

KEY WORDS



What are Key Words?

Key words are those words which occur most frequently in text, for example, '**and**', '**the**', '**as**' and '**it**'. They are often words that have little meaning on their own, but they do contribute a great deal to the meaning of a sentence. Some of the key words can be sounded out using basic phonic rules, for example '**it**' is an easy word to read using phonics. However, many of the key words are not phonetically regular and are therefore hard to read in the early stages. These words are sometimes called high frequency words, tricky words or sight words. In addition to being difficult to sound out, most of the key words have a rather abstract meaning which is hard to explain to a child. It's easy to learn words like **cat** and **house** because they can easily be related to a real object or a picture, but how do you represent the word '**the**' or '**of**'?

Key words are words which children need to tackle even in very simple texts. These words usually play an important part in holding together sentences and early familiarity with them helps children get pace and accuracy into their reading at an early stage.

We have used the high frequency words to produce a system of **Key Words**. There are ten foundation sets of words and a further thirty sets of ten words each.

Why learn the Key Words?

Researchers tell us that learning just 13 of the most frequently used words will enable children to read 25% of any text (whilst that 25% wouldn't make much sense on its own, it's a very good start).

Learning 100 key words gives a beginner reader access to 50% of virtually any text. When you couple immediate recognition of key words with a good knowledge of basic phonics, that's when a child's reading can really take off.

What are we doing in school?

From the Foundation Stage children are taught to recognise keys words in context when reading and to use them with accuracy in their writing. Many of the key words have difficult spellings and do not follow regular patterns so the words need to be reinforced through other practice and activities.

Your child has recently been assessed to place him/her at an appropriate starting point on the system of **Key Words**.

Teachers keep records of children's progress through the sets of words – this of course will vary as all children are individual and learn at different rates. There is no pressure to move on to the next set until children are confident in the reading and spelling of the words they are learning.

What can you do at home?

Research shows that work at home can make an important contribution to children's progress at school. Your child will bring home an appropriate set of key words. Any help you are able to give your child with the learning of key words will reinforce their learning in the classroom and support their development of a sight vocabulary, which is essential if children are to read and write with confidence, fluency and understanding. When you are happy that children can read and write their key words, they can colour in the cloud at the bottom of the rocket and stick it into their Reading Record on the page of the current week.

When children have completed a set of key words they should place their Reading Record into the labelled tray in their classroom – that day they will be tested on their key words and if their teacher thinks that they are ready to move on, they will be given the next rocket in the series.

Please ask if you have any questions or would like more guidance.