

The Alphabetic Code

complex code								
<p>simple code</p> <p>Teach this first.</p> <p>40+phonemes (sounds) of spoken English & key words</p>	<p>(1) Choose an order of introduction of letter/s-sound correspondences for a version of a simple code. Teach 3 to 6 correspondences per week. Provide a cumulative word bank (for the simple code) for modelling blending all-through-the-word for reading, and segmenting all-through-the-spoken-word for spelling. The 'simple code', in effect, is part of the complex code but it is just a 'first step' of introducing the complexities of the English writing system for reading and spelling.</p> <p>(2) Keep the simple code revised and begin to introduce spelling and pronunciation variations of the complex code at a rate appropriate to the age and stage of the pupils. The alphabetic code is not an 'exact science' and accents need to be taken into account at all times along with the notion of 'tweaking pronunciations' when decoding to reach the regional or preferred pronunciation of the target word. Tweaking pronunciations also helps to raise awareness of the 'schwa effect' (unstressed syllables) whereby in reality the sound /u/ is the spoken translation of the written code in words such as 'sofa' (sofu), 'faster' (fastu), 'little' (littul), 'around' (uround). The reverse of this is the need to be aware of the spelling possibilities when segmenting spoken words for writing - particularly with regards to the schwa effect. The ability to spell accurately relies on a growing knowledge of word banks (words with the same spelling and sound variations) and this knowledge takes much longer to acquire than learning to decode well. Always emphasise the relationship between sounds and letters when teaching spelling rather than relying on visual memory of letter order.</p> <p>main graphemes (spelling variations) & key words</p>							
/a/ ant								
/b/ bat	bb rabbit							
/c/ cat	k kitten	ck back	ch chemist	qu marquee	que plaque			
/d/ dog	dd ladder	ed coloured						
/e/ egg	ea head							
/f/ fish	ff fluff	ph graph	gh rough					
/g/ gate	gg digger	gh ghost	gu guard					
/h/ hat								
/i/ ink	y cygnet							
/j/ jug	ge cabbage	-dge hedge	g (soft) germ	g (soft) giraffe	g (soft) gypsy			
(k see /c/)								
/l/ leg	-ll bell		'schwa' effect	-le table	-il pencil	-al animal	-el label	-ol symbol
/m/ map	mm hammer	mb thumb	mn hymn					

/n/ nut	nn funny	kn knock	gn gnat					
/o/ octopus	(w)a wasp	(wh)a what	(qu)a quad					
/p/ pen	pp apple							
/qu/ queen								
/r/ rat	rr curry	wr wrist	rh rhyme					
/s/ sun	ss kiss	se house	ce palace	sc scent	ps psychic	C (soft) certain	C (soft) city	C (soft) cycle
/t/ tin	tt otter	ed jumped	bt debt	pt receipt				
/u/ umbrella	o love	ou famous						
/v/ van	-ve give							
/w/ wing	wh wheel							
/x/ box	-ks books	-k-s cakes	(gz) exam					
/y/ yellow								
/z/ zoo	zz buzz	s was	se please	ze breeze				
/ch/ chin	tch patch							
/sh/ shell	ch chef	ti station	ci musician	ssi mission				
/th/ moth								
/th/ this								
/ng/ ring	nk (ng+k) drink							
/ai/ aim	ay tray	a table	a-e gate	ey grey	eigh eight	ea steak	ei vein	
/ee/ eel	ea eat	e me	y rainy	ey key	e-e swede	ie thief	i radio	
/igh/ light	ie pie	y fly	i blind	i-e bike				

/oa/ oak	o gold	ow blow	oe toe	o-e rope	ough dough			
/ue/ statue	u unicorn	ew news	u-e cube					
/oo/ book	oul should	u put						
/oo/ moon	ew brew	ue blue	u-e flute	ui fruit				
/ou/ out	ow owl	ough bough						
/oi/ oil	oy boy							
/er/ herbs	ir girl	ur purse	ear earth	(w)or worm	our journey	-re centre		
/ar/ arm	(a) (grass)	al calm						
/or/ ornament	aw claw	au sauce	al chalk	oor door	ore snore	our four	(w)ar wart	oar oar
/air/ aircraft	ear tear	are share	ere there	eir their	heir heirloom			
/eer/ cheerful	ear ears	ere here	ier pier					
/zh/ television	si television	z azure	s treasure					

Characteristics of the English writing system include:

1. one sound can be represented by one, two or more letters (e.g. z, p, sh, ng, igh)
2. one sound can be represented by different spellings (e.g. o, oa, ow, oe, o-e, ough)
3. one spelling can represent multiple sounds (e.g. ough - though, thought, through, bough)

In the alphabetic code chart above, slashes // denote phonemes (sounds) and **key words** provide an example word for each letter/s-sound correspondence.

Grey correspondences denote consonant phonemes and black correspondences denote vowel phonemes.

Different phonics programmes have different versions of a 'simple code' therefore the order of introduction of any letter/s-sound correspondences should be determined by the chosen programme and decodable reading books.

NOTE:

- Treat the letter 'x' as one unit of sound although it is really two: 'x' = /k+/s/ = ks; but look at words such as 'box', 'fox', 'ox' and compare with words such as 'books' and 'likes' where letter 'k' and letter 's' each represent one unit of sound
- Treat the letters 'qu' as one unit of sound for teaching at the simple code level: 'qu' = /k+/w/ = kw
- Treat the letters 'nk' as one unit of sound for early teaching although it is really two: 'nk' = /ng+/k/
- The letters 'ue' can be an /oo/ sound or two sounds: /y+/oo/ = yoo but treat the letters flexibly by trying 'yoo' or the /oo/ sound when reading and consider the 'ue' as in words such as 'statue' as if it was one sound unit

www.syntheticphonics.com
www.rff.org.uk
www.dyslexics.org.uk

Debbie Hepplewhite's website
The Reading Reform Foundation
Susan Godsland's award-winning site