

THE PHONIC APPROACH

The phonic approach should be used with adult learners who are either non-readers, struggle with spelling, or are learning English as a second language. This approach consists of teaching adult learners to associate letters and parts of words with specific sounds. This approach is used as a transition from letters and words (*symbols*), to sounds and meanings of those letters/words. When teaching phonics, begin with the basics: the alphabet and alphabetization.

THE ALPHABET AND ALPHABETIZATION

Tutors must begin with teaching their learners the alphabet and alphabetization before they can begin to teach their learners different word and letter sounds. When teaching adults the alphabet, be sure to begin by emphasizing rhythm and grouping of the letters for memorization. Try using the classic grouping: *ab-cd-ef-g-hi-jk-lmnop-qrst-uv-wx-y* and *z*. Next, have learners neatly write or print the alphabet on an index card or sheet of paper and tape it to the cover of their spelling book or notebook. This will serve as a reference as they begin to learn the sequence of the alphabet.

Once learners have become familiar with the sequence of the alphabet, they can begin learning how to alphabetize. First, have your learner write each letter of the alphabet on a separate index card, and then have them divide the cards into three piles: *a-g*, *h-p*, and *q-z*. Shuffle the letters in the *a-g* pile and have your learner practice putting the cards in alphabetical order. When they can do this easily, have them practice alphabetizing the other two piles. When learners are comfortable with alphabetizing each pile of cards, have them divide their cards into just two piles: *a-k* and *l-z*. Eventually, have learners practice alphabetizing the entire set of cards until they have mastered alphabetization.

PHONIC BASICS

After learners have mastered the alphabet and alphabetization, the next step in the phonic approach is to help them distinguish between consonants and vowels and short and long vowel sounds:

Consonants: B, C, D, F, G, H, J, K, L, M, N, P, Q, R, S, T, V, W, X, Y, Z

Vowels: A, E, I, O, U, and sometimes Y

Short Vowel Sounds: a = can e = set i = sit o = rot u = cut

Long Vowel Sounds: a = cane e = be i = site o = rope u = cute

Long vowel sounds are described as the vowel saying its “name.”

Vowel/Consonant Rules: Once you have gone over the differences between consonants and vowels, it may be helpful to teach your learner some common phonic “rules” pertaining to consonants and vowels (there are some exceptions to these rules):

1. The letter “Y” is a consonant at the beginning of a word and a vowel at the end of the word.
Examples: (consonants) yellow yawn (vowels) fly y cry
2. Two vowels usually represent one sound, or “when two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking.” Examples: read pain oat
3. A silent “e” at the end of a word gives the first vowel in the word a long sound.

Examples: bake time cute mope

4. The sound /ch/ is spelled “tch” immediately following a short vowel.
Examples: kitchen satchel switch clutch
5. When “ght” is seen in a word, the “gh” is silent, leaving only the /t/ sound.
Examples: light might right sight bright
6. When a word begins with “kn,” the k is silent.
Examples: knot knight know knee
7. When the letter “r” immediately follows a vowel, the vowel sound is completely changed and is neither long nor short.
Examples: party fork urgent certain sir
8. Words with a double “e” usually make the long “e” sound.
Examples: see bee tree free three

Diagraph Rules: After covering consonants and vowels and their sounds, the next phonic aspects to cover are diagraphs and blends and their sounds. Digraphs occur when two consonants create one new sound. Examples: ch sh th wh ck ph kn wr

1. When “c” and “h” are next to each other, they make only one sound.
Examples: chair cheap chin chew chat
2. When a word begins with “kn,” the “k” is silent, leaving only the /n/ sound.
Examples: knot knight know knee
3. When a word begins with “wr,” the “w” is silent, leaving only the /r/ sound.
Examples: write wrong wrap wrath

Phonic Blends: Phonic blends are two or more consonants that have individual sounds present but are blended together. Unlike diagraphs, phonic blends contain more than just one sound.

Examples: spr st tr cr dr fr pl sp bl br cl
tw pr fl gl gr sk sm sw sn ng

English Speech Sounds: There are four stages in the articulation of a speech sound: 1.) positioning the lips, 2.) producing the sound, 3.) stopping the sound, and 4.) the relaxing position. It is also important to know what the terms diphthong and continuant mean:

Diphthong: two vowel sounds joined in one syllable to form one speech sound.

