

Chapter 11. Turning the FSE wordlists into a learning tool

Introduction

Throughout the Post-16 Phonics Approaches toolkit we advocate a structured and systematic approach to teaching letter-sound correspondences with post-16 learners, which takes account of their prior experience and knowledge. We **strongly recommend that you work through those parts of the toolkit** that introduce these ideas and explain what they mean for post-16 learners **before** reading this chapter. Chapters 1, 5, 6 and 7 are particularly important.

Good use of phonics approaches post-16 involves recognising the potential complexity of the one-to-many concepts (that one phoneme can be represented by many graphemes, and that one grapheme can represent different phonemes) in the English writing system, and helping learners devise strategies for dealing with this. A key part of our structured approach is to introduce learners to the most stable aspects of the spelling system first (we call this Basic Code Plus – see Chapter 6) and then gradually scaffold learners into the more complex code – the full range of phoneme-grapheme correspondences that the one-to-many concepts imply. This structured approach:

- is always embedded in the context of meaningful reading and writing activities
- maximises the use of working memory
- draws on learners' oral language as a key resource.

In this chapter, we apply these principles to the FSE curriculum document and the letter/s-sound correspondences wordlists in the Appendix.

11.1. Introducing the FSE letter/s-sound correspondences lists

We start from the observation that the FSE wordlists are **lists of desired outcomes**, in terms of reading and writing competences and definitely **NOT an order-of-teaching syllabus**. There is no reason to treat the words in the FSE content document as a list of grapheme-phoneme correspondences that learners must memorise in isolation, indeed this would be wholly counterproductive. Instead, let's begin from the desired outcome from the FSE curriculum.

The expectation is that by the end of Entry Level 1, learners should be able to read a simple text in which all the FSE wordlist 1 graphemes can be expected to appear. This is a reading task that learners will be able to accomplish if they are familiar with Basic Code Plus, as set out in Chapter 6. Our analysis of the FSE wordlist 1 suggests very few additions (See 11.2 below). In addition, learners will need a lot of practice in applying that knowledge to reading whole texts. Phonics approaches should, therefore, be integrated with a rich literacy curriculum encompassing a wide range of texts that appeal to post-16 learners, with plenty of opportunities to read them (see Chapter 3, **Phonics and the post-16 literacy classroom** and Chapter 10, **Phonics resources for post-16 learners: what matters most**).

The FSE lists 2, 3 & 4 may, at first sight, look more difficult to integrate into a broader literacy curriculum, as the stipulation is that learners must be able to read and spell the listed words. In this case, our approach is to turn things around and use the lists to support teaching the one-to-many concepts, returning to some of the ideas we first introduced in Chapter 7 (see 11.5 below).

In both cases our intention is to show how an understanding of a structured approach to using phonics post-16 is compatible with the provision of a rich literacy curriculum that meets learners' interests and needs. Starting from these principles it is possible to incorporate the FSE wordlists into a meaningful curriculum without resorting to rote memorisation and drill.

11.2 Rethinking and reorganising FSE list 1: graphemes for reading

FSE wordlist 1 sets out expectations for word reading at Entry Levels 1-3. You would, therefore, expect the list to be organised in terms of graphemes and their varying pronunciations (grapheme-phoneme correspondences), but it's actually organised the opposite way round – in terms of phonemes and the various ways they can be spelt (phoneme-grapheme correspondences). Below is an excerpt from the FSE wordlist 1 showing how the list is organised.

ee (<u>f</u> ee <u>t</u>), ea (<u>b</u> ea <u>ch</u>), e (<u>m</u> e <u>l</u>), y (<u>p</u> o <u>n</u> y), e-e (<u>th</u> es <u>e</u>), ey (<u>k</u> ey), ie (<u>ch</u> ief)	/i:/
i (<u>b</u> ig) y (<u>g</u> ym)	/ɪ/
e (<u>e</u> gg), ea (<u>h</u> ea <u>d</u>)	/e/
a (<u>m</u> at)	/æ/

Excerpt from the FSE wordlist 1, showing sample graphemes listed according to the phonemes they represent

To support the teaching of reading, we've reorganised the content of the FSE wordlist 1 by grapheme, and in Table 5 (below) we focused on only those graphemes on the list that would not be covered in Basic Code Plus. You will find them in the one-to-many concepts we introduced in Chapter 7 (Working from print to sound).

