

PHASE 04 · DIGRAPH PASS · EXPANDED SET

04 Blending the New Sounds

The new nuts join the bolt your child already knows. Harder words that do not feel harder.

TOOL: THE BOLT + DIGRAPH NUTS

The digraph nuts thread onto the same bolt, in the same positions, run with the same rotation. The system never gets more complicated. Only the sounds do. Ship, chat, and march are harder words than **map**, but the motion is identical, so the difficulty climbs without the anxiety following it along. You may even notice your child blend a word, pause, and try it again a little differently. That is not a mistake. It is a reader checking their own work.

Where each new nut sits

White	ch, sh, th, ph The one nut that floats. It can sit at the launch or the landing position.
Green	er, ar, or, ur The middle, where the clear vowels sit, but colored apart because r-controlled vowels behave differently.
Clear	ow, oi, ai, ee The middle, the same family as the original vowel nuts and the bridge teams. Two letters, one sound.
Pink	ng/ck/st/ly, ff/ll/ss/zz, dge/tch/mps/nks The landing position, treated as single team sounds rather than separate letters.
Beige	tr/dr/bl/cl, qu/wh/ps/wr The start of the word. The ps and wr faces quietly introduce the silent-partner idea.

Two things to watch for

A couple of things change here that are worth a heads-up. First, start with one digraph nut on the bolt, paired with familiar single-letter nuts, even if your child is comfortable with both flash card quads. Two digraphs at once is a later move, once single-digraph blending is steady, and three at once is too many. Second, the rotations will sometimes land on a combination that is hard to say, or a word you would rather not sound out at the kitchen table. Either way, skip it, turn to the next face, and keep moving. Having to skip at all is itself a sign your child is ready for this phase.

MOVE ON WHEN

Move toward Phase 05 when digraph and vowel-team blending is about as automatic as CVC became, and your child starts meeting words that do not sound out at all.