

Phonics vs Sight Words, at a Glance

ONE-PAGE CHEAT SHEET

- 1 Phonics = sounding out**
Letters represent sounds; sounds blend into words. Lets a child decode new, unfamiliar words.
- 2 Sight words = memorized by sight**
Common irregular words ("the," "was," "said") that don't follow normal spelling rules.
- 3 Use both, not one or the other**
Phonics for regular words, memorization for the common irregular ones.
- 4 The simple rule**
Regular spelling → sound it out together. Common irregular word → just tell them and move on.
- 5 Repetition builds sight words**
Rereading favorite books, not flashcard drilling, is what makes words "stick."
- 6 Don't quiz mid-story**
Save any check-ins for after the story — testing mid-read turns reading into an exam.
- 7 When to get a second opinion**
If your child shows no decoding strategy at all after months of regular reading, ask a teacher or tutor.