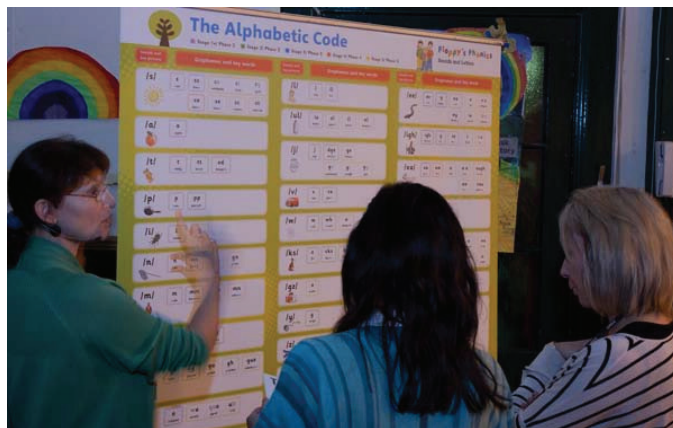
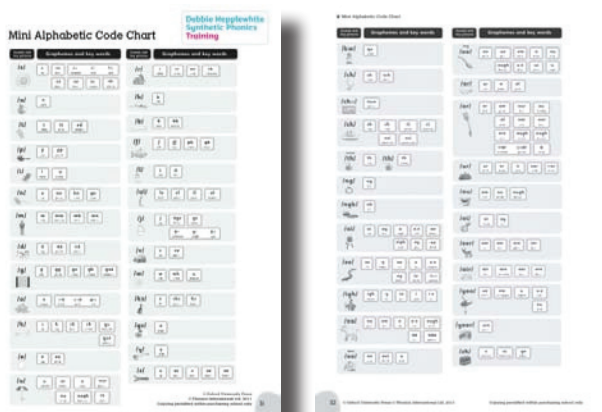


## “The Potential of Alphabetic Code Charts and the Two-Pronged Approach to Synthetic Phonics Teaching: Systematic and Incidental”



### Debbie’s Definition of an Alphabetic Code Chart

- The ‘**alphabetic code**’ is the reversible relationship between the discrete sounds we can identify in speech and the letters or letter groups which are code for the sounds. Some people prefer to describe the alphabetic code as *letter/s-sound* correspondences (GPCs) and others prefer to say *sound-letter/s* correspondences (PGCs). The main point, however, is that they *are* CORRESPONDENCES.
- The correspondences are taught, and learned, reversibly – that is, from ‘print to sound’ for a reading sub-skill and from ‘sound to print’ for a spelling sub-skill.
- An **Alphabetic Code Chart** is a core visual aid which lists the units of sound (42-ish phonemes plus some *combined phonemes*) **down the left hand column** with their corresponding spelling alternatives (graphemes) listed **across the rows**.
- The sounds are listed down the left-hand column because they come to an end point! The number of graphemes (spelling alternatives), however, goes on and on! It makes more sense to list the graphemes across the rows. A choice can be made as to how many spelling alternatives are listed on the chart ‘as code for’ the sounds. The Alphabetic Code Chart, then, is rooted in the ‘sounds’.



- The *units of sound* need to be written in *slash marks* to make it very clear that letters written within the slash marks indicate the SOUND and not the letter shapes or spelling.
- Choices can be made as to how the sounds in slash marks are notated.

/k/	c	k	ck
	cat	key	duck

Letter ‘k’ is chosen to represent the *sound* in the slash marks because this letter shape is consistently code for the /k/ sound in printed words. The letter ‘c’ shape is inconsistent as it is sometimes code for the /s/ sound as in ‘city’ and sometimes code for the /k/ sound as in ‘cat’.

How many **units of sound** can you count on the mini Alphabetic Code Chart?

Which units of sound are **combined phonemes**?

