A New Model for Teaching High Frequency Words

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Key to Slides

- Handouts #1 do not have slides with RED or GREEN titles
- Handouts #2 do not have slides with RED titles
- Handouts have slides with PURPLE titles

Objectives

- To examine the original purpose of high frequency word lists.
- To understand similarities among lists.
- To suggest a new way to think about organizing high frequency words for instruction.
- To provide tools for helping students who struggle with learning some high frequency words.
Your turn

1. How do you teach high frequency words?

2. Do any students, parents, or teachers experience frustration teaching high frequency words?

3. Do you have any students who get was and saw mixed up?

4. What other words do they confuse?

What Are High Frequency Words?

What Are High Frequency (HF) Words?

- Generally considered to be words on a list that are the words seen most often in text.
  - Dolch 220 Word List
  - Fry Lists (100, 300, 600, 1000 etc. most frequently used words)
  - 100 or 150 Most Frequently Used Words
Fry Lists

- First published an Instant Word List in 1950s, with several updates since then.
- 1000 Instant Words, which are the "... most common words in the English language. The words are arranged in order of frequency of occurrence in reading materials and in children's writing." (Fry, 1999, p13).
- The 1000 Instant Words are commonly presented in lists as follows:
  - First 100 - make up about half of all written material (Fry, et al, 1993, p.23).
  - First 300
  - First 600 - make up about 65 percent of all written materials (Fry, et al, 1993, p.23).

Dolch 220 Word List
About the Dolch 220 Word List

- Originally compiled in the 1930s
- Dolch included only “service words” on the Dolch 220 list (no nouns)
  - Conjunctions (e.g., and, as, because, or)
  - Prepositions (e.g., at, by, for, from)
  - Pronouns (e.g., me, you, he, thee)
  - Adverbs (e.g., again, ever, once, soon)
  - Adjectives (e.g., all, big, pretty, same)
  - Verbs (e.g., are, bring, come, eat, know)

- Dolch called these service words because they “are used in all writing, no matter the subject” (Dolch, 1941, p. 206)

Why Dolch Excluded Nouns

- Dolch didn’t think nouns are as important to learn by sight as “service words”, and he didn’t want teachers spending time teaching nouns as sight words instead of the “service words.”
  - “Nouns cannot be of universal use because each noun is tied to special subject matter. Unfortunately, teachers have spent a great deal of energy in teaching nouns in primers as sight words, and then, as the later books take up new materials, new nouns must be used and not those that have been learned. Perhaps one reason that many children in the intermediate grades do not know by sight the words on this basic list is that the emphasis has been on nouns instead of on these ‘service’ words.” (Dolch, 1941, pp. 206-207)

95 Nouns Common to the 3 Word Lists Dolch Used To Compile His HF Word List

- apple, banana, book, cat, dog, elephant, fish, frog, goat, hamburger, house, ice cream, jacket, key, lake, monkey, orange, potato, rabbit, school, spider, sun, table, taxi, unicorn, volcano, water, x-ray, yam, zeppelin
Dolch List by Grade

Dolch’s Intention for the Grade Level List

- The grade-level lists show the most frequent words from the Dolch 220 Word List at each reading level.
- The lists are intended to give the teacher a feel for the words children will encounter at each reading level, not as a list of which words should be taught at each level.
- Dolch says the teacher should build “... the basic sight word vocabulary from the books the children actually read. Each story will add some of these words and the teacher can make a list of them as she goes.” (Dolch, 1941, p. 210)

Comparison of Dolch and Fry Lists

Dolch
- First published in 1930s
- Meant for grades 1 – 3
- 220 words, excluding nouns, listed various ways
- 95 most frequent nouns listed separately; not considered important for teaching as sight words
- Compiled from 3 existing word lists
  1. 2,596 words from children’s speaking vocabularies before entering first grade
  2. 500 most frequent words in primary grade texts
  3. 453 most frequent words found in 10 primers and 10 first readers.
- 193 words on all three lists; 27 words on two of the lists

Fry
- Most recent version published in 1990s
- Meant for grades 1 – 6
- 1,000 words listed in order of frequency
- Nouns included on list and considered equally important to teach as sight words
- Based on American Heritage five-million word count
  Taken from texts and other reading materials used in grades 3 – 9.
Which List To Use?

• All high frequency word lists can be useful for identifying words to include in early reading materials, such as:
  - Stories
  - Word lists
  - Spelling tests
  - Writing exercises.

