



Know High Frequency Words

Keys to
Fluency

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Reader**

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Know High Frequency Words

Keys for the Teacher



Mastering recognition of high frequency words is an essential component in learning to read. This task is complicated by several factors.

- 1. Most high frequency words have no picture clues.*
- 2. Many high frequency words hold little meaning. It can be difficult to explain words such as “at, the, to and is.”*
- 3. Many high frequency words do not follow typical phonics patterns.*

For these reasons, many high frequency words need to be memorized for quick recall.

When to teach high frequency words to young children is complicated. Developmental milestones should take precedence but decisions are often influenced by district and parent expectations.

Keys for the Children

Good readers learn to “look and say” sight words.

Lesson

Introduce the concept of sight words by showing a group of easily recognizable pictures to children to identify. Some examples might be: book, dog, fork, sun, apple, mouse, tree, hat, pencil and car. Hold up each picture and encourage the children to quickly “look and say” the name of the item. After working through the stack, point out how quickly students could name the picture. The next step is to make the connection that good readers do the same with sight words. Whenever they see a sight word, they quickly “look and say” the word. Explain that because sight words are everywhere in books, learning to read them will make reading easier.

A follow-up lesson would be to enlarge this text to share with the class.

I like to read books. Do you? I keep the books I like in a special place.

Have the children count the number of words in the sentences. Next identify and circle the sight words. Then compare the two counts. This visual will help children see the abundance of sight words sprinkled throughout sentences.

From this point students should have a “good-fit” word list in their book box to use during Word Work activities. Having lists at multiple levels is an easy way to differentiate word practice for students.

Introduce words slowly, one or maybe two per week to the entire group. Use and notice them in poems, handwriting, books, math problems, charts, labels, and magazines. Become sight word detectives and find them at every opportunity.

Notes...

1

It can be fun to give a name to your collection of sight words. Some examples might be:

- *Heart words*
- *Popcorn words*
- *Bubble-gum words*
- *I-Spy words*
- *We know sight words by heart.*
- *Sight words pop-up all over.*
- *Sight words stick sentences together.*
- *I spy sight words everywhere.*

2

It is not uncommon to have a wide range of abilities within a class. There likely will be a student who announces, "These words are easy." Smile and say, "You've been busy reading" and move on quickly.

3

Slow down for students who struggle learning sight words. Focus on fewer words at a time while using different learning modalities. Encourage parents to practice words at home. Be sure to communicate to them which word is the current target.

4

Having words represented in different fonts can help students understand that words remain the same despite small variations in shape.

