

# What is Phonics?

Supporting your child at home using  
Bug Club Phonics



Bug Club  
**Phonics**



# Bug Club Phonics

## What is phonics?

Phonics is one method of teaching children how to read and write.

Phonics is all about sounds. There are 44 sounds in the English language, which we put together to form words.

Some are represented by one letter, like 't', and some by two or more, like 'ck' in duck and 'air' in chair.

Children are taught the sounds first, then how to match them to letters, and finally how to use the letter sounds for reading and spelling.

Synthetic phonics refers to 'synthesising', or blending, the sounds to read words. It is based on the idea that children should sound out unknown words and not rely on their context.

# Phonics Terminology

Word	What Does It Mean?
<b>blend</b>	Saying the individual sounds that make up a word and then merging or blending the sounds together to say the word – used when reading.
<b>consonant</b>	Most letters of the alphabet (excluding the vowels: a,e,i,o,u).
<b>CVC words</b>	<p>Abbreviation used for consonant-vowel-consonant words, used to describe the order of sounds. Some examples of CVC words are: cat, pen, top, chat (because ch makes one sound).</p> <p>Other similar abbreviations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• VC words e.g. on, is, it.</li> <li>• CCVC words e.g. trap and black.</li> <li>• CVCC words e.g. milk and fast.</li> </ul>
<b>digraph</b>	<p>Two letters which together make one sound e.g. ee, oa, ea, ch, ay.</p> <p>There are different types of digraph:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Vowel digraph:</b> a digraph in which at least one of the letters is a vowel, for example; boat or day.</li> <li>• <b>Consonant digraph:</b> two consonants which can go together, for example shop or thin.</li> <li>• <b>Split digraph</b> (previously called magic e): two letters, which work as a pair to make one sound, but are separated within the word e.g. a-e, e-e, i-e, o-e, u-e. For example cake or pine.</li> </ul>
<b>grapheme</b>	Written letters or a group of letters which represent one single sound (phoneme) e.g. a, l, sh, air, ck.

Word	What Does It Mean?
<b>letters and sounds</b>	<p>A Government document detailing the teaching of phonics. There are 6 phases described:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Phase 1:</b> This is split into 7 aspects, which focus on hearing and talking about environmental sounds and letter sounds.</li> <li>• <b>Phase 2:</b> Learning 19 letters of the alphabet, along with the first 5 'tricky words and using them to read and spell simple words and captions'.</li> <li>• <b>Phase 3:</b> Learning the remaining letters of the alphabet, some 2 and 3 letter digraphs, along with the next set of 'tricky words'. Reading and writing captions and sentences.</li> <li>• <b>Phase 4:</b> Learning to blend and segment longer words, including words with adjacent consonants and more than one syllable. Reading and writing using these and the next 'tricky words', within sentences.</li> <li>• <b>Phase 5:</b> Learning alternative spellings and pronunciations for phonemes, including their common usage within words. Reading and writing using these and the next 'tricky words', within sentences.</li> <li>• <b>Phase 6:</b> Learning longer words and spelling rules. Children may work from another document from this point, called 'Support for Spelling'.</li> </ul>
<b>phoneme</b>	<p>A single sound that can be made by one or more letters – e.g. s, k, z, oo, ph, igh.</p> <div data-bbox="1931 664 2331 928" style="border: 1px solid blue; background-color: #007bff; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b>Top Tip!</b> When starting phonics, avoid using the letter names (see, ay, tee etc) and use the sounds instead (c, a, t)! This will help your child with spelling and recognising letter sounds when reading. Letter names can be introduced more gradually.</p> </div>
<b>phonics</b>	Phonics teaches children to listen to and identify the sounds that make up words. This helps them to read and write words.
<b>pure sound</b>	<p>Pronouncing each letter sound clearly and distinctly without adding additional sounds to the end e.g. 'f' not 'fuh.'</p> <div data-bbox="1931 1106 2331 1392" style="border: 1px solid blue; background-color: #007bff; color: white; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p><b>Top Tip!</b> It is tricky to say some sounds without the 'uh' sound at the end – like b, d, v and g! Try to emphasise the main letter sound when talking about these letter sounds. Some are easier to say by dragging the sound out e.g. fffff rather than 'fuh' or mmmmm rather than 'muh.'</p> </div>

