

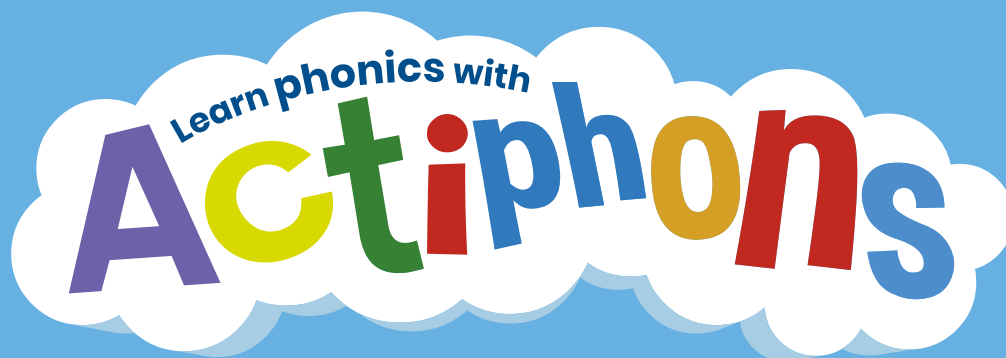


Learn phonics with

Actiphons

How to use
Actiphons





How to use Actiphons

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Learn phonics with **Actiphons**



Actiphons is an energetic phonics series for children who are learning to read. As children learn their letters and sounds with the Actiphons characters, they will become active learners – and lifelong readers!

Learning to read

A child's first step into reading is listening to stories being read to them as they follow the pictures in the book. When they start school or nursery, children begin to learn about phonics. Phonics teaches children to break words down into sounds that they can then read and understand. Each letter, or group of letters, makes its own particular sound. Actiphons introduces each sound in sequence, so that children can build up their knowledge to read more and more words.

Being active

Staying active helps children to be fit, healthy and ready to learn. Actiphons combines phonics with physical activity in a unique way. Physical literacy is at the heart of the programme and encourages children to develop key movement skills from an early age. For most children, this instinctively means throwing and catching, jumping, running and hopping – all the activities that the Actiphons characters love!

Building children's physical literacy in the early years is crucial. If they develop a positive attitude to physical activity early on, the benefits will stay with them for life.



Resources

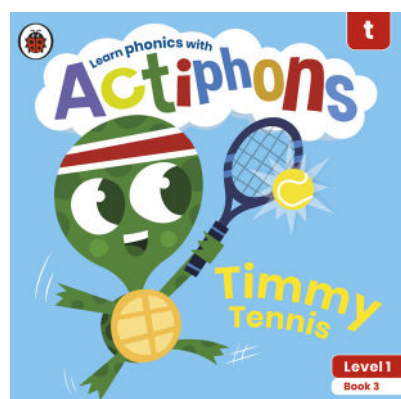
These materials support children as they develop key early phonics skills, having fun and keeping active along the way.

Storybooks, Audiobooks and Ebooks

70 carefully levelled storybooks, each one starring a different Actiphons character with a different physical action. Reading the storybooks in order will ensure your child progresses in a structured sequence through the different sounds. You can also listen along to the audiobooks with your child, and download each one as an ebook.

Level 1

23 storybooks



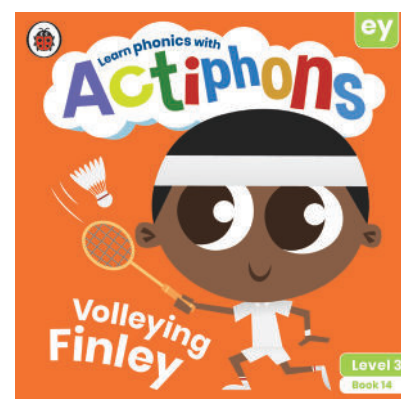
Level 2

28 storybooks



Level 3

19 storybooks



Flashcards

Flashcards to reinforce the letters and sounds, and to use in fun games and physical activities.



How to use Actiphons guide

An easy-to-follow guide to help you support your child as they progress through the series.

Songs and Songbooks

70 character songs for your child to sing along to and join in with the actions, as well as three songbooks to read along with.

Animations

70 animations so your child can watch each character perform their special action and hear their focus sound.

Posters

Three fun posters showing the Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 characters and their sound – ideal for whichever space you spend time reading in.

Reward charts

Three reward charts to acknowledge all the hard work your child has put in at each level!

Reading checks

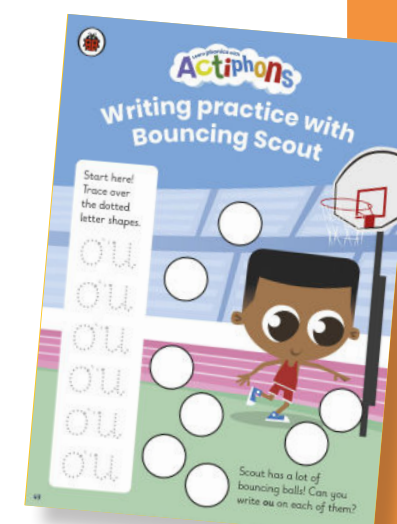
Reading checks and audio answer keys to assess your child's progress and reading confidence through the levels.

Certificates

Certificates to celebrate your child's progression in phonics as they read each set of storybooks and learn new sounds.

Teacher's Resource Pack

Resources and activities aimed at educators, as well as parents and carers who wish to further extend their child's learning with Actiphons.



Starting with phonics

Before children start to read letters and words, they are taught to become more aware of the sounds around them. The best way to increase children's awareness of sounds is through play and fun activities that focus on speaking, listening and communication.

Sounds all around!

Go on a listening walk together. Listen and talk about what you hear. Can your child copy the sounds?

Collect a set of noisy items, for example, a clinking set of keys, a rustling paper bag, a squeaky toy, some crunchy leaves, a rattling necklace of dried pasta and a bead-filled shaker. Experiment with making loud and soft sounds using these objects or everyday items such as a wooden spoon on a saucepan. Encourage your child to make and copy the sounds.

Read and sing rhyming stories and nursery rhymes with your child. Try making up sounds to match the words, or act out the stories using props.

