**Sight Word Recognition**

Sight words are words that are used frequently in reading and writing. Because these words are used so often, it is important that readers are able to recognize them quickly without having to sound them out. There are approximately 1000 sight words (Fry, Edward, 1996) ranging from preprimary to 4th grade that are used in approximately 90% of the text we read every day. It is critical at the beginning reading stage for students to have mastery of the age appropriate 1000 sight word list at a 95% accuracy rate to assure reading success in school. The number of words required at each grade level is:

Kindergarten 100 words

1.0-1.9 200 words

2.0-2.9 300 words

3.0-3.9 300-650 words

4.0-4.9 650-1000 words

A commonly used assessment by teachers is the *Fry Sight Word Inventory*. *The Fry Sight Words* list is a more modern list of words, and was extended to capture the most common 1,000 words. Dr. Edward Fry developed this expanded list in the 1950s and in 1996, Dr. Fry expanded on Dolch's sight word lists and research and published a book titled "*Fry 1000 Instant Words.*" In his research, Dr. Fry found the following results:

* 25 words make up approximately 1/3 of all items published
* 100 words comprise approximately 1/2 of all of the words found in publications and
* 300 words make up approximately 65% of all written material.

Over half of every newspaper article, textbook, children's story, and novel is composed of these 300 words. It is difficult to write a sentence without using several of the first 300 words in the Fry 1000 Instant Words List. Consequently, students need to be able to read the first 300 Instant Words without a moment's hesitation based on the most common words to appear in reading materials used in Grades 3-9. Learning all 1,000 words in the Fry list would equip a child to read about 90% of the words in a typical book, newspaper, or website. The Fry words are listed by the frequency with which they occur and are often broken down into groups of 100. So the first 100 Fry words are the 100 most frequently occurring words in the English language.

[www.christina.k12.de.us/LiteracyLinks/elemresources/](http://www.christina.k12.de.us/LiteracyLinks/elemresources/)

<http://www.candohelperpage.com/sightvocab_1.html#anchor_374>

<http://www.thecurriculumcorner.com/thecurriculumcorner123/2012/07/05/fry-list-check-off-pages/>

Another common list used by classroom teachers to screen for a reading problem is the Dolch Reading List compiled by Edward William Dolch, PhD. in 1936 and originally published in his book *Problems in Reading* in 1948. Dolch compiled the list based on children's books. The list contains 220 high frequency words that have to be recognized to achieve reading fluency. Dolch included a separate compilation of 95 nouns. Many of these words cannot be sounded out using common phonics patterns and have to be learned by "sight." Although the list is divided into grades, most Dolch words should be mastered by the end of 1st grade for English speaking readers. This free list is included as a means to screen students in the primary grades if a reading disability is suspected. The graded levels for word recognition are:

Kindergarten 1st quarter 0-85 words

Kindergarten 2nd quarter 86-97 words

Kindergarten 3rd quarter 98-120 words

1st 1st quarter 121-140 words

1st 2nd quarter 141-165 words

1st 3rd quarter 166-170 words

2nd or above 171-209 words

3rd or above 210-220 words

<http://www.springvillegi.org/webpages/croskow/reading_skills.cfm?subpage=1371461>

[www.newlondon.k12.wi.us/Assessment](http://www.newlondon.k12.wi.us/Assessment)

<http://www.dolchsightwords.org/dolch_word_list.php>

The main difference between the two assessments is that the Dolch assesses primarily for K-2 while the Fry assessment can be used up to the first quarter of fifth grade. Students beyond 4th grade level that have difficulty with these sight word lists would be sending up a “red flag” for serious reading difficulties.

For your convenience, the Dolch Word Lists and assessment forms are included here for your use courtesy of the teacher blog,

[www.blog.maketaketeach.com](http://www.blog.maketaketeach.com).

The Fry 1000 word list and assessment forms are included courtesy of <http://www.k12reader.com/worksheet/fry-words-complete-list/> and

<http://www.thecurriculumcorner.com/thecurriculumcorner123/2012/07/05/fry-list-check-off-pages/>

While the Fry and Dolch Screening assessments are free and commonly used by classroom teachers there are several commercially published tests that will assess sight word recognition quickly and do not require a lot of training. These include the:

***Slosson Oral Reading Test (SORT)*** <http://www.slossonnews.com/SORT-R3.html>

The Slosson Oral Reading Test (SORT) is designed to assess a student's level of oral word recognition, word calling or reading level. It is a quick screening test to determine a student's reading level. Although the primary use of the Slosson Oral Reading Test is as a screening instrument, the author also suggests the SORT may be used to assess a student's progress, determine a student's grade level in reading, and to determine if a student is in need of further diagnostic assessment. A basal level is attained when a subject can pronounce all 20 words in a group. A ceiling is reached when none of the 20 words in a group can be pronounced correctly. Basic administration and scoring procedures are printed on each test protocol. Raw scores, grade and age equivalents, percentile rank, standard scores, and confidence levels can also be determined and recorded directly on the protocol.

# *\Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)* <https://dibels.uoregon.edu/assessment/dibels/index>

If your school is already using *DIBELS*, then you already have a built-in screening device for reading disabilities. The ***Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS)*** are a set of procedures and measures for assessing the acquisition of early literacy skills from kindergarten through sixth grade. They are designed to be short (one minute) fluency measures used to regularly monitor the development of early literacy and early reading skills.

The [*DIBELS* assessments have been researched](https://dibels.uoregon.edu/research/techreports/#dibels) and validated specifically for benchmark testing in kindergarten through sixth grade. The [testing materials](https://dibels.uoregon.edu/assessment/index/material) consist of grade-level booklets for each student and a set of display materials. Most testing is done one on one with each student and takes approximately 5-10 minutes per student. Student scores are used to determine how each student is doing in relation to a benchmark goal that is predictive of later reading success. Benchmark testing with DIBELS can help determine which students are at risk for later reading difficulties.

**Summary**

It is important to keep in mind that the use of sight word recognition screeners are a means to determine if a student is exhibiting difficulty in the most basic form of reading readiness, that is letter and basic word recognition. It will provide the assessor with an initial level to administer further reading tests. For example, a 4th grade student who is able to only read as high as second grade sight words should be given a full battery of diagnostic phonemic assessments (K-3) rather than a 4th grade reading assessment. Or a student who is able to read sight words at grade level would be administered a grade level reading assessment to assess deeper reading difficulties.

Bottom of Form