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HIGH-FREQUENCY WORDS (revised May 2008)

The most frequently used words in the English language account for an amazing proportion of all words in texts. For example, just 25 words form one third of all words in texts read by adults. These 25 words, generally accepted by researchers,¹ are listed in the column in order of their frequency of use.

The recognition of these and other *high-frequency (HF) words* by early readers is one of the keys to their development of fluency and comprehension as readers. These words are also called *high-frequency sight words*.

Their often idiosyncratic spelling patterns are the result of the evolution of English spelling influenced by the spelling of other languages. These words largely come from the Old English language. When English spelling was becoming more consistent, the spelling of many words was taken from one part of England, while the pronunciation was often from another part. An example is the word *one*. An early pronunciation of this word can still be found in the words *lonely*, *atonement*, *only* and *alone*. So the spelling *used* to be 'regular'.

The varied spelling patterns displayed in the HF words and others in the language are an extreme challenge for English-language learners. However, mastery of the HF words at least gives them access to a large portion of any text they are likely to face and boosts confidence.

25 most frequently used English words

the	on
of	as
and	are
to	they
a	with
in	be
is	his
that	at
it	or
was	from
for	had
you	I
he	

In the WINGS Developmental Literacy Series,² 206 high-frequency (HF) words are introduced and reinforced throughout the first eleven guided-reading levels. This high-frequency word list was largely adopted from England's National Literacy Strategy *Framework for Teaching*.³

Beginning readers need to meet and learn these words not just on 'word walls' or lists, but mainly within the context of their reading and writing. The teaching of some of these words that conform to the regular sound-letter relationships can be supported with a phonic approach (see *Regular high-frequency words*).

Multiple strategies for the teaching of these words maximises the chances of children learning them due to the different thought learning modes preferred by individuals. A variety of strategies is used throughout the WINGS Teacher Guides. The careful pattern of introduction of new words and their repetition at subsequent levels for reinforcement in the literature allows students to develop gradual familiarity with the list in the context of their reading.

On the inside back cover of each reader at levels 1 to 11, you will find a list of the HF words used in that book. Words first introduced at that level are printed in bold type.

The following two charts list the 206 HF words as *regular* or *irregular*.

Regular high-frequency words

In terms of their spelling, high-frequency words can be divided into two main groups – regular and irregular. Words with regular spelling patterns are consistent with the common sound-letter relationships. Some examples are *about*, *and*, *but*, *down*, *tree* and *next*.

These words can be taught using phonological cues (phonics and phonemic awareness strategies) supported by context or meaning (semantics) and language structure (syntax) cues. The 148 regular words are listed here alphabetically

a	call(-ed)	Friday	I	may	on	sixteen	time(-s)
about	came	from	I'd	me	or	so	to
all	can(-s)	get(s) (-ing)	if	mine	out	spring	too
am	cat	girl(-s)	I'll	more	over	summer	took
an	dad (dad's)	go(-es)	I'm	much	pink	Sunday	tree(-s)
and	day(-s)	going	in	mum	play(-ed, -ers, -ing)	take	twelve
as	did	good	is	must	purple	ten	twenty
at	didn't	got	it	my	ran/run(-s, -ing)	than	up
away	dig(-s) dug	green	its	name	red	that	us
back(-s)	do(-ing)	had	it's	new	Saturday	that's	very
ball(-s)	dog(-s) ('s)	has	jump(-ed, -s, -ing)	next	saw	the	way(-s)
be	door(-s)	he	just	nine	see(-s)	them	we
bed(-s)	down	help	last	nineteen	seen	then	went
been	eleven	her	like(-s)	no	seven	these	will
big(-ger)	fall	him	little	not	seventeen	thirteen	winter
boy(-s)	fifteen	his	look(-ed, -s, -ing)	now	she	this	with
brown	first	home(-s)	made	off	sister ('s)	three	yes
but	five	house(-s)	make(-s)	old	six	Thursday	yellow
by	for	how	man				

Irregular high-frequency words

The written form of the irregular words does not conform to the common sound-letter spelling patterns in English. Examples include *could, eight, one, said* and *some*.