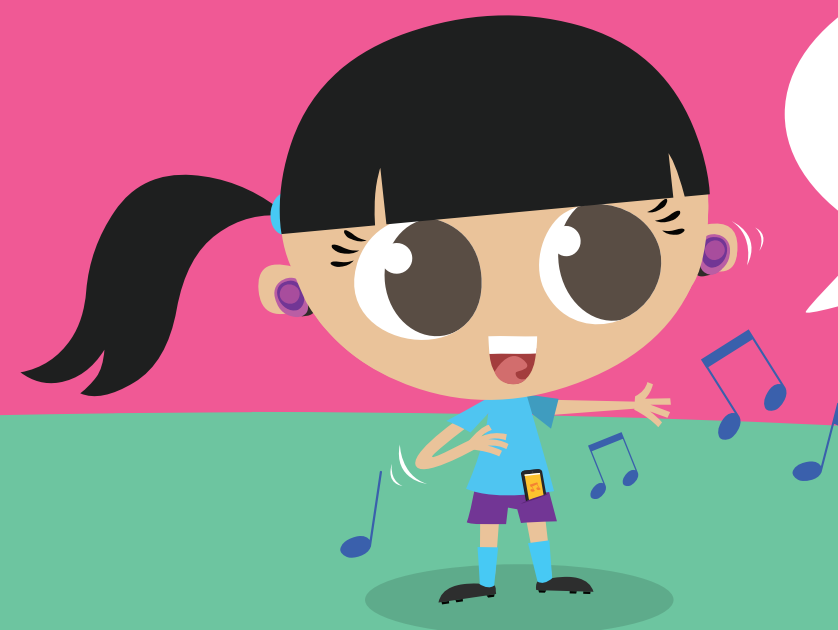


Encourage your child to make noises using simple percussion instruments (drum, tambourine, keyboard) or objects from around the house, such as pots and pans. Shake or tap along in time to a song.



Tap out a simple rhythm, using your hands or an instrument. Ask your child to copy the pattern of taps, then see if they can make up a rhythm for you to copy!

Have fun with body percussion! Encourage your child to experiment with the sounds they can make by clapping their hands, clicking their fingers, stamping their feet, tapping and patting different parts of their body. Experiment with loud sounds and soft sounds with corresponding movements, for example big, bold movements for loud sounds, and delicate, slow movements for softer sounds. Make up patterns of sounds for your child to copy.



I can sing!
La la la!

Alliteration

When a group of words starts with the same letter sound, it is called alliteration. Practising alliteration helps children to identify the first letter sound of a word.

Ask your child to listen as you read each of the following sentences out loud. Can they tell you the repeated sound in these sentences?

Walking Wendy wandered to the wild water.

Shot-put Sheena shook her shoe in shock.

Dancing Daisy's dotty dinosaurs are dancing.

Now create some more alliterative sentences together!

Take photos or videos of your child making the letter sounds. Talk about the shape their mouth makes. What happens to the sound if they change the shape of their mouths? Can they make a different sound with the same mouth shape?



Rhythm and rhyme

Introduce your child to simple pairs of rhyming words, such as **hop/top**, **dog/fog**. Say a short word and ask your child to think of a word that rhymes with it. (Nonsense rhyming words like **fun/lun**, **tap/pap**, **bat/dat** are fine!)



Play the Actiphons songs and encourage your child to listen for words that rhyme in the lyrics. Can they jump or clap along with the beat, or join in with an instrument?



Voice sounds

People can make all sorts of sounds with their voices – from whispering to shouting. Experimenting with these sounds encourages children to think about how they use their voice to form the sounds in words.

Make a voice sound, such as, 'Whee!' Ask your child to repeat this sound and adds another, for example, 'Whee, moo!' Take it in turns to add a new sound, but make sure you say the full list in the right order!

Talk about the noises that animals make, such as meow, woof, and squeak. Can your child make these noises with their own voice?



Oral blending and segmenting

Learning about oral blending and segmenting helps children to understand that words are made up of sounds that can be grouped together, moved and changed. It's a first step towards reading words on a page.

Oral blending:

blending sounds to say words out loud. If you say, 'c-a-t', your child can blend these sounds to say, 'cat'.

Oral segmenting:

breaking words down into sounds out loud. If you say, 'cat', your child can segment this word to say, 'c-a-t'.

For these activities, try to avoid blending and segmenting words that have two consonant sounds together, such as **train** or **milk**. Make sure you say the sounds clearly and consistently. Pronounce them as a pure sound without adding 'uh' to the end to give a crisp **t** and not 'tuh', for example.

Try sounding out a word when you ask children to do something, such as, 'Put on your **h-a-t**, **hat!**'

Introduce oral blending when sharing a story. Sound out and say a word at the end of a line, so it doesn't interrupt the story.

Pretend a robot has arrived for lunch and it can only speak using segmented words. You will need to sound out what you want to say for the robot to understand. Make up a menu with your child, then sound out the menu to your robot friend!

Level 1: Starting to read

Once children can recognise the sounds in spoken words, you can start to introduce letters – this is where reading words begins!

Your child may show an interest in printed letters before this point – perhaps when you are out and about, or when sharing a storybook. Let your child sit next to you while you are reading to them so that they can see the letter shapes on the page.

Encourage them to trace the letter shapes with their finger, but don't rush to move on to reading until they can blend and segment words out loud.



Phonemes and graphemes

In phonics, sounds and letters are referred to as phonemes and graphemes.

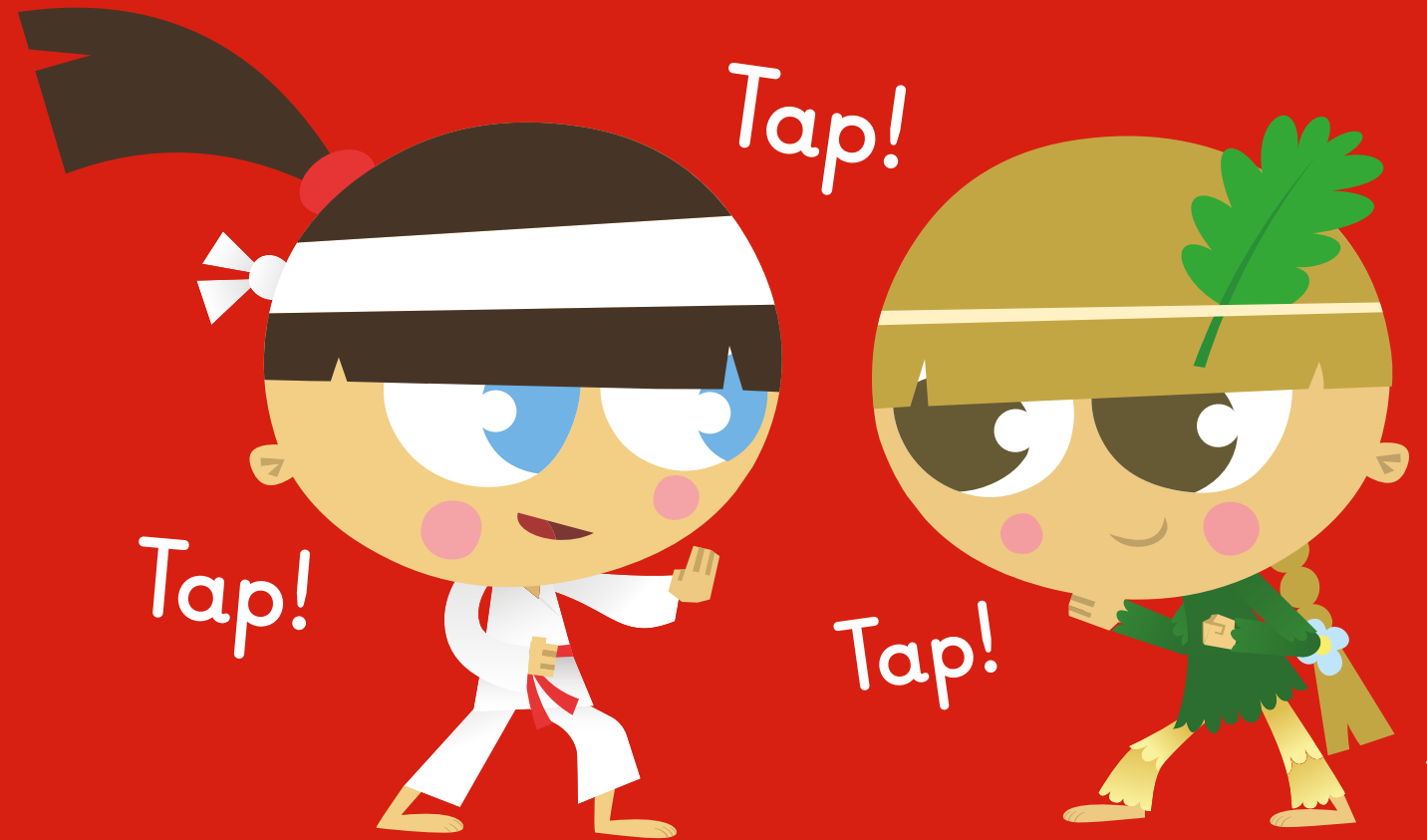
Phoneme: the sound made by a letter (or a group of letters).

