

600 MOST COMMONLY USED WORDS — COGNITIVE HOOKS FOR WORD-LEARNING SUPPORT

This document is a result of years of helping young students learn the most commonly used words as quickly as possible. Occurring most frequently, by some estimates upwards of 90 percent of the time, these words need to be accurately and rapidly recognized if students are to be able to get across the line of print efficiently. They are the “glue” that holds written language together.

The “hooks” help students resolve difficulties they have in remembering which words are which, for example *than* and *then*, *where* and *were*, etc. The document provides teachers with strategies which will be helpful to students who have confusions. It is important to fade the use of reminders of the strategies as soon as possible.

FIRST 100 OF THE 600 MOST COMMONLY USED WORDS — COGNITIVE HOOKS FOR WORD-LEARNING SUPPORT

the - <i>th</i> makes one sound; teeth are on tongue; air is blown out and vibrated.	were - The final <i>e</i> should not be there. Make <i>were</i> rhyme with <i>her</i> .	could - <i>oul</i> says /oo/ (book). Associate: <i>could, would, should</i> .
of - Neither sound is spelled correctly; it should be the letter <i>u</i> followed by <i>v</i> .	when - Questions start with <i>wh</i> .	no - Associate: <i>so, no, ho, go</i> .
and - "Say <i>ad</i> ; say <i>a-nd</i> . Feel the /n/ sound."	we - The word belongs to the family: <i>be - he - me - we</i> .	make
a	there - <i>There</i> answers the question where. Only <i>t</i> and <i>w</i> are different.	than - Use <i>than</i> to make a comparison (I like ice cream better than cookies.). (<i>Then</i> tells about time.)
to - The sound /oo/ is spelled incorrectly; there should be two <i>o</i> 's.	can	first
in	an	been - In England, many people say, "I have /been/ at the library."
is - The word should be /is/ as in <i>hiss</i> but is /iz/ as in <i>his</i> . Associate; <i>is, his, as, has</i> .	your - <i>You</i> with <i>r</i> makes whatever belong to you.	its - "belonging to it" (like <i>his</i> and <i>her</i>)
you - The letter <i>y</i> spells /y/.	which	who - Think: <i>how</i> ; move the <i>w</i> up front.
that - Create words that belong to the -at family.	their - Associate <i>you/your</i> and <i>they/their</i> (<i>y</i> changes to <i>i</i>); add <i>r</i> .	now
it - Create words that belong to the -it family.	said - <i>ai</i> says /e/ in <i>said- again - against</i> .	people - If <i>people</i> behaved as it should, it would be /pee-oep-l/.
he	if	my - <i>My</i> goes with <i>by</i> .
for	do - Associate: <i>to, do</i> .	made
was - Only <i>w</i> is spelled correctly; <i>a</i> says /u/; <i>s</i> says /z/.	will	over
on	each - <i>Each</i> makes it family rhyme: <i>beach, peach, teach, reach</i> .	did
are - The word <i>are</i> sounds like the name of the second letter.	about - <i>A</i> says /u/; the word <i>out</i> is in the second syllable.	down - Associate: <i>down, town, clown, brown</i> ,
as - The word should be <i>as</i> (donkey) but is /az/. Associate: <i>as, has</i> .	how - Associate: <i>how, now, brown, cow</i> .	only - If <i>only</i> played fair, it would be /on-ly/.
with	up	way - Associate: <i>bay, hay, jay, may, nay, pay, play, ray, say</i> .
his - The word should be <i>hiss</i> but is /hiz/. Associate: <i>is, his</i> .	out - The word <i>out</i> is in the second syllable of <i>about</i> .	find - Associate: <i>bind, hind, kind, mind, rind, wind</i> , (also <i>wind</i> as air).
they - <i>ey</i> spells /ae/ as in <i>obey</i> .	them - If we added /m/ to <i>the</i> , it would be /thum/.	use - Without <i>e</i> <i>use</i> is <i>us</i> . Notice the <i>s</i> says /z/ as in <i>nose</i> .
at	then - If we added /n/ to <i>the</i> , it would be /thun/.	may - Associate: <i>may, bay, day, hay, jay, lay, pay, ray, say, way</i> .
be - Compare <i>be/by</i> and <i>me/my</i>	she - Associate: <i>she, he, me, we</i> .	water - In <i>water</i> , <i>a</i> says /o/.
this	many - Put <i>m</i> before <i>any</i> .	little - In <i>little</i> , here are four sounds: /l-i-t-l/.
from - The letter <i>o</i> spells /u/.	some - <i>Some</i> should be /soem/ not /sum/.	very - Practice by saying: /ve (pause) ry/ so that you hear the /e/.
l — <i>l</i> says its name.	so - Associate: <i>so, no, ho, gn</i> .	after - <i>After</i> has two syllable; all spellings have the sounds expected.
have — The <i>e</i> should not be there.	these - The <i>s</i> says /z/.	words - In <i>words</i> , the <i>or</i> says /er/ and the <i>s</i> says /z/.
or	would - <i>oul</i> says /oo/ (book). Associate: <i>could, would, should</i> .	called - The -ed says /d/.
by - <i>By</i> goes with <i>my</i> ; <i>be</i> goes with <i>me</i> .	other - If we added /m/ to <i>other</i> , it would be <i>mother</i> ; /br/ — <i>brother</i> .	just
one - <i>O</i> spells /wu/; only <i>n</i> is spelled correctly.	into - <i>Into</i> is a compound word	where - Associate: <i>where</i> and <i>there</i> .
had	more	most - Associate: <i>most, post, ghost, host</i> .
not	her - With <i>e</i> at the end, <i>her</i> would be <i>here</i> .	know - Without <i>k</i> and <i>w</i> , <i>know</i> (in my head) is "so I won'ts."
but	two - "Say T-W-O for the number 2."	
what - Question words start with <i>wh</i> ; <i>a</i> spells /u/.	like	
all - All makes its family rhyme: <i>ball, call, fall, hall, mall, tall</i> , etc.	him	
	see	
	time	

