Parent's Guide to the Key Stage 1 Phonics Screening Test
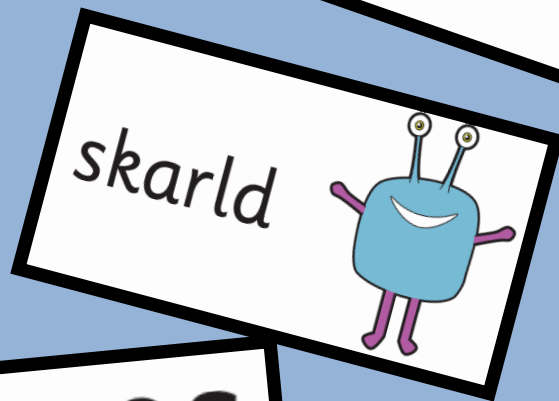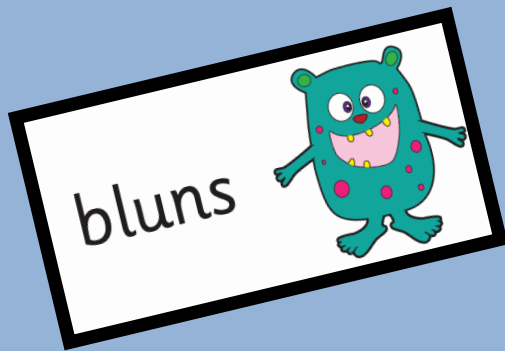
Information has been taken from http://www.education.gov.uk/and is correct of January 2016.

Frequently Asked Questions

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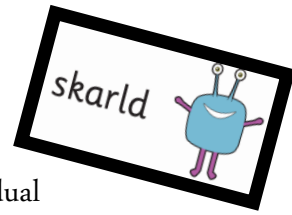
What is the phonics screening check?

The phonics screening check is a short, light-touch assessment to confirm whether individual children have learnt phonic decoding to an appropriate standard. The checks consist of **40 words and non-words** that your child will be asked to read one-on-one with a teacher.

It will identify the children who need extra help so they are given support by their school to improve their reading skills. They will then be able to retake the check so that schools can track children until they are able to decode.

Who is it for?

The screening check is for all Year 1 pupils and children in Year 2 who previously did not meet the standard of the check in Year 1.

Is it compulsory?

Yes. It is a statutory requirement for all schools to carry out the screening check.

Do children with Special Education Needs have to take the screening check?

It should be taken by as many children as possible, and the Government have worked closely with SEN specialists to make this happen. Where necessary, adjustments will be made and appropriate guidance provided.

For children who are working well below the level of the screening check (for example, if they have shown no understanding of letter-sound correspondences), there will be a disapplication process so they do not have to take part. Parents will be informed if a child is disapplied.

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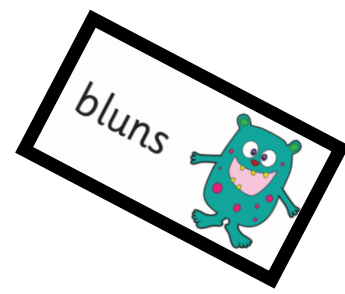
When does it happen?

Schools will be able to administer the check at any time that suits them during the week starting Monday 13th June.

Who carries out the screening check?

A teacher who is known to the child will carry out the test. Administering the phonics check requires a teacher's professional judgement.

How long does the check take?

Every child is different, but in the pilot study most children took between four and nine minutes to complete the assessment.

How is the check structured?

It will be a short, simple screening check to make sure that all children have grasped fundamental phonic skills. It comprises a list of 40 words and non-words, which a child will read one-to-one with a teacher. Half of the words cover phonic skills which tend to be covered in Reception, and half of the words are based on Year 1 phonic skills.

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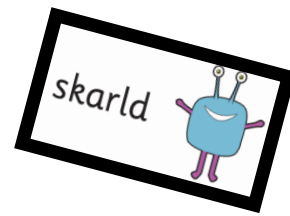
What are 'non-words?'

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

Why are 'non-words' used in the test?

Non-words are included because they will be new to all children, so there won't be a bias to those with a good vocabulary knowledge or visual memory of words. Children who can read non-words should have the skills to decode almost any unfamiliar word. The non-words are presented alongside a picture of an imaginary creature, and children can be told the non-word is the name of that type of creature. This helps children to understand the non-word should not be matched to their existing vocabulary.

Isn't it stressful to test such young children?

The assessment is age-appropriate, with children sitting with a teacher who they know. Reading one-to-one with a teacher is a familiar activity for Key Stage 1 children. It should be an enjoyable activity for children and takes no more than a few minutes.

What is the pass mark?

