

High Frequency Words in *Letters and Sounds*

This document is intended to show where all of the high frequency words presented in *Letters and Sounds* occur in the Sounds~Write programme. However, we feel that the term 'high-frequency words' should be accompanied by a reading and spelling health warning.

In the minds of many teaching practitioners, the term 'high-frequency words' has become synonymous with 'sight words'. Very many of the high-frequency words in the *Letters and Sounds* word list are easily decodable in the early stages of the Sounds~Write programme and over seventy-five percent of the list of three hundred words can be decoded by pupils taught using Sounds~Write by the end of Y1.

From the beginning, our focus is on transparency: that is to say that we teach pupils a transparent system within which if they can read a word, they can spell it. Nonetheless, the focus on transparency from the beginning can initially restrict pupils' ability to access text because there are a number of essential single-syllable words whose spelling at this early stage in their learning is not transparent to them. Words such as 'is', 'of' and 'the', for example, cannot easily be avoided when learning to read and write. When encountered in text, or in dictation, the teacher should take responsibility for these words and introduce them in the manner outlined in 'Reading and writing in text' in the 'Introduction to the Initial Code'.

Initial Code

By the end of the **Initial Code** pupils will be able to read thirty-two of the first 100 high-frequency words (see below) shown in the list by decoding them. Until they are covered in the programme, whenever they appear in text, tell the pupils what sound(s) the unknown spelling(s) represent(s) to allow them to decode the word for themselves. For example, if a pupil, working in the Initial Code at around Unit 7 or Unit 8, is trying to read the word 'back' but hasn't yet been introduced to the spelling alternative <ck> for /k/, the teacher runs their pencil under the <ck> and says, "This is one sound. It's /k/. Say /k/ here."

By following the Sounds~Write programme sequentially all the way through the Initial Code it is possible to have pupils reading any of the thirty-two words below:

| | | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 2 and VCC U8 | 6 in VC U2 | 10 it VC U1 | 14 on VC U2 |
| 18 at VC U1 | 20 but CVC U5 | 21 that CVC U11 | 22 with CVC U11 |
| 25 can CVC U3 | 27 up VC U5 | 28 had CVC U4 | 34 this CVC U11 |
| 36 went CVCC U8 | 41 not CVC U2 | 42 then CVC U11 | 48 mum CVC U5 |
| 50 them CVC U11 | 54 dad CVC U4 | 55 big CVC U3 | 56 when CVC U11 |
| 57 it's VCC U8 | 64 will CVC U7 | 66 back CVC U11 | 67 from CCVC U9 |
| 69 him CVC U3 | 71 get CVC U4 | 72 just CVCC U8 | 77 got CVC U3 |
| 91 if VC U4 | 92 help CVCC U8 | 96 off VC U7 | 100 an VC U2 |

[The number preceding the words in the list refers to place in which the word appears in the list of 100 high-frequency words in Letters and Sounds. C = consonant, V = vowel and U = Unit in the S~W programme.]

However, as suggested above, there are words, such as 'the' (1), 'a' (3), 'is' (16), and 'some' (39) that will need to be introduced *before* they are taught formally within the programme. Whether reading or writing these words, we would recommend that you follow the advice contained in the 'Introduction to the Initial Code' within the manual in the section entitled 'Reading and writing in text'.

By following the Sounds~Write programme sequentially through the Initial Code it is possible to have pupils reading a further 62 words in the list of the next 200 words in order of frequency:

| | | | |
|---------------|----------|--------------|----------|
| did | man | think | didn't |
| ran | cat | long | things |
| has | yes | dog | well |
| us | fox | stop | must |
| red | next | lots | that's |
| fish | bed | still | king |
| fast (N) | let's | much | last (N) |
| am | gran | tell | fun |
| sat | its | let | which |
| run | hat | bad | top |
| fell | box | grandad | end |
| than | best | hot | sun |
| across | wind | wish | eggs |
| thing | stopped | miss | lived |
| duck | rabbit | along | plants |
| dragon | children | | |

[In the list above, the letters N and S in parentheses refer (broadly speaking) to northern and southern accents of English. Letters in bold (e.g. '**along**') are schwas.]

We expect that most YR classes will have covered all of the Initial Code by Easter and that, by the end of the summer term, at least two or three of the first sound/spelling correspondences in the Extended Code, /ae/, /ee/ and possibly /oe/, will also have been covered.

NB: By the expression 'most YR classes', we do not mean ALL children in those classes because we would expect there to be a broad range of ability within any class.

The Extended Code

By the end of Y1, if teachers are following our recommendations, pupils should have covered the first 25 units of the Extended Code. In so doing, they will have been taught in the context of sounds and spellings another 133 high-frequency words in the list of 300 high-frequency words. This brings the total of high-frequency words to just over 230 words (i.e. over seventy-five percent of the three hundred words listed in *Letters and Sounds*).