• The lists all have approximately the same words and differ only because of (1) the source for finding the words and frequencies and (2) the number of words on the list.

Who Are Dolch and Fry?

Edward W. Dolch, Ph.D., (1889 – 1961)
- Professor at the University of Illinois from 1919 to 1940
- Published prolifically in his areas of research:
  - Reading and word meaning
  - Psychology and the teaching of reading
  - Teaching of primary reading and better spelling
- Wrote a number of children’s books.

Edward Fry, Ph.D., (1925–2010)
- Director of the Reading Center and Professor of Education at Rutgers University for more than 20 years.
- Author of a number of practical guides for reading teachers.
- Developed a variety of curriculum materials including typing courses for children, filmstrips, card reader programs on phonics and basic vocabulary, reading improvement drill books, and many others.

A Precise Definition of High Frequency Words
Definitions: “Sight Words” and “High Frequency Words”

- **High frequency words** - words used most often in text. The first 25 - 50 words in frequency are virtually the same no matter what text is being considered. The primary reason frequencies vary by list is the types of text used to select words.
- **Sight words** - words a student knows by sight without having to sound them out. Beginning readers have few sight words and mature readers have thousands of sight words.
- **Interchangeability:**
  - Often these terms are used interchangeably because of the belief that all high frequency words need to be taught as sight words, using flash cards, games, and frequent exposure.
  - Some phonics programs label high frequency words that are irregularly spelled as “sight words” because they can’t be decoded phonetically.

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This Presentation Is about High Frequency Words

- This presentation is about the most efficient and effective way to turn high frequency words into sight words.
- We will not refer to sight words.

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Importance of High Frequency Words

- According to Fry (Fry, 2000, p. 4):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking of Words</th>
<th>Percent of Words in Reading Materials (approximately)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25 most frequent</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 most frequent</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 most frequent</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A New Way To Think about High Frequency Words

How To Teach High Frequency Words?

- No one would disagree that students need to be able to read and spell high frequency words effortlessly and instantaneously.
- The disagreement occurs in how to teach the words.
  - By sight?
  - Phonetically?
  - A combination?

Traditional Way To Teach High Frequency Words

- Teachers have a list of high frequency words students are expected to read easily.
  - The list may be organized by frequency, topic (colors, numbers), or other ways.
  - Some high-frequency words may be related to stories students are reading.
- Students are expected to memorize these words, and the words are often sent home for students to study with their parents.
- The student keeps studying the words until he learns to recognize them.
Problems with Traditional Way To Teach HF Words

- Students are given words to learn outside any scope and sequence for teaching phonics.
- These words are studied and sent home and tested over and over again.
- Difficulties learning high frequency words are not considered in light of the student’s issues learning to decode.

New Way To Teach High Frequency Words

- Organize high frequency words by phonics pattern and fit them into phonics instruction.
- Organize irregularly spelled high frequency words so that words with similar spelling patterns are taught together.

What To Teach Pre-Readers in Pre-K and K
Teaching High Frequency Words before Phonics Instruction

- Students can and need to learn a few high-frequency words before formal reading instruction begins.
  - Some children will learn to recognize words on their own as they are read to, without any prompting.
  - Other children will need explicit instruction and practice to learn the words.

Important Warning:
Do Not Teach HF Words until Students Know all the Letters

- Asking a student to learn a word before he knows all the letters is:
  - Most often an exercise in futility
  - Not logical because if a student can't remember what one letter is called, it follows that it will be difficult for that student to learn a word with more than one letter.

Teach 10–15 HF Words after Students Know Letter Names

- Words in red are a good place to start.

Add I because it is easy.

1. the 11. he
2. of 12. for
3. and 13. was
4. a 14. on
5. to 15. are
6. in 16. but
7. is 17. what
8. you 18. all
9. that 19. were
10. it 20. when

Source: Phonics from A to Z, page 97
Pair Words That Will Not Be Easily Confused

Introduce words so that similar words are not easily confused
(for example, letters are different and meanings are not similar).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Confusing</th>
<th>Potentially Confusing if taught back-to-back</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I</td>
<td>is, was</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. the</td>
<td>of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. a</td>
<td>to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. of</td>
<td>and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. was</td>
<td>is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. to</td>
<td>you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. and</td>
<td>for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. is</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. you</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. for</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teaching the First High Frequency Words

- Point to words whenever they are in stories read to the class.
- Introduce one word at a time and insure mastery before moving to the next word.
- Practice words already learned while learning a new word.
- Use flash cards.
- Teach students to spell the words, but don't make it mandatory.

