



15 Things
you should



know
about
synthetic

phonics

teaching



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1. Synthetic phonics is about synthesising letter sounds in order to pronounce words. When a child learns synthetic phonics from the start of their learning experience they are able to learn just a few letter sounds, usually S A T and P and then start blending these into words straight away.

2. The new sounds are learnt very rapidly and as soon as each new letter sound is learnt the pupil is taught to blend these with other letter sounds already learnt. In this way a whole new range of words is built up.

3. Children progress quickly: In a longitudinal study by Johnston and Watson in 2004 it was discovered that children learning by a synthetic phonic method rather than with analytic phonics were 7 months ahead of what would be expected for their age in word reading and spelling.

4. Irregular words can be read by analogy: A criticism of synthetic phonics often rests around the idea that the pupils will have problems reading irregular words. The study by the aforementioned Watson and Johnston (2004) examined this premise and found that children taught by the synthetic phonics approach could read irregular words by analogy being able to work out parts of the word and guessing the rest by analogy.

5. Boys can progress at the same rate as girls: Many studies through the world have shown that boys do not read as well as girls. However, when boys and girls were taught by the synthetic phonics method it was discovered that by the end of Year 3 that the boys were performing as well as the girls and in some cases they were able to read words significantly better.

6. Synthetic phonics teaching can help the progress of children from deprived areas: Studies by Duncan and Seymour 2000 and Stuart et al 1998 found that children from deprived areas perform less well at reading than those from more advantaged areas. However when exposed to the same synthetic phonics teaching methods the progress of both groups was initially identical. The children from a disadvantaged background only started lagging behind again towards the end of their primary schooling.

7. Why does synthetic phonic teaching help children from a deprived background? Research suggests that the major inequality is their lack of letter knowledge. These children are less likely to have been carrying out literacy related learning at home. When exposed to synthetic phonics this disadvantage was overcome because of the rapidity at which the letter sounds are learnt.

8. Phonemic awareness is very important in the acquisition of reading skills. Both teachers and pupils need to have a good understanding of phonemes as the synthetic method is based on the blending of phonemes in order to read unfamiliar words

9. What is a phoneme? It is the smallest meaningful sound in our language. here are some phonemes: a b c d e f ch st ph A single phoneme can change the meaning

of a word eg Hut But Cut Jut Nut This is called phoneme substitution. A phoneme is substituted for another to form a new word. 10. There are 26 letters of the alphabet but 40-44 phonemes depending on regional accent. [Click here](#) for a chart giving all the phonemes.

11. Onset and Rime establishes a pattern for children to learn new words. ONSET is the first phoneme in the word and RIME is the last part of the word. eg cat C is the onset at is the rime. Think of all the new words that can be made just by being able to recognise the rime and adding a new onset: bat fat hat mat pat rat sat

12. First, Last and Middle sounds of words: Studies have shown that children have a fairly good awareness of the phonemes at the beginning of a word but often struggle to identify the last sound and particularly struggle to identify the middle sound in a word. The Burt Reading Scheme has identified this and module 1 has many worksheets to help children with middle and end sounds of words.

13. Children learn phoneme awareness better in the context of letters and print compared to learning without this concrete visual support.

14. Using phoneme awareness: Children who learn phoneme awareness using letters and print develop significantly better reading and spelling skills than those who do not.

15. Children's preschool phoneme awareness ability is associated with early literacy skills eg knowledge of letters of the alphabet and the ability to recognise environmental print such as product names on sweet wrappers.

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