Until they are covered in the programme, whenever these spellings appear in text, tell the pupils what sound(s) the unknown spelling(s) represent(s) to allow them to decode the word for themselves.

Included in the lists are words containing very infrequent spellings. For example, <oh> is a spelling alternative for /oe/ and <eo> in 'people' is a spelling alternative for the sound /ee/, but they are not common spellings and can mostly be taught as they arise in the context of everyday reading and writing.

What we are left with then are 'more spellings' of some of the vowels and consonants, all of which will be taught in the Sounds-Write programme by the end of Y2.

NB. All the words in the following charts which have been 'greyed out' are words that appear in the first list of '100 high-frequency words' In Letters and Sounds. All of the rest appear in the subsequent list of the 'Next 200 common words'.

Extended Code

| <u>Unit 2</u> | <u>Unit 3</u> | | <u>Unit 5</u> | <u>Unit 6</u> | <u>Unit 7</u> | <u>Unit 8</u> | <u>Unit 10</u> | <u>Unit 11</u> |
|---|--|--------|---|---------------------------------------|---|----------------------|-------------------------------|---|
| /ae/ <ey>, <a- e> <ay> <ea> | /ee/ <ee> <e> <y> <ey> <eo> | | /oe/ <o> <o-e> <o> <oh> <ow> <oa> | /er/ <er> <ir> <or> <ere> | /e/ <e> <ai> <ea> <a> <ie> | /ow/ <ow> <ou> | m/oo/n <o> <ou> <oo> | /ie/ <i> <y> <i-e> <igh> <eye> |
| they | he | keep | so | her | said | out | to | I |
| came | she | even | go | were | again | down | you | my |
| day | we | before | no | over | head | now | do | like |
| made | be | key | don't | after | many | about | into | by |
| make | me | sleep | oh | never | any | house | too | time |
| away | see | feet | old | first | friends | how | school | I'm |
| play | very | queen | going | work | | our | who | find |
| take | people | each | home | different | | round | food | I'll |
| way | eat | green | know | girl | | shouted | soon | right |
| may | tree | trees | only | under | | mouse | room | night |
| say | been | tea | told | better | | around | | I've |
| great | sea | floppy | clothes | ever | | | | why |
| | these | really | boat | birds | | | | cried |
| | began | please | window | river | | | | inside |
| | need | he's | snow | | | | | eyes |
| | three | we're | most | | | | | white |
| | | | cold | | | | | liked |
| | | | grow | | | | | giant |
| | | | | | | | | fly |

| <u>Unit 12</u> | <u>Unit 14</u> | <u>Unit 16</u> | <u>Unit 18</u> | <u>Unit 19</u> | <u>Unit 20</u> | <u>Unit 21</u> | <u>Unit 23</u> |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|---|----------------------------|---|----------------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| b/oo/k <oo> <u> <oul> | /u/ <u> <o> | /s/ | /l/ <l> <ll> <le> | /or/ <or> <a> <our> <aw> <oor> <au> | /air/ <ere> <eir> <ear> | /ue/ <ew> <u> | /oy/ |
| looked | some | house <small>already in /ow/</small> | little | for | there | new | boy |
| look | come | mouse <small>already in /ow/</small> | | all | their | use | |
| put | other | | | your | where | | |
| could | something | | | called | bear | | |
| good | suddenly | | | saw | air | | |
| would | another | | | water | there's | | |
| took | jumped | | | or | | | |
| couldn't | mother | | | door | | | |
| book | coming | | | small | | | |
| looking | | | | because <small>already in /o/</small> | | | |
| looks | | | | morning | | | |
| pulled | | | | horse | | | |

| <u>Unit 24</u> | <u>Unit 25</u> | <u>Unit 27</u> | <u>Unit 28</u> | <u>Unit 29</u> | <u>Unit 30</u> | <u>Unit 32</u> |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|----------------|---------------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|
| /ar/ accent dependent <a> <ar> <are> <au> | /o/ <o> <a> <au> | More spellings of /ae/ <a> | /d/ | More spellings of /ee/ | /i/ | More spellings of /oe/ |
| are | was | baby | | | | |
| asked | what | gave | | | | |
| can't | want | place | | | | |
| after | wanted | | | | | |
| car | because already in /or/ | | | | | |
| garden | | | | | | |
| fast (S) | | | | | | |
| laughed | | | | | | |
| last (S) | | | | | | |
| dark | | | | | | |
| hard | | | | | | |
| park | | | | | | |