Grapheme: the letter (or group of letters) that make the sound.



In Actiphons Level 1, your child will meet 23 new letter sounds, which are introduced gradually. Each book builds on the sounds that have been learned, so by the end of Level 1, your child will be able to confidently read words containing those 23 sounds.

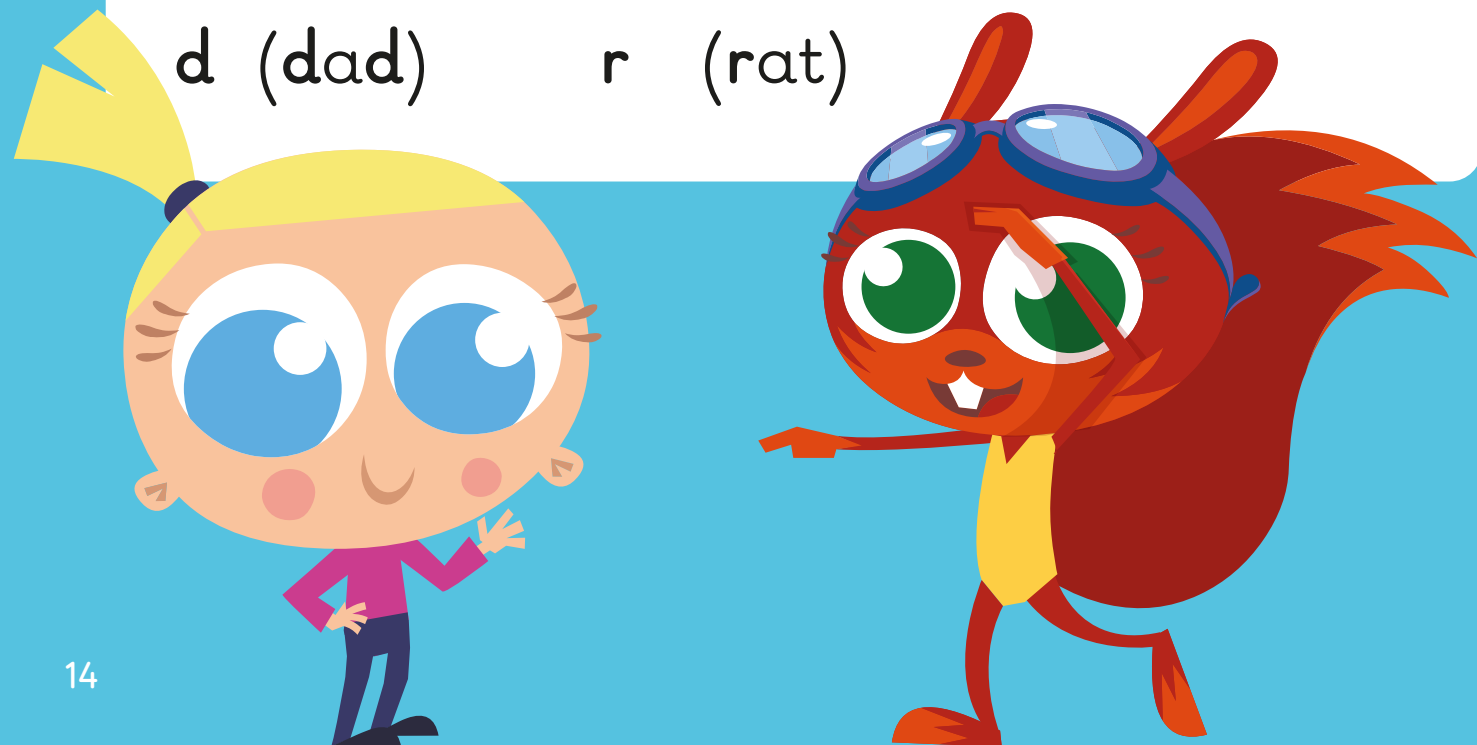
The first letter sounds in Level 1 are **s, a, t, p, i, n**. Once children know these, they can start to read simple words, such as **sat, tap, pan** and **sip**. At Level 1, reading is shared between the adult and child. It's an exciting moment when they read their first words independently!



Letter sounds covered at Level 1

Here are the 23 letter sounds covered in Level 1:

s (sun)	g (got)	h (hop)
a (cat)	o (dog)	b (bed)
t (tip)	c (cat)	f (fit)
p (pin)	k (kid)	ff (puff)
i (ink)	ck (pick)	l (lip)
n (nip)	e (egg)	ll (roll)
m (mum)	u (sun)	ss (pass)
d (dad)	r (rat)	



Introducing letters

Each letter, and its sound, should be introduced in sequence so that your child builds on what they have learned as they progress to the next book in the level. Try to pronounce each letter with a very pure sound, so **p** is pronounced with a popping sound and not as 'puh' and **s** is pronounced with a short hissing sound and not 'suh'. Here are some ideas to help you introduce new letters and sounds.

