

Teaching with *Our World Phonics*

Our World Phonics is a new phonics course from National Geographic Learning. Designed for young learners, *Our World Phonics* has been developed for use alongside *Our World*, *Explore Our World*, or any other primary English series. Research shows that learning phonics improves both literacy and pronunciation, as young learners explore the connection between spoken sounds (phonemes) and written letters or letter combinations (graphemes). *Our World Phonics* provides the opportunity for young learners to discover these connections in English.

The *Our World* Series

Teaching with *Our World*

Our World and *Explore Our World* use National Geographic content as the context for developing young learners' language skills, as well as their understanding of the world they live in. *Our World Phonics* aligns with the core principles of these programs—principles that reflect best practices for English language teaching and learning for young learners:

- Activities designed for young learners must provide multiple opportunities for understanding and constructing meaning at a level appropriate to the emotional and intellectual stages of children's development.
- Children learn effectively when they are challenged just one step beyond their current stages of cognitive and linguistic development. They most often need support from a knowledgeable person at this time to successfully understand and incorporate new information.
- Goal-oriented learning contributes to young learners' success. Providing explicit goals for language learning helps learners understand the purpose of the activities. Young learners then have the opportunity to compare their outcomes to the original goals, an important step in judging their own progress.
- Learning about the world through theme-based teaching benefits young learners. Different topics provide a meaningful basis for exploration through a variety of language-learning tasks. Children's learning is enriched through activities that expand their knowledge of the world and its cultures.
- Addressing the needs of the whole child in the language class includes attention to learning styles, learning strategies, critical thinking skills, 21st century skills, and universal cultural values.

Using Our World Phonics

Teaching Phonics

The study of phonics helps children establish connections between phonemes (sounds) and graphemes (letters or groups of letters), helping them build the skills necessary for spelling and reading. The study of phonics also helps students improve listening and speaking skills.

Phonics helps young learners:

- speak more clearly
- become better readers
- become better listeners
- read unfamiliar words
- become better spellers

Phonics provides the foundations for spelling and reading by:

- providing an understanding of the alphabetic principle; that is, an understanding that there is a predictable and systematic relationship between phonemes and graphemes
- developing phonemic awareness; that is, the ability to recognize and manipulate phonemes in spoken words

The ultimate goal of reading is comprehension. In the case of young English language learners, just teaching them to decode letters and sounds does not help with understanding. Phonics instruction must go hand in hand with teaching useful, high-frequency vocabulary.

In a classroom where students are learning to read in their native language, phonics helps young learners recognize the written form of words they already know. These children already have a solid vocabulary base, and they likely already know the sounds and meanings of many short, decodable words commonly used in phonics programs.

On the other hand, for young learners studying English as a foreign language for the first time or those who have had only limited exposure to English in a preschool setting, the foundational knowledge of vocabulary is not there. Many of the short, easily decodable words used in most phonics programs are low-frequency and unfamiliar to students. They are also unrelated to the themes presented in the lower levels of most primary series. Even though students could easily read and spell these words using the alphabetic principle and their phonemic awareness, it's difficult for students to make meaningful connections to them. For this reason, *Our World Phonics* uses both short, high-frequency, easily decodable words commonly used when teaching phonics, as well as other high-frequency words found in many pre-primary and primary English programs, such as *Welcome to Our World*, *Our World*, and *Explore*

Our World. To provide context and help students derive meaning, key words with target sounds are accompanied by photographs in each lesson. Additional words are introduced in the practice to reinforce the target sounds. Students are exposed to even more words in audio activities for simple sound discrimination practice.

Successful Activities

• Activities are purposeful and engaging

The use of photographs in *Our World Phonics* to illustrate each new key word helps students associate the sounds they are learning with the common objects and activities they encounter in their daily lives. In addition, by decoding the sounds of unfamiliar words, students learn to concentrate and develop better listening skills, ultimately leading to improved communication.

• Activities are supported and scaffolded

Teachers have to provide scaffolding to students in order to help them construct knowledge and learn language effectively. *Our World Phonics* sets students up for success by breaking the learning of sounds and spellings into small, achievable steps, each with a clear model.

