

A GUIDE TO READING

The purpose of the *Faith in Phonics* series is twofold.

Firstly, the books will enable young children to read Bible stories for themselves – perhaps for the first time. It is our hope that, with adult support, the reflections and questions provided at the end of each story will help children to apply the stories to their lives.

The second purpose of the series is to support the development of children's reading when taught using systematic synthetic phonics (SSP). The phonics used and developed through the *Faith in Phonics* books meets the expectations for England of the government policy paper, *The reading framework*, the *Ofsted Inspection Framework*, the *National Curriculum* and the *Phonics Screening Check*.

Research shows systematic synthetic phonics to be the most effective way of teaching reading. Children are taught the 42+ sounds (phonemes) of the English language and the letters (graphemes) that represent them (letter-sounds or grapheme-phoneme correspondences). To decode words, children are taught to blend (synthesise) the sounds together to read the words. Some common words (such as *the*, *you*, *come*) are not easily sounded out. They are called 'tricky words'. Tricky words are best taught by identifying the 'tricky' part, learning it, sounding out and blending as usual. A book that includes only words containing the letter-sounds a child has learnt so far, plus a few tricky words, is called a decodable text.

There are many phonics programmes, each supported by a range of decodable texts exactly matching that particular programme's phonic progression. The *Faith in Phonics* series aims to supplement these decodable texts, providing a faith focus and extra reading practice. It takes account of Phases 2 to 5 and the Steps and Stages of the range of programmes validated by the Department for Education. Whilst it cannot exactly match the phonic progression of every programme, each book is clearly labelled to show which sounds or spellings of those sounds has been covered, with the phonic focus clearly displayed on the front cover. (See the Table for more details.)

Set 1 Books cover the 42+ letter-sounds (grapheme-phoneme correspondences) with a few common alternative spellings and are suitable from Reception.

Set 2 Books cover all the main alternative spellings and are suitable from Year 1. A child who can read all of these will be well equipped to meet the national expectations in England for the Phonics Screening Check (taken at the end of Year 1).

Both sets of books are also suitable for older children who are catching up with reading, or just want a Bible story they can read easily for themselves.

Tricky words have been kept to a minimum and are explained in each book, as are the names of Bible characters and places.



Conventions used in the books

In all the books, text in small print is for the adult to read and text in large print is for the child to read.

In **Set 1 Books**, letter-sounds to practise from each book are on the back cover. Once digraphs (two-letter sounds) are introduced, alphabet sounds are not included as these are assumed to be known.

The inside front cover is a practice page to use before reading.

Sounds in the practice words are separated by a small gap (e.g. w i ll, h e l p, r ai n). Phonics helps children to sound and blend words as easily as possible. Thus we may not distinguish between the /z/ and /s/ sound in words like *has*, *is*, and *his* because these words are often read before the /z/ sound has been learnt. It is easier for a child to see the letter s and modify their pronunciation to get the word. Indeed, the exact number of sounds (or phonemes) cannot be fixed because of regional variations in pronunciation. Very often children sound out a word and ‘tweak’ (or modify the pronunciation) to say the word in their own regional accent. For example, the letter a in last says /a/ in some regional accents and /ar/ in others. The letter u in *but* says /u/ in some regional accents and short /oo/ in others. The letter e in *the* sounds like /u/ and is called a schwa sound. A schwa is a vowel sound in an unstressed syllable, where a vowel does not make its long or short sound. It is softer and weaker but similar to the short /u/ sound. Clearly letters do not actually ‘say’ sounds, but it is a simple way to talk about grapheme-phoneme correspondences. In reading, the letters *do* tell us what sounds to say. Strictly, in phonic terms, letters *represent* sounds.

Each syllable in a two syllable or polysyllabic word is indicated by a change of colour. Words that start with the letter a where it is not pronounced as a clear /a/ sound (such as *away* and *again*) do not have a change of colour as they are probably easier sounded out all through the word. Children

can just sound the letter a as a clear /a/ and then modify their pronunciation as they blend.

Some words have what is called an ‘**open syllable**’. It is open because the vowel sound is long and the syllable is not closed by a consonant (which would keep the vowel sound short). For example, *be/gan* starts with an open syllable and the letter e is a long vowel sound. In the word *beg/gar*, the first syllable is closed by the letter g and the letter e is a short vowel sound. Such words have what is called a ‘**closed syllable**’. To help young readers, long vowels in open syllables are underlined on the practice page (but not in the stories). A simple rule for children is, “if the short vowel sound doesn’t work, try the long vowel sound.”