1. If your child is practising **s**, show them the Swimming Sally flashcard and say, 'S S S Swimming Sally.'

2. Show the **s** flashcard again. This time as you say the sound, let your child trace the large letter on the other side of the card with a finger.

3. Then write the letter **s** on a piece of paper and repeat the sound together.

4. Encourage your child to write the letter, saying the **s** sound as they write. Reassure them that it doesn't matter how messy the letter looks!

5. Encourage your child to add in the Actiphons action to match the character. For **S S S Swimming Sally**, the child will stand with their arms up in the air, then circle their arms forwards, as if they are swimming, while they say **S S S** out loud. You can find these actions on page 18 of each storybook.



Blending and segmenting with letters

From the earliest Actiphons storybooks in Level 1, your child will get lots of practice in blending letter sounds together to read words. Encourage them to read and say the letter sounds from left to right in each word, and then blend the sounds together to read the whole word: **s-a-t**, **sat**. If they struggle, remind them of the letter sounds and show them how to say each sound before blending them together to read the word.

Encourage your child to practise writing some of the words they have read in the storybooks, too. Ask them to say a word out loud, e.g. 'sat', and then segment its sounds to write down the word: **s-a-t**.

Fun with early reading and spelling

Give your child the first six flashcards with the letters **s, a, t, p, i, n** and see how many words they can make by arranging the cards in different combinations. Add in one or two more letters at a time to expand the range of letters they can experiment with as you progress through the storybooks.

Magnetic letters can also be used for spelling and reading practice. You can also encourage your child to write letter shapes in finger paint. The more practice, the better! Using foam letters in the bath or chalk when playing outside provide excellent opportunities to reinforce their developing reading skills.

Tricky words

Some common words can't be decoded using children's phonics skills. These are called tricky words. Children will need to learn these words by sight.

The tricky words in Actiphons Level 1 are:

the	go	I
to	no	into

Reading the Level 1 stories together will help your child to recognise these tricky words. You can also look out for them on posters, in other books and on street signs. Make a game of seeing how many you can spot when you are out and about.

Activities and games for Level 1

Here are some ideas for quick and fun games to help reinforce your child's early phonic knowledge. These games are designed to use physical activity to reinforce what they have learned and, even more importantly, to spark your child's love of reading.

Have a letter sound race! Put a small pile of flashcards or sheets of paper with letter sounds your child knows at one end of the room. Encourage them to run and pick up one card or sheet of paper at a time, and say the correct sound. How many can they collect and say in a minute? Now place the cards face down and see how many of the letter sounds your child can remember.



Play an action-guessing game with your child. Take it in turns to perform a character's action. Can they remember the character's name and their focus sound?

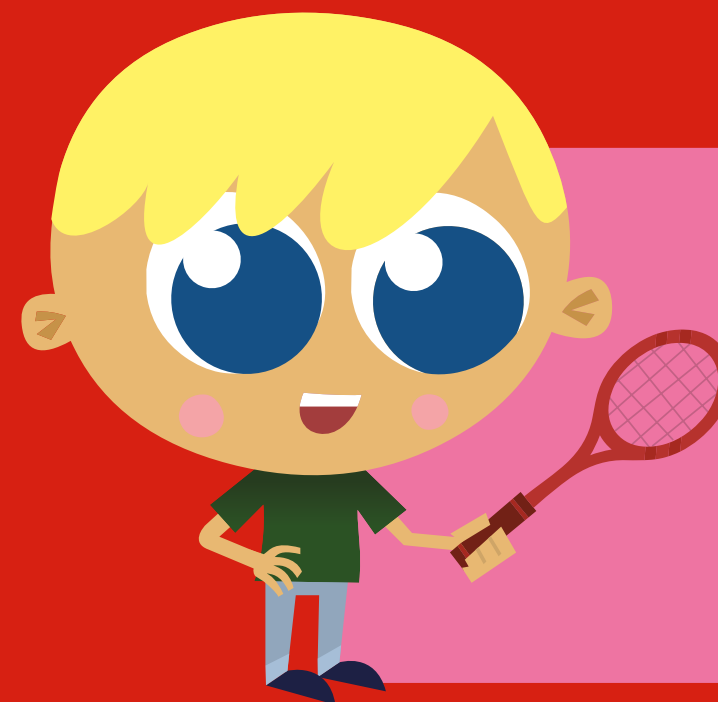


Practise blending and segmenting short words by speaking like a robot! Take it in turns to say a three-letter word such as **tap** and ask the robot-player to segment it into sounds by saying, 't-a-p'. Play the game the other way around to practise blending the sounds p-o-p into the word **pop**.

Get your child to practise writing the letters they know as you say the sound. They can use different pencils and pens, make them with a wet paintbrush, or with their finger in water or in the air.



Give your child a set of flashcards or magnetic letters and encourage them to pull out three letters at random. Can they make a word with their letters? (Made up words are fine!)



Level 2: Making progress in phonics

When are children ready for Actiphons Level 2?

Your child will enjoy the challenge of Level 2 books if they can:

- sound out and blend letter sounds to read simple three-letter words like **p-e-t**, **pet**.
- read some four-letter words with graphemes they have learned, such as **d-u-ck**, **duck**.
- recognise and read the Level 1 tricky words **the**, **to**, **go**, **no**, **I**, **into**.
- read simple sentences containing two-letter, three-letter and four-letter words.



Phonics at Level 2

In Level 1, children learn one sound for each of the most common letters, such as **o** and **t**. At the start of Level 2, they will meet the last few single letters: **j**, **v**, **w**, **x**, **y** and **z**.

The rest of Level 2 introduces two-letter and three-letter sounds, such as **ng** and **igh**. The letters work together to make one sound, such as the **ng** in **sing** and the **igh** in **night**. Children will also learn to read words containing two consonant sounds next to each other, such as **tree** and **fast**.



Letter sounds covered at Level 2

Here are the 28 letter sounds covered in Actiphons Level 2:

j (jug)	soft th (throw)	ar (car)
v (vet)	hard th (feather)	or (sport)
w (wet)	ng (wing)	ur (surf)
x (fox)	ai (aim)	ow (howl)
y (yoyo)	ee (feel)	oi (join)
z (zip)	igh (night)	ear (fear)
zz (fizz)	oa (goat)	air (chair)
qu (quack)	long oo (zoom)	ure (sure)
ch (chop)	short oo (book)	er (fern)
sh (push)		

Blending for reading

When they start learning to read, children say each of the sounds in a word, and then blend the sounds together to read the whole word f-o-x, fox.

When reading words with two-letter and three-letter sounds, make sure that your child only says one sound for each group of letters, so **thin** is th-i-n, not t-h-i-n.

