the, a, I, is, to, of, and, you, was, said, are, have, they, one, two, do, does, what, who, come, some
1	there, where, were, here, their, could, would, should, again, any, many, very, your, because, friend, people, water, only
2	though, through, enough, laugh, eye, busy, sure, early, heart, answer, often, pretty, beautiful, special, every, once

Heart words

Most of a sight word follows the rules; mark the one part you learn "by heart": s**ai**d, w**a**s, fr**ie**nd. Flash them daily; write them in sentences.

Fluency

- **Accuracy** first (every word right), then **rate** (about 60 words a minute by the end of grade 1, 90 by grade 2), then **expression**: voice up at a question mark, pause at a comma, stop at a period, feeling at an exclamation mark.
- **Reread:** three readings of the same page; time the third.
- **Phrase it:** read in groups of words, not word by word: "The little dog / ran down / the road."
- Poems and psalms make the best fluency practice: rhythm, rhyme, repetition.

Narration and summarizing

After reading, **tell it back** in your own words: who, what happened first, next, last, and why it matters. Then shorten it to three sentences: a **summary**.

Reading a chapter story

1. Read the title and the first page; guess what will happen.
2. Read a chapter a day; stop and tell it back.
3. Keep a list of new words with a picture or a sentence for each.
4. Notice the **characters**, the **setting**, the **problem** and how it is **solved**.
5. At the end, say what the story taught and read your favorite part aloud.

MEMORY TRICK

Sound it, chunk it, check it

Stuck on a word? **Sound** it left to right; **chunk** it into syllables; **check** that it makes sense in the sentence. Then read the sentence again smoothly.

"Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:28)

The goal of phonics is a child who can open the Bible and any good book and read for himself.