Letter buddies: answers and notes

What your child practised: reading ten digraphs, two letters that make one sound (sh, ch, th, ng, ck, ee, oo, ai, ar, or), and blending words that use them (Reception phonics).

Page 1 · Warm up

Lines under: **ch**ip · ri**ng** · f**ee**t · f**ar**m

Page 2 · Buddy hunt

Answers vary with the book. sh, ch, th and ee turn up a lot in most picture books.

Page 2 · A. Ring the buddy

sh · **ee** · **ar** · **ng**

Page 3 · B. Word to picture

fish → **fish** · duck → **duck** · feet → **feet** · chain → **chain** · king → **king**

Page 3 · C. How many sounds?

m-**oo**-n **3** · c-**ar** **2**
sh-**ee**-p **3** · t-**or**-**ch** **3**

Challenge: No. **s** and **h** are buddies: together they make one sound, **sh**. Ship has four letters but only **three** sounds: sh… i… p, ship. Reading "s… h… i… p" gives a word that doesn't make sense.

Watch out for

- **Splitting the buddies** (s-h-i-p, f-ee-t read as f-e-e-t). Ask, "Can you see any letters holding hands?" and draw the line together.
- **Counting letters, not sounds** in C. Count the buttons, not the letters: torch has 5 letters, 3 sounds.
- **ck at the end** says the same sound as c and k on their own: duck, sock.
- **th** is said with the tongue between the teeth; some children say "f" or "v" at first. That's normal.

Going further (5 minutes, no paper)

- **Buddy actions:** sh, finger on lips; ch, a train going choo-choo; ee, wide smile; oo, look up at the moon.
- **Sound spotting:** on a walk, listen for words with buddies: tree, car, shop, chips.
- **In the game:** Chapter 6, Word Magic, swaps letters to make new words and reads little sentences.