

Irregular Word Instruction for All Ages

Bringing All the Pieces together
for Academic Improvement



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Oh no!!!

Let's take a spelling test!

I will say some words and I want you to spell them on a piece of paper.
No asking a friend, using your phone or Google!

So what are irregular words???

- Only about 4% of words are truly irregular, meaning they don't follow English phonetic spelling rules
- About 50% of irregular words can be spelled accurately by sound-symbol correspondence. Example: cat
- 36% can be spelled accurately except for one speech sound. Example: said




(Hanna, Hanna, Hodges & Rudorf, 1966).




- 14% are spelled with two or more irregular patterns but most can be explained by looking at the word's morphology or etymology (the study of a word's origin and the way in which their meanings have changed through history) Example: colonel
 - Out of these 14%, only 4% are **truly** irregular


High frequency words are words that appear frequently in print and language. Example: the word "with" is a high frequency word and decodable however, if the student has not learned sound/ symbol relationships for w- i- th, it could be an irregular high frequency word.



An example of a high frequency word that is not decodable is "said". The first and last sounds in the word said are regular however the ai in the medial position is not a regular spelling for the /e/ .



Be mindful that students need to know the letter names in order to be able to spell irregular words. We can't expect them to spell a word if they have not learned the letter name or the mechanics of the letter shape prior.



Integrating high frequency words whether they are decodable (ex. with, can, it) or irregular (ex. said, of, was) into phonics lessons can be highly valuable in helping students make sense of various spelling patterns.

The goal is to create sight words which means any word, phonetic or irregular, that does not have to be decoded (sounded out) but retrieved automatically.

It is important to explicitly teach students **why** a word might have an unexpected spelling pattern.


Considerations:

1. Grade level
 - a. A kindergarten student will have a much larger irregular word bank than a 4th grade student simply because they have not been taught all the spelling rules/concepts.
2. Some irregular words are only "irregular" until the concept has been taught.
 - a. i.e. the word "she" is phonetic and can be decoded unless the student has not yet been taught open syllables.

We also know oral language and written language do not always coincide. Often, the etymology of a word can play a role in how a word is spelled. "A majority of irregular words have been derived and adapted from other languages (Henry, 2004).


Example: island and colonel

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zhqr-GNNgGo>




The Scribal "O"
Typically found before the letters, M, N, TH and V.
Examples: son, month, love, shove


<https://www.tiktok.com/@teacherrachelsorsel/video/7191233568394251562>



Students may be able to read irregular words and not be able to spell them. An informal assessment by the teacher can provide valuable information to guide instruction in teaching irregular words. A quick spelling test is one way to do this.




PROCESS OF INTRODUCING IRREGULAR WORDS




Introduce the word, **orally** first.

"The new word is _____"

"How many sounds do you hear in the word _____"?




"Now, let's discover what is unexpected for spelling in the word "said".






SENTENCE



Word # 2



Introduce the word, **orally** first.

"The new word is _____"

"How many sounds do you hear in the word _____"?

A rectangular box for handwriting practice. The top header has a rainbow gradient from purple to yellow. Below the header are four rows, each consisting of a solid top line, a dashed midline, and a solid bottom line.


Four horizontal solid black lines spaced evenly down the page, providing a simple writing guide.

A rectangular box for handwriting practice, identical in format to the first one. The top header has a rainbow gradient. The first row contains the word "SENTENCE" in the space between the top and midlines. The following three rows follow the standard solid-top, dashed-midline, solid-bottom format.


Four horizontal solid black lines spaced evenly down the page, providing a simple writing guide.

A rectangular box for handwriting practice, identical in format to the first one. The top header has a rainbow gradient. Below the header are four rows, each consisting of a solid top line, a dashed midline, and a solid bottom line.

Four horizontal solid black lines spaced evenly down the page, providing a simple writing guide.



Word # 3



Introduce the word, orally first.
"The new word is _____"
"How many sounds do you hear in the word _____"?




Handwriting practice lines with dashed midlines.



Handwriting practice lines consisting of a solid top line, a dashed midline, and a solid bottom line. This set includes three such lines.


Four sets of horizontal lines for writing practice, each consisting of a solid top line and a solid bottom line.



Handwriting practice lines consisting of a solid top line, a dashed midline, and a solid bottom line. This set includes three such lines.

SENTENCE

Four sets of horizontal lines for writing practice, each consisting of a solid top line and a solid bottom line.



Ways to practice irregular words once they are introduced:

- Bean bag toss
- Jumping jacks
- Hopscotch
- Basketball toss with crumpled paper
- Elephant roar

The options are truly endless!

Four sets of horizontal lines for writing practice, each consisting of a solid top line and a solid bottom line.

Thank you for coming to this session!
If you have any questions in the future, my email address is
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