Some letters (or groups of letters) make different sounds depending on the word they are in. At Level 2, your child will meet two sounds for **th** and two sounds for **oo**. Say the example words from the chart on the opposite page out loud with your child to hear the differences between these sounds.

If your child gets stuck, encourage them to sound out and blend the word to help them read it. Your child may begin to read whole words without sounding them out. Praise your child for doing this when they can.



Segmenting for writing

Segmenting is like blending, but in reverse. It helps children to spell out words. Children start by saying the whole word, such as **sip**, and then break it down into the separate sounds **s-i-p**. This helps them to identify the sounds in each word, and work out which letters to write.

Encourage your child to segment some of the longer words in Level 2, too, including words with two-letter and three-letter sounds. For example, **chair** is segmented as **ch-air** and **clear** is segmented as **c-l-ear**.

These tricky words are introduced in Actiphons Level 2:

he	she	we	me
be	was	you	they
all	are	my	her

Reading the stories together will help your child to recognise this new set of tricky words. You can also use the flashcards to help your child become more confident with reading these words.



Activities and games for Level 2

At around the time that children are securing the letters and sounds in Level 2, they'll be improving their reading skills in other ways, too. One of the key things that children learn to do at this stage is to read words that have two or more consonants next to each other. These are called adjacent consonants.

Tackling adjacent consonants

The vowels in English are **a**, **e**, **i**, **o** and **u**. Consonants are all the other letters – such as **b**, **d**, **r** and **s**. Adjacent consonants are two or more consonants that sit next to each other in a word, but also make two different sounds, for example:

slip **milk** **sport** **cream**

Adjacent consonants can come at the beginning, middle or end of a word. Sometimes there are just two consonants together; sometimes there are three.

Helping children read words with adjacent consonants

Luckily, once children know one main sound for each consonant in the alphabet, it's not too difficult to read words with consonants next to each other! The trick is to sound out and blend the sounds all through the word, pronouncing each consonant separately **s-l-i-p**, **slip**, **m-i-l-k**, **milk**.



Level 2 games

Here are some ideas for quick and fun games to help reinforce your child's phonic knowledge – including their ability to read words with adjacent consonants.



When out on a walk or around the house, see if they can spot any words with a sound you have been working on, or with adjacent consonants. Encourage your child to have a go at reading some of the words they find, and remind them to sound out and blend the sounds all through the words. Help them if they get stuck.

Give your child a set of alphabet cards or magnetic letters and encourage them to assemble a range of different words, including some with adjacent consonants. If they have adjacent consonants in their name, this is a great place to start.



Sound effect words often have adjacent consonants! Encourage your child to make a big **splash** in a basin, **thump** on a plastic tub, **clang** a spoon on a saucepan, **press** on a bell or **clap** their hands. Ask your child to say these sound effect words out loud and have a go at spelling them.

Place your Actiphons flashcards around the room or in an outdoor space. Call out a word that includes adjacent consonants. Challenge your child to find and sequence the flashcards to spell out the word.

Words with two syllables

In Level 2, your child will meet more words with two syllables, such as **hop-ping** and **quick-er**.

Give your child lots of praise for working out two-syllable words. If they have trouble with them, encourage them to follow the steps below.

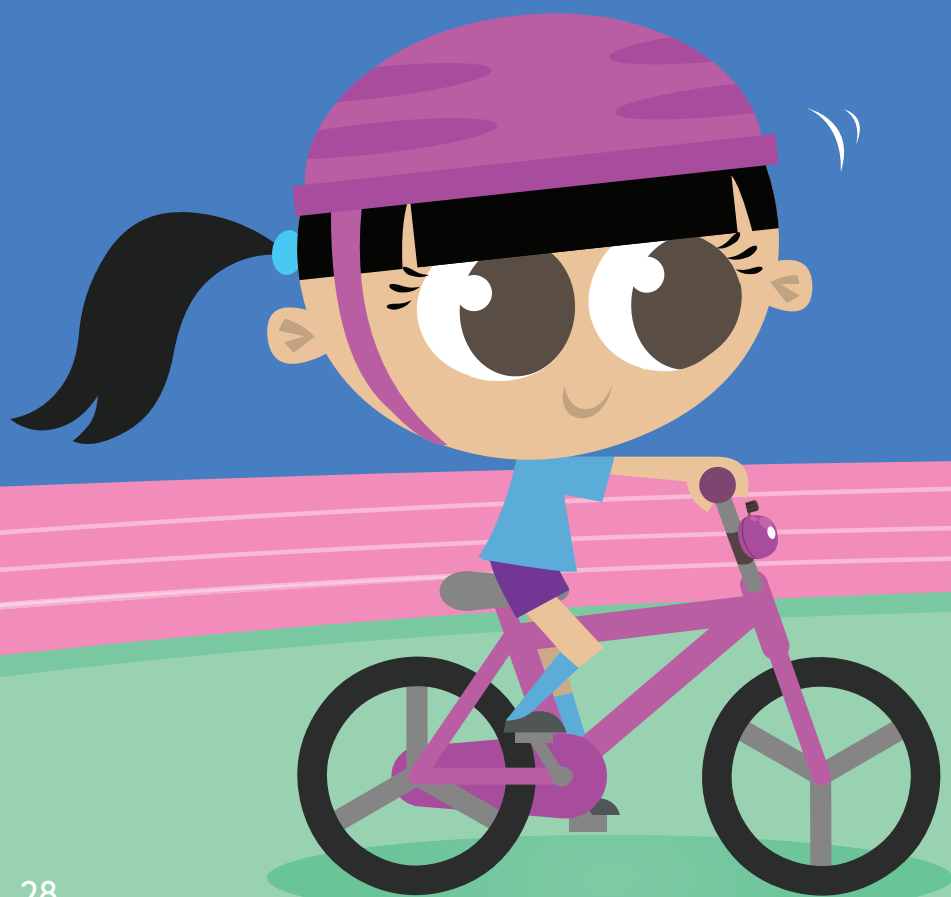


1. Look for the place where the word splits into syllables by clapping each syllable in the word. For example, the word **runner** splits into **run-ner**.

2. Sound out and blend the first syllable **r-u-n**, **run**.

3. Then do the same with the second syllable **n-er**, **ner**.

4. Now put the syllables together to say, '**runner**'



Letter names and capital letters

Level 2 is a good time to check that your child is familiar with the names of all the letters, as well as the letter sounds. If your child isn't sure, try singing an alphabet song with them.

Draw your child's attention to the capital letters at the start of sentences and names. Explain that we call these bigger letters capital letters, but that they have the same letter name and make the same sound as the lower case letters.



Level 3: Reading all sounds

When are children ready for Actiphons Level 3?