# Phonics Terminology

Word	What Does It Mean?
<b>segment</b>	<p>This is the opposite of blending (see above). Splitting a word up into individual sounds – used when spelling and writing.</p> <p><b>Top Tip!</b> Play word games with your child that encourage them to build words and recognise individual sounds in words e.g. word jigsaw puzzles, Hangman style games, I-Spy and making collections of objects that contain the same letter sounds at either the beginning, middle or end.</p>
<b>tricky words</b>	<p>Words that are difficult to sound out e.g. said, the, because.</p> <p><b>Top Tip!</b> Have some tricky word flashcards around and use them to practise reading and word recognition.</p>
<b>trigraph</b>	<p>Three letters which go together make one sound e.g. ear, air, igh, dge, tch.</p>
<b>vowel</b>	<p>The letters a, e, i, o, u.</p>

# What is Bug Club Phonics?

- ▶ **The Government realised a new Reading Framework in July 2021 which states that schools should no longer just rely on the 'Letters and Sounds' programme of study but adapt to include more opportunities to write and read fully decodable (phonetic) books.**
- ▶ **The validated systematic phonics programme we are now using at Great Kimble is called Bug Club Phonics. The programme is divided into six phases. During the programme new skills are taught, continually building on previous learning.**

# Phase 1 (Pre-Reception)

- ▶ **This is the beginning of the systematic learning of phonics and takes place predominately in Nursery or Pre-School. It falls primarily within the Communication, Language and Literacy area of learning in the Early Years Foundation Stage Curriculum. This phase is divided into seven strands:**
- ▶ **Aspect 1: Environmental Sounds** Children are exposed to a variety of sounds in the environment, being encouraged to copy them.
- ▶ **Aspect 2: Instrumental Sounds** Children are encouraged to listen to and make sounds using different instruments.
- ▶ **Aspect 3: Body Percussion** Children use their body to accompany songs and rhymes, for example by clapping and tapping.
- ▶ **Aspect 4: Rhythm and Rhyme** Children are exposed to a range of books and rhymes. Children are encouraged to join in with repeated refrains and rhymes.
- ▶ **Aspect 5: Alliteration** Children are encouraged to listen to initial sounds within words. They are asked to think of other words beginning with the same sound.
- ▶ **Aspect 6: Voice Sounds** Children are asked to create different mouth movements and say a range of sounds.

# Phase 1 (Pre-Reception)

## ► **Aspect 7:** Oral Blending and Segmenting

### **Oral Blending**

The merging together of the sounds is called blending. Initially, children may not be able to merge the sounds together independently and will need frequent practise which is highly beneficial.

At first, the adult will show the children how this is done. The separate sounds (phonemes) are clearly spoken aloud, in order, fairly quickly and are then merged together into the whole word. E.g. m-a-n man. The merging together of the sounds is called blending. Initially, children may not be able to merge the sounds together independently and will need frequent practise which is highly beneficial.

### **Oral Segmenting**

This is the opposite to oral blending. Here, children hear the whole word before it is then broken into separate sounds (phonemes). E.g. dog d-o-g. This skill is called segmenting and is vital in order for children be able to spell. Initially, children might only be able to hear the initial sound and will need frequent practise.

# Phase 2 (Reception)

- ▶ This phase builds upon the oral blending and segmenting of the previous phase. Children must continue to practise what they have learnt. They will also then be taught the grapheme-phoneme representations (letters) for 19 letters. Additionally, they will be taught that phonemes (sounds) can be represented by more than one letter. E.g. **fin**, **huff**

## Sounds

The Bug Club order for teaching the sounds, is as follows, with one unit being taught each week:

Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5
<b>s, a, t, p</b>	<b>i, n, m, d</b>	<b>g, o, c, k</b>	<b>ck, e, u, r</b>	<b>b, f/ff, l/ll, ss</b>

# Phase 2 (Reception)

## ► Learning Grapheme-Phoneme Correspondences

The process of learning a sound, includes:

Saying a number of words with the same initial sound, exaggerating it. E.g.  
sssnake ssssun

Showing the children the grapheme (letter) that represents the sound.

## ► VC and CVC Words

During this phase, children will be taught to read different words using the sounds and letters they have been exposed to (V-Vowel C-Consonant).

VC words are those that consist of a vowel and then a consonant (am, on, it). CVC words are those that consist of a consonant then a vowel and then a consonant (cat, dog, pen). Some words such as bell, are also CVC words because they only have three sounds. b-e-ll.

