

Tricky Words

Tricky words cannot be sounded out easily. They are common words that have complex spellings in them. Learn how to teach **tricky words** in phonics lessons. Emergent readers may find **tricky words** difficult to read as they have not yet learned some of the [graphemes](#) in those words. They are sometimes known as irregular words, [common exception words](#) or [sight words](#). Learn how to teach **tricky words** in your phonics lessons with this handy guide.

How to teach tricky words in phonics lessons

Tricky words are typically part of the phonic code. The word 'want' has the 'o' sound instead of 'a,' which is how it's spelt. This means that children find it difficult to read out the word, as the sounds don't accompany the letters. Other **tricky words** include: was, swan, they, my and are.

Using [word mats](#), [flashcards](#), [classroom displays](#) and [phonics tricky word assessments](#) are all brilliant ways of assisting a child in the understanding of **tricky words** and why we have them in the English language. These lovely resources are great for anyone wondering how to teach **tricky words** in phonics lessons, as they help to engage pupils and bring the topic to life.

More how to teach tricky words in phonics techniques:

- Encourage children to sound out the parts of the word they know and give children support with sounds they don't know. Using the same **tricky word** example 'want,' pupils can pronounce the 'w' sound before you demonstrate how to pronounce the 'an' sound.
- Teach children more letter-sound correspondences. For example, the letter 'a' is pronounced differently in 'ran' and 'was.' If children recognise both letter-sound correspondences then it makes it easier for them to read new words.
- Compile a list of **tricky words** and write them out in different forms. You can use colourful pens, write them in sand or use playdough. Practice and repetition are important when considering how to teach **tricky words** in phonics, so pick activities children can repeat and remember.

What is the difference between high frequency and tricky words?

- High-frequency words - A sight word or [high-frequency word](#) is a commonly used word that children should be able to memorise by sight. Retaining this information is vital for children to recognise within three seconds without needing to decode. These words include: no, the, of, words, number, part, made and find.
- Tricky words - Tricky or phonically irregular words differ from sight words as children need longer to decode. They are words that cannot simply be sounded out in their head. Tricky words should be learnt through a variety of different methods and not just by sight, as it may lead to difficulty in understanding other tricky words that do not follow the same pattern.

What are the skills used in phonics?

There are five different phases used in **phonics** to help develop and improve reading and writing skills:

- **Letter sounds** - There are 42 letter sounds to be learnt in the English language.
- **Letter formation** - Using sensory methods to understand the way words are formed.
- **Blending** - Blending word sounds to read and write words.
- **Sounds in words** - Using auditory learning to understand sounds in words.
- **Tricky Words** - These are the irregular spellings.