

COLOUR CODING

For the beginning reader who first looks at words, there is nothing to tell him how they should be spoken. Letters do not shout their sounds any more than sentences speak their meanings.

Colour-coding provides the clue to this puzzle because it is unmistakable, it is easily recognised, and it does not change the traditional shapes of the letters. It is used on the wordcharts to identify sounds. Identical colours are used for identical sounds.

Example :



The signs **s** and **ss** are the same colour, which suggests that you should say them the same way. Therefore, when a child later sees the word science on the chart and recognises that the **sc** and **ce** are the same colour as the **s** in **us**, he will produce the correct sound because he already knows the sound associated with that colour.

But look at another example:



By colouring the shape **s** differently in these two words, we give a clue which indicates that their pronunciation must also be different. On the charts you will find as many colours as are necessary to represent the 21 vowel and 32 consonant sounds of English. No special phonetic symbols were introduced.

Once sounds are known, colour is no longer necessary and indeed the materials in the kit, except for the wordcharts and the Fidel, are in black and white.

It may be that children are already familiar with the alphabet or some of it. Of course the alphabet is extremely useful for looking up words in a dictionary or names in a telephone directory, but as a method for introducing the written forms of speech it creates more problems than it solves; a knowledge of **abc** is of very little help in sounding out the word **cab**. The sign a, as you will see, appears in ten different columns on the Phonic Code, which indicates that it corresponds to ten different sounds in English, as in: **pat, was, village, any, swamp, metal, father, all, late, care**. (As you listen to yourself uttering each of these examples, you will hear that only in one of them does the shape carry the sound we give for it in the alphabet. Besides, most letters never carry in a word the sounds we give to them when naming the alphabet.)

Instead of the alphabet, here your work will be with the signs (letters or groups of letters) which stand for the sounds of English, each represented by a different colour. However, since reading has several other components besides decoding (which means going from print to speech) colour does not solve all the problems of learning to read. The problem it does solve, it solves steadily and easily in a way that learner readers find within their reach.