

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO EARLY READING

Helping your child blend and read



Simple sounds • CVC words • First sentences

s – a – t

p – i – n

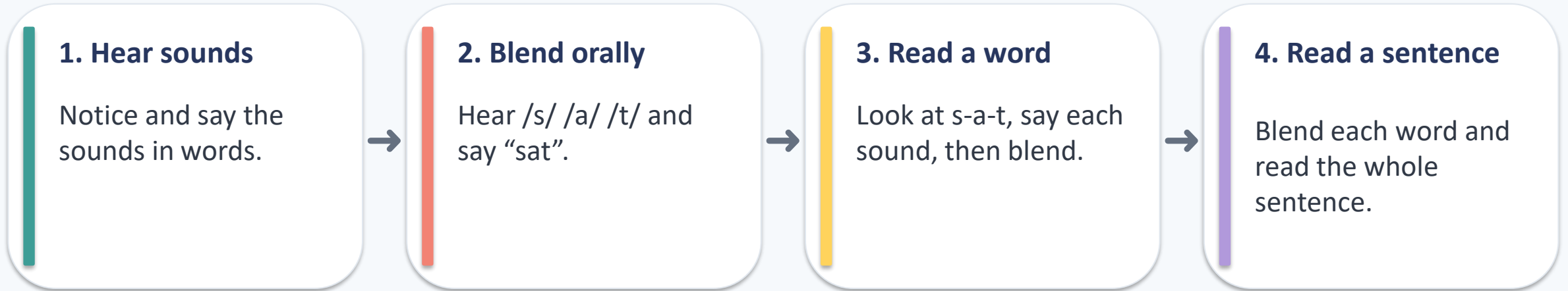
m – a – p

Small steps, praise and regular practice help children grow in confidence.



The journey from sounds to sentences

Children build these skills step by step.



Children may need lots of practice at each stage. Keep sessions short, positive and playful.

What is oral blending?

Oral blending means listening to sounds and pushing them together to make a word.

Say the sounds slowly:



Try it aloud

Adult: “/s/ /a/ /t/”

Child: “sat!”

At first, your child does not need to see the letters. They are practising hearing the sounds and blending them together.

Tip: keep the sounds close together and avoid adding “uh” after consonants. Say /m/, not “muh”.



How to practise oral blending at home

Make it playful: try it while walking, playing or getting ready.

1. Say the sounds

“Can you find the /c/ /a/ /t/?”
Keep the sounds clear and in order.

2. Let your child blend

Pause briefly, then invite them to say the whole word: “cat”.

3. Reveal the object

Show a cat picture or toy, or point to the real object if you can.

Start with familiar words and use a warm, encouraging voice.

Try: “There is a /c/ /a/ /t/.” • “Can you get your /b/ /a/ /g/?” • “Where is the /p/ /e/ /n/?”



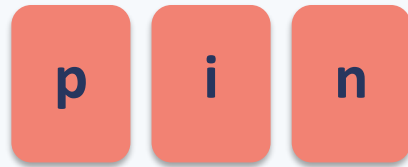
What is a CVC word?

CVC means consonant–vowel–consonant. These are often early words children learn to blend.

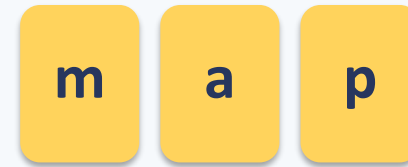
Each word has three sounds, for example:



cat



pin



map



sun



Use sounds, not letter names

For blending, say /c/ /a/ /t/, rather than “see-ay-tee”.