- The units of sound on an Alphabetic Code Chart can be listed from *top to bottom in any order* – for example, the order that they are introduced in a specific programme or, for a generic chart, starting with sounds which have correspondences of one letter only (rather than sounds like /ch/ which have corresponding graphemes of more than one letter).

- An Alphabetic Code Chart can be designed to be totally *generic* or *specific to a particular phonics programme*. It can include the *mnemonic system* of the programme – for example, pictures to prompt the learning of the sounds.
- The most informative Alphabetic Code Charts show the graphemes (spelling alternatives) discretely and also highlight the spelling alternatives in **key exemplar words**.

## Debbie suggests that ‘two-pronged’ systematic and incidental phonics teaching is a specific ‘approach’ and could become the way forwards for the most effective phonics teaching and learning:

- Systematic Synthetic Phonics tends to be a ‘*linear*’ teaching method at first because the teacher introduces letter/s-sound correspondences in a specific order which is *mainly one spelling for the 42+ sounds*. This is teaching a ‘basic’ (or ‘simple’ or ‘transparent’) alphabetic code **before** progressing onto further spelling alternatives and pronunciation alternatives of the ‘extended’ (or ‘complex’ or ‘opaque’) alphabetic code.
- With a ‘two-pronged’ approach consisting of both systematic and incidental phonics teaching (supported by a giant Alphabetic Code Chart as a high-profile permanent visual aid) the teacher has far greater flexibility for teaching the learners. Both teaching and learning can be accelerated for at least some children (probably ALL children) as there is a sustained approach of *over-learning/revision/consolidation* through not only the planned teaching sequence but also through the constant incidental teaching as opportunities arise – with the Alphabetic Code Chart providing the permanent, supporting visual aid. Thus, beginning teaching includes **both** *introducing* the basic code and *dipping into* the extended code.
- The ‘two-pronged’ teaching ethos can liberate adults to support any learners as they read any book, or print, aloud. Any adult at any time with any learner is trained and encouraged to ‘teach’ new alphabetic code as it appears in any reading material – or during any writing activities. Some children will be able to learn this new code instantly, others after a few repeated mentions, and others may take longer but may need supporting like this even when the code in the words has already been systematically introduced.

straight

“In *this* word, *these* letters *are code for* /ai/.”




“I’ll teach you more about that, **LATER...**”

# The Alphabetic Code Chart is an essential visual aid

- It illustrates clearly the *rationale* of the sounds of speech (down the left-hand column) and their spelling alternatives (across the rows) and supports teachers to teach this concept.
- It can support the *organisation* of the *planned systematic programme*.
- It provides the *overview* of the alphabetic code content (the letter/s- sound correspondences) that the school is *formally accountable to teach* through its 'systematic' synthetic phonics programme. A small version can be sent to parents, a small version can be part of the school's literacy policy and a small version can be included in the school's brochure.
- It can provide an instant *training resource* for any supporting adults in the school who are new to synthetic phonics or new to the programme.
- It provides a *classroom reference tool* to teach letter/s-sound correspondences '*incidentally*' and at any time as it is permanently to hand.
- It can train *student-teachers* very quickly.
- It is shared *universally* – teachers, learners, parents.
- It provides a tool for *consistency and continuity* for teaching or revising the alphabetic code across whole schools and from Key Stage One to Key Stage Two. In effect, it is a permanent spelling reference chart.
- It provides an important *sustained* resource for older learners who require it, and will benefit from it, for *basic reinforcement* longer than some of their peers. Suitable versions can be used in secondary schools.
- It provides a great resource for *differentiation*. The teacher or teaching assistant can refer to the chart at any time to teach an individual, a group or the whole class any part of the alphabetic code as required.
- It provides a core '*work in progress*' resource. Not only can teachers and learners track which letter/s-sound correspondences they have looked at and which they have yet to look at through their planned programme of work, learners can *actively discover* spelling alternatives which are not on the main chart. (An example of a discovered letter/s-sound correspondence would be the '-ffe' grapheme as code for the /f/ sound at the end of 'giraffe'.) The new grapheme can then be *added* to the chart or incidental posters of the discovered grapheme can be made and added to the main phonics display wall.
- Some learners will be able to 'self-teach' with the Alphabetic Code Chart displayed in the classroom.
- It can support *reading and writing in the wider curriculum*, not just the phonics lessons.
- It supports the teaching of *spelling in Key Stage Two*.