The tricky part of each **tricky word** is underlined and explained. These words should be sounded out and blended as usual once the tricky part has been learnt. Again, some adaptation may be needed to account for regional accents. For example, the wh in words such as ‘*when*’ and ‘*where*’ is aspirated in some accents but not in others.

Contractions are explained too on the practice page.

The **suffix -ed** for the past tense can cause difficulty because it can be said in three ways: /e/ /d/ as in shouted, /d/ as in played and /t/ as in jumped. Where -ed says a single sound, either /d/ or /t/, it is underlined in the past tense verbs on the practice page.

Towards the end of Set 1, three common split digraphs are introduced. A split digraph is a long vowel spelling pattern in which two vowels are separated by a consonant, e.g. **a-e** in *came*. On the practice page, split digraphs are indicated by a loop joining the two letters to remind readers that these letters make one sound.

In **Set 2 Books** the same conventions are used. The back cover has examples of words used in the book with the sound or spelling of that sound in colour.

Using the Faith in Phonics Series

Choose your moment! A tired or hungry child may not be an enthusiastic reader. Many children respond well to a regular time slot when they expect to read (and be read to). Don't worry if the whole book is not completed in one session.

Check that the child has learnt the sounds or spellings of the sounds covered in the book. For **Set 1 Books** you could see how fast they can say all the sounds on the back cover.

Ask the child to read the sounds on the practice page near the front of the book and then sound out and blend as many words as are helpful – paying particular attention to any two syllable words which might cause difficulty.

Point out any tricky past tenses where the suffix -ed says a single sound, /d/ or /t/, and try reading the past tense verbs if these are likely to cause problems.

Using the notes provided, explain any tricky words that the child is unable to read 'at a glance'.

Read the introduction on page 1 and make sure the child is familiar with the names of the Bible characters and any place names. There are notes to help children sound these out as usual.

Then let the child read the story and enjoy the pictures. You may need to contribute to the story by reading some small print yourself in some of the early texts in Set 1.

Finish by reading the reflection and asking the questions.

After reading a **Set 2 Book**, you could choose a few words on the back cover for the child to read again, particularly if any words contain sounds the child was unsure of. Alternatively, make a game of counting how many words from the back cover the child can read in one or two minutes, either before or after reading the text.

Reading the story again will help the child develop fluency and improve comprehension. But above all, keep the reading session light hearted and enjoyable. Be patient and praise their efforts!

SET 1	Level 1 Pink	Phonics	Books 1-4
	Level 2 Yellow	Phonics	Books 5-8
	Level 3 Blue	Phonics	Books 9-12
SET 2	Level 4 Green	Phonics	Books 1-5
	Level 5 Orange	Phonics	Books 6-9
	Level 6 Turquoise	Phonics	Books 10-12

6 Reading
Levels
to progress
through

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Tips to help with reading

If the child gets stuck on a word, **slow down** and encourage them to **say the sounds**. Make sure that pure sounds are used. Remind them of any letter-sounds they have forgotten and ask them to **speed up the sounds** so that it's easier to hear the word. If they find this hard, say the sounds faster yourself and ask whether they can hear the word. If not, say the word for them. If there are too many words the child can't read, try an earlier book in the series.

Children move through several stages when learning to read.

- ◆ At first they **sound out (out loud)** and **say the word**
- ◆ Later they can be encouraged to **sound out in their head and say the word**.
- ◆ And finally they **just say**, read 'at a glance' (no need to go on sounding out if you recognise the word!)

A child who is really struggling will need additional help at home or in school to develop the vital skills for literacy of knowing the sounds and blending those sounds all through the word for reading.



Difficulty with two syllable and polysyllabic words

Some children have no difficulty blending all through a word like '*bandits*'. Others may need more help. If they do, cover the second syllable with a finger or piece of paper and encourage the child to sound out each syllable separately before blending the syllables. Book 4 in Set 1 gives plenty of practice in reading two syllable words.



Difficulty reading words with suffixes (-s, -es, -ed, -ing, -er, -est)

Again, some children have no difficulty adding -s to a word for a plural or present tense verb. For those that need help, cover the -s with a finger so that they can read the root word before adding the /s/ sound. Words ending in -ing, -er, -es and -est can be treated as two syllable or polysyllabic words as described above.



Set 1 Books covering Initial Code and a few alternative spellings, suitable from Reception.

