



# Using GPC Characters for Engaging Phonics Teaching

A narrative driven multi-sensory systematic synthetic phonics programme

Approved  
Phonics  
Teaching  
Programme



Department  
for Education





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- The importance of stories
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# Using GPC Characters

- Associating the characters with GPCs lends itself to story telling and putting these characters in meaningful contexts, which the pupils can relate to.
- These characters underpin the whole of the scheme and are referenced in the flashcards, decodable books, lesson plans, interventions, teaching books and formation rhymes.
- The characters are used when introducing digraph and trigraphs, assimilating pupil's prior knowledge with their new knowledge thus making them progress at a fast pace.

Phonics Shed

Set 4

Buck the duck



c – Curl down Curly's tail to her claws.

k – Down Kit's body, block with his arms, then kick with his leg.





# Using GPC Characters

- **Prior Knowledge** - By activating prior knowledge, teachers help students become ready to assimilate new information. This cueing helps the learner associate new information with previously learned knowledge. *Wendling, B.J. and Mather, N. (2008)*
- ‘Donald Hebb who was influential in the area of neuropsychology famously said that “Cells that fire together, wire together” and, more formally, “**any two cells or systems of cells that are repeatedly active at the same time will tend to become ‘associated,’ so that activity in one facilitates activity in the other**”.
- Improves the process of retrieving and recalling data

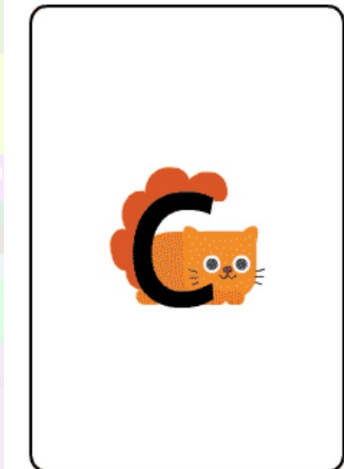
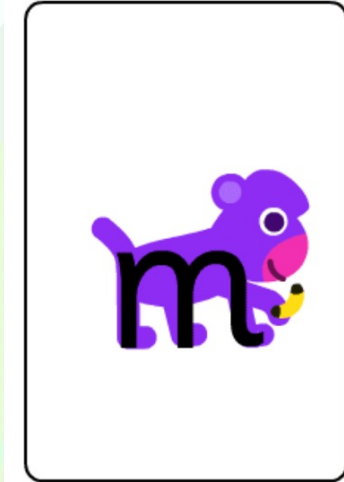






# Using GPC Characters

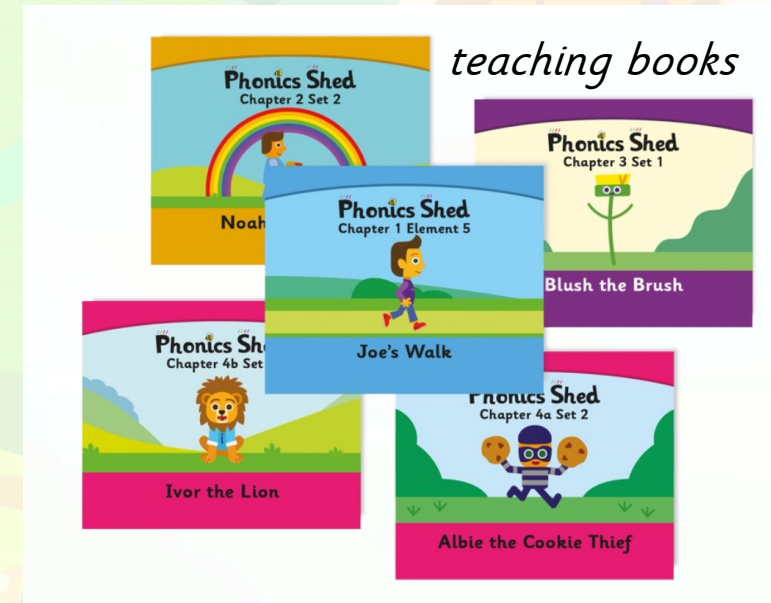
- Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondences Taught in a Meaningful Context
- Each letter is linked visually to an animal or human character. For example, **Curly the cat** and **Monty the monkey**. The visuals and alliterative names allow children to create concrete links with the sounds.
- The use of characters will particularly aid those children who struggle with abstract concepts, especially when combined with the multi-sensory aspect of the programme.





*“Our minds treat stories differently than other types of material. People find stories interesting, easy to understand, and easy to remember.”*

*The Reading Mind, Daniel Willingham, 2017*





# The importance of stories

**“Both storytelling and story reading have been found to be successful educational strategies that create significant improvements in language acquisition in young children** (Lucarevschi, 2016; Miller & Pennycuff, 2008; Speaker et al., 2004); **improve their oral or spoken language** (Cooper, 2009; Cremin et al., 2018; Isbell et al., 2004; Typadi & Hayon, 2010) **[and] develop reading comprehension** (Craig et al., 2001; Haven & Ducey, 2007)”

*Storytelling in Early Childhood Education, M. Rahiem, 2021*





# The importance of stories

- Schools who score highly in the Phonics Screening Check note that building a love of stories and reading plays a big part in their success (DfE, 2021).
- 2019 survey by the Literacy Trust found that children who enjoy reading were up to three times more likely to have higher than expected reading levels for their ages, and those who read daily are twice as likely to be above average in reading.
- Since the 1960s, research has repeatedly shown that reading for pleasure is an indicator of reading ability. In fact, it was suggested in an international study that reading enjoyment and ability have more impact on children's overall education than socio-economic factors.





