Phase 4 tricky words: Reception Summer term

Information for parents and carers

'Tricky words' are words that cannot easily be decoded ('sounded out' and read). This is because some of the sounds in the words are spelled in an unusual way. It is important for children to be able to read these words as they are among the most common words in English.

The table shows the tricky words that your child will learn in Phase 4 in the Summer term of Reception and explains why each word is tricky. Phase 2 and 3 tricky words that remain tricky at this stage of learning are also shown. Children will practise the tricky words in school until they can read them automatically. They will also practise reading the tricky words in the decodable books that they bring home.

Phase 4 tricky word	Tricky part(s)	Why is it tricky?
said	ai	The 'ai' makes the sound **e.** This is a rare spelling for this sound.
so	o	The 'o' makes the sound **oa**. **Learning so far:** For 'o', your child has learned the sound o as in 'top'.
have	ve	Your child has not yet learned the digraph 've', which makes the sound **v**.
like	i–e	Your child has not yet learned the split digraph 'i–e', which makes the sound **igh**.
some come love	o–e	Your child has not yet learned the digraph 'o–e'. Here, it makes the sound **u**.
do	o	The 'o' makes the sound oo (as in 'food'). This is a rare spelling for this sound.
were	ere	The trigraph 'ere' makes the sound **ur**. This is a rare spelling for this sound.
here	ere	Your child has not yet learned the trigraph 'ere'. Here, it makes the sound **ear**.
little	le	Your child has not yet learned the digraph 'le', which makes the sound **l**.
says	ay	The digraph 'ay' makes the sound **e**. This is a rare spelling for this sound.
there	ere	Your child has not yet learned the trigraph 'ere'. Here, it makes the sound **air**.
when	wh	Your child has not yet learned the digraph 'wh'. Here, it makes the sound **w**.
what	wh a	Your child has not yet learned the digraph 'wh'. Here, it makes the sound **w**. The grapheme 'a' makes the sound **o**. **Learning so far:** For 'a', your child has learned the sound **a** as in 'cat'.
one	whole word	The grapheme 'o' makes the sounds **w-u***. The digraph 'ne' makes the sound **n.** *This is a rare spelling.
out	ou	Your child has not yet learned the different sounds made by the digraph 'ou'.
today	today	The word 'today' has two tricky parts: the 'o' is an unstressed oo (as in 'food') that makes the schwa sound*; the digraph 'ay' is not yet decodable. *This is a rare spelling for this sound.

Phase 3 tricky word	Tricky part(s)	Why is it tricky?
was	a	The 'a' makes the sound **o**. **Learning so far:** For 'a', your child has learned the sound **a** as in 'cat'.
you	ou	Your child has not yet learned the different sounds made by the digraph 'ou'. Here, it makes the sound oo (as in 'food').
they	ey	Your child has not yet learned the different sounds made by the digraph 'ey'. Here, it makes the sound **ai**.
my by	y	The 'y' makes the sound **igh**. **Learning so far:** For 'y', child has learned the sound **y** as in 'yap'.

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Phase 3 tricky word	Tricky part(s)	Why is it tricky?
all	a	The 'a' makes the sound **or**. **Learning so far:** For 'a', your child has learned the sound **a** as in 'cat'.
are	whole word	This is a rare spelling of the sound **ar**.
sure	whole word	The 's' makes the sound **sh**. The 'ure' makes two sounds (**yoo** plus the schwa sound). These are rare spellings for these sounds.
pure	ure	The 'ure' makes two sounds (**yoo** plus the schwa sound). This is a rare spelling for these sounds.

Phase 2 tricky word	Tricky part(s)	Why is it tricky?
I	i	The 'i' makes the sound **igh**. **Learning so far:** For 'i', your child has learned the sound **i** as in 'pin'.
the	e	It is rare for 'e' to make the schwa sound at the end of a word.
put* pull full push	u	The 'u' makes the sound **oo** (as in 'book'). **Learning so far:** For 'u', your child has learned the sound **u** as in 'cup'.
go no	o	The 'o' makes the sound **oa**. **Learning so far:** For 'o', your child has learned the sound **o** as in 'dog'.
to into	o	The 'o' makes the sound oo (as in 'food') or the schwa sound, depending on context. **Learning so far:** For 'o', your child has learned the sound **o** as in 'dog'.
she he we me be	e	The 'e' makes the sound **ee**. **Learning so far:** For 'e', your child has learned the sound **e** as in 'egg'.
of	f	The 'f' makes the sound **v**. This is a rare spelling for this sound.

*Depending on regional pronunciations, not all children will be taught the words 'put', 'pull', 'full' and 'push' as tricky words.

Terminology

Phoneme: The smallest unit of sound that can be identified in words. We also use the term 'sound' but your child may use the word 'phoneme'. There are 44 phonemes or sounds in the English language.

Grapheme: A letter or group of letters used to represent a phoneme in writing. The way graphemes are used to represent phonemes in our written language is known as the alphabetic code.

Decode: To break down ('sound out') a written word into sounds then blend the sounds together to read the word.

Digraph: A grapheme made of two letters that represent one sound. An example is the 'sh' in 'shop'. Your child may use the mantra 'two letters, one sound' when they spot a digraph.

Schwa: This is the name for the most common sound in English. It is the unstressed sound that we find in many words and can be spelled in many ways. It makes an 'uh' sound, which varies according to accent. Examples include: th<u>e</u>, bett<u>er</u>, carr<u>o</u>t, b<u>a</u>lloon.

Trigraph: A grapheme made of three letters to represent one sound. An example is the 'igh' in 'sight'. Your child may use the mantra 'three letters, one sound' when they spot a trigraph.

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