	Title	Phonic Focus	New Tricky Words (excluding names of people and places)	Faith Message	Pages	Sentences	Words
1	God is (The nature of God)	alphabet, ck	I	The Bible tells us what God is like. God is love.	8	10	37
2	Ham's dad (Noah builds an ark)	alphabet, ck	of, the	God keeps his promises.	12	30	104
3	Up he jumps! (Peter and John heal the lame man)	alphabet	he, me, no, go, gold, to, into, can't	We can pray for people who are ill.	12	29	116
4	Bandits! (The Good Samaritan)	2 syllable words, past tense -ed	was	Our neighbour is anyone who needs our love.	12	25	120
5	A rash lad (The Prodigal Son)	sh, ch, th, ng, verb ending -ing	when, give, began	No matter what we do, God welcomes us back when we come to him.	12	26	150
6	Afraid in a boat (Jesus calms the storm)	ai, ee, ie, oa, ue	you, are, be, we, they, said	With Jesus we don't need to be afraid.	12	32	164
7	A Star for a King (The wise men visit Jesus)	ar, er, or	some, come, were, so	Jesus is the greatest gift.	12	26	168
8	Contest on Mount Carmel (Elijah and the prophets of Baal)	oi, ou, oo, oo	two, put, altar, built	God is powerful. We can say sorry to God.	12	34	182
9	Can you hear me? (Hannah prays for a baby, Samuel hears God)	air, ear	she, son, what, stitch, didn't	We can listen to God and be part of his plan.	12	36	186
10	Will Dan pray? (Daniel in the lion's den)	alternatives: ay, oy, ow	my, oh, your, lions, live, do	God protects us.	12	29	187
11	Zac the greedy taxman (Zacchaeus climbs a tree to meet Jesus)	y saying 'i' or 'ee', ow saying ou	one, have, house, going, today	God wants us to be the best people we can be.	12	29	190
12	Let's go home! (Story of Ruth)	split digraphs a-e, i-e and o-e	there, by, all, told	God loves families and wants us to look after each other.	12	30	212



Set 2 Books covering Advanced Code (all main alternative spelling patterns), suitable from Y1.

	Title	Phonic Focus	New Tricky Words (excluding names of people and places)	Faith Message	Pages	Sentences	Words
1	When Jesus came to stay (Martha and Mary)	ai: ai, a, a-e, ay, ey	friends, would, could, listen, expensive, when	We show our love for God in different ways, but we all need to listen to God.	16	31	190
2	Don't eat from that tree! (Adam and Eve)	ee: ee, e, ea, e-e, y	don't, middle	The world has been spoilt because people put themselves in God's place, but God has a plan to put things right.	16	34	235
3	Jesus is kind (Jesus and children and blind Bartimaeus)	ie: ie, i, igh, i-e, y	want, little, squeeze, noise, gone, more, hasn't	Be kind, like Jesus, who sees the people others may not notice.	16	36	230
4	Jonah won't go! (Jonah and the Whale)	oa: oa, o, o-e, ow	sank, people, why	God is patient – even with the people we don't like very much!	16	34	231
5	Play a new tune (David plays his harp for King Saul)	ue: ue, u, u-e, ew	shepherd, serve, battle, become	Singing songs to God can cheer us up and help us to feel God's love.	16	38	242
6	Awful Saul, awesome Paul (Conversion of Saul)	ar: ar, a er: er, ur, ir or: or, au, aw, al	here, done, where, drink, doing	Jesus changes people.	16	40	268
7	Jesus grew, just like you (Jesus at the Temple age 12)	oi: oi, oy ou: ou, ow oo: oo, u, oul oo: oo, ue, ew, u-e, ou, o	work, temple, hadn't, he's	Jesus obeyed Mary and Joseph, listened to his teachers and asked questions - a good way to grow up.	16	42	273
8	Miriam's brother (Moses in the bulrushes)	u: u, ou, o-e, o	fetch, before, daughter, nurse	God had a plan to free the Israelites and has a plan to give us freedom too.	16	36	274
9	Bread from heaven (Manna in the desert)	e: e, ea, ai, ie	I'm, their, shone	God provides bread for our bodies. Jesus is bread for our souls.	16	43	269
10	Angelic messengers (Christmas story)	j: j, g(e, i, y), ge, dge	world, donkey, Christmas	Jesus came to show us what God is like. His birth changed the world.	16	48	297
11	Prince of Peace (Crucifixion and resurrection)	s: s, ss, c(e, i, y), ce, se ee: ee spelt ie	guards, you're, let's, cheered, know	Jesus forgives and we can forgive too.	16	49	313
12	Phew! That was tough stuff (David and Goliath)	f: f, ff, ph, gh	armour, shoulder, wore, giant	God is bigger and stronger than the tough stuff in our lives.	16	52	310