

Establishing good routines

Why are good routines important?

Children respond well to routines and they thrive on the kind of classroom management where they:

- share collective procedures, such as very quickly and quietly gathering on the carpet with established seating positions 'ready for learning'
- know that they can focus fully on their own work – confident in what this will consist of and recognise that they are making good progress.

Good routines are essential for phonics teaching as there is a lot of alphabetic code knowledge to teach to the children. The more simple, efficient and disciplined the teaching routines, the greater the likelihood the slower-to-learn children will engage with the learning, enabling them to keep up, and the more likely that all the children will enjoy the lessons and gain maximum knowledge.

Recommended simple teaching routines

This programme's terminology does not refer to *sound buttons*, and dots and dashes are not provided beneath printed words. There are no robot-arms actions, or robot voices, and no counting sounds involved with the reading process. The reading, spelling and writing routines described below are simple, focused, appropriate and repeated.

A routine for blending:

- Finger-track under the graphemes of each word from left to right with the index finger of the child's writing hand, whilst saying the sounds.
- After saying the sounds one at a time, return the index finger to under the first grapheme and run the finger under the whole word whilst saying the whole blended word.
- Modify the pronunciation of the blended word if necessary.

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:

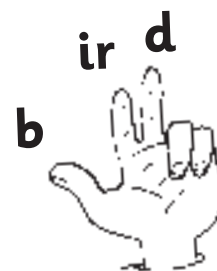
Point under each grapheme (letter or letter group) as you say the sound, then run your finger under the whole word as you say the whole (or blended) word.

e.g. **p-ur-p-le purple**

Tips for spelling (encoding)

Say the word slowly to identify each sound in the word.

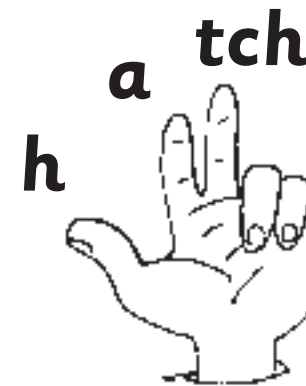
Use your left hand to tally the individual sounds to your thumb and fingers.



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

A routine for segmenting:

- Orally segment words by saying the words slowly (enabling the individual sounds and mouth shapes to be clearly evident) whilst tallying each sound to your thumb and fingers of your left hand.



- Draw sound dashes (writing lines) for the sounds counted on thumb and fingers during the routine above and select small Grapheme Tiles for the identified sounds to place on the sound dashes from left to right. Alternatively, write the graphemes straight onto the sound dashes.

h a tch ✓

- Check, or edit, the proposed spelling by sounding out and blending the selected graphemes (again with finger-tracking). Ask the children to make corrections as necessary. Encourage children to tick correct spellings.

The sound dashes provide a temporary stepping-stone for spelling. When the children can write beyond word level, they can orally segment and write their spellings without the sound dashes.

A routine for handwriting:

- Finger-trace letter shapes and air-write with the index finger of the child's writing hand and say the sounds at the same time.
- Hold pencils correctly with the tripod pencil grip (shown right).

Routines to learn the letter/s-sound correspondences of the alphabetic code include:

- pointing to individual graphemes to 'say the sounds' (in the order you have introduced them and then randomly)
- saying the sounds to the children and asking them to point to the graphemes (e.g. "Point to /s/, /t/, /a/, /n/. Point to /k/ as in **cat** and then /k/ as in **duck**").



The *Flashcards*, *Frieze*, *Books*, CD-ROM and *Posters* all support these routines and allow variation in how the routines can be practised in the classroom.