

Sight Words and Chants

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The school I visited was Mesa Robles. This school is a distinguished school which means their students have high achievements on the tests. After I observed several classes, I realized the reason why its students are all successful. They have professional teachers to teach them and Ms. Woods is one of them. I benefited a great deal from her class. Therefore, I'd like to share what I've learned from her with all the teachers in Taipei County.

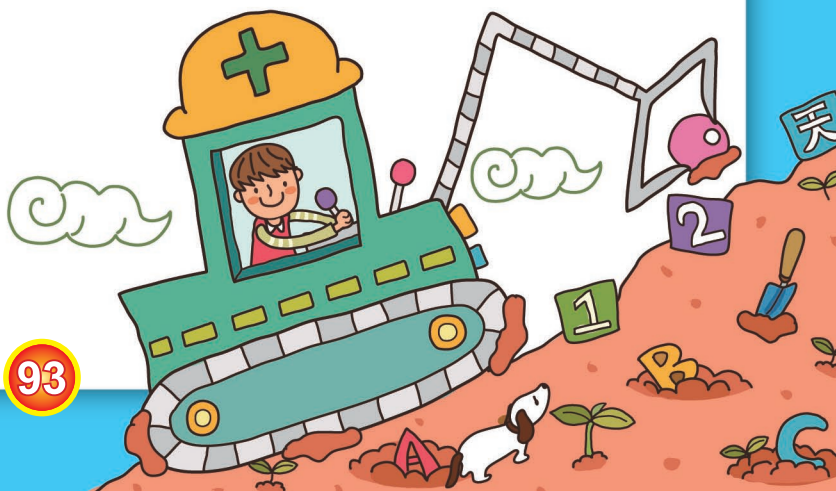
Ms. Woods teaches kindergarten students whose ability is similar to that of our first graders. She told me the basic knowledge sets that students have to learn are alphabet and sight words. Sight Words (sometimes called the Dolch Word List) are some of the most frequently used words in the English language. Even though the number of Sight Words is only about 200, Sight Words make up approximately 50 to 70 percent of any given general, non-technical text. Therefore, teaching Sight Words as early as possible is considered a crucial part of elementary education.

Introduction to Sight Words

Sight words are high frequency words that students see when they read any articles. The followings are a list of the most common sight words:

and, are, can, for, go, have, he, here, is, like, me, my, of, on, play, said, see, she, that, the, they, to, was, with, you, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, brown, black, white, gray, pink, an, at, big, do, down, has, in, it, no/yes, not, small, this, too, up, we, what, who, again, away, because, come, could, help, house, how, jump, little, look, make, one, run, should, their, there, they're, three, to, too, two, want, we're, were, when, where, why, would, all, am, as, be, by, came, dear, did, friend, from, good, had, his, I, if, love, made, nice, now, out, over, put, some, then, very, will, your, zero, one, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, about, around, but, eat, fight, find, funny, get, into, new, ride, please, pretty, saw, say, says, so, under, which

The reason why we need to teach our students sight words is because that while students read, these sight words will constantly show up. If students know these words and memorize them, reading will be easier for them. Every English teacher must agree that reading is one of the most critical skills that are being taught at school. If students can be familiar with sight words in the early grades, it can help students boost their reading ability.



Sight words are the foundation of students' reading ability. You can tell how important sight words are from the decoration of American Kindergarten's classes. American teachers told me that their students are expected to be able to read simple materials by the end of the second grade. Therefore, we should teach our students sight words before 5th grades. They also said that one of the most important goals in teaching young students to read is making sure they are completely proficient with sight words.

However, it is difficult to tell our first graders to cram the words to their minds. But it is possible if we make good use of chants. Ms. Woods provided me a very useful website: heidisongs.com. The website includes a great amount of videos that guide teachers to teach their student chants. Every child can easily memorize the spellings of these words and begin writing as soon as they are able to write the alphabet and can read a few words. The website contains many videos, including subjects like alphabets, numbers, sight words, shapes, housework, days of the week and months of the year. Therefore, I am going to share some useful chants with you.

The Capital R

Big stick, circle and diagonal!
Big stick, circle and diagonal!
Big stick, circle and diagonal!

