POST-16 PHONICS APPROACHES: A TOOLKIT

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Introduction

This toolkit is intended to support practitioners wishing to use phonics approaches with post-16 learners. This is a quick guide to what is where.

PART 1   Getting started

Part 1 explains why we have designed phonics resources specifically for post-16 learners. It introduces some of the terms used in phonics to describe key aspects of spoken and written language and why these are useful to know. Perhaps most importantly, it describes what phonics looks like in the post-16 classroom. You may want to return to Part 1 as you become more familiar with the approach we are adopting and begin to get a feel for what it means in your setting.

Chapter 1 *Exploring post-16 phonics approaches* makes the case for post-16 phonics as an approach designed quite specifically to meet the needs of adult and post-16 learners.

Chapter 2 *Key terms for the post-16 phonics toolkit* provides a quick guide to the terms phonics uses to talk about the sounds in the English language and how they are represented in writing. You may find it helpful to refer back to the glossary as you work your way through the toolkit.

Chapter 3 *Phonics and the post-16 literacy classroom* uses case studies to show how post-16 phonics approaches work in the classroom and what this might mean for diverse groups of learners.

Chapter 4 *Knowledge of phonetics for post-16 literacy practitioners* introduces the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and shows why greater understanding of the sounds in the English language can be useful in the classroom.

PART 2   Using phonics approaches post-16

Part 2 explains how to put post-16 phonics approaches into practice in your setting, adjusting the pace and sequence for your learners. Our structured and systematic approach is outlined here.

Chapter 5 *Post-16 phonics: The essential concepts* introduces some of the essential concepts and principles that underpin our approach to using phonics post-16. These are the building blocks from which we work.

Chapter 6 *Sequence, content and lesson ideas for teaching the basic code* introduces Basic Code Plus, the starting point we advocate for emerging readers and writers. Through this sequence, they will be building their knowledge of how the writing system works.

Chapter 7 *Introducing the one-to-many principle in post-16 phonics* introduces the complex code. This is where developing readers and writers start to explore the one-to-many principle: that one grapheme can represent many phonemes, and one phoneme can be represented by many graphemes. We show how this approach can be used to support learners incidentally, or as part of a structured and sequential phonics programme.

Chapter 8 *Post-16 spelling strategies* shows how phonics approaches can be useful in supporting learners' spelling. It outlines some activities that can be adapted to meet the needs of different learners.

PART 3 More things to think about

Part 3 considers how phonics approaches fit more broadly within a rich literacy curriculum post-16. It directly addresses the diversity of learners' needs, knowledge and prior experience.

Chapter 9 *Assessing learners' needs: A post-16 approach* outlines how to assess what post-16 learners already know and can do with phonics in their reading and writing, using familiar classroom activities.

Chapter 10 *Phonics resources for post-16 learners: What matters most* considers a range of resources that can support reading and writing with post-16 learners and suggests how to choose between them.

Chapter 11 *Turning the Functional Skills English wordlists into a learning tool* reviews the Functional Skills English (FSE) wordlists from the perspective of post-16 phonics and suggests how they can be incorporated into good practice.

Chapter 12 *Using phonics approaches with learners from different language backgrounds* outlines what post-16 phonics approaches may offer learners from language backgrounds other than English, according to prior knowledge and need.

Chapter 13 *Developing inclusive approaches for phonics post-16* considers how to develop an inclusive approach to using post-16 phonics, including how to differentiate phonics activities based on learner feedback.

Chapter 14 *Putting phonics approaches to the test* underlines the importance of assessing how well post-16 phonics approaches work in different settings and for diverse learners. It makes the case for documenting classroom practice and sharing outcomes with other practitioners.

Chapter 15 *If you want to find out more* summarises the core principles upon which this tool kit has been built and signposts some other resources to consult when developing good phonics research and practice post-16.

PART 1
GETTING STARTED

Chapter 1.
Exploring post-16 phonics approaches

Introduction

This chapter outlines some of the key characteristics of our approach to using phonics post-16. In particular, it draws out the differences between using phonics approaches with children who are just beginning their literacy lives, and addressing the needs of adult or post-16 learners who bring much richer life experience to the task.

1.1 Reasons to explore post-16 phonics

What we are calling post-16 phonics is aimed directly at learners over the age of 16, respects everything older learners bring to a literacy course, and includes age-appropriate vocabulary and reading material. It does not involve a lot of drill and repetition and from this point of view may be very different from what people think of when they hear the word phonics: something that very young children do at school.

Here are some of the main reasons why we think post-16 phonics is worth exploring:

1. It's designed specifically for this age group

- Even basic phonic skills can be explored using words that derive from a post-16 learner's rich spoken vocabulary and applied to reading and writing age-appropriate, high-interest text.

- Post-16 phonics can give learners a new language with which to describe their reading and spelling. Once everyone has a vocabulary for talking about spelling and reading unfamiliar words, there is scope for 'incidental phonics'.

- Some learners will already recognise phonics vocabulary and may be interested in what it all means. It is already in some learners' 'funds of knowledge', often because their own children are being taught phonics in school.

- Our learner-centred approach prepares learners for the very wide variety of words they are expected to read and spell as part of the Functional Skills English (FSE) subject content without advocating drill or rote memorisation.

2. It's flexible – it can be used in a set sequence and/or structured according to learner need

- You can prioritise starting points for key elements of a learner's learning programme. You can choose and implement an appropriate support strategy that meets your learner's needs.

- You can identify where the learner is on a continuum of increasing complexity in spelling knowledge.

Whether taught in structured sequence with the least confident learners or used incidentally at the higher levels, phonics helps to reveal patterns so learners can read and spell many similar words quickly. In this sense, post-16 phonics is a 'self-teaching strategy' Share, D. L. (1995). Phonological recoding and self-teaching: Sine qua non of reading acquisition. *Cognition*, 55 (2), 151 – 218. Share, D. L. (1999). Phonological recoding and orthographic learning: A direct test of the self-teaching hypothesis. *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 72 (2), 95 – 129.

3. **It can help learners, whatever their starting point, become 'unstuck' quickly**

- Phonics approaches in lessons can move learners from supported through degrees of independence to proficient more quickly than you might suppose, escalating reading and spelling development rapidly.

- Understanding grapheme-phoneme correspondences is a useful tool that can help unblock reading development for learners who have become stuck.

- Using phonics, you can identify and describe types of spelling errors that may have become 'fossilised' in learners' writing.

- A structured approach enables learners to practise past steps as they move on to new steps, making it especially suitable for those at the early Entry Levels.

- Post-16 phonics allows learners to continuously move forward. This helps keep interest levels high and can have a positive impact on a learner's motivation.

1.2 Why using phonics approaches with adults is different from using phonics approaches with children

Most readily available phonics resources are designed for use with young children, but children's experience and needs are very different from post-16 learners.

1. **Young children are mostly emergent readers and spellers with limited experience of language, the world in general and education in particular. Post-16 learners without special educational needs are nearly always able to read and/or write some words and bring with them important knowledge of how written texts are used in our society.**

- Adults and post-16 learners who are still at the early levels of reading acquisition arrive at a literacy class with a personal bank of sight words already in place and, with this, usually at least some knowledge of sound-symbol relationships.

- Post-16 learners will be able to draw on a range of metacognitive tools and strategies that are very different from those of 4- to 5-year-olds and can be used to enhance their learning. See, for instance, Duncan (2009) for a discussion of the value of gaining learners' perspectives on what is going on when we read.

- Post-16 learners also come with a variety of experiences of education, potentially negative. They may carry with them some embarrassment, shame or frustration around previous unsuccessful attempts at reading and spelling, and the lack of equity in the educational system.

- While most children are well aware that it is usual for them to only start to read and write in their school literacy classes, most adult emergent readers and writers will be aware that their surrounding society(ies) expects adults to be confident readers and writers already.

2. **Most children have go to school for over six hours, five days a week, and spend a good chunk of this time on literacy work, while adult learners may attend classes only a few hours a week, for fewer weeks of the year. School practitioners know that they will see the same group of children (with very few absences) every day. Post-16 practitioners do not work under the same conditions.**

- As adult literacy practitioners, we know that learners often cannot attend regularly, new learners will start at any time, and others will leave due to the many, many challenges of adult life.

- For those working in the criminal justice system, this is amplified because practitioners often do not know who they will be teaching on a given day or how long learners will be with them.

- Adult learners may also be less likely to be able to focus all of their attention on the sessions because of other potential worries on their minds, as well as mental and physical health issues at play.

3. **Primary school children in the early years are still developing their command of the spoken language and are encountering many aspects of language in its written forms for the first time.**

- Many post-16 learners will already have experienced formal literacy teaching at school, and this may well have included phonics instruction.

- In the case of learners for whom English is an additional language, they may already have experience of literacy in a different language that they can draw upon.

- Adults' motivations to return to learning are likely to be diverse. They will be aware of real-life literacy practices they need or want to engage in. They may want to develop their reading in general, or spelling in particular. They may need to be able to read a book to their child, or to complete some paperwork in the workplace. They may want to take a course of study, or gain a professional qualification that requires a certain amount of reading and writing.

- Post-16 literacy learners may find reading, writing or formal learning situations challenging. They may have busy and complex lives (like all of us adults!), yet these motivations push them forward. Post-16 phonics takes all these factors into account.

1.3 Using phonics approaches with adult and post-16 learners: principles and practices

The differences we outline above suggest some important principles that practitioners need to bear in mind. Here are some dos and don'ts of using phonics with post-16 learners.

✖ **Don't 'teach' phonics as an end in itself, use phonics to help learners access and create meaningful texts.**

✔ **Do** use phonics to teach reading and spelling. The goal is accessing meaning in authentic text and writing fluently.

✔ **Do** help your learners make connections between the sounds and the symbols of the language, using the principles in Part 2 of the toolkit. This may mean (re)discovering how phonemes and graphemes relate to each other in the English writing system.

✔ **Do** use the post-16 phonics principles to create a shared language with your learners that you can all use to discuss reading and spelling and share your reflections. Metalanguage is a powerful tool for adult learners.

✔ **Do** use phonics to break down barriers to learning and allow learners to discover the code for themselves. Talking together about the one-to-many principles and encouraging them to find and

explore patterns is an important part of post-16 phonics pedagogy.

✔ **Do** make the most of how you personally use phonics when spelling or reading unfamiliar words in everyday life. Try to find a text with an unfamiliar name or word to demonstrate what this looks like.

✖ **Don't 'teach sounds', draw on the sounds in learners' oral language.**

✔ **Do** acknowledge that your learners already have all the sounds in their speech – whatever their accents (see Chapter 12 when working with learners of the English language who may be developing their pronunciation as part of an ESOL course).

✔ **Do** explicitly highlight connections between phonemes (speech sounds) and graphemes (written symbols) when necessary.

✔ **Do** listen for clear pronunciation. This is not the same as listening for 'received pronunciation' (a particular accent). Clear speech features only insomuch as it aids spelling and can be spoken with any accent. In the writing example in Chapter 9, the learner has written 'after woods' instead of 'afterwards'. This is the kind of error that can be fixed by speaking clearly before writing and clearing up misheard words. We all have them!

✔ **Do** acknowledge that we all sometimes say words in an unnatural way to get to the correct spelling. Most adults, even teachers, say 'Wed nes day' and 'bus i ness' to help us spell.

✔ **Do** stress that spelling is not a simple transcription of anyone's speech. Some of the irregular correspondences between sounds and graphemes in the English spelling system are based on pronunciation from hundreds of years ago.

✖ **Don't apply the same sequence of phonics lessons to every learner.**
A systematic approach does not mean doing the same thing with every learner or group.

✔ **Do** pay attention to where they need to start. Getting to know the key principles set out in Chapter 5 and the sequence to teaching phonics set out in Chapters 6-8 will all help with this.

✔ **Do** give sufficient time to a sequence of lessons covering the basic code if your learners are very inexperienced with decoding and encoding. A sequence of lessons will help them feel safe and give them the confidence to move ahead quickly.

✔ **Do** use long words and age-appropriate vocabulary even at the most basic levels: 'admit', 'upset', 'victim', 'laptop', 'transit' are all composed of the simplest code. Each syllable is no more complex than words like 'cat' and 'mat', which most learners can already read.

✖ **Don't use invented words (often called nonsense words) out of context for the purpose of demonstrating phonics principles.**
Nonsense words can frustrate and confuse learners who may have limited spoken vocabularies.

✔ **Do** use less common words that can help learners focus on decoding challenges. A word like 'kelp' or 'finch' may be unfamiliar but it's easy to explain what they mean and a post-16 learner can more usefully apply their skills to them, expanding their vocabularies as they do so.

✔ **Do** use real songs or poems that may contain invented words if you want to help learners practice decoding. You can also use unusual place names, but be aware that long histories and a

tendency to 'localise' pronunciations have often distorted the relationship between phonemes and graphemes, for example, Kirkby ('kerby') or Leicester ('lester').

✔   **Do capitalise on learners' prior knowledge.**

✖   **Don't** ask learners to spend time on what they can already do. Always ask your learners if they can already do what you're asking of them when it comes to phonics. If they can spell and read all the little words then don't waste time on them. Instead, start with the longer simple words. Reflect on the proportion of familiar and new items in any particular lesson sequence. Research with younger children suggests a 20/80% split works to give a constant feeling of success and moving forwards. Decide what is the balance that works with any particular group.

✔   **Do** capitalise on what they already know. If a learner can already read some complex words by sight, don't make them analyse them phonically unless it will help with spelling. If they spell confidently and correctly in syllables, don't make them write sound by sound.

✔   **Do** use the expertise of one learner to help another learner. If one learner can already do something, ask that learner to explain it to a learner who needs help. This can build confidence in both learners, consolidate knowledge, and give you insights into thinking and teaching processes.

✔   **Do choose reading materials that interest adult learners.**

✖   **Don't** assume that phonics requires only 100% decodable text of the kind you might find in a phonics programme for young children. (See Chapter 10 for more on when decodable texts might be helpful.)

✔   **Do** ask the learner what they want to read and support them in meeting that goal. Don't unnecessarily restrict their diet of reading material.

✔   **Do** use decodable text if your learners want it. At the very basic levels it can help with confidence. However, make sure the language still sounds natural and the sentence structure is straightforward.

✔   **Do** experiment with providing reading material. You can make up your own decodable sentences incorporating the sight words your learners already have.

✔   **Do** look for a range of authentic texts with a percentage of words that are decodable for your learners at any given lesson. This takes practitioner time and practice but it's a skill that gets easier with experience. Encourage learners to bring in texts that they find and/or would like to read as well.

✔   **Do adopt an age-appropriate approach.**

✖   **Don't** cave in to learners or other practitioners who insist phonics is 'babyish'. Any teaching approach can be 'babyish', or not, depending on how it is done.

✔   **Do** make sure your lessons aren't seen by learners as 'babyish'. Move quickly, use long words for spelling and reading, find or create interesting adult-focused texts and resources.

✔   **Do** explain to your learners why you are trying out this approach and show them what they'll be reading and spelling in a few weeks. In particular, explain the thinking behind a focus on phoneme-

grapheme relationships and share appropriate terminology so learners feel they are engaging in a specialist, linguistic, adult thinking activity.

✔ **Do** think about learning a bit about the history of the English language, or English languages, with your learners. This will provide a (political as well as linguistic) context to the complexity of the spelling system.

✔　**Do keep pace and interest high.**

✘　**Don't** expect perfection. The English spelling system is complex and our attempts to classify and understand phoneme-grapheme relationships will never be perfect. But it is an interesting and useful process in understanding how written words relate to spoken words.

✔　**Do** keep moving forward once you're sure learners have assimilated the latest lesson, adding new graphemes and practising them in the context of reading and spelling. Phonics is cumulative.

✘　**Don't** think of phonics as a cure-all for every problem in literacy. It is, however, a foundational step that many struggling readers and spellers have missed, especially the one-to-many concepts. Once in place, the skills and knowledge a post-16 phonics approach builds will allow learners to feel they can really 'take off' in the rest of their literacy learning. All this means that post-16 phonics should enhance, not replace, current teaching.

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> As learners build up a repertoire of grapheme-phoneme correspondences they learn not to be daunted by the variations they encounter but to take them in their stride.
>
> Gemma Moss, 2019
>
> "

> "
>
> Don't teach phonics, use phonics to enhance your teaching of reading and writing.
>
> Sam Duncan and Tricia Millar, 2019
>
> "

Chapter 2.
Key terms for the post-16 phonics toolkit

Introduction

In this chapter we introduce some of the key terms that might be helpful as you work through the post-16 phonics toolkit. Some terms you may already be familiar with, some may be new to you. You might like to print off these pages for easy reference.

If you think it will be supportive for your learners, you can share these terms with them, but it is not essential. Only do so if you feel they would be interested and if you think it would be helpful for their understanding of the learning processes they are engaged in. Children learn these terms early in primary school so they may be familiar to learners who are parents.

2.1 What do I need to know?

The toolkit uses three different ways of writing down the sounds in a language:

- IPA notation – these are symbols used internationally to transcribe sounds from any language. They are shown between forward slashes /fjuː/

- Ordinary letters to represent particular sounds in everyday speech. These are shown between speech marks 'f'

- The actual letters that represent that sound when writing a particular word. These are shown between angle brackets <gh>

  - In the examples above, the common sound is the "f" sound in the word <rough>.

We use this notation throughout the rest of the toolkit.

2.2 A glossary of terms

The commonest terms used in the toolkit to talk about the relationship between the sounds in a language and their representation in writing are shown with an asterisk below.

1. *Phoneme: a unit of sound in a language.

- Phonemes are the sounds in a language that distinguish one word from another. In the words **bin, pin, fin, tin,** changing the initial sounds results in a change of meaning, and a 'different' word. /b, p, f, t/ are all phonemes of English (see Chapter 4).

- In post-16 phonics, we use **phoneme** to talk about sounds in a word.

- Every word consists of one or more phonemes:
  - The word **stand** has five separate sounds (phonemes) /s-t-a-n-d/- written in IPA as /s, t, æ, n, d/.
  - The word **eightieth** also has five phonemes: 'ay-t-ee-u-th' – written in IPA as /eɪ, t, iː, ə, θ/.

- The word **phoneme** comes from the same root as the word **phone** in tele**phone** meaning sound/voice.

- Phonemes are usually written between forward slashes in IPA: /θ/ or with everyday representations written with speech marks: 'th'.

2. *Grapheme: the unit of writing that represents a single phoneme.

- The number of letters in a grapheme varies.
  - The word **stand** has five graphemes: <s, t, a, n, d> with each letter standing for a single phoneme.
  - The word **eightieth** also has five graphemes: <eigh, t, i, e, th>.
  - The sound 'ay' /eɪ/ at the start of the word is represented by the four-letter grapheme <eigh> and the sound 'th' /θ/ at the end of the word is represented by the two letter grapheme <th>.

- The word **grapheme** comes from the same root as the word **graph** in **graph**ics, from the Greek 'to write'.

- Graphemes are usually written between angle brackets <b>.

3. *Correspondences: the relationships between letters and sounds in a writing system.

They can be described as:

- phoneme-grapheme correspondences (the link between sounds and the letters that represent them)

- grapheme-phoneme correspondences (the link between letters or combinations of letters and the sounds they represent).

4. GPC: grapheme-phoneme correspondence.

5. CVC/ CCVCC: conventional abbreviations to describe the consonant/vowel structure of words.

For example:

- using C for consonant, and V for vowel, a CVC word has the structure: consonant-vowel-consonant

- a CCVCC word has extra consonants at beginning and end

- Note: these abbreviations are based on writing not speech. For example, 'car' is CVC in spelling, but in many accents, including Receive Pronunciation (RP), is just CV in sound: /kɑː/.

6. Digraph: a two-letter grapheme where two letters represent one sound – the <ay> in pl**ay** or the <ve> in lo**ve**.

- You may hear this mispronounced by learners and practitioners alike, as 'diagraph' with three syllables but it's only two: di-graph.

7. Split digraph: formerly known as the 'magic e', where the final 'e' alters the preceding vowel sound, as in <o-e> in c**o**v**e**; or <i-e> in b**i**t**e**.

8. Trigraph: a three-letter grapheme where three letters represent one sound – the <igh> in m**igh**t or the <dge> in bri**dge**.

9. *Schwa: Unstressed vowel sound.

- Found at the start of the word **about,** at the end of the word **umbrella** and the middle of the word **telephone** (in IPA it is written /ə/).

- It can be represented by many different graphemes.

- We encourage using a 'spelling voice' to over-pronounce the schwa in order to hear the sound you want to spell: 'el-ee-phant', 'rel-ee-vant' for example. See more on learner voice and spelling voice below.

10. Consonant cluster: a series of adjacent consonants, each representing a different sound (sometimes called a consonant blend).

- In post-16 phonics we avoid teaching consonant clusters because they can be an unnecessary burden on memory.

- If a learner knows how to read <s>, <t>, <p> and <r>, they don't also have to learn, <st>, <str>, <tr>, <pr>, <sp> and <spr>.

- If a learner uses them accurately and fluently, don't ask them to undo what they do well.

- We don't recommend them as a starting place for learning the relationships between phonemes and graphemes.

11. **Silent letters:** every letter is always part of a grapheme so in post-16 phonics we don't refer to any of them as 'silent'. This means learners in post-16 phonics are not focused on worrying about which letters represent sounds and which do not.

12. ***IPA:** stands for the **International Phonetic Alphabet.**

- It is used to transcribe sounds into print so that every sound of every language can be represented by a symbol.

- Forty-four phonemes are generally accepted in Standard British English (24 consonant phonemes and 20 vowel phonemes).

- The symbols can be helpful for representing a sound when traditional spelling might be ambiguous and for noting the presence of a schwa, which can have many different spellings (see above).

- Read more about IPA in Chapter 4.

13. ***Syllables:** the beats of a spoken word.

- Every word has one or more syllables and every syllable has one or more phonemes.

🔎 **Activity:** Syllables

Sort the following into 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 syllable words. The answers are at the end of the chapter.

remain   sprained   totally   Oceania   boa   utopia   manicurist

pronunciation   so   sent   fantastic   thorough   idea   establishment

Syllables	Words		
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

- Many learners find syllables easy to grasp and like the way they are able to take quite long words and break them up into manageable chunks.

- Sometimes it is obvious where the syllable breaks take place (re-main, un-faith-ful) but at other times there is more than one option (in-sig-nif-i-cant or in-sig- ni-fic-ant or in-sig-nif-ic-ant?)

- The number of beats or syllables in a word stays the same, but the word breaks can change. Learners can choose what makes most sense to them.

14. Accent: a way of speaking particular to an individual, social group or region.

- Post-16 phonics works from learners' everyday speech. There is no single 'correct' accent that learners need to learn.

- You may have learners in the same group who pronounce the word **'bath'** in very different ways but, however they pronounce it, they will each associate the vowel sound with the letter <a>.

15. *Learner voice and spelling voice: different ways of using speech to support spelling.

- Start with the learner's voice no matter their accent or dialect.

- If a dialect pronunciation seems to get in the way of attaching sounds in the right order, ask learners to say the word in a 'spelling voice'. They might say 'aksed' in everyday speech but **'asked'** in order to make spelling easier. We never suggest that learners change their everyday speech.

- A spelling voice can be used to stress parts of a word that aid memory: 'Wed-nes- day', 'bus-i-ness', 'ree-mem-ber'.

16. Segmenting and blending: the act of isolating the sounds in a word (segmenting) and putting them back together (blending).

- In post-16 phonics, we talk about saying sounds and listening for a familiar word.

- Outside SEND/LDD, segmenting and blending rarely need to be taught. Post-16 and adult learners can put these things into practice through the post-16 lessons. See Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

17. Decoding and encoding:

- Decoding means turning written symbols (graphemes) into spoken sounds (phonemes) while reading.

- Encoding is turning spoken sounds (phonemes) into written symbols (graphemes) for spelling.

18. *Systematic: a structured approach to using phonics that supports learners who are starting at the very beginning. This is built into Basic Code Plus.

19. Synthetic phonics: an approach to teaching reading that connects individual graphemes to phonemes and then blends (or synthesises) them to generate word pronunciations. Evidence suggests that:

- Synthetic phonics moves from print to sound and is associated with teaching young children to read.

- Post-16 phonics is based on linguistic phonics, which moves from sound (in whole meaningful words) to print.

20. *Morphology: the study of the smallest parts of a word that lead to changes in grammar and meaning, which are called morphemes. For example:

- The words **rest, restless** and **rested** all include the morpheme **rest.** Adding the morphemes **less** or **ed** changes the meaning.

- It is an essential part of post-16 phonics, especially for spelling.

- It can be used alongside phonics as a way of helping post-16 learners to read and spell more complex words using prefixes (re-, un-, dis-, et cetera) and suffixes (-ed, -tion, -ing, -ly, et cetera). For example:

  - **help:** *helpful, helpfully*

  - **comfort:** *comfortable, uncomfortable.*

21. *Ending: the final part of a word.

- It might be a meaningful suffix: intend-ed, easi-ly, stand-ing.

- Or it might simply be a syllable that is easier to learn as a whole. For example:

  - **-age** in *baggage, wreckage, percentage*

  - **-ate** in *temperate, considerate, desolate*

  - **-le** in *little, table, bottle.*

22. *Spelling system or writing system: the way in which spoken language is represented in writing.

- English uses an alphabetic spelling system in which single letters or groups of letters (graphemes) represent individual speech sounds (phonemes).

- A spelling system is sometimes called an orthography.

- Different languages, sharing the same alphabet, follow different spelling conventions.

  - In some spelling systems, each phoneme is regularly represented by the same grapheme. These are called transparent or shallow orthographies.

    - Spanish is a good example. It has one of the most regular spelling systems and word stress is largely predictable, unlike in English.

  - In some spelling systems, one phoneme can be represented by several different graphemes, and one grapheme can represent several different phonemes. These are called opaque or deep orthographies.

