

8th Labor Gakuen Newsletter

Special Edition on Books & Reading; with Book Reviews, a Quiz and more!

Phonics & Learning to read

What is phonics?

To read English, we must know the 26 letters of the alphabet. However, we must also know how to pronounce the letters when they are put together to make words. For example, we must know that 'eight' and 'ate' are pronounced the same.

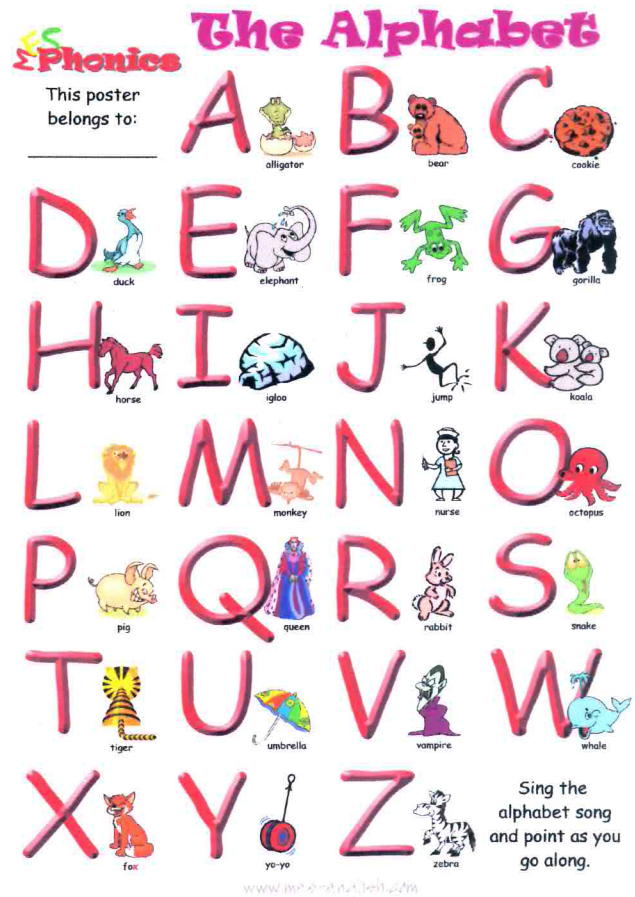
Phonics is the relationship between spelling and the sounds that letters make, either on their own or in combination with other letters.

How is phonics taught?

Phonics is about learning pronunciation patterns. In a phonics lesson, children are taught the most common sound-spelling patterns in English, and this helps them to say the written letters aloud. At first, they practice saying things like, 'P...P...pig...P...P...pen...P...P...pineapple'. Later, they learn that words like 'bought' and 'caught' have the same vowel sound, and practice reading other words with the same sound (eg. 'taught' and 'thought'). The teacher uses picture cards and simple story books in the class, to give the children hints as to how letters and words are said aloud.

Phonics and sound patterns

About 84% of English words are regular in their pronunciation pattern (eg. 'care', 'rare', 'fare') so it is very useful for readers to learn the rules about these regular patterns. The other 16% of irregular English words (eg. 'are') must be learned as 'sight words', which means we just have to remember how to read them. Luckily, most irregular words occur often within written text, so children see them many times and naturally learn to pay attention to the special spelling patterns and keep them in their memory.



Phonics and reading

Teaching children to read with phonics helps them to put sounds to spellings and encourages them to read aloud. This means that their reading skills can be checked and they can gradually gain more confidence. As children start to read words easily, their reading fluency naturally improves. As their reading fluency improves, their understanding of what they are reading also improves because they pay more attention to the meaning of the text.

When you're in English class, you can check the pronunciation of words with your teacher and notice the sound-spelling patterns. Then at home, why don't you try reading aloud sometime?!

What do your teachers like to read?

What's your favourite book?

Brooke: The Joy Luck Club by Amy Tan.

Miles: Moby-Dick by Herman Melville.

