

PHONICS CONCEPTS

What is a phoneme?

A **phoneme** is the smallest unit of sound in a word. For example: the word "cat" has three phonemes: /k /a/ /t/.

Why do we need phonemes?

Phonemes are essential in learning to read and write because they are the building blocks of words, enabling us to segment and blend sounds to form words. Understanding phonemes helps in the development of literacy skills.

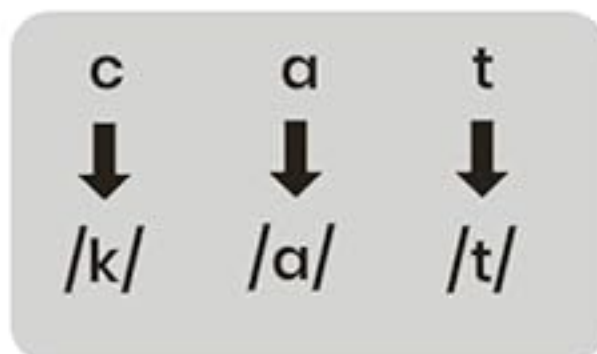
The English Alphabetic Code is based on the 44 phonemes in the English language. The letters of the alphabet represent those sounds with 160+ letter combinations.

When we teach reading, we need to show how the Alphabetic Code works: that the letters on the page spell sounds in words.

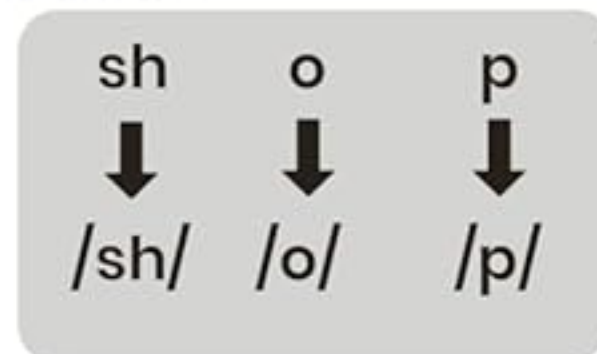
What is a grapheme?

A **grapheme** is a written representation or spelling of a sound (phoneme) in a word. A grapheme can be spelled by 1-4 letters.

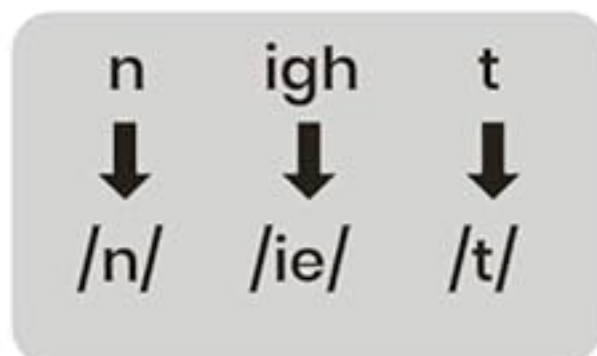
In a **1-letter grapheme**, each sound is spelled by one letter:



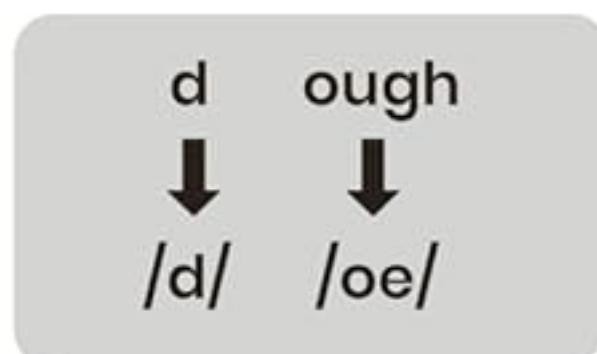
In a **2-letter grapheme**, a sound is spelled by two letters:



In a **3-letter grapheme**, a sound is spelled by three letters:

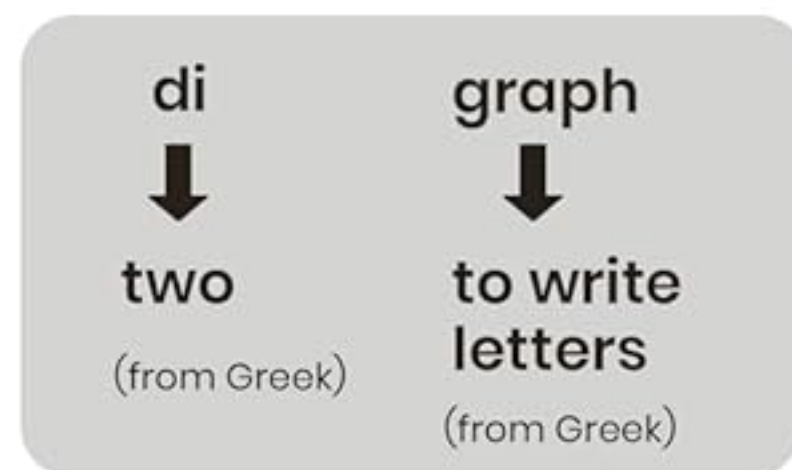


In a **4-letter grapheme**, a sound is spelled by four letters:



What is a digraph?

A **digraph** is when two letters represent one sound in a word (phoneme).



Therefore, a digraph means two written letters.

A **consonant digraph** is when two letters represent a consonant sound. For example: the letters 's' and 'h' spell the sound /sh/ in the word "ship".

A **vowel spelling** is when two or more letters represent a vowel sound. For example: the letters 'a' and 'i' spell the sound /ae/ in the word "rain".

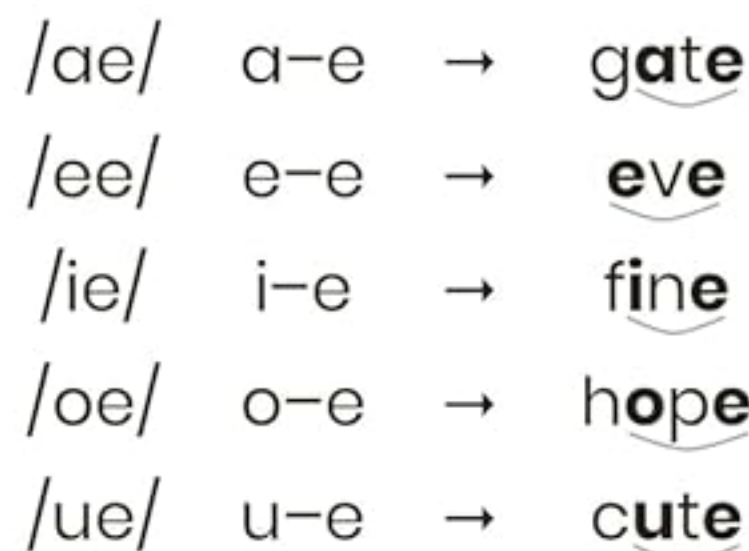
What are adjacent consonants?

**Adjacent consonants** are also called **consonant clusters**. These are two or more adjacent consonants in a word that spell two separate sounds. For example, in the word "stop" the letters 's' and 't' spell the sounds /s/ and /t/.



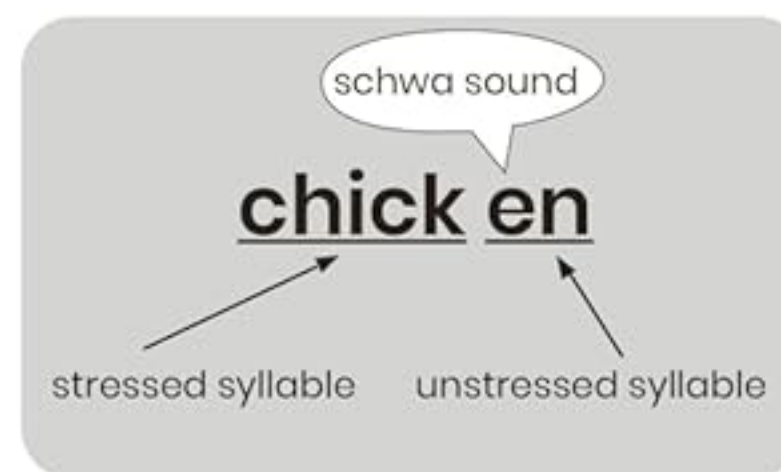
What are split vowel spellings?