During this Phase the children will also to tricky words (whords which cannot be sounded out):

## ► I, to, the, no, go, into, her

# Phase 3 (Reception)

- ▶ **The purpose of this phase is to:**
- ▶ Teach more graphemes; the remaining letters of the alphabet and some sounds of which are made up of two or three letters, known as digraphs and trigraphs. E.g. 'ee' as in bee
- ▶ Practise blending and segmenting a wider range of CVC words
- ▶ Read more tricky words and begin to spell them
- ▶ To read familiar words on sight, rather than decoding them

## **Sounds and Digraphs:**

The Bug Club order for teaching the sounds, is as follows, with one unit being taught each week:

Unit 6	Unit 7	Unit 8	Unit 9	Unit 10	Unit 11
j, v, w, x	y, z, qu	ch, sh, th, ng	ai, ee, igh, oa, oo (long and short)	ar, or, ur, ow, oi	ear, air, ure, er

# Phase 4 (Reception/Year 1)

- ▶ The purpose of this phase is to consolidate the sounds already taught. Children are also exposed to adjacent consonants (consonant blends and consonant clusters) and multisyllabic words.

## **CVCC and CCVC Words**

Blends and clusters such as the following are taught:

- ▶ **'nt' as in tent**
- ▶ **'st' as in toast**
- ▶ **'pl' as in plum**
- ▶ **'sp' as in spoon**

## **Tricky Words**

During this phase, the children will also be exposed to tricky words; words that cannot be sounded out.

# Bug Club Phonics at Home

## Learning to read

- ▶ At Great Kimble School we use the Bug Club Phonics programme to help your child learn to read. The programme follows an approach of synthesising phonemes associated with graphemes a child sees; or put another way, learning to read by blending the sounds associated with the letters a child sees. The programme is the product of extensive research on the best way to teach children how to read.
- ▶ The reading books your child are allocated online and will bring home (**These will be available shortly**) are designed to support them in practising and consolidating the learning they have done at school. They also enable children to experience the pleasure and pride of reading their own books.
- ▶ All the books in Bug Club Phonics have been finely-levelled to ensure that all children can read books at exactly the right level for them. What's more, there are online versions for every printed title and a personalised website for each child.

# Bug Club Phonics at Home

## Reading a book online

- ▶ We allocate books to your child according to their reading levels. These books will appear in the 'My Stuff' area of their personal homepage.
- ▶ The eBooks have three main additional features to help your child. Find them in the 'Independent' section of 'My Stuff'.
- ▶ **Phoneme pronunciation guide:** click on the bug icon to hear some of the phonemes (sounds) in the book.
- ▶ **Read to me:** after your child has had a go at reading the book, you can click on this to hear the text read out loud e.g. to help your child with giving expression.
- ▶ **Quiz question:** click on the second bug icon within the book to answer a question designed to reinforce your child's learning. Their teacher will receive information about attempted questions.
- ▶ When your child has finished the book, clicked on the phoneme pronunciation guide and attempted the quiz question, he or she will earn 'ActiveLearn Coins'. By reading more books, your child will earn enough coins to 'buy' a reward in one of the many reward schemes.
- ▶ When your child has finished a book, it will move to 'My Library'. Children can read these books again if they want to, or they can choose new books from 'My Stuff'.

# Bug Club Phonics at Home

## After your child has learnt to read

- ▶ Until they are fluent readers, younger children will benefit from reading aloud to you as often as possible. By the time they are in Years 5 or 6, many children prefer to read silently to themselves. Create quiet opportunities for them to do so, but then talk to them about the book they are reading.

## Sharing reading

- ▶ When sharing a book with your child, try to take opportunities to talk about the book - before, during and after reading.
- ▶ **Before reading:** look at the book cover and talk about your child's expectations. Is the book likely to be fiction or non-fiction? Have you read other books together about these characters or by this author? What does your child think the book is going to be about?
- ▶ **While reading:** support your child when unknown words need tackling: you can sound them out, split them into syllables, or identify suffixes and prefixes. Remind your child to listen to the words while reading them, to make sure that they make sense. Have a 'meaning check' every now and again to ensure that your child understands the text.
- ▶ **After reading:** talk about the book. What was it about? Did it match your child's expectations? Ask questions beginning with the words *how* and *why* to check that your child has been able to read between the lines. Ask whether anything seemed puzzling. Then ask your child to explain what the best and worst bits of the book were, and why.

