

High Frequency Words and Games to Play

Although the English language contains millions of words, over 50 per cent of all text is composed of the first 100 high Frequency words. A child knowing the first 100 high frequency words will know approximately 50% of children's literature. A child knowing the first 200 high frequency words will therefore be able to recognise the majority of words in children's literature. The first 300 words make up 65% of all written material contained in newspaper articles, magazines, textbooks, children's stories, novels, and more. So it makes sense to teach these words as soon as possible to improve a child's reading ability.

These words often present a special difficulty to early readers. High Frequency words contain a number of "sight words." These are the many words in the English language that cannot be "unpacked" or sounded out through phonics. A word like "the" is a good example of a sight word that needs to be read as a whole, using a child's memory. Yet these words are essential to reading. If children are to read quickly and fluently, they must memorise these words by sight. Recognising high-frequency words by sight primarily involves memorisation, and therefore finding ways to present these words and repeat them over and over is essential.

Ideas for Teaching the Words and Games to Play

Suggestions for introducing these words

1. Introduce words in small groups of six to eight words or fewer per week after the age of 5 years. It may be beneficial to present words in phonetic groups (*this, that, they, the, those, there; big, but, by, best, both*, etc.).
2. Attach the words to a picture, piece of furniture, appliance etc. So that children come to match the word with its meaning e.g. black, house, coat. Unfortunately it isn't easy to find a picture clue for each word.
3. Allow children to write the words as often as possible. They may practice individual words or write high-frequency word sentences such as "We love to _____," or "I walk by the _____."
4. Keep a checklist of high-frequency words. When a child has memorised a word, meaning he or she can read it without decoding check the word off and move on to the next word. Make it fun. Draw a chart and have a prize for when your child is able to read a certain amount of words. For example when they have achieved their

goal they can choose 2 stories for you to read, a game to play etc. They need to be able to achieve their goal within 1 week initially so make sure that you

Games and Activities

Individual

Create flashcards for the high-frequency words in your lesson. Flashcards can accommodate any number of fun activities:

Children who are just starting to read will be focusing on the shape of the letters that make up the word. E.g.



Please note that many of the initial games only require your child to recognise the shape of the word. They do not need to be able to read the word itself.

1. Make up shapes to fit the words (as above) and see if the child can match them
2. Make up playing cards with 2 sets of the words to be learned. Mix them up and turn them over on a table then take turns in turning over two cards at a time to see if they match. If they do then you win the pair, if not the cards are turned back over in their original place and the next person takes their turn. This is also good for improving visual memory.
3. How quickly can they find one of the words in their reading book (or on a certain page)?
4. Have the words in front of your child (5 maximum). Draw the word on the child's back and ask them to point to the word that you have drawn. Later, they can progress to saying the word.
5. Play "Who am I?" Again the words need to be in front of your child and then you say, "I begin with a "t", I have 4 letters. Etc. As your child builds a more extensive vocabulary or increases their understanding of language the clues become harder e.g. I have 1 vowel, I rhyme with sack etc. Take turns so that your child provides you with the clues.
6. Make up two sets of words and play "Snap" or "Go Fish." For Go Fish use a maximum of 20 different words. Shuffle and deal 5 cards to each player (it is better if more than 2 people are; playing) and put remaining cards face down in centre. Players pick up their

cards not letting others see the words. Players place matching cards in front of them. The dealer then asks any other player next to them if they have a card that matches one in their hand. For example, "Do you have "look?" If 'yes' the card must be handed over so the questioner can make a pair. The pair is placed down and questioner asks again. If the player doesn't have the card they say 'Go Fish' and questioner picks the top card from centre pile to try and make a pair. If they make a pair they ask again, if they cannot make a pair the next player has a turn. If a player does not have a card on their turn they take the top card from the centre pile and ask. The game continues until there are no cards left. The winner is the person with the most pairs.

7. Initial letters. Cover up the first letter on a set of High Frequency Word flashcards. Ask the children what the first letter might be and what the word would then be. Use words which have more than one possibility e.g. could and would. As an alternative, cover up the last letter.