A **split vowel spelling** is when the spelling for the vowel sounds /ae/, /ee/, /ie/, /oe/, and /ue/ is split by a consonant:



What is a schwa?

A schwa is a weak vowel sound in an unstressed syllable.



LANGUAGE UNITS AND PRINCIPLES

Words to morphemes

There are different ways of looking at a word.

A **word** is a distinct meaningful unit of speech or writing.

**Letters** are characters used for representing sounds in speech.

**Syllables** are mouthfuls of words.

**Phonemes** are speech sounds in words.

**Graphemes** are spellings of sounds in words.

**Morphemes** are units of meaning in words.

Distinguishing phonology, phonological awareness, and phonics

**Phonology** is an area of linguistics that deals with speech sound systems and sound patterns of spoken language.

**Phonological awareness** is the ability to break down words into smaller parts: syllables (mag net), alliteration (Bobby beetle bounced), onset and rime (m at), and phonemic awareness (m a t).

**Phonemic awareness** is the ability to identify and manipulate individual sounds in words (to blend, segment and manipulate sounds).

**Phonics** is the teaching of:

- letter/sound correspondences for reading and spelling: c a t = /k/ /a/ /t/
- blending of individual letters/sounds for reading: m a t
- segmenting of individual sounds/letters for spelling: m a t



### How do we teach pupils to spell the schwa sound correctly?

#### Step 1

Model the word and ask the pupil to say the word with the correct syllable stress.

#### Step 2

Ask the pupils to split the word into syllables and identify the stressed syllable.

moun-tain

#### Step 3

Ask the pupils to find the schwa sound in the "weak" syllable.

moun-tain

#### Step 4

At this point the teacher can introduce the "spelling voice". Pupils are encouraged to sound out the schwa as it is spelled. For example: when spelling the word "mountain", the teacher will show the pupils how to say an exaggerated /ai/ sound as they spell the second syllable. They say the sounds /m/ /ou/ /n/ - /t/ /ae/ /n/. The /ae/ sound is exaggerated to remind the pupil how to spell the word. Now the pupil can underline the spelling of the schwa sound. Other words with the same spelling pattern and stress can be tackled at the same time, for example "fountain", "captain" and "certain".

mountain

### How to teach vocabulary when reading a decodable book

Decodable books often include target words that pupils may not know. There are many reasons why pupils may not know words in a text:

- The word may be unusual.
- The pupils may have limited language as English language learners.
- The pupils may have a language disability.
- The pupils may have had limited opportunities to read books at home.

Learning new vocabulary is beneficial for all pupils. It helps them develop their expressive and receptive language. This will also develop their comprehension as they become readers.

When we teach new vocabulary, we want our pupils to learn how a word sounds and how it is spelled. We want them to make connections to words they already know, so the new vocabulary is stored securely in long-term memory and can be retrieved when needed.

Here is how we recommend teaching pupils new words encountered in a decodable book. The example here is the word "growl" from Book 6: Mr Brown from the Dandelion Readers, Level 1 series.

1. Demonstrate how letters map onto the sounds in the word.

growl or g r ow l

2. Say the word clearly. Ask the pupils to repeat the word. All too often pupils are not confident in pronouncing new words. /g/ /r/ /ow/ /l/ → "growl". This is particularly important when the word has more than one syllable as pupils need to know which syllable to stress.
3. Define the word. For example, "The word 'growl' means to make a deep, rough sound." (A simple definition can often be found in the decodable book.)

4. Give an example from the decodable book. Ask questions, such as, "Why does Meg growl in the story?" Pupils can answer in their own words. ("Meg growls because of the postman, Mr Brown.")