Why Learn 10 – 15 HF Words before Beginning Reading Instruction?

- Knowing a few high frequency words will enable the student to read sentences when first learning to read, while keeping most of the text decodable based on the letter-sounds taught.
Confusing HF Words

- Use letter sounds, if possible, to help students with difficult HF words.
  - is, was, to, for: Tell students to think about the first sound in 'each word' before reading it.
- 'Of' is difficult. We make up a ditty to help students learn 'of'. They point to the letters and the word as they sing.
  - 'o' 'f' of, 'o' 'f' . . . of
  - I love to spell 'of'

Categorizing High Frequency Words: ♥ Heart & ⚡ Flash Words

- ⚡ Flash Words
  - Words that are decodable according to phonics patterns the students have been taught.
    - cvc: can, get, did
    - digraphs: back, them, much
    - blends: and, help, just
    - r-controlled vowels: her, first
    - silent e: came, like
- ♥ Heart Words
  - Words with some parts that do not follow phonics patterns and have to be "learned by heart".
    - said, people, does, again, were, where
Flash Words Are Spelled According to Phonics Patterns

- Short vowel patterns
- Digraphs
- Blends
- ing, ang, ong, ung, ink, ank, onk, unk + all
- R-controlled vowels
- Open syllables (one vowel at the end of the word)
- VCe
- 2-syllable with above patterns

This page is on your handout

150 HF Words – Decodable or Not

- Decodable words are at these levels:
  - Short vowel
  - Digraphs
  - Blends
  - Ng, nk + all
  - R-controlled vowel
  - Open syllable
  - VCe
  - 2 syllables

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Let’s Group the Flash Words into Phonics Patterns

Short vowels
Can have double letters at end of word
• an
• at
• but
• can
• did
• get

Find 12 more words:
• Short vowels
• No digraphs
• No blends
• Can have double letters at the end

Write SV by the word and circle it.

Let’s Group the Flash Words into Phonics Patterns

Short vowels, digraphs or blends
• an
• at
• but
• can
• did
• get
• had
• him
• if
• in
• it
• man
• not
• off
• on
• up
• well
• will

Find 8 more words
• Short vowels
• Digraphs
• No blends
• No words with ng

Write D by the word and circle it.

Short vowels & digraphs
• back
• much
• such

Find 8 more words
• Short vowels
• Digraphs
• No blends
• No words with ng

Write D by the word and circle it.
Short vowels & digraphs

• back
• much
• such
• than
• that
• them
• then
• this

Short vowels & blends

• and (reinforce what was “memorized” in PreK or K)
• help

Find 4 more words
• Short vowels
• Blends
• No words with nk

Write B by the word and circle it.

• just
• must
• went
• its
• ing, ang, ong, ung, ink, ank, onk, unk + all
• long + all
• things
• think

Write NK or NG or ALL by the word and circle it.

R-controlled vowels
• first
• for

Find 3 more words
• One syllable
• R-controlled vowels

Write R by the word and circle it.

R-controlled vowels
• first
• for
• her
• or
• part
Open syllable – one vowel letter at the end of the word

- be  no
- go  she
- he  so
- I   we
- me

How might you group these for instruction?

Write O by the word and circle it.

Open syllable – one vowel letter at the end of the word

- be  no
- go  she
- he  so
- I   we
- me

How might you group these for instruction?

Write O by the word and circle it.

VCe (silent e)

- came
- here
- like

Find 3 more words

- One syllable
- Vce
- Digraphs
- Blends

Write VCE by the word and circle it.
VCe (silent e)

- came
- here
- like
- made
- make
- place
- same
- take
- time
- s = /z/
- use
- these

Two-syllable: short vowel, r-controlled, open syllable

- after
- number
- over

Write 2 by the word and circle it.

Grouping ♥ Heart Words

- Some words don’t fit patterns:
  - again, also, are
  - because, been
  - does
  - four
  - only, our
  - people, put
  - said
  - these, their, too
  - very
  - what, was, were, where
  - your
- To group heart words for instruction, find similar spelling patterns, and add other non-HF words if there are any.
Group Heart Words with Similar Spelling for Instruction

- Work with one or more partners to find one set of at least 3 words that you would group for instruction.
- Example:
  - by, my, why (all have long i spelled y)

What Is the Pattern?

