



Fantastic Phonics

How to Teach with Fantastic Phonics.

How Effective is Fantastic Phonics?

The best answer is a quotation from an Australian teacher who was given the job of teaching reading to autistic and intellectually-disabled children – a difficult challenge for any teacher ...

“Using Fantastic Phonics with a class of students suffering from Autism and a Moderate to Severe Intellectual Disability. Getting great engagement with 3 students now reading...one student has reached book 15 (Level 1) in only 4 weeks. Amazing to hear ‘non-verbal’ (or so I was informed earlier) students read with improving speech and articulation.”

English-as-Second-Language: If your family does not speak English at home, Fantastic Phonics has **EXTENSIVE ESL** support. The Digital and Multimedia has **AUDIO** of all the words, the way they are sounded, and videos of how to teach.

Phonics is easy to learn, and simple to teach.

All children learn with Fantastic Phonics. If you follow the simple steps outlined in the written Guides, your child will learn to read. As of June 2020, we estimate 11 million children have learned to read with Fantastic Phonics.

The **Fantastic Essentials Pack** has three core resources:

Parent’s Guide (which teaches Phonemic Awareness, so the parent can teach the child)

- You should start each session with a run-through of the exercises

The **Decodable Books** which provide the structured text

- This story reading session comes next

The **Shared Worksheets** which extend the knowledge and vocabulary

- Every session should finish with these exercises

LESSONS FOR PARENTS

First Lesson for Parents

The first lesson for parents, is that children don't teach themselves to read. They need guidance, and they will learn by copying you.

We have created complete Parent Guides to give you the confidence and knowledge to teach.

Fantastic Phonics contains everything you need to become their teacher. The Printable Books, the Parents Guide and Worksheets are essential; why we call them *Fantastic Essentials*.

If you are not totally comfortable about Phonics, please consider the *Essentials Pack*.

Second Lesson for Parents

Fantastic Phonics is designed to provide 'reading excellence'. If you follow the step-by-step process, the program will help your child become a 'master reader' – the Books, Guides and Worksheets are graded **to allow every child to succeed**.

Third Lesson for Parents

If you do not teach Phonics, your child will revert to the failed system of 'sight reading' - of remembering each word by 'sight'. This strategy limits children in their school and working life. Teaching Phonics to a child is the most durable skill you can teach your child.

A WARNING ABOUT WORKSHEETS

If any of your child's worksheets, from school or the internet, have 'pictures' to support the words - like an image of a 'drum' with the word DRUM next to it – this is SIGHT READING.

There are thousands of websites on the internet which offer "picture + word" worksheets which teach sight reading – between 1970 to 2010, the only method taught was sight reading, and there are millions of pages of out-dated worksheets.

If your child is given a book or worksheets which use images and visual clues to 'help' the child decode a word, throw them away.

UNDERSTAND YOUR OWN SKILLS

Most parents do not remember how they learned to read. Understandably, they are not sure of the right way and wrong way to teach reading.

- If you learned to read between 1970 and 2010, chances are you did not receive Phonics training. We created the Parent Guides for this reason – most younger parents do not have 'instinctive knowledge' of phonics.
- When you start teaching your child, you might find yourself saying "remember the word" – meaning "remember the word with your eyes". You should avoid this – it is encouragement of sight reading.
- Phonics does not teach 'memory of words' - it teaches 'knowledge of sounds'. This skill is called "Phonemic Awareness" and is absolutely vital for reading success.

PHONICS – A QUICK SUMMARY

Phonics does not teach ‘memory of words’ - it teaches ‘knowledge of sounds’.

- Phonics provides a ‘decoding method’ which allows a child to independently ‘work out’ unknown words
- It works by using the ‘sounding out’ strategy – the child ‘sounds’ each letter and then ‘sounds out’ the word, and then
- The child learns to match the ‘sounded word’ - with a word they already know in their existing everyday language (‘speech vocabulary’). And, as a result, they will translate the text into a word they know.

The Strategy of Phonics.

Phonics teaches children the skill of ‘sounding out’ words ... which allows them to ‘sound out’ an unknown word and match it to a word found in everyday speech.

By age 5, children have an existing ‘library of words’ – they understand an average 5000 words – the ‘sounding out’ method allows them to link the words on paper to their existing ‘library’.

To achieve that, we teach them the ‘sounds’ that speech creates (44 ‘phonemes’) and teach them the letters that ‘represent’ those sounds.

