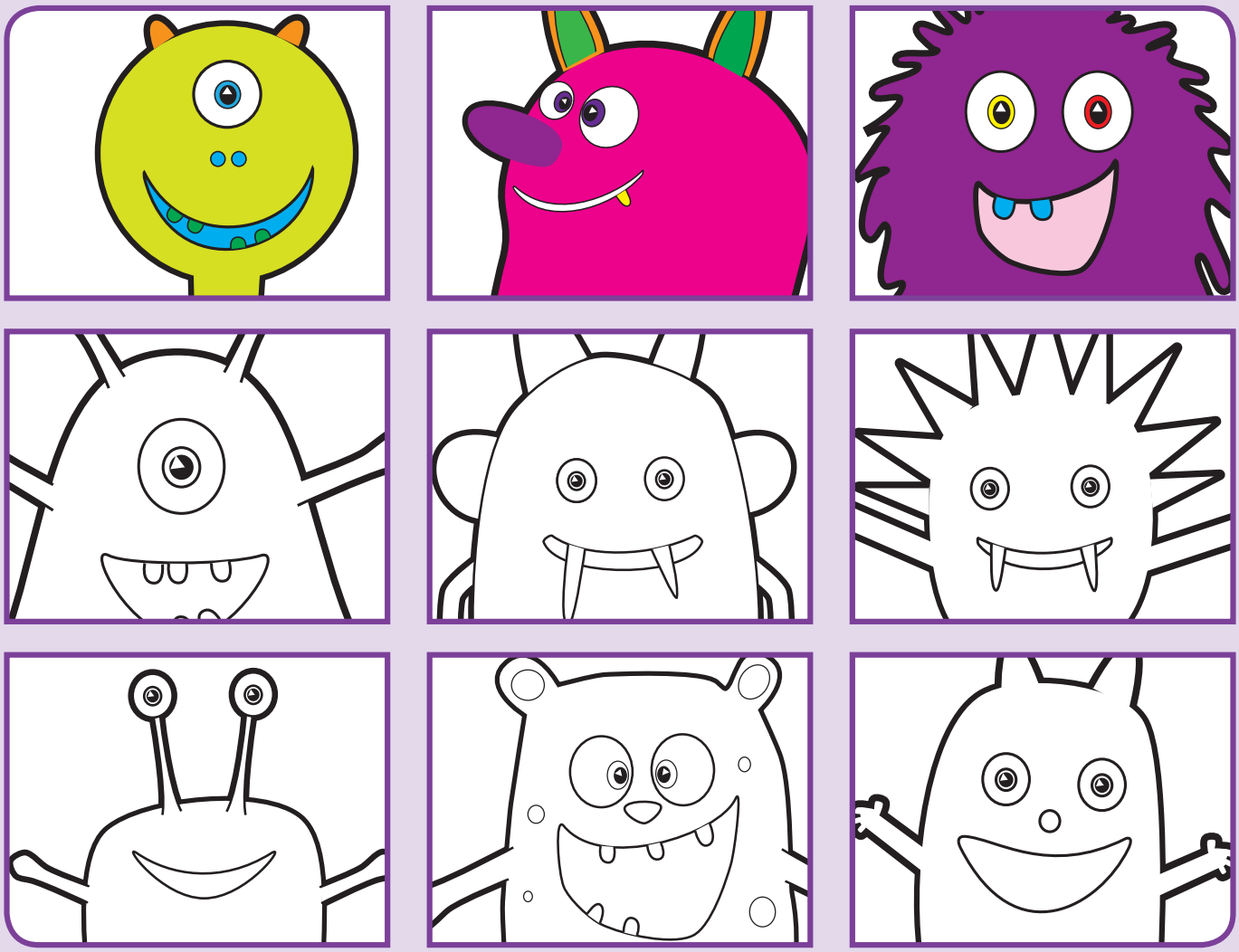
Year 1 Phonics Check

Administration guide



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Year 1 Phonics Check

1 | Introduction

This guidance is for schools administering the Year 1 Phonics Check. This guidance is for:

- school leaders
- teachers.