Mark: The Little Prince by Antoine De Saint Exupéry.

Kris: Malcolm X by Alex Haley.

What kind of books do you like to read?

Miles: Offbeat fiction, history and science.

Kris: Art history, biographies and Japanese language books.

Brooke: Novels about people's relationships or the mystery of life.

Mark: Detective stories, historical novels and sci-fi.
(not SF that's San Francisco!)

How often do you read?

Mark: It depends, if I have bought a new book I read almost every day.

Brooke: Every night in bed until I fall asleep. I also love to take long train rides so I can read.

Miles: Every day- I always have one novel and one non-fiction novel on the go (am reading at the moment)

Kris: When I get the time.

Which is not as often as I would like.

What is a book that you would recommend for students to read?

Brooke: The Orange Girl by Jostein Gaarder. It's a tear jerker (will make you cry) but it's short and good for Pre-Int and up.

Miles: The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time by Mark Haddon. A brilliant book about an autistic boy written for young people, so it's not difficult to read.

Kris: Anything that appeals (is interesting.) to them.

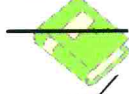
Mark: I think Miles's choice is great. I'd also recommend The Alchemist by Paulo Coelho. A wonderfully uplifting (makes you feel good) story about a boy who searches for treasure. It's easy to read and good for Pre-Int & up.

Labor Gakuen Reading Marathon

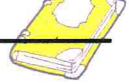
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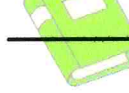
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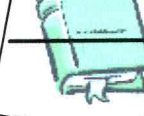
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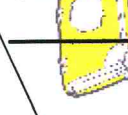
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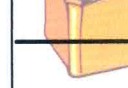
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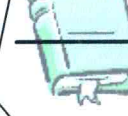
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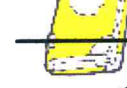
4th title:



5th title:



6th title:



7th title:



The Labor Gakuen Reading Marathon. Mrs. Yomiko Honda has been awarded the Gold Award.



Reading Marathon Rules:

1. Borrow a book (graded reader) from the Labor Gakuen library (or buy one) and read it.
2. Write a short review about the book (include Title, Author, Level, information about the plot & your opinion) and give it to your teacher.
3. Your teacher will read your review and give you a stamp on this card.

* As you read more books and get more stamps, you will receive Bronze, Silver & Gold certificates!
Have fun!

Book Reviews

from the Labor Gakuen Library

Here are two book reviews from Amazon.com, of two **graded readers** in our library. These reviews are written by English students like you. If you go to Amazon.com.jp, you can read reviews of our library books in Japanese.

Title: Forrest Gump
Author: Winston Groom
Level: 3 (Pre-Intermediate)



A man with a learning difficulty studies only in special classes at school. Then he goes to Vietnam and receives the Order of the White House. He also has an amazing talent at violin and chess that was hidden because people thought he was simple.

I knew that there was a movie called Forrest Gump, but I didn't imagine that this story was so interesting. It is crisp and melancholy. It is similar to Rain Man especially the way it ends a bit sadly. I like these kinds of stories about Americans, because they are about the heart.

.....
Title: Alice in Wonderland
Author : Lewis Carroll
Level : 2 (Elementary)

Alice followed a rabbit and then fell into to a hole. In this world, Alice experienced profoundly mysterious things. Her body shrank and got bigger, and she encountered strange animals and a queen of cards, and a mad hatter, and a grinning cat that vanished slowly, firstly his tail, next his body, next his face, and finally his grin.



I think this book is about a really strange world. The scenes change quickly one after another so I could not understand it very well. Therefore, I give it 3 stars. Maybe other readers can enjoy this fantasy world more than me.

How to Write a Book Review

Look at the reviews above. First, they list the **Title**, the **Author**, and the **Level**, then they have two paragraphs.

The **first paragraph** is a brief description of the story, or plot. It mentions the main character, and what happens at the beginning of the book. Then it adds one or two more interesting events.