The Lower Case r

Short stick down, back up and a rainbow.
Short stick down, back up and a rainbow.
Short stick down, back up and a rainbow.
The lower case r.



Four is like a bunny,
As it hops across the floor,
Four is like a bunny,
4,4,4
Four is like a bunny,
As it hops across the floor,
Four is like a bunny,
4,4,4

Circle

A circle is like the sun,
A circle is like the moon,
A circle is like the ball I bounce,
Every afternoon.
Boom
A circle is like the sun,
A circle is like the moon,
A circle is like the ball I bounce,
Every afternoon.
Boom



Chants about sight words:

Like (Tune: 綠油精)

I like you, you like me.
I spell like l, i, k, e
With a great big hug
and a kiss for you and me
I spell like l, i, k, e

Go (from heidisongs.com)

G-o, G-o, G-o, G-o
I can spell a go, go, go.
G-o, G-o, G-o, G-o, G-o, G-o
Go, go, go, go, "go" to school

Black (from heidisongs.com)

B-L-A-C-K spells black.
Flying bat, pointy hat.
Black as night without a light.
B-L-A-C-K, black.

Jump (from heidisongs.com)

You gotta jump down,
turn around.
J-u-m-p
jump down, turn around.
J-u-m-p
jump down, turn around.
J-u-m-p
jump down, turn around.
J-u-m-p

Line up song

Zip it, lock it, put it in your
pocket, no more talking,
Sh, Sh, Sh~~~

Cleaning song

Clean up, clean up,
everybody everywhere,
Clean up, clean up,
everybody do your share.

Their (from heidisongs.com)

Oh! "Their" is written, "their" is written
T-H-E-I-R
For something that belongs to them.
It's T-H-E-I-R
Like it's their dolly, it's their house, or
Maybe it's their car.
For something that belongs to them.
It's T-H-E-I-R

Out (from heidisongs.com)

Go O-U-T the window,
Go O-U-T the window,
Go O-U-T the window,
'cause O-U-T spells out.

All (from heidisongs.com)

A-L-L spells all.
A-L-L spells all.
All, all
We all fall down.

But

"But" is spelled with a B-U-T
/b/, but, but ,B-U-T,
/b/, but, but ,B-U-T,
"But" is spelled with a B-U-T
Now jump, jump, jump but don't you
bump
Now jump, jump, jump but don't you
bump
/b/, but, but, B-U-T



Fight

F-i-g-h-t, we don't fight
F-i-g-h-t, we don't fight
Talk it over, walk away.
Find another game to play.
Talk it over, walk away.
Find another game to play.
F-i-g-h-t, we don't fight

Months

January, February, March,
April, May, June, July,
August, September, October,
November, December,
Happy New Year.