# Bug Club Phonics at Home

**Shortly your child will receive a unique login to access the Bug Club Phonics Reading Books from home. Below guides you through this process:**

## Bug Club Phonics walk-through for parents

Step 1: Firstly, go to [www.activelearnprimary.co.uk](http://www.activelearnprimary.co.uk)

Click on the yellow Log in button and use your child's username, password and school code that the teacher provided



[Forgotten password?](#)

[Will it work on my computer?](#)

Once logged in you will be taken to the Pupil World homepage. This is where you can access all of the homework.

Once logged in you will be taken to the Pupil World homepage. This is where you can access all of the homework.



You will see there are several tabs at the top of the page: My Home, My Stuff, My Library, My Rewards, Log Out and Grown-Ups.

Use My Home to change the home page theme.

My Stuff is where any new homework gets sent to. The number displayed indicates how many pieces of homework have been allocated to your child.

# Bug Club Phonics at Home

Step 2: Open My Stuff to see what's been allocated



The eBooks homework will come under the Independent tab, click on this to bring up the homework. In this case 3 books have been allocated.

At the bottom of each book icon you can see a gold coin and a number. This number indicates how many coins the child will get for attempting every quiz activity and reading to the end of the book.

# Bug Club Phonics at Home

Step 3: Open one of the books

The screenshot shows an eBook interface for the book 'A Big Mess'. On the left, there is a sidebar with the following sections:

- Before and during reading**
- 1 Say the sounds**: h, b, f, f, l, l, s, s. A yellow circle with a bug's face is in the middle.
- 2 Blend the sounds**: Say the sounds, then the word.
  - t - u - b, tub
  - h - o - p - s, hops
  - f - i - ll, fill
  - m - e - ss, mess
- 3 Read the tricky words**: I into. A small character 'd' is shown.

Below the sidebar is a magnifying glass icon. At the bottom, there are navigation buttons: 'Back', 'Read to me', 'Next', and a red 'X' icon.

**Meet the Alphablocks**  
We are the Alphablocks. We each have our own special sound. When we get together, word magic happens! When we make a word, we say our sounds in turn and then blend them together.

**Talk together**  
Ask the children to read the title and look at the cover picture. What kind of mess do they think the story will be about? Ask if they have ever made a mess at bath time. What happened?

**Vocabulary check**  
On page 2, check that the children realise that 'tub' is another word for 'bath'.

**While you read**

- Listen to the children reading the book. Ask them to say the sounds and blend them in order to read words they do not recognise.
- On page 5, what do the children think is going to happen next? Turn the page to see if they were right!
- On pages 6-7, encourage the children to read the text and speak bubbles with lots of expression.
- On pages 8-9, ask the children to find:
  - Which character is he looking at?
  - What do the children think he is going to do?

**A Big Mess**

Written by Joe Elliot  
Illustrated by Neil Sutherland, Blue-Zoo and Tony Trimmer

On the left of the eBook you can see which sounds and letters will be covered in the books, as well as any tricky words and top tips to help your child.

You will notice that there is a yellow circle with a bug's face in the middle. This is our hot spot icon and whenever you click on it there will be an activity to do.

In the bottom left of the screen you have a magnifying glass should you wish to zoom in.

In the bottom middle we have a Read to me function. If you click on this the narrator will read the book aloud. We advise that your child attempts to read it by themselves first if you want to use the Read to me function.

In the bottom right corner you can close the book.

# Bug Club Phonics at Home

## Step 4: Completing an eBook

The screenshot shows a page from an eBook. On the left, there's a colorful illustration of a bathtub with bubbles. Above the tub, the letters 'o', 'f', and 'f' are shown in a box. Below the tub, the letters 'o', 'f', 'f', 'i', and 't' are scattered. A character 'o' is saying 'Tip top!' to a character 't'. Below the illustration, the text reads 'o - ff, off! The tap is off.' with a small yellow smiley face icon.

