

2026 national curriculum assessments

Key stage 1

**Standards
& Testing
Agency**

Phonics screening check

2026 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 child has to select the correct phoneme for the word, for example the 'ow' in 'blow' should not be pronounced as the 'ow' in 'cow'.

The tables on the next page provide guidance on some examples of common pronunciations of the pseudo-words in the check. When decoding a pseudo-word, all plausible alternative and regional pronunciations are acceptable.

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: When decoding a pseudo-word, all plausible alternative and regional pronunciations are acceptable.

Pseudo-word	Acceptable pronunciation	Phonemic representation
jad	This item uses the 'j' from 'jet' and rhymes with 'sad'.	/dʒæd/
kib	This item uses the 'k' from 'kit' and rhymes with 'bib'.	/kɪb/
tep	This item uses the 't' from 'tub' and rhymes with 'step'.	/tɛp/
ips	This item uses the 'i' from 'inn' and rhymes with 'lips'.	/ɪps/
vaff	This item combines the 'v' from 'vest' and the 'aff' from 'affect'.	/væf/
qued	This item uses the 'qu' from 'quid' and rhymes with 'red'.	/kwɛd/
dorl	This item combines the 'd' from 'dear' with the 'or' from 'for' and the 'l' from 'fool'.	/dɔ:l/
shars	This item uses the 'sh' from 'sheep' and rhymes with 'stars'.	/ʃɑ:s/ or /ʃɑ:z/
skop	This item uses the 'sk' from 'skim' and rhymes with 'stop'.	/skɒp/
crort	This item uses the 'cr' from 'crawl' and rhymes with 'snort'.	/krɔ:t/
zint	This item uses the 'z' from 'zips' and rhymes with 'hint'.	/zɪnt/
veest	This item combines the 'v' from 'views' with the 'ee' from 'feeds' and the 'st' from 'first'.	/vi:st/

Section 2: When decoding a pseudo-word, all plausible alternative and regional pronunciations are acceptable.

Pseudo-word	Acceptable pronunciation	Phonemic representation
jair	This item uses the 'j' from 'joke' and rhymes with 'lair'.	/dʒɛə/
plute	This item uses the 'pl' from 'place' and rhymes with 'flute'.	/plu:t/
yurp	This item uses the 'y' from 'yard' and rhymes with 'burp'.	/jɜ:p/
phime	This item uses the 'ph' from 'phone' and rhymes with 'grime'.	/faɪm/
grusp	This item uses the 'gr' from 'grunt' and rhymes with 'cusp'.	/grʌsp/
gloast	This item uses the 'gl' from 'glow' and rhymes with 'boast'.	/gləʊst/
splace	This item uses the 'spl' from 'split' and rhymes with 'face'.	/splɛɪs/
scrant	This item uses the 'scr' from 'scrape' and rhymes with 'chant'.	/skrɑ:nt/