2019 national curriculum assessments

Key stage 1

Standards
& Testing
Agency

Phonics screening check

2019 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 'or'. 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 'chort', may be pronounced as /tʃɔrt/ instead of /tʃɔːt/. 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
sut	This item uses the 's' from 'sip' and rhymes with 'cut'. All regional pronunciations of the 'u' are acceptable.	/sʌt/ or /sʊt/
yad	This item uses the 'y' from 'yes' and rhymes with 'mad'.	/jæd/
dop	This item uses the 'd' from 'day' and rhymes with 'mop'.	/dɒp/
uct	This item combines the 'u' from 'ugly' with the 'ct' from 'act'. All regional pronunciations of the 'u' are acceptable.	/ʌkt/ or /ʊkt/
meck	This item uses the 'm' from 'mash' and rhymes with 'neck'.	/mɛk/
shig	This item uses the 'sh' from 'shop' and rhymes with 'twig'.	/ʃɪg/
joil	This item uses the 'j' from 'join' and rhymes with 'boil'.	/dʒɔɪl/
chort	This item uses the 'ch' from 'chain' and rhymes with 'snort'. All regional pronunciations of the 'or' are acceptable.	/tʃɔːt/ or /tʃɔrt/
blem	This item uses the 'bl' from 'blow' and rhymes with 'stem'.	/blɛm/
drell	This item uses the 'dr' from 'drums' and rhymes with 'shell'.	/drɛl/
fusp	This item uses the 'f' from 'farm' and rhymes with 'cusp'. All regional pronunciations of the 'u' are acceptable.	/fʌsp/ or /fʊsp/
quisk	This item uses the 'qu' from 'quilt' and rhymes with 'whisk'.	/kwɪsk/

Section 2

Pseudo-word	Acceptable pronunciation	Phonemic representation
vaw	This item uses the 'v' from 'vet' and rhymes with 'saw'.	/vɔː/
meast	This item combines the 'm' from 'march' with the 'ea' from 'leaf' or 'deaf' and the 'st' from 'feast'.	/miːst/ or /mɛst/
waib	This item combines the 'w' from 'wise' with the 'ai' from 'tail' and the 'b' from 'blob'.	/weɪb/
zome	This item uses the 'z' from 'zero' and rhymes with 'home'.	/zəʊm/
brend	This item uses the 'br' from 'brown' and rhymes with 'spend'.	/brɛnd/
throst	This item combines the 'thr' from 'three' with the 'ost' from 'cost' or 'most'.	/θrɒst/ or /ðrɒst/ or /θrəʊst/ or /ðrəʊst/
stret	This item uses the 'str' from 'stray' and rhymes with 'bet'.	/strɛt/
spraw	This item uses the 'spr' from 'spray' and rhymes with 'draw'.	/sprɔː/