Key stage 1

Phonics screening check

2016 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 vowel digraphs that end with 'r', such as 'ur'. In a small number of regional dialects, the 'r' in words with these vowel digraphs is voiced and pupils who speak with these dialects will be known to their teachers. For these pupils, pseudo-words with a vowel digraph ending in 'r', such as 'charb' may be pronounced as /tʃɑːrb/ instead of /tʃɑːb/. These pronunciations are acceptable alternatives in the relevant pseudo-words.

Section 1

Pseudo-word	Acceptable pronunciations	Phonemic representation
lig	This item uses the 'l' from 'leg' and rhymes with 'jig'.	/lɪg/
mep	This item uses the 'm' from 'mat' and rhymes with 'step'.	/mɛp/
gax	This item uses the 'g' from 'get' and rhymes with 'fax'.	/gæks/
emp	This item combines the 'e' from 'end' and the 'mp' from 'amp'.	/ɛmp/
beff	This item uses the 'b' from 'bill' and rhymes with 'chef'.	/bɛf/
shup	This item uses the 'sh' from 'shop' and rhymes with 'cup'. All regional pronunciations of the 'u' are acceptable.	/ʃʌp/ or / ʃʊp/
doil	This item uses the 'd' from 'deal' and rhymes with 'boil'.	/dɔɪl/
charb	This item uses the 'ch' from 'chain' and rhymes with 'garb'.	/tʃɑːb/
frex	This item combines the 'fr' from 'frog' and the 'ex' from 'rex'.	/frɛks/
criff	This item uses the 'cr' from 'cramp' and rhymes with 'tiff'.	/krɪf/
haps	This item uses the 'h' from 'hits' and rhymes with 'maps'.	/hæps/
barst	This item combines the 'bar' from 'barn' and the 'st' from 'first'.	/bɑːst/

Section 2

Pseudo-word	Acceptable pronunciations	Phonemic representation
jigh	This item uses the 'j' from 'jump' and rhymes with 'high'.	/dʒaɪ/
woats	This item uses the 'w' from 'warns' and rhymes with 'coats'.	/wəʊts/
rird	This item uses the 'r' from 'rail' and rhymes with 'bird'.	/rɜːd/
phope	This item uses the 'ph' from 'photo' and rhymes with 'scope'.	/fəʊp/
glips	This item uses the 'gl' from 'glows' and rhymes with 'ships'.	/glɪps/
floost	This item uses the 'fl' from 'flakes' and rhymes with 'boost'. All regional pronunciations of the 'oo' are acceptable.	/fluːst/ or /flʊst/
splam	This item uses the 'spl' from 'split' and rhymes with 'scram'.	/splæm/
stribe	This item uses the 'str' from 'stroke' and rhymes with 'scribe'.	/straɪb/