



## How To: Build Sight-Word Vocabulary: 4 Methods

Rapid recognition of sight words is a key foundation skill that supports the development of reading fluency (Hudson, Torgesen, Lane, & Turner, 2012; NICHD, 2000). Below are four quick and simple tutoring interventions that promote student acquisition of common sight words. While of course teachers can employ these ideas, schools should also consider making efficient use of non-instructional personnel (e.g., support staff, paraprofessionals, adult or peer tutors) to serve as sight-word interventionists (Burns & Gibbons, 2008):

**Sight Words: Flashcards: Single-Response** (Ferkis, Belfiore, & Skinner, 1997). The tutor has a deck of 5 flashcards with sight words. Prior to the session, the tutor sets a session criterion for mastery: e.g., the student will name all sight words in the deck correctly 3 times in a row. The session opens with the tutor saying to the student "We are going to practice some words." The tutor shows each flashcard to the student with the prompt, "Look at this word and say the word." If the student responds correctly within 3 seconds, the tutor says, "Yes, the word is [word]." If the student responds incorrectly, the tutor says, "No, the word is [word]. Say [word]." If the student hesitates for longer than 3 seconds, the tutor says, "The word is [word]. Say [word]." When all flashcards have been presented, the tutor shuffles the cards and repeats. When the student attains the mastery criterion, the tutor repeats the above procedures with a new deck of 5 sight words.

**Sight Words: Flashcards: Direct Instruction** (Ruwe, McLaughlin, Derby, & Johnson, 2011). The tutor prepares a deck of 10 flashcards with sight words. Prior to the session, the tutor sets a session criterion for mastery: e.g., the student will name all sight words in the deck correctly 3 times in a row. The tutor shows each card to the student and asks, "What is this word?" If the student names the card correctly within 2 seconds, the tutor puts the card at the back of the deck and presents the next card. If the student names the card incorrectly or hesitates for longer than 2 seconds, that card temporarily becomes a 'drill card'. The tutor (1) shows the drill card, says the sight word aloud, and has the student repeat the sight word correctly, (2) returns that drill card to the deck 2 places back from the front of the stack, (3) following each subsequent appearance of the drill card continues to re-place it 2 places from the beginning of the stack until the student responds to it correctly 3 times in succession, and (4) then ends the drill-card procedure by placing that flashcard at the back of the stack. When the tutor has reviewed all of the flashcards in the stack at least once and has no drill cards in play, the tutor shuffles the cards before again presenting them to the student. When the student attains the mastery criterion, the tutor repeats the above procedures with a new deck of 10 sight words.

**Sight Words: Flash Cards: Folding-In** (Baranek, Fienup, & Pace, 2011). The tutor creates a deck of flashcards taken from a master sight word list (e.g., Dolch word list). In preparation for the intervention, the tutor shows each flashcard from the master deck to the student. Any card that the student is able to read correctly within 3 seconds is sorted into a "known" pile, while any card that the student reads incorrectly or hesitates on for more than 3 seconds is sorted into an "unknown" pile. Before each session, the tutor creates a daily deck of 10 cards, with 3 drawn from the "unknown" pile and 7 drawn from the "known" pile. The tutor shuffles the deck, presents each card to the student, and says, "What is this word?" If the student responds correctly within 3 seconds, the tutor says, "Yes, the word is [word]." If the student responds incorrectly, the tutor says, "No, the word is [word]. Say [word]." If the student hesitates for longer than 3 seconds, the tutor says, "The word is [word]. Say [word]." When all flashcards have been presented, the tutor shuffles the cards and repeats. When the student is able to read all sight words in the daily deck correctly 3 times in a row, the daily deck is updated: The tutor pulls any 3 cards from the daily deck, places them in the "known" pile, and adds 3 new cards from the "unknown" pile to the daily deck. The tutor then shuffles and repeats the above procedure.



**Sight Words: Word List Preview and Repeated Reading** (Baranek, Fienup, & Pace, 2011). For each session, the tutor creates a worksheet listing 10 sight words. Before beginning the tutoring session, the tutor sets a criterion for mastery: e.g., a word is mastered when the student has read it aloud correctly within 3 seconds 3 times in succession. The tutor first reads all of the words on the list aloud, while the student follows along silently. Then the student reads the list of words aloud, 3 times in a row. If while reading the word list, the student misreads a word or hesitates for longer than 3 seconds, the tutor points to the error word and says, "This word is [word]. Say [word]." After responding correctly, the student continues until the word list has been read 3 times. The tutor then records any words mastered during the session. In preparation for the next session, a new word list is created that includes those words from the previous list not yet mastered.

## References

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