

# Reading Racetrack Sight Word Activity

## Background

Words that can be recognized automatically, or on sight, are known as **sight words**. This type of word recognition enables children to devote their energy to the critical skill of decoding words that are more difficult.

Teaching children sight words involves brief (less than 10 minutes per session) sessions that include immediate and specific feedback, and practice with validated research-based sight word lists.

## Word Lists

One of the most popular research-based sight word lists is Edward Dolch's (1936) words list. Words from this list can be used in the exercise below.

- [Click here to access the Dolch words \(via the Utah State Board of Education\)](#)

## Reading Racetrack Instructions

This research-based sight word instructional strategy (Rinalidi, Sells, & McLaughlin, 1997; Sullivan, Konrad, Joseph, & Luu, 2013) has been modified for implementation in peer pairs and small groups.

## Preparation Steps

1. Using words from the list described above, identify 28 sight words a child is unable to read with automaticity but that previously have been introduced.
2. Write each sight word on a notecard.
3. Prepare five copies of the reading racetrack included below.
4. Assign seven sight words to each of four racetracks. The fifth racetrack is a review racetrack.
5. On one racetrack, write the first set of seven words in each cell. The selected seven words will appear four times in random order to fill the 28 cells of the racetrack. Repeat this with three other racetracks, using seven different words from the list of 28 total words on each racetrack until all words have been used.

6. On the fifth or review racetrack, write all 28 words in each of the 28 cells of the racetrack in random order. Each word should appear one time.

## Lesson Steps

1. Begin with a review of the seven sight words featured on the racetrack. Present each sight word on a notecard and say, "This word is \_\_\_\_\_. Read the word." Provide feedback based on the children's responses. If the child reads the word correctly, say, "Yes, the word is \_\_\_\_\_." If the child reads the word incorrectly, say, "This word is \_\_\_\_\_. Try reading it again. What is the word?"
2. After teaching all of the seven sight words in this manner, introduce the reading racetrack featuring the same sight words. Working in pairs, the first child selects a starting point on the racetrack. The peer starts a timer and directs the first student to read as many sight words as she can in 1 minute. If a reader comes to a word she does not know during the 1-minute timing, the peer prompts the reader to move to the next word. The peer records the number of sight words the partner read correctly and incorrectly in 1-minute. Then, the partners switch roles.
3. After each partner has had a turn reading the words on the racetrack, collect the record sheets and form small groups of children who have made similar errors. Working with one small group at a time, use a direct instruction procedure called "model, lead, test, and retest" to teach the children the words they read incorrectly. For example, while pointing to a word on the reading racetrack, say, "This word is \_\_\_\_\_. What is the word?" Prompt the children to read the word correctly a few times, sometimes in unison and sometimes individually.
4. While you work with another small group, the children who just reviewed their errors return to working in pairs. They complete three additional 1-minute timings of the same reading racetrack. Each child graphs his/her highest number of sight words read correctly across all 1-minute timings.

## References

Dolch, E. W. (1936). A basic sight vocabulary. *The Elementary School Journal*, 36, 456-460.  
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Rinaldi, L., Sells, D., & McLaughlin, T. F. (1997). The effect of reading racetracks on the sight word acquisition and fluency of elementary students. *Journal of Behavioral Education*, 7, 219-233.  
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Sullivan, M., Konrad, M., Joseph, L. M., & Luu, K. C. (2013). A comparison of two sight word reading fluency drill formats. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 57, 102-110.  
doi:10.1080/1045988x.2012.674575

# READING RACETRACK

START .....→



1	2	3	4
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5	6	7	8	9
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10	11	12	13	14
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15	16	17	18	19
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20	21	22	23	24
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25	26	27	28
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FINISH

# READING RACETRACK SCORE SHEET

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



	NUMBER OF WORDS READ CORRECTLY	NUMBER OF WORDS READ INCORRECTLY
SESSION 1		
SESSION 2		
SESSION 3		
SESSION 4		
SESSION 5		