• Activities are enjoyable and interesting

To teach young learners effectively, lessons need to be enjoyable and interesting. *Our World Phonics* provides a wide range of fun activities, including games, word puzzles, a chant, and a story. In addition, the lesson plans provided in the Teacher's Guide offer a wide variety of extra activities to increase students' engagement in the lessons.

Repetition and Recycling

Using repetition and recycling is important when working with young learners. Repeating is a natural part of a child's learning process. If children are interested in a story or chant, they ask to hear it again. If children enjoy an activity or game, they want to play it several times. With its systematic format, *Our World Phonics* offers plenty of opportunities for meaningful repetition and recycling, both in the Student Book and in the additional Warm Up, Extend, and Wrap Up activities provided in the Teacher's Guide. Recycling happens within a unit and also across units and levels to help with retention. Activity types are repeated to inspire confidence and guarantee success.

Program Structure

Our World ABC

Our World ABC introduces the letters of the alphabet, numbers 1–10, shapes, and some simple words and sentences. It may be used before *Our World Phonics 1*, and is particularly useful for students who do not use the Roman alphabet in their first language and need more help learning and writing letters.

The lesson plans provided on pp. 9–13 divide the content of *Our World ABC* into five steps that progress from tracing lines and shapes to eventually writing simple sentences. Teachers aren't expected to cover an entire step in a single lesson. Instead, teachers are encouraged to break the content down in a way that is useful for their own classrooms. Teachers may choose, for example, to focus on presenting five to six letters of the alphabet in a single lesson, working on the alphabet over four or five separate lessons, each lasting approximately twenty minutes. This will allow students to remain focused and master writing and saying individual letters. Teachers should determine their own students' familiarity with the Roman alphabet and base the instruction of *Our World ABC* on the abilities and needs of their class.

Our World Phonics Levels 1–3

Our World Phonics provides comprehensive phonics instruction across three levels:

Our World Phonics 1 introduces single-letter sounds, together with some consonant digraphs, such as *th*, *sh*, *ch*, and *ng*. Students hear and produce the sounds in the initial, final, or medial position of a word. Students also learn to differentiate between familiar sounds.

Our World Phonics 2 introduces long vowels and digraphs, the trigraph *igh*, the silent *e*, diphthongs, and two-consonant letter blends, such as *bl*, *pr*, or *sp*. Students hear, produce, and differentiate sounds. They also learn to associate sounds with spelling patterns.

Our World Phonics 3 introduces the concept of syllables and word stress. This level also presents the schwa sound, *r*-colored vowels (such as *ar*), three-letter blends (such as *spl*), and other letter combinations. Students hear, produce, and differentiate sounds. They also associate sounds with spelling patterns, as well as identify rhyming words and homophones.

Our World Phonics Unit Structure

Each level of *Our World Phonics* follows the same structure: an introductory unit (Unit 0), nine main instructional units, and three review spreads.

Unit 0:

- **Level 1:** Unit 0 gives students the opportunity to practice the alphabet, focusing on tracing and writing, as well as learning letter sounds.
- **Level 2:** Unit 0 reviews sounds and spellings presented in Level 1.
- **Level 3:** Unit 0 begins by reviewing sounds and spellings presented in Level 2. This unit goes further to prepare students for Level 3 content by presenting the concepts of syllabification and stress, which are essential as students identify sounds produced in weak syllables.

Units 1–9: In these main instructional units, the program follows a repeated, page-per-lesson format designed to help teachers and students become familiar with the objectives and activity types. Each unit is divided into six lessons:

- **Lessons 1–4** teach and practice a new sound and/or spelling. Students hear and produce each new sound using high-frequency key words. They then trace the relevant letters in each word to connect the new sound with its spelling. Additional words are then introduced receptively in the practice activities so that students can hear the target sounds in words they may not be familiar with. In this way, students have greater exposure to each sound.
- **Lesson 5** consolidates the sounds and key words in a game and a chant. The game offers students the opportunity to use their knowledge of target sounds and key words to solve a puzzle. The chant provides a fun, engaging way to orally practice new sounds and key words. At the end of Lesson 5, students are directed to the Picture Dictionary in the back of their book for additional vocabulary review and writing practice.
- **Lesson 6** uses a story to provide a memorable, humorous context for the new sounds and key words. The colorful, engaging story illustrations capture children's attention. Teachers can ask meaningful questions about these illustrations to elicit the use of key words in authentic contexts. There is also a fun end-of-unit review activity. Students can then complete the Unit Worksheet at the end of Lesson 6. Unit Worksheets are available on the Teacher's Resource Website.