On the right, there's a box with two columns of text:

- After reading**
  - Story comprehension**
    - How do the Alphablocks make a bath appear? (They make the word 'bath'.)
    - What goes wrong in this story? What causes the problem?
    - How do the Alphablocks solve the problem?
    - Do the Alphablocks have fun in the bath in the end? What do they do in the bath?
    - Do the children have fun playing in the bath? What kinds of things do they like to do?
  - Picture detective**
    - Ask the children to find an object in the pictures that contain the:
      - iv sound (bath, bubbles)
- Follow up**
  - Speedy reading**
    - Return to the words on the front inside cover (section 2) and check children can sound out and blend these words confidently. Ask them to practice reading these until they can read them quickly. Do the same for the sticky words (section 3).
  - Segmenting for spelling**
    - Practice this spelling routine using the words in section 2.
      - Say the word in a sentence, then as its own word and ask the children to repeat it.
      - Children say the sounds all through the word (segment) and either write a dash or hold up a finger for each sound.
      - Children select magnetic letters or write down the graphemes for each sound, saying the sound quietly as they do so.
      - Model the spelling by saying each sound as you write the word for the children to see.
      - Children give themselves a tick for each grapheme in the correct place.

Below the 'After reading' section, there's a speech bubble that says: "Don't necessarily do all of these activities - just those that your children need." Below that is a character 't' holding a magnifying glass.

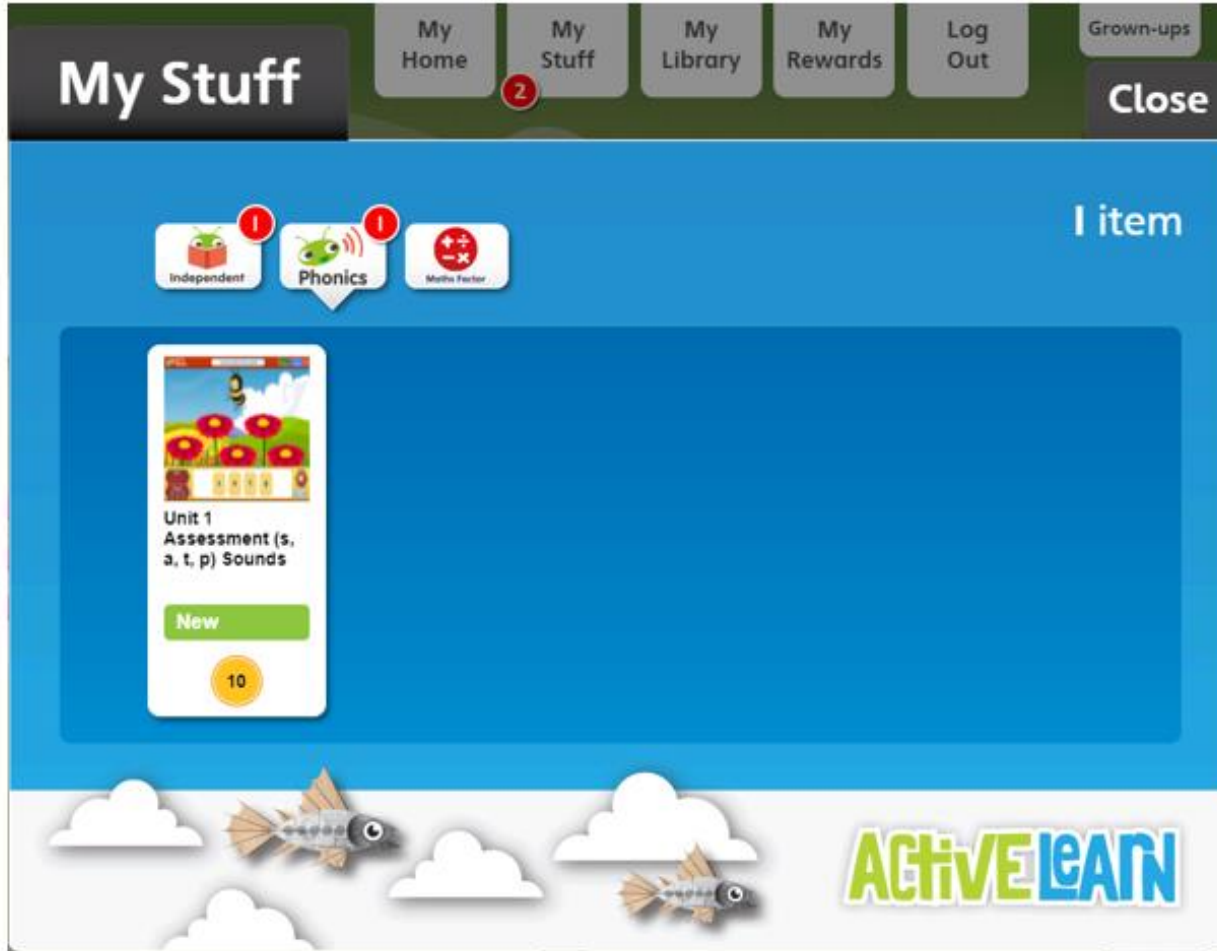
At the bottom of the page, there's a navigation bar with a magnifying glass icon, a 'Back' button, a 'Read to me' button with a speaker icon, a 'Next' button, and a red 'X' icon.