- come
- from
- of
- some
- other
- another

Other words with same pattern:
- love
- son
- ton
- glove

- about
- again
- around
- away

Other words with same pattern:
- along
- above
- aside

- could
- would

Other word with same pattern:
- should

- do
- to
- who
- into

What Is the Pattern?

/i/ spelled o

- come
- from
- of
- some
- other
- another

Other words with same pattern:
- love
- son
- ton
- glove

/æ/ spelled schwa

- about
- again
- around
- away

Other words with same pattern:
- along
- above
- aside

/ʌ/ spelled ou

- could
- would

/ʌ/ spelled o

- do
- to
- who
- into

Other word with same pattern:
- should
Turn/talk/share:

1. What thoughts are you having about “rethinking” how to teach high frequency words?
2. What questions do you have?

Correct Pronunciation of “A” and “The”

“A” and “The” Are Articles

- Articles are always attached to another word in a phrase or sentence and they don’t carry specific meaning.
  - the happy clam
  - I live in the house on the corner.
  - Keisha wants a horse for her birthday.
  - Billy caught a fish.
- Articles are so common that they have the schwa sound when they are before another word in normal conversation.
  - the house.
  - a fish
- In isolation, the words are properly pronounced with the long vowel sound because they are “open” syllables.
  - thē
  - ā
Should I Worry about My Students Mispronouncing ‘a’ and ‘the’ When They Read?

• When students are first learning to read or when they struggle, they often read word-by-word, in which case they may read “a” or “the” with long vowel sounds.

• Do not correct this. They will read “a” and “the” with the schwa sound when they learn to read with a more conversational tone.

You Can Turn This Into A Ditty

• You can say /ä/ or you can say /uh/, but we always spell it with the letter ‘a’.

• You can /thee/ or you can say /thuh/, but we always spell it t-h-e.

Does It Matter if a Student Reads ‘a’ or ‘the’ or Doesn’t Read the Word at All?

The importance of accuracy to comprehension.

• The horse got a cold.

• The horse got cold.

• The house got cold.
Teaching Reading and Spelling of Heart Words

Learning Heart Words Depends on a Basic Understanding of Letter-Sound Relationships

Understanding letter-sound relationships is a foundation for remembering how to read and spell high frequency words.

Teaching Heart Words: Focus on the Difficult Part

said

How many sounds are in the word?
Which letters are spelled exactly as we expect?
Which letters do we have to "learn by heart?"
Teaching Heart Words:
Focus on the Difficult Part

**said**

How many sounds are in the word?
3: /s/ /ĕ/ /d/

Which sounds are spelled exactly as we expect?
S and D

Which letters do we have to "learn by heart?"
AI

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Teaching Heart Words: 1-syllable words

1. Introduce the Word
2. Match Sounds & Letters
3. Identify Heart Letters
4. Read and Spell the Word Aloud
5. Desk-Write the Word (from memory)
6. Questions Students about the Word (from memory)
7. Backward and Forward Spelling (from memory)
8. Students Spell Word on Erasable Surface
9. Create Practice Card

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Email Linda@Readers.com if you would like a copy of the 7 Steps for Introducing Heart Words

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FAQ: How many HF words can be taught using the “New Method” when teaching short vowels?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phonics Scope &amp; Sequence*</th>
<th>Heart Words</th>
<th>Flash Words</th>
<th>Total HF Words</th>
<th>Running Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Phonics</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VC &amp; CVC</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Digraphs</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blends</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ng, nk</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>62</strong></td>
<td><strong>70</strong></td>
<td><strong>132</strong></td>
<td><strong>--</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Based on Readsters’ Phonics Plug-in Scope & Sequence.

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63 HF Words To Teach in Kindergarten from the Dolch List

1. the (1) 16. but (19) 31. did (45) 46. an (72)
2. to (2) 17. had (20) 32. so (47) 47. red (80)
3. and (3) 18. at (21) 33. see (48) 48. got (93)
4. he (4) 19. him (22) 34. not (49) 49. by (103)
5. a (5) 20. up (24) 35. were (50) 50. well (109)
6. I (6) 21. all (25) 36. get (51) 51. ran (111)
7. you (7) 22. is (27) 37. one (54) 52. let (112)
8. it (8) 23. her (28) 38. my (56) 53. six (120)
9. of (9) 24. as (32) 39. me (58) 54. off (132)
10. in (10) 25. be (33) 40. will (59) 55. tell (141)
11. was (11) 26. go (35) 41. yes (60) 56. ten (153)
12. said (12) 27. we (36) 42. big (61) 57. run (162)
13. his (13) 28. am (36) 43. are (63) 58. has (166)
14. for (14) 29. do (41) 44. if (65) 59. us (169)
15. on (17) 30. can (42) 45. no (68) 60. cut (188)