SECOND 100 OF THE 600 MOST COMMONLY USED WORDS — COGNITIVE HOOKS FOR WORD-LEARNING SUPPORT

get
through - OUGH says /oo/. (in thought /o/, though /oe/, thorough /oe/.
back
much
go - Associate: <i>go, ho, no, so</i> .
good - Associate: <i>good, hood, wood</i> .
new - Associate: <i>new, dew</i> .
write - WR spells /r/. Associate: wrote written, wrap, wreck, wrestle, wriggle,
our
me
man
too
any - A says /e/. Associate: any, many.
day
same
right - Associate: <i>right, fight, flight, light, might, night, sight, sigh, thigh</i> .
look - Associate: <i>look, book, cook, hook, nook, rook, took</i> .
think - The spelling <i>n</i> has the sound /ng/.
also - A says /o/.
around - A says /u/.
another - A compound word: <i>an other</i> . A says /u/.
came
come - The <i>o</i> says /u/. Associate: <i>come, some</i> .
work - The <i>or</i> says /er/. Associate: <i>work, word, world, worse, worth</i> .
three
must
because - Say: B-E-C-AU-S-E .
does - The <i>oe</i> spelling says /u/.
part
even
place
well
such

here
take
why
help
put - The <i>u</i> says /oo/ as in <i>pull, bull, push, and bush</i> .
different - The base word is <i>differ</i> (to be unlike)
away - A says /u/.
again - In three words, <i>ai</i> says /e/: <i>again, against, and said</i> .
off - Double consonant spelling, <i>ff</i> , follows a short vowel sound.
went
old - Associate: <i>old, bold, cold, fold, gold, hold, mold, sold, told</i> .
number
great - Associate: <i>great, bear, steak, break</i> .
tell
men
say
small
every - Every has three syllables; say each one.
found
still
between
name
should - Associate: <i>should, would, could</i> .
home
big
give - In English, there is an <i>e</i> after <i>v</i> .
air
line
set
own - Associate: <i>own, known, owe, bow, low, mow, sow, sown</i> .
under
read - Present tense /reed/; past tense /red/.
last
never