Table 5: Graphemes for reading – the FSE wordlist 1 reorganised

Graphemes for reading (beyond Basic Code Plus)			
*adjust for accent			
**not on FSE wordlist 1 but helpful and logical			
Single letter graphemes			
Grapheme	Phoneme as in:		
a	fast*	want	zebra
c	city		
g	gem		
y	gym	fly	
Consonant digraphs and trigraphs			
Grapheme	Phoneme as in:		
dge	bridge		
ge	large		
kn	knee		
ph	photo		
se	house	cheese	
tch	fetch		
wh	wheel	who**	
wr	write		
ve	have		
ze	sneeze		

Table 5: Graphemes for reading – the FSE wordlist 1 reorganised (continued)

Vowel digraphs			
Grapheme	Phoneme as in:		
ai	rain	said**	
al	talk		
au	sauce		
aw	law		
ea	beach	head	break**
ee	feet		
ew	few	flew	
ey	they	key	
ie	pie	chief	
igh	light		
oa	boat		
oe	toe		
oi	coin		
oo	moon	book*	
ou	out	soup	
ow	down	snow	
ue	clue	due	
Vowels with <r>			
air	hair		
ar	far		
are	square		
ear	near	bear	
er	person		
ir	bird		
oor	door		
or	fork	work	
ore	store		
ur	burn		
/ə/ endings			
-al	metal		
-el	tunnel		
-il	pencil		

➤ Notes to Table 5

Reading schwa /ə/ in words like 'zebra' and 'umbrella'

We've left 'zebra' on the list but learning to read schwa is a matter of learning the stress of individual words. Native English speakers who are learning to read might start with a stressed

sound then adjust to an unstressed one as they listen for a familiar word. ESOL learners might need more direct instruction on the correct stress of a word.

This varies by accent around the UK. For instance, 'convention' has a stressed first syllable in Lancashire but not in Kent.

11.3 From list to classroom: Introducing graphemes in the context of a broader literacy curriculum

Remember, teaching grapheme-phoneme correspondences should always happen in the context of meaningful reading and writing activities. You might use lists of individual words to explore patterns and frequency of pronunciation for some graphemes, however, do not teach grapheme-phoneme correspondences as decontextualised lists. This will not support learners' capacity to access this knowledge when they need it.

Our approach to post-16 phonics integrates writing and reading activities. Graphemes introduced for writing will be harnessed for reading and vice versa, providing opportunities for learners to apply their knowledge in reading and spelling activities. This means learners will be able to find them and accurately read or write them when they need to.

The following extract from [Chapter 3, Phonics and the post-16 literacy classroom](#), shows this movement between reading and writing. The class have been reading a short text on birthdays, and have encountered the grapheme <ir>:

"Maria wants to write 'birthday' but struggles, so Dina makes a wordbox for her with all the sounds and helps her that way: **b ir th day**."

Wordbox 1

b	ir	th	day
---	----	----	-----

Because Maria knows the one-to-many principles, she takes it in her stride that <ir> spells the 'er' sound in 'birthday'. Dina puts 'day' on one puzzle piece, which isn't technically correct, but Maria knows the word well so it's fine."

The correct wordbox would be:

Wordbox 2

b	ir	th	d	ay
---	----	----	---	----

Learning to spell a phoneme is an excellent way to introduce a grapheme that will later be encountered in reading. This incidental <ir> spelling lesson could spin off into many more examples of words with that grapheme. It will also allow you to point out that girl and first have the same <ir> spelling as birthday when you're looking at all the ways to spell **/ə/** or **/ər/** as on [Table 7, Vowels with <r>](#).

What about learners who aren't starting at the beginning?

Learners starting at Entry Levels 2 and 3 (as well as some in Entry Level 1) will probably already know most of the Basic Code Plus graphemes, but they might not know how to use all of that prior phonic knowledge when reading. Check their knowledge through text reading activities. If there are weaknesses in any areas, they can pick up some of the skills they need through the one-to-many activities with more complex graphemes for spelling (see Tables 6, 7 & 8 below).

Systematic teaching in Post-16 phonics takes into account what learners already know and can do. If learners can read **house** and **cheese** they do not need to be explicitly taught these as different ways to read the grapheme <se>.

11.4 Rethinking and reorganising the FSE lists 2, 3 and 4 – phonemes and graphemes for reading and spelling

FSE lists 2-4 set out all the specific words that learners are expected to be able to read and spell at different Entry Levels. Each word list is organised by phoneme. In our Tables 6, 7 and 8 (below) we show these designated levels, although we suggest you do not follow them without checking your learners' knowledge first. There are additional requirements that aren't listed in the FSE wordlists, but are in the FSE Appendix. In Entry Level 1, this includes a large number of words that your learners will be able to read and spell anyway if you work through Basic Code Plus.

