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**The Essence of Phonics**

**by Dr. Patrick Groff  
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**For parents who may not understand what phonics information is, this may give them confidence they can teach it. The essence of what you need to know to teach phonics information can be expressed "on the back of an envelope":**

1. Letters of the alphabet represent the sounds of speech.
2. The "short" vowel sounds are:  
   /mhtml:file://C:\Users\reggie\Desktop\essence.mht!http://www.nrrf.org/images/shorta.jpg/ as in *at*;      /mhtml:file://C:\Users\reggie\Desktop\essence.mht!http://www.nrrf.org/images/shorte.jpg/ in elf;      /mhtml:file://C:\Users\reggie\Desktop\essence.mht!http://www.nrrf.org/images/shorti.jpg/ in it;       /mhtml:file://C:\Users\reggie\Desktop\essence.mht!http://www.nrrf.org/images/shorto.jpg/ in odd;      /mhtml:file://C:\Users\reggie\Desktop\essence.mht!http://www.nrrf.org/images/shortu.jpg/ in up
3. Attaching short vowels to consonant sounds makes  
   /ab-eb-ib-ob-ub/, or      /ba-be-bi-bo-bu/, or   
   /bat-bet-bit-bot-but/, or      /brag-bled-drip-stop-drum/, or   
   /fast-rest-fist-cost-must, or      /grand-blend-brisk-frost-crust/
4. The "long" vowel sounds are:  
   mhtml:file://C:\Users\reggie\Desktop\essence.mht!http://www.nrrf.org/images/longa.jpg as in game;       mhtml:file://C:\Users\reggie\Desktop\essence.mht!http://www.nrrf.org/images/longe.jpgin Pete;       mhtml:file://C:\Users\reggie\Desktop\essence.mht!http://www.nrrf.org/images/longi.jpgin pine;      mhtml:file://C:\Users\reggie\Desktop\essence.mht!http://www.nrrf.org/images/longo.jpg in home;       mhtml:file://C:\Users\reggie\Desktop\essence.mht!http://www.nrrf.org/images/longu.jpg in cute  
   The long vowels also are spelled with two *joined* letters:  
   f*ai*l, pl*a*y; s*ee*n, l*ea*f; d*ie*; b*oa*t
5. The diphthongs are /oi/ as in *oil* or *boy,* and /ou/ as in *howl* or *out.*
6. Two other important vowels sounds are /oo/ in foot, and mhtml:file://C:\Users\reggie\Desktop\essence.mht!http://www.nrrf.org/images/longoo.jpgin *boot.*
7. Long vowels, diphthongs, and /oo/ and /mhtml:file://C:\Users\reggie\Desktop\essence.mht!http://www.nrrf.org/images/longoo.jpg/ attached to consonant sounds make up many words (the same way short vowels do).
8. Some consonant sounds are spelled with joined letters:  
   /ch/ as in *ch*ant;       /kw/ in *qu*ack;      /sh/ in *sh*op;       /th/ in *th*is
9. Some speech sounds in words are not spelled according to the above phonics rules:  
   angel; vary, care, hair; be; myth, prince, fence; find, night, by; arm, salt, cough; union; both, know; truth, who, rude, new; put.  
   Some words have "silent" letters:  
   com*b,* *w*rite, bub*b*le, mid*d*le, cuf*f*, ful*l*, com*m*on, con*n*ect, pop*p*y, tar*r*y, mis*s*, but*t*er, buz*z*.
10. All words are sounded-out *left-to-right* when phonics information is applied to them.

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