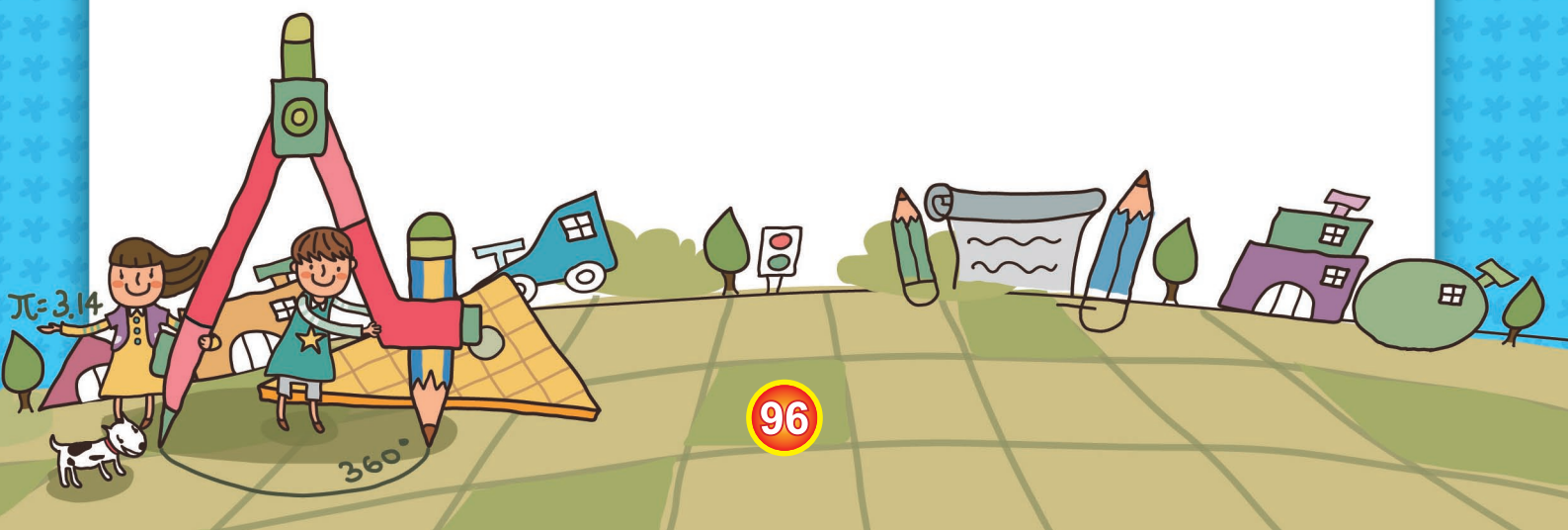
Days of the Week

Days of the Week (clap, clap)
Days of the Week (clap, clap)
Days of the Week
Days of the Week
Days of the Week (clap, clap)
There's Sunday and there's Monday.
There's Tuesday and there's Wednesday.
There's Thursday and there's Friday.
And there is Saturday.
Days of the Week (clap, clap)
Days of the Week (clap, clap)
Days of the Week
Days of the Week
Days of the Week (clap, clap)

Days of the week and months of the year are important topics when we teach our students. And there are too many words for students to memorize. If we can teach them these songs after teaching the subject, I believe students will have a deep impression on their minds.

Why Should Kids Learn Chant?

First of all, kids from kindergarten to 3rd graders love to sing and dance around. Chants are usually catchy and with some common vocabulary in them. While kids sing those songs, they can be entertained by the songs and remember a great amount of useful words and phrases. It is always fun to let kids sing and dance during the class. If you are teaching topics like body parts, you can use chants to review what they have learned and they will remember those words for good. What's more, after you teach one chant, students are not only learning that chant but also learn more if you use different words to replace the lyrics. Take *This Little Pig* for example, the song is like:



This little pig went to market,
This little pig stays at home,
This little pig has roast beef and
This little pig had none,
And this little pig cried wee, wee, wee,
All the way home.

You can replace “pig” with different kinds of animals, such as duck, mouse, dog, cat, etc.

This little dog went to market,
This little dog stays at home,
This little dog has roast beef and
This little dog had none,
And this little dog cried wee, wee, wee,
All the way home.

You can make chants by yourself too. While we took some English training courses from the coach teachers in the U.S.A., they gave us some examples of some catchy chants they made. For example:

Alex the Fearsome Leader

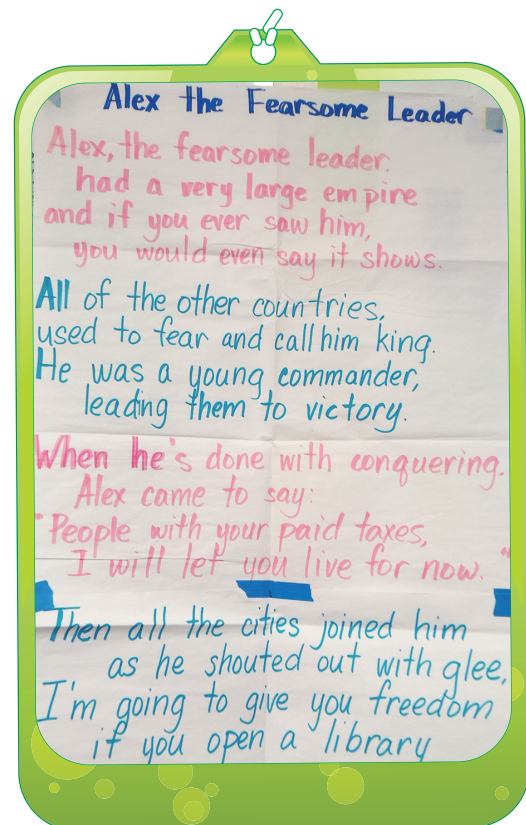
(Tune: *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*)

Alex, the fearsome leader
Had a very large empire,
And if you ever saw him,
You would even say it shows.

