

The Truth About the Dolch Sight Word List

The Dolch Sight Word List was developed in 1936 by educator Edward Dolch, and contains 220 of the most common words in children’s literature at that time.

Pre-primer

a, and, away, big, blue, can, come, down, find, for, funny, go, help, here, I, in, is, it, jump, little, look, make, me, my, not, one, play, red, run, said, see, the, three, to, two, up, we, where, yellow, you

Primer

all, am, are, at, ate, be, black, brown, but, came, did, do, eat, four, get, good, have, he, into, like, must, new, no, now, on, our, out, please, pretty, ran, ride, saw, say, she, so, soon, that, there, they, this, too, under, want, was, well, went, what, white, who, will, with, yes

First Grade

after, again, an, any, as, ask, by, could, every, fly, from, give, giving, had, has, her, him, his, how, just, know, let, live, may, of, old, once, open, over, put, round, some, stop, take, thank, them, then, think, walk, were, when

Second Grade

always, around, because, been, before, best, both, buy, call, cold, does, don’t, fast, first, five, found, gave, goes, green, its, made, many, off, or, pull, read, right, sing, sit, sleep, tell, their, these, those, upon, us, use, very, wash, which, why, wish, work, would, write, your

Third Grade

about, better, bring, carry, clean, cut, done, draw, drink, eight, fall, far, full, got, grow, hold, hot, hurt, if, keep, kind, laugh, light, long, much, myself, never, only, own, pick, seven, shall, show, six, small, start, ten, today, together, try, warm

Edward Dolch believed that the words on these lists were best learned as “sight words” and should be memorized rather than sounded out. Many educators mistakenly believe that these words are not phonetic.

But here's the truth! Let's eliminate all the words that can be spelled using a basic knowledge of phonetic structure and spelling rules (which your student can learn in [All About Spelling](#)).

Short A	can, am, at, ran, ad, had
Short I	big, in, it, did, will, him, its, sit, if, six
Short O	not, on, off, got, hot
Short U	run, up, but, us, cut
Short E	red, get, well, yes, let, tell, ten
Second sound of S	is, as, his, has
Consonant teams SH, TH, and CH	that, this, with, them, then, wish, shall, much
Final blends	and, help, jump, must, went, ask, just, best, fast
Initial blends	stop
Consonant teams CK and NG	black, pick, sing, bring, long
The blend of NK	thank, think, drink
Open syllables	go, I, me, we, be, he, no, she, so
Y can say long I	my, by, fly, try
First job of Silent E	here, make, ate, came, like, ride, take, five, gave, made, these, those, use
These multisyllabic words can be decoded with basic syllable division rules	giving, open, before, myself, seven, into, upon
Consonant team WH	white, when, which, why
I and O are often long before two consonants	find, old, cold, hold, kind, don't, both
R-controlled vowels (such as OR, ER, IR)	for, under, after, her, over, first, or, work, better, far, hurt, never, start, warm
2nd and 3rd sounds of single vowels	funny, to, all, do, want, who, every, from, put, call, pull, wash, carry, fall, full, only, small, together
Other jobs of Silent E	blue, come, are, have, live, some, were, done, give
These words have common vowel teams (such as OW, OO, and AY)	down, look, play, see, three, yellow, you, brown, eat, four, good, new, now, our, out, please, saw, say, soon, they, too, how, know, may, round, always, because, found, goes, green, read, right, sleep, their, your, clean, draw, eight, grow, keep, light, own, show, today
Begin with A in an unaccented syllable	away, again, around, about
Consonant-L-E syllable type	little
Consonant team WR	write

After eliminating all the words that fit neatly into a phonetic category, there are just 22 words left on the list of words that must be memorized rather than sounded out. Here's the Dolch list now:

Pre-primer

A, and, away, big, blue, can, come, down, find, for, funny, go, help, here, I, in, is, it, jump, little, look, make, me, my, not, **ONE**, play, red, run, **SAID**, see, **THE**, three, to, **TWO**, up, we, **WHERE**, yellow, you

Primer

all, am, are, at, ate, be, black, brown, but, came, did, do, eat, four, get, good, have, he, into, like, must, new, no, now, on, our, out, please, **PRETTY**, ran, ride, saw, say, she, so, soon, that, **THERE**, they, this, too, under, want, **WAS**, well, went, **WHAT**, white, who, will, with, yes

First Grade

after, again, an, **ANY**, as, ask, by, **COULD**, every, fly, from, give, giving, had, has, her, him, his, how, just, know, let, live, may, **OF**, old, **ONCE**, open, over, put, round, some, stop, take, thank, them, then, think, **WALK**, were, when

Second Grade

always, around, because, **BEEN**, before, best, both, **BUY**, call, cold, **DOES**, don't, fast, first, five, found, gave, goes, green, its, made, **MANY**, off, or, pull, read, right, sing, sit, sleep, tell, their, these, those, upon, us, use, **VERY**, wash, which, why, wish, work, **WOULD**, write, your

Third Grade

about, better, bring, carry, clean, cut, done, draw, drink, eight, fall, far, full, got, grow, hold, hot, hurt, if, keep, kind, **LAUGH**, light, long, much, myself, never, only, own, pick, seven, shall, show, six, small, start, ten, today, together, try, warm

How many words do you think *your* child would rather memorize—220 or 22?

If you'd like to teach your child the phonics rules that will help him learn to decode 90% of the sight words on the Dolch list, check out [All About Spelling](#).