2022 national curriculum assessments

Key stage 1

Standards
& Testing
Agency

Phonics screening check

2022 scoring guidance

Pronunciation of real words and pseudo-words

Some of the graphemes used in the check represent a number of different phonemes. When decoding a real word in the check, the pupil has to select the correct phoneme for the word, for example the 'ow' in 'blow' should not be pronounced as the 'ow' in 'cow'. However, when decoding a pseudo-word, all plausible alternative pronunciations are acceptable.

The tables on the next page provide guidance to teachers scoring the check on acceptable pronunciations of the pseudo-words in the check.

Regional pronunciations

Some of the pseudo-words in the screening check contain letters which can be pronounced in different ways when read aloud according to the regional accent of a pupil, for example, vowel digraphs that end with 'r', such as 'ar'. In a small number of regional accents the 'r' in words with these vowel digraphs is voiced and pupils who speak with these accents will be known to their teachers. For these pupils, pseudo-words with a vowel digraph ending in 'r', such as 'nart', may be pronounced as /nɑrt/ instead of /nɑːt/. Valid alternative pronunciations related to regional accents are acceptable in the relevant pseudo-words and will be listed in the scoring guidance.

Contact details
For more information about the phonics screening check, please contact the national curriculum assessments helpline on 0300 303 3013 or email assessments@education.gov.uk.

Section 1

Pseudo-word	Acceptable pronunciation	Phonemic representation
bem	This item uses the 'b' from 'bad' and rhymes with 'gem'.	/bɛm/
dax	This item uses the 'd' from 'den' and rhymes with 'Max'.	/dæks/
kig	This item uses the 'k' from 'key' and rhymes with 'dig'.	/kɪg/
eld	This item combines the 'e' from 'egg' with the 'ld' from 'old'.	/ɛld/
besh	This item uses the 'b' from 'ball' and rhymes with 'mesh'.	/bɛʃ/
quab	This item uses the 'qu' from 'quid' and rhymes with 'jab' or 'swab'.	/kwæb/ or / kwɒb/
barp	This item uses the 'b' from 'boil' and rhymes with 'harp'.	/bɑ:p/ or /bɑrp/
chell	This item uses the 'ch' from 'check' and rhymes with 'smell'.	/tʃɛl/
grux	This item uses the 'gr' from 'grin' and rhymes with 'flux'. All regional pronunciations of the 'u' are acceptable.	/grʌks/ or /grʊks/
smung	This item uses the 'sm' from 'smell' and rhymes with 'flung'. All regional pronunciations of the 'u' are acceptable.	/smʌŋ/ or /smʊŋ/
nesk	This item uses the 'n' from 'newt' and rhymes with 'desk'.	/nɛsk/
foint	This item uses the 'f' from 'ferry' and rhymes with 'point'.	/fɔɪnt/

Section 2

Pseudo-word	Acceptable pronunciation	Phonemic representation
vair	This item uses the 'v' from 'vest' and rhymes with 'hair'. All regional pronunciations of the 'air' are acceptable.	/vɛə/ or /vɛər/
cloat	This item uses the 'cl' from 'clean' and rhymes with 'float'. All regional pronunciations of the 'oa' are acceptable.	/kləʊt/
tirt	This item uses the 't' from 'torn' and rhymes with 'dirt'. All regional pronunciations of the 'ir' are acceptable.	/tɜ:t/ or /tɜrt/
whike	This item uses the 'wh' from 'whale' and rhymes with 'spike'.	/waɪk/
plunt	This item uses the 'pl' from 'plank' and rhymes with 'stunt'. All regional pronunciations of the 'u' are acceptable.	/plʌnt/ or /plʊnt/
flards	This item uses the 'fl' from 'flank' and rhymes with 'cards'. All regional pronunciations of the 'ar' are acceptable.	/flɑ:dz/ or /flɑ:ds/ /flɑrdz/ or /flɑrds/
spran	This item uses the 'spr' from 'sprint' and rhymes with 'plan'.	/spræn/
splew	This item uses the 'spl' from 'splash' and rhymes with 'blue'.	/splu:/