us
left
end
along - A says /u/.
while
might
next - Say <i>nest</i> ; say <i>next</i> to feel the /ks/ that <i>x</i> spells.
sound
below - E says /u/.
saw - Associate: <i>saw, caw, claw, law, paw</i> .
something
thought - OUGH says /o/. (in <i>through /oo/, though /oe/, thorough /oe/</i> .
both - O says /oe/.
few - Associate: <i>few, pew, nephew</i> .
those - Associate: <i>those; these</i> .
always - The /ol/ in <i>always</i> is spelled with one <i>l</i> .
show - Associate: <i>show, know, bow, low, tow</i> .
large - E tells <i>g</i> to say /j/.
often - The <i>t</i> in <i>often</i> is usually silent, but it may say its sound.
together - The <i>o</i> says /oo/.
asked - The <i>-ed</i> ending says /t/.
house
don't - The <i>o</i> says /oe/. Associate: <i>don't, won't</i> .
world
going
want - The <i>a</i> says /o/.
school - The <i>ch</i> says /k/.
important - Notice the /m/ before the /p/. Both sounds are made on the lips.
until
form
food
keep
children

THIRD 100 OF THE 600 MOST COMMONLY USED WORDS — COGNITIVE HOOKS FOR WORD-LEARNING SUPPORT

feet	being - Compare the spellings of <i>being</i> and <i>begin</i> .	top
land	study	turned
side	second - <i>O</i> says /u/.	learn - Associate: <i>learn, earn, earth</i> .
without	soon	point
boy	story	city
once - Say and write <i>one</i> . Put a <i>c</i> before the <i>n</i> . Now say /wuns/	since	play
animal - Say /mul/; say /ni-mul/; say /a-ni-mal/.	white	toward - "Say /to - ward/," like <i>backward</i> and <i>forward</i>
life	ever - Associate: <i>ever, never</i> .	five
enough - Associate: <i>rough, tough, enough</i>	paper - <i>A</i> says /ae/.	himself
took	hard	usually - "Say /ue - zhoo - ul -ly/."
four - Associate: <i>four, pour</i> .	near	money - Associate: <i>money, honey, monkey</i>
head - Associate: <i>head, read, dead</i> .	sentence	seen
above - <i>A</i> and <i>o</i> say /u/.	better	didn't - The apostrophe takes the place of <i>o</i> in <i>not</i> .
kind - Associate: <i>kind, find, mind</i> .	best	car
began	across - <i>A</i> says /u/.	morning
almost - <i>A</i> says /o/; <i>o</i> says /oe/.	during	I'm - The apostrophe takes the place of <i>a</i> in <i>am</i> .
live - In English, there is an <i>e</i> after <i>v</i> . <i>Live</i> is both /liv/ and /liev/.	today	body
page - <i>Ge</i> says /j/. <i>E</i> signals <i>a</i> and <i>g</i> .	however	upon - "Say /up - on/."
got	sure - In <i>sure</i> and <i>sugar</i> , <i>s</i> says /sh/. <i>Sure</i> can be /sher/ or /shoor/.	family - The <i>i</i> says /u/.
earth - Associate: <i>earth, earn, learn, search</i> .	knew - Say /k - new/.	later
need	it's - The apostrophe takes the place of <i>i</i> in <i>is</i> .	turn
far	try	move - The <i>o</i> says /oo/.
hand	hold - Associate: <i>hold, cold, fold, gold, mold, told</i> .	face
height - In <i>height</i> , <i>e</i> is an extra letter: say /he - ight/	young - "You are young."	door - <i>Oor</i> says /or/. Associate: <i>door, floor</i> .
year	sun	cut
mother - Associate: <i>mother, other, brother</i> .	thing	done - <i>O</i> says /u/.
light	whole - Associate: <i>whole</i> and <i>hole</i> .	group - <i>Ou</i> says /oo/. Associate: <i>group, soup</i> .
country - Say: /count - ry/.	hear	true - <i>Ue</i> says /oo/. Associate: <i>true, blue</i> .
father - <i>A</i> says /o/.	example	half - <i>L</i> is silent. Associate: <i>half, calf</i> .
let	heard - "Today I <i>hear</i> , yesterday I <i>heard</i> ."	red
night	several - The ending <i>-al</i> says /ul/.	fish
picture - Associate: <i>picture, future, lecture</i> .	change - The <i>a</i> says /ae/; <i>ge</i> says /j/.	plants
	answer - "Say /an - swer/."	
	room	
	sea	
	against - Associate: <i>against, again, said</i> .	

