

# Sight words and using flash cards/ word cards in the teaching of reading.

## What are flash cards/ word cards?

**Flash cards** are cards containing cues - pictures or key words or facts to assist with learning and revision. When they are used for **vocabulary**, they may be called **word cards**: a card that displays a written word.

In the Sunrise Readers Teacher's Manual, we refer to **word cards** as "**flash cards**".

## Why are flashcards useful?

- **They appeal to all learning styles** It's a good way to focus the children's attention – remember the multiple intelligences present in the room, we learn in different ways. Having a visual clue assists the many visual learners, along with verbally saying the word for auditory learners, letting children hold the card if used in a game can help kinaesthetic learners. (I've made cut out letters from sandpaper in the past, or written over the word in glue and sprinkled it with sand!), to let these learners trace over the letters.
- **Little and often** is key to building learning at any age and stage. Flashcards can be picked up and used for a few minutes' practice throughout the day, reinforcing a more structured lesson. Take relevant words outside for PE – hold up an action word, such as jump, run, hop, go, stop, come. Blow a whistle to change the word – hold up the next word. The children don't have to read aloud – their actions are enough and the goal is to have fun whilst learning.
- **Aids and trains memory: Flashcards** help the brain to do what it does naturally! Set out a few picture *OR* word cards (keep them separate especially at the start). I'd start with 4 or 5 and build up to about 9. After practicing, remove one card at a time (or turn over if the back is blank), but still get the children to say the word that was in the space.

walk	run	Tatenda
Fluff	play	jump
up	down	find

- They are an effective way to **present, practice and recycle vocabulary** – useful for repetition.

**Remember, remember!** We suggest an eclectic approach to the teaching of reading. It is **vitaly important** that learners should systematically follow an **effective phonics curriculum** to **teach letter sounds and blends**. At the same time, **sight words** should be introduced using flash cards/ word cards.

## What are sight words?

**Sight words** are words that can't easily be sounded out phonetically. They are common, frequently used foundational words. Children learn to recognise **sight words** without sounding out the letters. Sight words are also called **High Frequency Words**, **Instant Words** or **Snap Words** (because they should be recognized in a snap or an instant!)

**Teaching sight words with the teaching of phonics increases a child's fluency and speed in reading.**

## Practical Suggestions for the teaching of reading using flashcards/sight words:

Most early childhood classrooms have a display of the **letters of the alphabet**. They may be displayed as a **chart** or on **flashcards on the wall**. Children are often given a letter chart/ alphabet chart each to use when they are learning the letters and recognizing letters in reading or writing.

Examples: f - fish, g - goat, h - hippo



- Once the class has embarked upon the pre-reading program, the teacher begins introducing **reading words** using the Whole word or Look and Say approach. At this point the child does not have the phonic knowledge necessary to sound out words. This will develop alongside and will soon take preference over Look and say.
- For the convenience of the teacher, each Sunrise Reader has a **word list** at the back. This list gives all the words that are introduced for the first time. The teacher can build up her collection of flash cards from these lists. (See free downloadable/ printable pdfs for flashcards at the end of this blog.)

- The **characters** and the stories are introduced and discussed. The children learn the Sunrise characters' names and identify them visually before reading the books.
- **Make picture posters** of each character - pdfs are supplied for this purpose. (Or, if you have internet/ powerpoint access, powerpoint slides of the characters are provided for you to use – see downloadable links at the end of this blog.)
- Make - or print - **large flashcards** of each character's names. (Free downloadable pdfs at the end of this blog.)
- **Introduce** one character at a time. You may introduce one character each day, or you may choose to develop that character for a few days before introducing the next.
- **Developing characters:** See the short video clip available for ideas about how to develop a character – or read the available blog. It is vital to be enthusiastic when talking about each character; to refer to the picture in great detail, using questions to elicit ideas and responses from the children. Your intention is to bring the Sunrise children alive for your young learners – you have triumphed if they become well-known friends! Be sure to unobtrusively involve the children using the vocabulary they will meet in flashcard form and in the text of the book.
- **Matching picture flashcards to word cards:** In pairs or threes, learners will have fun matching the names of the Sunrise characters to the picture cards. Young learners can also use the character picture cards in role play and oral work, developing the characters.

### Introducing sight words for each book:

- The first words (see the word list at the back of the book) could be introduced at the end of the first week of school, depending on the teacher's assessment of the children's readiness.
- Only one or two words should be introduced each day. These must be reviewed and drilled daily along with each new one added.

**Drilling:** involves daily repetition and the children may be asked to repeat the word three times whenever the flashcard is held up. The games and suggestions in the Teacher's Guide also contribute towards effective drilling. The best learning occurs when new work is practised little and often: For example:

- at every lesson change over,
- before going out for break, and
- before home time – run through the day's words again.
- Use 'action words' like go/jump/run/come or
- take the children outside, show the flashcard and let them run;
- blow a whistle and change the flashcard/command word to jump; blow the whistle, change the flashcard/command word to come, etc.

### How to introduce a word:

The teacher introduces the first word with a **flash card**. She tells the children what it says, for example, "This word says 'look'. Look. Can you say 'look'? What do we look with? Yes, our eyes. Can you see these two round eyes looking at you here?" (Points to **OO** in the

word). She can draw two eyes into the word on the chalkboard.