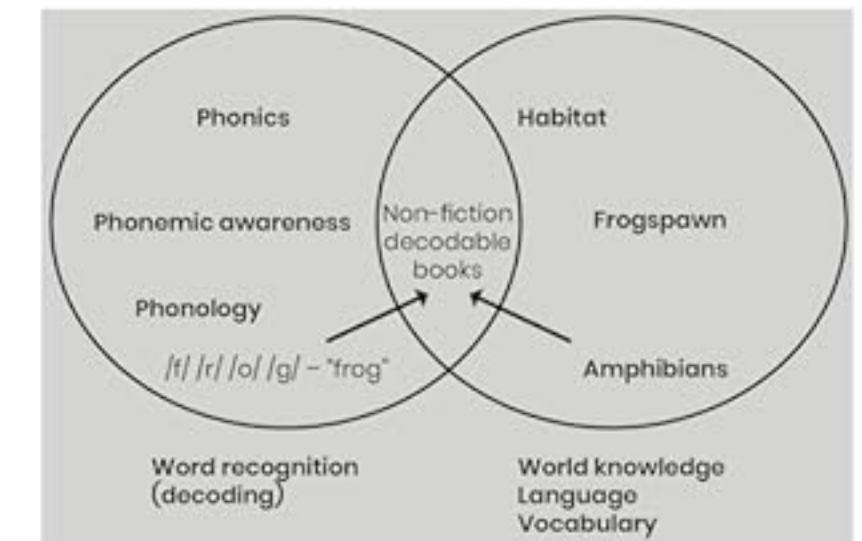
Meg, the dog, is on the path.  
"Growl, growl," says Meg.  
Mr Brown mops his brow.

5. Ask the pupils to give another example of when a dog might "growl".
6. Ask the pupils to compare with synonyms. "Is 'roar' a stronger word than 'growl'?"
7. Have the pupils act out or describe a scenario where an animal might growl. This could be a dog guarding its territory or a cat feeling threatened. This helps them understand the context in which "growl" is used.
8. Keep both words on the board and revisit throughout the week.

#### How to read a non-fiction decodable book

While the main lesson plans in this teacher guide predominantly focus on Dandelion Launchers, which is centred around fiction, this section delves into non-fiction decoding. This is particularly relevant for teachers who would like to incorporate resources from the Dandelion World series, a non-fiction parallel series to the Dandelion Launchers.

Non-fiction decodable books are wonderful reading resources. They combine two essential parts of reading: word recognition (decoding) and world knowledge (language comprehension and subject vocabulary).



Educators now recognise that world knowledge has an important part to play in reading comprehension. Pupils who lack world knowledge can't make sense of a text that presumes they have general knowledge. For example, a sentence that describes a character as a "fossil" will have little meaning to a pupil who has not learned about what fossils are and how they are created.

The Dandelion World series features "Knowledge Builder" pages that include pictures and text about the subject of the book. The series also includes a glossary so that pupils can learn new words that are beyond their decoding skills. By including knowledge-building pages, which are intended for pupils to read with an adult, the pupils can develop their world knowledge orally without being limited only to a text they can read. As learning about a subject supports reading comprehension, it is advisable to immerse the pupils in the knowledge first and only then read the decodable book.

Before reading the decodable text, teachers can start by asking the pupils what they know about the topic. This way new learning is built on what the pupils already understand and know. Then teachers can read the "Knowledge Builder" pages to the



**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Comprehension questions**

1. Where was the pond?
2. What did Meg use to hit the tent pegs with?
3. Did Mum make a fuss when Jed sobbed?
4. What was the treat after the picnic?

Comments:	3. Comprehension		3. Comprehension	
	DK:	OM:	1 <sup>st</sup> attempt	/4
	SC:	VE:	2 <sup>nd</sup> attempt	/4
	SO:	BL:	3 <sup>rd</sup> attempt	/4
	AD:			

Scores	1 <sup>st</sup> attempt	2 <sup>nd</sup> attempt	3 <sup>rd</sup> attempt
1. Single words			
2. Text			
3. Comprehension			
<b>Total Score / 138</b>			

**% score reading text:** \_\_\_\_\_

**% score whole test:** \_\_\_\_\_

Single words

landed    running    match    little

quick    have    dustbin    when

sinking    fetch    jumping    give

invent    quest    rabbit    whip

bottle    which    quit    hunted

kidnap    giving    tipped    pebble

High-frequency words

the    to    was    of    I    you    for  
 said    he    her    me    are    we    our



STEP 1  
Preparation

20 mins

## Reviewing sounds (3 mins)

- Using sound cards or a whiteboard, review some previously learned CVCC words.