🔍 Activity: Syllables (answers)

Syllables	Words		
1	sprained	so	sent
2	remain	boa	thorough
3	totally	fantastic	idea
4	utopia	manicurist	establishment
5	Oceania	pronunciation	

> " As in any area of education, a shared professional language is important. Becoming more confident with some of the terminology for phonics enables us to discuss more accurately with colleagues the particular difficulties learners have with reading and spelling.
>
> Bob Read, 2019
> "

Chapter 3.
Phonics and the post-16 literacy classroom

Introduction

This chapter uses three case studies, based on examples of classroom practice, to explore how post-16 phonics approaches can become a useful part of a wider literacy curriculum. The case studies help show why practitioners need to have a whole toolbox of techniques, methods and approaches that they can draw on when teaching, as well as the capacity to reflect on how well they work with a range of learners in different contexts. Each case study also provides ideas for teaching.

3.1 Phonics for post-16 learners

Post-16 learners come to literacy classes (including FSE) with a variety of backgrounds and experiences that affect their current and future learning. In addition, we all learn differently – we have different existing skills and different ways of learning. For the literacy practitioner, this is both a benefit (there are lots of options) and a challenge (it can be difficult to judge which option is best).

A practitioner working with a group of diverse learners needs two key skills:

- an ability to listen to what the learners have to say about their learning and respond to it; and

- the ability to be flexible – to adapt approaches to fit what will support learners best and give them confidence. This includes thinking about what to prepare in advance and what might be appropriate learning strategies for specific circumstances that arise during the course of the session.

The following case studies demonstrate both aspects to practice – stability in planning over the longer term and the ability to adapt. In each case, they also recognise that it is important to not use too many strategies at the same time as this could confuse learners.

3.2 Case Study 1. Mobilising phonic knowledge within a text, sentence and word framework at Entry Level 3

Alison is a literacy practitioner working with a group of E3 learners in an FSE class at an FE college. At the beginning of the class, there is a discussion about food, focusing on what the learners like to eat and what they cook. This will lead to reading and writing tasks. During the discussion, Alison writes up some key words to do with food and cooking, including those that will help with a planned reading. The learners then sit in pairs and read a short recipe together. Alison circulates, checking that no one is stuck, helping where necessary and noting any words that they find difficult to read.

In the discussion that follows she elicits from the learners what they have understood about the text and how it might relate to their own experience of buying, cooking and eating food, ensuring that everyone contributes something. As key words and phrases emerge from the discussion, Alison writes them on the board so that they can be used later in the session. Up to this point, the focus has been on text-level work with some word-level support.

The next task is for learners to write their own recipe. Alison projects the recipe they have read on the interactive white board (IWB) and elicits from the group the significant features of the genre. These include the format (image, headings, bulleted list of ingredients and method section), the language (use of the imperative, short sentences) and relevant vocabulary. At this point the whole framework – text, sentence and word level work – come together. If there is time, they might do an example together on the board before each learner settles down to write their own recipe.

Some useful vocabulary will already be on the board; other words that are relevant to the whole group's writing can be added as necessary, or given to individual learners. When recipes have been drafted and read to each other in their pairs, the group picks out some key words from their writing to work on. For example, someone had difficulty spelling the word 'roast' and another learner noticed that it had the same pattern as **toast.** From these two cooking words, Alison asks the group for other words with the same spelling pattern for the long 'oe' (/əʊ/) sound and they begin with some that rhyme – **boast, coast.** They gather together quite a list: **oat, goat, float, throat, coat, coach, soap,** and Alison points out the phonemes and graphemes in the words, and how the same grapheme <oa> forms the phoneme 'oe' /əʊ/ in these words.

Because they are working from the /əʊ/ sound, learners suggest some words with the same phonemes but different graphemes: **most** and **host.** Alison asks for any other ways they know of spelling the /əʊ/ sound, and elicits **snow, though, so, phone.** She writes these on the board too, but separately from the list of <oa> words, reminding them of the one-to-many principle. At this point, she does not talk through all the other spelling options, but instead concentrates on the <oa> grapheme and where that might be the most likely spelling option. By a process of questioning and eliciting, she draws their attention to the pattern of /əʊ/ + consonant(s) spelled <oa> and /əʊ/ at the end of the word leading to more varied choices such as <snow>, <toe>, <go> and <though>.

Learners then pick three <oa> words that they think would be useful for their own writing and write these in their personal wordbooks. In their pairs, they then practise making up sentences using those words. For their homework, they decide to write out these sentences for more practice in using those spellings.

3.3 Case Study 2a. Phonics takes the lead in a mixed Entry Level 1 and 2 group with diverse needs

Bruno works with a small group of beginning readers and writers in a community class at their local library. Some of the learners have a learning difficulty and one is partially deaf, so Bruno has to differentiate carefully for each learner. They all have different needs so have been working through Basic Code Plus with different levels of support. However, several weeks in, they all share a vocabulary for talking about words they want to be able to read and spell. They can also all read and spell the phoneme/grapheme correspondences from the Basic Code Boxes A, B and C and are about to start working on the ones from Box D – simple word endings.

They always start the session with some word work that allows learners to practise what they already know and introduces something new in the context of whole words. Last week, they added <ck>, <oy> and <ay> (Box C, Chapter 6, Basic Code Plus) and this week they're looking at the -er and -y endings.

They begin with a puzzle exercise using a multisensory approach and the words:

sister   **winter**   **cracker**

They say each word, count the syllables and then write them out using word boxes, placing one grapheme for each phoneme in each box.

s	i	s	t	er
c	r	a	ck	er

The learners say the sounds while they're writing the symbols – some writing in whole syllables and some saying each sound.

Bruno asks for more words that sound the same that the class would like to be able to spell. Hassan suggests **'hammer'** and Maria says **'yesterday'**. They'd worked on <ay> last week and she'd not been able to read it very easily. The unstressed 'er' (which most learners will pronounce as a schwa /ə/) isn't at the end, but she hears it in the middle of the word, and has spotted that it's just like the sound they are focusing on.

Dina wants to write **daytime** so Bruno makes up a word puzzle but is careful to note that the split vowel (the <i-e> in **time**) is something they'll work on next week. He'll come back to it then. They add some -y words, the other pattern they are looking at:

funny   **lucky**   **family**

Dina says she wants to spell **suddenly** so they add that.

Then they switch to a whole group discussion about how they celebrate birthdays and other special occasions in their families. Next Bruno gives the group a short text he's written on birthdays

incorporating spelling patterns they've already covered. To keep the text meaningful, he highlights words he thinks they may not easily decode in brown, and tells the class what they are. He says there are a few graphemes (also in brown) that they might not know. They can try to work them out or just ask.

> The Reddy family enjoys birthdays. Every member gets fantastic gifts and expects a big p**ar**ty. Prava Reddy's 60th birthday is in the summer, and the family is planning a big event to **celebrate.** Prava thinks it will be a big dinner, but the family is going to send her and her husband, Vikram, on a **cruise** to Italy. She has never been to Italy and she has never b**ee**n on such a big ship. If the family can k**ee**p the secret, it will be the biggest **surprise** ever!

Pairs take turns to read the sentences and help each other work out any unfamiliar phoneme-grapheme correspondences, listening for a word that makes sense in the context. Then they talk about 'the most fantastic gift I ever got' or 'the most fantastic gift I ever gave'.

If there's time, they can test each other on spelling the familiar words from the text, using word boxes. Maria wants to write **birthday** but struggles, so Dina makes a wordbox for her with all the sounds and helps her that way. **b ir th day.** Because Maria knows the one-to-many principles, she takes it in her stride that <ir> spells the 'er' sound in **birthday.** Dina puts **day** on one puzzle piece, which isn't technically correct, but Maria knows the word well so it's fine. Later they might write about 'the most fantastic gift I ever got' or 'the most fantastic gift I ever gave'.

3.4 Case Study 2b. Differentiating support by learner needs in a mixed Entry Level 1 and 2 group

In the same session as Case Study 2a, while the pairs are reading, Bruno is working with Hassan, who is partially hearing. They use the Language Experience Approach and Hassan says, "My brother looked for a job. He trained as a bricklayer (saying only two syllables: bricklair), but it so hard to find job. He just find job as labourer (again, in two syllables: labrer)." (For more information on the Language Experience Approach, see Hughes and Schwab (2010), pp. 162-163.)

Hassan's hearing impairment means he cannot discriminate between some sounds. He can distinguish syllables and connect his own combined perception of lip movement and unclear sounds with the written symbols. To help him, whether in front of the class, or working one-to-one, Bruno makes sure his lips are visible and he's making the sounds clearly.

In this case, Bruno transcribes Hassan's words but leaves blanks for **bricklayer** and **labourer** so they can practise using the -er ending from earlier in the lesson.

Bruno says **bricklayer** clearly with three syllables then asks Hassan to say it and count the syllables, **brick lay er.** Then Bruno asks him to write the first syllable on a small dry erase board. Bruno and his group like to use these because it's so easy to make errors disappear.

Hassan writes <brick> because it's a word they spelt while working with <ck> last week. In the next syllable, Bruno reminds him of the <ay> spelling they also did last week in **play, stay, May,** et cetera. Hassan hadn't connected those because of his hearing impairment, but he now 'sees' the sound as he says it clearly. Bruno asks him what he thinks that last syllable is and Hassan laughs because it's what they were working on earlier. Turns out he does know how to spell **bricklayer** now that he can think of it in three beats.

They work through several more job-related -er words that Hassan suggests from his time working on building sites. Bruno supplies the sounds they haven't yet covered (in **red**) and Hassan writes the ones he knows, especially the -er endings. They do **labourer** with puzzle pieces first because it's more complex than the others. Digraphs are in **bold.**

---

bri**cklayer**

---

lab**ou**r**er** – la bour er – start with l a b our then add -er. They notice the 'ay' (/**eɪ**/) sound in labourer has a different spelling than the one in **bricklayer.**

c**ar**pent**er**

pl**um**b**er**

r**oo**f**er**

w**or**k**er**

Hassan then asks about **doctor** so Bruno shows him that a few words end in <or>, but that <er> is by far the most common.

The class finishes by talking about what words they will add to their personal wordbook. Maria says she can now spell 'yesterday' without any problem at all, and has added 'birthday' to her spelling repertoire even though they haven't done <ir> yet.

Hassan has conquered -er endings for many jobs, and has added 'doctor' to his wordbook.

They've all encountered the one-to-many principles incidentally through reading and spelling. They don't have to remember the details, but they're becoming aware of how the complex part of the English code works and are seeing that long words are much easier to read and spell when thinking in syllables and sounds rather than in strings of letter names.

3.5 Case Study 3. Using authentic materials as a basis for reading and writing instruction with a mixed E2/E3 group

Carey teaches in a 'Category C' training prison for men. She teaches a mixed E2/low E3 FSE class assigned to a 'sandbags' workshop. There are six learners in the group, varying in age from 19 to 54. She sees them five times a week for 1.5 hours a day.

The prison has recently introduced a project called 'job sheet learning'. Prisoners have to read workshop instructions in order to carry out a variety of practical tasks that include writing for others (such as lists and handover notes). The prisoners have been told by their workshop instructor that they will receive a bonus for successfully completing their job sheets each week.

The image below shows some 'job sheet' information prisoners have to be able to read and respond to:

> **GENERAL INFORMATION**
>
> Pack in bundles of 100
>
> Bind with nylon wrap
>
> 1000 to a box
>
> Bind box to the pallet with nylon wrap
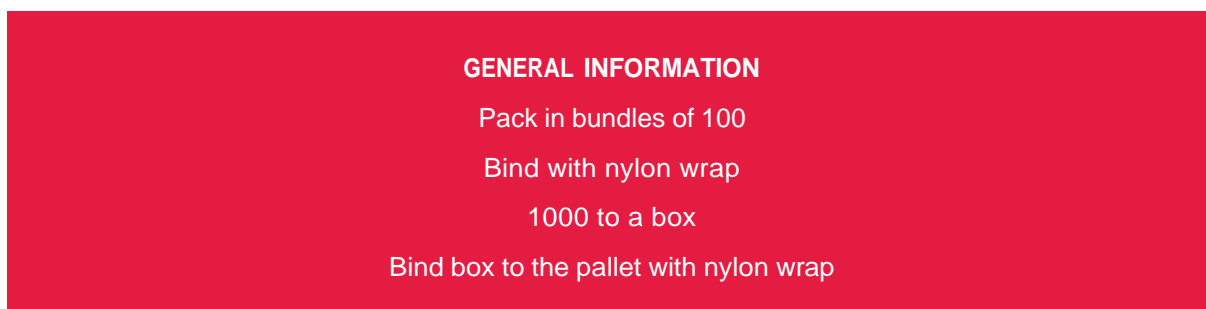
This is the first 'job sheet learning' session and Carey has been reflecting on the following:

- If learners make rapid progress in session 1, it is likely to improve their motivation and confidence.

- They will probably know most of the phoneme/grapheme correspondences from Basic Code Plus (but she knows she needs to check).

- They may view long words as harder to read and spell than short words.

- They will probably have many sight words.

- They will probably be more confident reading than spelling (but, again, she needs to check).

- They may well consider a spelling lesson less taboo than a reading lesson.

Carey begins with a discussion about the work this group do. They have recently completed an order of sandbags for villages in the local area at risk of flooding, and one member of the group was previously in the army and shares a story about helping people to save their houses during a previous year's floods. Carey then initiates a discussion about the job sheets, focusing on the 'packing' station in the workshop and the tasks at hand: learners will need to read the instructions and then write a short list for the workshop orderly, who is going to collect materials from the stores, as well as handover notes for peers working at the 'packing station' the next day.

Carey has written the sandbag packing instructions on a flipchart page. She shows learners the text, circling the words **general** and **information.** She reads these words aloud to learners, explaining that words with more than one syllable like this are easier to read and spell if they are broken down into sounds. She illustrates this by sounding out the words slowly. Carey now distributes a copy of the text to each learner and asks them to read through it and highlight any words they find interesting in terms of spelling (that is, hard or unusual). Using words that learners highlighted and her understanding of Basic Code Plus and one-to-many concepts, she decides to focus on the following words in this session:

pa**ll**et

nylon

bund**les**

bind

inf**or**ma**tion**

> **Note:** Single letter graphemes are shown here in normal font and graphemes with two or more letters are in bold. The ending <tion> is easier to remember as a whole syllable, so is in bold and underlined.

Carey takes the texts back in and hands out a mini white board and pen to each learner. She picks the first word on the list, **pallet,** and writes its graphemes on the flip chart out of order, as follows:

a   **t**   **p**   **ll**
               e

Carey explains that not all sounds are represented by single letters and introduces the word grapheme to explain this. Here, two letters <ll> form one grapheme and have one sound /l/. She reminds them of the whole word, **pallet,** by saying it out loud, and counting the syllables. Next, she asks them to use the graphemes on the chart to spell each syllable. Carey reminds the group that this way of breaking down words is going to help them read and spell many long words in a short amount of time.

Carey hands out puzzle pieces with graphemes from the four remaining words and asks learners, in pairs, to match the graphemes to form the target words: **nylon, bundle, bind** and **information.**

General **information**

Pack in **bundles** of 100

Bind with **nylon** wrap

1000 to a box

Bind box to the **pallet** with **nylon** wrap

Next, Carey shows the whole text again and reads it aloud, asking learners to notice ('hear') the graphemes in the target words (emboldened to the right):

Carey now focuses on the more complex word **information,** writing its base word in the middle of a matrix, as follows:

in			a		tion
con		**form**	al		
re			er		
			ed		

She explains that the base word **form** comes from the Latin word for **shape.** She asks if they can see a connection between **form,** meaning shape, and the word **information.** Carey now asks how many words learners can make from the base word **form** using this matrix (there are 11: **inform, informal, information, informer, informed, conform, conformer, conformed, reform, reformation, reformer**). Carey asks what is interesting about the prefix 're' and elicits that it means to do something again. She asks if learners know any other words with 're' at the start (for example: **repeat, reinstate**).

Next, Carey turns the group's attention to the writing tasks: three of them will focus on writing a list for the orderly who will collect materials from the stores and the other three will complete a handover sheet for their peers. She asks why it is important that they spell words correctly in both cases (because someone else will be reading their work and needs to get the right materials/start at the right place in their tasks). Carey collects the puzzle pieces and original texts for the group to encourage them to practise spelling independently but allows them to check their spellings by referring back to the texts at the end.

To end the lesson, Carey asks people to swap their group-written list or handover notes with others in the class and to read them through, focusing on checking that someone outside the class could follow them and accurately get/do what was needed. When the groups are happy with their texts, Carey asks the class to hand them to the orderly, who will now collect materials from the stores and pass the list to prisoners coming into the workshop the following day.

3.6 Reflection

These three practitioners, working with diverse literacy/English groups, respond in different ways to the needs of their learners. They are using phonics approaches to work on the relationship between phonemes and graphemes within a rich literacy curriculum that contains speaking, listening, reading and writing activities. In each instance, their approach is related to the learners' own language and rooted in how they wish to express themselves and what they want to learn.

Activity: Developing learners' spelling and reading strategies

These practitioners use different activities to develop their learners' spelling and reading strategies. In a similar situation, how would you respond?

What other phonics activities would you have used in these different settings?

What kinds of activities could be added to expand learners' vocabulary?

What else might help keep interest and engagement high?

Are there any other ways of making use of the diverse skills and knowledge that the learners have?

If more technology had been available, might this have helped further develop word-level work?

You might want to return to these questions as you read on in the toolkit, or discuss them with colleagues when you have the opportunity.

For wider guidance on teaching reading and writing to adults, please see Hughes and Schwab (2010).

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 In some post-16 contexts, such as secure estates, the importance of protecting learners' self-esteem is paramount. Post-16 phonics safeguards learners' self-esteem by: keeping the pace fast whenever possible, never asking anyone to do something they have not previously learned and by starting with learners' own language.

Claire Collins, 2019

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Chapter 4. Knowledge of phonetics for post-16 literacy practitioners

Introduction

The chapter will be of interest for practitioners who wish to go deeper into the linguistic underpinnings of phonics and knowledge of phonetics before they read the rest of the toolkit. You might prefer to come back to this chapter once you're ready to put the toolkit into practice with your learners.

This chapter describes and illustrates how the phonemes of the accent called Received Pronunciations (RP) are represented by the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet and outlines why this is useful knowledge for practitioners.

4.1 Why does phonetics matter for phonics?

Accurate and systematic phonics requires a good underpinning knowledge of the phonetics and pho-nology of English. This is not something that is acquired automatically simply by being a native speaker. Yet without this knowledge, practitioners may misunderstand the actual sounds that learners produce, as well as their relationship to the spelling system.

Research has shown that phonics instruction needs to be systematic, not half-hearted or ad hoc. It also needs, above all, to be accurate – inaccurate phonics is misleading and unhelpful for the learner. Here we use phonetics to explain how consonant and vowel phonemes can be analysed and spell out some implications for adapting phonics for the range of accents with which English is spoken.

4.2 The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

This is the normal transcription system through which phonetics is taught, and it also features in the Functional Skills English (FSE) framework. Within the system, every single sound of any and every language can be represented by a symbol that provides a consistent one-to-one correspondence. For a language like English with its 26 letters of the alphabet but around 44 phonemes, such a system avoids ambiguities.

It is not intended that IPA should be taught to learners, but it is a useful tool to assist practitioners in their understanding of phonetics and identification of individual phonemes.

The tables below set out the IPA symbols for the consonant and vowel phonemes of English, in the accent called Received Pronunciation.

> **Note:** the conventional way of representing sounds (phonemes) is between slanted brackets / /, and letters (graphemes) within angled brackets < >.

Table 1: The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols for the 24 consonant phonemes of the Received Pronunciation accent of English

IPA		Sample word	IPA transcription
/b/	as in the first sound of	by	/baɪ/
/d/	as in the first sound of	dye	/daɪ/
/g/	as in the first sound of	guy	/gaɪ/
/m/	as in the first sound of	my	/maɪ/
/n/	as in the first sound of	nigh	/naɪ/
/p/	as in the first sound of	pie	/paɪ/
/t/	as in the first sound of	tie	/taɪ/
/r/	as in the first sound of	rye	/raɪ/
/k/	as in the first sound of	coo	/kuː/
/tʃ/	as in the first sound of	chew	/tʃuː/
/f/	as in the first sound of	few	/fjuː/
/dʒ/	as in the first sound of	jaw	/dʒɔː/
/l/	as in the first sound of	law	/lɔː/
/s/	as in the first sound of	sue	/suː/
/v/	as in the first sound of	view	/vjuː/
/z/	as in the first sound of	zoo	/zuː/
/h/	as in the first sound of	who	/huː/
/ŋ/	as in the last sound of	ring	/rɪŋ/
/ʃ/	as in the third sound of	fission	/ˈfɪʃən/
/ʒ/	as in the third sound of	vision	/ˈvɪʒən/
/θ/	as in the first sound of	thigh	/θaɪ/
/ð/	as in the first sound of	thy	/ðaɪ/
/w/	as in the first sound of	well	/wel/
/j/	as in the first sound of	yell, union	/jel, ˈjuːnjən/

Table 2: The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols for the 20 vowel phonemes of the Received Pronunciation accent of English

IPA	Sample word		IPA transcription
Short pure vowels			
/æ/	as in the first sound of	ant	/ænt/
/e/	as in the first sound of	end	/end/
/ɪ/	as in the first sound of	ink	/ɪŋk/
/ɒ/	as in the first sound of	ox	/ɒks/
/ʌ/	as in the first sound of	up	/ʌp/
/ʊ/	as in the second sound of	pull	/pʊl/
/ə/	('schwa') as in the first sound of	about	/ə'baʊt/
Long pure vowels			
/ɑː/	as in the first sound of	aardvark	/'ɑːdvɑːk/
/ɜː/	as in the first sound of	earl	/ɜːl/
/ɔː/	as in the whole sound of	awe	/ɔː/
/uː/	as in the first sound of	ooze	/uːz/
/iː/	as in the first sound of	eel	/iːl/
Dipthongs			
/eɪ/	as in the first sound of	aim	/eɪm/
/aɪ/	as in the first sound of	ice	/aɪs/
/əʊ/	as in the first sound of	oath	/əʊθ/
/aʊ/	as in the first sound of	ouch	/aʊʧ/
/ɔɪ/	as in the first sound of	oyster	/'ɔɪstə/
/eə/	as in the whole sound of	air	/eə/
/ɪə/	as in the whole sound of	ear	/ɪə/
/ʊə/	as in the second sound of	juror	/'ʤʊərə/

There are some unfamiliar symbols in IPA, but if you look, for example, at the IPA consonant list you'll see that well over half the symbols are used with their familiar sound values.

4.3 Phonetics – the basics

Phonetics is the study of speech sounds and is one of the key branches of linguistics (the science of language). Here we are looking at phonetics as a means to an end, namely as a way of informing our phonics practice.

A phoneme is a unit of sound. The identification of phonemes is based on identifying those sounds that speakers recognise will make a change in meaning. So, for example, if we look at the initial sounds of the words big, pig, fig, gig, each change of sound results in a change of meaning (and a 'different' word). Thus, /b, p, f, g/ are all phonemes of English.

Distinguishing vowels from consonants

Phonemes can be divided into vowels and consonants, a familiar distinction that can be explained in different ways. Distinguishing vowels from consonants is instinctive for native speakers of English. Thus we say '**a** banana' but '**an** apple' – two different forms of the indefinite article precede consonants and vowels respectively.

More technically, the sounds produced depend on different positions of tongue, lips, and so on:

•   Making consonant sounds involves some obstruction to the airflow, for example, with /p/, the lips come together, completely blocking the airflow.

•   With /f/, contact is between the bottom lip and teeth, where the obstruction is partial and enough air escapes to make a long-drawn out /ffffff…/ sound.

•   If you try that with /p/ it is not possible.

•   By contrast, there is no obstruction in the vocal tract when vowel sounds are produced so the sound can be prolonged until you run out of breath: 'aaaaa…'

An accurate understanding of the vowel and consonant inventory of English is vital for effective delivery of phonics. This is because spellings can suggest sounds that are not there or fail to account for sounds that are there. For example, in many accents of English, the final <r> in words is not sounded, for example, <car> sounds like /kɑː/. Keep listening carefully. Being able to use the IPA lists to recognise the sounds associated with different accents can help here.

Understanding consonants

Consonants are relatively straightforward and there is less variation between accents in consonants than in vowels. Familiarising yourself with the IPA list is a good starting point.

Many of the consonant phonemes come in related pairs /p, b; t, d; k, g; f, v; s, z; θ, ð; ʃ, ʒ/. This distinction is called '**voicing**', whereby the vocal cords in the larynx vibrate for 'voiced' sounds or do not vibrate ('voiceless' sounds). The first phoneme in each of these pairs is voiceless – you can test this out by sounding them out in turn with your hand on your Adam's apple and you should feel the difference.

Why does voicing matter? The distinction between voiced and voiceless consonant pairs is not always reflected in the spelling. For example, with the words **cats** and **dogs,** both end in grapheme <s>, but the sound at the end of dogs is actually phoneme /z/. Why is this? It is easier to follow a voiced sound with another voiced sound, a voiceless sound with a voiceless. */ catz/ would be rather awkward to say.

Consonant clusters – adjacent consonant phonemes – are either all voiced or all voiceless in English (this process is known as assimilation). The same process occurs in words such as husband, cooked, leaves. What about **exit**? Is it /ˈeksɪt/ or /ˈegzɪt/? Either is possible, but not */ˈegsɪt/ or */ˈekzɪt/.

Another type of assimilation happens with nasal consonants /m, n, ŋ/. In the words bump and hunt, phonemes /m/ and /p/ are both made with the lips together (bilabial), and /n/ and /t/ both involve the placing of the tongue on the bony ridge behind the upper front teeth (alveolar). /ŋ/ requires the back of

the tongue to be raised against the back of the mouth (velar) and is often represented by the grapheme <ng>, for example, **sing**.