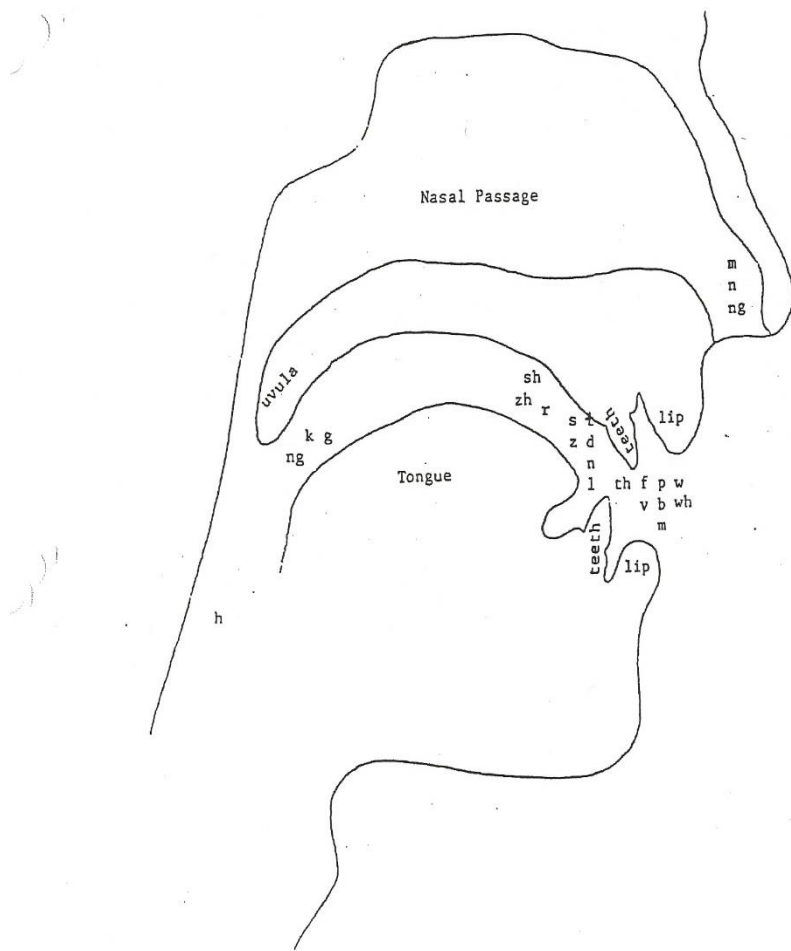
Examples: oi ou

Continuant: a consonant sound that lasts as long as the breath lasts without a change in quality.

Examples: /s/ /z/ /f/ /h/

In English speech, all vowel sounds are continuant and all diphthongs are continuant for only the second sound. Examples: The “i” in oi and the “u” in ou are continuant.

Now that your Adult Learner can distinguish between vowels, consonants, digraphs, and blends, it is time to help them learn how to make English speech sounds. Below is a diagram which can help your Adult Learner understand where certain English speech sounds are made and what parts of the body are used in making those sounds:



Vocalization Code for Speech Sounds:

v = voiced un = unvoiced c = continuant s = stop n = nasal

Primary Secondary Used Voc.

Spelling Spellings as in Code Articulator Position

b	-	bird	v s	Stop air with lips together; open with small puff of breath. Voiced equivalent of /p/.
c	ck	cup	un s	Tongue tip down. Stop air with an arch of the tongue and release breath from back of the throat. Unvoiced equivalent of /g/.
d	-	dish	v s	Lips and teeth slightly parted. Stop air with tongue tip touching roof of mouth just behind upper teeth. See lower surface of tongue. Tongue is dropped as breath is expelled. Voiced equivalent of /t/.
f	ph gh	fish	un c	Lower lip touching upper teeth lightly. Breath sound is continuant. Unvoiced equivalent of /v/.
g	-	girl	v s	Tongue tip down, touching back of lower teeth. Stop air with an arch of the tongue and release breath from back of throat. Voiced equivalent of /k/ or /c/ above.
h	-	hand	un c	Has no position of its own. Position the tongue for the vowel following it and give a continuant breath sound.
j	g (e) (i) (y)	jumping	v	A combination of /d/ and /zh/. Lips forward. Start with tongue tip up; lower tongue as breath is expelled. Voiced equivalent of /ch/.
k	c, ck, ch	kicking	un s	Tongue tip down. Stop air with hump an arch of the tongue and release breath from back of throat. Unvoiced equivalent of /g/. Same as c/ above.
l	-	leg	v c	Tongue tip touches just behind the upper teeth. Air comes out along the sides of the tongue.
m	-	man	v n	Lips together. It is made with the same lip position as /b/ and /p/, but /b/ and /p/ are stopped sounds. /m/ is a continuant and a nasal sound.
n	kn	neck	v n c	Lips and teeth slightly parted. Tongue tip up touching roof of mouth just behind upper teeth like /t/ and /d/, but /t/ and /d/ are stopped sounds. /n/ is a continuant and a nasal sound.
p	-	pan	un s	Stop air with lips together; open with a big puff of breath. Unvoiced equivalent of /b/.
r	wr	river	v c	Tongue tip down. Lips forward. A continuant.
s	c (e) (i) (y)	snake	un c	Teeth close but not touching. Tongue tip down. A continuant sound. The unvoiced equivalent of /z/.
t	-	tent	un s	Lips and teeth slightly parted. Tongue tip touching roof of mouth just behind upper teeth. Tongue is dropped as breath is expelled. Unvoiced equivalent of /d/.
v	-	valley	v	Lower lip touching upper teeth lightly. A continuant.