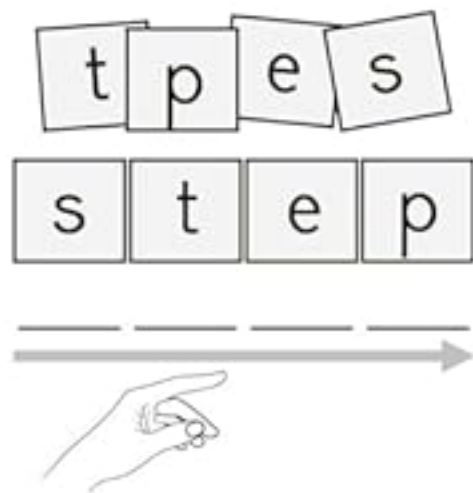
## Learning goal (2 mins)

- Explain to the pupils that you will be teaching them to read and spell words with four sounds using the sounds they have previously learned.
- Introduce the book Dandelion Launchers Book 9a: Bob is Glum.
- You will be completing some activities from Dandelion Launchers Units 8–10 Activities.

## Preparation (15 mins)

## 1 Word building and blending

- First demonstrate how to build a word. Use only four sound cards, e.g. for the word "step".
- Draw four lines on the whiteboard, and tell the pupils that you are going to show them how to build the word "step".
- As you say the word slowly, move your finger under the lines.
- Ask the pupils to listen to the first sound in the word "step" – point to the first line. Emphasise the first sound as you say the whole word. The pupils respond – /s/.
- Then ask the pupils which letter spells the sound /s/. The pupils point to the letter (or you can tell them). Bring the letter down to the first line.
- Repeat with the remaining sounds in the word. Now ask the pupils to sound all four sounds and blend them into a word, moving your finger under the word: /s/ /t/ /e/ /p/ → "step".
- The next time this is done, you can ask a pupil to participate and identify the sound and then letter and bring it down to the line.



## LESSON RESOURCES



## 2 Word reading

- Write the words you have created on the whiteboard (if you haven't done so already). Then ask pupils to blend and read the words.
- Show how to say each sound individually and then blend them together to read the word. Model blending by using a swishing motion with your finger.
- Encourage pupils to follow your example with these words: "step", "frog", "sled" and "grab".

## 3 Oral segmenting

- Say the word aloud (e.g. "spot") and count the sounds in the word (4). Write the number of lines you need for all the sounds. Now ask pupils to listen to the sounds in the word and write a letter for every sound in the word as you spell the word.

## 4 Word chain

- Using sound cards or magnetic letters, demonstrate how to build the word "slot". Explain to the pupils that you will be making one change to the word. They must be "sound detectives" and notice if you have added a sound, taken away a sound, or swapped a sound.
- Say that you are going to change the word "slot" (moving your finger under the word) to "slat". Ask the pupils to listen carefully to where the change has occurred. Move your finger under the words as you say it slowly. Once the change has been identified, invite a pupil to swap the sound card or letter. Ask all the pupils to sound out the word and read the new word. e.g. /s/ /l/ /a/ /t/ → "slat".
- Direct pupils through the following word-chain sequence: slot–slat–slap–lap–clap–cap–camp–lamp–limp–lip–slip–slop–slot

STEP 2  
Application for reading

15 mins

## Before reading (3 mins)

- Pre-teach difficult vocabulary in the book (e.g. "glum" and "brim"). Clearly say the word: /g/ /l/ /u/ /m/. Then provide a simple definition, e.g. "Glum describes a feeling of sadness."
- Ask questions such as, "Can you think of a book where a character felt glum?"
- Then write the word on the whiteboard and refer back to it throughout the week for reinforcement.

## High-frequency words (2 mins)

- Pre-teach or revisit these high-frequency words: "a", "of", "is", "he" and "the".
- Explain that these are high-frequency words that have tricky spellings the pupils will learn later.
- Write the words on the board, showing the separate graphemes in each word. As pupils learn more of the Alphabetic Code, they will be able to decode those graphemes.

## Application (10 mins)

- Read Book 9a: Bob is Glum.
- Encourage pupils to sound out each word and then blend to read.

STEP 3  
Application for spelling

15 mins

## Segmenting and spelling (5 mins)

- Ask pupils to complete the following activity to practise writing the graphemes: **First and third missing sounds** (Activities, page 47). Encourage the pupils to say the sounds as they write them and then blend the four sounds in each word together as they write them.

