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1000 Instant Words

**The Most
Common Words
for Teaching
Reading, Writing
and Spelling**

by Edward Fry, Ph.D.

Teacher Created Resources

1000 Instant Words

by Edward Fry, Ph.D.

Teacher Created Resources, Inc.

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Introduction

In the English language, there are a number of words that have been scientifically determined to be the most commonly used words in the language. These high-frequency words are referred to as “Instant Words” because they are words that should be recognized instantly by readers. *1000 Instant Words* contains a list of the 1000 most commonly used words in the English language and is a basic tool for reading and writing teachers, curriculum developers, literacy tutors, authors of children’s books, and researchers.

Beginning readers, who for now we will define as those whose reading ability ranges from none to upper fifth grade, need to master a high-frequency vocabulary such as the Instant Words. In fact, they need to be able to read the first 300 Instant Words without a moment’s hesitation because these 300 words make up 65% of all written material! Over half of every newspaper article, textbook, children’s story, and novel is composed of just these 300 words! These are words that come up over and over again—words like *and*, *of*, and *the*. It is difficult to write any sentence without using several of the first 300 Instant Words.

Another reason for learning the Instant Words is that some of these often-used words do not follow regular phonics rules very well. For example, how do you sound out *of* or *said*? The answer is that beginning readers need to learn these words as “sight” words, and beginning readers also need to learn to spell these common words.

The core of this book is 1000 Instant Words ranked in order of frequency (i.e., the most common words listed first). These 1000 words are arranged in groups of five words to indicate to the teacher that only a few should be taught at one time. This “rank order” is also the suggested order in which beginning readers or writers normally learn new basic words. (Of course, children and adults learn many other subject words, like names and subject matter words, too.)

This list of 1000 Instant Words is followed by the same words arranged in alphabetical order (in case you want to look up the position of any word). The list is based on the American Heritage five-million word count but has a different ranking because variant word forms were combined and subsequently re-ranked.

The next section tells how to test your student(s) so that you can start teaching the Instant Words at an appropriate place. This will aid you in selecting words to teach to children or adults who have some, but not very complete, reading or writing ability.

Following that are some suggestions on how to teach the Instant Words with reading practice, flash cards, games, and spelling lessons.

Finally, there is a section with 100 Picture Nouns, which are nouns illustrated by pictures. These are a useful addition to the Instant Words because they can be used to help students write more meaningful sentences or read useful words that might not occur in the 1000 Instant Words. The picture nouns are also effective for students who learn reading and writing best through the use of concrete or easily-visualized words.

Rank Order 1–30

1–5

the
of
and
a
to

16–20

as
with
his
they
I

6–10

in
is
you
that
it

21–25

at
be
this
have
from

11–15

he
was
for
on
are

26–30

or
one
had
by
words

Rank Order 31–60

31–35

but
not
what
all
were

46–50

she
do
how
their
if

36–40

we
when
your
can
said

51–55

will
up
other
about
out

41–45

there
use
an
each
which

56–60

many
then
them
these
so

Rank Order 61–90

61–65

some
her
would
make
like

76–80

number
no
way
could
people

66–70

him
into
time
has
look

81–85

my
than
first
water
been

71–75

two
more
write
go
see

86–90

called
who
am
its
now