Read Write Inc Speed Sounds Set 1

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INTRODUCTION TO READ WRITE INC SPEED SOUNDS SET 1: THE FOUNDATION OF EARLY READING SUCCESS

Learning to read is one of the most transformative milestones in a child's early education. Among the most effective and widely adopted phonics programmes in schools today is **Read Write Inc**, developed by Ruth Miskin. At the heart of this programme lies the **Read Write Inc Speed Sounds Set 1**, a carefully structured sequence of sounds that forms the bedrock of early literacy. For parents, educators, and anyone supporting a young reader, understanding how Set 1 works, why it matters, and how to reinforce it at home can make all the difference in building confident, fluent readers.

This article takes a deep dive into **Read Write Inc Speed Sounds Set 1**, exploring its purpose, its structure, and the proven teaching methods that make it so effective. Whether you are a teacher looking to refine your classroom practice or a parent wanting to support your child's phonics journey, this guide will provide you with everything you need to know.

WHAT IS READ WRITE INC SPEED SOUNDS SET 1?

Read Write Inc Speed Sounds Set 1 is the first stage of the systematic synthetic phonics programme used in thousands of primary schools across the United Kingdom and beyond. It introduces children to the essential building blocks of reading and writing: the individual sounds that letters make. Unlike some other phonics schemes that present letters in alphabetical order, Read Write Inc groups sounds in a specific sequence that allows children to start blending and reading words as quickly as possible.

The term "speed sounds" refers to the expectation that children will learn to recognise these sounds rapidly and automatically, without hesitation. This automaticity is crucial because it frees up cognitive space for comprehension. When a child can instantly recall the sound associated with a letter or letter group, they can focus their mental energy on understanding the meaning of the word, sentence, or story they are reading.

Set 1 includes 31 sounds in total: 25 single-letter sounds and 6 digraphs (two letters that make one sound). The digraphs introduced in Set 1 are **sh, th, ch, qu, ng, and nk**. These are taught after children have secured a foundation of single-letter sounds, enabling them to read a wider range of simple words.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SPEED SOUNDS SET 1 PROGRAMME

The **Read Write Inc Speed Sounds Set 1** is not just a list of sounds to be memorised. It is a carefully sequenced, multi-sensory teaching approach that integrates visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic learning. Each sound is introduced with a memorable picture and a phrase that helps children anchor the sound in their memory. For example, the sound 's' is introduced with the picture of a snake and the phrase "s-s-s-snake." This combination of visual cue and verbal prompt is incredibly effective for young learners.

The sounds are not taught in alphabetical order. Instead, the sequence is designed so that after learning just a handful of sounds, children can begin blending them to read simple words. The first group of sounds taught is typically **m, a, s, d, t**. With these five sounds, children can already read words like "mat," "sat," and "dad." This early success is highly motivating and builds confidence from the very start.

The Complete List of Read Write Inc Speed Sounds Set 1

Here is the full sequence of sounds as they are typically introduced in **Read Write Inc Speed Sounds Set 1**:

- **m** – Maisie, mountain, mountain
- **a** – Round the apple, down the leaf
- **s** – Slither the snake
- **d** – Round his bottom, up his tall neck, down to his feet
- **t** – Down the tower, across the tower
- **i** – Down the body, dot for the head
- **n** – Down the top, to the top, over the net
- **p** – Down the plait, up and over the pirate's face
- **g** – Round her face, down her hair, give her a curl
- **o** – All around the orange
- **c** – Curl around the caterpillar
- **k** – Down the kangaroo's body, tail, and leg
- **u** – Down and under, up to the top, and draw the puddle
- **b** – Down the laces, over the boot, around the toe
- **f** – Down the stem, to the top, around the flower
- **e** – Slice into the egg, go over the top, then under the egg
- **l** – Down the long leg
- **h** – Down the horse's head to his hooves, over his back
- **r** – Down the robot's back, then curl over his arm
- **j** – Down his body, curl and dot for his head
- **v** – Down the wing, up and over the wing
- **y** – Down a horn, up a horn, and under his head
- **w** – Down, up, down, up
- **z** – Zig-zag-zig
- **x** – Down the arm and leg, repeat the other side

After these single-letter sounds, children move on to the Set 1 digraphs:

- **sh** – The horse's head and the snake
- **th** – The princess with a thorn in her thumb
- **ch** – The train going "choo-choo"
- **qu** – The duck with a quack
- **ng** – The thing that goes "ng-ng-ng"
- **nk** – The pink drink

HOW READ WRITE INC SPEED SOUNDS SET 1 IS TAUGHT

The teaching of **Read Write Inc Speed Sounds Set 1** follows a consistent, structured routine that children quickly become familiar with. Each session typically includes the following elements:

Speed Sounds Practice

At the start of every lesson, children review previously learned sounds using flashcards. This daily repetition is key to building automatic recall. Teachers hold up a card, and children respond with the sound and the associated phrase. This rapid-fire practice is what gives "speed sounds" their name. The goal is for children to recognise each sound within one to two seconds.