Children will enjoy the challenge of Actiphons Level 3 if they can:

- Sound out and blend words using the letter sounds they have been taught at Level 2, such as **sh-ee-p**, **sheep**.
- Read some words containing two consonant sounds next to each other, such as **f-e-l-t**, **felt**.
- Recognise and read the Level 2 tricky words: **he, she, we, me, be, was, you, they, all, are, my, her**.
- Read words with two syllables, such as **carpet** or **sunset**.



Phonics at Level 3

In Actiphons Level 2, children learned how some pairs or three-letter groups work together to form a single sound, such as **ng** and **igh**.



In Level 3, children build on this knowledge by learning 19 more letter sounds. These new sounds all have two letters. In addition, children will practise reading and spelling words with two or more syllables, such as **seesaw** and **cheerleader**. Past tense words, such as **jogged** and **opened**, and other words with suffixes, such as **-ed** and **-ing**, are also introduced in the Level 3 storybooks.

As your child moves through the level, you might notice they are able to read an increasing number of words with less hesitation. They will become quicker at reading, and also become increasingly able to read independently.

For this reason, the stories in the Level 3 books are designed for your child to read on their own. But continue to encourage them to ask for help if they get stuck!

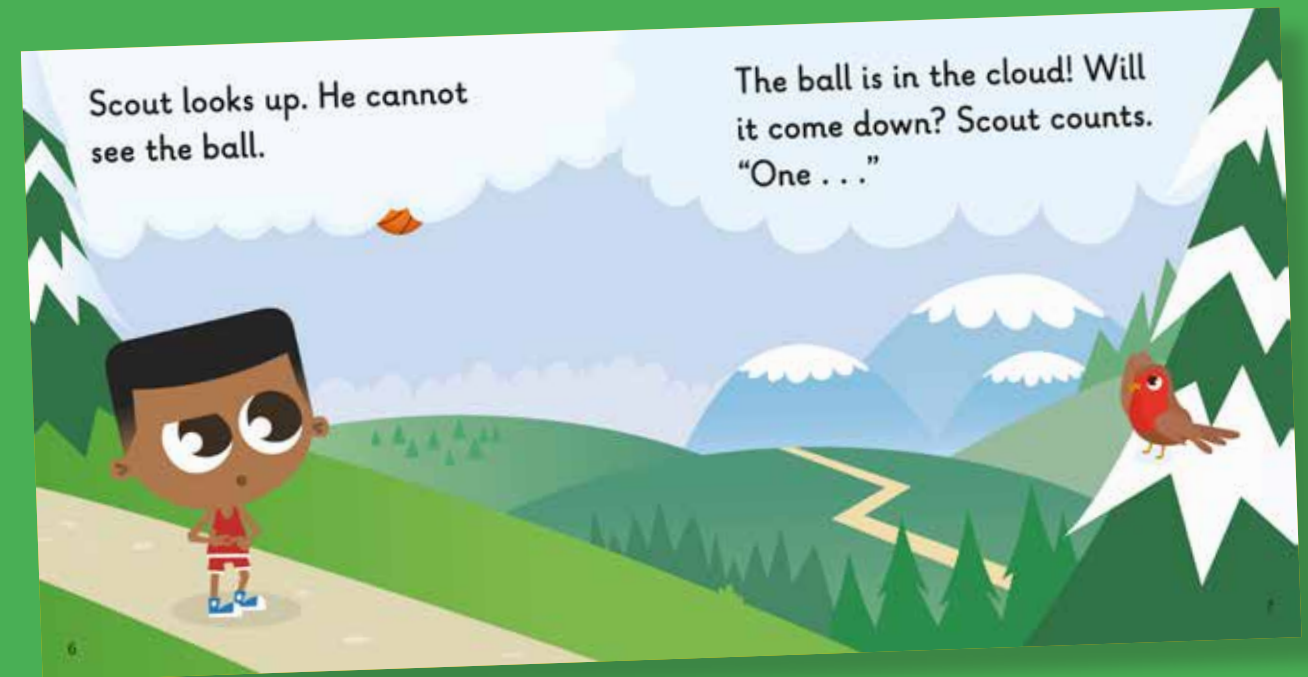
Alternative pronunciations

Some letters, or groups of letters, can be pronounced in more than one way, just like **th** and **oo**. At Level 3, children will start to encounter more of these alternative pronunciations. For example, they will encounter the letter **o** in words like **hot** and **spot**, but also in words like **cold** or **told**, where it is pronounced with a longer sound. By reading, listening and practising, children begin to work out how to pronounce words correctly.

Alternative spellings

In a similar way, lots of sounds can be written in more than one way. For example, the long **i** sound is spelled **igh** in the word **night**, **ie** in the word **pie**, **i** in the word **kind** and **i-e** in the word **time**.

Children become familiar with the different ways of spelling words through reading frequently. Books at Level 3 will gently introduce them to this new skill.



Activities and games for Level 3

While children are working through Level 3, they'll be able to read simple stories and use the phonics they know to work out unfamiliar words independently. It's now time to build on their knowledge to help them become fluent, confident readers.

- While they're reading an Actiphons storybook, or any other reading book, prompt your child to look out for words with sounds they know and practise reading them. Can they think of other words that have the same sound? Is the sound always spelled the same in other words?
- Encourage your child to re-read books several times – to enjoy the story, as well as to get extra practice reading words with any sounds they find tricky.
- Make sure your child knows they can read silently in their own heads, as well as out loud.
- Check that they're able to read the tricky words introduced in Levels 1, 2 and 3 by using the tricky words flashcards.



- Encourage them to read longer books as well as shorter ones.
- Make sure they read non-fiction as well as stories. Be guided by your child's own interests and encourage them to read things that fuel their enthusiasm! All reading is good reading.

Level 3 games

Make word games part of your daily routine. Here are some ideas to get you started!

Spend ten minutes when you are at home or out on a walk trying to spot words or objects whose name contains a particular sound. How many can your child find?



With your child, make a list of words that include a sound you have been working on. Look through the Actiphons books if you need some inspiration. Once your list is ready, make up your own story that includes as many of the words on your list as you can.

Make your own dictionary. As your child learns more letter sounds, start a scrapbook of words that are important to them. Ask them to write the word, draw a picture to illustrate it, and write a sentence explaining what the word means.

Letter sounds covered at Level 3

The first 14 two-letter sounds covered in Level 3 are:

ay (play)

aw (paw)

ou (out)

wh (when)

ie (lie)

ph (photo)

ea (sea)

ew (new)

oy (toy)

oe (toe)

ir (girl)

au (haul)

ue (blue)

ey (volley)

The last five books in Level 3 introduce the letter sounds **a-e**, **e-e**, **i-e**, **o-e** and **u-e**. These sounds are called split-diagraphs, because the two letters always appear on either side of a consonant, as in the words **make** or **rope**.

a-e (late)

o-e (hope)

e-e (compete)

u-e (tune)

i-e (like)

Tricky words

These tricky words are introduced in Actiphons Level 3:

said	some	one
do	little	oh
there	what	called
out	looked	so
people	could	were
asked	like	when
have	come	their

The Level 3 flashcards also include the tricky words **Mr** and **Mrs**. These words don't appear in the storybooks, but they are useful for your child to learn.



