

The Year 1 phonics screening check is not a formal test, but a way for teachers to ensure that children are making sufficient progress with their phonics skills to read words and that they are on track to become fluent readers who can enjoy reading for pleasure and for learning.

Ten questions answered

What is the Year 1 phonics screening check?

The phonics screening check was introduced in English schools in June 2012. It is designed to give teachers and parents information on your child's progress in phonics. It will help to identify whether your child needs additional support at this stage so that they do not fall behind in this vital early reading skill.

What is in the phonics screening check?

There will be two sections in this 40-word check. Your child will read up to four words per page for their teacher and they will probably do the check in one sitting of about 5-10 minutes.

What sort of check is it?

It is a school-based check to make sure that your child receives any additional support promptly, should they need it. It is not a stressful situation as the teacher will be well-equipped to listen and understand your child's level of skills.

There will be an opportunity to practice prior to the check to make sure your child understands the activity.

What will it check?

It will check that your child can:

- Sound out and blend **graphemes** in order to read simple words.
- Read phonically **decodable** one-syllable and two-syllable words, e.g. cat, sand, windmill.
- Read a selection of nonsense words that are referred to as pseudo words.

What are alien or pseudo words and why are they included?

These are words that are phonically **decodable** but are not actual words with an associated meaning e.g. brip, snorb. Pseudo words are included in the check specifically to assess whether your child can **decode** a word using phonics skills and not their memory.

The pseudo words will be shown to your child with a picture of a monster and they will be asked to tell their teacher what sort of monster it is by reading the word. This not only makes the check a bit more fun, but provides the children with a context for the nonsense word which is independent from any existing vocabulary they may have. Crucially, it does not provide any clues, so your child just has to be able to [decode](#) it. Children generally find nonsense amusing so they will probably enjoy reading these words.

Is there a pass mark?

The check is not about passing or failing but checking appropriate progress is being made. If children do not reach the required standard, then the teacher will offer additional, tailored support to ensure that your child can catch up. Children progress at different speeds so not reaching the threshold score does not necessarily mean there is a serious problem. Your child will re-sit the check the following summer term, in Y2.

What happens to the results?

The school will report your child's results to you by the end of the summer term as well as to the local authority, but the results won't be published in a league table as with SATs. If you have any concerns, do talk to your teacher about this.

Do all schools and children have to participate?

All schools and academies in England must take part in the phonics screening check unless they are an independent school. However, if the school thinks that there are reasons that taking the phonics screening check may not be appropriate for your child, they will discuss this with you.

What can I do to help my child?

Check with your child's teacher if there are any particular areas that you should focus on at home so that you are working together to support your child.

What should I do if my child is struggling to decode a word?

- Say each sound in the word from left to right.
- Blend the sounds by pointing to each letter, i.e. /b/ in bat, or letter group, i.e. /igh/ in sigh, as you say the sound, then run your finger under the whole word as you say it.

Talk about the meaning if your child does not understand the word they have read.

- Work at your child's pace.
- Always be positive and give lots of praise and encouragement.