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62 words grouped

Pre-Phonics
1. the (1)
2. to (2)
3. and (4)
4. he (4)
5. a (5)
6. I (6)
7. you (7)
8. of (8)
9. for (14)
10. is (27)

Short A
11. at (41)
12. had (20)
13. am (34)
14. can (42)
15. an (46)
16. ran (51)
17. has (146)
18. has (32)
19. all (25)
20. are (63)
21. do (64)

Short I
22. it (5)
23. it (6)
24. in (14)
25. fish (22)
26. did (45)
27. will (58)
28. if (45)
29. big (61)
30. six (126)
31. sit (61)
32. his (13)
33. said (13)
34. my (16)
35. by (18)
36. go (36)
37. so (47)
38. do (56)
39. were (59)
40. one (54)

Short O
41. got (4)
42. up (14)
43. run (4)
44. up (44)
45. cut (18)
46. go (35)
47. so (47)
48. be (33)
49. we (16)
50. me (18)
51. red (80)
52. well (106)
53. let (132)
54. tall (144)
55. ten (153)
56. get (16)
57. yes (60)

Short U
58. but (19)
59. up (24)
60. not (4)
61. cut (18)
62. us (169)
63. big (61)
64. six (126)
65. he (45)
66. she (18)
67. the (18)
68. no (68)
69. one (59)
70. us (169)
71. run (163)
72. we (36)
73. me (58)
74. was (31)
75. by (18)
76. she (18)
77. the (18)
78. us (169)

Some words are predictably confusing

Explain the confusion.
Give an idea for correcting it.

• where
• were
• then
• they
• the
• a

• when
• then
• of
• for
• she
• the

Which word has h?

Where loves h
Some words are predictably confusing

Explain the confusion.
Give an idea for correcting it.

• where
  • were

• then
  • they

• when
  • then
  • she
  • the

• the
  • a

Not looking carefully at end of word.
• Underline the last letters / heart over ey in they

Same letters, different order – not paying attention to initial letter sound.
• Say the first sound before reading the word

Confusing Words Practice

Fixing HF Word Confusions

1. Create a practice page.
   - 10 words on a line
   - 5 confusing words on each line.
2. Teach the scaffold(s).
3. Practice using the scaffold(s).
4. Practice without the scaffold(s).
Practice Page for were / where

10 rows of words.
5 words the student knows, and 5 words are ‘where’ and ‘were’.
- Alternate:
  3 where & 2 were
  2 where & 3 were

Let’s Practice

Student points to each word and reads it.
When student comes to ‘where’, student underlines ‘wh’ in ‘where’ and says “where loves h”, then reads “where”.
Student just reads the word ‘were’.

I’ll show you how it works

© 2010 Readsters, LLC
Practice lines 2 & 3 with a partner

Practice page for saw / was

Let’s Practice

Student underlines first letter while saying the sound, then reads the word.

was – saw
Practice lines 1 & 2 with a partner

Two Categories of Scaffolds

**Scaffolds for Both Words in the Pair**
- **was** – **saw**
  - Student underlines first letter while saying the sound, then reads the word.
  - **was** – **saw**

**A Scaffold for One Word in the Pair**
- **were** – **where**
  - Student underlines ‘wh’ in ‘where’ and says ‘where loves h’, then reads the words.
  - Student just reads the word ‘were’.
Two-Step Practice

**STEP 1** – with scaffold

**Practice:** Student practices using scaffold until getting three rows 100% correct, with no errors or self-corrections.

**Move to Step 2:** When student reads the first 3 rows attempted correctly, move to Step 2.

**STEP 2** – without scaffold, just read words

**Practice:** Student practices without scaffold until getting three rows 100% correct, with no errors or self-corrections.

**Mastery:** Stop practice when student reads the first 3 rows attempted correctly.

Did We Meet Our Objectives?

- Did we examine the original purpose of high frequency word lists?
- Do you understand the similarities among lists?
- Do you have a new way to think about organizing high frequency words for instruction?
- Did we provide tools for helping students who struggle with learning some high frequency words.

Sources