In the words **finger, thank, ink** and **include**, the /ŋ/ phoneme is represented by <n> and in each case is followed by a velar consonant /k/ or /g/, which is produced in the same part of the mouth as /ŋ/. Again it is much easier to have both sounds made in a similar way. If you try saying */bunp/ or */humt/ or */pin-k/ you'll find that there is more effort involved. These two types of assimilation demonstrate that consonant phonemes cannot be fully understood in isolation; you also need to understand how they behave in words.

Understanding vowels

Vowels can be harder to describe because there is greater regional variation. There are some visual clues when pronouncing vowels – see how the shape of the mouth varies when you say the words **eel, ill, all.**

Vowels can be divided into 'short', 'long' and 'diphthongs' (see Table 2).

Most accents of English have seven **short vowel phonemes** – the five traditionally associated with the letters <a, e, i, o, u>, namely /æ, e, ɪ, ɒ, ʌ/; the other two are /ʊ/ as in **pull,** and the 'schwa' vowel /ə/ represented by the letter <a> in **about.**

Long vowels are indicated by length marks /ː/, and many accents have five: /ɑː, ɜː, iː, ɔː, uː/ (think **ah, err, ee, awe, oo**).

Often what are referred to as 'long vowels' are in fact **diphthongs,** which involve a glide from one sound to another. Misleadingly, the letters <a, e, i, o, u> are often described as 'saying their names' when long. But three of these 'letter-name vowels' are actually diphthongs - <a, i, o> /eɪ, aɪ, əʊ/.

Stress

As with consonants, it is how vowels behave in words that is important, especially how they are affected by word stress, that is, where the emphasis is placed on a word. In phonetic transcription, a stressed syllable is indicated by the mark /ˈ/ immediately preceding the syllable, for example, **polite** /pəˈlaɪt/. In particular, we need to distinguish between stressed and unstressed syllables in order to understand the vowel phoneme /ə/, known as 'schwa'.

Schwa usually only occurs in unstressed syllables. It can be spelled using any of the vowel graphemes, although <a> is the most frequent spelling. However, don't be tempted to assume that all vowels in unstressed syllables are schwa. To take one example, the unstressed first vowel in **immense** – /ɪˈmens/ – is not.

> **Note:** Stress shifts can affect vowel phonemes, even when the graphemes remain the same, for example, **present** /ˈprezənt/ (noun) and /prɪˈzent/ (verb).
>
> Vowel phonemes can disappear completely before or immediately after a stressed syllable, for example, **raspberry**. In normal speech we don't actually say /ˈrɑːspberiː/ but something closer to /ˈrɑːzbriː/. And this is another illustration of 'assimilation', which we saw earlier when consonants in a cluster share the same voicing – so /zb/ is easier to say than /sb/.
>
> Despite the relative complexity of vowel phonemes, it tends to be consonants that actually carry the information in words, a feature that is exploited in texting (for example, **txt, thnx**).

4.4 Accents and phonics teaching

One of the concerns that practitioners raise in connection with phonics is how to cope with the variety of accents, British and non-British, in which their learners operate. By 'accent' we mean features of pronunciation rather than of vocabulary or grammar. Received Pronunciation (RP) is just one of the many accents of English and not even the most frequent. We tend to think that it is other people, outside our family and peer groups, who 'have an accent'. But we all speak with an accent of one sort or another. It is most often the vowel phonemes that are affected; the best-known variations are the North/South distinctions between /æ/ and /ɑː/ (as in **bath**) and between /ʊ/ and /ʌ/ (as in **cup**).

What are the implications for post-16 phonics teaching? Practitioners can expect learners to have accents other than RP. If a learner does not discriminate between particular phonetic distinctions because they do not feature in his or her accent, **there is no need to teach these.** Good phonics teaching accepts that the grapheme-phoneme and phoneme-grapheme correspondences may well be different in different accents of English, but within each accent they can still be mapped out. Recognising the range of sounds that make up the English language and how they can be distinguished using IPA may help here.

“

When I ran phonetics training sessions as part of an adult phonics project, the practitioners found the phonetics knowledge helpful for their practice. Here's a quote from one of them: 'I think it is essential to fully understand this aspect before we begin to teach a structured programme of phonics to our learners... this underpinning knowledge is invaluable when designing handouts and worksheets where we can hopefully avoid words and sounds which would confuse our learners.' (Quoted in Burton et al. 2008, p. 9)

Maxine Burton, 2019

”

PART 2 USING PHONICS APPROACHES POST-16

Chapter 5. Post-16 Phonics: The essential concepts

Introduction

This chapter introduces the essential concepts and principles in 'post-16 phonics'. These take into account the profile of older learners who come to Entry Level English Functional Skills courses with different experiences and needs.

The structured and systematic approach we adopt provides the basis for creating a shared language of reading and spelling for both practitioners and learners. It introduces ideas of sequence and complexity that underpin phonics teaching and shows how they can be used to support learners, whatever their prior knowledge.

Unlike other alphabetic writing systems, the spelling system in English is not straightforward. It does not employ a consistent one-to-one relationship between individual letters and speech sounds. On the contrary:

- the same speech sound (phoneme) may be represented by different letters or combinations of letters (graphemes) – two/to/too

- the same grapheme can represent different speech sounds – <ch> represents 'ch' (ʧ) in church and 'k' (/k/) in chemist.

This is why the English spelling system is sometimes described as 'opaque'. In a more 'transparent' alphabetic writing system like Spanish or Italian, the relationship between sounds and letters is more stable and therefore, it is much easier to predict how to spell a word. An opaque spelling system such as English presents learners with a greater number of challenges as they move from speech to writing and vice versa. By focusing systematically on the relationships between letters and sounds in the English spelling system, post-16 phonics approaches are designed to help learners tackle these challenges. We look at this in detail in Chapter 7.

5.1 Why use a structured phonics approach with post-16 learners?

Post-16 learners are not blank slates. When presented with text, less confident readers often experience anxiety rooted in perceived past failure. The trajectory of learning using phonics is part gaining and applying new information and part unlocking and finding a way to make use of prior literacy knowledge. Phonics approaches in lessons will move learners from supported through degrees of independence to proficient. We are all somewhere on that continuum, making more or less use of phonics with unfamiliar words.

When we read and spell in English, we all use a written code that encompasses a complex range of phoneme-grapheme relationships. By using a structured and systematic approach to understanding the code, we can help those with less confidence in their literacy (including those who feel they cannot read or write at all) to write more words and read more text from the start.

A structured approach to teaching the code helps to reveal patterns so learners can read and spell many similar words quickly. It does so by moving learners through a set sequence. As learners progress in their reading and spelling, the set sequence becomes less important.

A structured approach also enables learners to practise past steps as they move on to new steps. Teaching in this way will feel less like repetition and more like a continuous moving forward. This helps keep interest levels high. Post-16 learners need to move as quickly as possible to avoid feeling stuck and to grow in confidence and independence in their reading and writing.

From the outset, learners need to understand that there is a relationship between spoken and written English for both reading and spelling. It works:

- from sound to print for spelling

- from print to sound for the decoding element of reading.

For post-16 learners, it is often particularly useful to start from oral language (using their own regional accent). Ask them to:

- say whole meaningful words that are in the learner's vocabulary

- identify the sounds

- and then attach written symbols to those sounds.

By working backwards from oral language to written text, using a structured and systematic approach, they can learn how the writing system works as a code and gain confidence through spelling. The process can then be reversed for reading, providing an age appropriate strategy for building reading skills.

Once everyone has a vocabulary for talking about spelling and reading unfamiliar words, there is scope for 'incidental phonics' and jumping ahead of the structure as learners seek to write and read beyond the programme. However, if they're struggling, consider whether or not it's because they've jumped too far ahead of the cumulative sequence.

5.2 The essential concepts of post-16 phonics

These concepts are the foundations of post-16 phonics. They will give your learners a language for talking about reading and spelling and the tools for dealing with unfamiliar words in the context of reading and writing authentic text. These concepts are what we mean by 'structure' in phonics. We'll refer to and illustrate all these concepts as we talk about putting them into practice.

Depending on the needs of your learners, you may not do any explicit teaching or explaining of the first four concepts. However, many Entry 1 learners will enjoy the satisfaction of taking basic (easy) words and stretching them into something more age-appropriate and sophisticated. Whether you teach them or just use them, the first four concepts are essential to lessons in post-16 phonics.

1. Words 'work' from left to right with a beginning, middle and end

Struggling readers often view words as objects to be recognised by sight. Instead, we want to show how words work from left to right (in English), and are comprised of sounds and syllables.

When a learner:

- mixes up 'for' and 'of' or 'was' and 'saw' or reads informed instead of information, remind them to start at the beginning and read right through

- writes **<rember>** instead of **<remember>**, have them say the syllables then write the matching graphemes in the correct order. **r/e - m/e/m - b/er**

> "
>
> A 17-year-old looked at the word waterspouts while preparing to read a text about weather. He proudly said he knew that one, 'It's watersports.' I pointed at the <ou> to show him what made the sound 'ow' rather than 'or' but he wouldn't have it. He brought another member of staff into the conversation who gently explained how she read all the way through words. She didn't just look at the shape because lots of words look the same. Our least confident learners need to know that words aren't shapes to be identified as whole objects.
>
> Tricia Millar, 2019
>
> "

2. Words are made up of sounds that can be segmented and blended

Letters and combinations of letters represent the sounds we say out loud. This is true whether the word is '**cat**', '**kicker**' or '**achlorhydric**'. We can pick out individual sounds (segmenting) and put them back together (blending).

Most adults don't need explicit instruction in blending and segmenting, but they may well need practice thinking in sounds rather than letter names. It's important to reassure learners that all this talk about sounds is so they can be spelling and reading whatever they want, including new words they haven't met before.

Post-16 learners need to know that we're thinking about sounds because it's helpful when words get long and complex.

It's easier to read '**remote**' or '**successful**' when you think of them one syllable at a time, saying the sounds and listening for a familiar word. You may have had to do that with 'achlorhydric'. Building up familiarity with how to divide written words into their component graphemes is part of post-16 phonics.

Spelling requires the reverse. Say the word you want to spell then write a grapheme for each sound. Learners who are starting out will do this sound by sound but eventually start writing syllable by syllable. Other learners will think and write in syllables from the start.

3. In writing, sounds are represented by graphemes

Learners may prefer to think of phonemes and graphemes as sounds and ways to spell sounds and can work with this concept from the outset. Letter names are helpful for talking about which grapheme they might need, asking things like, "Is the 'ee' (/iː/) sound in stream spelt ee-ee or ee-ay?" They think about sounds first, then use letter names to talk about an individual grapheme.

> **Note:** Writing about sounds can be tricky so we've used both everyday examples like 'ee' and IPA symbols like /iː/ to clarify which sound we're talking about on the page. It doesn't determine a specific accent for working with phonics. Post-16 phonics works with any accent and with a variety of accents in the same group.

4. A single grapheme consists of one, two, three or (rarely) four letters

You may encounter learners who believe that each letter must be sounded out individually.

Working on this concept will help them see that a collection of letters can represent one sound instead of thinking that every letter equals a sound. You can introduce this concept simply from the beginning using double consonants at the ends of words like '**mess**', '**bell**', '**fuzz**', et cetera.

a <a> 1 letter – 1 grapheme

sw**ee**t **<ee>** 2 letters – 1 grapheme

h**igh** **<igh>** 3 letters – 1 grapheme

thr**ough** **<ough>** 4 letters – 1 grapheme

For reading: When they meet a word like '**chair**', they'll know to try 'ch' (/tʃ/) rather than 'kuh-huh' (/k – h/). They may know the sound 'air' (/eə/ or /eər/) or they may know the word air, but either will get them to 'ch-air' (/tʃ – eə/ or /tʃ – eər/) and the correct word. They will also then be able to decode other **<air>** words.

For spelling: Instead of trying to picture a whole word or remember a string of letter names, learners will focus their memory on graphemes that might be harder to remember. Once they've mastered a complex grapheme like **<ough>**, words that have been challenging become very straightforward. (See concept 6 for the idea that one grapheme can represent many sounds.)

5. Long words are accessed via syllables and long words are no more difficult to read and spell than short words

Simple 'fat cat sat' phonics – basic code and single syllable words – may be too limited for older learners, so post-16s can go beyond that from the outset with simply structured multisyllabic words.

A learner who can read and spell '**fan**', '**pub**', '**set**', et cetera, can master words like '**upset**', '**public**' and '**fantastic**' with support in the first phonics lesson.

5.3 Introducing the one-to-many concepts: working from letters to sounds and sounds to letters

The first five concepts will become second nature as you and your learners apply them in reading and writing. However, the complex code is what makes the language come alive for post-16 learners who want to read and write without the constraints of a sequence.

The final two concepts give learners a way of talking about what's challenging about reading and spelling in English. They help create scaffolds for making best use of limited memory for spelling and give learners a way into any word for reading. Once learners understand these concepts, they can focus on learning to recognise a growing number of graphemes (for fluent reading) and recall a growing number of graphemes (for fluent spelling).

Following are what we refer to as the one-to-many concepts. They share a label but are the mirror image of each other: one grapheme might represent several different phonemes; one phoneme might be represented by several different graphemes. This is much easier to understand in practice, and rest assured, no one needs to know how many ways there are to pronounce the letter **<a>** or how many ways there are to spell the sound 'ay' (/eɪ/). They do have to know that these 'one-to-many' concepts reflect the complexity of English and give learners a way into reading and writing anything they like.

6. One grapheme can represent many phonemes

You can also say there are lots of ways to say some letters and combinations of letters. Usually there are only a couple of choices.

carrot, **c**ity, (and much less frequently), **c**ello

When a learner comes across an unfamiliar word and they have a choice of what to say for one of the graphemes, they can try it both ways, and listen for a word that makes sense in the context. It's hard to think of a piece of text where both '**kitty'** and '**city**' would make equal sense.

There are a few graphemes that each represent several different sounds. When learners are confident, then it becomes a joyous challenge to tackle even complex graphemes like **<ough>**

t**a**p b**a**by w**a**ter f**a**ther **a**round

happ**y** Jul**y** **y**es m**y**stic

thr**ough** th**ough** th**ought** thor**ough** (r**ou gh** c**ou gh**)

7. One phoneme can be represented by several different graphemes

You might also say there are lots of ways to spell some sounds.

Some are so common we don't think about them:

'**m**'(/m/)

mouse so**me**

Some are simple and have some predictable patterns:

ha**mm**er

Some are a bit quirky but show up in very common words. They require memory:

autu**mn** co**mb**

Vowels have the most alternative spellings, but some are much more common than others and some are rare but appear in common words. There are still others that may come up occasionally but the rarity of the words they show up in means we can all be surprised by them and express to learners that we didn't know that one either.

'**ee**' (/iː/)

Common

s**ee** b**e** t**ea**m bab**y** tax**i**

Less common

p**e**t**e** k**ey** ch**ie**f re**cei**ve

Rare but in words that post-16 learners might want to write

f**oe**tus qu**ay** L**eigh** archa**eo**logy p**eo**ple

So rare that we won't worry about them, but they might come up randomly

prec**is** espr**it** cham**ois**

These concepts form the basis of post-16 phonics. The next chapter demonstrates how to put them into practice.

> **"**
>
> Whether we struggle to read 'boat' or struggle to spell 'haemorrhage', we're all somewhere on the same literacy continuum.
>
> Tricia Millar, 2019
>
> **"**

Chapter 6. Sequence, content and lesson ideas for teaching the basic code

Introduction

This chapter sets out Basic Code Plus, a simple-to-complex sequence of phoneme-grapheme correspondences and sample lessons that take into account the mature language experience of post-16 learners. It can be carefully scaffolded for your least confident learners or less structured for those who need to fill in some gaps in their knowledge of how English works as a code.

The sequence in structured and sequential phonics is simply the order in which the phonemes and graphemes are introduced for spelling and reading. In post-16 phonics, the sequence should move quickly from simple to complex, and allow the teaching to move from explicit to incidental as learners internalise the concepts from Chapter 5 and become more confident using them.

Basic Code Plus allows for very rapid progression because most post-16 learners already know the basic code. Basic Code Plus gives them solid ground to stand on whilst learning how to negotiate longer and more complex words.

6.1 What is Basic Code Plus?

Basic Code Plus is the introduction to using the English code for reading and spelling, starting with the simplest and most frequent sound-to-letter correspondences. It gradually adds complexity, including digraphs, and a taste of working with the one-to-many concepts. This is that a single grapheme can represent more than one sound and a single phoneme can be spelt with more than one grapheme. One-to-many is covered in more detail in Chapter 7.

At this level, focus your teaching on learners gaining long word confidence and seeing how reading and spelling are reversible when using the basic code. We approach words as puzzles that can be taken apart, put back together and manipulated to create new words. In each box is an idea for applying this 'words as puzzles' idea.

Your least confident learners will need lots of practice, but your more confident learners will need fresh challenges at this level or to move quickly through it.

Below is an idea of what a simple to complex and explicit to incidental sequence could look like. The order is important at the very beginning because it's carefully scaffolded to build confidence in your least confident learners. As they progress, the need for structure is less.

6.2 The sequence in Basic Code Plus

Box A (below) is the recommended starting place for all learners even if you only work on words with two or more syllables. Boxes B to E contain essential content but can be covered in any order that suits you and your learners. Whatever order you choose, make sure to include content you've worked on previously so learners keep practising whilst moving forward.

In each of the boxes A, B, C, D and E, you can do word, sentence and text level work. Move from spelling with the graphemes visible to word reading, then onto spelling without the graphemes visible. This helps learners discover for themselves how the code works from sound to print and print to sound. In the process they'll learn to read and spell hundreds of words. You can create a variety of support activities for practising at every stage.

The words in each of the boxes below are samples of the type of words learners will be able to spell and read at that level and beyond. If you follow the order laid out below, each lesson or activity will include the concepts and letter/sound correspondences of all the previous ones.

This basic sequence is a natural starting place for Entry Level 1 and assumes learners can speak English fairly fluently and have no or mild learning difficulties. If your learners need more support, that is, they don't know the basic alphabet letters and sounds, or don't yet speak English, you can introduce the phonemes and graphemes from Box A more gradually. However, do challenge learners who can do more to move more quickly. Post-16 phonics helps learners engage latent phonic knowledge enabling them to move quickly through Basic Code Plus.

Box A. One sound to one letter plus <qu> /kw/ and <x> /ks/

Single syllable and multi-syllable words

a e i o u (short vowel sounds only: /æ, e, ɪ, ɒ, ʌ/)

b d c k f g h j l m n ng p qu r s t v w x y z

Double consonants (final): ff ll ss zz

Sample words:
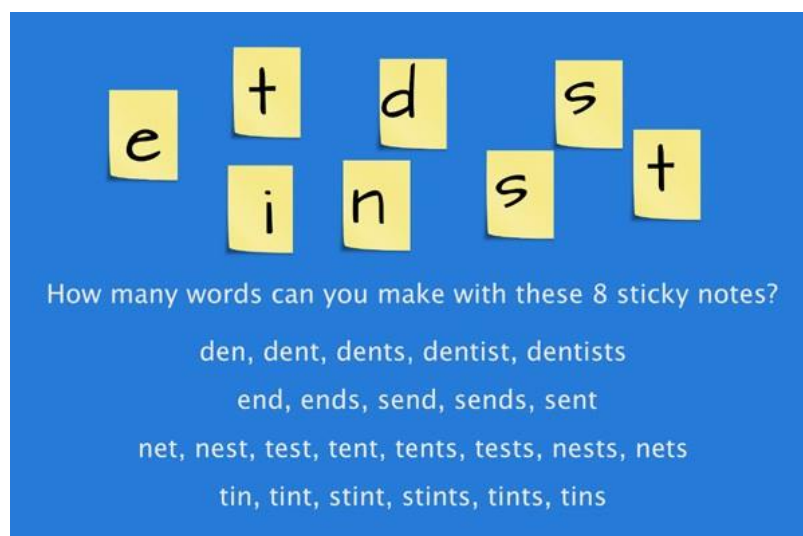
tap, max, quit, mop, dub, yap, mill, tell, buzz, lamp, stand, stamp, cliff, strand, scrimp, rang, fling, strong, upset, laptop, transit, fantastic, profit, inspect, invent, dentist, insect, contest, umbrella (unstressed final syllable)

🔎 Activity: Word stretching

Word stretching activity: write each grapheme /d/e/n/t/i/s/t/ on a separate small sticky note. Give a set to each learner or pair of learners. Ask them to build the word '**den**'.

Change den to **dent**; change dent to **dents**; change dents to **dentist** – think about the sounds as you're moving the sticky notes around. It works best if learners are saying the sounds as they're working. Have them write each word after they've built it. How would they write '**dentists**'?

You can do this type of activity very early on with emergent readers and writers using graphemes and phonemes to build familiar words.

How many words can you make with these 8 sticky notes?

den, dent, dents, dentist, dentists

end, ends, send, sends, sent

net, nest, test, tent, tents, tests, nests, nets

tin, tint, stint, stints, tints, tins

> **Note:** double letters like **zz, ll,** and **ss** each go on one sticky note rather than two because they are each a single grapheme.
>
> **qu** also goes on one sticky note even though it represents two sounds.

Box B. ch sh th (th)

Sample words:

chip, shop, that, this, bath, crunch, lunch, brush, crash, crush, thanks, lunchbox, astonish (unstressed first syllable), embellish, sandwich, bathtub

🔍 Activity: Introducing new graphemes

You can use sticky notes to introduce new graphemes. Ask everyone to say the sounds as they build the words. If they don't say the sounds, it can quickly become a visual spelling activity. Rather, keep the sounds up so it becomes an activity in discovering how English works as a code for spelling.

Make sticky note puzzles with one grapheme on each puzzle; that means sh, ch and th each go on one sticky note. Emergent spellers who think they can't write much can quickly be spelling 'fish and chip shop'.

The puzzle pieces for that are /f/i/sh/a/n/d/ch/i/p/sh/o/p/. You can differentiate by doing one word at a time or by putting all the graphemes on the table and talking through the sounds in each word.

Box C. C. ck ay oy

Sample words:

snack, flack, flick, track, trick, truck, backrest, jacket (unstressed syllable)

tray, stray, spray, payday

joy, soy, toy, enjoy, employ, employment (unstressed final syllable)

Activity: Syllable combining

The sticky note puzzle for employment is /e/m/p/l/oy/m/e/n/t/

You can do this as a syllable combining activity. Have them build **em** then **ploy** then **ment**. Explain that syllables aren't usually the same as words and are often easier to spell.

Now get them to make employ then employment. Have them write it. Ask if anyone would like to try spelling it without the sticky notes in front of them.

Encourage everyone to keep thinking in sounds so they're not just saying letter names.

Box D. Endings -ed -y -le -er -ing plus incidental one-to-many

Sample words:

sprayed, employed, snacked, inspected, snapped, astonishing, twenty, plenty, happy, simmer, hammer, little, trickle

More double consonants (final and medial): bb dd gg mm nn pp rr tt

Incidental one-to-many spelling: Learner is writing a card and asks, "How do you spell the 'er' (/ɜː/) in Happy Birthday?"

Incidental one-to-many reading: Learners encounter a long vowel spelt with one letter – table, be, wind, so, university – and adjust the sound from short to long to hear words which make sense in the context.

🔍 Activity: Endings

Put endings on a single sticky note even if they have more than one sound.

Add sticky notes with /ing/ /er/ /ed/ to the 'employment' puzzle and have learners create new words and write them saying the sounds and endings.

This activity is a multi-sensory and learner-centred way to fulfil the FES Entry Level 1 requirements to read and spell 'common two-syllable words with ay and oy' and '-ed for the past tense when the root word remains unchanged'.

Box E. Split digraphs – tap tape, pet Pete, fin fine, mop mope, cut cute

Sample words:

save, plane, theme, eve, quite, site, crime, robe, slope, drove, tube, cube, mute, pavement, scheme, concrete, dispute, compute

Activity: Split digraphs

When you make a puzzle with a split digraph, the two parts of the digraph are on separate sticky notes and underlined to show they represent one phoneme.

The puzzle pieces for **concrete** are /c/o/n/c/r/e̲/e̲/t/

For **pavement** they're /p/a̲/v/e̲/m/e/n/t/

6.3 Additional word-level lesson ideas

In Post-16 phonics, word-level work provides the building blocks for sentence level work and text work. Here we set out some ideas for working with words.

Spelling words with the graphemes visible

This is a confidence-building way into spelling. Ask learners to listen for the sounds in a word, identify the correct graphemes for those sounds on a chart, then write them, saying the sounds. Those learners who don't need to look at the graphemes are already spelling, so they can move on. Some will be able to spell at the start, so ask if they'd like the graphemes visible or not.

Single-syllable words

More support: limit the number of visible graphemes to a handful or even only those in the word you're going to spell. If you're not sure, ask your learners if something is too difficult or they need more challenge. Successful post-16 phonics constantly asks learners how they feel about what they're learning, and whether or not the pace is right for them.

Words with two or more syllables

Ask them to say the word in clear syllables. This is descriptive rather than prescriptive, so either rap/id or ra/pid is correct. Likewise, they might say yell/ow or ye/llow but they won't say yel/low as you might have seen it in a dictionary or split in text. Syllables in post-16 phonics reflect natural speech.

For longer words, limit the graphemes to those required for the word. Make puzzle pieces with one grapheme per piece, on sticky notes or scrap paper, or get everyone to write the correct graphemes, out of order, on a white board. So, the graphemes in 'happy' are h/a/pp/y (four puzzle pieces) and in 'employment' are e/m/p/l/oy/m/e/n/t (nine puzzle pieces). Then they can put them back in the right order as they say each syllable.