Once again, we've chosen to reorganise the FSE wordlists. Tables 6, 7 and 8 and the notes below them contain the same information as the three separate FSE lists 2, 3 and 4, but we've combined them into three tables sorted into vowels, vowels with <r> and consonants, with a column for each Entry Level. This matches the order in Table 4, the one-to-many chart in Chapter 7. This is to make it easier to integrate phonics teaching into teaching meaningful reading and writing. In this format it also becomes easier to decide which sorting activities would be useful for which learners. You'll notice that there are many more graphemes for these phonemes in Table 4 in Chapter 7. Don't restrict your learners to only those words or graphemes on the FSE wordlists because that will limit what they can read and write at any stage.

11.5 Introducing the structure of Tables 6, 7 and 8

The columns

The left-hand column has the IPA symbol for the target phoneme, and the other columns have words that contain the various graphemes that can represent that sound. The graphemes are in **red**. If you're not sure what sound the IPA symbol represents, read the words aloud to listen for the target sound. For instance, in 'every' the target sound is 'ee' spelt with a <y> at the end.

The words in **green** will automatically be covered in Basic Code Plus. **'Complete'** and **'extreme'** could have been learnt whilst looking at split digraphs and **'everything'** and **'everybody'** could have been learnt with **'every'**, also in Basic Code Plus.

The words in bold font could be learnt at an earlier level than indicated by the FSE wordlists. In the example below, **'mean'** could have been learnt alongside **'eat'**. Don't wait to include words in reading and writing just because they appear later in the FSE wordlists.

There are some words that we feel are either in the wrong place or better taught another way in post-16 phonics. We've moved those to the Notes at the bottom of this resource. If there's a word on the FSE wordlists but not on Tables 6, 7 and 8, then have a look at the Notes.

➤ **Remember:** our strongest advice is to start using the sequence in Chapter 6, with the emphasis on meaningful words. Then cross-refer to make sure you have full coverage.

Table 6: Graphemes for spelling vowel phonemes

phoneme in IPA	Words with graphemes which represent that phoneme – adjust for accent Entry Level 1 Entry Level 2 Entry Level									
	Entry Level 1				Entry Level 2				Entry Level 2	
/æ/	bat fast last past plant path ask	*Adjust for accent see also /a:/ below			half*					
/e/	bet	head	any many anyone	said again* says*	anything	friend				
/ɪ/	bit				busy business minute	build	women	pretty	certain	
/ɒ/	cot	want what* was*	because		watch	knowledge		curiosity	qualify qualification	
/ʌ/	but	come done some other brother money Monday	does		won son among something month	young touch double trouble country				
/ʊ/	look* good	push pull put full	would could should		woman					
/eɪ/	day say way	made make take came same late	They		daily	great break	eight eighteen weigh weight	obey straight		
/i:/	be he me we she even	every	see seem feel meet week	Eat real	mean	complete extreme everything everybody	believe	people	committee	achieve
/aɪ/	I find mind child Friday	like time life while write	by my myself reply	high right might	find behind quiet	quite	eye	height	island	

Table 6: Graphemes for spelling vowel phonemes (continued)

[illegible]

Table 7: Graphemes for spelling vowels plus <r> phonemes

phoneme in IPA	Words with graphemes that represent that phoneme – adjust for accent									
	Entry Level 1				Entry Level 2				Entry Level 2	
/aɪ/ or /aɪr/	far	are	our*							
/ɑː/	fast last past plant path ask after	*adjust for accent see /æ/ above			half					
/eə/ or /eər/	air	where there	Their		care bare	bear				
/ɪə/ or /ɪər/	near dear year	here			year*					
/ɜː/ or /ɜːr/	her* person	Thursday Saturday	girl first	work word world were*	thirteen thirty	early heard learn earth	surname			
/ə/ or /ər/	together number after other never under				perhaps remem- ber	surprise	grammar calendar forward	pressure	sugar popular particular regular	centre thorough borough (see note)
/ɔː/	saw draw	walk talk	all call also water		always	thought	caught naughty	cause*	bought brought ought	
/ɔː/ or /ɔːr/	or for morning	door floor poor*	more before	warm your four	forty forwards	fourteen	quarter	therefore		