## Spelling and dictation (10 mins)

- Ask pupils to complete **All missing sounds** (Activities, page 49) to practise writing whole words.
- Read out the **Sentence dictation** sentence (Activities, page 58): "Viv fills the cups to the brim."
- Encourage the pupils to sound out the words as they spell them.
- For pupils who finish early or need additional practice, create additional sentences and dictate these new passages to them.

STEP 4  
Comprehension and consolidation

20 mins

## Book reading (5 mins)

- Reread Book 9a: Bob is Glum.

## Comprehension (5 mins)

- Ask pupils to retell the story, using the pictures and words in the **Retell the story** activity (Activities, page 52). The word cards on the same page can be used to reinforce vocabulary.

## Consolidation (10 mins)

- Divide the class into pairs and give each pair a copy of the **Dice game** (Activities, page 72).

STEP 5  
Tracking progress

- Complete the **Spelling list** (Activities, page 71) to make a quick, formative assessment of pupils' progress.
- Depending on your findings, either revisit some of the activities to reinforce any specific skill gaps, or invite pupils to complete an additional activity from the Activities book.

## PARALLEL BOOKS

In addition to Book 9a: Bob is Glum, the following books also cover CCVC words and can be used for more practice of decoding, for book bags to take home.

## Dandelion Launchers

Book 9b: Don't Spill  
Book 9c: Floss  
Book 9d: Stop the Pram!

## Dandelion Readers

Book 9: Flip and Flop Slip (Set 1 Units 1–10)  
Book 9: The Trap (Set 2 Units 1–10)  
Book 9: The Sled (Set 3 Units 1–10)

## Dandelion World

Book 9a: Up the Cliff  
Book 9b: Clam, Crab, Gull

Book 9: Fred Has a Plan (Set 4 Units 1–10)



STEP 1  
Preparation

20 mins

## Learning goal (2 mins)

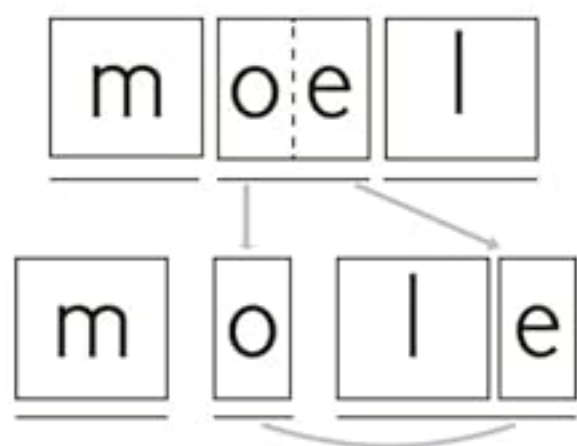
- Explain to the pupils that you will be teaching them to read and spell new words using the spelling 'o-e' for the sound /oe/.
- Introduce the book *Dandelion Readers Split Vowel Spellings Book 4: The Note*.
- You will be completing some activities from *Dandelion Readers Split Vowel Spellings Activities*.

## Preparation (18 mins)

- Introduce the spelling 'o-e' for the sound /oe/.
- Model the sound correctly and ask pupils to copy.
- For example, say, "This letter stands for the sound /oe/ as in 'note'."
- Read this list of words: "note", "home" and "bone". For each, point to the letters as you slowly pronounce them, demonstrating how the 'o' and 'e' work together to form the /oe/ sound. Use your thumb and third finger to visually link these letters.

## 1 Word building

- Assign the **Word-building** activity (Activities, page 43).
- Ask the pupils to cut out the letters along the dotted lines, which split the 'o' and 'e'.
- For example, demonstrate with the word "mole" how to separate 'o' from 'e' and then rearrange them by placing 'o' at the end after the 'l'. Use your fingers to reinforce the connection between letters.



- For the remaining words, direct pupils through the process of assembling the cut-out letters, always emphasising how the 'o' and 'e' are connected.

## LESSON RESOURCES



- Explain the spelling rule: in words like "mole", even though a consonant ('l') separates the vowels, the 'o' and 'e' still work together to form the /oe/ sound, which occurs right before the consonant.