| <u>Unit 33</u> | <u>Unit 34</u> | <u>Unit 35</u> | <u>Unit 36</u> | <u>Unit 37</u> | <u>Unit 38</u> | <u>Unit 40</u> |
|--|-------------------------------|---|---|---|----------------|----------------|
| More spellings of /n/ <kn> <ne> | More spellings of /er/ | More spellings of /v/ <f> <ve> | More spellings of m/oo/n <ough> | More spellings of /j/ <g> | /g/ | /f/ |
| know <small>(already in /oe/)</small> | | of | through | magic | | |
| gone | | have | | | | |
| | | gave | | | | |
| | | live | | | | |
| | | I've <small>already in /ie/</small> | | | | |

| <u>Unit 42</u> | <u>Unit 43</u> | <u>Unit 44</u> | <u>Unit 45</u> | <u>Unit 46</u> | <u>Unit 47</u> | <u>Unit 48</u> |
|--|--|--|---|------------------------------|------------------------------|---|
| More spellings of /m/ <me> | More spellings of /or/ <ough> <ore> | More spellings of /h/ <wh> | More spellings of /k/ <ch> | More spellings of /r/ | More spellings of /t/ | More spellings of /z/ <s> <se> |
| some | thought | who | school <small>already in m/oo/n</small> | | | is |
| come | more | | | | | his |
| something | before <small>already in /ee/</small> | | | | | was |
| | | | | | | as |
| | | | | | | these <small>already in /ee/</small> |
| | | | | | | please <small>already in /ee/</small> |
| | | | | | | use <small>already in /ue/</small> |

| <u>Unit 49</u> | <u>Unit 50</u> |
|---|---|
| Spellings of /eer/ <ere> | Spellings of 'schwa' /ə/ (accent dependent) |
| here | the |
| | a |
| | children |
| | around already in /ow/ |
| | garden already in /ar/ |
| | across |
| | along |
| | dragon |

Polysyllabic words

In the list of 300 high-frequency words, there are a small number of polysyllabic words. The most effective way of introducing them is clearly set out in Lessons 11, 12, 13 and 14 of the Polysyllabic Word section. In the early stages of reading polysyllabic words, the teacher needs to take responsibility for separating the words into their constituent syllables. Having read the word, the pupil should then write the word in the prescribed manner. When spelling (writing) polysyllabic words, pupils need to say them very precisely in their syllables, using their spelling voice, and then to write each syllable sound by sound across the syllable or syllable by syllable, depending on whether they are at the level of Lesson 12 or Lesson 13.

Polysyllabic words in the list.

Most polysyllabic words in the list are relatively easy to present. There are only three in the first list of 100 high-frequency words. They are, in order, 'children', 'about' and 'people', though the first two contain schwas and 'people' contains the highly unusual spelling of <eo> for /ee/.

In the list of the next 200 words, probably the most awkward are the following, which have been separated into syllables: e|ve|ry|one, e|ve|ry, di|ffe|rent. The reason for this is because we elide syllables in some words. For example, the word 'different', a three-syllable word, is usually said as 'diffrent', a two-syllable. The word 'every', a three-syllable word, is usually spoken in everyday talk as 'evry', a two-syllable word. Although we have no wish to change the way people talk, we do want pupils to be able to spell these words correctly. To do this, they may need to use a spelling voice, as recommended in the section on 'schwas' in the 'Introduction to Polysyllabic Words'. There are also problems with sounds that are elided, such as the /n/ in 'government', the spelling of which is greatly helped by saying it precisely in its syllables: 'gu' 'vern' 'ment'.

Other examples of problematical words might be 'a|ni|mals' and 'na|rra|tor': the first because there is a hint of a sound between the /m/ and the /l/ (a schwa /ə/); the second because people pronounce words differently. I say 'na|rra|tor' with the stress on the first syllable, thus making the two remaining vowel sounds schwas. Other people have begun to stress the middle syllable and to say 'na|rra|tor', making the first and last vowel sounds schwas. It doesn't matter which is preferred. The point is to make pupils aware of what they say and to say the word precisely in its syllables and to use their spelling voice to remember how to spell the schwa.

Finally, there are in the list of high-frequency words a few words which, admittedly, can be troublesome to teach. These are: 'one', 'two', 'mr', 'mrs', 'many', 'any', and 'once'. However, an explanation about why they are written in their present form is often helpful. For example, the word 'mr' is an abbreviation of the word 'mister' and 'mrs' is an abbreviation of the word 'mistress'.

'One' is derived from Old English forms 'en' and 'ane', whose pronunciation, by the fifteenth century, had changed to 'won' but whose spelling was retained. Similarly, the word 'two' derives from the Old English word 'twa'. The words 'any' and 'many' simply reflect the changes in pronunciation with which the spellings have not caught up.