**Words - Regular/Irregular and High/Low Frequency**

Words can be categorised as either are **regular** or **irregular** words (in terms of their spelling). Distinguishing between words that are completely (or mostly) **regular** or **irregular** can be helpful to know which words might be difficult for students to **decode** independently.

***Regular words*** *are words that can be decoded using knowledge of phonics patterns (e.g. get, well, which, before)****Irregular words*** *are words that do not conform to phonics patterns (do, said, could, yacht, doubt)*

Words can also be categorised as either **low frequency** or **high frequency**, referring to how frequently they are found in texts for students of a particular learning level. Overtime, it is expected that students will become proficient and efficient at reading words they encounter the most (high frequency words).

***High frequency words*** *are words that students of a particularly learning level encounter frequently (see table below)****Low frequency words*** *are more rare (or not usual) for a student in a particular learning level to come across (see table below)*

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| --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***Regular*** | ***Irregular*** |
| ***High Frequency*** | e.g. get well help new each my know which much going name around saw before | e.g. the do to one two eight I they all are her said have some come were little their people would should could because does other many any goes favourite Wednesday February |
| ***Low Frequency*** | e.g. tat slump flinch rig cog keg kip twang broth | e.g. meringue plaid yacht doubt pigeon biscuit indict pharaoh ingenue aardvark psychic eczema |

It can be useful to use lists of high frequency words (e.g. Oxford Word List, Magic Words). However, when you identify the **graphemes** within these words it is clear that many high frequency words are also regular words.

1. **Regular high frequency** words: Using a knowledge of graphemes (rather than just memorisation) can be a more constructive way to become familiar with important words and graphemes simultaneously.
2. **Regular low frequency** words can be read using knowledge of graphemes. These words are not as useful for reading or personal writing. However, these are perfect words for assessing the decoding abilities of students.
3. **Irregular high frequency** words, on the other hand, have to recognised by sight.

The following tricks may be useful to help students remember the spelling of irregular words:

MNEMONICS

* because = Big Elephants Can Act Under Small Elephants

SAYING FOR SPELLING

* Wednesday = "wed" "nez" "day"

OTHER MEMORY PHRASES (using letter names)

* beautiful = B E A Utiful

**Irregular low frequency** words (like meringue plaid yacht) can be learnt in the context of everyday reading, spelling, and writing, when students need to use such words for a specific purpose.