



Department
for Education

The Year 1 Phonics Screening Check

What is the phonics screening check?

The phonics screening check is a quick and easy check of your child's phonics knowledge. It helps your school confirm whether your child has made the expected progress. The check usually takes place in June when your child is in Year 1.

How does the check work?

- Your child will sit with a teacher he or she knows and be asked to read 40 words aloud.
- Your child may have read some of the words before, while others will be completely new.
- The check normally takes just a few minutes to complete and there is no time limit. If your child is struggling, the teacher will stop the check. The check is carefully designed not to be stressful for your child.

What are 'non-words'?

The check will contain a mix of real words and 'non-words' (or 'nonsense words'). Your child will be told before the check that there will be non-words that he or she will not have seen before. Many children will be familiar with this because many schools already use 'non-words' when they teach phonics. Non-words are important to include because words such as 'vap' or 'jound' are new to all children. Children cannot read the non-words by using their memory or vocabulary; they have to use their decoding skills. This is a fair way to assess their ability to decode.

After the check

Your school should tell you about your child's progress in phonics and how he or she has done in the screening check in the last half-term of year 1. If your child has found the check difficult, your child's school should also tell you what support they have put in place to help him or her improve. You might like to ask how you can support your child to take the next step in reading. Children who have not met the standard in year 1 will retake the check in year 2.

All children are individuals and develop at different rates. The screening check ensures that teachers understand which children need extra help with phonic decoding.