The inside cover notes in the *Floppy's Phonics Sounds and Letters* books provide guidance for the adult to support the young reader to sound out and blend new words and they provide guidance for oral segmenting:



Series created by Roderick Hunt and Alex Brychita  
Phonics Consultant: Debbie Hepplewhite

Once children have learned all of the sounds in Stage 3 they can go on to read the Stage 3 Floppy's Phonics Fiction and Non-fiction.

USING THIS BOOK TOGETHER:

- 1 Say the sound together.
- 2 Ask your child to finger-trace the letter group and say the sound.
- 3 Ask your child to point to the key picture and say the word, e.g. "ai as in aim".
- 4 Ask your child to sound out and blend the list of words.
- 5 Find all the words that include the focus sound in the picture. Some are labelled, some are not.
- 6 Talk about what is happening in the picture, e.g. Who can you see? What are they doing? How do you think they might be feeling?
- 7 Ask your child to say the sounds at the bottom of the page as quickly as possible.

Remember to do the fun activities at the end – letter-tracing, matching and reading!


THIS BOOK INTRODUCES:

**ai** as in aim.  
**ee** as in eel.  
**igh** as in knight.

Hear the sounds on our website  
[www.oxfordowl.co.uk](http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk)

LABELS IN THE ILLUSTRATIONS

The labels show the focus letter group in block. Encourage your child to listen for the focus sound within the word as you read the whole word to them.




### Debbie Hepplewhite's Top Tips

**What is blending?**  
For reading (decoding) say the sounds from left to right of the word and blend the sounds to hear the whole word.

**How to blend:**  
Point under each grapheme (letter or letter group) as you say the sound, then run your finger under the whole word as you say the whole (or blended) word.

e.g. **l-igh-t light**

**Tips for spelling (encoding)**  
Say the word slowly to identify each sound in the word.



Use your left hand to tally the individual sounds to your thumb and fingers.

Write down the graphemes which are code for each sound you have tallied.

**Sounds and spellings**  
Letters written like this /k/ refer to a sound, not a spelling.

e.g. /k/ as in cat, key, duck

**TEACHERS:**  
For inspirational support plus free resources and eBooks  
[www.oxfordprimary.co.uk](http://www.oxfordprimary.co.uk)

**PARENTS:**  
Help your child's reading with essential tips, fun activities and free eBooks  
[www.oxfordowl.co.uk](http://www.oxfordowl.co.uk)

Text © Oxford University Press © Debbie Hepplewhite 2011  
Illustrations © Alex Brychita 2011  
The characters in this work are the original creations of Roderick Hunt and Alex Brychita who retain copyright in the characters.  
First published 2011  
This edition published 2011  
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in retrieval systems, or transmitted in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press.  
ISBN 978 0 19 448273 5 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1  
Printed in China by Widespread  
All rights reserved. Photographing of this book is prohibited.

The spelling routine: When a learner identifies the sounds all-through- the-spoken-word, he or she may need to ask, "Which spelling do I need for 'feel', the /ee/ as in 'eel' or the /ee/ as in 'eat'?" The teacher can find the /ee/ row on the **Alphabetic Code Chart** and then track along to *point* to the 'ee' grapheme and say, "This one here as in 'eel'".



