

The rationale and structure of the Phonics International online synthetic phonics programme designed by Debbie Hepplewhite

The English Alphabetic Code Overview Chart

The design of the **Phonics International** programme takes account of international research on reading instruction and leading-edge practice. The programme is systematic, comprehensive and also innovative - informed by years of teaching and teacher-training experience. The basis of the programme is to teach the **letter/s-sound correspondence knowledge** (letters, letter groups and sounds) of the **English Alphabetic Code** and how to put this code knowledge to use applying the **three skills** of: **1) all-through-the-word 'sounding out'** and **blending** for reading (synthesising); **2) segmenting** for spelling (splitting up spoken words into their smallest constituent sounds and knowing which letters or letter groups **are code for** the identified sounds); and, **3) handwriting** the letter shapes correctly. The ultimate aims of the programme include learners gaining an enriched vocabulary and developing their comprehension in the process of learning to read, spell and write in the English language. Learners also benefit from building-up specific **spelling word banks** into their long term memory for writing purposes.

The role of The Alphabetic Code Overview Charts:

- The Phonics International programme is designed around the structure of the **Alphabetic Code Overview Chart**. This is an informative and important **reference chart** that visually and organisationally promotes the understanding that the English writing system is based on alphabetic **symbols** (single letters and letter groups - **graphemes**) which **are code for** the smallest identifiable **sounds** in English speech (**phonemes**). The 44+ **sounds** (phonemes) are always shown in slash marks (/ /) down the **left hand column** of the Alphabetic Code Overview Charts and the **spelling alternatives** (graphemes) of those sounds are presented across the **rows**. A hard-copy selected chart should be on display as a **permanent feature** to support both **planned** phonics teaching and **incidental** phonics teaching, and as a general spelling reference chart, as the need arises.
- There are **many versions** of The Alphabetic Code Overview Chart provided in the free unit 1 (of 12 units of resources) but these are all based on the **same structure** and merely provide for a **choice** of chart depending on the needs and preferences of the user. These range from the giant charts for **wall display** in classrooms and homes to various mini charts for **planning and tracking** (for teachers and learners). The charts are provided 'free' so that people become as familiar with the important notion of **The Alphabetic Code** as they are with the notion of **The Alphabet**. These charts, along with other resources in the free unit 1, enable people to understand the synthetic phonics teaching principles and to **evaluate** the type of resources that the Phonics International programme provides.
- An important feature of The Alphabetic Code Overview Chart is the inclusion of **specific words** to exemplify the **focus sounds and graphemes**. These are in print and picture format on various charts and they also feature in other Phonics International resources such as the **PICTURE POSTERS**, **HEAR THE SOUNDS** (audio-visual resource in units 1 to 6), the **ALPHABETIC CODE FRIEZE POSTERS** and **GROUPING THE SPELLING ALTERNATIVE POSTERS** (in units 1 to 12). Various words and pictures provide **key examples** around which to base the programme and to create a system of aide-memoires to **make the teaching memorable**. In addition, **cumulative word banks**, **sentence level** and **text level** resources are provided throughout the programme to **systematically** build on the initial learning of the alphabetic code knowledge. The **I CAN READ storylines** plus their full **illustrations** and **supplementary word banks** are designed to help learners recall the **spelling word banks** of specific letter/s-sound correspondences which is the ultimate key to competent spelling.
- The Alphabetic Code Overview Charts also provide the **structure for the delivery** of the programme. There are **12 units of work** which are **colour-coded** as shown on the charts. Thus, on the example provided (see left), the background colour of the grapheme-squares indicates in which unit the material for teaching and learning any particular grapheme will be located. At a glance the teacher can see, for example, that '-ge' as code for the sound /j/ is first introduced in **unit 5** (the **blue** background colour). Other resources throughout the programme are colour-coded to **link in with the same elements** of the alphabetic code. The printable resources for each unit are provided online via discrete colour-coded webpages - one webpage for each unit.

The rationale behind the order of introduction of the letter/s-sound correspondences:

- The decision for the **'order' of introducing the letter/s-sound correspondences** (from top to bottom of the left hand 'phoneme' column of The Alphabetic Code Overview Chart) is based in the first instance on the order in the **Jolly Phonics** programme which is becoming increasingly well-known across the world as an excellent starter programme for infants. Phonics International, therefore, can readily be used to **complement** **Jolly Phonics** ensuring that existing users of **Jolly Phonics** are not

precluded from using the Phonics International resources. Phonics International, however, provides a much **wider range** of detailed step by step resources [suitable for all ages](#) and introduces various spelling alternatives **much earlier** than *Jolly Phonics* and other phonics programmes - for example, not just the grapheme 'ai' (as in 'aid') is introduced when first teaching the sound /ai/ - but also the grapheme 'ay' (as in 'tray') and shortly afterwards the grapheme 'a' (as in 'table'). Note that Phonics International provides a [more comprehensive range](#) of letter/s-sound correspondences than other phonics programmes.

