

WORD ATTACK REFERENCE GUIDE



THE 44 PHONEMES

A phoneme is an individual speech sound in a word. A grapheme is the letter or letter combination that represents a speech sound. Based on regional differences and influences of other languages, it is difficult to classify speech sounds. Not all linguists agree on the exact number of phonemes in the English language. However, cognitive scientists have determined that the ability to discern individual speech sounds is one important component of learning how to read.

Most reading programs identify 44 phonemes that students must learn. Following is a list of the 44 phonemes taught in Fulton County Schools along with the most common letters or letter combinations that represent those sounds. The list does not include all possible graphemes for a given phoneme. For a demonstration of how to accurately pronounce each phoneme, watch the [44 Phonemes](#) video from the Rollins Center.

PHONEMES		GRAPHEMES		EXAMPLES
speech sounds		letter or letter combinations representing the <u>most common</u> spellings for the individual phonemes		
CONSONANT SOUNDS:				
1.	/p/	p		pat, spa, stomp
2.	/b/	b		but, brought, stubble
3.	/m/	m, mb, mn		milk, bomb, autumn
4.	/t/	t, tt, ed		tent, putt, missed
5.	/d/	d, ed		desk, dress, summed
6.	/n/	n, kn, gn		neck, know, gnaw
7.	/k/	c, k, ck, ch, q(u)		cot, kettle, deck, chorus, unique, quit
8.	/g/	g, gh		get, ghost
9.	/ng/	ng, n		rang, dank
10.	/f/	f, ff, ph, gh		half, staff, asphalt, rough
11.	/v/	v, ve		very, give
12.	/s/	s, ss, sc, ps		suit, pass, scent, psycho
13.	/z/	z, zz, se, s, x		zen, fuzz, rise, his
14.	/th/	th		thing, bath, ether
15.	/th/	th		that, seethe, weather
16.	/sh/	sh, ss, s, ch, sc, ti, si, ci		shawl, pressure, sugar, chagrin, conscious, spatial, mission, special
17.	/zh/	s, z, si, ge		measure, seizure, vision, rouge

18.	/ch/	ch, tch, (tu)	cheese, sketch, (furniture)
19.	/j/	j, dge, ge	judge, page
20.	/l/	l, ll, le	lice, pill, bubble
21.	/r/	r, wr	rat, wrist
22.	/y/	y, (eu, u), i	your, Europe, unique, onion
23.	/w/	w, (q)u	want, question
24.	/wh/	wh	whale
25.	/h/	h, wh	harm, whose
SHORT VOWEL SOUNDS:			
26.	/ă/	a	cat
27.	/ĕ/	e, ea	bed, breath
28.	/ĭ/	i, y	sit, gym
29.	/ŏ/	o, a	fox, swap
30.	/Û/	u, o, oo, ou	cup, cover, flood, tough
LONG VOWEL SOUNDS:			
31.	/ā/	a_e, ai, ay, ea ,a, eigh, ei, ey	make, rain, play, great, baby, eight, vein, they
32.	/ē/	ee, e_e, e, ea, ey, y, ie, ei	see, these, me, eat, key, happy, chief, either
33.	/ī/	i_e, ie, y, igh, i	time, pie, cry, right, rifle
34.	/ō/	o_e, oa, oe, ow, o	vote, boat, toe, snow, go
35.	/ū/	oo, u_e, ue, ew, ui, ou	moo, tube, blue, chew, suit, soup
36.	/yū/	u_e, ew, u, eu	cute, few, universe, feud
VOWEL DIPHTHONGS:			
37.	/oi/	oi, oy	oil, boy
38.	/ou/	ou, ow	out, cow
R-CONTROLLED VOWEL SOUNDS:			
39.	/er/	er, ur, ir	her, fur, sir
41.	/ar/	ar	cart
41.	/or/	or	sport
OTHER VOWEL SOUNDS:			
42.	/aw/	aw, au, a, ough	saw, pause, call, bought
43.	/oo/	oo, u, ou	took, put, could
44.	/ə/	a, o, e, i, u	about, lesson, elect, definition, circus
	Schwa is the empty vowel in the unaccented syllable of a word pronounced /Û/ or /ĭ/.		

SOUNDING OUT HARD WORDS

When a child gets stuck on a hard word:

1. Prompt the child to
 - Look carefully at all letters.
 - Sound out the word.
2. Ask the child, “Does that make sense?” or “Is that a word you know?”
3. Explain the pronunciation. You might tap out the individual sounds in the word with the child. For example, the word “switch” has 4 sounds or phonemes: /s/ /w/ /i/ /tch/
4. Ask the child to re-read the sentence with correct pronunciation.

DIVIDING WORDS INTO SYLLABLES

Pronouncing multi-syllabic words can be a challenge for many developing readers. A syllable is a unit of pronunciation organized around a vowel. Before applying the strategy of Sounding Out Hard Words it can be helpful to break a multi-syllabic word into its syllables.

1. Two consonants between two vowels

When vowels have two adjacent consonants between them, divide between the consonants. For example, if we divide napkin between the p and k, we have two manageable chunks that will likely be more familiar to a developing reader: nap-kin. Other examples include gar-den and com-pete.

2. One consonant between two vowels

First try dividing before the consonant. This will mean that the first syllable ends with a long vowel sound, such as in the word rival. This works about 75% of the time but does not work for a word like river. We would never say ri-ver. When the word does not make sense, have the child divide after the consonant: riv-er. River is a word we know.

3. Consonant blends and digraphs stick together

For example, we do not break separate the cr in se-cret. Other examples include spec-trum, e-ther, and sta-ple.