Reading words out of context (pure decoding – meaning might need to be supplied by practitioner)

Ask learners to say the sounds in a familiar word one by one and listen out for a word they recognise. This isn't a flashcard exercise for recalling words from memory. Instead, by asking them to say the sounds out loud and then identify the word they hear, learners will see how decoding right through the word leads to meaning. If they don't know that particular word, give them the answer and put it in the context of a phrase for meaning. This is a shame-free exercise and, unless they have serious speech and language difficulties, they will get better at hearing the word they're decoding. Try to pick words your learners will know when they hear them but not necessarily recognise in print.

More support: read the words you spelt in the previous lesson.

Less support: read words learners haven't yet seen but which fit the code knowledge already covered.

Spelling

This is exactly like the first exercise but you're asking learners to recall the correct graphemes without the graphemes visible. You still ask them to say the word, listen for the sounds and attach a letter or letters to each sound. Start with saying syllables for longer words.

6.4 Sentence and text-level lesson ideas

Practise reading the words from the level at which you're working in sentences and text, either created by you or found in a book, article and so on. For writing activities, freely provide all words beyond the current level, but ask them to work through writing words with the code and structure that you've already covered. This will change session by session, as the number of grapheme-phoneme correspondences you've covered increases.

More Support: include mostly words they've already spelt and read out of context.

Less support: include words from the appropriate level but which they haven't yet spelt or read.

By the end of Basic Code Plus, your learners will be able to read and spell hundreds of words and be confident reading and spelling words with one, two or three syllables. They'll be comfortable with writing one and two letter graphemes and decoding words they've never seen before. They'll be able to spell familiar words with simple sound to letter correspondences. They'll have seen that the grapheme <a> can represent the sound in 'cat', 'table' and 'umbrella'.

They'll also have seen that you can spell the long 'ay' (/eɪ/) sound with a single <a> in 'table', a split digraph <a-e> in 'cake', and <ay> in 'payday'. The next step is for them to meet one-to-many concepts in their entirety – that the letter <a> can also represent different sounds in 'father' and 'water'. They'll also meet many more ways to represent the long 'ay' (/eɪ/) sound in 'rain', 'great', 'they', 'eight', 'vein' and 'straight'.

The next chapter is all about the one-to-many concepts.

> "
>
> A structured approach to phonics exists for the sake of the least confident learners. It mitigates negative past experiences by allowing them to immediately engage in multisyllabic age-appropriate vocabulary. Nothing improves the self-esteem of someone who struggles with literacy like being able to read and spell complex looking words.
>
> Tricia Millar
>
> "

Table 3: Basic Code Plus

Basic Code		short vowels only		a bat	e bet	i bit	o bot	u but
b	d	c	k	**f/ff** fed/off	g	h	j	**l/ll** lop/fell
m	n	ng	p	qu	r	**s/ss** sat/boss	t	v
w	x	y	**z/zz** zap/fuzz					
Plus		long vowels spelt with one letter		a table	e he	i biped	o so	u unit
ck	ay	oy		-le	-y	-er	-ing	-ed
bb	dd	gg	mm	nn	pp	rr	tt	
ch	sh	th		a-e mistake	e-e Pete	i-e bike	o-e alone	u-e mute

Chapter 7.
Introducing the one-to-many principles in post-16 phonics

Introduction

This chapter sets out a more detailed explanation of the one-to-many concepts that are important for learners at any level. They can form part of a structured and sequential phonics programme or arise incidentally in lessons and are applicable to both reading and spelling well beyond Entry Level 3.

One-to-many concepts are important for learners at any level. They can form part of a structured and sequential phonics programme, or arise incidentally in lessons. The following content is not exhaustive, but it's enough to give learners time to discover and practise the one-to-many concepts. The sequence of delivery is up to the practitioner. To keep things interesting for learners, it's good to alternate the one-to-many concepts, switching focus between reading and spelling and noting where they overlap.

This isn't about teaching rules, but rather about looking out for frequency and patterns that emerge through the activities. For instance, you'll see that when the /p/ sound is in the middle of a word with a short vowel, the grapheme is usually <pp>. You'll see that you say a long 'ay' (/eɪ/) before the -tion ending. These are aspects of the English spelling system that learners can discover as they work with you.

Be ready for your learners to point out the oddities, because there are many. They'll notice that **copy** and **pity** don't follow the pattern. They'll point out **ration.** Those are wonderful conversations to have and, if they ask why these exceptions exist, "I'll have to look that up" is a great answer. You don't have to know all the answers for phonics to be an effective tool.

Finally, in post-16 phonics, we teach phonemes and graphemes in the context of whole, meaningful and age-appropriate words. Drilling of graphemes or flashcard type activities are not required in post-16 phonics.

7.1 One-to-many – working from print to sound

In this section we show how to support reading by introducing learners to the idea that:

> One grapheme can represent many phonemes
>
> or one symbol (letter or letters) can lead to many sounds
>
> grapheme <a> t**a**p b**a**by f**a**ther w**a**ter **a**round
>
> grapheme <ai> p**ai**nt s**ai**d mount**ai**n

This concept is powerful for those learners who, when reading, tend to see words as either whole objects or strings of letters. As they learn to see graphemes, attach sounds and listen for a word, they improve their word identification speed and stop skipping words they don't know. This in turn improves their reading comprehension as they learn to use context to check for meaning.

Boxes A-C introduce this print to sound, one-to-many concept, working left to right from least to most complex.

Box A: Trustworthy graphemes for reading

Alternatives for reading these graphemes are very rare, so there's no sorting activity. However, you can ask learners to look out for them in text or write text with lots of examples so learners can see for themselves that these graphemes are trustworthy for reading. We've put rare exceptions in brackets.

Box A. These graphemes almost always represent only one sound each.		
Consonants	**Vowels**	**Vowels plus <r>**
le**dge**, ba**dge**, fri**dge**	t**al**k, w**al**k, ch**al**k	f**air**, h**air**, st**air**s
i**tch**, ba**tch**, stre**tch**	**Au**gust, P**au**l, (g**au**ge)	t**ur**n, b**ur**rn, f**ur**nish
ha**ve**, gi**ve**, arri**ve**	dr**aw**, fl**aw**ed, h**aw**k	st**ir**, b**ir**thday, s**ir**
phone, **ph**oto (shepherd)	tr**ee**, str**ee**t, m**ee**ting	fl**oor**, d**oor**, (p**oor**)*
write, **wr**ist, **wr**eck	s**igh**, h**igh**, fl**igh**t	s**ore**, st**ore**, c**ore**
knit, **kn**ee, **kn**ow	b**oa**t, c**oa**t, fl**oa**t (boa)	
	b**oil**, c**oin**, s**oil**	/əl/ **'le' endings**
	w**oul**d, c**oul**d, sh**oul**d**	tab**le**, Apr**il**, hospit**al**, tunn**el**

*adjust for accents

** Learners might notice **shoulder** or **boulder** where the /l/ is pronounced. In those words, <ou> is the grapheme for the 'oe' (/əʊ/) sound.

Boxes B and C: Graphemes that represent two or more sounds

This concept can be grasped by having learners work together to sort 20 – 30 words with the target grapheme into appropriate phonemes. Every learner needs to be saying the words aloud and listening for a word they recognise. This exercise can't be done by sight. You can use the example words below as headings for the sorting activity and start them off by telling them the different phonemes they're going to be trying out. Adjust for the level of your learners.

If they need extra support, lead this activity from the front. If they're not sure, get them to try it both or all ways and pick the word that sounds familiar, for example, "akid, asid – oh 'acid' is the word so it goes in that column." If you include a word like **city,** which could lead to **kitty,** put it in a brief contextual phrase: "London is a city".

When one choice is much more common than the others, create a list that reflects that, for example, <ai> is more commonly the sound in **paint** than in **said** or **mountain**, so have more words with that long 'ay' (/eɪ/) sound.

🔍 Activity: Sorting Activity (one grapheme, two or more sounds)

Here's a completed <ea> sorting activity (see the grapheme to phoneme correspondences in **Box C**). Note that the practitioner has given learners the heading words so they know there are only three choices. There was some discussion about where to put **real** and **deal** but it was decided that the long 'ee' as in **beach** category was best. Note that the number of cards in each column mirrors the frequency of occurrence in English.

beach	bread	break
cheat	breakfast	great a great deal
easy	meant	steak
bleach	breath take a breath	
leave	health	
deal	weather	
please		
breathe breathe deeply		
real		
tea		

Box B. One alternative for reading

This is a good place to start with the concept that there can be more than one way of saying what you see in the spelling of a word.

cat a**c**id	k**ey** th**ey**	**car** doll**ar**
fit **o**f	n**ew** fl**ew**	sh**are** **are**
get **g**el	p**ie** ch**ie**f	s**or**t w**or**d (doct**or**)
hou**se** becau**se**	m**oo**n b**oo**k*	
so hi**s**	n**ow** kn**ow**	
	bl**ue** d**ue**	

*Ignore this one if your learners pronounce these words with the same vowel. Your class may be split on the issue so talk about it. Neither way is right or wrong.

Box C. Many alternatives for reading

There are other examples of graphemes which represent many phonemes but these are a good place to start.

a	p**a**n **a**ble f**a**ther w**a**ter **a**bout
ai	p**ai**nt s**ai**d (mount**ai**n)
ea	b**ea**ch br**ea**d br**ea**k
ear	f**ear** b**ear** (h**ear**t **ear**th)
o	**o**ff s**o** s**o**me t**o**
ou	**ou**t y**ou** sh**ou**lder
u	**u**p **u**nit p**u**t
y	ha**pp**y Jul**y** **y**es g**y**m

7.2 One-to-many – working from sound to print

In this section we show how to support spelling by introducing learners to the idea that:

> ❯   one phoneme can be represented by many graphemes
>
> or one sound can be spelt with many different symbols (letter or combinations of letters)
>
> phoneme /s/ **s**ay pa**ss** hou**se** chan**ce** **c**ent li**st**en mu**sc**le
>
> phoneme /ɪ/ b**i**t g**y**m b**u**sy w**o**men pr**e**tty b**ui**ld

Though this concept can help learners learn more graphemes for reading, it is most useful for spelling.

This 'one-to-many' chart illustrates for your learners that some spellings for sounds are more common than others. Rather than memorising strings of letter names, use the one-to-many concepts to help your learners figure out which parts of the words are easy to spell and which require extra memory. Notice the patterns together and ask learners to make groups of words that are similar in order to help them remember.

There are other graphemes in English that aren't on the chart, but they occur in words that aren't written or seen very often. However, they may occur in a local place name or even a learner's name, so add to the chart as you discover them. '**Leigh**' comes to mind.

Other graphemes need to be adjusted for accent. For instance, some of your learners will say identical vowels in **cat** and **laugh** so we've put the <au> grapheme as a way to spell that sound with an asterisk. For other learners, that vowel in **laugh** will sound like the one in **barn** so the <au> grapheme is in that section too. Adjust for your learners' accents and talk it over with them.

You can find a printable version of the chart in the appendix at the end of this chapter.

Lesson ideas for working with one sound – many graphemes

Continue to use the 'words as puzzles' activities from Chapter 6, the Basic Code Plus section, to familiarise learners with the grapheme-phoneme correspondences – the one-to-many principles.

You can also do sorting activities like you did for Boxes B and C above. Again, choose a variety of words, but this time sort by all the graphemes that spell a single phoneme. Try to choose a selection that shows that some graphemes are much more common than others.

Sorting activities can be led from the front or given to individuals or pairs to work on. Start as a whole group to identify all the various alternative spellings for the one sound, then you can differentiate in several ways:

🔍 Activity: Sorting Activity (one sound, many graphemes)

More able readers and spellers might like to sort a selection of words and write them on a paper grid with the graphemes as headers.

address	difference	promise
ask	fasten	rust
bless	fence	scene
castle	house	science
cent	interest	sense
chance	listen	sentence
city	loose	stress
concern	muscle	stretch
consider	pass	thanks
escape	pencil	unless

Sort these words by the grapheme that represents the /s/ sound.

Some of them have two /s/ sounds.

Listen when you're reading because 2 letters might be a single sound or might be 2 sounds. Look at 'listen' and 'interest'.

Words with the sound /s/ sorted by grapheme

s	ss	se	c	ce	sc	st
ask	address	house	cent	chance	muscle	castle
consider	bless	loose	city	difference	scene	fasten
escape	pass	promise	concern	fence	science	listen
interest	stress	sense	pencil	science		
rust	unless			sentence		
sense						
sentence						
stress						
stretch						
thanks						

You can also do this with cards to sort and sticky note headings as you did above with the <ea> activity.

se	ss	ce	c	s	st	sc
promise	bless	difference	cent	ask	castle	muscle
	address			escape		
				interest		

Here's the same activity with the graphemes highlighted in each word. Ask learners to sort into columns to discover how many ways there are to spell the /s/ sounds. This is the most supportive version of the activity.
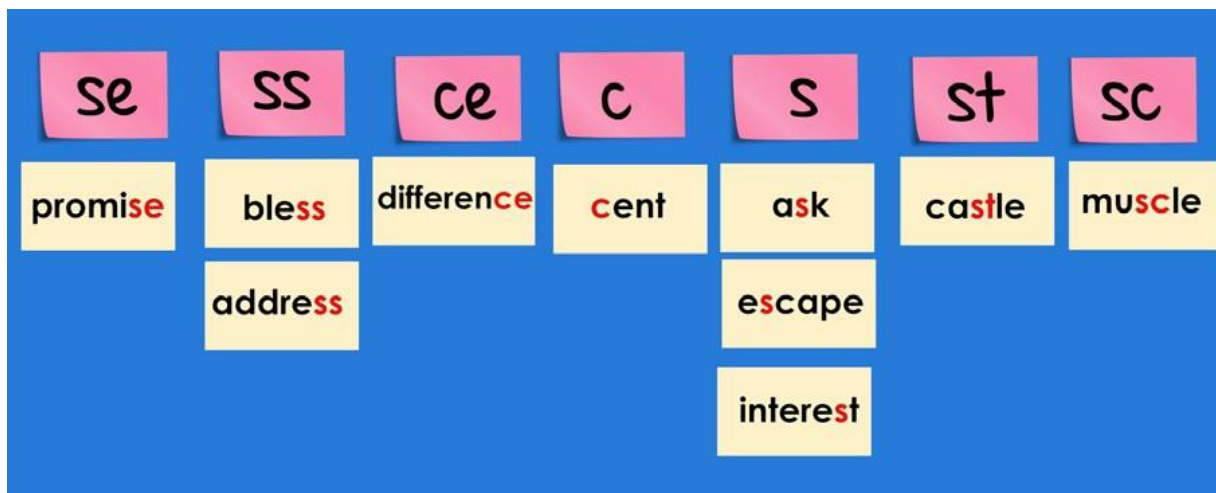
To support learners working in pairs or independently, make cards with the word in normal font, **castle**, on the front and the word with the grapheme highlighted, ca**st**le, on the back. Keep the grapheme in the context of the whole word rather than by itself. Learning graphemes by themselves isn't a good use of learner's time or memory.

Here are some pairs of words that show how the same letters might represent a single grapheme or two separate graphemes.
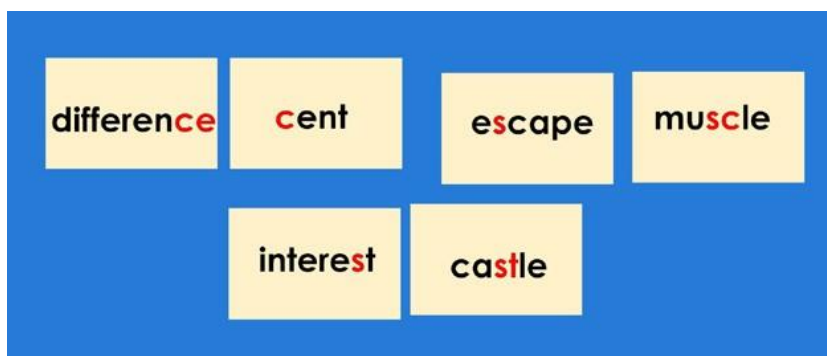
Once you've done a sorting activity, ask learners to choose one to five words they'd like to learn to spell. Create sticky note puzzles for those words then ask learners to write the words, saying the sounds – not the letter names – that are on the sticky note. They can take the puzzles away to practise and learn for spelling.

As learners develop their confidence, you can spend more time practising reading and writing these words in the context of sentences and paragraphs. Learners can develop personal charts or notebooks for looking up spelling alternatives when writing independently.

When you're doing these sound-to-spelling activities, make a special note of common words that have rare graphemes. For instance, the <ie> for the short /e/ sound in **friend** and the <aigh> for the long 'ay'

(/eɪ/) sound in **straight** occur only in those two words. However, **friend** and **straight** are important for post-16 learners, so they need to know those unusual spellings. Make sure to emphasise the rarity so learners aren't tempted to use them in words that have much more straightforward graphemes.

> **Sensitive Ears!** Someone might hear /ŋ/ in 'bank' where there is no <ng>. Have them start to say a /n/ sound then slide to a /k/ and they will automatically say the /ŋ/. Technically <n> spells the /ŋ/ sound in 'longer', but post-16 learners will automatically adjust the pronunciation. If they don't, practise lists of words side by side, some that retain the /ŋ/ only and others that have the hard /g/ sound:
>
> **singer, ringer,** et cetera versus **finger, linger,** et cetera, and, of course, **ginger, whinger**!
>
> Learners with fluent English will naturally adapt to find a word they know and that makes sense in the context. ESOL learners might need more explicit teaching and practice in context.

See for more on spelling with phonics.

> "
>
> When teachers and learners all use a common language around the one-to-many principles, learners stop saying, "I can't spell neighbour" and start asking, "How do I spell the 'ay' sound in neighbour?" Talking about phonemes and how to spell them and graphemes and how to read them increases reading confidence and helps with comprehension in the process.
>
> Tricia Millar, 2019
>
> "

Table 4: Grapheme correspondences chart: the many ways to represent one sound

This chart derives from the system used in Millar (2003) That Reading Thing, cross-checked with Brooks (2015) Dictionary of the British English Spelling System.

Adjust for Accent – i.e. the <au> in 'laugh' represents different phonemes in different accents

IPA	"**"	Most common ways to spell each sound				Less common spellings but they occur in common words						
Vowels												
/æ/	a	bat				lau**gh***						
/e/	e	b**e**t	h**ea**d			s**ai**d	**a**ny	fr**ie**nd	s**ay**s			
/ɪ/	i	b**i**t	g**y**m			b**u**sy	w**o**men	pr**e**tty	b**ui**ld			
/ɒ/	o	t**o**p	wh**a**t			bec**au**se	c**ou**gh					
/ʌ/	u	b**u**t	**o**ther			y**ou**ng	bl**oo**d					
/ʊ/	oo	g**oo**d	p**u**t	w**ou**ld		w**o**man						
/eɪ/	ay	c**a**ke	t**a**ble	s**ay**	r**ai**n	gr**ea**t	th**ey**	**eigh**t	v**ei**n	str**aigh**t		
/i/	ee	f**ee**t	m**e**	st**ea**m	famil**y**	p**i**zza	P**e**te	k**ey**	famil**ie**s	rec**ei**ve	qu**ay**	p**eo**ple
/aɪ/	igh	l**i**ne	qu**i**et	m**y**		r**igh**t	p**ie**	h**eigh**t	**eye**			
/əʊ/	oe	s**o**	st**o**ne	thr**ow**		c**oa**t	s**ou**l	t**oe**	th**ough**	bur**eau**		
/juː/	ue	**u**nit	**u**se	f**ew**		c**ue**	v**iew**	f**eu**d	b**eau**ty			
/uː/	**oo**	r**oo**m	s**u**per	fl**u**te	d**o**	fl**ew**	y**ou**	bl**ue**	fr**ui**t	thr**ough**	sh**oe**	tw**o**
/aʊ/	ow	h**ou**se	t**ow**n			pl**ough**						
/ɔɪ/	oi	**oi**l	b**oy**									
Vowels with /r/												
/ɑː/	ar	b**ar**n	f**a**ther*			h**ear**t	**are**	l**au**gh				
/eə/	air	sh**are**	h**air**			th**eir**	th**ere**	b**ear**				
/ɪə/	ear	cl**ear**	h**ere**			t**ier**	st**eer**	w**eir**d				
/ɜː/ or /ɜːr/	er stressed	t**er**m	th**ir**ty	w**or**d		f**ur**ther	l**ear**n	j**our**ney				
/ə/ or /ər/	er unstressed	hunt**er**				doct**or**	coll**ar**	cent**re**	Chesh**ir**e			
/ɔː/	or	f**or**k	s**ore**	w**a**ter	s**aw**	s**au**ce	w**ar**	y**our**	s**oar**	t**al**k	th**ough**t	c**augh**t

Table 4: Grapheme correspondences chart: the many ways to represent one sound (continued)

This chart derives from the system used in Millar (2003) That Reading Thing, cross-checked with Brooks (2015) Dictionary of the British English Spelling System.

Adjust for Accent – i.e. the <au> in 'laugh' represents different phonemes in different accents

IPA	"**"	Most common ways to spell each sound			Less common spellings but they occur in common words						
Consonants											
/b/	b	**b**elt	scri**bb**le								
/k/	k	**c**ap	**k**it	ro**ck**	s**ch**ool	o**cc**ur	che**que**	mos**qu**ito			
/tʃ/	ch	**ch**ip	ca**tch**								
/d/	d	**d**ark	mi**dd**le								
/f/	f	**f**it	di**ff**icult		**ph**oto						
/g/	g	**g**ame	bi**gg**er		**gu**est	lea**gue**	**gh**ost				
/h/	h	**h**at			**wh**o						
/dʒ/	j	**j**am	**g**el		stran**ge**	bri**dge**					
/l/	l	**l**amp	be**ll**								
/əl/	le ending	tab**le**		metal	lab**el**	counc**il**	symb**ol**				
/m/	m	**m**y	swim-**m**er		so**me**	autu**mn**	co**mb**				
/n/	n	**n**ut	di**nn**er		**kn**ot	imagi**n**e	**gn**ome				
/ŋ/	ng	lu**ng**	hu**n**k								
/p/	p	**p**et	sho**pp**ed								
/r/	r	**r**est	hu**rr**y		**wr**ist	**rh**ino	dia**rrh**oea				
/s/	s	**s**it	de**c**ide		pea**ce**	addre**ss**	promi**se**	ca**s**tle	**sc**ience	**ps**ychic	an**sw**er
/ʃ/	sh	**sh**ape			ti**ss**ue	**s**ugar	ma**ch**ine	spe**ci**al	nutri**ti**ous		
/t/	t	**t**ell	le**tt**er		defini**t**e						
/θ/	th	**th**in			brea**th**						
/ð/	**th**	**th**en			brea**th**e						
/v/	v	**v**et	lo**ve**	o**f**							
/w/	w	**w**ent	**wh**en		peng**u**in						
/ks/	x	ta**x**									
/j/	y	**y**es			on**i**on						
/z/	z	**z**ip	i**s**	plea**se**	pu**zz**le	bree**ze**					
/ʒ/	zh	mea**s**ure			massa**ge**						

Chapter 8.
Post-16 spelling strategies

Introduction

This chapter focuses on addressing the needs of learners who are confident in their reading but not in their spelling. Some learners may want to be able to spell words they need for everyday writing tasks; others may need to spell the specific and technical vocabulary they are acquiring as part of their vocational courses, for example, in construction or floristry.

Here we consider a range of spelling strategies that practitioners may already be familiar with, and also ask, "Where does phonics fit in?" Our approach in what follows is to employ the principles of sequence and complexity in thinking about phoneme-grapheme correspondences in the English writing system that we have introduced in Chapters 5-7 and use these principles to help learners move from oral language to writing.

8.1 Assessing learners' starting points

Visual strategies for spelling

Learners may already be familiar with spelling strategies that involve:

- Memorising strings of letter names

- Recalling what a word looks like and then practising writing it over and over until it's lodged in memory ("Look, cover, write, check"; sometimes expanded to "Look, **say**, cover, write, check").

Oral language as a resource for spelling

Letter names and knowing when a word 'looks right' both play a role in spelling, but, on their own they require a lot of memory to store single words. An alternative strategy is to start with saying the word and listening for syllables and sounds. Breaking the word up into chunks in this way makes the task more manageable. It also makes use of what a learner already knows, and thus reduces the burden on memory.

For instance, there's no shortcut to remembering whether **responsible** ends <ible> or <able>, so as little memory as possible should be spent on the rest of the word. Say the word clearly in syllables: **re** (easy) **spon** (easy) **si** (needs a clear vowel) **ble** (easy)*. The only bit to remember is the letter <i> rather than 11 letters or trying to visualise the whole word.

(* Note that the syllables could also be broken up like this: res/pon/si/ble. Someone who's more aware of morphology might give re + spons + ible but watch to make sure that they're understanding that syllables aren't words or they might write re + sponse + ible. It is not necessary for learners to all follow the same way. Being familiar with breaking words up is what counts and in post-16 phonics we put syllables first as a powerful approach for learners to use, working backwards from their own speech.)

This strategy builds from what learners already know about encoding phonemes into graphemes and helps them tackle longer words faster.

8.2 Steps to spelling with post-16 phonics

Phonics approaches to spelling post-16 help learners make explicit connections between the sounds in a word (phonemes) and the letters that represent those sounds. The principles underlying this approach are set out in Chapter 5, the essential concepts of post-16 phonics. You may want to look back at this. In the sections that follow, we offer more detailed guidance on how to help learners build up their spelling strategies by moving from phonemes to graphemes and in the use of 'words as puzzles' activities in Chapter 6.

1. Start with syllables.
Syllables in post-16 phonics start with natural speech. Ask them to say the word they want to spell in clear syllables. They can say either simm/er or si/mmer following their own speech pattern. You might later decide to adjust for meaningful suffixes. For instance, you might encourage simm/er/ing even when your learners would naturally say simm/ə/ring (that upside down <e> is a schwa, the symbol for an unstressed vowel like the first sound in 'about').

