

# Diagnostic Assessment Teacher's Guidance Notes



## Dandelion Launchers

These assessments work alongside the books in the Dandelion Launchers series. They can be used to evaluate reading progress over time and to identify where further help or consolidation is needed.

The assessments will identify the following:

- Knowledge of grapheme–phoneme correspondences
- Ability to blend sounds together accurately to decode single words
- Ability to decode a sequential text at the reader's decoding level
- Ability to comprehend a sequential text at the reader's decoding level

### When to assess?

The teacher will decide when to assess and at what level.

We suggest there should be at least a week after new learning and reading the relevant book, before delivering a diagnostic test at that level. The results will then show which areas need revisiting for further instruction and practice.

A teacher might decide to assess readers after a stage of work, e.g.:

- at the end of Dandelion Launchers Stage 7
- at CVCC, CCVC, and CCVCC level at the end of Dandelion Launchers Stage 10
- after consonant digraphs th, ch, sh, ck, ng at the end of Dandelion Launchers Stage 15

### High-frequency words

Our **Dandelion Launchers** series list the high-frequency words which appear in our stories at the beginning of each book.

Words stop being high-frequency words once the relevant sound spellings have been taught, but these words are initially necessary to construct proper sentences even in the earliest books. Our assessments do not seek to test high-frequency words. Each school will have its own high-frequency word policy.

There are high-frequency words in the assessments: words which appear in the text to be read. Provide the reader with help if needed before the reader reads the text.

**Point to the grapheme(s), the sound(s) of which the reader has not yet been taught and give the reader the sound(s). Then ask the reader to blend the sounds together and read the word.**

## Delivering the assessment

- Print the diagnostic reading sheets on cream paper. This will prevent the black print on white paper “glare” which affects some children when reading.
- We recommend you laminate the diagnostic reading sheets for multiple use.
- The teacher will determine how often the reader needs re-assessment. We have provided for two re-assessments on the scoring sheet.
- **Three errors in the single words or the text are enough to warrant a re-test at a later date.**
- Encourage the reader to have a positive attitude towards being tested, with an understanding that it is to demonstrate their progress with reading. The tester could say something positive to the reader such as: **“Today we are going to see how well you are doing!”**
- Make sure, during testing, that the reader cannot see what is being written.  
**Sit opposite rather than next to the reader.**
- Use the same notation for each assessment. This will save time and make it easier to compare test results.
- **Use a different colored pen for each re-test.** This will enable quick comparison of results with an earlier test.
- It is suggested that errors with high-frequency words should not be part of the three error re-test.

## Comprehension questions

Reading accuracy is important, with comprehension as the goal. Increased fluency speed helps with comprehension, but knowledge of vocabulary is also key. Two to four comprehension questions have been provided with each test.

**Let the reader re-read the text, if required, to find the answer, as these assessments are not memory tests.**

## Writing

**Reading and writing should always be taught hand in hand at these early stages, enabling pupils’ writing and spelling to progress at the same pace as their reading.**

Ensure pupils practise spelling alongside reading at each new level of learning.

**Phonic Books’ reproducible activity books** provide many exercises for this purpose at each level for all our sets and book series.

## Responses recommended on the teacher's record sheet as the reader reads

Reading response	Explanation of response (When the reader has made an error, always put a line through the word and write above what the reader has said.)	Symbol on record sheet	Example	Scoring
<b>Correct word</b>	If the reader says the sound accurately (with no /uh/ sound after a consonant sound) or reads the word accurately by sight, write a ✓ above the letter/word.	✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ u k m b ✓ ✓ ✓ pat mat sat	The reader scores <b>1 point</b> for each correct sound/word
<b>Don't know</b>	If the reader's response is "I don't know" or there is no response, put a line through the word and write DK above it.	<u>DK</u>	<b>DK</b> stamp	<b>No score</b>
<b>Self-corrects</b>	If the reader self-corrects, write a ✓ and SC above.	✓ SC	✓ SC catch	The reader scores <b>1 point</b> as the word is correct
<b>Sounds out the word</b>	If the reader sounds out and reads the word accurately, write a ✓ and SO above.	SO	✓ SO stamp	The reader scores <b>1 point</b> as the word is correct
<b>Misses a word in the text</b>	If the reader misses out a word in the text, put a line through the word and write MW above it.	<u>MW</u>	<b>MW</b> drink	<b>No score</b>
<b>Adds an /uh/ after a sound</b>	If the reader adds an /uh/ after a consonant sound, either in the letter sounds test or when sounding a word out, write ✓UH above.	UH	✓ UH m ✓ UH fan	<b>1 point</b>