## 2 Word reading

- Write the words you have created on the whiteboard. Then ask pupils to blend and read the words.
- Show how to say each sound individually and then blend them together to read the word. Model blending by using a swishing motion with your finger.
- Encourage pupils to follow your example with these words: "cone" and "slope".

## 3 Oral segmenting

- Say a word aloud (e.g. "home") and count the sounds in the word (3). Write the number of lines you need for all the sounds. Now ask pupils to listen to the sounds in the word and write a letter for every sound in the word as you spell the word.

## 4 Word chain

- Using sound cards or magnetic letters, demonstrate how to build the word "cone". Explain to the pupils that you will be making one change to the word. They must be "sound detectives" and notice if you have added a sound, taken away a sound or swapped a sound.
- Say that you are going to change the word "cone" (moving your finger under the word) to "clone". Ask the pupils to listen carefully to where the change has occurred. Move your finger under the word as you say it slowly. Once the change has been identified, invite a pupil to swap the sound card or letter. Ask all the pupils to sound out the word and read the new word. e.g. /c/ /l/ /oe/ /n/ → "clone".
- Direct pupils through the following word-chain sequence of words: cone—clone—lone—bone—tone—hone—hope—home—hone—cone

STEP 2  
Application for reading

15 mins

## Before reading (3 mins)

- Revisit the vocabulary taught in Step 1 (e.g. "note"). Clearly say the word: /n/ /oe/ /t/. Explore different definitions for "note", such as a written record of ideas or paying attention to something.
- Ask questions such as, "What do you write notes for?"
- Then write the word on the whiteboard and refer back to it throughout the week for reinforcement.

## High-frequency words (2 mins)

- Pre-teach or reiterate these high-frequency words: "Toad", "he", "saw", "the", "for", "said", "follow", "I", "is", "onto", "was", "into", "my", "you" and "me".
- Read each high-frequency word, pointing to the graphemes in the word.

## Application (10 mins)

- Read *Book 4: The Note*.
- Encourage pupils to sound out each word and then blend to read.

STEP 3  
Application for spelling

15 mins

## Segmenting and spelling (15 mins)

- Ask pupils to complete the following activity to practise writing whole words: **Reading and spelling** (Activities, page 50).
- In this activity, pupils follow the text from the top of the scroll to the bottom scroll.
- They then write a sound on each line, e.g. "rope".
- Where the vowel spelling is split (o-e), there is a link indicated by a curved line.
- This activity can also be used for dictation.
- For pupils who finish early or need additional practice, create additional sentences and dictate these new passages to them.

## Extension activities

- For practice of spelling two-syllable words, assign pupils the **Splitting two-syllable words** activities (Activities, pages 51–52).

STEP 4  
Comprehension and consolidation

20 mins

## Book reading (5 mins)

- Reread *Book 4: The Note*.

## Comprehension (5 mins)

- Check pupils have understood the story by completing the **What's missing?** activity (Activities, page 49).

## Consolidation (10 mins)

- Divide the class into pairs and give each pair a copy of the **Stepping stones game** (Activities, page 54).
- Have pupils find and point to these words in *Book 4: The Note*: "rope", "joke" and "slope".

STEP 5  
Tracking progress

15 mins

- Assign the **Timed word reading** (Activities, page 48). Pupils can repeat this activity to improve their reading speed.
- Play the **4-in-a-row game** (Activities, page 55).
- Depending on your findings, either revisit some of the activities to reinforce any specific skill gaps, or invite pupils to complete an additional activity from the Activities book.

## Extension activities

- Use the **Reading practice** cards (Activities, page 45) to play a simple bingo game. Encourage the pupils to sound out the words.
- Ask pupils to complete the **Pelmanism game** (Activities, page 46). This is a game for two or more players.
- Cut out the cards and jumble them up. Place them facing down in rows.
- The players take it in turns to pick up two cards. If they pick up a card with a word that matches a picture, they keep the pair of cards.
- Assign the **Is it true?** activity (Activities, page 47). In this activity, pupils are provided with pairs of sentences with 'o' and 'o-e' spellings.
- One sentence in each pair will be grammatically correct, while the other will contain an error.
- Instruct the pupils to mark a cross next to the incorrect sentence and a tick next to the correct one. Additionally, ask them to create a drawing that illustrates the meaning of each sentence.