Table 8: Phonemes for spelling consonant clusters

phoneme in IPA	Words with graphemes that represent that phoneme											
	Entry Level 1				Entry Level 2				Entry Level 2			
/b/	bob											
/k/	can act	look	back	school					scheme	occasion according		
/tʃ/	chat								picture actual			
/d/	dig				add address							
/f/	fan	off			differ different difficult				cough rough tough enough			
/g/	get give				guard guide				guarantee			
/h/	has	who			whole							
/dʒ/	jet	change large			age page strange				knowledge	college		
/l/	leg	will well tell still hello										
/əl/	little				possible example	animal			available			
/m/	mat	come some							committee	bomb thumb crumb climb	condemn column autumn	
/n/	net	know	done gone		imagine				knot knee knife knowledge			
/ŋ/	string			think								
/p/	pop								appear opposite apply			
/r/	rig	write wrote wrong			arrive carry							
/s/	sat	cross miss address	house		promise	city circle decide	notice since sentence once	answer	recent centre exercise medicine criticise receive	increase purpose experience	listen fasten whistle	
/ʃ/	shop				sure sugar	pressure	machine	special	especially	appreciate		

Table 8: Phonemes for spelling consonant clusters (continued)

phoneme in IPA	Words with graphemes that represent that phoneme										
	Entry Level 1				Entry Level 2				Entry Level 2		
/t/	tin				letter better				doubt debt	attach	minute
/θ/ /ð/	thin then				breathe						
/v/	van	have give live	Of								
/w/	win	when which what while white									
/ks/	box				six next				excellent		
/j/	yes										
/z/	zoo	is his as has			position potatoes	possess	cause		ease criticise	position	cause
/ʒ/	usual								measure treasure pleasure		

> Notes to Tables 6, 7 and 8

ENTRY LEVEL 1: ADJUSTMENTS MADE TO FSE WORDLIST 2

Wednesday /z/

It's not helpful to think of <es> as representing /z/ in the English code. Learn to spell **Wednesday** by saying it in three syllables, pointing out that we say only two syllables when reading or saying it out loud. Most practitioners say 'wed/nes/day' when spelling it so it's fine for learners to do the same.

think /ŋ/

<n> does represent the /ŋ/ sound as heard in words like 'bank' and 'think'. However, if a learner says /b/ /l/ /ɪ/ /n/ /k/, they will hear 'blink' with no need to process an /ŋ/ sound in that word. There is also an /ŋ/ sound in words like **longer**, but post-16 learners will automatically adjust the pronunciation. If they don't, practise lists of words side by side, some that retain the /ŋ/ only and others that have the hard /g/ sound: **singer, ringer**, et cetera, versus **finger, linger**, et cetera, and, of course, **ginger and whinger!** Learners with fluent English will naturally adapt to find a word they know and that makes sense in the context. ESOL learners might need more explicit teaching and practice in context.

enjoy /ɪ/

Some British English speakers pronounce the first sound in **enjoy** as a short /i/ (/ɪ/) – 'injoy'. However, an informal poll on social media suggests that almost everyone thinks 'en-joy' whilst writing it – regardless of what they say in conversation. Therefore, we've removed this word as an example of words with the short /i/ (/ɪ/) sound because it's not helpful for learners.

one /wʌ/

One is a very rare word that defies the phonic code. Instead of seeing it as two sounds, 'wuh' spelt with an <o> and 'n' spelt <ne>, we advise teaching it as a whole – just like we advise teaching whole endings such as -tion and -tious. Once learners have mastered **one**, they will be able to read and spell **someone, everyone**, et cetera.

thank /e/

See **enjoy**. People think of this as having a short /a/ in the middle regardless of what they say in conversation.

Words with

schwa /ə/

Rather than teaching the 36 ways to spell an unstressed syllable, we recommend using a spelling method that encourages using a spelling 'voice' which means saying a word as you intend to spell it. With this approach, saying a clear vowel for the letter in bold, '**the**', '**between**', '**until**', '**today**' and '**together**' will lead to a correct spelling and is much easier on memory than listening for a schwa and trying to remember which one of 36 symbols to use. **Today** and **together** should also be morphologically connected to **to** which is on the list under the 'oo' /u:/ sound.

ENTRY LEVEL 2: ADJUSTMENTS MADE TO FSE WORDLIST 3

year /ɜ:/ or /ɜ:r/

On FSE word list 2, **year** rhymes with **near** and **dear**. On the FSE wordlist 3, it rhymes with **her**. The first will probably be a better choice for spelling regardless of how your learner says the word in conversation.

hour our

There is a lot of variation in how these two words are spoken, so choose a list of words that look the same and rhyme and teach them together. Ask your learners what's easiest for them to remember.

potatoes /z/

FSE wordlist 3 has <es> as the way to spell /z/ in **potatoes**. Learners will probably find it easier to think of the /əʊ/ for the /oe/ sound and a normal <s> for the plural.

Words with

schwa /ə/

See the note above re: schwa and **Chapter 8** for spelling hints.

