FREE HOME EDUCATOR GUIDE

Pip on a Mat

Free Foundation English teaching guide · Five short sessions

Foundation English | Read and spell three-sound words

This sequence teaches a narrow Foundation phonics goal. The child learns to join first, middle and last sounds when reading and to hear and write them when spelling. They use this knowledge in three original short stories and talk about what the words mean.

Use this free guide on its own. The reading pages, printable teaching cards and progress records are included. Open or print only the pages you need for a lesson. Aspire's companion Support, Core and Extension workbooks offer extra practice and independent assessment if you want a longer sequence.

What you are teaching

Learning intention. Connect the three sounds in a short word to letters, read that word and spell it from speech.

Say to the child. 'I can say the sounds and read the whole word. I can listen to a word, find its three sounds and put a letter with each one. I can tell what happened and show the words that helped.'

Skill to practise	Evidence that will help you plan the next lesson
Join and separate sounds in speech	The child blends or segments a new one-syllable spoken word.
Decode and spell three-sound words	The child reads a new printed word and spells a fresh spoken word using practised sound–letter links.
Understand what they read	The child answers with a word or action from the story and rereads a word if meaning is unclear.

The sequence uses a selected sound set. If the child is new to some links, teach those first. Continue with the next group in your phonics program once this work is secure.

Prepare in five minutes

Print one teaching card or reading page at a time. Gather a pencil, three counters, a piece of paper for covering practice words, letter cards, a small mat and a rag. Optional items include a red hat and a second small object for a character. Keep a pencil and the record page beside you.

- **Sound:** the part you hear in a word. You can hear three in *sat*.
- **Letter spelling:** the mark you see that stands for a sound. In *sat*, the letter **s** stands for the first sound.
- **Blend:** join sounds to read the whole word.
- **Segment:** separate a spoken word into its sounds so you can spell it.
- **CVC:** consonant sound, vowel sound, consonant sound. *Mat* and *wet* each have three such sounds.

Say your usual short vowel in *mat*, *sit*, *wet*, *hot* and *sun*. The examples use Australian English without requiring a particular regional accent. Practise saying brief sounds like /t/, /p/ and /d/ without a following ‘uh’. Hold stretchable sounds, such as /s/ and /m/, while sliding under the first two letters. Keep final sounds close.

Say this first. ‘Today our ears listen closely and our eyes look all the way through the word. I will show you. Then we will try one together.’

For a child who tires or avoids writing, split a session into two short pieces. Use cards or a suitable keyboard for the spelling task if pencil control takes attention away from the sounds. Record the response mode. Save a separate short handwriting sample if that is a current goal.

Check the starting point

Run this beside the child with print covered for the first two steps. Say the words in natural speech. This check locates the starting task. It is an informal teaching check.

1 **Oral blending.** Say the sounds in *mat* separately. 'Push those sounds together. What word?' Repeat with *sit*.

2 **Oral segmenting.** Say *tap*. 'What sounds can you hear? Move one counter for each sound.' Repeat with *pin*.

3 **Link a sound to print.** Show s, a, t, p, i, m, o and n separately. 'What sound can this letter stand for?' Show a capital S and P when checking readiness for *Pip Sat*.

4 **Read and spell.** Show **sat** and **pit**, one at a time. Ask the child to spell *mat* and *tip*. Record both the response and how much prompting was needed.

What you see	Start here
Some first or final sounds are missed, or familiar letters still need prompts.	Use F1 with three counters and review any missing sound–letter links before *Pip Sat*.
Known sets can be blended in three-sound words; mixed vowels or spelling still need practice.	Use F2 after reviewing its additional sounds and special words.
The child reads and spells mixed-vowel CVC words and reads a new line accurately without help.	Use *Pip on a Mat* and the brief check on F3, then try the comparison with *Sam Had a Hat*.

There is evidence of progress if the child moves from modelling to a sound cue and then to checking independently. If entire sound groups are unfamiliar, teach those groups first. Keep this material for later blending practice.

Controlled-reading sequence

The order below is an Aspire pack teaching sequence. Check readiness against your child's prior phonics program. The three stories in the reading pages are controlled texts. Adults read directions and comprehension prompts aloud.