## Analysis of errors to be done after the assessment

Reading response	Explanation of response (When the reader has made an error, always put a line through the word and write above what the reader has said.)	Symbol on record sheet	Example	Scoring
<b>Adds a sound</b>	The reader added a sound: "pond" for "pod"	<u>AD</u>	<b>AD</b> pond pod	<b>No score</b>
<b>Omits a sound</b>	The reader omitted a sound: "back" for "black" Put a line through the word and write what the reader said above.	<u>OM</u>	<b>OM</b> back black	<b>No score</b>
<b>Visual error</b>	The reader made a visual error: "bat" for "pat"	<u>VE</u>	<b>VE</b> bat pat	<b>No score</b>
<b>Guesses the word</b>	The reader guessed the word. Put a line through the word and write what was said above. Later decide why the error was made.	<u>GU</u>	<b>GU</b> house home	<b>No score</b>
<b>Blending error</b>	The reader sounded out the phonemes correctly but blended incorrectly: /s/ /e/ /n/ /d/ "said"	<u>BL</u>	<b>GU</b> house home	<b>No score</b>

## Marking the assessment and adding up the scores

### Letter sounds

- After the assessment, tally marks in the first column on the right next to the special symbols (e.g. **SO, GU, MW**). This will give you a profile of the reader's approach to saying the sounds.
- If a reader says /em/ for /m/, they **do not score a point**. Readers cannot blend sounds with letter names. Examples that show the problem are: 'eff' begins with /e/, 'c' begins with /s/, 'g' begins with /j/, 'h' with /ae/, 'w' with /d/, etc.
- If a reader says /muh/ for /m/ they **score a point**, but the reader needs to be taught pure sounds. By putting a '✓ **UH**' above the word, it will remind the assessor that pure sounds need to be taught to that reader going forward, as this will help increase fluency and eventually, when automaticity sets in, speed of reading.
- If the reader says the wrong sound, put a line through the sound and write what was said above. Do not correct the reader.
- If the reader does not recognize the capital letters, carry on with the test, putting a line through the letter, and **DK** above.
- If the reader does not know the lower case sounds, or makes at least one error, stop the test after finishing saying the sounds, as further work on phoneme-grapheme correspondence at this level is needed.
- Add up the points and write the score in the second column.

### Single words

- After the assessment, tally marks in the first column on the right next to the special symbols (e.g. **DK, SC, VE**). This will give you a profile of the reader's approach to reading single words.
- These words provide practice for the new sounds in the stage being assessed, as well as incorporating sounds from previous stages. **Score one point** for each word read accurately, whether or not the word was sounded out or self-corrected.
- If the word was sounded out, put **SO** above the word. If there was self-correction, put **SC** above the word. These are not errors. By using these notations, the assessor will gain an understanding of the level of fluency the reader is operating at.
- **BL** indicates a blending difficulty. The reader will need more practice with this.
- **OM** and **AD** (omitting and adding sounds) point to poor blending skills.
- **VE**, which is a visual error, could be due to a specific developmental visual delay which could rectify itself over time. It might be a good idea to have the reader's vision checked. The same would apply if a reader misses a line when reading text, or **MW**, misses a word whilst reading the text. Notes about this can be put in the "Comments" box.
- Add up the points and write the score in the second column.

## High-frequency words

- High-frequency words are mentioned on the first page of this document. Each school will have its own high-frequency word policy. Our books use a variety of these, listed at the front of each reading book. We are not testing high-frequency words in this test, so we do not score them in the overall score.
- A minimum number of high-frequency words have been used in the reading texts and they are listed for practice before reading the text. (Stage 1 Assessment has only single words.)

## Sequential text

- Write tally marks in the first column every time a special symbol is used on the record sheet. This will give you a profile of the reader's approach to reading text.
- Put any comments you may have in the "Comments" box below, e.g. "Reader was put off by the amount of text" or "Reader needed a ruler under the line to help keep eyes on the lines of the text".
- To evaluate their decoding skills on the text, you may use the following formula for a percentage score:

## Comprehension

No of words - Errors = Final score in the text	Final score ÷ No of words x 100 = Accuracy	Decoding score
<b>19 - 4 = 15</b>	<b>15 ÷ 19 x 100 = 79</b>	<b>79%</b>

Comprehension is a very important part of the reading process. Early readers often concentrate hard on the decoding process, and do not take on board the sense of what they are reading. As automaticity sets in and reading becomes more fluent, they will start reading for meaning. For this reason we recommend you **allow them to re-read the text if necessary, to answer the questions. The diagnostic assessment is not a memory test.**

Two to four comprehension questions are included for diagnostic purposes based on the "reading text". **Give one point for each question answered correctly. The assessor to use their discretion as to the accuracy of the answer.**

**Record your comments in the "Comments" box.**

**Final score:**

Add up the scores from the column on the right-hand side:

**Sound score + Single word score + Text score + Comprehension score = Total score**

Write the result in the "Total score" box at the bottom of the teacher's assessment record.

If you wish to find a percentage score for the whole test, use the example formula below:

Score achieved ÷ Total score of test x 100 = Percentage score

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$$32 \div 39 \times 100 = 82\%$$