



What Are Sight Words?

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If I had to list just two skills that help beginning readers the most, I vote for: learning letters/sounds and instant recognition of sight words.

What are sight words?

Sight words are high-frequency words—words that most commonly appear in beginning readers. In fact, 50 to 75% of words in **all** written material including library books, newspapers and magazines are sight words. Sight words make up a core set of vocabulary that children need to learn in order to read quickly and automatically and to become fluent readers. Most school districts require that children learn to read and spell between 12 and 50 sight words in kindergarten and at least 100 in 1st grade. If beginning readers stumble on these, what I call, “icky,” words such as *I, the, a, is of, to, you*, they lose the meaning of what they are reading, and frustration sets in.

Help your child learn sight words

If your child is entering Kindergarten or 1st grade, I assure you at some point you will be handed a list of sight words to practice with your child. My best advice is to avoid the “drill and kill” approach where you *only* practice with flash cards. Flash cards are great, (put them in file box or on a ring), but make sure you practice the words other ways. How about those magnetic letters you have on the fridge gathering dust? Hand your child a flash card and have him or her make the word with the magnet letters. Write the sight words with chalk on the sidewalk. Your child can jump to and read each word. Keep a Magna Doodle in the car to practice the words. Point out sight words in books you read with your child.