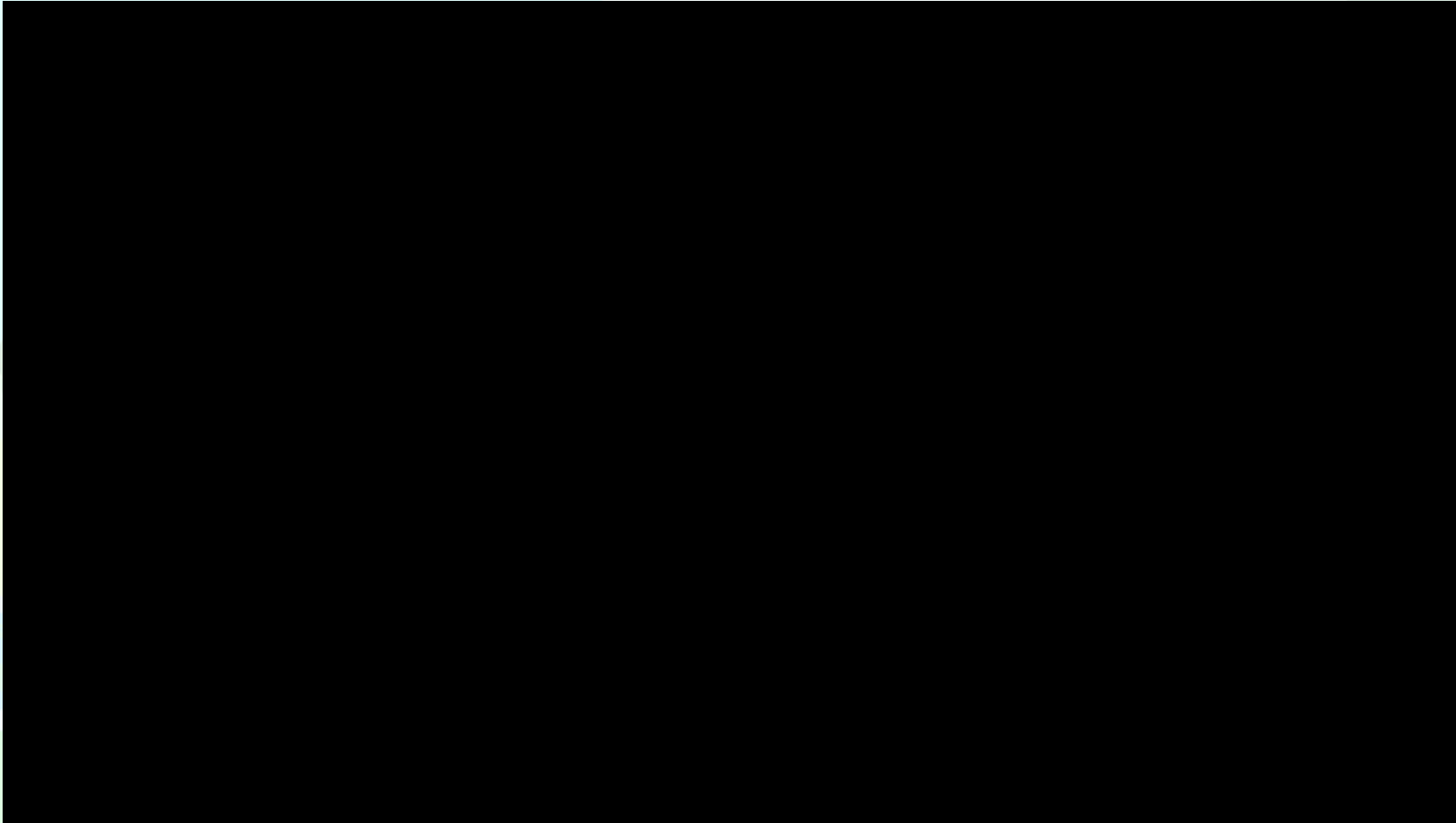


# Phonics Shed Sound Mat





# Using GPC characters in songs





Using GPC characters in actions

 **Phonics Shed**





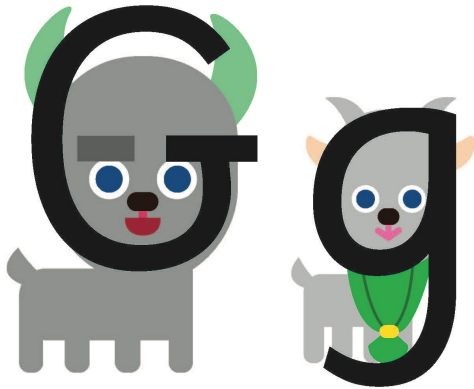


# Using GPC characters in letter formation

Phonics Shed

Set 3

Grey the goat



Curl around from his horn, up to his eye, and draw on his eyebrow.