All of the other countries,
Used to fear and call him king.
He was a young commander,
Leading them to victory.

When he's done with conquering,
Alex came to say,
“People with your paid taxes,
I'll let you live for now.”

Then all the cities joined him,
As he shouted out with glee.
I'm going to give you freedom,
If you open a library.



This was the chant that made by our coach teacher, Barbara. She is the teacher of the year and she can teach from elementary to high school. She made this song for her history class in high school. She also made another one for elementary school students:

Tastes (Tune: *Where is Thumb kin?*)

What tastes sweet?
What tastes sweet?
Cookies and fruit,
Ice cream and cake.
They're sweet with sugar,
We love to eat them,
Yum, yum, yum,
Yum, yum, yum.

What tastes sour?
What tastes sour?
Lemon and limes,
Lemon and limes,
They're sour to make us pucker,
We love to eat them.
Yum, yum, yum.
Yum, yum, yum.



Isn't it amazing that we can turn all the knowledge in the textbook into catchy chants? We were all amazed by her talents. However, she told us if we would like to try, we could be as good as her. Therefore, she gave us some time to figure out a chant by ourselves and so we did! We made our own chants about Taiwan:

What Can You Do in Taiwan?

What can you do in Taipei 101?
Shopping, eating and dating.
What can we do in Sun-Moon Lake?
Swimming, fishing and kissing.
What can we do in Jade Mountain?
Hiking, bird-watching and proposing.
What can we do in Ken-Ting?
Surfing, diving and getting married.

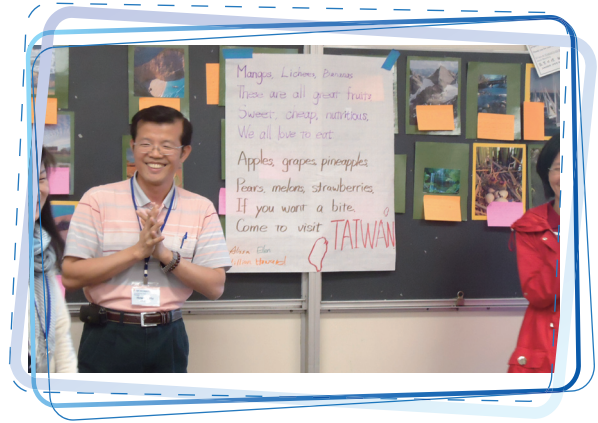


These chants can be used while we teach our kids locations in Taiwan. We not only can tell them where the place is but also what they can do there. Also, to make it more interesting, we added “dating, kissing, proposing, and getting married.” These are the words that students will have a lot of interests in.

The other team made a great chant too.

(Tune: 哥哥爸爸真偉大)

Mangos, lychees, bananas,
These are all great fruit,
Sweet, cheap, nutritious,
We all love to eat,
Apples, grapes, pineapples.
Pears, melons, strawberries,
If you want a bite,
Come to visit Taiwan.



This group did an even better job than us. They introduced some fruit that we eat in Taiwan. And they use a tune that we are all familiar with. Therefore, students will have a great time learning and singing this lovely song.

All the chants I provided can be found on heidisongs.com. It's a very useful website and Ms. Wood strongly recommended it to all of us.

After the training, I realized that there are many ways to teach our students. We can use TPR, songs and chants. Even if you can't find a way now, don't give up. Just keep learning. The more we learn, the more our students will benefit. I, myself, still have a lot to improve in my own teaching. Therefore, I seize every chance I have to learn. The principal of Mesa Robles said that not only students should learn effectively but also teachers should teach efficiently. The teaching skills we use determine if we teach effectively or not. Let's all learn together!

