

# Physically Active Phonics Games

Getting your children physically active and having fun is the best way to get them learning without even realising they are doing it. Any of these quick ideas can be easily adapted for whichever phonics phase your child is learning at the moment. There are links at the end of this resource to sets of decodable and tricky words for each phase to help you.

## Tips for Keeping Everybody Happy (Including You!)

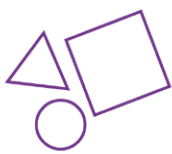
- Choose a few games similar to those your child already likes playing. Repeat any which work out well another day using different sounds or words.
- Encourage older children to help you set up games for younger ones or to help little ones complete their turns. Having an overall team score could help.
- Give older children extra sounds, words or challenges within each game if it helps to make it fairer to the little ones. Remember their concentration spans will vary greatly.
- You could time individual children during races to beat their own 'personal best' so that they feel happy to keep trying once others have finished.
- You could be on the other team from the children and make silly mistakes for the children to spot and correct you on. The more fun you are having the more the games will be a hit!
- Children will be far keener to write sounds or words down if they think they are doing it to keep score. You could have a quick score keeper's 'check' of the writing at the end.

## Useful items to keep handy:

- Flashcards with sounds and words your child is learning at the moment.
- Paper
- Card (any will do)
- Thick felt-tip pens
- Scissors
- Sticky tack
- Sticky tape
- Drawing pins
- Timer or stopwatch



## Key:



Games ideal for playing with mixed ages who are learning different sounds and words.



Games that are good for playing outdoors.



Games that are good for playing indoors.



Games that can be adapted for younger nursery and reception aged children.



Grab and go games that don't need to be set up in advance.








Games that don't make any mess.



Games that are good for children to play on their own again afterwards.

## Games That Need Buckets, Bowls or Tubs

<b>Rhyming Relay</b>							
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Write out a set of rhyming words suitable for your child on little bits of paper. Pop them into a bucket and put them at the finishing line. The aim is to run, skip or hop to collect each rhyming word one at a time from the bucket and bring them back to the start to 'read and rhyme', with help if needed. Once the words have all been collected, they can swap them for a new set, or write their own nonsense rhyming words.



**Older children** - Put one or two blank cards and a pen in their bucket so they have to write real or nonsense rhyming words on them to complete their set.





**Younger children** - Use rhyming objects or picture cards instead of words.

<b>Colourful Collections</b>							
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Write sounds or words suitable for each child on paper or card, choosing one colour of paper or pen for each child. Put lots of them inside buckets, tubs, cups and bowls laid out close together as a target. Let each child know which colour sounds or words they are collecting, and then take turns to use a ball or soft toy to aim into the targets and collect and identify their sounds and words. Take away each container once it is empty.

<b>Target Practise</b>							
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Stick two or three sounds that your child is finding tricky on buckets or large containers. Find as many items and pictures as you can that start with the sounds. Time how long it takes to sort the items by throwing them into the correct buckets. Tip the buckets out and try again. See if you can beat your best time.

<b>Lucky Dip</b>							
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Put shredded paper, leaves or other suitable material in a large container and hide items that start with two or three sounds your child is currently learning inside. Stick the same sounds in the corners of the room or garden. The aim is for your child to try to guess what the objects might be as they take a lucky dip into the container and feel them without looking. When they have guessed and taken the object out, they can run to the correct corner of the room.

## Sound Raffle



Write sounds suitable for each child on little pieces of paper, choosing one colour of paper for each child. Fold them up and place them in a container. Let each child know which colour paper they are to take. The aim is to say the sounds on their bit of paper once they have unfolded it, and then run, skip or hop to the 'prize' table to choose an item from it that begins with or contains that sound. You can use the children's toys, household items and small snacks as prizes.

## Sound Soup



Write consonants on one colour paper and vowels/vowel digraphs on another. Attach them to play food and hide them all over the garden or room. Place a bowl and some spoons on the floor. The aim is to collect all the food and place it in the bowl, then take out a consonant, vowel/vowel digraph and another consonant, and use them to build a real or nonsense words. You could chant the rhyme 'Sound Soup, Sound Soup, Hot Pot Hot Pot, Sound Soup' as you play.