4 - say the sounds

s	a	t	i	p
n	c	k	-ck	e
h	r	m	d	g
o	u	l	-ll	f
-ff	-ss	b	j	
y	ai	-ay	w	
oa	ow	-ie		
-igh	-le			

- There are several further significant benefits to the chosen **order** for introducing code knowledge in the Phonics International programme: **1)** The **order** enables learners to appreciate the notion of **pronunciation alternatives** and **spelling alternatives** from the **outset of learning** which makes them very **flexible** readers and spellers who are **very aware** of the complex nature of the English written code; **2)** The **order** includes the introduction of useful common words in a 'drip-drip' approach which other programmes often treat as an initial sight vocabulary or as tricky or irregular words - in Phonics International they are simply presented as **'rare' code in common words**; **3)** The **order** enables learners to **read text and environmental print relatively quickly** because they are introduced to such a wide range of alphabetic code very early on and because they understand about the notion of **'tweaking pronunciation'** when blending for reading and the need for asking the question **'which spelling do I need for this sound?'** when writing; **4)** The **order** enables the Phonics International programme to be used not only as a **mainstream beginner** programme for **any age learner** but also as an **intervention** programme for **any age learner**. Students needing additional help will already have encountered spelling alternatives and therefore will benefit from using material with spelling alternatives, for example: resources with both the graphemes 'ai' and 'ay' rather than just looking at either 'ai' or 'ay'; **5)** The **order** enables Phonics International to be used flexibly as a logical **spelling programme**. Teachers can choose to plan a programme of work focusing on **targeted 'sounds' and their spelling alternatives** using the resources related to the graphemes from left to right **'across the rows'** of The Alphabetic Code Overview Chart, for example: plan to focus on the sound /s/ - select material as required for the graphemes 's', 'ss', 'ce', 'se', 'ce', 'ci', 'cy', 'sc', 'st', 'ps'. This approach is **instead of** using the programme's resources in a strictly **linear** fashion (that is, unit 1 followed by unit 2, then unit 3).

The importance of the core Sounds Book Activity Sheets:

- The Phonics International programme is designed to be very **informative** and to enable people to **work in partnership** wherever possible. The programme provides **long runs** of a limited, but essential, range of **direct instruction cumulative** resources so that teachers, learners and learners' parents can get to know the resources well, 'share them' where possible, and use them confidently for all needs and ages **as required**. **Guidance** is provided **throughout the programme** on the core **SOUNDS BOOK ACTIVITY SHEETS** so that teachers and parents can learn about the alphabetic code knowledge **alongside** the learners. **Revision and repetition** is built into the design of the programme. **Vocabulary development** and **speaking and listening** opportunities are promoted as essential aspects of all teaching and learning activities within the programme.

Multi-sensory teaching and the balance of teacher-led activities and independent rehearsal:

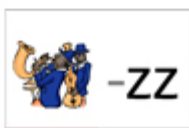
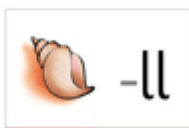
- The programme is **multi-sensory** in ways that are suitable for the teaching and learning of reading, writing and spelling. The teaching is always supported visually by permanent poster display (The Alphabetic Code Overview Chart) used alongside a **rolling programme** of various posters, visual aids and involving multi-sensory interactive activities for **lesson delivery and learning rehearsal**. **For all aspects of 'teaching' there is always an 'activity' for the learners - so that learners are not just passive recipients to teachers talking 'at' them.** It is important for teachers to appreciate when to provide **interactive** group or whole class activities and when to ensure that **each learner rehearses independently at their own level** of knowledge and skill. Each Sounds Book Activity Sheet, for example, **caters for differentiation** by providing both shorter and longer words. Each learner will access the material according to his or her own capacity and the teacher can provide additional supervision and extension work as necessary - but note that many learners may not need 'support' at all once the routines are established. **Assessment** includes the learners themselves using the **familiar** teaching and learning resources of the programme and self-assessment is a **high-profile ongoing process**.

spelling alternatives in key words				
is/	s snake	-ss glass	-se house	-ce palace
	ce city	sc scissors	-st- castle	ps pseudonym

The teaching principles for synthetic phonics are really very simple indeed. The Phonics International programme provides a large body of work (several years' resources) of very detailed, step-by-step **content** within a flexible framework. The scale of these details may seem overwhelming at first to someone initially investigating the programme but the reality is that the programme is straightforward and very supportive of teachers and learners because it **DOES** provide that detail! The challenge is to get people to pay attention long enough to absorb what the Phonics International programme has to offer and to appreciate the programme's full potential for raising standards of literacy in the English language.

