

Common Tricky/Exception Words

The words listed below have been collated from a variety of high frequency word lists and they're arranged in groups based on common spelling patterns, sounds or meanings (except for the last group of words which don't share any obvious patterns).

the	they	these
their	there	there's
were	we're	here
where	when	which
while	white	
to	into	today
do	don't	does
didn't	who	whose
whole	too	two
group	you	your



Common Tricky/Exception Words

our	hour	
so	also	no
go	going	know
me	we	she
he	he's	be
being		
is	his	as
has	us	eggs
trees	birds	



Common Tricky/Exception Words

my	by	fly
why	I	idea
what	want	wanted
watch	was	
water	father	paper
later	answer	
bye	dye	eye
eyes		
face	place	



Common Tricky/Exception Words

any	many	baby
floppy	suddenly	story
very	city	really
every	everybody	pretty
busy		
oh	only	open
over	old	cold
told	hold	gold
most	almost	clothes
both		
find	kind	mind
behind	wild	climb



Common Tricky/Exception Words

child	children	
more	before	four
door	floor	poor
please	great	steak
break	head	
other	another	mother
brother	some	something
come	coming	done
money	above	love
prove	move	



Common Tricky/Exception Words

one	someone	everyone
once	only	
could	couldn't	can't
would	wouldn't	won't
should	shouldn't	country
young		
house	mouse	
call	called	look
looked	ask	asked
laugh	laughed	live
lived	give	gave



Common Tricky/Exception Words

work	world	
through	thought	enough
page	change	large
giant	magic	
learn	Earth	
Mrs	Mr	
said	again	



Common Tricky/Exception Words

sure	sugar	
put	push	pull
full	See notes about regional variations.	
fast	past	last
class	grass	pass
plant	path	bath
See notes about regional variations.		
of	it's	have
little	people	even
because	gone	are



Common Tricky/Exception Words

horse	picture	write
school	use	narrator
friends	half	parents
Christmas		

Notes:

- While we have tried to put the words into meaningful groups, it would be possible to arrange some words into alternative groups based on different criteria. In many cases, it might be simpler to follow the sequence of words in the phonics programme you are using.
- Regional accents can affect whether words are perceived as exceptions or not. For example, the words *put*, *push*, *pull* and *full* are listed as exceptions because the letter u in these words represents the /oo/ (ʊ) vowel sound that's normally found in words like foot, look and book. It's more common for the letter u to represent the /u/ (ʌ) sound that's spoken in words such as cup, duck and butter.

However, in some parts of the north of England, the /u/ (ʌ) sound isn't pronounced in any words, so put and but are spoken with the same /oo/ (ʊ) vowel sound and both words rhyme with foot.

Similarly, the words *fast*, *last*, *past*, *class*, *grass*, *pass*, *plant*, *path* and *bath* are exceptions in some southern English accents where the /a/ (ɑ:) vowel sound is used, but they are not exceptions in other accents where the a in these words is pronounced /æ/, as in *cat*.

- Some words in the list are not exceptions to common phonics patterns but they are included to highlight their relationship with other exception words. For example, *children* is included to highlight the different pronunciation of the letter 'i' in *child*.