The Year 1 Phonics Check is recommended for administration in Term 1 or Term 3. It can be used to assess Year 1 and Year 2 students, as well as older struggling readers.

The Year 1 Phonics Check will confirm if students are developing the phonics knowledge they need to be successful in their reading, spelling and writing programs. As a first step, teachers can respond to student performance in the Year 1 Phonics Check by reviewing their existing phonics program and then design appropriate differentiated learning and intervention processes for reading, spelling and writing.

An understanding of phonics is foundational to the development of writing, spelling and reading skills and is one component of *The Big 6 components of reading*. In the Australian Curriculum English learning area, phonics and word knowledge begins in Foundation and continues through until the end of Year 6, but with ongoing application in Years 7 to 10. Phonological and phonemic awareness will continue to be applied to written words as students develop their spelling knowledge in Year 3 and beyond. The literacy general capabilities in the Australian Curriculum maps the development of these skills. Phonics is an integral part of writing, spelling and reading.

2 | School leaders' responsibilities

School leaders should ensure:

- students with disabilities are catered for (eg by modifying materials)
- the check is administered by the student's trained teacher rather than another support person
- all teachers review this guide and the Year 1 Phonics Check support materials prior to administering and scoring the check
- students' responses are scored accurately and consistently
- teachers review results and reflect on the effectiveness of the present whole-school phonics program
- teachers plan differentiated learning for their students
- any students who did not perform well in the check receive appropriate support in phonics.

3 | Participating students

The Year 1 Phonics Check should be administered to students by their teacher. The principal or a school leader, with advice from the teacher, should decide if it is not appropriate for a student to participate in the check. All students should be included in the check unless they have no understanding of grapheme-phoneme correspondences, for example, the student has recently arrived in Australia from a non-English speaking background; a student has a language or developmental delay.

Students who do not formally participate in the Year 1 Phonics Check could be provided with a similar experience by modifying the practice sheet to their level so they can demonstrate their skills, for example, by including only single letters or consonant-vowel-consonant pattern words.

4 | Preparing for the check

4.1 | Year 1 Phonics Check platform

The online Year 1 Phonics Check platform allows Australian schools to set up classes, assign checks to students, conduct the check and report on student results. In addition to this Administration Guide, the following technical user manuals support schools through these steps on the Year 1 Phonics Check platform.

1. *Phonics Check user manual: register and manage user accounts*
   This manual provides instructions for school administrators and teachers on how to register for the platform and manage user accounts.

2. *Phonics Check user manual: Phonics Check delivery*
   This manual provides instructions for school administrators and teachers on how to set up classes and add students, conduct the check, and view reports.

4.2 | Year 1 Phonics Check materials

When setting up a check, you will be asked to choose one of the following delivery modes:

1. **QR code mode (online): My students will use their own device**
   Scan the QR code to allow your students to see the words using their own device.
2. **Presentation mode (online): I will use a screen projector or a second screen for my students**
   Show the words to your students in a new window on your projector screen or on any second screen available to you.
3. **Offline mode: I will be doing the check offline**
   Print the Year 1 Phonics Check student materials and answer sheet to conduct the check with your students offline and then record the results online at a later time.

Before you begin using the Year 1 Phonics Check with your students, familarise yourself with the online platform and the materials for your delivery mode. The table below details the test materials, their purpose and which materials are needed for the different delivery mode.

Year 1 Phonics Check test materials	Purpose	Delivery mode	
		Online	Offline
Practice sheet	Provides examples of real and pseudo words to familiarise students with the format of the check	✓	✓
Scoring guidance	Provides advice on acceptable pronunciations of the real and pseudo words students will encounter in the check	✓	✓
Example script	Provides a consistent script to use for delivering the check to students	✓	✓
Student materials	Provides the pseudo and real words for students to read aloud during the administration of the check		✓
Answer sheet	Provides a template to record students' responses to each item on the check, including comments to support analysis		✓ One copy per student

4.3 | Adapting check materials

Most students will use standard versions of the Year 1 Phonics Check, but you may adapt check materials to meet students' specific needs. Email the Literacy Hub <helpdesk@literacyhub.edu.au> for a Word version of the student materials. Examples of modifications may include:

- changing the font
- changing the font size
- having fewer words per page
- removing the imaginary creatures for any students that might find them distracting.