These words need to be learned visually as whole words through a variety of activities supported by strategies involving context or meaning (semantics) and language structure (syntax) cues. The following list of 63 irregular words is in alphabetical order.

again	could	have	Monday	push(-es, -ed)	their	Wednesday
another	does	here	more	pull(-ed)	there	were
are	don't	I'd	night	put	there's	what
autumn	eight	I'll	of	said	they	when
because	eighteen	I'm	once	say(-s)	Tuesday	where
blue	eleven	laugh(-ed)	one	school	two	who
brother	four	live(-d)	orange	should	want(-s, -ed)	would
can't	fourteen	love	our	some	was	you
come(-s, -ing)	half	many	people	the	water(-ing)	your

The two charts on the following six pages show the guided reading levels at which the high-frequency words are introduced in WINGS, and the pattern of their re-use in later levels to reinforce their learning. The complete list is introduced within guided reading levels 1–11, which corresponds roughly to what many students would achieve in the first year of formal instruction.

Most of these words are also included in the Reading Rods[®] word and sentence builder kits.⁴

This key indicates how to interpret the first chart.

GR Level	The instructional or guided reading level in WINGS
HF Words	High-frequency words
X	Word introduced for the first time
x	Word used for reinforcement
✓	Word included in the Reading Rods [®] kits

HIGH-FREQUENCY WORD LIST (ALPHABETICAL)

GR Level ►		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
HF Words	Reading Rods											
a	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
about	✓					X				X	X	X
after	✓			X	X	X		X	X	X		X
again	✓	X			X	X		X	X	X	X	
all	✓			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
am	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X
an	✓			X		X	X	X	X	X	X	
and	✓		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
another	✓			X	X		X	X	X		X	
are	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
as	✓								X	X	X	
at	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
autumn										X		
away	✓				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
back(s)					X		X	X	X	X	X	X
ball(s)	✓	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
be	✓		X	X	X			X	X	X		X
because	✓									X	X	X
bed(s)	✓	X	X	X		X	X	X		X	X	X
been	✓								X		X	
big(ger)	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
blue	✓	X	X		X	X						X
boy(s)	✓		X		X	X		X	X			
brother	✓	X		X		X				X	X	X
brown	✓	X	X	X		X			X		X	
but	✓		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
by	✓	X	X	X		X	X		X		X	X
call(ed)	✓			X				X	X	X	X	X
came	✓			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
can(s)	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
can't	✓								X	X	X	X
cat	✓	X	X	X	X	X			X		X	
come(s) (-ing)	✓		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

GR Level ►		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
HF Words	Rdg Rods											
orange	✓		X	X						X		X
our	✓				X	X			X			X
out	✓	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
over	✓	X		X	X			X	X	X	X	X
people	✓							X	X	X		X
pink		X	X			X						
play(ed, ers, ing)	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
pull(ed)				X			X			X		
purple	✓	X	X									X
push(es, ed)			X				X				X	X
put	✓	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X
ran/run(s, ing)	✓	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
red	✓	X	X	X	X	X				X		X
said	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Saturday	✓						X					
saw	✓			X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
say(s)	✓			X	X	X	X					
school	✓	X	X	X	X	X				X		X
see(s)	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
seen									X	X		
seven	✓	X					X					X
seventeen												X
she	✓	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
should	✓									X	X	X
sister ('s)	✓	X		X		X				X	X	X
six	✓	X		X	X	X		X				X
sixteen												X
so	✓				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
some	✓		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
spring										X		
summer							X			X		
Sunday	✓						X					
take	✓			X			X			X	X	X