## Games That Need Hoops or Rings

### Sound Shot Put



Lay out two or three hoops as targets and label each one with a sound your child is currently learning. Gather soft toys and other throwable items that begin with those sounds. The aim is to use the toys as shot-puts to throw into the correct hoop. Each toy in the correct hoop is a point! Mix them up and try again to see if everyone can better their score.

### Sound Hoopla



Outdoors, push cricket posts or sticks into the ground and attach sound flashcards securely to them. Play hoopla using small hoops, rings or paper plates with the middles cut out. Keep score by asking children to write down the sounds as they throw hoops over them.








**Older children** - Ask them to write down words containing the sounds for extra points. You could also have a second line a little further back to throw from.








**Younger children** - Provide a quick bingo card of all the sounds written out on card for them to tick off as they play, or write the sounds down for them with their help.



## Games That Need Bats and Balls







<b>Sound Skittles</b>							
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Make nine simple skittles using empty bottles or cups turned upside down. Use sticky tape and paper or felt-tip pens to put a sound on each skittle. Children score points for the number of skittles they knock down and extra points by making real or nonsense words with the sounds they have knocked down. Even 3 or 4 sound skittles can be turned into lots of extra points.

<b>Muffin Tray Mini Golf</b>							
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Metal muffin trays are good for placing magnetic letters inside and matching little items from around the house and garden to each sound. They can also be used as a target for batting ping-pong balls into or for tiddlywinks. The aim is to get a ball or object in each of the 12 holes.

## Games That Need Chalk

<b>Soak the Sounds</b>							
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Chalk out sounds or words on the ground or a wall outdoors. Call out sounds for the children to soak with their water guns, hoses or water balloons.



**Older children** - For older children challenge them to soak all of the alternative spellings of the sound, such as ai, or, and ee families.



<b>Phonics Hopscotch</b>							
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Chalk out a phonics hopscotch with single sounds and digraphs for children to call out as they hop and jump along.



**Older children** - Adapt the rules of traditional hopscotch to play the game, encouraging children to call out the individual letters when they are hopping along and around their counter, but the digraphs as they jump with both feet.



## Parking Space Sounds



Chalk out a few sounds your child is currently learning and encourage them to drive their favourite car or bike around to park on each sound. Call out sounds and time how long it takes them to drive and park on the correct sound.



**Older children** - Older children can park on sounds to spell out words as you call them out. For example, they would need to park on 'm', 'oo', and 'n' to spell out moon.

## Tricky Word Curling



Draw a large chalk curling target on the ground. Write a tricky word your child is learning inside each ring, with a score next to it. The smallest, middle ring should have the hardest word and the highest score. The aim is to slide upside-down plastic plates or bowls along the ground and into the target and to call each ring by the word inside it. The person whose plate/bowl is closest to the middle wins the round.

## Jumping Jacks



Use card, paper or chalk on the ground to make simple jumping spots of the sounds your child is currently learning. The aim is to have fun jumping from one to the next and then do a jumping jack when they are on the sound that is called out to them. You can all chant the sounds together as they jump along.



**Older children** - Use different colour chalk, card, paper, or pens for each different child's sounds and let them know which colour jumping spots are theirs.

## Games That Need Magnetic or Plastic Letters

### Search for The Stolen Sounds



Set out magnetic letters into simple, decodable words but with missing letters that have been 'stolen'. Use sticky tac to fix the corresponding objects next to the words. Challenge your child to work out which sounds have been stolen and to find them by hunting around the house. Set a stopwatch to time how long they take. You can repeat the game with the same words and objects but take different sounds away, or use a new set of words and objects.



## Letter Train Challenge



Set up a small train track with your child and add magnetic letters which need to be delivered to the stations. If you don't have magnetic boards to use as stations, you could use baking trays or even the fridge. Ask your child if they can identify any of the letters they are delivering to the 'stations'. Can they make all of the deliveries before the time runs out?



**Older children** - To make this activity more challenging, cut some small pieces of paper to use as tickets and write CVC words on them. Ask your child to find the corresponding letters to 'deliver' their word to one of the stations



## Phonics Foam Party



Spread plastic or magnetic letters out on a large tray and spray over the top with shaving foam. Place a bucket or bowl for each child a good distance away from the foam tray. Challenge the children to find one letter at a time in the foam, run to put it in their bucket and come back for more until they have all been found. Each time they find a letter they need to name it before they run. After the game, smooth out the shaving foam and have a go taking a few letters out of their bucket to write in the foam.