*This is called **Phonemic Awareness** and is the most important skill in learning to read.*

TWO NEW CONCEPTS ...

Phonemic Awareness is the ability to detect the sounds in language. The word “cat”, for example, has THREE sounds – /k/a/t/.

1. the /k/ sound (as in ‘kid’), [the letter ‘c’ has 2 sounds - /k/ as in ‘cat’ and /s/ as in ‘cell’]
2. the short vowel /a/ sound, and
3. the /t/ sound.

We show you how to ‘analyse speech’ and **progressively** teach these sounds to your child. We start with the basic set and slowly build on that.

Phonological Awareness is the ability to link the 44 sounds - to the letters that represent them. They are similar skills, but slightly different – you do not need an alphabet to teach Phonemic Awareness, but it is certainly required for Phonological Awareness.

These two skills are the bedrock of reading – and we spend considerable time developing your skill – each Book (in ***Fantastic Essentials***) has a **Phonemic Awareness Guide** (for parents) AND a set of **Shared Worksheets** (for parents to work through with the children) – which train these skills.

If you do not teach “Awareness of Sounds”, then your child will struggle to read. Research shows – the most significant factor in reading problems is ‘lack of phonemic awareness’.

WHAT IS PHONICS?

Phonics was taught in English-speaking schools until 1970, when a number of new ideas were introduced. These ideas produced poor outcomes, and research was established to determine - “What is the best system of reading?”

Over 20 years the result became clear; Phonics was the **ONLY** system that produced predictable results in children’s ability to read.

- Phonics is a strategy for ‘learning to read’ - it helps children to decode unknown words.
- It allows children to ‘sound out’ words and match the ‘sounded word’ with a known word in their speech vocabulary.
- This means they can read independently – without asking an adult “what word is that?”

Fantastic Phonics provides all the resources

If you follow the step-by-step processes outlined in the Books, Guides and Worksheets, you will develop the skills to competently teach your child, **and your child will learn to read.**

EVERY BOOK has a Parent’s Guide and Worksheets – read the Guide, then work through the Book, then finish by working on the Worksheets together with your child.

THE TROUBLE WITH SIGHT READING

“Sight Reading” occurs when a person tries to remember words by memorising the word shape, or the letter content, or the length – literally, anything that makes the word ‘memorable’.

There are two enormous problems with “sight reading”;

- A sight reader typically develops a reading vocabulary between 5000 and 8000 words, considered near the lower end of literacy. A phonics reader will have a vocabulary of 22,000-35,000 words.
- Sight reading does not have a ‘decoding strategy’. There is no system where a person can independently work out a new word.

Research shows, that whatever skills a ‘sight reader’ has gained by eight years of age, this skill will be the reading ability throughout life – unless Phonics is subsequently introduced.

Phonics can be introduced at any time – to a beginner reader, to an older child, to a teenager or adult – and it will reverse any reading difficulties.

The message is clear; “sight reading” has been a failure and if you train your child to memorise words ‘by sight’ then your child will be limited in the schooling and working life.

Some cultures are confused by Phonics

The people of China, Korea and Vietnam use the HAN character alphabet ... the HAN written language is not based on phonetics, which makes it unique; most other languages (including Japanese) have a limited set of alphabet symbols which reflect specific sounds.

HAN language readers, therefore, can struggle with Phonics; their instinctive reaction is to remember each word by sight (sight reading) and this creates issues – which is why it's important for a Chinese HAN speaker to learn Phonics (for reading English).

If your family's first language is HAN Chinese, then you should make special effort to avoid asking your child to remember words 'by sight'.

Fantastic Phonics makes it MUCH easier for ESL families – the DIGITAL EDITION has extensive support for AUDIO support, where each word is pronounced and 'sounded out'.

THE KEY CONCEPTS OF PHONICS

DECODING. This is the process where a person “sounds out” a word, then matches that with a word in their personal ‘speech vocabulary’. Before they can “sound out”, however, children need training in “Phonemic Awareness”.

PHONEMIC AWARENESS. This is the ability to detect the different sounds in a word. Instead of a word being “one sound”, they are taught that words are built from 44 different sounds.

SPEECH VOCABULARY. This is the “library” of learned words that your child can recognise and use in everyday speech. Some words they will understand completely – the meanings are simple and your child can use them in a sentence. Fantastic Phonics will dramatically expand their vocabulary.

