

# Some Helpful Phonics Terms

## With Teacher Definitions

PHONICS TERM	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES
Consonant	Basic speech sound that is produced with the breath partly obstructed.	<i>b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, y, z</i>
Vowel	Basic speech sound that is produced with vocal tract somewhat open.	<i>a, e, i, o, u</i> , sometimes <i>y</i>  Notes: <i>U</i> is not a vowel after <i>q</i> . <i>Y</i> is always a vowel at the end of a word. Every syllable has a vowel.
Consonant blend	Two or more consonants are blended together but each sound is heard.	Most common blends: <b>l blends:</b> <i>bl, fl, cl, gl, pl, sl</i> ; <b>r blends:</b> <i>cr, dr, fr, tr, gr, pr</i> ; <b>s blends:</b> <i>sm, sp, st</i>
Digraph	<b>Two letters</b> combine to make one sound. There are consonant digraphs <i>and</i> vowel digraphs. They can be found in the beginning, middle, or end of a word.  Vowel digraphs are used in vowel teams.	<b>Consonant digraphs:</b> <i>sh, ch, th, wh, ph, ck, ng, ss, tch</i> ; some have silent letters: <i>kn, wr, gn</i>  <b>Vowel digraphs:</b> <i>ai, ay, ea, ey; ee, ea, ey, ei, ie; ie, igh; oa, oe; ew, ue, eu; oi, oy, ou, ow, au, aw, oo</i>
Vowel teams	Two vowels or vowel/consonant combinations that make a long, short, or diphthong vowel sound. The letters work together to make one sound. Vowel teams include vowel digraphs and diphthongs.	<b>Predictable vowel teams:</b> <i>ai/ay; oa/oe; igh; ee</i> <b>Unpredictable vowel teams:</b> <i>ea, ie, oo, ow, ou</i> <b>Diphthongs:</b> <i>aw, oy, oo, ow</i> <b>Vowel/consonant combos:</b> <i>augh, igh, eigh, ough.</i>
Vowel digraph	<b>Two letters</b> that spell one sound, not the sound!	Includes <b>letter pairs</b> <i>ai, ay, ee, ea, ie, ei, oo, ou, ow, oe, oo, ue, ey, ay, oy, oi, au, aw</i>
Diphthong	A special kind of <b>vowel sound</b> made with two vowel sounds. The mouth glides from the position for one vowel to the position for another. The shape of the mouth changes.	<b>Special vowel sounds that glide:</b> <i>oi/oy, ou/ow</i>

(Continued)

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Variant vowel	<b>Groups of letters</b> that produce the <b>same vowel sound</b> .	For the long <i>a</i> sound: <i>a, a-e, ai, ay, eigh</i>  For the <i>oo</i> sound, like in <i>look</i> : <i>oo/oul/u</i> (e.g., <i>book, could, put</i> ).
Syllable	A <b>unit of pronunciation</b> having one vowel sound, with or without surrounding consonants. Have students place their hand on their jaw to feel each syllable. Each time their jaw drops, it counts as one syllable.	The word <i>principal</i> has three syllables.
Syllable types	There are six syllable types.	Closed syllable, open syllable, VCe syllable, vowel + r, final stable syllable, vowel teams.
Phoneme	The smallest unit of spoken sound.	The word <i>shake</i> has three phonemes, or sounds: <i>/sh/a/k/</i>
Grapheme	The smallest unit of written language.	Includes single letters or a sequence of letters representing a sound.
Morpheme	The smallest unit of meaning.	Includes <b>prefixes and suffixes</b> and <b>Greek and Latin roots</b>
Affixes (prefix, suffix) and root words	Knowing the meanings of <b>prefixes</b> (letters added to the beginning of a word that change its meaning), <b>suffixes</b> (letters added to the end of a word that change its meaning), and <b>Greek and Latin roots</b> can help students understand word meanings. When affixes are added to <b>root words</b> (basic words or word parts), new words are formed with new meanings.	Common <b>prefixes</b> : <i>un, re, in, im, il, ir, dis, en, em, non, over, mis</i>
Greek and Latin roots		Common <b>suffixes</b> : <i>s, es, ed, ing, ly, er, or, tion, sion, able, ness</i>  Common Greek and Latin roots: <i>aud, mis, astro, ped, bio, phon, dict, port, geo, scrib, meter, min, spect, struct</i>  Examples of affixes and root words combined to make new words: <i>rerun, fastest, unbelievable, misunderstanding, inaudible</i>