The pass mark for 2016 is unknown to teachers and will be revealed after the screening check in June.

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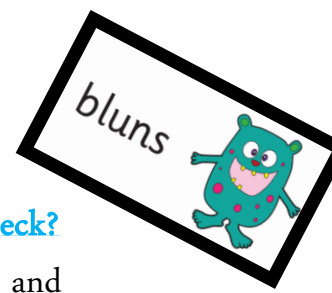
What skills do children need to meet the standard of the phonics screening check?

All children need to be able to identify sounds associated with different letters, and letter combinations, and then blend these sounds together to correctly say the word on the page. The same skill is needed whether the word is a real word or a non-word. The words gradually get harder through the check as the combinations of letters become more complicated.

What happens if a child does not meet the standard?

The screening check will identify children who have phonic decoding skills below the level expected for the end of Year 1 and who therefore need extra help. Schools will be expected to provide extra help and children will then be able to retake the assessment in Year 2.

Won't children who have not met the standard feel like a failure?

Children should not realise that they are being formally assessed. The check should be seen as part of their everyday phonics activities and not as a test. The result will provide teachers with information required for developing a child's skills

How will the results from the phonics screening check be used?

Schools' results will not be published, although schools will have to tell parents their child's results.

Frequently Asked Questions

What does the test look like?

Sample materials are available on the education.gov.uk website.

Below is an example from the 2012 Phonics Screening Test. Both the 2012 and 2013 paper are available online.

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Ph
KEY STAGE 1
Phonics screening check
Pupil materials
2012
National Curriculum assessments
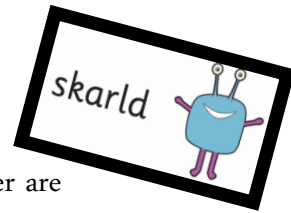
Nonsense words

Real words

Section 1

stin

proom

sarps

thend

Section 2

fair

flute

goat

shine

How can I help my child at home?

Practice the sounds with your child.

Initial sounds

s	a	t	p	i	n	m	d	t	o
g	c	k	u	b	f	e	l	h	sh
r	j	v	y	w	th	z	ch	qu	x
ng	nk								

Further sounds and their pronunciation
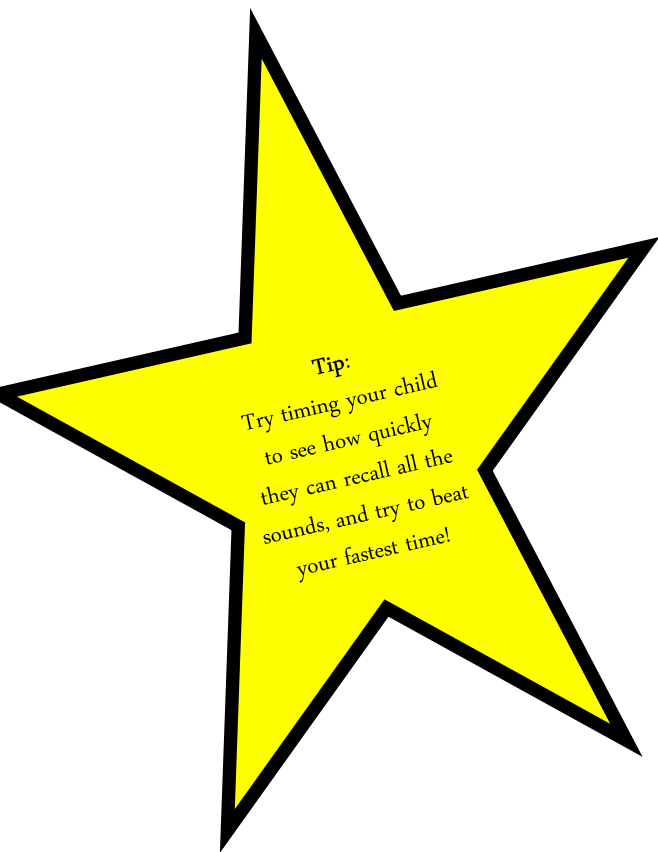
ay: may I play
ee: what can you see
igh: fly high
ow: blow the snow
oo: poo at the zoo
oo: look at a book
ar: start the car
or: shut the door
air: that's not fair
ir: whirl and twirl
ou: shout it out
oy: toy for a boy

Tip:
Try timing your child to see how quickly they can recall all the sounds, and try to beat your fastest time!

