

The Year 1 Phonics Screening Check: A Parent's Plain-English Guide

Key points

- The phonics screening check is a short, statutory (required by law) check for all children in Year 1 in England, usually taken in June.
- It checks how well your child can use phonics – the skill of linking letters to the sounds they make – to read 40 words aloud.
- Some words are real and some are 'pseudo-words' (made-up words, often shown next to a picture of a silly creature), so the check looks at sound-reading skills rather than memorised words.
- The check is done one-to-one with a teacher your child knows, in a quiet, familiar part of the school, and takes only a few minutes.
- The Department for Education sets the expected standard each year; children who don't meet it are given extra support and retake the check in Year 2.
- There's no special preparation needed – it's simply a snapshot of the phonics learning already happening in class.

Things to try at home

- Keep reading together for a few minutes most days – it's one of the most helpful things you can do, with no need to add anything extra.
- Play short, playful sound games, like spotting rhymes, clapping out the sounds in a word, or silly 'made-up word' guessing.
- Point out letters and sounds you notice together on things like cereal boxes, signs or shopping lists, just for fun.
- Keep the mood light and praise your child's effort and enjoyment rather than focusing on getting words 'right'.
- If your child is learning English as an additional language or has SEND (special educational needs and disabilities), it's worth asking the class teacher how phonics support is tailored for them.

Find out more

- GOV.UK: search 'phonics screening check' for the Department for Education's parent guidance on how the check works.
- GOV.UK: the Department for Education's published phonics screening check assessment framework and sample materials, which show the kinds of words used.
- Your child's class teacher or school, who can explain how your particular school approaches the check and when you'll hear the results, since this can vary a little from school to school.