The **second paragraph** gives the reviewer's opinion of the book. This should include how much they enjoyed it, and also how it made them feel.

It's easy!

Do You Want to Try It?

If you are doing the **Reading Marathon** (see over) you will write reviews of the library books you read. All you have to do is follow this simple format:

Title:

Author:

Level:

Paragraph 1 (Plot):

Paragraph 2 (Your opinion):

Give your review to your teacher and he or she will check it for you. The best reviews will be published in the next newsletter. Enjoy your reading (and writing)!

Reading Quiz

Try to match the following words and phrases to the correct definitions.
Good luck, the chapters get harder and harder!

Chapter one.

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| a.) An atlas: | 1.) A book that lists words with similar meanings. |
| b.) An encyclopedia: | 2.) A book with maps of all the countries in the World. |
| c.) A dictionary: | 3.) A simplified version of a book. |
| d.) A graded reader: | 4.) A book that tells the meanings of words. |
| e.) A thesaurus: | 5.) A book that gives information on many subjects. |

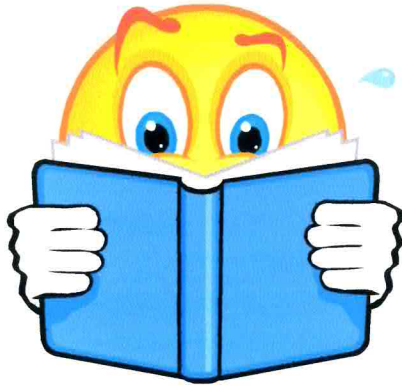
Chapter two

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| a.) Someone who reads a lot. | 1.) Reading in your head. |
| b.) Reading so people can hear you. | 2.) A dog ear. |
| c.) Reading silently. | 3.) Reading aloud. |
| d.) Someone who writes books. | 4.) A bookworm. |
| e.) A corner of a page which has been folded over . | 5.) An author. |

Chapter three

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| a.) Newspapers don't always tell the truth. You have to... | 1.) read my lips. |
| b.) George Bush is often quoted saying a phrase which means 'listen carefully'... | 2.) don't judge a book by it's cover. |
| c.) After his third offence, the authorities decided to... | 3.) read between the lines. |
| d.) Your brother is such a hard worker. I really wish you would.... | 4.) throw the book at him. |
| e.) Just because he doesn't look smart, it doesn't mean he isn't, so | 5.) take a leaf out of his book |

5 Reasons Why Reading Is Good For You



1. *It's the easiest way to practice English in Japan.* Lots of students think 'practicing English' only means speaking. It doesn't. Practicing English means understanding and using the vocabulary and grammar that you know in a communicative situation. Reading is communication.

2. *You can choose the speed and content.* When you read you can go fast, slow, stop, rest, look up a word, and focus on topics that interest you, or that you know about, unlike a conversation, where you have to keep up with another person, and deal with unpredictable topics, or topics that are unfamiliar.

3. *You can learn lots of new vocabulary,* and see lots of old vocabulary being used in a natural way. If you want to learn how native speakers use the words and phrases you study - read. Read. Read, and of course, keep a dictionary handy because you will always find new words. But you shouldn't use it all the time, because...

4. *You can choose the level.* We recommend that you choose books that are easier than your current level. If you are intermediate, read a pre-intermediate reader from the library. In this way you can understand almost everything, and process a lot of English - a lot more than you will get in a conversation or even a two hour lesson. Don't read the newspaper if it is too difficult. Difficult things are bad for your English. Read easy things, like children's books, graded readers, magazines and blogs.

5. *It's fun, and you might learn something!* And while you are enjoying learning things, you might even forget you are studying English, and simply enjoy using it!



This enjoyment is very important. Studies show that people who enjoy a class activity learn more than people who don't. Put simply, if you are nervous, shy, bored or frustrated when you practice English, you won't learn. If you are relaxed and emotionally involved, you will learn. Reading is relaxing and interesting - as you'll learn!