FOURTH 100 OF THE 600 MOST COMMONLY USED WORDS — COGNITIVE HOOKS FOR WORD-LEARNING SUPPORT

living
black
eat
short
United States
run
book
gave
order
open
ground
cold
really
table
remember
tree
course - The <i>our</i> says /or/. Associate: <i>course, court, your, source</i>
front - The <i>o</i> says /u/. Associate: <i>from, front.</i>
American - Say /u - me - ri - can/.
space
inside
ago
sad
early - Associate: <i>early, earth, earn, learn, search.</i>
I'll - The apostrophe takes the place of <i>wi</i> in <i>will</i> .
learned - The <i>-ed</i> ending says /d/.
brought - Associate: <i>brought, bought, thought</i>
close
nothing - <i>Nothing</i> means "no thing".
though - <i>OUGH</i> says /oe/. (in <i>through /oo/, thought /o"/, thorough /oe/.</i>
idea - "Say /ie - dee - u/."
before
lived - The <i>-ed</i> ending says /d/.

eight - <i>Eigh</i> says /ae/. Associate: <i>eight, weigh, weight.</i>
add
become - Compare: <i>become/became.</i>
grow - Compare <i>grow, grown, grew.</i>
draw
yet
less - Double <i>ss</i> after /e/. Associate: <i>less, mess.</i>
wind
behind - The <i>i</i> says /ie/.
cannot
letter
among - The <i>a</i> and <i>o</i> say /u/.
able - Associate: <i>able, table, fable.</i>
dog
shown - Associate: <i>shown, known</i>
mean
English - The <i>E</i> says /i/.
rest
perhaps
certain - Associate: <i>certain, curtain, captain, fountain, mountain.</i>
six
feel
fire
ready
green
yes
built - The <i>ui</i> says /i/. Associate: <i>built, build</i>
special - The ending <i>-cial</i> says /shul/.
ran
full - Associate: <i>full, bull, pull, push, bush.</i>
town
complete - The <i>o</i> says /u/.
oh
person - The <i>o</i> says /u/.

hot
anything
hold - Associate: <i>hold, cold, fold, gold, mold, told.</i>
state
least
stood
hundred
ten
fast
felt
kept
notice - Think: <i>not - ice.</i>
can't - The apostrophe takes the place of the <i>o</i> in <i>not</i> .
strong
voice
probably - "Say /-ly/; say /bubbly/; say /pro - bubbly/."
area - "Say /e - ree - u/."
horse
matter
stand
box
start
that's - The apostrophe takes the place of <i>l</i> in <i>is</i> .
class
piece - Think of a <i>piece</i> of <i>pie</i> .
surface - Think: <i>sur - face.</i>
river
common - The second <i>o</i> says /u/.
stop
am
talk - Associate: <i>tall/talk, ball/balk, wall/walk.</i>
whether - Compare: <i>whether/ weather.</i>
fine