SYSTEMATIC. You apply a set of proven principles and stick to them. Phonics is not a make-it-up-as-you-go system; it has 44 different sounds, that are represented by the alphabet, and for your child to understand what is written, you must teach the rules.

REPETITIVE. You teach the same strategy over and over, in the same order, so that your child builds a dependable skill based on known, solid principles.

EXPLICIT. Teaching is done through explicit demonstration. YOU sound out the letters and ask your child to copy. When your child hesitates at a word they cannot understand, you provide an explicit demonstration of how to decode that word.

Fantastic Phonics Series One begins with the first set of words – most children have no problem with these words. In Series Two & Three, your child may need help with some meanings.

USING FANTASTIC ESSENTIALS

Fantastic Essentials includes the **Printable Books, the Parent Guides and Child Worksheets.**

- **Before you start each Book, please read the Parent Guide included with the *Essentials Kit* with each Book – then the Book – then the Child Worksheets.**
 - ✓ Watch the “Teacher Reads the Book” video for each book (Series One)
- **Progress through each “Module” in a step-by-step manner**
 - ✓ When you follow the program structure, the program does the work, and your child will read. Do not jump from Book 1 to Book 20.
- **Do not start a new Book until the current book is mastered.**
 - ✓ You will only create frustration for yourself and your child if you move too fast
 - ✓ On average, a child will need a solid week with each book – approx. 15 minutes a day reading the book, and 15 minutes on the Worksheets
 - ✓ Be explicit – demonstrate by sounding the word out, and asking them “what word does that sound like?”
- **Work through the Worksheets together with your child**
 - ✓ The worksheets are best done with every reading of the Book.
 - ✓ The Worksheets will test your child’s understanding. Your child will need assistance.
 - ✓ Use a pencil so you can rub-out text that your child has written and re-use.
 - ✓ The worksheets are designed as both a revision of the Book AND an extension of knowledge. Over time, the Worksheets will add a large vocabulary and sophisticated reading ability.
- The **Handwriting section** (in *Fantastic Essentials*) reinforces knowledge and teaches new skills.
 - ✓ They require children to ‘trace’ the words while they develop handwriting skill, and this ‘tracing’ help drive words into long term memory.
- In **Book 5, Book 10 and Book 15**, we have included a brief “Phonemics Awareness” test that will monitor your child’s skills in this crucial area. At the end of Series One, we include a longer guided text to help you decide whether your child is ready for long vowels, vowel blends and multi-syllable words.
- In **Series Two**, we introduce longer “**Guided Text**” stories – rhyming poems and prose – which use the rhyming to highlight the different ways of creating the different vowel blends. These introduce your child to longer text.

THE STRUCTURE OF FANTASTIC PHONICS

Series One (20 modules) introduces the basic elements of language – one syllable words.

- Series one focuses on **SHORT VOWELS**
 - /a/ as in ‘cat’
 - /e/ as in ‘pet’
 - /i/ as in ‘pip’
 - /o/ as in ‘pop’
 - /u/ as in ‘mug’
- One syllable words are the foundation of written English; they are most often consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) like ‘cat’, ‘pop’, ‘dig’. Single syllable words can be;
 - 1 letter (‘a’),
 - 2 letter (‘be’, ‘of’, ‘as’),
 - 3 letter (‘cat’, ‘dog’),
 - 4 letter (‘hill’, ‘tick’, ‘shop’)
 - 5 letter (‘stick’, ‘slosh’, ‘quick’)
 - and, even words like ‘pulled’ are a single syllable – the /e/ vowel in the “ed” suffix is not stressed (we pronounced ‘pulled’ as /p/u/l/d/).

Series One teaches your child to ‘sound out’ the sounds created by **one-syllable, short vowel** words. In addition, we introduce ...

- basic sentence formation
- sight words (such as ‘the’, ‘was’, ‘once’, ‘said’ and others)
- consonant blends (such as /sh/, /st/, /ck/, /st/ and others)
- vocabulary acquisition
- rhyme detection
- introduction to 4 letter, 2-syllable words (such as ‘open’, ‘into’)
- handwriting skills.

Series One establishes the foundation skills required for reading.