GR Level ▶		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
HF Words	Reading Rods											
could	✓			X				X	X	X	X	
dad (dad's)	✓	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
day(s)	✓			X	X				X	X		X
did	✓				X		X	X	X	X	X	X
didn't	✓					X						X
dig(s) dug	✓		X	X						X	X	
do(ing)	✓		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
does	✓		X	X					X	X		X
dog(s) ('s)	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
don't	✓				X	X			X	X		X
door(s)	✓	X		X		X	X				X	X
down	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
eight	✓					X		X				X
eighteen												X
eleven						X						X
fall	✓									X		
fifteen												X
first	✓			X				X	X		X	X
five	✓	X		X	X	X		X		X		X
for	✓			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
four	✓	X		X	X	X		X		X	X	X
fourteen												X
Friday	✓						X					
from	✓							X	X	X	X	X
get(s) (-ing)		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
girl(s)	✓	X	X	X	X	X		X	X			
go(es)	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
going	✓	X				X	X	X	X	X		X
good	✓			X		X			X	X	X	X
got	✓				X				X	X		
green	✓	X	X	X		X			X	X	X	X
had	✓		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
half			X					X	X			
has	✓		X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X
have	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

GR Level ▶		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
HF Words	Rdg Rods											
ten	✓			X		X			X			X
than	✓									X		X
that	✓				X	X		X	X	X	X	X
that's	✓							X	X	X		X
the	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
their	✓							X	X	X	X	X
them	✓		X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X
then	✓		X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X
there	✓	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
there's	✓							X			X	
these	✓				X			X	X	X	X	X
they	✓		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
thirteen												X
this	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
three	✓	X		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
Thursday	✓						X					
time(s)	✓		X					X	X	X	X	
to	✓		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
too	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
took	✓				X			X		X		
tree(s)	✓	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tuesday	✓						X					
twelve												X
twenty												X
two	✓	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
up	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
us	✓			X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
very	✓				X			X	X	X	X	X
want(s, ed)	✓					X		X	X	X	X	X
was	✓			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
water(ing)	✓		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
way(s)	✓						X		X	X	X	X
we	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wednesday	✓						X					
went	✓			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

GR Level ►		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
HF Words	Reading Rods											
he	✓		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
help	✓			X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X
her	✓				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
here	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
him	✓			X				X	X	X		X
his	✓		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
home(s)	✓		X	X	X		X		X	X	X	
house(s)	✓	X	X			X	X		X	X	X	X
how	✓			X				X	X	X	X	X
I	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
I'd	✓		X			X						
if	✓							X	X	X	X	X
I'll	✓						X	X		X	X	X
I'm	✓					X	X	X	X	X		
in	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
is	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
it	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
its	✓		X					X				
it's	✓						X		X	X	X	X
jump(ed, s, ing)	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
just	✓	X				X		X	X	X	X	X
last	✓		X	X			X		X		X	X
laugh(ed)	✓					X			X			X
like(s)	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
little	✓			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
live(d)	✓				X	X	X	X	X	X		X
look(ed, s, ing)	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
love	✓			X				X		X		
made	✓		X			X		X	X	X	X	X
make(s)	✓			X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
man	✓		X			X	X					
many	✓			X			X	X	X	X	X	X
may	✓									X	X	X

GR Level ►		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
HF Words	Rdg Rods											
were	✓					X		X	X		X	X
what	✓		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
when	✓						X		X	X	X	X
where	✓		X	X	X	X				X	X	X
who	✓				X		X			X	X	X
will	✓		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
winter						X				X	X	
with	✓			X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
would	✓								X	X	X	
yes	✓	X	X			X	X		X	X	X	X
yellow	✓	X	X	X					X	X		X
you	✓		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
your	✓			X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
NUMBERS												
1,3,5-11								X				
2,4,6-10			X					X				
12			X									
four	✓	X		X	X	X		X		X	X	X
five	✓	X		X	X	X		X		X		X
six	✓	X		X	X	X						X
seven	✓	X					X					X
eight	✓						X					X
nine	✓						X					X
ten	✓			X			X					X
eleven							X					X
twelve												X
thirteen												X
fourteen												X
fifteen												X
sixteen												X
seventeen												X
eighteen												X
nineteen												X