4.4 | Teachers' responsibilities

Teachers should:

- be familiar with the sample materials
- ensure they understand and feel confident about:
  - administering the check
  - amending the check for students with additional needs, for example, font size, background colour
  - dealing with administration issues (such as rest breaks) during the check
  - scoring the check (see section 5.3, p. 6)
- administer the check on a one-to-one basis
- use the check results plan to differentiated learning for their students.

4.5 | Choosing a space

Administer the check in a quiet space, which is comfortable and well-lit.

4.6 | Students with additional needs

For students with additional needs, make adjustments for your students based on normal classroom practice. Modifications should not unfairly benefit individual students. Using the practice sheet with students may reveal if any individual students need modifications to be made – for example, fewer words per page, changing font or font size, allowing for a rest break. If you modify the sample script (see section 7, p. 8), make sure not to refer to any words which are in the actual check.

4.7 | Allocating time

There is no time limit for completing the Year 1 Phonics Check. Most students take between 5 to 7 minutes to complete the check. Give students enough time to respond to each word (10 seconds is usually enough). If needed, give individual students short rest breaks but **finish the check on the same day**.

5 | Administering the check

5.1 | Practice and administration

Practice

- Introduce the Year 1 Phonics Check to each student as consistently as possible, providing enough information to those students who do not initially understand the task. See section 7 (p. 8) for an example of how you could introduce the check.
- As part of introducing the check, use the practice sheet to familiarise students with the task. The practice sheet has 4 pseudo-words on one page and 4 real words on the other page.
- Provide further guidance using the practice sheet, if needed, to ensure students understand the task. Remind the student the sounds must be blended together to say the whole word. Demonstrate what you mean by using one of the practice words. (However, this instruction must not be given during the actual check.)

Administration

- When administering the check, it is important to tell students when there are real words presented on the page or when there are made up words on the page for imaginary creatures presented.
- You may prompt the student to move to the next word but be careful not to do so while they are in the process of decoding the word.
- You can indicate which word comes next but be careful not to provide decoding clues, for example, by pointing left to right.
- Offer encouragement and support when administering the check but do not indicate whether the student has decoded the word correctly or not.
- You know your students best and will recognise when it is appropriate to take a rest break. If a student is struggling, you may choose to end the session. It is recommended that most students are given the opportunity to attempt the first section of pseudo words and the first five real words at a minimum.

5.2 | Recording student responses

- For offline delivery, use the answer sheets to record responses. For online delivery modes, follow the on-screen prompts to record responses.
- Add your own comments to help you plan future phonics teaching, for example, *blending was difficult, grapheme was unknown*. It is important to record both the errors and the nature of the errors. See section 8 (p. 9) for an example of common annotations and the types of errors students may make.

5.3 | Scoring the Year 1 Phonics Check

- Refer to the scoring guidance sheet for acceptable pronunciations of the check's pseudo-words, for example, *blan* this uses the '*bl*' from '*black*' and rhymes with '*pan*'. This is also available in the Year 1 Phonics Check platform for online delivery modes.
- Record on the answer sheet whether the student said the word correctly or not. Students score one point for the correct decoding of each word, for a total score out of 40. In the Year 1 Phonic Check platform, teachers record student responses using the 'Got it' or 'Not yet' buttons and the platform automatically scores students' responses.