At the end of the book there will be an activity to do with your child. Once you are ready to finish, click the cross to close the book.

Your child's teacher will be able to see when your child has finished a book and also to see how they got on.

# Bug Club Phonics at Home

Step 5: How to find games that have been allocated



The teacher may also allocate Bug Club Phonics games. These can be found in the Phonics tab.

As with the eBooks, the gold coin represents how many coins the child will get as a reward for completing the game.

# Bug Club Phonics at Home

Step 6: Playing the games



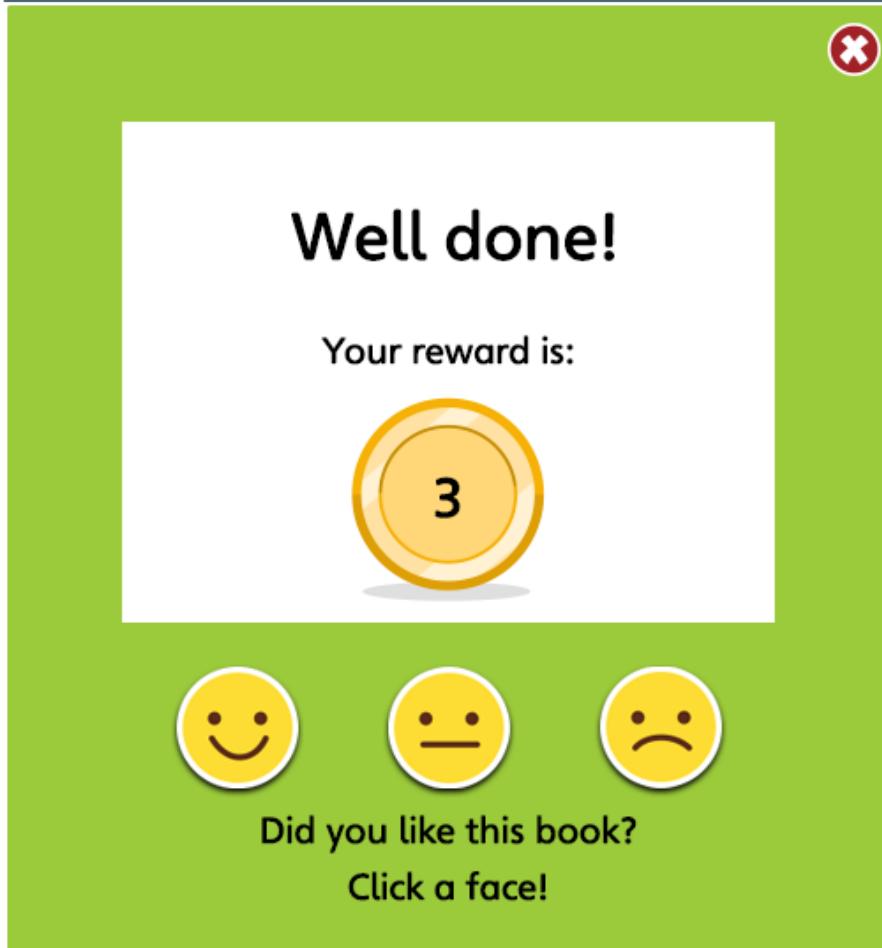
Whenever you open a game the first step is to click the play button and the narrator will provide the instructions for the game. You can also click the Guide button at the top right of the screen for written instructions.

In every game your child will have 3 chances to answer each question. If they get all three wrong, the narrator will provide the correct answer.

You can see how you did in the score counter. A green hexagon is shown for each question answered correctly and a red hexagon is shown for each answered incorrectly.

