

Phonetically Regular Sight Words

1. Long	2a. Short	2b. Short	3. Long	4. Other	5. L controlled	6. R controlled	7. W Changes
a	had	big	ate	sing	all	far	want
be	and	did	came	bring	call	start	wash
he	an	in	made	going	fall	+part	walk
me	can	him	make		small		+water
she	ran	sit	take	drink		or	
we	+than	it	gave	think	tell	for	warm
the	am	its			well		
	at	if	say	thank	help	first	work
	that	wish	may			her	+word
I	ask	six	+day	little	will	hurt	
	fast	pick	+way			after	
go	black	this	play	funny	full	better	
so		which	they		pull	under	
no	yes	with	see	how		+number	
	best		green	now			
my	get	got	keep	down		our	
try	let	hot	sleep	brown			
why	red	not	three			here	
by	then	off		out			
fly	when	on	eat	found			
	ten	long	*read	round			
	went	stop	clean				
	them		+each	saw			
		run		draw			
		cut	five				
		but	like	good			
		jump	ride	look			
		just	+time				
		must	white	too			
		much		soon			
		up	light				
		us	right	myself			
			grow				
			show	open			
			own	over			
			yellow				
			blue				
			new				

Key:

+ On Fry 100 List but not Dolch List

* Can be either long or short

Sight Words Arranged by Phonetic Pattern of Exception

8. Schwa	9. s as z, f as v	10. Vowel Sub	11. Ending v	12. Silent Letters	13. r Exceptions	14. Irregular	15. True Sight
again	as	to	give	would	carry	two	one
about	has	do	*live	know		buy	once
around	always	into		write	four		
away	hers	today	have	eight	your	laugh	
	is	together		who			
come	his				every		
some	goes	because		are			
done	please	been		+more	their		
from	these	could		before			
does	those	pretty			there		
what	use	put		+people	where		
+other	was	said					
	of	shall			very		
		you					
		kind					
		find					
		old					
		cold					
		hold					
		both					
		any					
		many					
		never					
		seven					
		upon					
		only					
		don't					
		*read					

Key:

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Teaching the Sight Words by Sound

Why you should teach the sight words phonetically by sound instead of wholes by sight:

Brain Research. Brain research shows that the brains of good readers read on the side of the brain that processes sound and language while poor readers read on the side of the brain that processes pictures. More recent powerful brain imaging techniques find that the brains of good readers are rapidly analyzing individual letters and groups of letters at the same time in a "massively parallel architecture."¹

Simple, Smart, Powerful. It is very simple to teach with phonics. And, it is very powerful. With just the first page of phonetically regular sight words, learning a few simple patterns with a list of 150 Dolch "sight" words and 9 Fry Instant words not on the Dolch sight word list will unlock the power to sound out over 20,000 additional words. Instead of spending hours learning to read a few hundred words as wholes by sight, when you learn them by sound, you gain the ability not only to read those words but thousands more. With the addition of a few simple rules and explanations, you can easily use phonics to teach the 68 Dolch and 3 Fry words on the second page that are slightly irregular, leaving only 5 words to be taught as wholes by sight. Learning these 71 sight words with phonics will unlock thousands of additional words.

Practical Experience. 40L volunteers have tutored hundreds of children, and the more sight words they have learned and the more they have studied them, the longer it takes for them to learn phonics well and unlearn their guessing habits. The students who made the fastest progress so far were 2 formerly homeless 2nd grade minority inner city children who had missed so much school that they had absolutely no guessing habits to overcome; they were sounding out 12th grade level passages in Webster's Speller after only 6 group tutoring sessions.

For more information about why, see 40L's sight word page.

How to teach the sight words phonetically:

The first page of this document has words which are 100% phonetic. You teach the sounds and then have your student sound out each sound from left to right. Some of the sounds are letter teams such as th, ch, or ay, these count as a single sound. Even better, use a solid phonics program² instead and these phonetic "sight words" will be learned naturally along with the rest of the program.

Notes:

1. Dehaene, Stanislas, "[The Massive Impact of Literacy on the Brain and its Consequences for Education](#)," Human Neuroplasticity and Education, 2011, p. 23 [Note: Stanislas Dehaene's 2009 book "Reading in the Brain" has a more detailed explanations and compares many different studies.]

2. Lists of good phonics programs can be found at The Phonics Page and Don Potter's websites.

Tips for each type of word by heading number:

1. These words are long because words and syllables that end in a vowel are long. The letter y acts as an i. The words “a” and “the” can be long or will schwa depending on use.⁴ Learning this simple pattern unlocks over 5,000 additional words.

2. (2a & 2b). These words are simple short vowel words. Words and syllables that end in a consonant will have the short vowel sound. Learning the short vowel pattern phonetically unlocks 10,000+ additional words.

3. These are all phonetically regular long vowel words. These patterns unlock 2,000+ additional words.

a_e: Long a because of the silent e.

ai/ay; ei/ey: Vowel teams that say long a, with ai and ei within the word and ay and ey at the end. Native English words do not end in i, the i changes to a y at the end of a syllable or a word.

ee: The letter team ee is very reliable and says long e.

ea: The letter team ea says long e approximately 2/3 of the time, and is the primary sound of ea.

i_e: Long i because of the silent e.

igh: The letter team igh also says long i, and is a reliable letter team.

ow: The ow team can make the sound of long o, this group of ow words have the long o sound.

eu/ew; ui/ue: These letter teams say long u, although the y sound of long u is dropped after certain consonants.

Native English words do not end in i, or u, the u will change to a w in eu/ew and the i changes to an e in ui/ue. The organization of these 2 letter vowel teams is actually fairly logical and easy to learn.