Come on!

Reading the stories in Level 3 will help your child to become familiar with these additional tricky words. Make a game of seeing how many tricky words you can spot in the storybooks, in other books they read, or when you are out and about.



Do you like my pompoms?



Reading the storybooks

At all levels, children learn to read through practice and through sharing storybooks with others. Reading along with a confident reader helps children to master basic skills, such as reading with expression and understanding different kinds of punctuation.

Each Level 1 and Level 2 storybook includes two kinds of text:

- **smaller text**, which you read to the child
- **larger, bold text**, which the child reads to you.



The larger text is written so that your child can use the letters and sounds they know to read it. It also includes some of the tricky words, which they need to practise reading by sight.

As you read with your child, you can also model how to use phonics to decode any unknown words and help them if they get stuck.

At Level 3, children can read many words for themselves so there is no longer need to share the main story with a grown-up. The whole story is printed in larger type for your child to read to an adult. There is a small amount of text on page 18 that you'll need to read to them, but apart from that, your child can read the whole book independently.



Even so, it's still a good idea to sit with your child, listen and help them with their reading. They will benefit from your encouragement and support. You can discuss the story together and ensure that they read with understanding and enjoyment.



Before reading

At each level, the Actiphons books are designed to be read in order, so your child's reading skills gradually increase as they learn each new sound. The books are numbered on the cover to help you.

When your child starts a new storybook, spend a few minutes helping them prepare to read it.

Look at the cover picture and the description of the story on the back cover. Talk about the character, and encourage your child to guess their physical activity. Ask your child to find the character's letter sound on the first page. Have they seen it before? Do they know the sound it makes?

Ask your child to trace the letters in the character's name on the cover as they say each sound. Then trace the book's letter sound in the air with a finger.

Can they spot any words with the focus sound on the first pages of the story?

Your turn!

At the end of the story, it's your child's turn to carry out the character's special action for themselves. Encourage them to practise the action or movement and say the focus sound at the same time.



During reading

Aim to make each reading session relaxed and fun. Pause to talk about the story, point out interesting things in the pictures, ask for your child's opinion and put on funny voices for the characters!

Encourage your child to use their developing phonics skills to blend sounds as they read the words. Talk about any difficult words. If your child needs help, show them how to sound out the word, **t-a-p-s**, and blend it into a word, **taps**.

Once your child feels more confident, encourage them to read the story as expressively as they can.

Look out for words containing the focus sound. Encourage your child to read these words again, or find examples in the smaller adult text for extra practice in each book.

Prompt your child to explain what is happening in the story by asking, 'Why do you think they did that?', 'Where are they going?', 'What might go wrong?'

When something happens to the characters, ask, 'How do you think they feel?' or 'What would you do that happened to you?'

If your child struggles with any words or sentences, it's fine to read them aloud yourself. Ask them to repeat the word or words afterwards and check they have understood the meaning of what they have read before you move on.

Congratulate your child for good reading! Especially if they struggle, praise them for persevering.



After reading

Talk about the story and use the questions and activities at the back of the book to check your child has understood it. You could also use these prompts to extend the discussion about what they have read:

- Who did the characters meet along the way?
- What was the funniest or most exciting part of the story?
- What happened at the end?

Sing along

If your child still has lots of energy, you could play the character's song, and sing and dance along. You could even reread the story together. Can your child spot where the character's action happens in the story?

Celebrate!

Once your child has learned the focus letter sound, take time to celebrate their achievement! Let them fill in the book's space on the reward chart. They are on their way to becoming an independent, active reader!



Get moving!

Whichever level your child is working at, these physical activities are a great way to encourage them to learn and practise the focus sounds, as well as a range of tricky words.

After reading each book, encourage your child to show you the character's special action or movement. Once they are able to complete the action confidently, challenge them to see how many times they can do it in thirty seconds. Can they say the character's sound each time they do the action? For example, running for two steps and then jumping up like Netball Nelly.

Make it into a race! Challenge your child to move from one end of the room to the other by doing the character's action, e.g. jumping like Shirley Circuit, crawling like Crawling Shawn or dancing like Hoedown Joe. As an extra challenge, can they say a word that includes the character's sound each time they do the action?

Grab a ball or a sheet of screwed-up newspaper, and throw it back and forth with your child. Each time you throw or catch the ball, make the character's focus letter sound or say and spell one of the tricky words.

Make a flashcard trail. Use flashcards with letters your child knows to spell out some simple words. Lay the words out on the floor and ask them to hop from flashcard to flashcard. When they reach a card, they should say the sound on the card, and then blend the sounds together to read the word.





Fun with songs

Play the Actiphons songs before or after reading each character's book, or whenever you have a free moment to listen and sing along. Pay particular attention to the songs for focus letter sounds they have already met.

Encourage your child to perform the character's action while their song is playing. How many times can they do it?

Ask your child to say or sing the character's sound in time to the song.

Give your child a piece of paper and ask them to write the focus letter sound as carefully as they can while the song is playing. Once they are good at doing this, encourage them to write a word that starts with (or includes) the focus sound if they can!

Help your child to trace the focus letter sound shape or shapes in the air with a finger every time they hear a word in the song that contains the focus sound.



Writing and making words

Your child can practise mark-making or first writing skills to music! Get your child writing at any level with these fun games.

- Prompt your child to use the sounds they know to write labels, simple stories, signs for play areas, or shopping lists. Don't worry about correct spellings at this stage, as long as they are using their phonics knowledge to segment and write words.
- Let your child paint and draw letters using different art materials. Even a wet paintbrush or floor chalk on an outdoor wall will keep them engaged and writing!
- Show your child how to model letters using modelling clay or homemade salt dough.
- Ask your child to draw pictures of their favourite Actiphons characters and label them with the character's name and focus sound. Help them add words that include the character's sound around their picture.
- Cut sandwiches or toast into letter shapes using cookie cutters, or invite your child to spell out words using alphabet pasta. You could even ice letters and words onto a biscuit!



Flashcards and poster games

These games help your child have fun with sounds at any level with their Actiphons flashcards and posters.

Play flashcard lucky dip. Put the flashcards for letters your child knows in a bag, and invite them to take out one at random. How many words can they think of that include the sound on that card? Can they make up a sentence containing a word or words that use that sound?

Cover your child's eyes and ask them to point at one of the characters on the Actiphons poster. Remove the blindfold and challenge them to carry out that character's action. Can they think of three words that include this character's sound?

