

## PHASE 03 · DIGRAPH PASS · EXPANDED SET

# 03 Digraphs and Vowel Teams

*Two letters, one sound. The single biggest jump in the system, introduced gently.*

**TOOL: COLOR-CODED DIGRAPH FLASH CARDS (32 CARDS, FIVE COLOR GROUPS)**

Once CVC blending is steady, the set expands, and here is the thing to hold onto: the sounds expand, not the system. Same bolt, same rotations, same five minutes. A digraph is two letters making one sound, s and h together saying **sh** rather than s then h, which is far easier to feel than to explain. The bolt does the explaining, and as always it starts on the cards. There are thirty-two new cards, grouped by the job each sound does: eight beige starter blends, four clear vowel teams, four green r-controlled vowels, four white floating digraphs, and twelve pink ending digraphs, a few of which run to three letters like **dge**, **tch**, and **nks**. Each color matches the nut it will become, so the visual language your child already trusts keeps doing its job.

## Start with the bridge you already own

Your child has already met four vowel teams back in the Starter Set: **oa**, **ea**, **ir**, and **oo**, with their clear cards. Put one of them in the middle position on the bolt, where a single vowel used to sit, and build words around it. When your child blends those bridge teams confidently, two letters landing as one sound without a stumble, that is the signal they are ready for the full digraph set. The **ir** card does quiet double duty, planting the r-controlled idea long before it needs a name.

From here, bring in the groups a few at a time rather than all at once. This order works well, reading down the first column then the second, and saving the trickiest forms for last:

**ff / ll / ss / zz**

**ow / oi / ai / ee**

**tr / dr / bl / cl**

**ch / sh / th / ph**

**qu / wh / ps / wr**

**ng / ck / st / ly**

**er / ar / or / ur**

**dge / tch / mps / nks**

You do not have to wait for mastery to start blending. The moment a group of four lands firmly in the Developing zone on the cards, thread that nut onto the bolt and let the blending carry it toward mastery, exactly the way the first single sounds moved from cards to bolt in groups of

four. The cards introduce the sound, and the bolt makes it automatic.

Follow the child. If a group is landing, keep going. If it is not, set it aside and circle back later. Mixing up similar sounds, like th and sh, is a normal part of the work and not a sign that anything is wrong.

### **A word on the trickier groups**

A few of these deserve a heads-up. The three-letter endings, **dge**, **tch**, **mps**, and **nks**, look heavy on the card, but each still makes one tidy ending sound, so treat them exactly like the shorter pink nuts. The **th** faces actually carry two sounds, the soft one in **thin** and the buzzy one in **this**, and your child will sort those out from the words themselves long before they could name the difference. And the green r-controlled vowels, **er**, **ar**, **or**, **ur**, bend the vowel so completely that it is easiest to treat each as its own single sound rather than a vowel followed by an r. None of this needs explaining up front. The cards and the bolt teach it by doing.

---

### **MOVE ON WHEN**

Within this phase, when your child has solid command of a group on the cards, its nut earns a place on the bolt. That move is Phase 04.

---