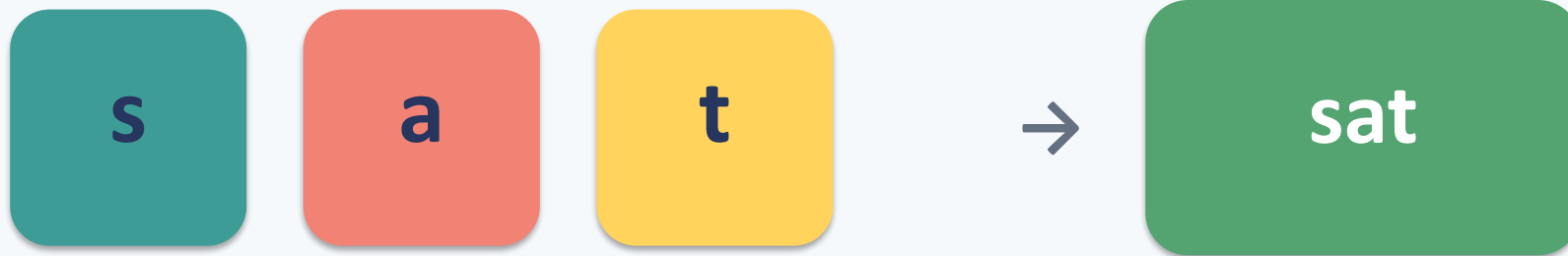
Choose words your child knows

Use only sounds and letter patterns your child has been taught in phonics.

From oral blending to reading a word

When your child is ready, connect the sounds they hear to the letters they see.

Point to each grapheme (letter or letter group) from left to right.



You can say...

“Point to each sound. Now push them together.
What word?”

If your child gets stuck...

Model it once, then let them try again. Keep the experience successful.

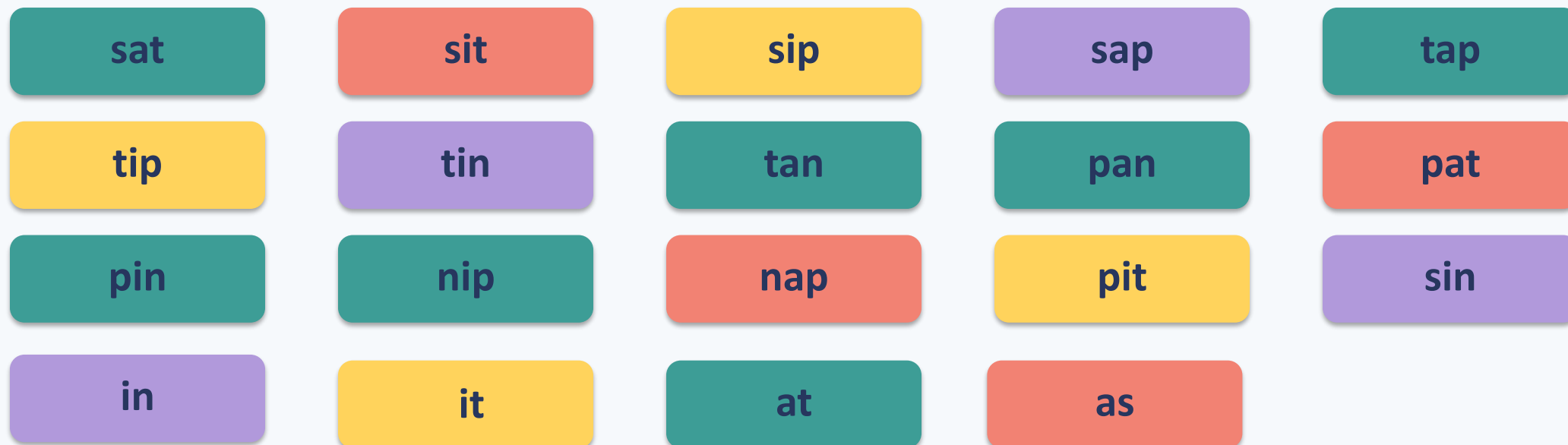


How many words can we make?

Using only the six letters: s a t p i n



Here are simple words to practise:



Model the sounds: /s/ /a/ /t/ → “sat”. Encourage your child to say the sounds close together, then blend them.

Some words may be unfamiliar; practise the words your child has been taught and understands.

What are tricky words?

Some common words cannot be read by sounding out every part in the usual way at first.

What does “tricky” mean?