Give your child clues to identify a character, such as, 'This character can disappear. Her sound is in the word **dig**.' How quickly can they point out Incredible Isabelle on the poster and say her sound? Can they describe a character using their own clues, too?

See how quickly your child can make the appropriate character action when you show them a flashcard.

With your child, make two identical sets of tricky words flashcards by writing the tricky words that they are learning on pieces of paper. Use the cards to play a game of Tricky Word Snap.

You can also use the tricky words flashcards you have made to play a game of Memory Match together. Lay all the cards face down and challenge your child to find the matching pairs of tricky word cards. Each player turns over two cards per turn. If their cards match, they can keep the pair. The winner is the player with the most pairs of cards once they have all been matched.



Learning together

It takes some children longer than others to become fluent readers – but try not to worry. With support and guidance, almost every child can become a confident reader.

By the time they have finished Actiphons Level 3, most children will be able to read a wide range of words on sight, and will be able to understand and talk about the stories. If you notice your child is struggling, here are some tips to help them.

If your child is finding it difficult to recognise and read some of the sounds they've been taught, try slowing down. Go back to a story they felt confident reading (even if it's from an earlier level) and build up again slowly from there. You could also play a game with the flashcards or use some of the activities from the back of the storybook to break up the reading session.

If they're struggling with a particular book, read it to them and ask them to join in with you wherever they can. Point out words in other books that have the focus letter sound and make a list of similar words with them.

Keep reading to your child and try to make storytime and reading an enjoyable experience, especially if they seem to have become anxious or disinterested in reading.

Talk about stories, ask them what they like or dislike, and share your own enthusiasm with them!



Supporting reading development

Reading time

- Set aside regular times for your child to read with you. Choose a time when they aren't tired or hungry. Experiment to see when works best.
- Try to sit somewhere that's fairly quiet, away from noisy distractions.
- Keep the reading sessions short and sweet. Five to ten minutes a day is better than a long reading session once a week.
- Give your child lots of praise for trying, especially if they are finding reading difficult! Reassure them that everyone finds reading tricky at first, and remind them that it doesn't matter if they make mistakes – the important thing is to keep trying.



- Help your child if they get stuck on a word, either by encouraging them to use the phonics they know to sound it out, or by reading it for them. Encourage them to re-read the sentence and give them lots of praise for having a go.
- If your child gets fidgety, tired or bored, put the book away and try again another day.

Sharing stories

Although your child's own reading skills are developing, it is important to keep reading stories to them, too! Let them choose new stories or revisit old favourites as often as they like.

Reading to your child is particularly important if they are finding reading a struggle. We all want children to enjoy learning to read and to get lifelong pleasure from reading – so positive early experiences with books and stories are essential. Let them concentrate on listening to the story, looking at and talking about the pictures, and having fun.

Read-aloud sessions will also help your child to improve their comprehension skills, especially if you talk about the story together.



Reading is important

Help your child to see that reading is important by:

- letting them see you reading, whether it is books, newspapers, or websites. Minimise your own screen time (on phones/tablets) around your child.
- talking to them about what you are reading.
- discussing and sharing ideas about the books they are reading.
- encouraging them to read and listen to lots of different types of stories. There is no harm in sometimes reading a book that seems too easy or a little advanced, as long as your child doesn't become discouraged.

- going with your child's interests and supporting them to find books on topics they will enjoy.
- joining the local library if possible, and taking out books to enjoy together.

Reading all around

The world outside is full of letters and words, on street signs, posters, leaflets, packaging. Encourage your child to use the letters and sounds they know to have a go at reading any familiar words they encounter. Praise them for spotting sounds that they know in the world around them.



supporting physical development

If children are fit, strong and healthy, they will find everything easier – including reading! An active lifestyle helps to give them the energy to learn, play, grow and feel positive.

Staying active

- Aim for your child to engage in some kind of activity that gets them out of breath for around 30-60 minutes a day. This could be a structured physical activity that they take part in through sport or club such as gymnastics, football or swimming. Many children can get enough exercise through running around in your local park. Keep it fun and don't put them under any pressure!

- Try taking your child swimming, go out on a bike ride or meet up in the playground to play with friends – find out what their likes and dislikes are. Try to engage them in a range of different activities, which will help them develop a range of skills, strength and confidence. Finding activities they enjoy will also mean that being active is never seen as a chore!
- Play some music and have fun dancing around indoors. Try making up your own dance routines, or playing musical statues. Or put on your wet weather clothes and boots and jump in puddles on rainy days!
- Break up long periods of sitting still with fun physical activities that limit the amount of time your child spends watching TV or playing on a tablet. Use screen time as a reward for helping you with chores or tidying up. This will also get them moving!

Use some of the suggestions on pages 48-49 to help children keep active.



Food for young brains and bodies

- Just like adults, young children need to eat a balanced diet. Save snacks such as crisps, chocolate and biscuits for occasional treats.
- Try to offer your child a range of different healthy foods. You could even have fun trying to eat a fruit or vegetable that begins with each letter of the alphabet or that matches the letter sound from the Actiphons story you are reading!
- If you can, stick to regular mealtimes and snack times – ideally with the whole family eating together at least once a day if circumstances permit. Starting early will help your child develop healthy eating habits.

- Encourage your child to drink plenty of water throughout the day. Water and milk are the best drinks for young children. Avoid sugary drinks – even natural fruit juice is high in sugar and should be given as an occasional treat rather than a regular drink.

Sleep

- It is important to rest, too. Sleep and rest help children's brains and bodies process their busy day and prepare them for the next day's adventures.
- Try to follow a regular bedtime routine, such as bath time, brush teeth, read a story together, then sleep.
- If you can, it helps to stick to a regular bedtime and to encourage calm, quiet activities in the hour before lights out.



What next?

Once your child can confidently read the Level 3 storybooks, perform the characters' actions and has had plenty of practice with the activities, it's time to think about next steps!

There's no rush

It can be tempting to move on quickly to the next stage of learning, but it's important to take things slowly. This gives children time to process the reading and physical skills they have learned, before they carry on and learn more. It is never a waste of time to revisit storybooks your child has read – to brush up on particular focus sounds, or just to enjoy the stories again.

Praise and rewards

Don't forget to give your child lots of praise for their good reading and for staying active! Use the reward chart and certificates to show how much you value your child's hard work. But often saying 'Well done!' or 'You are working so hard!' is all it takes to show your child that you appreciate their effort.



Moving on

Once your child has finished all the Actiphons books, they will be able to tackle a wide range of simple stories and non-fiction texts. They will be able to read many of these independently, but don't be surprised if they still need some help and support. It takes most children a while to become completely fluent readers. They need lots of practice, so take every opportunity to read with them and let them read to you!