- Develops the ability to detect separate sounds used in language
- And the ability to link the sounds with the letters that represent them
- It creates the ability to “sound out” short words and match them with words from the child’s ‘speech vocabulary’
- Creates awareness that ‘consonant blends’ (sh, ch, ck etc) are a single sound
- Teaches that double-syllable (and longer) words are built from small single syllables (eg, ‘often’ is built from ‘of’ and ‘ten’, ‘upon’ is built from ‘up’ and ‘on’)
- Develops simple sentence formation skills.

Series Two is focused on LONG vowels, multi-syllable words and the 'Onset and Rime' technique of rapid decoding; it includes ...

- Vowel blends (ou, oa, ea, ie, ow, ue) which convert short vowels to long
- The 'silent e' principle, which converts a short vowel to long
- Silent letters (kn as in 'know', gh as in 'sigh' and 'though')
- Multi-syllable words
- Skills in detecting syllable 'breaks' and whether a vowel is long or short
- Extensive vocabulary acquisition
- Understanding prefixes like "un", 'dis' and 'in' which modify the root word
- Understanding suffixes like 'less', 'full', 'able' which modify the word
- Comprehensive sentence construction
- Introduction to longer text stories
- Alternate spellings for common sounds

Series Two develops the skill in decoding short vowel, single syllable words. We demonstrate that longer (multi-syllable) words are created from single syllable components (un-for-giv-en) or from two simple words ('out-back').

We suggest that Series Two should NOT be started until the child develops 'mastery' in the decoding of single syllable words, simple two syllable words (into, upon) and the listed 'sight' words (said, was, the, where, come, some, none).

We have included an "Assessment Text" within Book 21 (beginning of Series Two). If your child can decode most of the text (a rhyming poem) then your child is ready to progress.

The "Assessment text" is a carefully crafted story which reviews both your child's ability in decoding already learned words, as well as new words that are equally simple.

If your child gets half-way and begins to struggle, it would be best to stay with Series One and cement their knowledge.

Series Three continues to develop a range of skills in reading.

- Decoding complex vowel blends
- Knowledge of sounds such as /qu/ and /ph/
- Increased skills with the /ou/ blend and its sounds
- Longer stories and more independent reading
- Advanced vocabulary acquisition

By the time your child has completed **Series Three**, you can be confident that they are ready for independent reading of more difficult books.

WHEN YOUR CHILD HAS DIFFICULTIES

There are a number of reasons why a child experiences difficulty in reading with Phonics. The PRIMARY cause is “lack of phonemic awareness”, but there are other more significant issues, ranging from eyesight problems, to hearing problems, to an autism or dyslexia diagnosis.

- An eyesight problem can make reading difficult but this would normally have been picked up during their infant years – and the same as hearing.
- A hearing issue (which can muffle the word sounds and is common among children with chronic ear infections) will need assessment.
- The most common problem you will encounter is a lack of phonemic awareness, and the solution is simple; keep teaching the phonemic awareness skill.

Dyslexia

Dyslexia is considered to be the most common learning disability, affecting children across different languages, writing systems, and educational approaches. But research has demonstrated that Phonics successfully overcomes Dyslexia (in fact, it shows Dyslexia is directly associated with “a lack of phonemic awareness”, which is why the Parent Guides are essential).

There is a single, proven “cure” for reading problems - and that answer is “more phonemic and phonological awareness.”

Autism

“Using Fantastic Phonics with a class of students suffering from Autism and a Moderate to Severe Intellectual Disability. Getting great engagement with 3 students now reading ... one student has reached book 15 (Level 1) in only 4 weeks. Amazing to hear ‘non-verbal’ (or so I was informed earlier) students read with improving speech and articulation.”

(Australian school teacher)

Research studies have consistently demonstrated that Phonics is the most effective method of teaching reading to children suffering from a range of intellectual disabilities, including brain trauma, complex communication needs, physical and/or sensory disabilities, and autism.

A 2016 study, for example, taught letter-sound correspondence (Phonics) to small groups of students with significant intellectual disabilities.

The participants in this study, who ranged in age from 11 to 16 years of age and had primary diagnoses of cerebral palsy, autism, Rett syndrome, Down syndrome, and intellectual disability, were placed into four groups for instruction in phonics.

There was strong evidence of the participants’ ability to understand letter-sound relationships, and each participant demonstrated an increased performance in the treatment phase.

There are a number of behavioural tendencies with children on the autism spectrum, which may make it more difficult to concentrate and avoid distraction. Nonetheless, the proven process of teaching reading to intellectually challenged children is simply ... Phonics.