Phonics Shed

Set 4

Buck the duck



c – Curl down Curly's tail to her claws.  
k – Down Kit's body, block with his arms, then kick with his leg.

Phonics Shed

Set 4

Ugbie the bug



Under Ugbie's tummy and back down to his sting.







# Using GPC characters in lessons

## Introduction

## Whole Group



### See

- Show the flashcard.
- Introduce the character.
- Example: *"This is Sam the snake. Say hi to Sam"*

"sss"

### Sound

- Say the sound it makes.
- Please check guidance videos to ensure correct pronunciation.
- Example: Demonstrate the sound the 's' makes (long hiss sound, NOT 'suh')

"Es"

### Name

- Say the name of the letter and compare it to the sound.
- Example: *"This is an 'es'. Its name is 'es' and it makes a 'sssss' sound"*



### Action

- Do the action related to the specific GPC/Character.
- Make the sound as you do the action.
- Example: Hands together and wriggle upwards like a snake from chest up to face and over your head. "sss"



### Song

- Sing/Listen to the song once and then ask the children to join in, you may need to talk through the words too.
- The song should be repeated at least twice.
- A lyrics sheet is included in the resources and videos of the songs are available on the Phonics Shed Hub.
- All songs are to the tunes of common nursery rhymes.



### Formation

- Lower and Upper Case Formations
- Use the Formation Animations on the Phonics Shed hub to model, or run your finger over the character on the flashcard.
- Say the formation rhymes as the letter is written.
- Formation Rhymes are found in the planning and on the bottom of the flashcards.
- Children are to practice forming the letters with their fingers before using a pen or pencil.



### Story

- Share the characters story book.
- Use the book that has the same name as the character.
- Try to emphasis the focus sound every time you read it.
- You can use the comprehension questions at the end of the story to recap and assess comprehension and listening.
- Use the word lists on the final page to practice blending and segmenting using the focus sound.



*"This is Sam's mummy, she makes the same sound as Sam (s) and has the same letter name (es), but she is a capital letter, she is bigger. We use a capital at the start of names, places and sentences"*

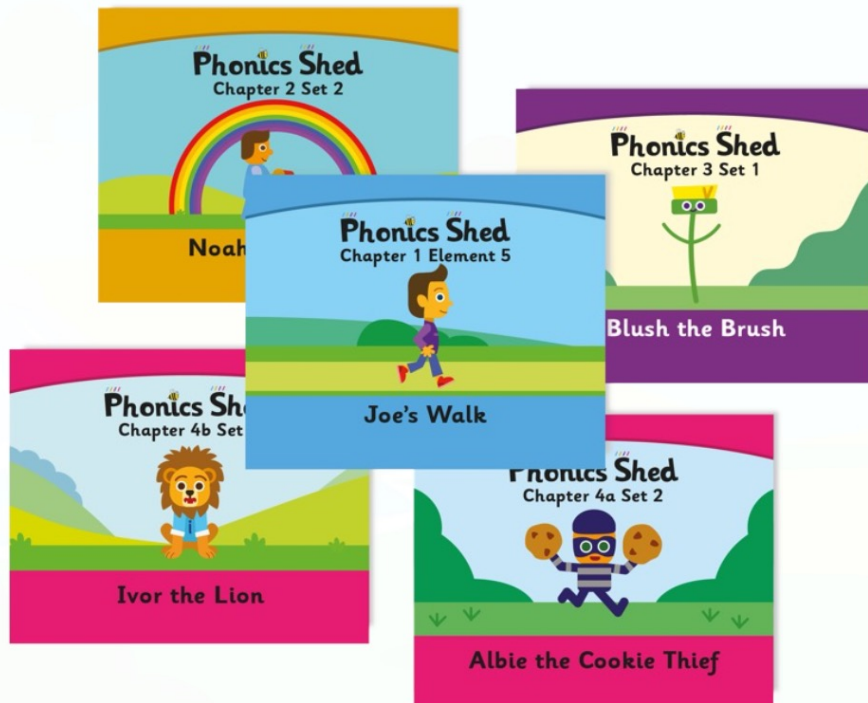
Example: Introducing Sam the Snake





# Using GPC characters in books

## 140 teaching books



## 120 decodable books



These Phonics Shed character-based stories also cover many other important and relatable themes, such as emotions, social skills, mental health and self-care. This allows the children to identify with the characters and engage at a deeper level. They can also help children address their own thoughts and feelings by talking about the stories and the issues raised in them.





# GPC Characters promote active engagement

- **Active Engagement** - Another key predictor of academic success is the amount of time the student is actively engaged in learning (Greenwood, Horton and Utley, 2002).
- When the pupil is an active participant, attention and focus is increased as they are thinking about the task in hand. *Wendling, B.J. and Mather, N. (2008)*
- Recall, imitating, actions, songs, reading and writing







- Teacher hub
- Resources, assignments and games
- Any questions