Story	Taught correspondences at this point	Teach as whole words with sound mapping
Pip Sat	Stage A: s as in *sat*, a as in *mat*, t as in *tap*, p as in *pin*, i as in *sit*, m as in *mat*, o as in *on*, n as in *nap*. Match capital P and S.	**a**
Pip on a Mat	Stage A plus Stage B: w as in *wet*, e as in *wet*, d as in *dab*, b as in *bed*, g as in *got*, r as in *rag*, h as in *had*, u as in *sun*. Match capital P, M, T, N and D. The separate Core task bank also uses familiar l as in *lip*.	**a**, **the**, **was**
Sam Had a Hat	Reuse Stage A and B. Match capital S, H, A and T as required in the title and sentences. The separate Extension task bank also uses familiar f as in *fit*. Teach it before using that check.	**a**, **the**

Teach a. Say ‘a mat’ naturally. In that phrase **a** often has a soft ‘uh’ sound. Show the single letter and place a finger under it. Let the child read the phrase with you, then find **a** when it appears again. A stressed reading of **a** may sound like the letter name.

Teach the. Hear ‘the mat’. Point to the two letters **th**, which work together for one voiced sound at the start. Point to the final **e**, which has a soft sound here. Read the entire word naturally, then reread the phrase. This one-word prompt does not introduce a new digraph to the rest of the reader.

Teach was. Hear ‘was wet’. Point to **w**. The vowel in **was** sounds different from the short vowel in **mat**, and the final **s** sounds like the end of *buzz*. Say **was**, point to each part and blend it with the child. A weaker vowel in fast speech is ordinary.

Session 1 · Listen and build

Goal. Blend and segment three sounds orally and match them to letters. Allow about 15 minutes. Use teaching card F1. Move on when the child can show you three sounds with counters.

I do · 3 minutes. ‘Listen to *sat*. I can stretch the first sound, sss. I hear the middle sound as in *mat*. I finish with a quick /t/. Watch me push one counter for each sound. Now I sweep under all three and say *sat*.’

We do · 5 minutes. Say *mat*. Say, ‘Move a counter every time you hear one part.’ If the child moves only one, say *mat* once, then say each sound yourself while moving three counters. Clear the table and try *tap* together. Ask, ‘Which is the last sound?’ Now reveal the matching letters and build *mat* in the three boxes.

You do · 5 minutes. Cover your model. Dictate *pat*. Ask the child to build it. When they have placed their letters, say, ‘Read it back. Match each letter to the sound you wanted.’ If the middle vowel is missing, return to the blank counters before replacing the letters.

Close · 2 minutes. ‘What did the boxes help us hear?’ Save the independent word, and write a note if you supplied any letter.

Session 2 · Help, then fade it

Goal. Read and spell short-a and short-i CVC words without a model. Allow about 15 minutes. Use the *sit* row and follow-up on F1, then *Pip Sat*.

I do · 3 minutes. Write **sat** and **sit**. Say, 'I hear the same sound at the start and end. My mouth changes for the middle. Listen to *sat*, *sit*. I point to the letter that changed. I read all the sounds to check.'

We do · 4 minutes. Compare *pat* and *pit*. The child points to the vowel, says the sound, then reads. Erase one word and spell it together from speech. Let the child touch the middle position again if needed.

You do · 5 minutes. Take the chart away. Dictate *tip*, then *tap*. Give time to write or build. If the child knows Stage A and **a**, offer *Pip Sat*. Say, 'Read the words with your eyes, then tell me where each character sat.' Let the child use counters to retell it after reading.

Close · 3 minutes. Set **map**, **sit** or **pit** on a card. Ask the child to read it independently before the next activity. If two prompts are needed, re-model with plain counters. Recheck with a different word after a break.

Session 3 · Read a controlled story

Goal. Read mixed-vowel CVC words accurately, then use them in a short text. Allow about 20 minutes. Use teaching card F2 and *Pip on a Mat*.

Prepare · 4 minutes. Show a rag and demonstrate a dab. 'I press the rag lightly, lift it and press again. That small quick press is a dab.' Preview wet, rag, dab, set and nap in speech and ask the child to show one action. Teach **a**, **the** and **was** as on the earlier page.

I do · 3 minutes. Point to **wet**. 'I start at w. I say the sounds without big gaps, then say *wet*. Listen to me read it in a sentence: "Pip was wet." I know *wet* fits because a dog and a mat can get wet.'

We do · 4 minutes. Read **rag** and **dab**, then practise **sun**. Stop on any specific correspondence the child does not know. Ask the child to find **the** or **was** in the story. Connect the word to its phrase and read the three parts together.

You do · 6 minutes. Child reads the story. For a wrong word, say, 'Look all the way through. Try the sounds again.' If that fails, supply the missed sound, ask for a blend and reread from the start of the line. After the first read, ask for a second read with a speaking voice. Let the child point under each word as needed.

Close · 3 minutes. 'What did Nan get? Show me the word.' Ask one question now and return to the other Core prompts later. Accuracy comes before pace. No stopwatch is needed.

Session 4 · Find a reason in the story

Goal. Use a decoded word or action as evidence for an idea. Allow 15–20 minutes. Use the after-reading questions and the new scene prompt on F2.