- Use the following table when scoring the student's response:

Score as 'Got it'	Score as 'Not yet'
Sounds out the phonemes, or names the letters, and then says the word	Sounds out the phonemes but does not blend the word (no prompting allowed)
Elongates the phonemes but then blends them to form the word	Elongates the phonemes but leaves gaps and doesn't blend them
Uses alternative pronunciations of graphemes in pseudo-words	Inappropriate pronunciations of real words, for example, reading '*blow*' to rhyme with '*cow*'
Corrects initial attempts and finishes with the correct pronunciation	Correctly attempts a word but then recorrects and finishes with an incorrect pronunciation
Pronunciation difficulties, for example, student usually says '*fw*' for '*th*'	
Words pronounced with the student's accent	

6 | Analysing and reporting results

Results from the Year 1 Phonics Check can be useful at a whole cohort level, as well as at a classroom level. Teachers can access student results in the online platform. Results can be analysed to plan for allocation of learning support and to determine next steps in instruction. The *Year 1 Phonics Check: analysing and responding to results* provides further detail.

The expected achievement level is 28 out of 40 items. This is a guide for what is reasonable to expect for Year 1 students in the second half of the year, in line with the requirements of the Australian Curriculum. Please note that this is not a pass/fail mark. Rather it is an indication of the score a student might achieve if their phonics learning is progressing as expected.

Students who score lower than 28 may be considered for phonics-related intervention support - either within or in addition to the classroom program. If many Year 1 students in a class or cohort score less than 28, this is an indication that a review of your existing phonics program may be needed.

Some questions to consider:

- Did your students do as well as you expected?
- Were there any surprises? For example, which students performed better/worse than expected? Is it clear why?
- How close to mastery of the grapheme-phoneme correspondences are your students? What do they need to learn next?

Please refer to the *Year 1 Phonics Check: analysing and responding to results* booklet when designing learning following the screening check. This document will provide a more detailed analysis for students who are struggling with learning to decode words.

7 | Sample script

Introducing the Year 1 Phonics Check

In this activity, I am going to ask you to read some words aloud.

You may have seen some of the words before and others will be new to you.

You should try to read each word but don't worry if you can't. If it helps you, you may sound out the letters before trying to say the word.

This 'practice sheet' shows you what the words will look like.

Have a go at reading out loud these four words which you may have come across before [in, at, beg and sum].

The words on this side [turn over 'practice sheet'] are not real words. They are made up names for imaginary creatures. You can see a picture of the creature next to each word.

Can you read out the words on this page for me [ot, vap, osk and ect]?

Now we are going to start reading out the words in the activity and I'm going to make some notes.

Can you start reading the words to me?

8 | Annotating student errors – example

Recording incorrect responses in a meaningful way will give teachers a clearer means of analysing the data collected from the Year 1 Phonics Check. For teachers using the answer sheet, below is a sample of one way of annotating student responses in the Got it and Not yet columns.

Student response	Notation	Example annotation	
		Got it	Not yet
correctly sounded	Mark each correctly sounded letter with a tick	✓✓✓ l i g	
omission of sound	Strike through the omitted letter sound		flo∅st
substitution	Write the substituted letter above the letter in the word		g ✓✓✓✓ c r i f f
insertion – with sounding out	Add the sound and place a caret where the sound was added		✓✓✓m✓ s h u p ^
insertion – without sounding out	Some students will just say the word with the additional sound included – so just record the insertion		m s h u p ^
self-corrected (SC)	Write SC above the corrected letter (or after the corrected word, for example, student says 'brast' then 'barst' SC)	SC d b a r s t	
repeated sound (R)	Write an R above the repeated sound or after the repeated word	✓✓ R ✓✓✓ s t r i b e s t r i b e R	
incorrectly blended	Write the incorrect word in the incorrect column of the answer sheet		✓✓✓✓✓ w o a t s wats
letter name said instead of sound	Mark the letter as a capital		M✓✓ m e p
digraph read as two separate sounds	Write the sounds with a \ between them		✓o\i✓ d o i l
reversal of adjacent letters sounds	Make a curved arrow between reversed letter sounds		✓ᔓ✓✓ t r a m

Notes

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