2. The one-to-many principles.
Show learners the common and less common ways to spell sounds in English, using the chart in Chapter 7. At this stage, they're going to need all of them.

3. Unstressed vowels.
It can be a good idea to encourage your learners to over-pronounce unstressed vowels when they break words down into syllables. **Economise** for spelling sounds like 'ee' 'con' 'oh' 'mise'.

This is probably what you do when you're trying to spell a word with unstressed vowel sounds. For instance, how would you say **remember** for someone if you were helping them to get to the correct spelling? It would likely be 'ree' 'mem' 'ber' even though you wouldn't say it like that in conversation.

> **Note:** As you do this, you may find opportunities for discussing the morphological structure to words, which would divide the word into re + member – see below. We recommend this supports phonics approaches and chunking by syllables, rather than leads.

4. Use of syllables.
Once they've said the word clearly, get them to write the sounds syllable by syllable. Encourage everyone to say the sounds (not the letter names) out loud as they write them.

5. Word puzzles.
If it's a complex word, treat it like a puzzle. Write the graphemes on a board or on sticky notes and have learners assemble the sounds into syllables. Then have them write the whole word and decide which part they need to work on remembering. They might want to keep a personal dictionary with bits of words highlighted to aid memory.

8.3 Morphology (the meaningful parts of words)

A sound grounding in phonics provides a good platform from which to judge the usefulness of morphology in analysing any given word. Morphology is both more complex and more inconsistent than phonics. Sometimes the meaningful parts of words are obvious and sometimes they're not. The **un** in **unbelievable** clearly means **not** and the **re** in **retake** clearly means **again.** However, the **re** in **receive** means **back** and probably won't help with the correct spelling of this word. It's better to think of **re** in **receive** as an easily spelt syllable and concentrate on getting the <ei> correct.

Helpful:

unnecessary Here's a place you can split a sound. It's easier to remember **un** and **necessary** than to remember that unnecessary has two n's.

recommend Thinking in morphemes is easier than trying to remember how many c's are in recommend. If you commend something, you praise it. If you praise it to someone else, you re-commend it.

Neutral:

Minimum and **protection** are both easy to spell by saying clear syllables and attaching graphemes. Knowing the meaning of **min** and **pro** might be interesting but probably won't change the spelling outcome.

The message here is make use of meaningful affixes when they are helpful. If you want to delve deeper, do so and you'll find a fascinating world. However, you can help your learners to spell without knowing more than the basics of morphology.

8.4 Working from vocabulary lists

Colleges and vocational courses may produce lists of vocabulary they expect learners to be familiar with and use in their writing. Any such list can be reordered for learners so that it becomes easier to see regularities in the spelling patterns.

The following example is based on a list of 30 catering words provided by an instructor.

bread	mixture	simmer
chop	nutritious	slice
cut	poach	spread
dough	preparation	steam
economise	presentation	time
follow	recipe	toast
grate	roast	vegetable
hygienic	rub	whisk
ingredients	safety	wrap

It is possible to work through the list in the order they've been given, or to ask learners to suggest words they'd like to work on. Below, however, the words on the list have been reorganised to demonstrate that there is a logical and fairly simple way to spell them using the phonemes and graphemes from Basic Code Plus and the one-to-many principles of many ways to spell some sounds (many graphemes to represent some phonemes).

This doesn't mean the words have to be taught in this order, but it will help if you are aware of which words have the most predictable spellings and which have unusual graphemes or syllables that will require memorising. This is a skill that will develop over time as you and your learners interact with the sounds and symbols of the language and get to know the one-to-many concepts.

8.5 Grouping words

The teaching approach here is to group words by spelling and sound patterns, so that learners can generalise from one word to others with the same spelling/sound relationship. This reinforces the general principles from the single example. Wherever possible, grouping by frequency means that most attention can be paid to those phoneme-grapheme correspondences that learners will meet most often and that repay the time spent learning them. It also makes it easy for learners to decide which part of the word they need to work on remembering.

🔍 Activity: Grouping words 1 (Basic Code Plus)

Go back to Chapter 6 for a reminder of what's included here.

Here are the eight words that can be spelt using only the most predictable code and a few familiar endings and digraphs.

cut
rub
chop
time
grate
safety
scramble
simmer

Do word stretching activities like those in Chapter 6.

chop – chopping – chopped – chopper (double)

grate – grater – grated – grating (drop)

simmer – simmered – simmering (nothing)

You will teach the need to drop, double, change or do nothing when adding endings as always.

🔍 Activity: Grouping words 2 (one-to-many – simple)

These next twelve each have only one grapheme from the one-to-many chart in Chapter 7.

You could use the <ea> words to talk about different ways to read that grapheme. See the sorting activity in Chapter 7.

One-to-Many – simple
Basic code plus except for the underlined grapheme

beat, steam
bread, spread
poach, roast, toast, dough, follow
slice
whisk
wrap

You could use the **poach, roast,** et cetera, words to talk about different ways to spell the 'oe' sound.

Focus on the fact that there is only one thing to remember in these words. The rest is exactly as you'd expect. Ask your learners which bit they'll have to work a little harder on remembering.

🔎 Activity: Grouping words 3 (one-to-many – syllables)

These words don't have very complex code but they do have several syllables. You might like to make sticky note puzzles for working on these. As usual, start with syllables then attach sounds.

e/con/o/mise
in/gred/i/ents
re/ci/pe
hy/giene   hy/gien/ic

Here are puzzles for the four words. Just add <s> to make ingredients.
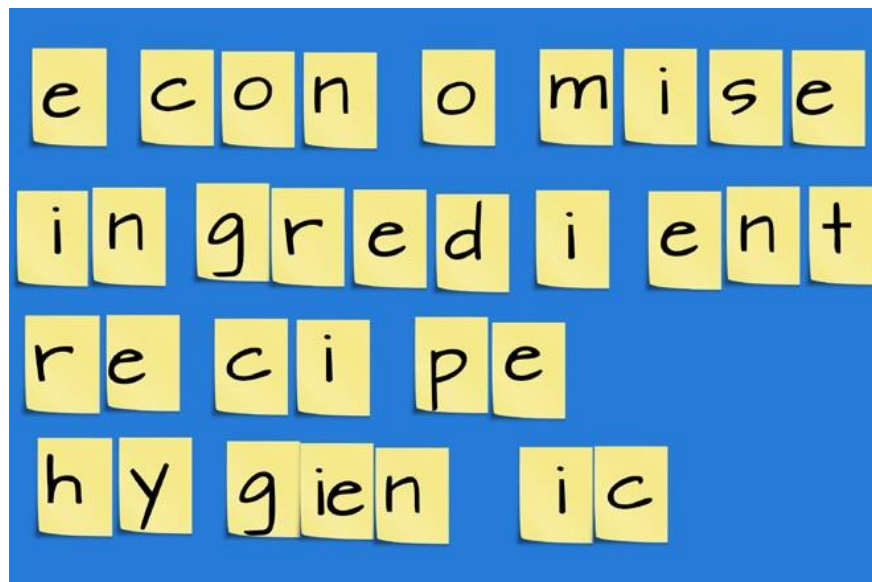
🔎 Activity: Grouping words 4 (one-to-many – endings)

These words have endings that are best remembered as whole syllables rather than individual sounds. If you have time, this is an excellent opportunity for extending spelling vocabulary by learning several words with the same pattern. An internet search for 'words ending _____' will net you many examples.

One-to-Many – endings

mix<u>ture</u>

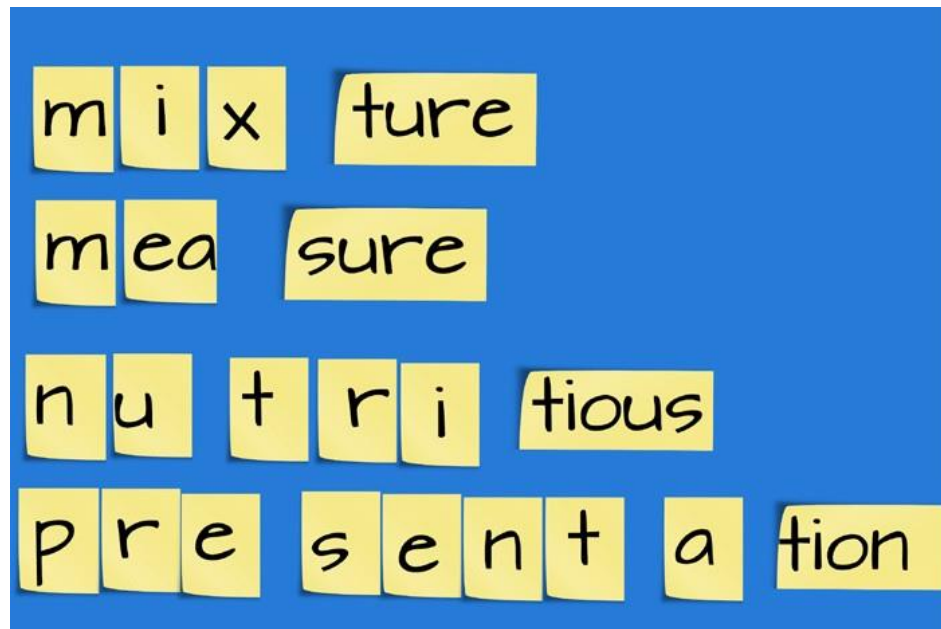prepara<u>tion</u>   presenta<u>tion</u>

meas<u>ure</u>

nutri<u>tious</u>

mixture – furniture – agriculture – acupuncture

measure – pleasure – treasure – closure

nutritious – ambitious – cautious – infectious

Learning the -tion spelling of that ending will help your learners spell hundreds of words.

> In an analysis of 720 common words with an ending that sounds like 'shun', we found that 82% of them were spelt <tion>. Knowing that one spelling will mean your learners can concentrate on learning the far fewer words with alternative spellings.
>
> Tricia Millar, 2019

🔎 Activity: Grouping words 5 (one-to-many – quirky)

Sometimes the word has more syllables when written than when spoken. The code in **vegetable** isn't unusual, but the word requires a pronunciation for spelling which is considerably different from natural speech.

Let your learners know that this is what good spellers do. Practitioners do the same with Wed/nes/day and bus/i/ness. It's not cheating, just using the features of the language to aid memory.

8.6 Last word

That's a lot of information to take in. Remember, no one (neither practitioner nor learner) has to learn a list of phonemes and graphemes by rote. They're already familiar in the context of whole meaningful words and there's no reason to be able to recite them out of that context.

Instead, the approach we outline here enables you as a practitioner to become familiar with how the English code, especially the one-to-many concepts from Chapter 7, works for spelling. The more confident you feel about the one-to-many concepts, the easier it will be to talk about these alternatives with your learners and even apply them to your own spelling. Most of us are still improving our spelling and it's fine to share that with your learners.

A practitioner's challenge:

- to look at the vocabulary of the learners' course to first see the words with logical patterns and common graphemes

- to understand how the one-to-many concepts for spelling apply, but without expecting learners to recite all the possible graphemes

- to decide which word endings are better remembered as whole syllables

- to provide time to practise working from saying the word, listening for syllables and sounds and attaching graphemes.

A learner's challenge:

- to start with saying a word clearly and over-pronouncing the unstressed vowels

- to decide which graphemes or endings need special attention.

> "
>
> I have been continuing to use whiteboards with my learners and I have found the examples of saying, "Look you only got one letter wrong, or just remember in the middle of environment there is a ron," very effective. This has been a wonderful technique for helping my Entry 3 classes with spelling. It focuses on what they can do rather than what they can't do.
>
> Practitioner, pilot centre, 2019
>
> "

> "
>
> Tell your learners we're all bilingual when it comes to spelling. Nobody writes as they speak and we all have a 'spelling voice' for helping to remember the unusual bits.
>
> Tricia Millar, 2019
>
> "

PART 3
MORE THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

Chapter 9. Assessing learners' needs: a post-16 approach

Introduction

This chapter considers some light touch ways in which post-16 literacy practitioners can assess what Entry Level post-16 learners already know and can do in their reading and writing, and how to plan what best to do next, in terms of phonics approaches.

Many initial literacy assessment instruments will give a rough indication of the literacy level an adult or post-16 learner is at in terms of reading and writing. However, they may well not focus specifically on finding out where learners are up to with their understanding of phoneme-grapheme/ grapheme-phoneme correspondences.

We might expect some Entry Level 1 learners to struggle with words from the Basic Code, where one grapheme stands for one phoneme. These will yield quite easily to segmenting and blending, and can be covered quite rapidly once the principle is grasped.

But once secure in the Basic Code, post-16 learners will need to move towards the one-to-many principles as quickly as possible. This will create new challenges and possibilities, as well as new demands. An assessment of what learners already know and can do will help practitioners plan which kinds of activities will be most beneficial and how to pace them at each stage (see Part 2).

Below we set out guidance on assessment including:

- how to use everyday reading and writing tasks to assess where the main difficulties lie in the case of individual learners

- how to turn specific learner errors into teaching opportunities.

9.1 Prepare to be surprised about what learners may or may not be able to do

The complex mix of skills and unexpected gaps in adult and post-16 learners' understanding of how the writing system works can be surprising. This is the 'spiky profile' identified in Besser et al. (2004). A spiky profile might indicate that a learner who is otherwise judged to be at Entry Level 3 in reading may have difficulty in retrieving quite basic phoneme-grapheme correspondences in their writing. They may need to rebuild knowledge of some of the more common phoneme-grapheme correspondences in the complex code, and find ways of retrieving these patterns as they write (see Chapter 8). Other spiky profiles may mean far stronger skills in spelling than in reading.

Look out for these profiles. Use a variety of informal and more formal assessment tools to build up an in-depth picture of what a learner can and can't yet do over time, and from that decide where their attention may most usefully be focused.

9.2 Knowing when to assess, at what depth

There is no need to conduct an exhaustive exploration of a learner's knowledge of phoneme-grapheme correspondences the minute they join a class. Indeed, it would be extremely off-putting for the new learner, who may already be feeling vulnerable and nervous. More probing diagnostic assessment of their phonic knowledge can take place within the class later. In the meantime, a variety of simpler procedures can be used to determine where your learners are at with phonics for both reading and spelling.

Watch out for learners who can read shorter words but lack the confidence to tackle longer words. These learners often benefit most rapidly from phonics work. Returning to some of the essential concepts of phonics and building their confidence in working right through longer words from beginning to end can really help here.

Encourage learners to stretch out shorter words they can already read. 'Stretching' here is a literal term for making words longer and demonstrating to learners that they're not necessarily more difficult to read or spell than shorter words. The word **stag** can be stretched to **stagger** and **staggered** as well as **stag party, stag night** and **stag hound.** Each extension can provide important talking points about how the spelling system works. You can use this to see how each learner interacts with English as a code and plan future phonics-led lessons accordingly. If they can do this easily, move on to something more difficult.

9.3 Investigating learners' grasp of phonics for reading

We recommend assessing reading before spelling. To make a detailed assessment, ask learners to read aloud a short passage that is of interest to them, or one of topical interest that you have selected. Make two copies of the text so that you can make notes on one while the learner is reading.

The chosen text may well include words that are difficult to decode – you should not let the learner struggle too long with these, but supply them fairly quickly to avoid losing meaning and demoralising the learner.

Do not attempt to teach phonics while the learner is reading. Record any problems learners have with 'lifting the words off the page', including any hesitations, uncertainties, self-corrections and errors on your copy of the text. Be aware that errors may arise from unfamiliar or complex vocabulary, or from uncertainty about sounding-out and blending.

This approach will not necessarily distinguish the learner's sight words from words they can decode, but it should show whether learners are still struggling with the basic code, or only with less familiar words or those that have greater complexity. To make a more precise assessment, it may be useful to create a text including unusual but meaningful words from the basic code as well as more complex phoneme-grapheme correspondences (see Chapters 6 and 7) and see what happens. If learners are finding difficulty with more complex phoneme-grapheme correspondences, then further systematic work on the one-to-many principles should help here (see Chapter 7).
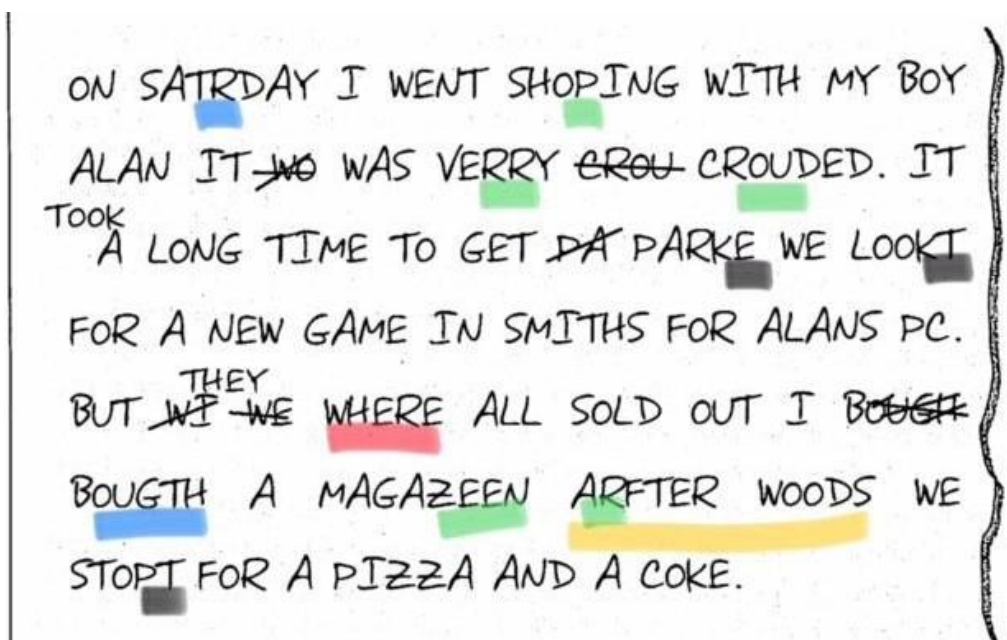
There is no need to use nonsense words to assess decoding skills. Although used in the phonics screening check in primary schools, we do not think they are a helpful way to proceed with adults; in particular, they are likely to confuse adult learners. Post-16 phonics emphasises using decoding skills to identify meaningful words. We think it is important to keep to that principle.

9.4 Investigating learners' grasp of phonics for spelling

A writing task will reveal a good deal about a learner's grasp of phonics for spelling. It will show whether a learner is still struggling with basic code correspondences, even in regular words, or only with the more complex parts of the code where the same phoneme can be spelt in several ways. By the latter stages, learners will increasingly have to rely on a wider range of strategies in which morphology, etymology and phonology interact.

A test of phonics for spelling can only cover the first of these stages and only needs to ascertain whether or not the learner is secure with the first principles of one-to-one correspondences introduced in Chapter 6, Basic Code Plus.

The following text helps us look at spelling errors through a phonics lens. There are several errors here, but not all of them are associated with knowledge of phoneme-grapheme correspondences.

ON SATRDAY I WENT SHOPING WITH MY BOY
ALAN IT ~~NO~~ WAS VERRY ~~CROU~~ CROUDED. IT
TOOK
A LONG TIME TO GET DA PARKE WE LOOKT
FOR A NEW GAME IN SMITHS FOR ALANS PC.
THEY
BUT ~~WI~~ ~~WE~~ WHERE ALL SOLD OUT I ~~BOUGH~~
BOUGTH A MAGAZEEN ARFTER WOODS WE
STOPT FOR A PIZZA AND A COKE.

It's clear the learner understands that the letters in a word represent spoken sounds and they hear those sounds clearly. However, it looks as though they haven't had experience using the whole extended code and would benefit from encountering many common words with various spellings of the same sound. There is no getting around the need for memory in spelling and these errors require concentration and practice.

9.5 Turning spelling errors into teaching opportunities

There are two kinds of code errors in the writing sample above, which suggest different remedies.

Code errors which are phonically plausible

These words have the correct sounds but the wrong grapheme. The learner has heard the sound correctly but chosen a grapheme that is incorrect in that word. In what follows we give the spelling error and a suggested practitioner response. In each case, the response is to help the learner establish patterns in the code.

shoping – Demonstrate the regular pattern (not as a rule) of doubling a consonant before an ending.

verry – Let them know they've chosen the most common way to write a word that rhymes with **berry, terry, ferry, merry,** et cetera, but that **very** is an oddity with only one <r>, and simply has to be remembered.

crouded – <ou> and <ow> are the most common ways to spell the /aʊ/ sound and, again, this is where memory comes in. Strategise with the learner on the best way to remember **crowd** versus **cloud** when there is no obvious way of knowing which way of representing the sound is needed.

magazeen – Make a list of useful words (for your learners) ending <ine>: **machine, marine, nicotine, routine, vaccine.** There aren't very many of them, but they tend to be long and many come from French. Contrast them with words ending <een>: **teen, seen, green,** et cetera.

arfter – Northern learners will have less trouble with words like this as they say a short /æ/ as in **cat.** Other learners can look at a variety of words with /ɑː/ as in **far** and see if there's a pattern for the graphemes.

Code errors which are phonically implausible

Satrday – Say the word with three clear syllables and note that /ə/ (schwa in the middle syllable) can't be spelt with an <r> by itself.

bougth – Teach all the various pronunciations of <ough> and learn the handful of useful words all together. Saying each word clearly and listening for the sounds from left to right will help prevent errors that arise from trying to recreate a word from visual memory.

Non-phonic errors

Teaching groups of words together also holds here as a useful strategy.

where for **were**

This error often crops up as something that a learner simply never got straight. It's not so much a code error as a confusion error. Teach all five <wh> question words together: **who/what/when/where/why,** then note that **were** is just a <w> and not one of the five. Practise them in writing full sentences. Note: In some accents, **where** and **were** sound identical: /wɛə/ (for example, in Liverpool), so they are a heavier burden on memory.

arfter woods

In addition to the small code error, this is a vocabulary error. Post-16 learners can have many of them and are embarrassed when people point them out. Collect a few from learners' work and add a few other common ones to delve into all at once so no one is singled out. Emphasise clear pronunciation (in any accent) for spelling.

lookt, stopt, parke

These are all the same morphological error – a lack of understanding of the -ed suffix. Sort lots of words, talk about the past tense, notice how <ed> can represent /t/ as in **looked,** /d/ as in **strummed** and /ɪd/ as in **spotted.** Look at the few words like **slept** and **dreamt** that do end in a <t> in the past tense and point out how rare they are compared to the <ed> ending.

9.6 Direct phonics instruction is a means to an end, not an end in itself

Phonics instruction tends to be time-limited. Once a learner has grasped the principles of the system of correspondences and many of the basic and more frequent correspondences in the complex code, then further phonics teaching is often not necessary, and may even be counterproductive as reading and spelling become increasingly automatic and take up less processing time. Remember it is only useful in so far as it enables learners to create meaning **from text** (reading) and **in text** (writing, including spelling).

> "
>
> Like phonics, assessment is a means to an end and not an end in itself – keep it formative and light-touch.
>
> Greg Brooks, 2019
>
> "

Chapter 10. Phonics resources for post-16 learners: what matters most

Introduction

Many of the activities we advocate to support post-16 and adult literacy learning do not depend on externally bought resources, and indeed can best be designed in context, using the principles and ideas set out in Part 2 of the toolkit. In this chapter, we consider a range of resources and how to decide when and under what circumstances a particular resource might be helpful. Often this depends upon understanding learner needs and the dynamics of the particular context in which teaching is taking place. It is also useful to consider the evidence base that supports the use of particular approaches or resources.

The chapter is organised as follows: resources to support tutor designed activities (10.1); a summary of the (very slender) evidence base on phonics materials designed for use with adults (10.2); some general principles on how to evaluate resource materials designed for use with post-16 learners and what to bear in mind when doing so (10.3-6). Finally, we review the usefulness of a range of more broadly conceived materials that can support phonics approaches as part of a rich literacy curriculum (10.7-9).

10.1 Resources to support tutor designed activities

Post-16 phonics incorporates a wide range of teaching and learning activities that involve the manipulation of letters and words in relation to their sounds, and can thus be used to develop phonic skills (see Chapter 6 and Chapter 7). These activities are usually facilitated by a practitioner using readily available materials, such as paper or card and sticky notes, or individual whiteboards and felt pens. These cost little and are convenient for use in any context. However, where practitioners have access to technology, they may also like to consider how the use of digital tools can save time. Using multimedia formats can sometimes be more engaging for learners and more easily differentiated.

Most **mobile phones** include a basic voice recorder app that practitioners can use to create their own sound files to accompany a phonics-based activity. In this way, the task can be adapted to reflect the individual learning needs and vocabulary interests of a group or an individual. To create a revision activity for blended learning, tasks could be uploaded as Word documents together with their linked audio files to an online location so that learners can access them on a device between sessions. Online bulletin boards like **Padlet, Linoit** and **Trello** that enable multimedia uploads can be used for this purpose.
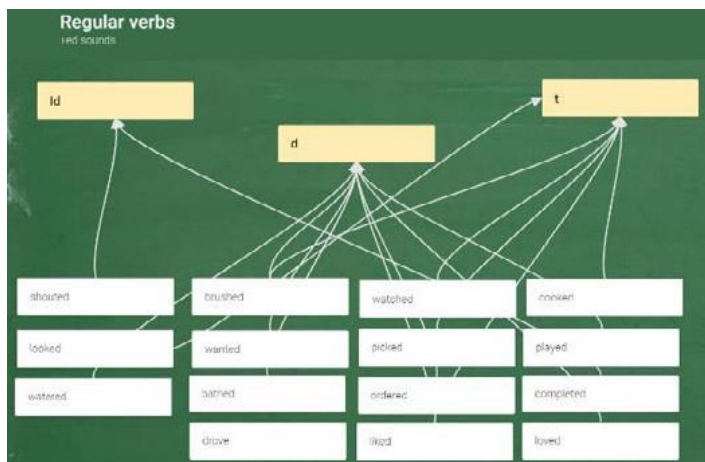
The software for most **interactive whiteboards** (IWB) enables practitioners to create, move and colour code 'cards' containing graphemes, morphemes or root words for use in word analysis and word building tasks. Alternatively, there are numerous **online tools** available on websites, such as **Triptico, GoConqr** and **Quizlet,** that enable you create flashcard-based games and activities. (Note: most content creation websites of this sort operate on a 'freemium' basis, which gives free access to the basic features but offers more advanced features for a subscription payment.)

