



Phonics screening check

2018 scoring guidance

Pronunciation of real words and pseudo-words

Some of the graphemes used in the check represent a number of different phonemes. When decoding a real word in the check, the pupil has to select the correct phoneme for the word, for example the 'ow' in 'blow' should not be pronounced as the 'ow' in 'cow'. However, when decoding a pseudo-word, all plausible alternative pronunciations are acceptable.

The tables on the next page provide guidance to teachers scoring the check on acceptable pronunciations of the pseudo-words in the check.

Regional pronunciations

Some of the pseudo-words in the screening check contain letters which can be pronounced in different ways when read aloud according to the regional accent of a pupil, for example, vowel digraphs that end with 'r', such as 'ur'. In a small number of regional accents the 'r' in words with these vowel digraphs is voiced and pupils who speak with these accents will be known to their teachers. For these pupils, pseudo-words with a vowel digraph ending in 'r', such as 'slirt', may be pronounced as /slɜ:rt/ instead of /slɜ:t/. Valid alternative pronunciations related to regional accents are acceptable in the relevant pseudo-words and will be listed in the scoring guidance.

Contact details

For more information about the phonics screening check, please contact the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013 or email assessments@education.gov.uk.

Section 1

Pseudo-word	Acceptable pronunciation	Phonemic representation
reb	This item uses the 'r' in 'run' and rhymes with 'web'.	/rɛb/
wup	This item uses the 'w' from 'wig' and rhymes with 'cup'. All regional pronunciations of the 'u' are acceptable.	/wʌp/ or /wʊp/
jub	This item uses the 'j' from 'jam' and rhymes with 'tub'. All regional pronunciations of the 'u' are acceptable.	/dʒʌb/ or /dʒʊb/
eps	This item combines the 'e' from 'end' and rhymes with 'steps'.	/ɛps/ or /ɛpz/
vuss	This item uses the 'v' from 'vast' and rhymes with 'fuss'. All regional pronunciations of the 'u' are acceptable.	/vʌs/ or /vʊs/
quop	This item uses the 'qu' from 'quiz' and rhymes with 'stop'.	/kwɒp/
zook	This item uses the 'z' from 'zone' and rhymes with 'book'. All regional pronunciations of the 'oo' are acceptable.	/zu:k/ or /zʊk/
chack	This item uses the 'ch' from 'chest' and rhymes with 'track'.	/tʃæk/
skap	This item uses the 'sk' from 'skin' and rhymes with 'trap'.	/skæp/
blorn	This item uses the 'bl' from 'black' and rhymes with 'thorn'. All regional variations of the 'or' are acceptable.	/blɔ:n/ or /blɔrn/
meft	This item uses the 'm' from 'mark' and rhymes with 'left'.	/mɛft/
veems	This item uses the 'v' from 'views' and rhymes with 'seems'.	/vi:ms/ or /vi:mz/

Section 2

Pseudo-word	Acceptable pronunciation	Phonemic representation
var	This item uses the 'v' from 'vet' and rhymes with 'car'. All regional pronunciations of the 'ar' are acceptable.	/va:/ or /var/
slirt	This item uses the 'sl' from 'sleek' and rhymes with 'dirt'.	/slɜ:t/ or /slɜrt/
weaf	This item uses the 'w' from 'wait' and rhymes with 'deaf' or 'leaf'.	/wɛf/ or /wi:f/
pobe	This item uses the 'p' from 'pale' and rhymes with 'robe'.	/pəʊb/
flisp	This item uses the 'fl' from 'flick' and rhymes with 'crisp'.	/flɪsp/ or /flɪzp/
braint	This item uses the 'br' from 'break' and rhymes with 'paint'.	/breɪnt/
scrid	This item uses the 'scr' from 'scrap' and rhymes with 'grid'.	/skrɪd/
splote	This item uses the 'spl' from 'split' and rhymes with 'wrote'. All regional pronunciations of the 'o-e' are acceptable.	/spləʊt/