I do. 'The story says the mat was wet. I can point to *wet*. Nan put it in the sun. I think she wanted it to dry. The drying part is my idea and those two lines help me make it.'

We do. Ask, 'What do those three dabs help us imagine?' If the child says 'She presses the rag', ask, 'Where in the story did you hear that action?' If they point to *rag* alone, ask them to find the three repeated words as well. Talk through the action with the real rag.

You do. Let the child retell two things in order. Ask for a new scene with Pip on a rug or a mat. The child spells the target word. Offer oral rehearsal or write down the other words. Ask them to explain why the target word fits the scene.

Close. Save the new line. Mark independently spelt letters separately from any letters in words you supplied. A child can give an excellent verbal explanation while still learning to spell.

Session 5 · Transfer to a new story

Goal. Explain a text clue, compare two uses of an object and retell a changed ending. Allow about 20 minutes. Begin once the child can read the first story accurately and spell taught three-sound words. Use the comparison on F3.

I do. Read a sentence from each story with the child. Say, 'I can see *rag* in both. In the first story the mat is wet. That gives me one reason Nan might get a rag. I need different clues to tell what Sam is doing with one.'

We do. Read *Sam Had a Hat*. Ask which two lines tell what the dog got. If the child says Sam gave the rag 'because he was angry', ask, 'Which words tell us that? Which part is our idea?' Accept plausible guesses with an explanation and mark them as guesses.

You do. Child names the two problems and how each rag helps. They propose a new ending and independently spell one CVC word in it. If they find writing slow, adult writes the spoken ending separately. Say, 'Tell me one thing that would help a listener make sense of your ending.' Let the child add that idea.

Close. Ask the child to read one line again and explain why their chosen spelling fits. Save an independently spelled word and a short transcript of the explanation.

When the child gets stuck

What you hear or see	Try this response	Check it again
They hear *sa* as one part.	'Stretch the first sound. Move a counter for sss, another for the middle and one for the last.' Add print after they hear three.	Try *sit* orally, then on cards.
They say 'tuh' for t.	Model a very short /t/ and stop quickly. Blend continuously into the vowel before saying the last sound.	Try *tap* and *mat* at the next warm-up.
They read *pat* for *pit*.	Point to the middle. 'Say that sound. Listen to the two words. Which one goes with this letter?'	Say *tip*, then ask for a fresh read and spell.
They name a picture instead of reading.	Set the picture aside. 'Start under the first letter. Look all the way across.' Discuss meaning after the word is decoded.	Give another printed word without a picture.
They leave the last sound out in spelling.	Say the word normally, ask for a repetition and touch the final empty box. Ask for the last sound before the letter.	Ask the child to spell *pin* or *hot* independently later.
They guess from the story.	'That idea makes sense. What do these letters tell us?' Blend the printed word and reread the line.	Present a new line with the same word elsewhere.
They work hard to hold a pencil.	Let them build with letters or select graphemes. Keep spelling and handwriting records separate.	Keep the same spelling goal in the independent check.

If the child is frustrated, pause, finish with one familiar success and return to a short oral or modelled task next time.

Weekly program and evidence record

Make one copy each week. As a starting rhythm, try two short lessons on sounds and spelling, one supported reading, one application lesson and a short assessment or rereading. Some children need an extra week at an earlier step before mixed vowels.

Date	Task and word or line	Independently accurate	Prompt or self-correction	Plan for next time
	Oral sounds			
	Letter–sound review			
	Read a word or line			
	Spell from speech			
	Retell or explain a reason			

Reading log	Details
Story and date	
A line reread accurately	
One word to revisit	
Oral idea or evidence	

Keep one brief dated spelling check, one learned-and-retried example, one child-created line or drawing with its dictated caption, and a short note on one reasoning response. These samples show what the child did. They are for learning records.

Decide what to teach next

Reteach the missing sound or word position if there is a repeated error. Change one sound at a time in minimal pairs such as *sat* and *sit*. Recheck in a different word.

Consolidate if the child can decode familiar examples but applies the skill only after a prompt. Use one guided word, then fade the boxes, then use one new printed word and one dictated word.

Move on when the child can apply the taught patterns in unfamiliar words and brief connected text across more than one occasion. Add the next planned group of single-letter spellings, or move toward blends or digraphs once basic blending is secure. Use your existing phonics program to sequence them. A two-letter spelling can represent one sound. Adjacent consonants can represent two sounds. Teach the difference explicitly as each pattern appears.

Retest after practice. Use the independent word set and next-step table on F3. Use a different word drawn from the same sound set, such as *hid*, *rob*, *bed* or *cut*. Review the letter **c** for /k/ before *cut* if it has not been taught.