Visualisers are easy-to-use classroom tools that enable practitioners to share a traditional paper-based worksheet or word building activity with a large group.

You can speak to your Regional Specialist Lead (RSL) about specialist courses that explore the use of digital technology in English teaching (see our **website** for information on how to find your local RSL).

10.2 What is the evidence base for commercially produced phonics materials?

Before investing in commercially produced materials, it is worth considering the evidence base that supports their use with adult learners. Very few rigorous studies have been conducted into the use of phonics with adults and teenagers in the UK, and only two randomised control trials of Corrective Reading and the phonics-based reading scheme, Sam and Pat, have been conducted elsewhere. For further discussion on the depth and quality of the evidence base, see **Moss et al. (2018)**.

Sabatini et al. (2011) conducted a randomised control trial (RCT) of Corrective Reading in the USA. They randomly assigned a sample of adult learners with basic reading skills to one of three programmes, all

of which were originally designed for children but were adapted for adults:

- Corrective Reading (CR), a decoding programme that was 80%-90% phonics-based

- Retrieval, Automaticity, Vocabulary Elaboration – Orthography, a combined decoding and fluency programme, 25%-35% phonics-based

- Guided Repeated Reading, a fluency-only programme, 10%-20% phonics-based.

The results showed 'no significant relative differences across interventions' (p.118), and only minute and statistically non-significant gains for the CR group on all six literacy measures (Table 1, p.126).

Condelli et al. (2010) conducted a study with a randomised research design with adult English as a second language (ESL) literacy learners. The treatment group were following a teaching programme based on an adult reader, Sam and Pat (Hartel et al. 2006). The controls were learners matched on attainment and enrolled in ESL literacy classes on a business-as-usual basis. Although both groups made gains, there were no statistically significant differences in outcomes between the treatment and control groups.

> **To sum up:** there is very limited evidence that practitioners can reliably draw on when seeking out phonics resources for adult learners.

It is worth noting that a similar case holds in relation to materials produced for the younger age group. None of the commercially produced phonics-based schemes available in the UK and designed for use with 4- to 6-year-old beginner readers have been rigorously evaluated as initial teaching schemes. The Education Endowment Foundation is only now (as of 2018) funding two trials of one scheme, Read Write Inc, as part of its programme of RCTs. One study is due to report in summer 2019, the other in 2021.

A number of commercially produced phonics-based schemes available in the UK have been evaluated **as targeted interventions** for children and young people struggling with literacy. Evaluations have mainly been relatively small one-group pre-test/post-test studies, rather than larger scale and more robust RCTs that allow firmer conclusions to be drawn. Brooks (2016) includes about 20 such programmes in his review – the easiest way to locate them is via the associated website **www.interventionsforliteracy.org.uk/home/research.**

Post-16 literacy practitioners, therefore, face the choice of devising their own materials, using materials designed for older teenagers and adults but not rigorously evaluated, or adapting schemes designed for schoolchildren aged 4-16.

10.3 Borrowing phonics resources from the primary sector

It can be tempting to borrow phonics resources from the primary sector for use with adults. There certainly are many books, websites, worksheets and games aimed at young children and produced with a phonics-based literacy curriculum in the primary sector in mind. However, it is also worth pausing before deciding on their use. In particular, the sequence and pace at which phonics is introduced into the primary school reflects the age and prior knowledge of the learners. This means that far more time is given over to introducing the basic code than is either necessary or desirable in post-16 phonics. The pacing is determined by very different assumptions about the knowledge about language and literacy

that young children have to draw on. Resources designed for the primary sector may not be related to adult interests and have the potential to make phonics look unsuitable for use with post-16 learners. If using such resources, you need to ensure they are contextualised into an adult-focused curriculum, and are adapted for adult or young adult use.

10.4. Criteria for judging the phonetic and phonic accuracy of commercially-produced phonics materials

It is important to check that any materials adopted are phonetically and phonically accurate. We stress this point because some school-level phonics schemes are known to be faulty in these respects (see Beard et al. 2018).

For a scheme to be **phonetically** accurate, it must show clear definitions of and distinctions between the terms phoneme, consonant phoneme, vowel phoneme, pure vowel and diphthong, and know how many there are in each category. In the most-studied British accent, Received Pronunciation, there are 44 phonemes comprising 24 consonants and 20 vowels; 12 of the vowel phonemes are pure vowels (seven short and five long), and eight are diphthongs. For details, see Chapter 4.

For a scheme to be **phonically** accurate, it must show that its devisers have a working knowledge of the most used graphemes (of which there are about 90), of their principal correspondences with phonemes (of which there are about 140), and of the four types of grapheme – single letters, digraphs (pairs of letters representing single phonemes), trigraphs (sequences of three letters representing single phonemes), and four-letter graphemes. Examples of the various sizes of grapheme are /uː/ spelt <u, oo, u-e, oeu, ough> in super, moon, rule, manoeuvre, through. For details, see Brooks (2015) and Burton (2011).

Within digraphs, there is the special category of the six split digraphs <a-e, e-e, i-e, o-e, u-e, y-e>. The term 'magic <e>' to describe the final letter of these digraphs is now considered unhelpful because it obscures their functioning within the larger set of digraphs.

Schemes that are known to be accurate in both respects include That Reading Thing, That Spelling Thing, THRASS and Toe By Toe. There are undoubtedly others, but if you decide to use or adapt a school-level scheme, check it out.

10.5 Phonics-based resources to support individual learners

There are many publishers and websites that provide phonics-based resources that are not complete programmes. They have their uses for busy practitioners, especially those who need to differentiate within their group, perhaps because they are working with mixed-level groups or with learners who have different preferences. They can provide practice for individuals, pairs or small groups while the practitioner is occupied with other learners. They can also be taken home for follow-up work, which can be useful if their focus is on what has been covered in the class. Some learners like them because they can work at their own pace and feel a sense of achievement by completing them successfully. If learners are motivated by such activities and they provide a genuine learning experience, then they have some value. But be alert to the criteria mentioned under 10.4: are the worksheets phonically and phonetically sound? Are they offering learners more than 'busy work'? Look for resources that are coherent and adult-focused, place phonics tuition or practice within a meaningful learning context and will reinforce current learning.

Many practitioners find their own resources can be better adapted to the needs and interests of a particular group. They can range from a one-off, quickly produced resource for a single learner that is then discarded, to very professional-looking materials that can be used repeatedly with different groups (see 10.1). As homework, they can be geared towards what has been covered in the class and will be at the right level for those learners.

10.6 Identifying quality materials to use with post-16 learners

There is a huge range of resources available both in print and online. It is often hard to choose between them and decide what might be best for your purposes. Besides checking for phonetic and phonic accuracy, they need to be scrutinised for more general aspects of acceptability. The checklist below draws out some important criteria to bear in mind, particularly when considering a long-term investment. You might also find it useful to apply the same criteria to any resources that you or your colleagues make yourselves.

LEARNING RESOURCE EVALUATION

Title of resource?

Intended group of learners?

What is the resource intended to teach? What are the learning outcomes?

Motivation

Is the material appropriate for the learners? (age-appropriate content, relevant context, et cetera.)

Does the material use authentic text(s) and task(s)?

Is the subject/topic interesting/stimulating for everyone in the group?

Presentation of text and images

Is the text clear and easy to read? (font, size, density of text)

Is it well spaced?

Are any images included? If so, are they relevant and used well?

Are titles and headings used well to help learners make sense of the text?

Is it accessible to all the learners who will be using it?

Instructions

Are instructions clear and easy to follow?
(Think of coherence and cohesion, sentence structure, vocabulary.)

Is the language level appropriate?

Can it be used independently or does it rely on practitioner help?

Literacy development

What skills, language, knowledge, concepts or strategies are being taught?

What previous knowledge, skills and language is it assuming?

What theory of learning does it follow? Is this appropriate for the learners?

Is it to be used for pre-teaching, teaching, practising or testing?

Does it teach transferable skills? Or could the skills be transferred through further activity?

Will all varieties of English be equally acceptable, or is it expected that a particular variety will be used? Is that explicit?

Organisation

Does it have clear learning outcomes that match the teaching/ learning objectives?

What work needs to precede this resource to prepare the learners?

How would you follow up the work on this resource?

Can the learners access it if they want to work independently?

Inclusivity

Is the material inclusive for all learners in the group – culturally, linguistically, visually?

Might any learner have difficulty with any part of it? What could be done to make it more accessible?

Does it contribute to equal opportunities and avoid stereotypes?

Adaptation

If it doesn't meet all the criteria above, can it still be used as it is?

If it can't be used as it is, what adaptations could you make to render it usable?

10.7 The value of readers in post-16 phonics

Integrating phonics work into a rich and broad literacy curriculum is a key goal of post-16 phonics. Reading materials designed to be of interest to adult learners provide a useful resource in almost all settings.

Reading books designed specifically for adult learners are primarily aimed at providing accessible and engaging texts. As such, they do not limit vocabulary to 'decodable words' – that is, words that match the sequence in which a particular phonics scheme introduces grapheme-phoneme correspondences. They do provide material that is motivating to read, and which makes fewer demands upon readers in terms of vocabulary or syntax, with many words that can be read at any given phase of their phonics learning. Practitioners can use such materials for stimulating discussion and for structured peer reading tasks, as well as for generating ideas for writing. It is always possible to take examples of words in context that learners can work on further in a more systematic way.

The Reading Agency has a fairly comprehensive list of books for emergent readers on a database called *Find a Read* (**https://readingahead.org.uk/find-a-read**). Books are listed under genre and/or reading level (from Pre-Entry to Level 2). Each listing has a brief summary of the content and some also have reviews by learners. They cover a variety of topics, fiction, non-fiction and biography. Some, like the Quick Reads series, have been written by well-known authors, such as Minette Walters, Malala Yousafzai and Bernadine Evaristo, while others are written by tutors or learners.
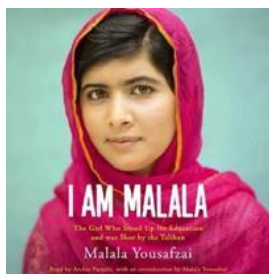
10.8 Can a case be made for decodable texts?

These are texts that aim to restrict the vocabulary to the learners' level of phonic knowledge, and then gradually increase the number and complexity of the words used in a set sequence. There may be a case for using these with learners who bring very little prior knowledge to the task of learning to read.

However, there is a trade-off to be made between the ease of decoding individual words, and the effect this has on the underpinning syntax. Too much emphasis on decodable words may actually make it harder to make sense of a text, particularly where it lacks the rhythms and cadences of everyday speech. This example demonstrates some of the potential drawbacks.

On this day Dan the dog ran a lot.

He ran for his ball.

He ran and ran.

He ran to Tom.

It was hot and dry.

On the way back Dan was slow.

Lot of cars were on the road.

It was Sunday, the day for trips.

Dan and Tom started to cross.

Dan was slow.

A car came fast.

In the case of decodable reading schemes, some learners may like them because they can be read fairly easily, even by those who find reading very difficult. This may give a sense of achievement. Others will find them over-simplistic and will be put off by the awkward sentence structure. Learners' views should be taken into account.

A case can be made for practitioners producing their own decodable texts for learners working at Entry Levels 1 and 2 (see Case study 2a, Chapter 3). These can provide useful reading materials tailored to the interests of a particular group of learners and pitched at the level of grapheme-phoneme correspondences that the group are working on. Controlling the vocabulary in this way should be done without compromising meaning. Words with irregular and complex spellings can always be included in such a text, provided readers are not left to struggle with these on their own. There are also many phonically regular multisyllabic words to draw on, and those devising their own materials should not try to limit the vocabulary to CVC words only.

10.9 Authentic texts and post-16 phonics

Learners often bring into the classroom forms, leaflets, manuals, letters or texts that they want to read and might need help with. These might have difficult vocabulary and/or complex sentences that can tax the learner, even if their motivation to read them is high. Some may only be relevant for the learner who brings them, while a few might be usefully shared with others in the group. When dealing with these kinds of texts it is useful to be able to rapidly review where any difficulties may lie. Official forms and manuals often use a lot of technical language that many of us would struggle with.

Search instead for high-interest news articles and stories that contain a large proportion of words that readers can tackle at their level, and remember regular multisyllabic words, such as hospital, recognition, astonished, fantastic, attacked and withstand, can all be within learners' competence early on. The practitioner who knows her learners well will be able to look out for texts that she knows will interest the whole group (or a particular sub-group), including adverts, poems and songs, all of which often make use of sounds for rhyming patterns. In the case of a high-interest article, it is also possible to make a 'companion version' with a higher proportion of decodable words. Take along the original because some will want to tackle that too.

It is also worth remembering that adult literacy and language education has a long tradition of working with learners, encouraging them to write and publish their own texts. From the 1970s onwards, there was an upsurge in community-based publishing initiatives designed to help learners 'speak for themselves', through fiction, (auto)biographies, poetry and many other written genres. Such publishing ventures provided a platform for voices outside the mainstream that might otherwise not be heard, particularly from the working class. This gave learners access to texts that represented the experiences of people who, like themselves, might have struggled to read or write confidently in their own lives. This made a welcome change from a diet of reading materials that bore little relation to learners' own lived experiences.

Although much of this publishing tradition has changed with the advent of the internet, some organisations survive (see, for example, the Fed: **http://www.thefed.btck.co.uk/**). Authentic texts written by adult learners can still be found online and provide a useful resource for literacy lessons. See, for example, some of the original Centerprise publications that have been digitised: **https://www.ahackneyautobiography.org.uk/publications.html**. Materials have also been written for use in literacy and ESOL classes for some of the books (although not specifically using phonics): **https://www.ahackneyautobiography.org.uk/teachers.html**.

"

In my experience, any material that the learners find interesting and relevant to their lives can be used as a teaching and learning resource. I use the checklist (**10.6**) to help me make decisions about materials.

If the learners are motivated enough to want to read a text, the teacher can do something with it to make it into a meaningful learning experience. Grade the task, not the text. This is as relevant for phonics work as for any other learning strategy.

Irene Schwab, 2019

"

Chapter 11. Turning the FSE wordlists into a learning tool

Introduction

Throughout the Post-16 Phonics Approaches toolkit we advocate a structured and systematic approach to teaching letter-sound correspondences with post-16 learners, which takes account of their prior experience and knowledge. We **strongly recommend that you work through those parts of the toolkit** that introduce these ideas and explain what they mean for post-16 learners **before** reading this chapter. Chapters 1, 5, 6 and 7 are particularly important.

Good use of phonics approaches post-16 involves recognising the potential complexity of the one-to-many concepts (that one phoneme can be represented by many graphemes, and that one grapheme can represent different phonemes) in the English writing system, and helping learners devise strategies for dealing with this. A key part of our structured approach is to introduce learners to the most stable aspects of the spelling system first (we call this Basic Code Plus – see Chapter 6) and then gradually scaffold learners into the more complex code – the full range of phoneme-grapheme correspondences that the one-to-many concepts imply. This structured approach:

- is always embedded in the context of meaningful reading and writing activities

- maximises the use of working memory

- draws on learners' oral language as a key resource.

In this chapter, we apply these principles to the FSE curriculum document and the letter/s-sound correspondences wordlists in the Appendix.

11.1. Introducing the FSE letter/s-sound correspondences lists

We start from the observation that the FSE wordlists are **lists of desired outcomes**, in terms of reading and writing competences and definitely **NOT an order-of-teaching syllabus.** There is no reason to treat the words in the FSE content document as a list of grapheme-phoneme correspondences that learners must memorise in isolation, indeed this would be wholly counterproductive. Instead, let's begin from the desired outcome from the FSE curriculum.

The expectation is that by the end of Entry Level 1, learners should be able to read a simple text in which all the FSE wordlist 1 graphemes can be expected to appear. This is a reading task that learners will be able to accomplish if they are familiar with Basic Code Plus, as set out in Chapter 6. Our analysis of the FSE wordlist 1 suggests very few additions (See 11.2 below). In addition, learners will need a lot of practice in applying that knowledge to reading whole texts. Phonics approaches should, therefore, be integrated with a rich literacy curriculum encompassing a wide range of texts that appeal to post-16 learners, with plenty of opportunities to read them (see Chapter 3, **Phonics and the post-16 literacy classroom** and Chapter 10, **Phonics resources for post-16 learners: what matters most**).

The FSE lists 2, 3 & 4 may, at first sight, look more difficult to integrate into a broader literacy curriculum, as the stipulation is that learners must be able to read and spell the listed words. In this case, our approach is to turn things around and use the lists to support teaching the one-to-many concepts, returning to some of the ideas we first introduced in Chapter 7 (see 11.5 below).

In both cases our intention is to show how an understanding of a structured approach to using phonics post-16 is compatible with the provision of a rich literacy curriculum that meets learners' interests and needs. Starting from these principles it is possible to incorporate the FSE wordlists into a meaningful curriculum without resorting to rote memorisation and drill.

11.2 Rethinking and reorganising FSE list 1: graphemes for reading

FSE wordlist 1 sets out expectations for word reading at Entry Levels 1-3. You would, therefore, expect the list to be organised in terms of graphemes and their varying pronunciations (grapheme-phoneme correspondences), but it's actually organised the opposite way round – in terms of phonemes and the various ways they can be spelt (phoneme-grapheme correspondences). Below is an excerpt from the FSE wordlist 1 showing how the list is organised.

ee (f<u>ee</u>t), **ea** (b<u>ea</u>ch), **e** (m<u>e</u>), **y** (pon<u>y</u>), **e-e** (th<u>e</u>s<u>e</u>), **ey** (k<u>ey</u>), **ie** (ch<u>ie</u>f)	/iː/
i (b<u>i</u>g) **y** (g<u>y</u>m)	/ɪ/
e (<u>e</u>gg), **ea** (h<u>ea</u>d)	/e/
a (m<u>a</u>t)	/æ/

Excerpt from the FSE wordlist 1, showing sample graphemes listed according to the phonemes they represent

To support the teaching of reading, we've reorganised the content of the FSE wordlist 1 by grapheme, and in Table 5 (below) we focused on only those graphemes on the list that would not be covered in Basic Code Plus. You will find them in the one-to-many concepts we introduced in Chapter 7 (Working from print to sound).

Table 5: Graphemes for reading – the FSE wordlist 1 reorganised

Graphemes for reading (beyond Basic Code Plus)		
*adjust for accent		
**not on FSE wordlist 1 but helpful and logical		
Single letter graphemes		
Grapheme	Phoneme as in:	
a	fast*	want	zebra
c	city		
g	gem		
y	gym	fly	
Consonant digraphs and trigraphs		
Grapheme	Phoneme as in:	
dge	bridge		
ge	large		
kn	knee		
ph	photo		
se	house	cheese	
tch	fetch		
wh	wheel	who**	
wr	write		
ve	have		
ze	sneeze		

Table 5: Graphemes for reading – the FSE wordlist 1 reorganised (continued)

Vowel digraphs			
Grapheme	Phoneme as in:		
ai	rain	said**	
al	talk		
au	sauce		
aw	law		
ea	beach	head	break**
ee	feet		
ew	few	flew	
ey	they	key	
ie	pie	chief	
igh	light		
oa	boat		
oe	toe		
oi	coin		
oo	moon	book*	
ou	out	soup	
ow	down	snow	
ue	clue	due	
Vowels with <r>			
air	hair		
ar	far		
are	square		
ear	near	bear	
er	person		
ir	bird		
oor	door		
or	fork	work	
ore	store		
ur	burn		
/əl/ endings			
-al	metal		
-el	tunnel		
-il	pencil		

> **Notes to Table 5**
>
> Reading schwa /ə/ in words like 'zebra' and 'umbrella'
>
> We've left 'zebra' on the list but learning to read schwa is a matter of learning the stress of individual words. Native English speakers who are learning to read might start with a stressed

sound then adjust to an unstressed one as they listen for a familiar word. ESOL learners might need more direct instruction on the correct stress of a word.

This varies by accent around the UK. For instance, 'convention' has a stressed first syllable in Lancashire but not in Kent.

11.3 From list to classroom: Introducing graphemes in the context of a broader literacy curriculum

Remember, teaching grapheme-phoneme correspondences should always happen in the context of meaningful reading and writing activities. You might use lists of individual words to explore patterns and frequency of pronunciation for some graphemes, however, do not teach grapheme-phoneme correspondences as decontextualised lists. This will not support learners' capacity to access this knowledge when they need it.

Our approach to post-16 phonics integrates writing and reading activities. Graphemes introduced for writing will be harnessed for reading and vice versa, providing opportunities for learners to apply their knowledge in reading and spelling activities. This means learners will be able to find them and accurately read or write them when they need to.

The following extract from Chapter 3, **Phonics and the post-16 literacy classroom,** shows this movement between reading and writing. The class have been reading a short text on birthdays, and have encountered the grapheme <ir>:

"Maria wants to write 'birthday' but struggles, so Dina makes a wordbox for her with all the sounds and helps her that way: b ir th day.

Wordbox 1

b	ir	th	day

Because Maria knows the one-to-many principles, she takes it in her stride that <ir> spells the 'er' sound in 'birthday'. Dina puts 'day' on one puzzle piece, which isn't technically correct, but Maria knows the word well so it's fine."

The correct wordbox would be:

Wordbox 2

b	ir	th	d	**ay**

Learning to spell a phoneme is an excellent way to introduce a grapheme that will later be encountered in reading. This incidental <ir> spelling lesson could spin off into many more examples of words with that grapheme. It will also allow you to point out that girl and first have the same <ir> spelling as birthday when you're looking at all the ways to spell /ə/ or /ər/ as on Table 7, Vowels with <r>.

What about learners who aren't starting at the beginning?

Learners starting at Entry Levels 2 and 3 (as well as some in Entry Level 1) will probably already know most of the Basic Code Plus graphemes, but they might not know how to use all of that prior phonic knowledge when reading. Check their knowledge through text reading activities. If there are weaknesses in any areas, they can pick up some of the skills they need through the one-to-many activities with more complex graphemes for spelling (see Tables 6, 7 & 8 below).

Systematic teaching in Post-16 phonics takes into account what learners already know and can do. If learners can read hou**se** and chee**se** they do not need to be explicitly taught these as different ways to read the grapheme <se>.

11.4 Rethinking and reorganising the FSE lists 2, 3 and 4 – phonemes and graphemes for reading and spelling

FSE lists 2-4 set out all the specific words that learners are expected to be able to read and spell at different Entry Levels. Each word list is organised by phoneme. In our Tables 6, 7 and 8 (below) we show these designated levels, although we suggest you do not follow them without checking your learners' knowledge first. There are additional requirements that aren't listed in the FSE wordlists, but are in the FSE Appendix. In Entry Level 1, this includes a large number of words that your learners will be able to read and spell anyway if you work through Basic Code Plus.

Once again, we've chosen to reorganise the FSE wordlists. Tables 6, 7 and 8 and the notes below them contain the same information as the three separate FSE lists 2, 3 and 4, but we've combined them into three tables sorted into vowels, vowels with <r> and consonants, with a column for each Entry Level. This matches the order in Table 4, the one-to-many chart in Chapter 7. This is to make it easier to integrate phonics teaching into teaching meaningful reading and writing. In this format it also becomes easier to decide which sorting activities would be useful for which learners. You'll notice that there are many more graphemes for these phonemes in Table 4 in Chapter 7. Don't restrict your learners to only those words or graphemes on the FSE wordlists because that will limit what they can read and write at any stage.

11.5 Introducing the structure of Tables 6, 7 and 8

The columns

The left-hand column has the IPA symbol for the target phoneme, and the other columns have words that contain the various graphemes that can represent that sound. The graphemes are in **red.** If you're not sure what sound the IPA symbol represents, read the words aloud to listen for the target sound. For instance, in 'every' the target sound is 'ee' spelt with a <y> at the end.

The words in **green** will automatically be covered in Basic Code Plus. **'Complete'** and **'extreme'** could have been learnt whilst looking at split digraphs and **'everything'** and **'everybody'** could have been learnt with **'every'**, also in Basic Code Plus.

The words in bold font could be learnt at an earlier level than indicated by the FSE wordlists. In the example below, **'mean'** could have been learnt alongside **'eat'**. Don't wait to include words in reading and writing just because they appear later in the FSE wordlists.

There are some words that we feel are either in the wrong place or better taught another way in post-16 phonics. We've moved those to the Notes at the bottom of this resource. If there's a word on the FSE wordlists but not on Tables 6, 7 and 8, then have a look at the Notes.

> **Remember:** our strongest advice is to start using the sequence in Chapter 6, with the emphasis on meaningful words. Then cross-refer to make sure you have full coverage.

