

Using Word Walls

(Source: *Just Read Florida!*)

- **Select words from reading programs, high frequency word lists, irregular words, and words that students commonly use in their reading and writing.**

Students can refer to the Word Wall as they read and spell words.

- **Limit the words to those that students encounter often in their reading and writing.**

Words should be added gradually, approximately five per week.

Words can be written in big black letters on different colored paper to help students distinguish easily confused words, such as *for* and *from* or *them* and *they*.

- **Display words in a highly visible, accessible place in the classroom.**

Being able to easily see the words on the Word Wall helps students when they are reading and writing.

- **Categorize words in a variety of ways.**

You may have many different Word Walls. Words can be categorized in alphabetical order. Pictures can also be added.

Words can also be categorized by similar spelling patterns, such as **-at** or **-ig**, to help children make connections between sounds in words.

Cutting around the shape of the word helps some students distinguish one word from another.

Smaller versions of Word Walls, such as charts, can reflect current topics of study and content-area words (e.g., weather, geographical regions, and mathematics).

- **Incorporate a variety of Word Wall activities.**

Word Walls are not just bulletin boards.

Saying, spelling, and writing the words several times a week helps students recognize words automatically and increases their lexicon of sight words.

- **Encourage students to use the Word Wall when they are independently reading and writing.**

Students who have reading difficulties need explicit instruction and teacher modeling to remind them to use the Word Wall.

Throughout the year, Word Walls grow and provide a visual representation of the many words that students are learning and using as they read and write.

- **Provide many opportunities for Word Wall practice.**

Word Wall practice can be scheduled for short periods several times a week.

Portable or individual Word Walls can be constructed using file folders.

Individualized Word Walls provide students with their own resource that they can use at their desks or take home.

Examples of Word Wall Activities: (Sample words are used in the examples.)

Word Wall Activity #1

(Students need paper or dry-erase boards.)

Pretend that you're a word detective.

Number your paper from 1 to 5. *(Number 1-5 on large dry-erase board.)*

I'm thinking of a word on the Word Wall. Try to guess the Word Wall word that I'm thinking.

I'll give you one clue at a time.

Listen to each clue and, on your paper, write the Word Wall word you believe I'm thinking about.

Don't shout out any words. Be a good detective! Here's the first clue.

Clue #1. It's on the Word Wall. Beside #1 on your paper, write the Word Wall word that you believe is the word I'm thinking. Everyone should make a guess and write a word each time I give a clue.

Clue #2. It ends with the letter **e**.

Write the Word Wall word next to #2. *(Draw a line and write the letter e beside numbers 2, 3, 4, and 5.)*

If you think it is the word you guess for clue #1, write the same word again.

Clue #3. It has the letter **a** in it. *(Write the letter a in front of numbers 3, 4, and 5.)*

Write a word by #3. Remember to write the same word again, if you believe you have figured it out.

Clue #4. It has 7 letters. *(Erase the line in places to make 7 blanks with e in the last blank.)*

Clue #5. It fits in the sentence: I wear a coat _____ it is cold. *(Write the sentence on the board under #5.)*

Raise your hand if you think you know the word. _____, tell us the Word Wall word you discovered.

Answer: (because) Repeat after me. *(Read and spell the word. Students echo.)*

Word Wall Activity #2

(Write the word can on the board.)

Can someone read this Word Wall word?

If I cover up the first letter, what is the last part of the word?

Answer: (an).

Can is in the /an/ word family. Words spelled with the same letter pattern can be grouped in word families.

Raise your hand if you can think of more words that are in the /an/ family.

(Call on students to write and spell the words on the board under the word can. Possible answers: an, Dan, man, tan, fan, ban, clan, bran, Stan, and ran.)

Let's read and spell all the words we wrote in the /an/ family.

Repeat after me. *(Read and spell each word. Students echo.)*

Word Wall Activity #3

(Hold up five fingers.)

I'm thinking of a five-letter Word Wall word that begins with the letter **a**.

(Write the letter on the board.)

The word makes sense in this sentence: That was fun so let's do it _____.

Answer: (again). Repeat after me. *(Say and spell the word. Students echo.)*

Word Wall Activity #4

(Hold up four fingers.)

I'm thinking of a four-letter Word Wall word that ends with the letter **t**.

(Write the letter on the board.)

It makes sense in this sentence. I ate _ _ _ t of the apple.

(Write the sentence on the board.)

Answer: (part). *(Fill in the blank with the word.)*

Repeat after me. *(Say and spell the word. Students echo.)*

Word Wall Activity #5

Find Word Wall words that end with the /d/ sound. Write them on your paper.
(Call on students to say and spell the words as you write them on the board.)
Repeat after me. (Say and spell the words. Students echo.)

Word Wall Activity #6

Find two Word Wall words that rhyme with **no**. Answers: (**go, so**).
Repeat after me. (Say, spell, and read the words. Students echo, write the words, and read them.)

Word Wall Activity #7

We're going to *Write and Rap* three words from the Word Wall. On your paper, write **the**, **does**, and **from**.
(Write words on board and read them. Students echo.) Now let's rap!

- I'll say **the**, and you say **the**. (Students echo **the**.)
I'll spell **the**: **T-H-E**.
Now you spell **the**: (Students echo **T-H-E**.)
- I'll say **does**, and you say **does**. (Students echo **does**.)
I'll spell **does**: **D-O-E-S**.
Now you spell **does**: (Students echo **D-O-E-S**.)
- I'll say **from**, and you say **from**. (Students echo **from**.)
I'll spell **from**: **F-R-O-M**.
Now you spell **from**: (Students echo **F-R-O-M**.)

Word Wall Activity #8

(Write the letters **a**, **s**, and **w** on the board.)
The Word Wall word I'm thinking of is spelled with these three letters.
It makes sense in the sentence: I ____ walking down the street.
(Write the sentence on the board.)
Answer: (**was**). (Read sentence with answer. Students echo.)
Repeat after me. (Say and spell the word. Students echo, write the word, and read it.)

Word Wall Activity #9

Which word on the Word Wall means "human beings?"
(If no one guesses the word, provide clues one at a time.)
Clue #1: The word that means "human beings" begins with a letter that is in the middle of the alphabet.
Clue #2: The word that means "human beings" makes sense in this sentence: We have lots of _____ who go to our school.
Answer: (**people**). (Read sentence with answer. Students echo.)
Repeat after me. (Say and spell the word. Students echo, write the word and read it.)

Word Wall Activity #10

Turn to your neighbor.
Choose one of the Word Wall words.
Tell your partner the letter it begins with but NOT the word.
Slowly write each letter with your finger on your partner's back.
Ask your partner to guess the word.
Write the word again on your partner's back, saying each letter aloud together.
End by saying the word. Take turns.

NOTE:

Even though these activities are meant to be used with students in grades K-3, the activities may be modified for students in the upper grades by simply changing the complexity of the word.