It is very useful if the teacher can devise as many 'memory hooks' as possible for the words. The use of finger play also serves as a memory aid. For example, the children can 'look' through the circle made by their thumb and forefinger, repeating 'look' over and over.



### Some other suggestions:

- Oh – a round mouth, children make their mouths round when they say "oh".
- On the board, the teacher can write the word and then show a face.



- and – And is a friendly word that joins people and things together. Get the children to hold hands, place the 'and' card above their hands.

and



- come – make a beckoning finger in the shape of ‘c’.
- up/down – a see-saw



### Reading sentences:

Flash cards can be placed together on the board to show children how to build sentences:  
e.g.

Tatenda	and	David
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**Sentence strips** are very useful in the progression of teaching of reading. A sentence strip may be made or written on the chalkboard/ whiteboard. Making a sentence strip is useful for repetition, and for activities in small groups when children can practice reading and saying the words, and matching individual word/flashcards to those on the sentence strip.

Come and look, Tatenda.

- The teacher reads the sentence to the children, pointing at each word.
- The children repeat the sentence two or three times.

The teacher can then match individual flashcards to the sentence.

Come	and	look	Tatenda
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- Use the sentences in the reading book. “Jenny can go fast!” “See funny Chipu jump.” Once the children are confident with the words and how the

sentence looks and sounds, cut the strip up into individual words. (Assign the cutting to the children!) The children work to build the sentence correctly again. Use the flashcards from the set as well, ask the children if they can make up their own sentence using the words they know. Once they start writing, they can copy down the sentences they create.

## Incidental reading

Make flashcards for items in the classroom – door, window, desk, chalkboard, chair etc. Put the words on the item. One day, move them all around so they are in the wrong place. See how long it takes the children to notice. Put up sentence strips – “This is the window”, “Here is the door” etc.

**Word Walls:** Display new sight words in a designated space on a wall in your classroom. Encourage children to remember and refer to these in their writing.



(<https://www.edutopia.org/article/building-better-word-wall>)

## Games and Activities to give further practice:

**M**atch the flashcard (especially for the characters' names) to the correct picture.

**H**ide the new word (on flash cards) amongst four or five other words. Read and look at it until all the children can confidently recognise it. The children have to hunt for the word. They whisper the other words but when they see the word they are hunting, they call

it out and shoot a hand into the air. (The teacher holds all the flashcards and reveals one at a time by moving the front word to the back.)

**D**rill words and sentence strips as a class. Vary this: just the boys saying the words, then just the girls, or individuals called upon to read alone. Other ideas for **drill**:

1.

- Place three – four words on the board in a line.
- Read them aloud three – five times. Say them with eyes shut three times.
- Teacher removes one word. Point at each word, including the space where the word is missing. Remove another word etc.

2.

- Place a word on the board.
- Children read it three times.
- Cover the word with a larger paper or card.
- Children say it three times.

3. **To review words:**

- Hold the cards with the writing towards the class.
- Move the front card to the back.
- Just give the children a glimpse of the new word and see if they can say what it is – truly FLASH it!

4. **Other ideas:** Read a word in different ways:

- ★ Normal voices      ★ Loud voices      ★ Whispers      ★ High squeaky voices
- ★ Low growly voices      ★ Boys read it      ★ Girls read it

5. **Reading a list of words:**

- ★ Stand up (or sit down) for every word with an 'a' in it.
- ★ Sing the words to a simple tune.

**6. Singing and finger play** Choose repetitive songs such as “Heads and shoulders, knees and toes” or “Incy Wincy Spider”. Sing the whole song, doing all the hand actions. Then sing again, leaving out one word and humming in that space instead – “mmm and shoulders, knees and toes”; “Incy Wincy spider climbed up the water spout, Down came the mmm and washed the mmm out!” Progressively leave out each word whilst continuing with the actions. Then use the same “brain tracks” for games as below with the flashcards.

**Lastly:**

**Practical tips if you are home-making your flashcards: (Remember, we provide free downloadable, printable flashcards for you to print and paste onto card! See the pdfs below. N.B. Paste the words starting with a capital on the back of the word starting with a lower case letter. E.g. come Come.)**

- Make cards out of sturdy cardboard, cut to a uniform size. Do not make a small card for a short word. Children are developing their visual discrimination skills and it will help them to see that the word “go” looks different in the same space as the word “aeroplane”.
- It helps if the cardboard is a matt white.
- Use a thick, black marker to write the words, unless you are printing from a computer.
- Make several identical smaller sets, (with the pictures as above for the first book) with the same words currently being learnt. Identify each set with a coloured dot or a sticker on the back, for ease of sorting the cards back into correct sets after use. These small sets are great for early finishers to play with, usually arranging themselves as ‘teacher’ and ‘pupils’, playing ‘school’!

**Free downloadable pdf resources:**

- 1 Character/Picture Cards:  
Sunrise Readers Books 1 & 2**
- 2 Small Character Word Cards (Books 1 & 2) to match.**
- 3 Character/Picture Cards:  
Sunrise Readers Books 3, 4 & 5**
- 4 Small Character Word Cards (Books 3,4 & 5) to match.**
- 5 Sunrise Readers Book 1: Friends Complete Vocabulary/ Wordlist**
  - Small flashcards
  - Medium sized flashcards
  - Large flashcards for whole class use.