A tricky word has a part that children may not yet know how to sound out using the phonics they have learnt.

How do we learn them?

Look at the word, say it, notice the sounds and the part that is tricky, then practise recognising it in books.

Tricky words we will cover in Reception

I	no	to	go	the	into	he
she	me	be	we	you	was	her
my	were	all	are	they		

Tip for parents: practise a few at a time, spot them in books and revisit them regularly.



Building towards simple sentences

Use short, decodable sentences made from sounds and words your child has already learnt.

Sam sat.

Blend each word, then reread the sentence.

A cat sat.

Point to each word; help with “a” if needed.

The cat is on a mat.

This may include digraphs or tricky words—use it only when taught.

Important: a sentence is “decodable” only if the child knows the phonics patterns and any tricky words in it.



Small tips that make a big difference

Keep practice close to the phonics approach used by your child's school.

Do

Use the pure sound where possible: /m/, /s/, /t/.
Blend from left to right.

Avoid

Adding “uh” to consonants, e.g. “suh-a-tuh”.
This can make blending harder.

Do

Practise words made from taught sounds.
Mix familiar words with a few new ones.

Avoid

Guessing from pictures or memorising whole words
instead of looking at the letters.

English has some unusual spellings. Follow the sound pronunciations and word lists shared by your child's school.



What can I say when we practise?

Helpful prompts build independence without turning reading into a test.

When your child is trying

“Look at the letters.”

“Say the sounds.”

“Now blend them together.”

When they make a mistake

“Let’s try that together.”

Model the word clearly, then invite another try.

When they read a word correctly

“You pushed the sounds together!”

Praise the strategy, not just speed.

When they are tired or frustrated

Stop, choose an easier word, or finish with a favourite story.

Aim for about 3–5 minutes at a time. Follow your child’s pace and celebrate small steps.



A simple 5-minute routine

Little and often is more useful than one long session.

1 minute

Listen and blend 3 spoken words.

2 minutes

Read 3–5 words using taught sounds.

1 minute

Read one short decodable sentence together.

1 minute

Celebrate effort and finish with a story.

If your child is not ready for printed words yet, spend the time on oral blending and listening.



Working together with school

A consistent approach helps children feel confident.

Ask the teacher

Which sounds and tricky words has my child learnt?

Use school materials

Follow the phonics books and guidance sent home.

Share what you notice

Tell the teacher which words feel easy or tricky.

Children develop at different rates. If reading feels difficult, speak to the class teacher for guidance and suitable next steps.



From words to simple sentences

Choose sentences that use phonics your child has already learnt, alongside any taught tricky words.

Start with words

sat • pin • tap • nap

Blend each word from left to right.

Build a sentence

“I sat.”

“I” is a tricky word from the Reception list; “sat” is a CVC word.

Then try

“I sit.”

Only use sentence examples that match the sounds and tricky words taught in class.

Help your child point to each word, blend the decodable words, and then reread the whole sentence to make it sound natural.

Remember

A sentence is decodable for your child when its phonics patterns and any tricky words have been taught.



Useful Websites

Children need lots of practise and consistency.

ActiveLearn

Use the individual login detail that you child's class teacher has provided. Read books, play game and watch videos

[ActiveLearn: Login](#)

Phonics Play

Free website for your child to play a range of games to support their phonics

[PhonicsPlay](#)

TopMarks

Free website for your child to play a range of games to support their phonics

[Topmarks - Free Interactive Learning Games, Maths Worksheets & Teaching Resources – Topmarks](#)

YouTube

- Alphablocks
- Phonics with Mr Thorne
- Miss Phonics - [Sounds of the Alphabet | Learn Phonics | British Teacher | Learn to Read](#)

**Children may need lots of practice at each stage.
Keep sessions short, positive and playful.**

Remember: keep it short, clear and joyful

Hear the sounds → Blend the word → Read the letters → Read a sentence

Your encouragement matters.

Praise effort, practise little and often, and enjoy sharing books together.

cat

pin

sun

map

Thank you for supporting your child's early reading journey.