Table 6: Graphemes for spelling vowel phonemes

phoneme in IPA	Words with graphemes which represent that phoneme – adjust for accent Entry Level 1 Entry Level 2 Entry Level							
	Entry Level 1				Entry Level 2			Entry Level 2
/æ/	bat fast last past plant path ask	*Adjust for accent see also /a:/ below			half*			
/e/	bet	head	any many anyone	said again* says*	**anything**	friend		
/ɪ/	bit				busy business minute	build	women	pretty	certain
/ɒ/	cot	want what* was*	because		watch	knowledge		**curiosity**	**qualify qualification**
/ʌ/	but	come done some other brother money Monday	does		**won son among something month**	young touch double trouble country		
/ʊ/	look* good	push pull put full	would could should		woman			
/eɪ/	day say way	made make take came same late	They		daily	great break	eight eighteen weigh weight	**obey** straight	
/iː/	be he me we she even	every	see seem feel meet week	Eat real	**mean**	**complete extreme** everything everybody	believe	people	**committee**	**achieve**
/aɪ/	I find mind child Friday	like time life while write	by my myself reply	high right might	find behind quiet	quite	eye	height	island

Table 6: Graphemes for spelling vowel phonemes (continued)

phoneme in IPA	Words with graphemes which represent that phoneme – adjust for accent Entry Level 1 Entry Level 2 Entry Level								
	Entry Level 1				Entry Level 2				Entry Level 2
/əʊ/	so no go old over open most only both told hold don't	close	show own follow						though although
/juː/	use	Tuesday	new few		music computer	beautiful			communicate community **education**
/uː/	too room	you group	do to into who	Two	**group** blue	**move** blew	truly fruit	through	
/aʊ/	how down	out about without around							
/ɔɪ/	boy								

Table 7: Graphemes for spelling vowels plus <r> phonemes

phoneme in IPA	Words with graphemes that represent that phoneme – adjust for accent **Note:** the IPA for 'air' is slightly different on the FSE wordlists – /ɛə/ or /ɛər/ instead of /eə/ or /eər/										
	Entry Level 1				Entry Level 2				Entry Level 2		
/ɑː/ or /ɑːr/	far	are	our*								
/ɑː/	fast last past plant path ask after	*adjust for accent see /æ/ above			half						
/eə/ or /eər/	air	where there	Their		care bare	bear					
/ɪə/ or /ɪər/	near dear year	here			year*						
/ɜː/ or /ɜːr/	her* person	Thursday Saturday	girl first	work word world —— were*	**thirteen thirty**	early heard learn earth	**surname**				
/ə/ or /ər/	together number after other never under				perhaps remem- ber	surprise	grammar calendar forward	pressure	**sugar popular particular regular**	centre	thorough borough (see note)
/ɔː/	saw draw	walk talk	all call also water		**always**	thought	caught naughty	cause*	bought brought ought		
/ɔː/ or /ɔːr/	or for morning	door floor poor*	more before	warm —— your four	**forty forwards**	**fourteen**	**quarter**	therefore			

Table 8: Phonemes for spelling consonant clusters

phoneme in IPA	Words with graphemes that represent that phoneme										
	Entry Level 1				Entry Level 2				Entry Level 2		
/b/	bob										
/k/	can act	look	back	school					scheme	occasion according	
/tʃ/	chat								picture actual		
/d/	dig				add address						
/f/	fan	off			differ different difficult				cough rough tough enough		
/g/	get give				guard guide				guarantee		
/h/	has	who			whole						
/dʒ/	jet	change large			age page strange				knowledge	college	
/l/	leg	will well tell still hello									
/əl/	little				possible example	animal			available		
/m/	mat	come some							committee	bomb thumb crumb climb	condemn column autumn
/n/	net	know	done gone		imagine				knot knee knife knowledge		
/ŋ/	string		think								
/p/	pop								appear opposite apply		
/r/	rig	write wrote wrong			arrive carry						
/s/	sat	cross miss address	house		promise	city circle decide	notice since sentence once	answer	recent centre exercise medicine criticise receive	increase purpose experience	listen fasten whistle
/ʃ/	shop				sure sugar	pressure	machine	special	especially	appreciate	

Table 8: Phonemes for spelling consonant clusters (continued)

phoneme in IPA	Words with graphemes that represent that phoneme										
	Entry Level 1				Entry Level 2				Entry Level 2		
/t/	tin				letter better				dou**bt** de**bt**	attach	**minute**
/ɵ/ /ð/	thin then				brea**the**						
/v/	van	ha**ve** gi**ve** li**ve**	O**f**								
/w/	win	**wh**en **wh**ich **wh**at **wh**ile **wh**ite									
/ks/	box				six next				e**x**cellent		
/j/	yes										
/z/	zoo	i**s** hi**s** a**s** ha**s**			po**s**ition **potatoes**	po**ss**ess	cau**s**e		ea**se** critici**se**	po**s**ition	cau**se**
/ʒ/	u**s**ual								mea**s**ure trea**s**ure plea**s**ure		

❯ Notes to Tables 6, 7 and 8

ENTRY LEVEL 1: ADJUSTMENTS MADE TO FSE WORDLIST 2

Wednesday /z/

It's not helpful to think of <es> as representing /z/ in the English code. Learn to spell **Wednesday** by saying it in three syllables, pointing out that we say only two syllables when reading or saying it out loud. Most practitioners say 'wed/nes/day' when spelling it so it's fine for learners to do the same.

think /ŋ/

<n> does represent the /ŋ/ sound as heard in words like 'bank' and 'think'. However, if a learner says /b/ /l/ /ɪ/ /n/ /k/, they will hear 'blink' with no need to process an /ŋ/ sound in that word. There is also an /ŋ/ sound in words like **longer,** but post-16 learners will automatically adjust the pronunciation. If they don't, practise lists of words side by side, some that retain the /ŋ/ only and others that have the hard /g/ sound: **singer, ringer,** et cetera, versus **finger, linger,** et cetera, and, of course, **ginger and whinger**! Learners with fluent English will naturally adapt to find a word they know and that makes sense in the context. ESOL learners might need more explicit teaching and practice in context.

enjoy /ɪ/

Some British English speakers pronounce the first sound in **enjoy** as a short /i/' (/ɪ/) – 'injoy'. However, an informal poll on social media suggests that almost everyone thinks 'en-joy' whilst writing it – regardless of what they say in conversation. Therefore, we've removed this word as an example of words with the short /i/ (/ɪ/) sound because it's not helpful for learners.

one /wʌ/

One is a very rare word that defies the phonic code. Instead of seeing it as two sounds, 'wuh' spelt with an <o> and 'n spelt <ne>, we advise teaching it as a whole – just like we advise teaching whole endings such as -tion and -tious. Once learners have mastered **one**, they will be able to read and spell **someone, everyone,** et cetera.

thank /e/

See **enjoy.** People think of this as having a short /a/ in the middle regardless of what they say in conversation.

Words with

schwa /ə/

Rather than teaching the 36 ways to spell an unstressed syllable, we recommend using a spelling method that encourages using a spelling 'voice' which means saying a word as you intend to spell it. With this approach, saying a clear vowel for the letter in bold, 'th**e**', 'b**e**tween', 'until', 't**o**day' and 't**o**gether' will lead to a correct spelling and is much easier on memory than listening for a schwa and trying to remember which one of 36 symbols to use. **Today** and **together** should also be morphologically connected to **to** which is on the list under the 'oo' /uː/ sound.

ENTRY LEVEL 2: ADJUSTMENTS MADE TO FSE WORDLIST 3

year /ɜː/ or /ɜːr/	On FSE word list 2, **year** rhymes with **near** and **dear.** On the FSE wordlist 3, it rhymes with **her**. The first will probably be a better choice for spelling regardless of how your learner says the word in conversation.
hour our	There is a lot of variation in how these two words are spoken, so choose a list of words that look the same and rhyme and teach them together. Ask your learners what's easiest for them to remember.
potatoes /z/	FSE wordlist 3 has <es> as the way to spell /z/ in **potatoes.** Learners will probably find it easier to think of the /əʊ/ for the /oe/ sound and a normal <s> for the plural.
Words with schwa /ə/	See the note above re: schwa and **Chapter 8** for spelling hints. **Seven, address, arrive, important, probably, second, woman** and **difficult** can all be learned in Entry Level 1 by using a spelling voice to say the unstressed vowels clearly.
idea material	The <ea> in this word isn't a separate sound. Instead, split **idea** into three syllables: i/dee/a (with schwa at the end as in umbrella or zebra). Can be taught in Entry Level 1. Ask your learners how they hear the middle syllable of 'ma/te/ri/al' It might be /ma/tear/ee/uhl/ or /ma/tea/ree/ul/. Either will work for both reading and spelling. It's the same as the first <e> in **serial, imperial** and **experience.**

ENTRY LEVEL 3: ADJUSTMENTS MADE TO FSE WORDLIST 4

experience	See 'material' above.

Words with

schwa /ə/	See the note above re: schwa and Chapter 8 for spelling hints.

Competition, correspond, determined, develop, frequently, explanation, dictionary, definite, describe, experiment, purpose, opposite and **suppose** can all be learned in Entry Level 2 (or even 1). |

certain	Moved to the 'short <i>' section, /ɪ/ as in 'bit'. See also **captain** and **mountain.** Adjust for accent.

famous　various	Teach these with an <ous> ending. Could add **fabulous, tremendous,** et cetera.

thorough　borough	Moved to the schwa ending with **centre,** though the /ɜːr/ pronunciation isn't an option.

11.6 From list to classroom: supporting reading and spelling in the context of a broader literacy curriculum

The words included on FSE wordlists 2, 3 and 4 are examples of particular phoneme-grapheme correspondences that form part of the complex code. Instead of teaching them one by one from the list, use the words on the lists as prompts for the kinds of reading and spelling activities we recommend in Chapters 7 and 8. By helping learners identify groups of words that share the same pattern, whether as phonemes or graphemes, you will deepen learners' knowledge of the complex code.

These kinds of pattern-based activities will enable learners to familiarise themselves with particular grapheme-phoneme correspondences they have been working on, which will in turn help them accurately read or write those graphemes when they need to. This is likely to be much more effective than teaching isolated grapheme-phoneme correspondences as decontextualised lists. This will not support learners' capacity to access this knowledge as and when they need it.

Remember, our approach to phonics post-16 puts oral language first. The relationship of sound to grapheme depends both on each speaker's accent, and on how they break up the word. They need to practise writing in a way that takes them from a version of their natural speech to the appropriate spelling – just like we all do. I may say "gunna" but I know that I need to write 'going to'. This is the level of language awareness required by post-16 learners.

The following example from Chapter 3 shows how this kind of pattern-focused work can be integrated into the broader reading and writing curriculum. In this case, a mixed Entry Level 2/3 group in a prison have been reading a text that includes the word information. By developing a word sorting activity that breaks the word into the base word form and component parts that can be added as prefixes or suffixes, learners have opportunities to review their knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondences as they reassemble the parts into different whole words. Later they will be able to draw on that knowledge in their writing.

"Carey focuses on the word information, writing its base word in the middle of a matrix, as follows:

in		a	tion
con	form	al	
re		er	
		ed	

She explains that the base word **form** comes from the Latin word for **shape.** She asks if they can see a connection between **form,** meaning shape, and the word information. Carey now asks how many words learners can make from the base word form using this matrix (there are 11: **inform, informal, information, informer, informed, conform, conformer, conformed, reform, reformation** and **reformer**). Carey asks what is interesting about the prefix 're' and elicits that it means to do something again. She asks if learners know any other words with 're' at the start (for example, **repeat, reinstate**)."

The learners in this group can engage with the matrix because they're confident in manipulating the phonemes and graphemes that make up each part of a word. Using phonics approaches in the context of meaningful language makes it possible to work confidently with age-appropriate language for post-16 learners in a range of varied contexts. The resources elsewhere in the toolkit are there to support you with this goal.

We hope that you can take the principles, ideas and approaches examined throughout this post-16 phonics toolkit and use them to explore ways to integrate the reading and spelling wordlists within the new Entry Level English subject content. We'd like to end by reiterating the **two crucial points** we started with.

Firstly, we strongly recommend that you come back to this chapter after working through the rest of the toolkit, which includes thinking through how to apply the principles we've used to guide the use of phonics approaches post-16 in your own teaching context. Chapters 1 and 5 to 7 are particularly important.

Secondly is the importance of prioritising pedagogic principles in curriculum delivery. This means that decisions about what to cover, how and when must be led by the pedagogical principles examined in Part 2 of the toolkit, including an understanding of different learner strengths, areas for development and needs, and the complex contextual factors that affect learning.

"

Phonics is necessary but insufficient.

Sir Jim Rose, speaking at The Children's Literacy Charity day conference,
London, 23rd March 2018

"

Chapter 12. Using phonics approaches with learners from different language backgrounds

Introduction

In this chapter, we will focus on questions that you may have about using this toolkit of resources with learners or groups of learners who come from different language backgrounds.

12.1 Who benefits from post-16 phonics?

The toolkit, **Phonics Approaches for Adult Learners**, has been primarily created to support practitioners in meeting the needs of learners in post-16 or adult literacy groups who are working towards FSE qualifications, as well as those in non-accredited or other groups. Most learners will be confident and fluent speakers of English orally/aurally, but find reading and writing a particular challenge. This is so regardless of whether they grew up speaking English or have grown up speaking other languages and learnt English later.

One of the key principles of our approach is to work from learners' own (oral) language. This is particularly relevant for post-16 learners who struggle with the written code, whatever their language background. In this section of the toolkit, however, we focus on what practitioners should keep in mind when working with learners for whom English is an additional language. For whom will our approach work, and where might it not be useful?

Below we reflect on three rather different learner/group profiles. They have been designed to provoke discussion about the interaction between learners' knowledge of language and of literacy.

12.2 Profile 1: Learners who are confident in their literacy in another language

If learners are confident in their literacy in another language, but are just beginning to learn English, then they are most likely to be attending ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) or EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classes in order to learn or develop their English language. Their main learning needs are likely to be around developing vocabulary, grammar, functional language and pronunciation. Any issues with reading and writing may well be more about knowledge of words and syntax rather than getting to grips with decoding and encoding the spoken language in and of itself.

1. What should I keep in mind?

It is important to consider whether these learners need to do concentrated phonic work to establish awareness of the relationships between phonemes and graphemes, or whether they might benefit more from a brief overview of the English spelling system, emphasising differences between it and other writing systems. For example, they might welcome clarification that the English spelling system is based on phoneme-grapheme correspondences, but that a) graphemes may be more than one letter and b) the relationships between phonemes and graphemes are complex: one phoneme can be represented by different graphemes and one grapheme can represent different phonemes. This may be particularly important if a learner is confident in their literacy in a language that uses a writing/spelling system that is completely different to that of English.

2. How the English spelling system works: points of comparison

Some learners will be familiar with writing systems using forms of logograms, scripts based on syllables rather than phonemes, and/or systems that work from right to left or top to bottom. You may want to support these learners in getting to grips with the Roman alphabet, reading and writing from left to right, and the relationship between capital and lower-case letters. Talking through each of the numbered points in Chapters 6 and 7 will help clarify the nature of the English spelling system.

If, for example, a learner or group seems unsure of which capital letters match with which lower-case letters, you can ask learners to make little cards. These could be index card or business card sized. You can buy these, but getting learners to make their own can be fun, useful reinforcement and cheaper. They could make up one card with each capital letter of the alphabet, and then one (perhaps in a different colour) with each lower-case letter of the alphabet. When the cards are made, you could get the learners to mix them up on a desk or the floor, match them into pairs and then think of the phonemes each usually represent and words that start with these. This could be done quickly, as a timed competition, or with emphasis on the artwork if you feel this would help challenge or interest.

This may also help with 'false friends' when an element of a writing system is similar. For example, Russian is written in the Cyrillic alphabet, a system based on phoneme-grapheme correspondences but using (mainly) a different set of letters/graphemes, and where a few of the letters look the same as some of those in the Latin/Roman alphabet (for example, C, P, B and H), but represent different phonemes.

It may also be the case that a learner literate in a language that uses a completely different writing system may be best served by the suggestions under Profile 2 below.

3. Different spelling systems, same alphabet

Learners who are confident reading and writing in another language that also uses the Roman alphabet may need reminding that a writing/spelling system is not the same as an alphabet. Different languages using the same alphabet may encode the sounds in the language differently. For example, the grapheme <ch> in the English spelling system most often (but not always) represents the /tʃ/ phoneme, as in **cheese,** but in French it usually represents the /ʃ/ phoneme, as in **champagne.** The number of graphemes used to encode phonemes also varies, as does the regularity of the patterns used. Spanish phoneme-grapheme correspondences are nearly always one-to-one, unlike those of English. It may be useful, with some groups, to share the terms 'transparent orthography' (a largely one-to-one correspondence between phoneme and grapheme, like Spanish) and 'opaque orthography' (a many-to-one and on-to-many system, like that of English) (See Part 2, Chapter 5).

Concepts 5, 6 and 7 from Chapter 5 may be particularly useful: a single grapheme can be made up of more than one letter; one grapheme can represent several different phonemes; and one phoneme can be spelled with different graphemes. You could offer learners an example of each of these principles and then ask them to come up with more examples themselves to share with the group.

12.3 Profile 2: Learners just starting to learn the English language and new to reading and writing

These learners are often labelled 'ESOL literacy' learners because they are learning English while also learning to read and write for the first time. They may have had very little formal education before, at any stage in their lives, and are therefore facing the considerable task of getting to grips with reading and writing (and understanding classroom conventions), while also learning a new language.

A lot of this toolkit will not apply to these learners because they are unlikely to have the oral language our approach presupposes. For these learners, it is important to work out how best to combine literacy work with oral language work. Most ESOL experts will recommend focusing on oral language initially, and using reading and writing in a limited way to consolidate oral work or to support basic functional literacy, for example, learning to write their own names and addresses. Have a look at the advice from English language teaching (ELT) specialists Spiegel and Sunderland (2006). See also **The British Council ESOL Nexus site** for articles written by ESOL practitioners, some of which support 'ESOL literacy' in particular.

12.4 Profile 3: Speakers of other language(s) who may be fluent speakers of English, but struggle with reading and writing

In many ways the phonic approaches in this toolkit will help you meet these learners' needs. However, there are three things to keep in mind.

1. Phonics and oral vocabulary

Be aware of how reading and writing needs relate to learners' vocabulary development. If your learners are still building up their vocabularies, then this may well relate to specific difficulties when reading. Most experts agree that it is much harder to read/decode a word if you do not already 'know' the word, as in understand its meaning and/or use it in your own oral language. Coming across a completely new word in a text will make it harder to know how to deal with the one-to-many concepts discussed in Chapter 7. Coming across a large number of new words in one text will make reading a text a struggle and could put learners off reading. These are challenges to be aware of when choosing reading materials (see Chapter 10).

2. The English spelling system: transparent versus opaque orthographies

If a learner is familiar with another writing system, they may need extra care clarifying the distinctive nature of the English spelling system and how it differs from other writing systems they are already

familiar with. The terms transparent and opaque indicate the complexity of phoneme-grapheme correspondences a spelling system employs. In a transparent spelling system there is a consistent relationship between phonemes and graphemes, as in Turkish or Spanish. In English the relationships between phonemes and graphemes varies in line with the one-to-many principles. This is why English is described as an opaque spelling system (See earlier guidance under Profile 1).

3. A note on pronunciation

Phonics is an approach to help learners recognise (read) and write or spell the words that they say and hear. It is not an approach to teaching pronunciation. Some learners who have not grown up speaking English will want to develop their English pronunciation and may ask for guidance in pronouncing certain words, and you as a practitioner will want to help them through modelling and/or explicit teaching of pronunciation (there are many resources created by ESOL practitioners for teaching pronunciation, see the **British Council** website for more information). It is usually best to keep this work distinct from phonics or any other reading work, and be careful of giving or encouraging the idea that spelling drives pronunciation.

> "
>
> To keep in mind: post-16 phonics is an approach for developing word-level reading. It is not an approach for teaching pronunciation.
>
> Sam Duncan, 2019
>
> "

Chapter 13. Developing inclusive approaches for phonics post-16

Introduction

We know that post-16 and adult learners take a variety of routes into adult literacy or Entry Level Functional Skills classes. Some learners may have had little previous experience of education; for others 'struggling with reading and writing' may be a constant part of their educational experience. Some may willingly come to classes late in life; others may find themselves compelled to attend when they would not freely choose to be there. Some will be finding their feet in a new language (see Chapter 12). Others may be learners with a variety of special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and/or learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD).

All these learners will benefit if practitioners play to their strengths. This chapter considers how to do so:

- by capitalising on spoken language

- by differentiating post-16 phonic activities according to learner needs

- by reflecting on some general points to bear in mind when planning an inclusive curriculum.

We hope this advice will benefit all learners, whether identified as SEND/LDD or not.

13.1 The primacy of spoken language

A principle of good practice, highlighted regularly in the toolkit, is the importance of capturing, validating and building on the spoken language that learners bring with them into sessions. This is especially important in promoting inclusive practice when using phonics approaches at the lower Entry levels. It's an integral part of linguistic phonics, which is the systematic and structured approach to phonics teaching that phonics post-16 is based on. Linguistic phonics begins with oral language and then helps learners explore what the individual sounds in whole words look like when segmented and written down. It emphasises manipulating phonemes and graphemes in the context of whole words (see Gray et al. (2016) for an account of its origins in Northern Ireland).

FSE classes can value oral language by supporting learners to share and record their thoughts, reflections and spoken accounts of their activities using written transcription or digital tools of various sorts. These texts can then be used as the basis for motivating reading material. Such learner-centred texts can be essential in encouraging learners to make the challenging journey from spoken to written English. Equipped with an awareness of the basic code and how this connects to learners' vocabulary, practitioners can use such texts as the starting point for work on the particular elements of phonic knowledge that are most relevant to the learner or a group of learners. Alongside other materials discussed in Chapter 10, such reading resources bring into the classroom the post-16 learners' interests, their spoken vocabulary and language practices in ways that ensure equality of access for those who may perhaps otherwise feel excluded by factors such as disability, cultural background, race, et cetera.

13.2 Why post-16 phonics is inclusive: the place for differentiated activities right from the start

In post-16 phonics, pace, structure and resources can all be differentiated to suit any learner's needs, regardless of learners' different starting points or the speed at which they grasp key elements in the Basic Code Plus.

It's best illustrated in a practical lesson. Here's an example from Chapter 6, Basic Code Plus: Box A, the first time a learner might encounter post-16 phonics. Many learners will just touch on this section and move on, but what could you do for a learner who needs to spend more time here?

Box A: One sound to one letter plus <qu> /kw/ and <x> /ks/

Single syllable and multi-syllable words

a e i o u (short vowel sounds only: /æ, e, ɪ, ɒ, ʌ/)

b d c k f g h j l m n ng p qu r s t v w x y z

Double consonants (final): ff ll ss zz

Sample words:

tap, max, quit, mop, dub, yap, mill, tell, buzz, lamp, stand, stamp, cliff, strand, scrimp, rang, fling, strong, upset, laptop, transit, fantastic, profit, inspect, invent, dentist, insect, contest, umbrella (unstressed final syllable)

Most learners will be able to spell the single-syllable words without resorting to sticky note puzzles, but if they lack confidence or are taking longer to make the connection between the sounds they say and letters they write, create puzzles for even the very short words and, instead of word stretching as in Chapter 6, work through the following sequence:

CVC words like: bet, top, map, lip, but, bell, till, buzz et cetera

laptop, combat, upset, fantastic et cetera

CVCC words like: **ramp, pump, tent, tint, belt, melt, blip** et cetera

invent, contest, dentist, insect et cetera

CCVCC words like: stamp, trust, brand, swept, et cetera

transit, profit, umbrella, inspect et cetera

Even more consonants: string, strand, strong, scrimp et cetera

You can find lists of words on the internet, usually from primary phonics sources, by using search terms like 'ccvcc words'. Make sure you have a lot of words on hand, at the current level and beyond. Even the learner who is struggling the most likes to feel they're making progress, so don't wait for perfection before moving on. Try the following activities.

🔍 Activity: Segmenting sounds

Put one sound on each sticky note puzzle. Remember to separate all consonant clusters to support memory. You can do this with any word that can be built from the graphemes in Box A. The learner should work on a small dry erase board.

So **strand** looks like this:

1. Put one sound on each sticky note.
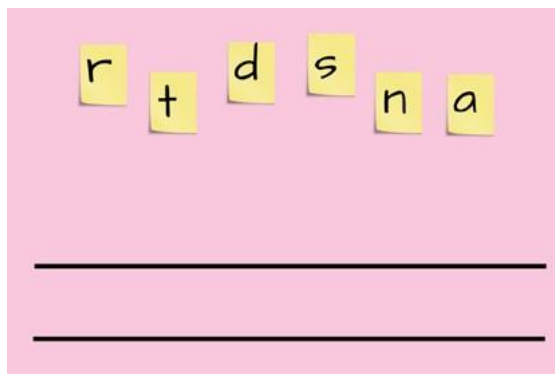
2. Ask the learner if they can hear the first sound in **strand**. See if they can find it and move it to the line, saying the sound as they move the puzzle piece until they've said and moved all the pieces in the right order.
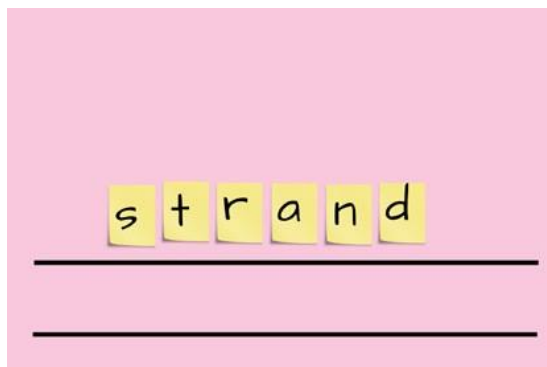
3. Ask them to write the word underneath the puzzle, still saying each sound as they write. Do a few of these with each type of word with one, two and three syllables.
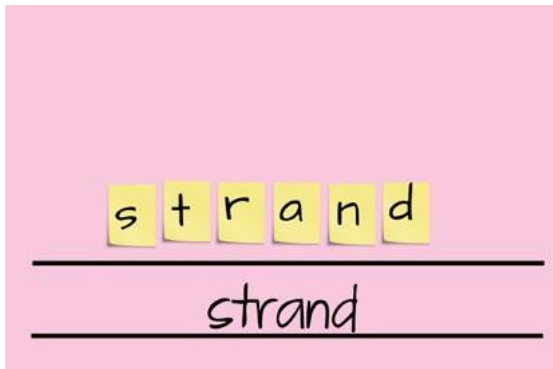
Extension: Create simple text – even a sentence will do – that features the words you've done puzzles for. Later, you can choose a couple of words to spell. You can differentiate this lesson too (see below).