How does The Early Years Starter Package designed by Debbie Hepplewhite fit in with the Phonics International programme?

Examples from the
Early Years Starter Package



The **Early Years Starter Package** is based on the same teaching principles and rationale as the full Phonics International programme. It is therefore a programme which teaches how to read, spell and write.

The relationship between Phonics International and the Early Years Starter Package:

- The resources of the Early Years Starter Package are all provided online via one webpage and they relate to exactly the same letter/s-sound correspondences as introduced in units 1 to 6 of the Phonics International programme. In effect, the Early Years Starter Programme is a programme within a bigger programme!
- The Early Years Starter Package can be regarded as additional to, and/or as providing some alternative resources for the Phonics International programme for units 1 to 6. The Package can also be regarded as a discrete programme in its own right in that it provides very detailed, systematic and comprehensive teaching and learning resources which include **letter/s-sound correspondence** material plus cumulative **word banks**, **sentence** and **text level** material.
- The **key words** and **pictures** on the A5 ALPHABETIC CODE FRIEZE POSTERS, FLASH CARDS, EARLY YEARS STARTER ACTIVITY SHEETS and text level BOOKLETS are the same as in the full Phonics International programme for units 1 to 6. This avoids any confusion and allows for 'cross-use' of all the resources.
- The resources of the Early Years Starter Package are exceptional value for money when bought as a separate package, although the Early Years Starter Package is provided free of charge as a 'bonus' for purchasers of the full Phonics International programme.

Choices of simpler versions of The Alphabetic Code Overview Charts:

- Within the Early Years Starter Package is a choice of six versions of THE ALPHABETIC CODE OVERVIEW CHARTS which include the letter/s-sound correspondences of units 1 to 5 or units 1 to 6. The alphabetic code in units 1 to 5 correlate to STAGE ONE of two stages of teaching of the full Phonics International programme. There are four additional flexible poster resources for teaching phonemic awareness, lower case and capital letters, the alphabet and alphabetical order.

The importance of the core Early Years Starter Activity Sheets:

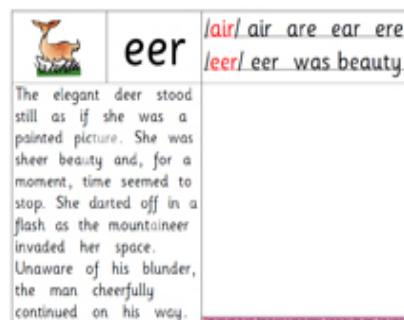
- The wording on the 92 core **EARLY YEARS STARTER ACTIVITY SHEETS** is designed to provide **direct instruction** guidance to support both teachers and parents. Similar to the core SOUNDS BOOK ACTIVITY SHEETS of the full Phonics International programme, the Early Years Starter Activity Sheets include **new** core alphabetic code knowledge at letter/s-sound correspondence level, plus **cumulative words (then sentences) to blend**, plus **handwriting practice**, plus **phonemic awareness development**, plus a mnemonic **drawing** activity, plus **spelling with editing routines**.


Range of text level material:

- The 102 text level BOOKLETS of the Early Years Starter Package progress to this level of text: "**My brother, Ernie, has now travelled the world. He works hard doing geological digs sometimes in the worst weather. His work is so worthwhile as it involves discovering how best to conserve the Earth's minerals. Words cannot describe how I look up to my brother.**"

Are reading book schemes required to supplement the Phonics International resources?

- The large bank of cumulative, **instructional** pieces of text level resources in both the full Phonics International programme and the Early Years Starter Package enables the programme/s to be regarded as **stand-alone** in terms of 'teaching' and 'learning' the requisite reading skills. Suitable reading book schemes based on synthetic phonics teaching can be used to **complement** the Phonics International programme for 'independent' reading as long as learners have been introduced to the alphabetic code included in the reading books. Additionally, learners can have access to any reading material to enrich their lives, to encourage an appreciation of literature and to promote a love of learning. The synthetic phonics teaching approach delivered by using the Phonics International programme is so effective that learners will soon be independent readers choosing literature for themselves and writing creatively!