## Two versions of the Alphabetic Code Chart

The English Alphabetic Code		The English Alphabetic Code	
simple code	complex code	simple code	complex code
s	-ss	ce	se
sh		ci	ci
sc		sc	sc
st		st	st
ps			
a			
t	-tt	-ed	
i	-y		
p	-pp		
n	-nn	kn	gn
ne			
k	-ck	ch	que
ea			
ai			
h			
r	-rr	wr	rh
m	mm	mb	mn
me			
d	-dd	-ed	
g	-gg	gu	gh
gue			
o	a	a	a
u	o	-ou	ough
l	-ll		
le	il	al	el
f	-ff	ph	gh
b	-bb	bu	
g	ge	g	g
dge			
y			
ai	ay	a	ae
a-e	-ey	eight	-ea
w	wh		
oa	ow	o	oe
o-e	-ough	eau	
-igh	-ie	-y	-e
ee	ea	e	-y
e-e	-ey	-ie	-i
or	aw	au	al
oar	oor	ore	our
-zz	-s	-se	-ze
-ng	-n	ough	ough
-nk			
v	-ve		
oo	oul		
oo	ue	u-e	ew
ui	-ou	-o	ough
-x	-ks	-cks	-kes
ch	tch		ture
sh	ch	-ti	-ci
ssi			
th			
th			
qu			
ou	ow	ough	
oi	oy		
ue	u	u-e	ew
eu			
er	ir	ur	ear
wor			
-our	-re		
ar	a	al	al
air	are	ear	ere
eer	ear	ere	ier
-si	-s	-z	-g
ge			

Version 1

Version 2

The English Alphabetic Code		The English Alphabetic Code	
simple code	complex code	simple code	complex code
/s/			
/a/			
/t/			
/l/			
/p/			
/n/			
/k/			
/e/			
/h/			
/r/			
/m/			
/d/			
/g/			
/o/			
/u/			
/l/			
/l/			
/f/			
/b/			
/j/			
/y/			
/ai/			
/w/			
/oa/			
/igh/			
/ee/			
/or/			
/z/			
/ng/			
/nk/			
/v/			
/oo/			
/oo/			
/x/			
/ch/			
/sh/			
/th/			
/th/			
/qu/			
/ou/			
/oi/			
/ue/			
/er/			
/ar/			
/air/			
/eer/			
/si/			
/z/			
/g/			
/ge/			

### Version 1

Supports the organisation of the online Phonics International programme:

- 1) Top to bottom of the left-hand column illustrates the order of introduction of the 'sounds' which is a *teaching feature*.
- 2) The grapheme squares are colour-coded to indicate in which unit of 12 Units (webpages) the resources will be located for each grapheme. This is a practical *organisational website feature*.

Key picture-words prompt the sounds which is an *early learning mnemonic* (aid to memory).

The chart not only shows the spelling alternatives as *discrete enlarged 'graphemes'* but the graphemes are also shown highlighted in *key printed words*. The words themselves can provide a form of spelling mnemonic.

Ultimately, learners need to assimilate *spelling word banks*. Further aids to memory might be helpful such as *mnemonic spelling stories with pictures*; and *activities to associate words with the same sounds and spelling alternatives* (for example, 'acting' a group of associated words).

### Version 2

In version 2, there are no pictures to prompt the sounds. Instead, there are *pictures to illustrate the exemplar key printed words* for the spelling alternatives. This may be particularly important for young learners and learners for whom *English is a new or additional language*. Such learners need as many supportive pictures as possible not to help them decode the printed words but to help them learn the *vocabulary* – what the words, when decoded, actually '*mean*'.

In both charts, the 'sounds' indicated in slash marks are shown as *coloured letters*. The colours distinguish consonant sounds (in blue) from vowel sounds (in red).

In many phonics programmes and phonics information provided for teachers and parents, there is often a failure to distinguish clearly enough when there is reference to consonant and vowel *letters* and when there is reference to consonant and vowel *sounds*. The use of *slash marks* to notate the *sounds* should not be avoided or substituted by using just letter shapes alone. **This will cause confusion sooner or later!**

How many **units of sound** are shown on the PI charts?

How many **vowel sounds** are there?

How many **consonant sounds** are there?