Fred Talk

One of the hallmark strategies of the Read Write Inc programme is **Fred Talk**. Fred is a puppet frog who can only speak in sounds. When Fred says "c-a-t," children learn to blend those sounds together to say "cat." This oral blending practice is a critical precursor to reading words on the page. Children who can orally blend sounds are far better prepared to decode written words.

Fred Talk is used throughout the teaching of Set 1. Teachers will say a word in sounds, and children will blend them to say the whole word. For example, the teacher might say "m-a-t" and the children respond "mat." This is done orally before children ever see the written word, ensuring they understand the concept of blending.

Word Time

After children have learned a set of sounds, they engage in "Word Time" sessions where they practise reading and writing words containing those sounds. These words are called **Green Words** because they are fully decodable using the sounds children have learned. For Set 1, examples of Green Words include "sat," "pin," "dog," "shop," "thin," and "chip." Children read these words by saying each sound and then blending them together. They also write them by segmenting the word into its individual sounds and writing the corresponding letters.

Writing Practice

Alongside reading, **Read Write Inc Speed Sounds Set 1** emphasises accurate letter formation. Each letter is taught with a memorable phrase that guides the child's hand movements. For example, for the letter 'd,' the phrase is "round his bottom, up his tall neck, down to his feet." These verbal prompts help children form letters correctly from the very beginning, which is essential for developing fluent handwriting later on.

WHY SET 1 IS SO IMPORTANT FOR EARLY LITERACY

The **Read Write Inc Speed Sounds Set 1** is not merely a list of sounds to be ticked off. It represents a fundamental shift in a child's understanding of how written language works. Before learning phonics, children may recognise words by their shape or by guessing from pictures. Set 1 gives them the tools to decode any word they encounter, provided it follows regular phonetic patterns. This empowers them to read independently and builds the confidence needed to tackle more complex texts.

Research consistently shows that systematic synthetic phonics, of which Read Write Inc is a prime example, is the most effective way to teach early reading. The **Speed Sounds Set 1** provides the initial, essential foundation upon which all subsequent reading skills are built. Without a secure grasp of Set 1, children will struggle to blend, segment, and decode words in later stages.

Building Phonemic Awareness

Phonemic awareness is the ability to hear, identify, and manipulate individual sounds in spoken words. **Read Write Inc Speed Sounds Set 1** develops this awareness through activities like Fred Talk and sound repetition. Children learn to listen for the sounds in words, which is a skill that transfers directly to both reading and spelling. A child who can hear that "dog" begins with 'd' and ends with 'g' has a strong foundation for literacy.

Preventing Reading Difficulties

Early, systematic phonics instruction has been shown to reduce the incidence of reading difficulties, including dyslexia. By providing explicit, structured teaching of sound-symbol relationships, **Read Write Inc Speed Sounds Set 1** ensures that all children, regardless of their background or prior exposure to books, have the opportunity to become successful readers. The programme's emphasis on repetition and review helps to embed learning securely in long-term memory.

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR SUPPORTING READ WRITE INC SPEED SOUNDS SET 1 AT HOME

Parents play a crucial role in reinforcing the learning that takes place at school. Here are some practical, evidence-based ways to support your child with **Read Write Inc Speed Sounds Set 1** at home:

Use the Correct Pronunciation

One of the most important things you can do is use "pure sounds" when saying the sounds with your child. Avoid adding an 'uh' sound to the end of consonants. For example, say "m" not "muh," and "s" not "suh." Pure sounds make blending much easier for children. If you are unsure how to pronounce the sounds correctly, ask your child's teacher for guidance or look up videos online from the official Read Write Inc programme.

Practise with Flashcards

Simple flashcards with the Speed Sounds on them are an excellent tool for building automatic recall. Show your child the card and ask them to say the sound and the picture phrase. Do this for just a few minutes each day to keep it fun and engaging. The goal is speed, so if your child hesitates for more than a few seconds, simply tell them the sound and move on.

Play Fred Talk Games

Incorporate Fred Talk into everyday activities. When you are at the supermarket, you might say "Let's get a b-a-g" and ask your child to blend the sounds to say "bag." Or at dinner time, say "Can you pass me the f-o-r-k?" These playful interactions reinforce the blending skill in a low-pressure, natural context.