			c	Voiced equivalent of /f/.
w	-	woman	v c	Lips forward and rounded, with a "one-finger" opening. Same as /oo/ sound. A continuant.
y	-	yells	v c	Lips are drawn back, top and bottom teeth close together but not touching. Same as /ee/ sound. A continuant.
z	s	zipper	v c	Top and bottom teeth are close together but not touching. Tongue tip down. A continuant. Voiced equivalent of /s/.
a	-	apple	v c	Wider jaw opening. Tongue down. A continuant.
e	ea ²	egg Ed Head	v c	Wider jaw opening. Tongue down. Lips and teeth closer together than /a/ but not touching.
i	y	in city	v c	Tongue down. Lips and teeth slightly closer together than for /e/.
o	-	olive	v c	Wider jaw opening. Prolong the sound. A continuant. Similar to /a/ sound.
u	-	up	v c	Medium jaw opening. Relaxed lips. Prolong the sound slightly. A continuant.
x	-	box	un	Teach as /ks/.
qu	-	quarter	un	Teach as /kw/. Lips rounded like /oo/ ² .
th	-	thanks	un c	Teeth and lips parted slightly. Tongue touches both upper and lower teeth. A continuant breath sound. A consonant digraph.
sh	ch	shop	un c	Lips forward and rounded. Teeth close but not touching. Tongue down but not touching lower teeth. A Continuant breath sound and a consonant digraph.
ch	tch	children	un	A combination of /t/ and /sh/. Lips forward. Start with tongue tip up; lower as breath is expelled. Unvoiced equivalent of /j/. A consonant digraph.
wh	-	whistle	un c	Teach as /hw/. A continuant and a consonant digraph.
th ²	-	mother the	v c	Voiced sound of /th/ above. A continuant and a consonant digraph.
ar	-	car	v c	Teach according to person's local pronunciation.
ur	er ir	curtains	v c	Tongue tip down. Lips forward, almost squared, more relaxed than for /r/.
ng	-	ring	v n c	Tongue tip down behind lower teeth. Arch tongue. Nasal equivalent of /k/ or /g/. A continuant and a consonant digraph.
a-e	ai	cake	v c	Do not teach as a diphthong. Teeth about a half-inch apart. Hold twice as long as /e/. Tongue down. A continuant.

i-e	igh y	five spy	v c	Lips drawn back. Sound comes from back of throat. A continuant.
ee	ea	three	v c	Lips are drawn back, teeth close together. A continuant. Hold twice as long as /i/.
o-e	oa ow ²	nose	v c	Lips forward and rounded, with a "1 ½ -finger wide" opening. A continuant.
or	-	horn	v c	Lips forward with a "1 ½ -finger wide" opening.
oo	-	room	v c	Lips forward and rounded, with a "one-finger" opening. Prolong the sound. A continuant.
oo ²	-	wood	v c	Lips forward, almost squared. A continuant. Tongue is more relaxed than for /oo/ sound.
aw	a, o, au, al, all	law	v c	Lips forward, wide jaw opening. A "two-finger" opening. A continuant.
u-e	u, ew	rule	v c	Teach as /oo/. A continuant.
ou	ow	mountain	v c	A diphthong. Combination of /o/ and /oo ² /. Start with a wide jaw opening, move lips forward with a small opening. A continuant.
oi	oy	oil	v c	A diphthong. Combination of /o/ and /i/. Start with lips forward for /o/, and then draw back for /i/.
su	si	measure television	v c	/zh/. Similar to /sh/.

PHONIC RESOURCES

Midland Need to Read also offers several types of phonic instruction, including an accelerated, phonetically-based, videotaped teaching method developed by learning experts at the Texas Scottish Rite Hospital in Dallas. The instruction is presented in 160 DVD lessons with volunteer tutors facilitating the interaction between the learners and the Certified Academic Language Therapist on the DVDs.

The DVD curriculum emphasizes the structure of the written English language with special attention given to cursive writing, spelling, and written expression. A "life skill," such as how to use a dictionary or read the label on a food item, is also presented with each lesson. These skills enable the learners to apply their literacy skills to real-life situations rather than simply improving their phonic skills. Another helpful tool when teaching phonics is to make phonic flashcards for your adult learner. Flash cards are useful for studying, memory games, and review after lessons.

- www.englishforeveryone.org
- www.nrrf.org/phonicsprimer.pdf
- www.phonicsontheweb.com
- www.k-3teacherresources.com