Letters and Sounds: the six phases

New graphemes and tricky words in each phase, as set out in Letters and Sounds (DfES, 2007). Your child's school may use a different order.

Phase	When	New graphemes (sounds)	Tricky words
Phase 1	Nursery and start of Reception	No letters yet: listening to sounds, rhythm and rhyme, alliteration, voice sounds, oral blending and segmenting	-
Phase 2	Up to 6 weeks	s, a, t, p, i, n, m, d, g, o, c, k, ck, e, u, r, h, b, f, ff, l, ll, ss	the, to, I, no, go
Phase 3	Up to 12 weeks	j, v, w, x, y, z, zz, qu, ch, sh, th, ng, ai, ee, igh, oa, oo, ar, or, ur, ow, oi, ear, air, ure, er	he, she, we, me, be, was, you, they, all, are, my, her
Phase 4	4 to 6 weeks	No new graphemes: words with adjacent consonants, such as frog, jump and string	said, so, have, like, some, come, were, there, little, one, do, when, out, what
Phase 5	Throughout Year 1	ay, ou, ie, ea, oy, ir, ue, aw, wh, ph, ew, oe, au, a-e, e-e, i-e, o-e, u-e, plus alternative pronunciations and spellings	oh, their, people, Mr, Mrs, looked, called, asked, water, where, who, again, thought, through, work, mouse, many, laughed, because, different, any, eyes, friends, once, please
Phase 6	Throughout Year 2	Past tense, suffixes such as -ing, -ed, -er, -est, -ful and -ly, spelling longer words	-

Graphemes are the letters that write a sound: sh is one grapheme for one sound. Tricky words have a part that does not follow the phonics taught so far, so children learn that part by heart.

Practise each phase free at unlimitedsheets.co.uk/english/phonics/