4. These are a mix of other patterns, and together they unlock 1,000+ additional words when taught phonetically.

ng/nk: The n is pronounced a bit more nasally than normal in words with ng and nk, and it also slightly changes the sound of the vowel that comes before the letter n. The word count does not include words ending in –ing.

le: The letters el and le are both pronounced “ul.” There are different syllable division rules for el and le.

-y: The letter y at the end of words is pronounced long e when it is unaccented, and the sound of i as in by when accented as in deny. This word also follows simple syllable division patterns linked below.

ou/ow: These letter teams often make the sound as in “ouch,” and the u will change to a w at the end because Native English words do not end in u.

au/aw: These letter teams make the sound is in “awe” and the u will change to a w at the end of a word.

oo: This letter team can have its long sound as in zoo or its short sound as in book.

The last 3 words are completely phonetic when divided with the syllable division rules below. (my-self, divide between words; o-pen and o-ver, divide before a single consonant, syllables that end in a vowel are long.)

Notes:

4. This word “the” is regular with its long e sound before words beginning with vowels. Before words beginning with consonants, the e sound will mush to the schwa sound of uh. (Long e in the end, uh sound in the bears.) The word “a” can be long or will schwa depending on emphasis.

5. The letter L slightly changes the sound of the vowel before the L, but in a regular manner, and the –LL words are all phonetic. Knowing the –LL patterns will unlock hundreds of additional words.

6. Like L, the letter R changes the sound of the vowel that comes before it. You can better teach the pattern in the words “our” and “here” by adding a few words like “flour and hour” (silent h) and “mere and adhere.” The two syllable words on this list follow the syllable division rule “divide between 2 consonants.” These R patterns unlock 2,000+ additional words.

7. The letter W often changes the sound of the vowel that follows it, but in a completely regular pattern. You can better teach the war pattern with the addition of the words “ward, war, and warden.” These w patterns add hundreds of additional words.

The 2nd page of this document has sight words that are slightly irregular. All but 5 of them can be learned phonetically with the additional of a few simple rules and explanations. To teach a word that has a sound change from what would be expected, have your student sound the word out after explaining the exception. For example, for said you say, “ai normally makes the long a sound, ay. In this word it makes the short e sound of eh. Then, you sound it out for them: /s/ /e/ /d/” Then, have them try to sound it out. The word has should be approached the same way: “s normally says sss, in this word it makes the z sound, /z/.” Then, have the student sound it out, gently reminding them “s says /z/ in this word” if they forget.

8. Schwa: The first group of words has the beginning unaccented a that will schwa. While there are hundreds of words that schwa with a beginning a, there are thousands and thousands of words in English that have at least one syllable that will schwa, so learning about schwa is very powerful. Unaccented syllables often schwa, a relaxing of the vowel sound. The longer the word, the more likely it is to have at least one syllable that will schwa. The schwa sound is usually the relaxed sound of short u, but sometime e will “schwi” to short i as in decision, and long a can relax to short e. A few of the words in the 2nd group have a special case of why they have the sound of short u.⁷ Many words in English schwa, making this pattern especially important for decoding thousands of additional words.

9. Consonant pairs are consonant sounds that are made with the mouth and tongue in the same position, but one is voiced and the other is unvoiced. Sometimes a consonant will make the sound of its pair’s sound instead of its normal sound. The first words have s with its pair sound of z and the word “of” has its pair sound of v for the f. This is the reason why words like leaf change to leaves. The word “was” also schwa’s. Learning this pattern will unlock hundreds of additional words.

10. The first set of words have o as oo. The next group has a variety of vowel changes. The next few groups have a long vowel sound when a short vowel sound is expected. These words used to be spelled with an e at the end. The e was lost, but their long vowel sound remains. This is especially common in words with i or o before 2 consonants. The words “any” and “many” should be taught as a pair. The next group of words do not follow normal syllable division rules for vowel sounds. The word read can be either long or short e depending on context. Learning these pattern will unlock hundreds of additional words.

11. Words in English will not end in v, so words with ve at the end may be either short or long, the words on this list are short, except for “live,” which can be pronounced either long or short depending on its usage. Learning this pattern will unlock hundreds of additional words.

Notes:

7. Hanna, Paul R, Richard E. Hodges, and Jean S. Hanna, "Spelling: Structure and Strategies," 1971. p.44: " During the Middle English period, a certain type of angular writing was in vogue which resulted in some ambiguity for the reader when *u* was followed by an *m*, *n*, or *u* (sometimes written *v* or *w*.) Consequently, scribes replaced the *u* with *o*, and that spelling is retained in some words used today, e.g. *come*, *monk*, *love*, *tongue*, *some*, *honey*, *son*.

12. Most of these silent letters are fairly common, and are more easily seen and taught with the addition of a few more words of each type. Add “could and should,” “knee and knack,” “wrote and wrong,” and “weight and freight.” The wh team will have a silent w when it is followed by the letter “o” in a few words, teach the additional words “whose and whole,” and whose also has o as oo. Learning these silent letter patterns will unlock hundreds of additional words.

13. To better teach their irregular –R patterns, add in a few words: “marry, arrow, parrot” and “heir” (silent h.) Learning this pattern will unlock hundreds of additional words.

14. These 3 words are irregular, but have some sense to them. Two and buy are what Margret Bishop in "The ABCs and All Their Tricks" calls "very short words," which "must be padded with silent letters to attain the three-letter minimum." Laugh has gh as f and au changed to the short vowel sound of a.

15. The last two words are so irregular that they actually do qualify to be taught as sight words, but the words can be taught together as a pattern. The “n” and the “ce” are phonetic, at least.

Now that you’ve mastered all the phonics needed to teach these words, give your student the gift of reading by teaching phonics to the 12th grade level so they can sound out anything. 40L has a variety of different free phonics lessons available, and links to good phonics books and resources.