Seven, address, arrive, important, probably, second, woman and **difficult** can all be learned in Entry Level 1 by using a spelling voice to say the unstressed vowels clearly.

idea material

The <ea> in this word isn't a separate sound. Instead, split **idea** into three syllables: i/dee/a (with schwa at the end as in umbrella or zebra). Can be taught in Entry Level 1.

Ask your learners how they hear the middle syllable of 'ma/te/ri/al' It might be /ma/tear/ee/uhl/ or /ma/tea/ree/ul/. Either will work for both reading and spelling. It's the same as the first <e> in **serial, imperial** and **experience**.

ENTRY LEVEL 3: ADJUSTMENTS MADE TO FSE WORDLIST 4

experience

See 'material' above.

Words with

schwa /ə/

See the note above re: schwa and [Chapter 8](#) for spelling hints.

Competition, correspond, determined, develop, frequently, explanation, dictionary, definite, describe, experiment, purpose, opposite and **suppose** can all be learned in Entry Level 2 (or even 1).

certain

Moved to the 'short <i>' section, /ɪ/ as in 'bit'. See also **captain** and **mountain**. Adjust for accent.

famous various

Teach these with an <ous> ending. Could add **fabulous, tremendous, et cetera**.

thorough borough

Moved to the schwa ending with **centre**, though the /ɜ:r/ pronunciation isn't an option.

11.6 From list to classroom: supporting reading and spelling in the context of a broader literacy curriculum

The words included on FSE wordlists 2, 3 and 4 are examples of particular phoneme-grapheme correspondences that form part of the complex code. Instead of teaching them one by one from the list, use the words on the lists as prompts for the kinds of reading and spelling activities we recommend in Chapters 7 and 8. By helping learners identify groups of words that share the same pattern, whether as phonemes or graphemes, you will deepen learners' knowledge of the complex code.

These kinds of pattern-based activities will enable learners to familiarise themselves with particular grapheme-phoneme correspondences they have been working on, which will in turn help them accurately read or write those graphemes when they need to. This is likely to be much more effective than teaching isolated grapheme-phoneme correspondences as decontextualised lists. This will not support learners' capacity to access this knowledge as and when they need it.

Remember, our approach to phonics post-16 puts oral language first. The relationship of sound to grapheme depends both on each speaker's accent, and on how they break up the word. They need to practise writing in a way that takes them from a version of their natural speech to the appropriate spelling – just like we all do. I may say “gunna” but I know that I need to write ‘going to’. This is the level of language awareness required by post-16 learners.

The following example from [Chapter 3](#) shows how this kind of pattern-focused work can be integrated into the broader reading and writing curriculum. In this case, a mixed Entry Level 2/3 group in a prison have been reading a text that includes the word *information*. By developing a word sorting activity that breaks the word into the base word form and component parts that can be added as prefixes or suffixes, learners have opportunities to review their knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondences as they reassemble the parts into different whole words. Later they will be able to draw on that knowledge in their writing.

“Carey focuses on the word *information*, writing its base word in the middle of a matrix, as follows:

in		a	tion
con	form	al	
re		er	
		ed	

She explains that the base word **form** comes from the Latin word for **shape**. She asks if they can see a connection between **form**, meaning shape, and the word *information*. Carey now asks how many words learners can make from the base word form using this matrix (there are 11: **inform, informal, information, informer, informed, conform, conformer, conformed, reform, reformation** and **reformer**). Carey asks what is interesting about the prefix ‘re’ and elicits that it means to do something again. She asks if learners know any other words with ‘re’ at the start (for example, **repeat, reinstate**).”

The learners in this group can engage with the matrix because they're confident in manipulating the phonemes and graphemes that make up each part of a word. Using phonics approaches in the context of meaningful language makes it possible to work confidently with age-appropriate language for post-16 learners in a range of varied contexts. The resources elsewhere in the toolkit are there to support you with this goal.

We hope that you can take the principles, ideas and approaches examined throughout this post-16 phonics toolkit and use them to explore ways to integrate the reading and spelling wordlists within the new Entry Level English subject content. We'd like to end by reiterating the **two crucial points** we started with.

Firstly, we strongly recommend that you come back to this chapter after working through the rest of the toolkit, which includes thinking through how to apply the principles we've used to guide the use of phonics approaches post-16 in your own teaching context. [Chapters 1](#) and [5 to 7](#) are particularly important.

Secondly is the importance of prioritising pedagogic principles in curriculum delivery. This means that decisions about what to cover, how and when must be led by the pedagogical principles examined in [Part 2](#) of the toolkit, including an understanding of different learner strengths, areas for development and needs, and the complex contextual factors that affect learning.

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Phonics is necessary but insufficient.

Sir Jim Rose, speaking at The Children's Literacy Charity day conference,
London, 23rd March 2018

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