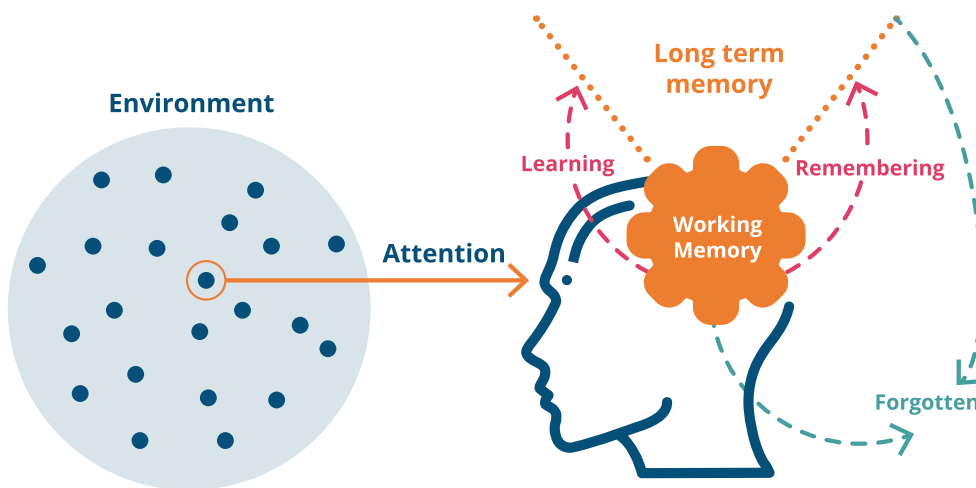


## Providing repeated practice: Practice throughout the day

***‘Practice makes permanent’*** Sir Bobby Robson, England Football Manager



*‘If children do not practise reading and writing enough, they fail to make sufficient progress. Activities must be high quality, practical, efficient and focused on the main goal – reading and spelling using phonics.’*

[The reading framework: Teaching the foundations of literacy](#) (DfE, 2021)

### The importance of practice beyond the phonics lesson

Repeated practice beyond the phonics lesson helps children move their new learning into their long-term memory. Children learn to read by first sounding and blending words, and then reading them ‘straight off’, without overt sounding and blending. Once this has been practised sufficiently, recognition of these words becomes automatic, and they are held as an orthographic store in a highly specialised area of the brain that expert neurologist Stanislas Dehaene calls ‘the brain’s letterbox’. This orthographic store, and the instantaneous recall it enables, is the basis of fluent reading. It is important to remember that the orthographic store is most effectively built up through extensive practice of the sounding-blending-reading process, which establishes the necessary neural pathways, not through trying to memorise countless whole words.

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We recommend whole-class teaching for the phonics lesson, so the teacher knows exactly what has been taught, and has a good idea of which GPCs, words and tricky words need additional practice.

### **Practice across the curriculum**

Reinforce the phonics learned in the daily lessons through other subject areas whenever the children are reading, writing and spelling.

At the end of these lessons, ask the children to review their writing to check if they have spelled words containing the GPCs and the tricky words you have revised correctly.

### **Embedding phonic knowledge through writing**

When practising writing graphemes and words in the phonics lessons, we advise that children do so on whiteboards so teachers can use the 'show me' feedback technique to see and correct children's work immediately.

We would also advise that children write at desks during the Review lesson when they are writing a short, dictated sentence.

When embedding phonics through writing outside the phonics lesson, ensure children are writing at desks on paper and with the correct posture and pencil grip.

### **Teaching handwriting – in addition to the phonics lesson**

Handwriting should be taught in a separate lesson to the letter formation activity during the teaching of graphemes in Phase 2. This is where you can concentrate on all aspects of handwriting.

Use the formation phrases to teach correct letter formation for each grapheme. (See Phase 2 grapheme information sheets [Autumn 1](#) and [Autumn 2](#).)

The Little Wandle letter formation is print. Cursive or pre-cursive should not be taught in Reception. This is in line with the DfE policies and The reading framework (2021), which explain why teaching cursive can be deleterious:

*'... it slowed down children's writing, at a point when they already found manual dexterity tricky and the muscles in their shoulders, arms and hands were still developing.'*

From [Bold beginnings: The Reception curriculum in a sample of good and outstanding primary schools](#) (Ofsted, 2017)

### **Embedding spelling**

Choose words that have been taught in the previous week to practise spellings and help children become more fluent in spelling words with the GPCs they have learned. Or you can choose to focus on reviewing one GPC each spelling session.

Use this time to practise and embed spelling for children in Year 1 especially, and as a challenging extension for children in Reception.

Keep these sessions short and fun!

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- Use the spelling routines as outlined in the [Reception and Year 1 Practise and apply: Spelling 'How to' video](#) and the [Prompt cards](#). Model how to spell the first word.
  - Provide less support for subsequent words.
  - Make sure that you model and check the correct spelling of each word.
  - Consider a quick quiz once a week to see how well the children can spell independently.

### **Additional dictation**

Challenge children to apply their secure phonic knowledge in short, dictated sentences.

- Use the 'sentences to read' in the weekly grids from a few weeks previously as dictations.
- Choose sentences that practise words the children can read with ease: spelling has a higher cognitive load than reading.
- Choose shorter sentences and avoid any sentences that require complex punctuation such as inverted commas.
- Remember the purpose of these dictations is to practise accurate spelling not punctuation!
- Use the dictation routine as outlined in the Reception and Year 1 [Practise and apply: Write the sentence 'How to' video](#) and the [Prompt cards](#).
- Make sure that you model and check the correct spelling of the sentence.

### **Quick flash reviews**

Make time for additional practice in short bursts. Use these to quickly review recent teaching and retrieve GPCs and words from previous terms. Use activities such as:

- Timed reading of GPCs/words/tricky words.
- Reading words quickly: ask children to find the digraph and then read the word fluently.
- Reading longer words using the chunking method. Aim to read some longer words fluently each time.

### **Seizing every opportunity**

The more children practise reading the GPCs and words, the more quickly these will move into their long-term memory and the orthographic store. Use every opportunity to practise:

- as children are lining up
- by the serving hatch at lunch
- by having grapheme cards your pockets to flash to children
- using 'stop and say' with grapheme cards and words – outside the phonics lesson.

### Reception: Oral blending games throughout the day

Use the oral blending games throughout the day to grow children's confidence and phonemic awareness. See the [Reception 'How to' oral blending videos](#) and [Prompt cards](#) for these activities. Make sure these games are short and lively and fun!

### Teacher-led blending through the day

Use teacher-led blending to help children read words throughout the day, either as a whole class or individually. Informal practice of blending with children in Reception is a powerful way to get the additional practice that turns a wobbly blender into a confident little blender! Make sure these sessions are short, warm and successful. See the [Keep-up Phase 2 Blending and reading words 'How to' videos](#) to see a graduated approach to teaching blending.

### Displays

- Don't make displays of words static, otherwise they become wallpaper – move words and GPCs around.
- Display friezes and posters in corridors and cloakrooms library and any other breakout area where reading is taught.

### Activities that can hinder learning

There are instances where phonics practice should not be embedded into learning activities, as explained in The reading framework (2021):

*'Activities such as painting, colouring, modelling, playing in the sand and water tray are valuable for developing language, knowledge, cooperative play, fine motor skills, imagination and creativity. Using them as vehicles for practising phonics not only takes away the integrity of the activities but also does not provide sufficient practice in word reading, for example, when 'fishing' for words in a water tray, or painting or making models of letters.'*

[The reading framework: Teaching the foundations of literacy](#) (DfE, 2021)