FIFTH 100 OF THE 600 MOST COMMONLY USED WORDS — COGNITIVE HOOKS FOR WORD-LEARNING SUPPORT

fine	tiny - The <i>i</i> says /ie/.	single - The <i>g</i> is part of the spelling <i>ng</i> and has its own sound /g/.
sat	hour	clear
possible - The <i>i</i> says /u/.	happened - The ending <i>-ed</i> says /d/.	energy
heart - Associate: <i>heart/hearth</i>	foot	week
deal	care	explain
simple	low	lost
snow	else	spring
rain	gold	travel - The <i>e</i> says /u/.
suddenly	build	wrote
easy	glass	farm
leaves - Compare: <i>leave, leaves</i> and <i>leaf, leaves</i> .	rock	circle
lay	tall	whose - The first three letters spell <i>who</i> ; add /z/.
size	alone - The <i>a</i> says /u/.	correct - The <i>o</i> says /u/.
wild	bottom	bed
weather	check	measure - The <i>su</i> says /zh/. Associate: <i>measure, treasure, pleasure</i> .
miss	reading	straight - The <i>aigh</i> says /ae/.
pattern	fall	base
sky	poor	mountain - Associate: <i>mountain, fountain</i> .
walked - The <i>-ed</i> ending says /t/.	map	caught
main	friends	hair
someone	language - The <i>u</i> says /w/; <i>age</i> says /ij/.	bird
center	job	wood
field - Associate: <i>field, yield, chief, belief, relief</i>	music	color - Think of the pattern: <i>o/o</i> .
stay	buy	war - Associate: <i>war, warm, warn, wart</i> .
itself	window	fly
boat	mark	
question - The <i>tion</i> says /chun/.	heat	
wide	grew	
least	listen - The <i>t</i> is silent.	
	ask	

SIXTH HUNDRED OF 600 MOST COMMONLY USED WORDS — COGNITIVE HOOKS FOR WORD-LEARNING SUPPORT

figure
you're - The apostrophe replaces the <i>a</i> in <i>are</i> .
free
fell
suppose
natural - The <i>tur</i> says /chur/.
ocean - The <i>cean</i> says /shun/.
government - The <i>o</i> says /u/.
baby
grass
plane
couldn't - The apostrophe takes the place of <i>o</i> in <i>not</i> .
street
reason - The <i>o</i> says /u/.
difference
maybe
history - The <i>o</i> says /u/.
mouth
middle
step
child
strange - The <i>a</i> says /ae/.
wish
soil
human
trip
woman - The <i>o</i> says /oo/ (<i>book</i>); the <i>a</i> says /i/.
eye
milk
choose
north
seven
famous - The ending <i>-ous</i> says /us
late
pay
sleep
Iron - The <i>ron</i> says /ern/.
trouble - Associate: <i>trouble, double, couple</i> .
store
beside
oil
modern
fun
catch
business - Associate: <i>business</i> with <i>busy</i> ; the <i>y</i> changes to <i>i</i> .

reach
lot
won't - The apostrophe takes the place of <i>o</i> in <i>not</i> . Associate <i>won't</i> (<i>will not</i>) and <i>don't</i> (<i>do not</i>).
case
speak
round
dark
past
ball
girl
road
blue - Associate: <i>blue, true</i> .
instead - The <i>ea</i> says /e/.
either
held
already - There is one <i>l</i> in the /ol/ of <i>already</i> .
warm - Associate: <i>war, warm, warn, wart</i> .
gone - The <i>o</i> says /o/; the <i>e</i> should not be there.
finally - There are two endings <i>-al</i> and <i>-ly</i> ; <i>-al</i> says /ul/.
summer
understand
moon
animals
mind
outside
power
problem
longer - The <i>g</i> is part of the spelling <i>ng</i> and has its own sound
winter
deep
heavy - The <i>ea</i> says /e/.
carefully - There are two endings <i>-ful</i> and <i>-ly</i> .
follow
beautiful - "Say: /bea - ue - ti - ful/."
everyone
leave
everything
game
system - The <i>y</i> says /i/.
bring
watch - The <i>a</i> says /aw/.
shell

dry
within
floor - Associate: <i>floor, door</i> .
ice
ship
themselves - The final <i>s</i> says /z/.
begin
fact
third
quite
carry
distance
although - <i>OUGH</i> says /oe/. Associate: <i>although, though</i>