# Bug Club Phonics at Home

*Rewards for finishing the book or game*

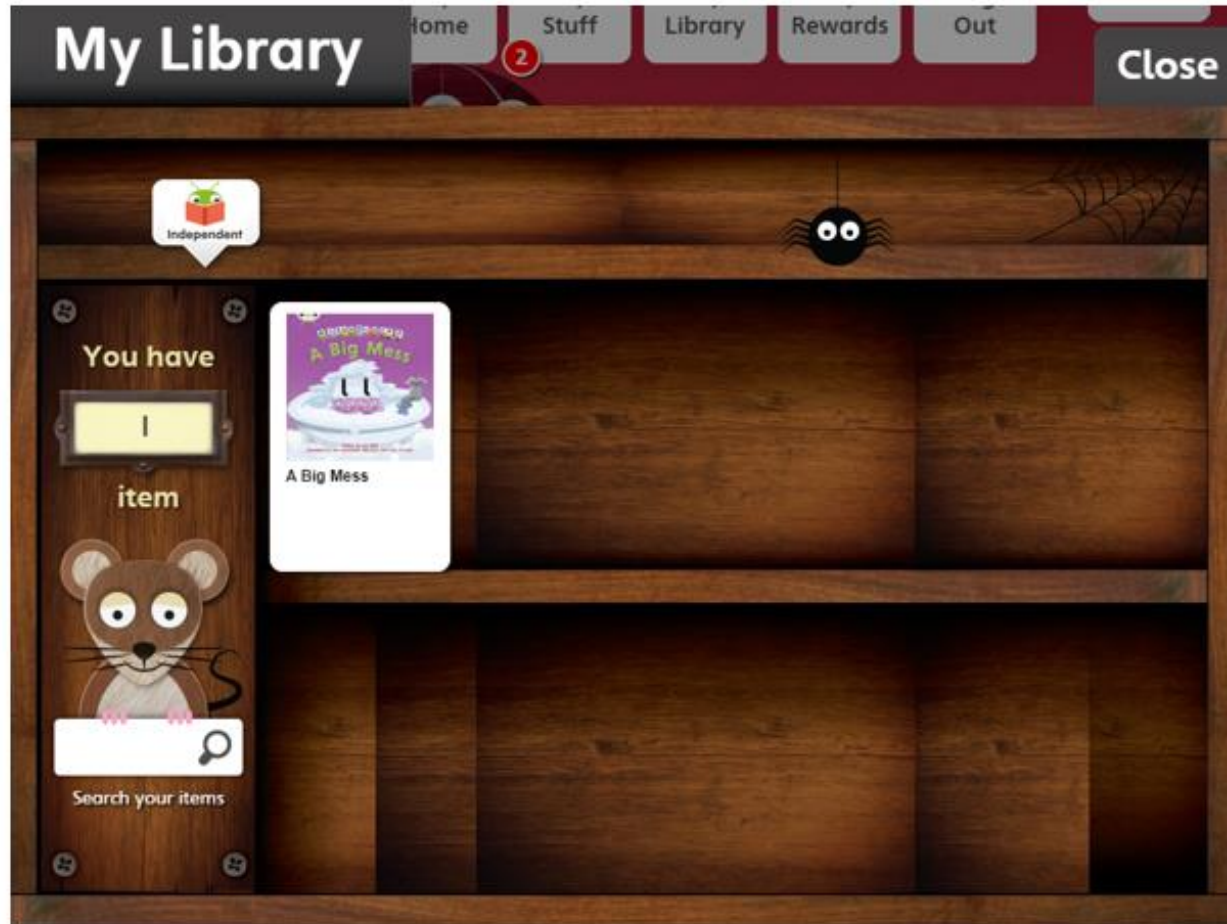


For eBooks, once you read to the end and attempt all of the activities, your child will be given a reward and the opportunity to say whether they liked the book.

For games, your child will be given a reward after attempting every activity and clicking finish at the end of the game.

# Bug Club Phonics at Home

My library



Once you finish a book it will drop out of My Stuff and move into My Library. Your child can read this any time they wish, but they won't be able to earn additional coins.

# Bug Club Phonics at Home

*Step 7: Spending the coins*



Over time, your child will accumulate more and more coins as they read more and more Bug Club Phonics books. You can see just how many coins they have on the homepage.

Now for their favourite part (after reading the eBooks of course), spending those coins.

Click on My Rewards to spend the coins. In the Pit Stop area children can play a racing game; in the Sticker Factory area they can buy digital stickers; finally, in The Tree House, they can decorate their tree house.