 Overview of Resources	Early Years Starter Package	Introducing letter/s-sound correspondences		Core alphabetic code knowledge and skills rehearsal		Additional games and activities		Word Level		Sentence Level		Text Level	
	L/s correspondences same as P1 units 1 - 6	In units 1 - 6	In units 1 - 12	In units 1 - 6	In units 1 - 12	In units 1 - 6	In units 1 - 12	In units 1 - 6	In units 1 - 12	In units 1 - 6	In units 1 - 12	In units 1 - 6	In units 1 - 12
unit 1 s a t i p n c k -ck e h r	Optional Actions Information Booklet Suggestions for parents & A5 Charts (for Sounds Books)	Hear the Sounds (audio-visual online) Picture Posters - 93	Alphabetic Code Frieze Posters - 186		Mini Posters - 205 (cumulative words and tricky words)	Say the Sounds Booklets Pairs Games (various)	Colour-in Sounds Books A5	Picture Cards - 279 31 page Guidance for using the Picture Cards	Word Flash Cards - large (print only earlier units)	Sentences 66 sets for units 1 to 5			I can read - decodable cumulative texts - 150 (act as mnemonic spelling stories from unit 7)
unit 2 m d g o u l -ll f -ff -ss b j y ai ay w oa ow -ie -igh -le o (long a e i o u y)	Core Teacher Modelling Cards -95 Learners' Modelling Cards - 95	20 various Alphabetic Code Overview Charts (in unit 1)	Alphabetic Code Frieze Posters Extras - 14 (in units 2 & 3)		CORE SKILLS: Sounds Book Activity Sheets - 184 (with additional cumulated word lists units 6 to 12)	Spelling Sheets with Word Check List - 40 Lined Proforma for Word Spelling	Bookmarks letter/s-sounds (in units 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10)	My Words - word lists 231 (3 lists per A4 sheet)	More Spelling Word Banks For Long Term Memory (to be added)				Questions - 150 sets of comprehension questions for 'I can read' texts of units 1 to 12
unit 3 ee or z -zz w wh ea e-ea /z/ s se ze	A5 Alphabetic Frieze Posters (double up as Flash Cards) Substitute Flash Cards Activity Sheets - 92 (Style 2 Activity Sheets - 92)	Alphabet Posters (in unit 1)	Small Grapheme Tiles (black-grey; or teal)		Collated Alphabetic Code Information (in unit 2)	Letters, Sounds and Pictures Matching Game - 21x44 3 Handwriting resources (in unit 2)	Proforma for Pictures, Writing and Sequencing (same in each unit and not in unit 1)	Blend Word Cards					Full colour illustrations for 'I can read' texts -150
unit 4 -ng -nk v -ve oo-oo y -y -x ch sh th-th	Grapheme Tiles & Suggestions for use	Tracking resources (in unit 1)			Letter for Parents (in unit 1)	(Reading) Guidance for Parents (in units 1 & 5)		I can read, write and draw - 76					Line Drawings with word banks for 'I can read' texts -150
unit 5 qu ou ow-ow oi oy ue-ue er ar -ve -ce s-ss ge-j -se y-y-y	Word Bank Simple word Blend Cards 31x3 lists Simple Sentences -89 Booklets - 102 texts	Simple Code Flash Cards - lines and no lines (in unit 1)	Flash Cards with and without pictures (for all the letter/s-sound correspondences)		Grouping the Spelling Alternatives Posters - 65			Read the words, make up a story - 79					
unit 6 ce,ci,cy ge,gi,gy o-oe 'oes' ie,i-e ee,e-e oe,o-e ae,a-e ue,u-e air are ear ere eer ear ere ier ir ur ear wor er our -re	4 Posters for Capital and Lower Case 6 Alphabetic Code Overview Charts (reduced code)	Complex Code Flash Cards - lines and no lines (in unit 6)			Grouping the Spelling Alternatives Posters - 65			20 Origami Books + Guidance (in units 3 & 4)					
unit 7 -le -ll -al -el aw au al oar oor ore -our ch,tch ge,dge x,x kn wr -mb sc gu bu ch rh			Grapheme Flash Cards Capital Letters - lines and no lines (in unit 2)		Grouping the Spelling Alternatives - Draw the Pictures - 65								
unit 8 sh,ch -ti -ci -ssi /zh/ -si -z -g -ge ou 'ous' ph -gh q,qq,gh ch,ch,ch wa qua war gn -st-					Say the Sounds Posters - 31								
unit 9 -ey elgh -ea -aigh -ey -ie -y -ie ei													
unit 10 -o -ew -ui -ou -o eu ew -iew													
unit 11 ough augh ch qu -que quar													
unit 12 -gue -ine -ine -ine -mn ps alm all -ture -eau -re -n													