GR Level ▶		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
HF Words	Reading Rods											
me	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
mine										X		X
Monday	✓						X					
more	✓		X			X		X		X	X	X
much	✓									X	X	X
mum	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X
must	✓							X	X			X
my	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
name	✓							X			X	
new	✓							X		X	X	X
next	✓			X					X			
night	✓			X								
nine	✓					X			X			X
nineteen												X
no	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
not	✓		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
now	✓		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
of	✓			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
off	✓		X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
old	✓			X		X	X		X	X	X	X
on	✓		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
once	✓			X			X		X			
one	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
or	✓			X				X	X	X	X	X

GR Level ▶		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
HF Words	Rdg Rds											
twenty												X
COLOURS												
brown	✓	X	X	X		X			X		X	
green	✓	X	X	X		X		X		X		X
red	✓	X	X	X	X	X				X		X
yellow	✓	X	X	X						X		X
blue	✓	X	X		X	X						X
orange	✓		X	X						X		X
pink		X	X			X						
purple	✓	X	X									X
DAY/SEASON												
Monday	✓						X					
Tuesday	✓						X					
Wednesday	✓						X					
Thursday	✓						X					
Friday	✓						X					
Saturday	✓						X					
Sunday	✓						X					
summer							X			X		
winter							X			X	X	
autumn										X		
fall	✓									X		
spring										X		

HIGH FREQUENCY WORDS X LEVEL OF INTRODUCTION

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9	Level 10	Level 11
a	and	after	away	about	I'll	from	as	because	may	NUMBERS
again	be	all	back	didn't	it's	if	been	mine		twelve
am	boy(s)	an	did	I'm	way(s)	must	can't	much		thirteen
are	but	another	don't	laugh(ed)	when	name	seen	should		fourteen
at	come(s)	call(ed)	got	want(s)(ed)	DAYS	new	would	than		fifteen
ball	dig	came	her	were	Monday	people		SEASON		sixteen
bed	do(ing)	could	live(d)	NUMBERS	Tuesday	that's		autumn		seventeen
big(ger)	does	days	our	eight	Wednesday	their		fall		eighteen
brother	had	first	so	nine	Thursday	there's		spring		nineteen
by	half	for	took	eleven	Friday	NUMERALS				twenty
can(s)	has	good	very		Saturday	1,3,5-11				
cat	he	help	who		Sunday					
dad	his	him			SEASONS					
dog(s)	home(s)	how			summer					
door(s)	I'd	little			winter					
down	its	love								
get(s) (-ing)	last	make(s)								
girl(s)	made	many								
go(es)	man	next								
going	more	night								
have	not	of								
here	now	old								
house(s)	off	once								
I	on	or								
in	push(es, ed)	pull(ed)								
is	some	saw								
it	them	say(s)								
jump(ed, s, ing)	then	take								
just	they	that								
like(s)	time(s)	these								
look(ed, s, ing)	to	us								
me	water(ing)	was								
mum	what	went								
my	where	with								
no	will	your								
one	you	NUMBERS								

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Level 7	Level 8	Level 9	Level 10	Level 11
out	NUMERALS	ten								
over	2,4,6-10,12									
play(ed, ers, ing)	COLOURS									
put	orange									
ran/run(s, ing)										
said										
school										
see(s)										
she										
sister(s)										
the										
there										
this										
three										
too										
tree(s)										
two										
up										
we										
yes										
NUMBERS										
four										
five										
six										
seven										
COLOURS										
brown										
green										
red										
yellow										
blue										
pink										
purple										

REFERENCES

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2. *WINGS Developmental Literacy Acquisition Series*, Era Publications, Adelaide (2002–2007)



WINGS®

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4. *Reading Rods®*, ETA/Cuisenaire. Vernon Hills USA, distributed in an Anglicised edition by Era Publications, Adelaide, Australia

FURTHER INFORMATION

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