Further sounds and their pronunciation

ea: cup of t<u>ea</u>	**ai**: sn<u>ai</u>l in the r<u>ai</u>n
oi: sp<u>oi</u>l the boy	**oa**: g<u>oa</u>t in a b<u>oa</u>t
a-e: make a cake	**ew:** <u>chew</u> the st<u>ew</u>
i-e: nice smile	**ire:** <u>fire</u> <u>fire</u>!
o-e: phone home	**ear:** <u>hear</u> with your <u>ear</u>
u-e: huge brute	**ure:** <u>sure</u> it's <u>pure</u>?
aw: y<u>aw</u>n at d<u>aw</u>n	**tion:** (celebra<u>tion</u>)
are: sh<u>are</u> and c<u>are</u>	**tious / cious:** (scrump<u>tious</u> / deli<u>cious</u>)
ur: p<u>ur</u>se for a n<u>ur</u>se	
er: a bett<u>er</u> lett<u>er</u>	**e**: h<u>e</u> m<u>e</u> w<u>e</u> sh<u>e</u> be
ow: br<u>ow</u>n c<u>ow</u>	

The websites 'Oxford Owl' and 'Mr Thorne does phonics' have audio
links you can use to hear the correct pronunciation of
the sound, as well as a range of resources.

How can I help my child at home?

Practice a mix of 'non- words' and real words.

kigh

girst

baim

Ask your child to draw 'sound buttons' underneath each sound, to show they can correctly identify each one.

Say all the sounds individually then put the word together.

k–igh = kigh

g – ir – s –t = girst

b –ai —m = baim

REAL WORDS

argue	invite	pursue	sort
bead	jaunty	queue	sphinx
chew	ladder	quiet	statue
drawer	lawn	quit	theft
escape	main	renew	threw
evening	moan	repeat	thundering
fairground	pew	rocker	tie
flute	pie	rule	trash
fork	pole	scratch	turning
golf	prophet	seventh	use
gran	proud	shelving	value
handstand	prune	sighting	woe

Examples of 'non words'

aib	dea	gainty	hurp
arfue	deesh	gam	
	dephew	gaunty	jea
bew	deplied	gawn	jea
bleme	descroy	geck	jole
blied	dess	gick	joudest
bountain	dest	glese	
bup	dis	gloy	koe
		goot	
chawn	enroy	gowl	lort
cheme	escake	grize	
chound	exglode	grune	maunch
cleam			melp
clied	foast	hess	mept
curt	frelt	hinner	mip
dack	fup	hoost	mirst

nass	reshied	sweast	vuse
numper	rube	swoat	
nurn			wab
	scaub	teb	wheck
penue	sclue	thid	whem
phantob	scray	thimney	
phopics	shar	thirt	yass
phot	sheg	thrair	
phream	snill	thrist	zie
phrew	spratch	thrunk	zoil
poil	spraw	thrue	zort
puge	sprew	toam	
	stame	tockney	
quair	stod		
quig	stolphin	vaw	
quiss	stroe	vurf	

How can I help my child at home?

Make learning sounds fun!

There are lots of websites available to help your child with their phonics.

http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/wordsandpictures/phonics/

http://www.ictgames.com/literacy.html

http://www.familylearning.org.uk/phonics_games.html

http://www.letters-and-sounds.com/

http://phonicsplay.co.uk/
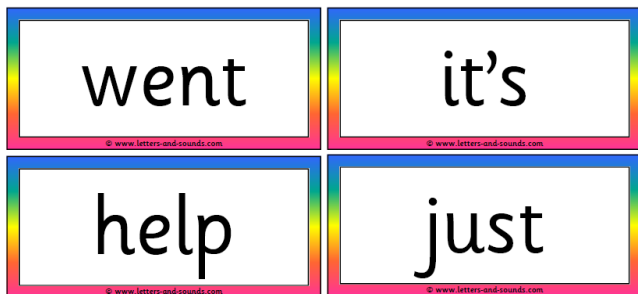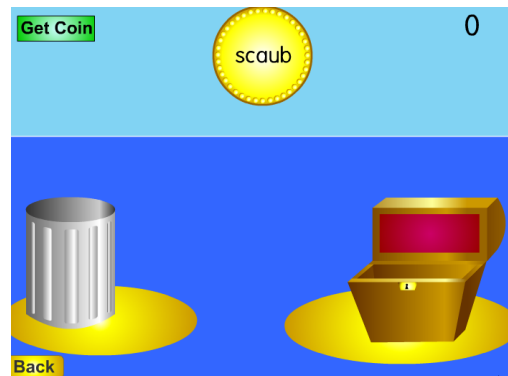
http://www.mrthorne.com/

http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/

Letters and Sounds has some simple flash cards that can be printed at home for children to practice with and draw sound buttons onto.

Phonics Play has some excellent resources using 'non words'.

Don't forget about your reading books and library books.
Practicing reading daily automatically helps with decoding!