**Older children** - Challenge older children to make as many words as they can from the letters in the buckets and write each one in the foam.

## Games That Need Other Household Items







### Sound and Spoon Races



Gather as many small ball pool or ping-pong balls as you can and write sounds that each child is learning on them. Put these balls in their starting places on a start line. Place a bowl or bucket for each child at the finish line. The aim is for the children to use their spoons to carry their sound balls to the finish line without dropping or holding them. When they get to the end, they should drop it into the bucket while shouting the sound out. Continue until all the sounds are in the buckets.

<b>Sound Slam Dunk</b>							
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Peg pillowcases on a washing line so that they hang open like nets, you may need to roll down the top of the pillow cases to make them stay open. Label large balls with sounds your children are learning. The aim is to shoot them or slam dunk them into the nets while shouting out the sounds as they score. After the game they could empty each net and make a word with the balls before playing again.

<b>Parasheet Games</b>							
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Gather as many small ball pool or ping-pong balls as you can and write the sounds on them that each child is learning at the moment. Use a large bedsheet as a parachute and spread it out on the ground. Place one ball at a time on top and bounce the ball up and down by swooping the sheet up and down in the air. Chant the sounds together as the balls bounce on the parachute.

<b>Musical Sound Statues</b>							
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Play musical statues, in which the children have to try to use their body or hands to make the shape of the letters you call out each time the music stops. This is a good opportunity to look closely at letter shapes in a fun way. Once children get really good at the game, you could call out digraphs for them to make together, or on their own as two statue shapes one after another.

<b>Rainbow Writing</b>							
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Using different colours, children practise writing sounds or words on a shed, the patio, windows, chalkboards or any writing surface you have available. Whiteboard pen and chalk pens work well on windows and clean off easily with a little help. The aim is to listen for the sound or word you call out and then write it as many times as they can in one minute. Count up how many they have written after each round and repeat with new sounds or words. Can they beat their own personal best? You could ask them to leave their writing there for the rubbing out races (see below).

<b>Stepping Stones</b>							
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Use card, paper or chalk on the ground to make simple jumping spots with the sounds your child is currently learning on them. Place these as a single line of stepping-stones across the room or area and tell the children there are crocodiles underneath the water around them. The aim is to jump across from one stepping-stone to the next calling out the sounds as they jump.

<b>Balloon Bounce</b>							
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Blow up balloons and write different sounds or words, that your child is currently learning, on them. Play 'keep the balloon in the air' or bounce the balloons around to each other. The aim is to say the sound or word on each balloon they touch.



## Treasure Hunt Games

### Sound Hunt



Write 10 sounds suitable for each child on little bits of paper, choosing different-coloured paper or pen for each child. Hide them around an indoor or outdoor area. Let each child know which colour sounds they are hunting for. The aim is for them to find all 10 sounds and then to make as many different real or nonsense words as they can with their sounds. They could also write down the words they make as an extra challenge.

### Treasure Hunt



Write out 10 clues on pieces of paper, with a sound or word on one side and a simple clue on the other. If you can use words your child already knows when you write the clues, or words that they can sound out easily then that works really well. Keep the first clue, and then hide the rest in your chosen hiding places. Take little notepads on the treasure hunt for children to record what sounds they find, or place the notepads at the end to record the sounds once finished. Make words out of the sounds. If you leave the clues out children can try this again on their own (with an adult accompanying them if need be).

## Sounds, Decodable Words and Tricky Words for the Games

### Sound Mats:

[Level 2 Sound Mat](#)

[Level 3 Sound Mat](#)

[Level 2 and 3 Sound Mat - Useful for Phases 3 and 4](#)

[Level 5 Sound Mat](#)

[Whole Scheme Sound Mat - Useful for Phases 5 and 6](#)

### Decodable Words:

[Level 2 Word Booklet](#)

[Level 3 Word Booklet](#)

[Level 4 Word Booklet](#)

[Level 5 Word Booklet](#)

[Level 6 Word Booklet](#)

### Tricky Words:

[Level 2, 3, and 4 Tricky Words](#)

[Level 5 Common Exception Word Booklet](#)

[Level 6 Common Exception Word Booklet](#)