> **Note:** If your learner has serious speech and language difficulties, it's possible that phonics will frustrate them. If you suspect they're feeling stuck on CVC words, always ask if they like what they're doing and if they're finding it helpful.

Further differentiation:

- If a learner has no knowledge of the alphabet, only do a few graphemes at a time.

- Adjust the size of the puzzle pieces.

- Write the graphemes on top of a pad of sticky notes to make them easier to grasp.

- When spelling without puzzle pieces, give each learner a grid with the basic code graphemes you've covered as a reminder. Don't ask them to spell anything you haven't done as a puzzle.

- For an ESOL learner who finds themselves in an Entry 1 class, make use of free image sites like Pixabay to illustrate simple text.

- Have a look at the decodable text available for adults.

Finally, here's an anecdote from one of our pilot centres. This experienced practitioner had never used phonics before and was a bit hesitant, but we assured her that she could do great things with some sticky notes and a dry erase board. She was particularly concerned about a young adult learner who had come to her with zero literacy alphabet knowledge. They'd made some progress together learning word shapes and basic sounds but we encouraged her to get out the puzzles and see what she could do. It seemed a bit over ambitious, but here's the feedback from their first session with post-16 phonics combined with some external basic code wordlists.

"I thought you might be interested in how I got on with my non-reader today, armed with my post-it notes and a whiteboard! It was extremely empowering for him. He wanted to do it his own way and he took the lead. He loved the whiteboard and was happy to sound out the letters and point to the post-it notes. He couldn't believe how many words he could sound out and read. He told me how difficult it had

been to sit in a class and not know the alphabet. The whole group told him how proud they were of him. He wants to do some more tomorrow and he wanted to try and put a sentence together: 'Going to my car'. We also did 'upset' and his face was a picture when he realised he could read it.

Thank you so much for this; it was a real treat to watch him blossom and start to redefine himself."

13.3 General points to bear in mind when creating an inclusive curriculum

Below we offer some general advice that may be helpful in planning an inclusive curriculum for Entry Level learners.

1. Keep an open mind about what is possible to achieve

SEND/LDD specialists within your institution or local area may well be able to give advice on particular areas of need and how best to support literacy learning. Dedicated resources designed for supporting SEND/LDD are also available (for example, at **https://send.excellencegateway.org.uk/**). A key starting point in the literacy classroom is to make a careful assessment of individual needs, strengths, preferences and goals. Dialogue with the learners about what works for them and helps them make progress should always be part of this process.

When using phonics approaches as part of a broader literacy curriculum, keep in check any assumptions about what will or won't 'work'. Don't assume phonics has nothing to offer for particular groups of learners, or set low expectations for the progress that can be made. The approaches we outline in Part 2 can be adapted for a wide range of learners and take into account divergent starting points. Review how learners are doing and be prepared to vary the pace or diversify approaches as appropriate. For instance, when working from oral language, it is possible to use a variety of methods to break up speech into smaller units: onset and rhyme, stressed and unstressed syllables, as well as individual phonemes and the graphemes that represent them. These can all be tried. Reflect on which ones work best for particular learners, taking into account their feedback. Bear in mind that small steps can be huge achievements for some learners. Recognising and celebrating progress will encourage learning.

2. Identify strategies to engage and challenge learners

Learners may have identified that they 'need to work on their English/literacy' but what in particular do they really want and need? This question applies to all learners, not just those with an identified SEND/LDD.

It is important to take learners' views into account: what do they feel they can't do that they want to be able to do? Can you find ways to help them identify what they want and need? What do they see as the barriers to reading or writing the texts they want to read or write in the ways they want to read or write them? Connect learning strategies to those goals. Taking the time to listen can lead to planning more engaged and purposeful learning.

When using phonic approaches with all learners, not just those with an identified SEND/LDD, it is important to take learners' specific motivations into account and reflect on pace and challenge in this light. How are learners being stretched? If you look back at Chapter 6, you'll see that learners can start with very simple words like 'den' and 'rent', but they can also start with longer words that have simple syllables like 'dentist' and 'profit'. It's possible to find words that are age-appropriate and challenging no matter what the learner's starting point. The same principle applies to other literacy work, whatever you

are doing. Try to find ways to make it as interesting as possible, with an element of challenge. Careful and regular assessment will help provide a more precise idea of what individuals are struggling with so that more opportunities can be created for learners to focus in on these. Learners shouldn't be spending time doing what they don't need to or find too easy or boring.

3. Make connections with learners' interests

Phonics should not be boring. If a learner/group of learners want to be studying plumbing and not English FS, find ways to harness this ambition, through the choice of reading and writing activities and vocabulary. Highlight the importance of literacy in the professional lives of plumbers and/or use the literacy practices of successful professional plumbers to contextualise the phonic work you do.

Finding connections to learners' interests and concerns applies in all settings. If the 'Where do they want to be?' is a bit more nuanced or complex in some settings (if for example, your learners are in prison), probe for interests and motivating factors. This could be around future work that individuals would like to do, but also about other important aspects of adult life (such as family, faith or politics) as well as personal interests. Find out more about what kinds of texts learners would ideally like to be reading or writing and build this into your sessions.

4. Take time, using repetition and appropriate pace to support learners according to need

One important principle in post-16 phonics approaches is to build up what learners can do with Basic Code Plus very rapidly. This is not so much about covering a lot of ground as about showing learners how much they can do from grasping a relatively small set of concepts. These are set out in Chapter 5, **Post-16 Phonics: The essential concepts**.

What does this mean for SEND/LDD learners? As is always the case, practitioners will need to recognise and respond to the pace at which learners are grasping the essential concepts and make judgements about what needs further consolidation and what does not. There should be plenty of room when planning lesson content to consolidate prior learning as well as adding something new.

Using phonics approaches with SEND/LDD learners will mean recognising that:

- Some SEND/LDD learners may process information more slowly and need more practice and more reinforcement to make progress in reading and spelling.

- Slow progress is not necessarily a sign that something is 'not working' – discussing progress with the learner can help clarify this.

- Some learners with learning difficulties may find a structured phonic approach extremely useful, others may not. Monitoring how well different approaches are working plays an important part in knowing what to adjust.

- The chance to try out and talk about different approaches is part of meeting learner needs, and opportunities to do so should be planned into the curriculum.

13.4. When an approach based on relationships between spoken words and written words may not be appropriate

Post-16 phonics approaches are based on helping learners make the connection between the sounds in spoken words and the ways these words are written. However, it is important to recognise this route may not be appropriate for all learners.

Visual impairment

A phonics approach may not be suitable for users of contracted Braille unless the learner has a particular reason for wanting to learn Standard English spelling. These judgements should always be made by the learners in conjunction with specialist advice.

Hearing impairment

Deaf learners have greatly differing needs and orientations towards literacy learning. Some may lip-read and others not. Some will use signed languages such as British Sign Language, in which case reading and writing will not be about a relationship between (English) spoken/heard words and written words at all. These learners' experience of English will be as a written language only. In these cases, practitioners may wish to focus on developing visual knowledge of spelling patterns. It is important that whatever literacy learning strategies you use are discussed and evaluated with the individual learners in question. Seek guidance from experts in hearing impairment and uses of signed languages.

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> Remember, teaching at Entry Levels in English is not just the responsibility of the Learning Support Assistant. The responsibilities need to be shared.
>
> John Brown, 2019
>
> "

> "
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> Whilst every learner is different and some may face challenges learning to decode confidently, don't set limits on what learners can be expected to do. Explain to learners what you are doing and why, and keep post-16 phonics approaches under review as you try them out.
>
> Claire Collins, 2019
>
> "

Chapter 14. Putting phonics approaches to the test

Introduction

In this chapter we set out some issues for practitioners to think about as you develop post-16 phonics approaches in your own context. We see an opportunity for practitioners to contribute to knowledge and understanding of the role phonics might play post-16 through critical reflection on that process.

14.1 Why reflect on practice in your context?

There is very little research evidence that directly supports the use of phonics with adult learners. Our systematic review of recent studies (**Moss et al. 2018**) suggests that this is because:

- Most research into phonics focuses on very young children in the early years of schooling. Studies pay little attention to the differences between this cohort and older learners.

- Where adult learners are the focus, good research designs suffer from irregular attendance patterns which may characterise adult literacy classes. In larger trials in particular, attrition (the drop-in numbers of participants starting and finishing a programme) makes generalising from the outcomes difficult.

As a consequence, practitioners have a key role to play in building up a robust evidence base on the outcomes of teaching phonics post-16. We would encourage you to take up this challenge and in doing so, help answer the fundamental question: **"To what extent are phonics approaches useful in helping post-16 learners develop as readers and writers in a range of different contexts?"**

14.2 Setting an agenda for practitioner research

Our systematic approach to phonics post-16 sets out a well-planned sequence to the introduction of phoneme-grapheme and grapheme-phoneme correspondences. This is summarised in Part 2.

Recognising the distinction between Basic Code Plus and the more complex aspects of the code that embody the one-to-many principles are all key to building post-16 and adult learners' confidence and knowledge and equipping them with the skills they need to continue to develop their reading and writing independently.

At the same time, we recognise that post-16 learners are diverse. They will come to classes with a range of prior understandings of how literacy works. Both their experience and interests will vary.

Some will need to revisit some of the essential concepts set out in Chapter 5. The range of activities we suggest in Chapters 6 and 7 will help consolidate and extend previous learning. Prior experience

suggests that learners can master the basic code quite swiftly, using this approach. Others may come with the spiky profiles described in Chapter 9. In this case, deciding how they should be supported is less clear cut.

As we said in our review of the research evidence: "Principles of sequence and pace that will prove most efficacious for adult learners need fuller exploration" **(Moss et al. 2018)**. So far, no research evidence has established exactly what pace and sequence in phonics should look like for post-16 learners, particularly when it comes to the complex code. Indeed, these matters have not been fully settled yet for the very young (Savage et al. 2018). Some of the most interesting research is now factoring in the frequency with which particular grapheme-phoneme correspondences appear in the texts children actually read, instead of steering by a set sequence. In the case of adult learners departing from a set sequence may indeed be worth exploring.

Post-16, the pace may always need to vary according to the individual, and how quickly learners make progress (see Chapter 13). When it comes to the complex code, sequence can also vary depending on what post-16 learners want and need to write and what they want and need to read. Speaking and listening, reading and writing all interact here to extend the varieties of language that learners are familiar with and want to use. This is why we anticipate some incidental teaching of the complex code – taking words from the complex code that derive from learners' speech, or which appear in texts they are reading – then creating the time and space to group together grapheme-phoneme correspondences or phoneme-grapheme correspondences that employ the same pattern. Building word groups in this way is an important aspect of post-16 phonics. Making time to explore a particular pattern will help learners build up the repertoire of grapheme-phoneme correspondences they are familiar with. In the process, they will also learn not to be daunted by the variations they encounter but to take them in their stride.

The one-to-many principles in all their complexity may seem daunting for both practitioners and learners alike. By considering both the complexity and the frequency with which particular grapheme-phoneme correspondences occur (See Table 4, Chapter 7), we aim to give some pointers about what should be taught in which order. This can only benefit from being tested in practice. Practitioners will have a valuable contribution to make by recording the approach they have adopted and noting what happened as a result.

14.3 Reflecting on classroom practice

Here's an example from one of the pilot colleges showing how practitioners recorded what they did. The form has a simple reporting format that encourages users to note down what happened as they tried out new approaches. It includes spaces to record what learners and the practitioner thought of the activity. This is a really useful tool for gathering information from the classroom and sharing it. You will find a photocopiable version of this diary at the end of this chapter.

Post-16 Phonics Lesson Diary

Date: 22/01/19

Group: Multi Construction Skills Entry 3 | Tuesday 10.15am

Session: Functional Skills English

What did I try to do?

I planned to work with this group as I have a lot of learners who are really struggling with their spelling skills. This group has a variety of learners and for the majority this is the first time they have maintained in an educational establishment.

There are numerous behaviour issues within the group so for the lesson focus I planned to engage the learners by working with vocabulary from their vocational course.

I came up with a list of words from their vocational area of multi skills that I felt learners may struggle with in terms of spelling. In total there were seven words which were:

1. Cement
2. Hammer
3. Chisel
4. Plaster
5. Mallet
6. Float
7. Trowel

I printed and laminated graphemes and created a chart to analyse how the learners attempted to spell the words and which graphemes they used.

What happened?

I decided to work with three learners and we all sat on one table within the classroom. We got the laminated cards out and spread them across the table so the learners could see all the letters and graphemes. I explained we were going to have a go at spelling some words from their vocational course that they should be familiar with.

I read aloud the first word 'cement' and two of the learners got straight into finding the letters that were needed. One learner was very reluctant to join in at first but when he saw the other two learners looking for letters he began to help out.

I reminded the learners to think of the sounds they can hear in the word and they managed to spell the some of the words correctly.

They spelt hammer, chisel, plaster and mallet easily enough.

When it came to the word 'trowel', they chose the <l> grapheme not the <el>.

Did it have the effect I hoped for?

I thought the learners would show some reluctance to take part in the activity especially with it being something new but I was happy that all three became involved.

I didn't expect the learners to be as strong with the spellings of these words as they were and I was impressed by how well they did.

However, the learners were quite distracted with the amount of graphemes on the table, and I felt that this put them off slightly.

I was also unable to get my support assistant involved as he had to keep the other learners engaged whilst I was completing this activity.

What did learners think of it?

I had a discussion with the learners afterwards. They said they enjoyed the activity and found it easier to spell the words using the cards rather than actually writing the words down as they were able to see when/if they had gone wrong and easily correct it.

One of the learners informed me that they found the words quite easy to spell as they were used to these words from their vocational course.

The learners all said that there were too many letters and cards to focus on and they felt they spent more time actually finding the letters than they did thinking about how to spell.

What next?

Do I need to do more planning, more reading, try something different, experiment with other groups? Et cetera

- Only include the relevant letters/graphemes that are needed and a few extra
- Give them some more complex and longer words – this may work better
- Get the learner support also involved in the activity
- Aim to use an activity that involves all learners rather than just a small group
- Increase my understanding of phonics and graphemes so I am able to explain this better to the learners

14.4 Identifying questions in practice

Here are some questions that practitioners can help answer by reporting on their use of post-16 phonics. You may well be able to add to the list.

- Does the suggested sequence in the toolkit help my planning and bring coherence to the lessons and activities I prepare?

- When and how should I adapt sequence and pace – by vocational course, by individual learner or the immediate reading or writing need?

- Is it possible for learners to make gains in reading by working on spelling, as suggested in Chapter 8?

- In my classroom, who benefits most from a post-16 phonics approach?

  - What are the characteristics of learners who benefit most from Basic Code Plus?

  - What are the characteristics of learners who move quickly and those who move slowly through Basic Code Plus?

  - Can we develop simple but accurate assessment tools to predict these?

- What is the best balance in my classroom between using phonics approaches and providing other reading and writing activities to ensure my learners experience a rich and engaging literacy curriculum?

- What are the challenges of using phonics approaches with mixed-ability groupings and how might they best be resolved? (We suggest collaborating on this enquiry with colleagues working with learners with a range of needs.)

- Can looking at learners' writing help me assess their phonics needs? What choices should I make about activities to support learners?

- Can these phonics activities be usefully combined with other approaches to grouping words for learning that I've used before, or do they work best on their own?

- Using the criteria for deciding what makes a good resource for post-16 learners in the toolkit (see Chapter 10), how can I ensure that the resources I use are age-appropriate, use phonics appropriately and are of benefit to my learners?

- How much time do I really need to spend on the toolkit to get the best out of the resources for my learners, and how will I know?

  - Don't underestimate the value of this last question for you and for others. There are a lot of ideas in the toolkit that may take some time to work through and relate back to your setting.

14.5 Documenting the process

Practitioner-led enquiry prioritises making changes aimed at helping learners. All the questions above have this intention. Research becomes more valuable when practitioners document what they plan to do in their own context, reflect on any evidence they collect on outcomes, and share their findings with other practitioners. This is best summed up in the action research process of planning a session and trying new phonics approaches; recording the outcomes of the session; discussing with your learners and colleagues; and reflecting on the experience to plan a more refined next session (see 14.2 above).

Findings become more useful if they are based on tangible evidence of learner experience and learning outcomes. These will help other practitioners to judge whether the approaches tried might be worth considering and developing within their own particular settings.

Some ways of documenting outcomes from practitioner-led enquiry include collecting:

- examples of the types of spellings and readings that learners produced during a particular stage or stages of your research session(s)

- previous and revised session plans, annotated to show how you attempted to integrate phonics, and what working adaptations were required in practice

- descriptions of what happened in a session, written up afterwards

- feedback from learners about the session and observations from sessions that might indicate what they thought

- guidance from the toolkit annotated with your evaluation of the guidance when applied in practice.

Good ethical practice involves asking learners for their consent before starting to conduct research. If you want to share findings beyond your own institution, then it is important to think about how to elicit informed consent, particularly in the context of GDPR. See **BERA 2018 Ethical Guidelines** for useful advice on this and other matters.

14.6 Sharing findings

Sharing practice is not about proving success. It is about being able to explore why certain approaches were successful or unsuccessful in this particular context and under these circumstances. Such a reflection can provide useful intelligence for other practitioners. And in a context where comparatively little is known about what might make phonics approaches effective with adult learners, it may be useful for phonics researchers too.

From investigating how you use post-16 phonics approaches in your teaching, we would be especially interested to gather your developing insights into the following:

- how you modified your planned phonics approaches in the light of experience

- how you developed or helped other practitioners develop their phonics approaches

- how phonics is best combined within a rich literacy curriculum, integrating knowledge about how words are formed and where language has come from

- how you managed to integrate the FS reading and spelling wordlists into a meaningful literacy curriculum

- what other resources proved useful, in addition to this Phonics Toolkit.

> "
>
> Whenever possible, try and get your learners to discuss their experiences of your use of phonics – their insights will help us refine our approaches.
>
> Andy Convery, 2019
>
> "

Post-16 Phonics Lesson Diary

Date:

Group:

Session:

What did I try to do?

What happened?

Did it have the effect I hoped for?

What did learners think of it?

What next?

Do I need to do more planning, more reading, try something different, experiment with other groups? Et cetera

Chapter 15.
If you want to find out more

Introduction

In this toolkit we have covered some of the essential ingredients involved in using phonics approaches well with post-16 learners.

We have adopted a systematic approach:

- by showing when and how to engage learners in working on Basic Code Plus

- by showing how to support learners as they grapple with the one-to-many principles

- by considering how to take account of the diversity of learner needs in different settings.

We have focused on making post-16 phonics age-appropriate:

- by choosing resources that respect what learners already know

- by encouraging learners to adopt a puzzle-solving approach

- by working from the richness of learners' language into the written code in ways that support learning.

The toolkit is evidence-informed. We have combined research evidence, expert advice and practitioner expertise:

- to devise activities that engage learners and provide the appropriate level of challenge

- to deepen practitioners' understanding of key concepts and key principles

- to give practitioners the means to adapt these approaches to their own working context.

Through this we want to show that post-16 phonics approaches can be successfully incorporated into a rich literacy curriculum, sustained by meaningful reading and writing tasks.

As you work your way through the resources you will begin to get a feel for what phonics can do in your setting. The next stage is to try out more things and share experiences with other practitioners. In Chapter 14 we make some suggestions for how to do this. But if you do want to read or think more about this area, then this chapter gives some further signposts.

15.1 Reread sections of the toolkit

Some areas of the toolkit are more technical than others. They will be of benefit if you go back to read them later on. For instance:

- ## Chapter 11, **Turning the FSE wordlists into a learning tool:** This needs an understanding of the ideas we first introduce in detail in Part 2. Without this, it will be a difficult read. To make it easier to take in you will need to recognise the difference between the most stable parts of the writing

system that we call Basic Code Plus, and the more complex code, the patterns in the spelling that demonstrate the one-to-many principles (one grapheme can represent more than one phoneme and vice versa). These are introduced and explained in Chapter 5. Becoming familiar with these essential concepts and seeing how they apply in practice is where to start. Come back to Chapter 11 later and you will see why we've taken the FSE wordlists and reordered them for teaching purposes. You'll also be better equipped to deal with the demands of the new FSE curriculum.

- ## Chapter 4, **Knowledge of phonetics for post-16 literacy practitioners:** This provides a detailed description of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) and how it is used to distinguish between the sounds in a language. You will get more from reading this chapter if you have begun to use phonics approaches in your classroom and are beginning to understand what's involved. If this sparks your interest, then you can follow up many of the ideas outlined in this chapter by looking out for these publications: Burton et al. (2008) and Burton (2011).

15.2 Find out more about the research evidence on phonics post-16

Knowing what the research evidence does and doesn't say about the use of phonics with this age group should be a key starting point for anyone looking to change their practice. A good place to start is the ETF commissioned research report, **Current Practice in Using a System of Phonics with Post-16 Learners** (**Moss et al. 2018**). This research was conducted by a team from the International Literacy Centre at the UCL Institute of Education. They reviewed and summarised all of the available research evidence on the use of phonics with post-16 learners, published in the English language between 2004-18, paying attention to the quality of the research. They also reported on a survey conducted with practitioners to identify their perspectives on and experience of teaching word level skills, including phonics, to adult and post-16 learners. This provides some insights into current practice in the sector.

Despite a thorough and systematic search of the literature, the report found a paucity of high-quality research into effective uses of phonics with post-16 or adult learners. Gaps identified in current knowledge that would benefit from being filled include:

- understanding what are the essential ingredients in a systematic approach to teaching phonics post-16, which can take into account learners' diverse starting points and varying needs

- understanding whether and under what conditions it helps to combine phonics with other word study approaches such as morphology, and how this could be evaluated

- finding out how to choose the most appropriate phonics resources to support post-16 learners

- figuring out what role high-quality CPD can play in equipping practitioners with the necessary knowledge and understanding to be able to integrate the use of phonics into a rich and meaningful post-16 literacy curriculum

- understanding the differences in using phonics approaches successfully in early childhood and post-16.

The report makes recommendations for policy and practice, based on this evidence. You can read a succinct summary of the findings in Chapter 7 of **Moss et al** (2018), pp44-47.

If you are interested in the academic side of these subjects, then you may want to delve deeper into the research literature. Although we generally caution against treating older learners exactly the same way as child learners, some research studies conducted with younger learners make for useful reading.

- They can highlight interesting points of debate in the field about the most effective mix of approaches to teaching word level skills (see for instance, Bowers et al. (2010)).

- They can draw attention to important aspects of the English spelling system that might matter when working with adult learners (see for example, Bowers and Bowers (2017)).

- The literature on younger learners can sometimes provide useful evidence on particular techniques that might support adult learners. For instance, on the benefits of word puzzles, see the review of the literature by Ross and Joseph (2018).

We hope that by reading more deeply into the research literature, more adult literacy practitioners will become interested in doing post-graduate research in this area, including into the wider context of adult literacy development. This would help to build a strong and resilient research community that will benefit learners and practitioners alike.

15.3 Explore more widely by reading, thinking and working around the issues

Not all reading needs to be highly academic. There is a range of more accessible literature that can also support thinking about practice.

- For more guidance on linguistic phonic approaches to reading and spelling, upon which this resource is based, see **That Reading Thing** and **That Spelling Thing.**

- For studies of wider adult literacy policy and pedagogy, explore the NRDC publications available **online here**. The NRDC benefited from sustained government funding and produced a number of publications which continue to be relevant.

- If you're interested in how different European languages' spelling systems work, the **ELINET analytic glossary of the initial teaching and learning of literacy** provides some useful information. It also contains a detailed glossary of many of the technical terms used to discuss how written languages represent speech sounds.

- Find out more about the history and development of the English language(s). See, for example, Duncan (2012) on adult literacy pedagogies and practices, past and present, or try either of these books by David Crystal: **The Stories of English** (2005) or **Evolving English: One Language, Many Voices** (2010, from the British Library exhibition of the same name). There are a lot of resources also available online, including some funny clips on YouTube.

15.4. Get involved

There are lots of other ways of getting involved in reflecting upon practice. The research review (**Moss et al. 2018**) highlighted the important role that CPD plays in supporting practitioner learning. The training opportunities that ETF are providing for the sector are good ways of bringing practitioners together to discuss 'what works' in the classroom to develop systematic approaches to phonics post-16 that can meet diverse learners' needs. Research always benefits from this kind of stress testing through practice. That's why we advocate the importance of careful and constant reflection and assessment of what is going on in your classroom, and paying attention to what your own learners say. It's by paying attention to pacing and learner engagement that we get phonics post-16 right.

Training and CPD provide an important forum in which to share ideas. You may well benefit from seeing how others are embedding systematic and explicit uses of phonics as part of a rich post-16 literacy curriculum (see Chapter 14 for more on how to share reflections on your own practice). Perhaps most importantly, though, we recognise that any training or guidance is never enough in itself, but rather needs to be part of a wider and on-going practitioner engagement. This is best fostered both by strong local peer support and through wider professional networks that can help all those involved exchange ideas and deepen critical reflection.

> **"**
>
> There is a clear need for quality evidence to drive optimal practice in adult literacy work and maximise educational opportunities.
>
> Robert Savage, 2019
>
> **"**

> **"**
>
> The guidance in this toolkit will help a lot of adult literacy teachers make a start using phonic approaches more or differently. This is great but we have to remember it is the start not the end! The next step is to keep trying things out, exploring, sharing ideas and reflecting with different colleagues and learners.
>
> Sam Duncan, 2019
>
> **"**

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