Review: A review lesson appears after every three units. The review lessons provide further practice and recycling of target sounds and key words in the context of a board game or *Bingo*.

Lesson Structure

With the busy teacher in mind, the lesson plans that have been developed for *Our World Phonics* Teacher's Guide use minimal additional materials, and provide step-by-step guidance for effective phonics instruction. An overview of the sound(s) and key words, objectives for each lesson, and a list of necessary resources and materials are listed at the start of each plan. Each lesson consists of four main parts: Warm Up, Present and Practice, Extend, and Wrap Up. The Warm Up, Extend, and Wrap Up activities do not appear in the Student Book. Rather, the instruction in these components offers teachers unique, interactive activities that reinforce and build upon the Student Book content.

• Warm Up

Warm Up activities help students transition from their native language to English. In *Our World Phonics*, they help students switch from the mindset of their general English lesson to focus specifically on phonics. Warm Up activities reinforce material from earlier lessons and help build students' confidence. The *Our World Phonics* Teacher's Guide provides Warm Up activities that are carefully devised to review the known sounds most helpful in teaching students a new sound. For example, before students learn letter blends with *r* and *l* in Level 2, the Warm Up practices sounds for *r* and *l* individually. This type of review prepares students to transition to the new lesson by reinforcing and making connections to previously taught material.

• Present and Practice

The Student Book activities follow a repeated format, with a clear path from presentation to practice. The Teacher's Guide provides full guidance for using the Student Book activities to present and practice each target sound and its associated spelling. This includes suggested teacher scripting, as well as the audio script for each activity. An answer key is also provided in the annotated Student Book page that appears in the top panel of each lesson plan, as well as on the Teacher's Resource Website.

• Extend

Extend activities are supplementary, interactive activities that provide further practice of the target sounds and key words for each lesson. Extend activities often synthesize old and new information in a single activity. They also provide an opportunity for students to use the new sounds and vocabulary in a more active, creative, or personalized way. In an Extend activity, students may be asked to categorize words with new

and previously taught sounds. Or, they might be asked to use the words from the lesson to create a tongue twister, rhyme, or a meaningful sentence. The *Our World Phonics* Teacher's Guide provides an Extend activity for each lesson in Units 1–9. In Lessons 5 and 6, Extend activities are used to provide opportunities for decoding the text of the chant or story. Students have a task-based activity linked to the text. For example, they may organize lines from the story in order, complete texts with missing letters or words, or correct wrong information about the chant or story.

• Wrap Up

The *Our World Phonics* Teacher's Guide provides appropriate and targeted Wrap Up activities for each lesson. These activities include simple games, memory and recall activities, word quizzes, and tongue twisters. They offer teachers a quick, informal way to assess mastery of the lesson's sound and spelling.

Pacing

Our World Phonics is designed to be used alongside *Our World*, *Explore Our World*, or any other primary English course. *Our World Phonics* provides a short phonics lesson that can either be included as part of a general English class, or given its own weekly slot—for example, Friday Phonics Time!

Each lesson in *Our World Phonics* is designed to provide content for approximately 20 minutes of teaching time. As a general rule, about 10–20 percent of that time should be spent on the short Warm Up. The Student Book activities will take approximately 50 percent of that time, leaving 30–40 percent for the Extend activity and the Wrap Up.

The flexibility offered in the lesson plans allows teachers to adjust these estimates according to the level of the students in their classes. For example, if students take extra time to master a more challenging sound, an Extend or Wrap Up activity can be omitted or postponed. Or, if students finish the lesson earlier than expected, favorite activities can be repeated or extended.

Supplementary practice materials, such as the ABC worksheets, Picture Dictionary, and unit worksheets, are available, but can be omitted at the teacher's discretion.

Detailed pacing guides for users of *Our World* and *Explore Our World* are available on the Teacher's Resource Website.