

Phonics and Word Recognition Rubric: Grade 1

Task

Students recognize and analyze letters and sounds in words.

Curriculum alignment

- Students recognize and analyze letters and sounds in words ([Outcome](#)).
- Students apply accuracy, appropriate rate, and expression in the development of fluency ([Outcome](#)).

Rubric

Criterion	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Exemplary
Letter and sound recognition	Identifies fewer than half of upper and lower case letters or their sounds.	Identifies most letters and some letter sounds; inconsistent with consonants and vowels.	Identifies all 26 letters and most letter-sound pairs; distinguishes consonants and vowels (Skills).	Identifies all letters and sounds fluently; explains how letters represent sounds in words (Understanding, Knowledge).
Word decoding	Cannot blend sounds or reads only sight words; does not attempt to decode unfamiliar words.	Blends some sounds in simple words with support; decodes a few one-syllable words.	Blends sounds with accuracy to read one- to two-syllable words; recognizes long and short vowels (Skills).	Decodes unfamiliar words smoothly; explains letter combinations and vowel patterns (Understanding, Skills).
High-frequency word fluency	Recognizes fewer than 25 high-frequency words; reads them slowly or with errors.	Recognizes 25 to 75 high-frequency words; reads some automatically.	Reads 125 high-frequency words automatically and in sentences (Skills).	Reads all high-frequency words instantly; uses them fluently in connected text (Understanding).
Presentation and labelling	Labels are missing or unclear; model or report is incomplete or hard to follow.	Most labels are present; some clarity; model or report shows basic understanding.	All labels are clear and accurate; model or report explains phonics concepts clearly.	Labels are precise and well-organized; model or report teaches the concept effectively.

Scoring

Add the level for each criterion. A score of 16 is Exemplary; 12 to 15 is Proficient; 8 to 11 is Developing; 4 to 7 is Beginning.

Notes for the teacher

- Look for evidence that the child can match letters to sounds, not just name letters. Ask the child to point to a letter and say its sound.
- High-frequency word fluency means the child reads the word instantly, without sounding it out. Listen for smooth, effortless recognition rather than hesitation or self-correction.

- Labelling should match what the child is showing. If the model shows a word broken into sounds, labels should name each sound (phoneme) or letter (grapheme) clearly.
- The English alphabet consists of a set of 26 letters that represent sounds. Accept any format that shows the child's thinking about how sounds and letters work together.