

# BUILDING SKILLS @ HOME

## H I G H F R E Q U E N C Y W O R D S

### HIGH FREQUENCY WORDS OR SIGHT WORDS?

These two terms are generally used interchangeably, but there is a difference between high frequency and sight words. High-frequency words are the most commonly occurring words in print. The English language has more than 600,000 words. However, 25% of what we read is made up from 13 frequently used words, and 50% of what we read is made up from only 100 frequently used words. Hence, these words are called high-frequency words. Sight words are words that are recognized by sight. Both high frequency and sight words have an important role for young readers.

### WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

There are several reasons why children should be explicitly taught high frequency and sight words. First, many of these words, such as *the*, *is*, *to*, and *are*, do not follow commonly taught phonics rules and cannot be sounded out. The only way a child can read these words is to recognize them by sight. Second, knowing the most commonly used words by sight will help children be more fluent readers. Children who need to pause and decode most of the words they read tend to overload their memory. As a result, their understanding of what they read suffers. A third reason for teaching high frequency words is that while many of these words alone do not carry much meaning, they do affect the meaning of a sentence and help make it understandable. It is important for children to practice with high-frequency words in isolation and within the context of books or text. Presenting words in a random order, each time they practice ensures that children are mastering the words in all context and not merely memorizing lists.

*Taken from reading-tutors.com*

### FUN ACTIVITIES TO TRY:

- Use magnetic letters (found at the dollar store) to build words on a cookie sheet, refrigerator, or another magnetic surface.
- Make flashcards of the words. Have your child read them to you in different types of silly voice. (examples: baby talk, whisper voice, robot voice, etc.)
- Write ten words on index cards and have your child sort them into alphabetical order. Read the list several times. For a challenge, take away a word and add the word back varying the order each time.
- Have your child use a highlighter and search for high frequency words in the newspaper, a magazine article, or decodable book.
- Make your own versions of these word games using high-frequency words; Scrabble, Memory, Go Fish, Bingo, Boggle, Word Search, or Hang Man.
- Hang high-frequency word flashcards on the wall. Hit them with a fly swatter, bean bag, or another soft ball. Read the words you hit. Turn out the lights and use a flashlight to point to the words as you read them.
- Write high-frequency words in something fun like shaving cream, whipped cream, salt placed in a shallow dish, or form the letters out of play dough, or string/yarn.
- Lay your high-frequency word cards on the floor. Jump over the word that an adult calls out.
- Use different colors to write your words in rainbow colors.
- Set a timer. See how many sight words you can read in one minute.
- Write sentences using your high-frequency words.
- Use your sight word flashcards to sort and read them in different ways. Some possible sorts could be the beginning letter, vowel sound, or the number of letters in each word.
- Go to [www.handwritingworksheets.com](http://www.handwritingworksheets.com) and create your own handwriting worksheet using your high-frequency words.