Learning reflection

Ask, ‘What helps you if you meet a word you do not know?’ Write the child's answer in their own words.

Record a small next step in their words and yours.

Addresses selected Foundation reading and spelling skills. This is a teaching resource for use at home or in a classroom.

Print-and-teach card F1 · Listen, build and read back

Use blank counters before letter cards. Review the available sound–letter links from the guide's controlled-reading sequence. Say one word normally before asking for the parts.

Say	Work together	Try independently
sat	Move three counters as you say s, short a, t. Swap the counters for letters and sweep back to blend.	Say *pat*. The child orders its letters, points to each sound and reads the whole word back.
mat	Say the middle sound while touching the middle spot. Compare *mat* and *sat*.	Show **map**. The child reads it and names one change from **mat**.
sit	Move the middle card in **sat**. Listen for short i before rebuilding.	Say *tip*, then *tap*. Record which letter the child chose for each middle sound.

Cut or copy these letters onto scraps. Make another copy if you need two of the same letter.

s	a	t	p
i	m	o	n
p	a	P	S

First sound	Middle sound	Last sound

After reading Pip Sat. Ask: ‘Where did Sam sit? Who sat on Sam? Show me the words.’ Use two toy figures or counters to act out the last line after the child reads it. If asked who Pip is, explain that Pip is a little dog. Read the last line twice in different voices and let the child choose one.

Print-and-teach card F2 · Read Pip on a Mat

Before reading. Show a rag. Press briefly against a surface and lift the rag. Repeat. Say ‘Each small press is a dab.’ Read **wet**, **mat**, **rag**, **dab**, **sun** and **nap** with the child. Teach **a**, **the** and **was** using the mapped pronunciations in the guide.

Sound warm-up. Read **sat**, **pin**, **wet**, **hot** and **sun**. Point to the middle letter each time. Dictate *sit*, *set* and *sun* in that order. In *sun* the final sound changes as well as the vowel.

After reading.

1 ‘What did Nan get? Find the line.’ Look for *a rag*.

2 ‘Tell me two things in the order they happened.’ Accept a coherent pair from Pip sitting, Nan getting the rag or the mat going in the sun.

3 ‘Why might Nan put the mat in the sun? What makes you think that?’ Model, ‘I think Nan wants to dry the mat. I can see that the story says it was **wet**.’ Invite a second clue, such as Nan choosing the *sun*.

4 ‘Tell me where Pip could sit next.’ Say the new line aloud. Let the child spell one taught three-sound word, such as *rug*. Point to the spaces and reread the whole sentence together.

Record one line. If the child dictates, write their words and mark the word they spelled independently.

Print-and-teach card F3 · Compare, spell and check

Read Sam Had a Hat. First map **a** and **the**. After the child reads, ask 'What did the dog get first? What did it get after that?' Ask why Sam may have brought a rag. Point to the sequence: the dog gets the hat, the dog gets the rag and Sam gets the hat. This supports a swap; the story leaves Sam's intention unspoken.

Compare. Put both stories beside each other. In Pip's story, the mat is wet and dabbing suggests drying. In Sam's story, the dog has the hat and the rag may help Sam get it back. Ask the child to point to a word or action in each story, then tell a different ending. Save one self-spelled word.

Check on a new day. Read **red**, **lip**, **hut**, **dot**, **bag** and 'Nan sat in the sun.' Teach **l** for the initial sound in *lip* before using the set. Dictate *ten*, *log* and *gum*, covering the list. Record whether each word was independent, self-corrected, prompted or modelled.

Skill	What to look for	What to teach next if it is still difficult
Reading CVC words	Says the sounds in order and blends the word, even slowly, with no supplied sound.	Revisit the position of the missed sound and try a fresh word of the same pattern.
Spelling CVC words	Represents all three sounds in order; reads the spelling back to check it.	Rehearse the spoken word with three counters, then remove them for a new word.
Understanding a story	Gives a plausible reason and points to a useful word or action.	Ask for one literal detail first and jointly connect it to the possible reason.

Recheck on another day with equally familiar sound–letter links and fresh words. Slow, accurate independent blending counts. Keep support notes beside the sample so you can see whether the help has reduced over time.

Pip Sat

Sam sat.

Pip sat.

Sam sat on a mat.

Pip sat on Sam!

Pip on a Mat

Pip sat on a mat.

Pip was wet.

The mat was wet.

Nan got a rag.

Dab, dab, dab!

Nan set the mat in the sun.

Pip had a nap.

Sam Had a Hat

Sam had a red hat.

A dog ran up.

The dog got the hat.

Sam got a rag.

The dog got the rag.

Sam got the hat.