High Utility Words! What, Why, and HOW!!

This month's tip is a list of the 37 most common spelling patterns (sometimes referred to as 'rimes' or 'word families'). Knowing these 37 spelling patterns will allow students to read and spell more than 500 words commonly used by young children (Wylie & Durrell, 1970). This list, including examples of words using each spelling pattern, was created by the Start-to-Finish team, who have developed the Start-to-Finish book series (www.donjohnston.com/stfpublishing). The list can be used for many different purposes:

1) **Word Walls.**   For beginning readers, be sure that you have one example of each of these 37 spelling patterns on your word wall. When creating the word wall examples, avoid using words that begin with a consonant blend (st, bl, pr, spl, etc.) or a consonant digraph (ph, th, sh, ch). Choose words that use a single consonant in front of the rime. Underline the rime. Following the first example in each word family, you can add words beginning with a consonant blend or digraph.

-ack	-est	-ight	-oke	-unk
back	best	fight	poke	sunk

   a. Refer to these words when helping students decode unknown words during reading. For example, the student is trying to decode /shack/. The teacher says, 'There's a word on the word wall that will help you . . . it's under the word family -ack ; can you find the word *back* ? <student needs another clue> . . . it's a red word' (the key word /back/ is on a red background).

   b. Refer to these words when helping students encode words for spelling. For example, the student is trying to spell the word /pest/. The teacher says, 'There's a word on the word wall that will help you. . . it's under the word family –est; can you find the word *best* . . . <student needs another clue> . . . it's the green word' (the key word, /best/ is on a green background).

Writing Books for Older Students Who Are Beginning Readers: This list can help you create texts with words that are highly decodable. For example, for very beginning, older readers, consider Literacy Starters (www.donjohnston.com/stfliteracystarters)

2)). As an author in that series, I can tell you that we consider the Wylie and Durrell list when selecting words. For example, in a transitional or conventional story, we would use the word /pick/ rather than /choose/, as it contains the high-frequency spelling pattern /-ick/. Similarly, given a choice of character names, we might select Zack (-ack) over Zach or Jerry.

3) **Creating Chants or Songs:**   This list of spelling patterns PLUS the examples is a highly portable 'rhyme table' which can help you quickly select words that rhyme and also use the same spelling pattern.

Do's and Don't's
1) Do use this list to help you make informed decisions about:
   a. Word Wall words
   b. Words to use in texts (especially conventional texts!)
   c. Words to use in songs and chants

2) Don't get carried away, and over-use spelling patterns in stories for older students.   That may result in books that sound artificial, contrived, and babyish! REMEMBER: Who really **cares** if Dan the tan man had a van, a can **OR** a fan???

3) For those very beginning, older readers, consider Literacy Starters (www.donjohnston.com/stfliteracystarters). Also consider the conventional stories in the Older Students Collection (Musselwhite & King-DeBaun), which includes 10 units, ranging from gardening to sports to nutrition, www.adaptedstories.com In addition, Musselwhite and Richardson use this list to support story writing in the school to work transition set, *Learning to Work,* available through www.aacintervention.com. I can assure you as an author in these series, that you will fine many examples of the Wylie & Durrell rimes.

4) Remember that it supports students in their learning if they are confronted with words that have the same spelling pattern (e.g, words that end with /-ain/, such as pain, gain, rain), but ALSO with words that have different spelling patterns, but

still rhyme (e.g., plane / rain). Don't get carried away with the Wylie and Durrell list to the exclusion of other spelling patterns, sound patterns, etc!

Thanks to Jerry Stemach for sharing this very useful, concise, *edited* list! If I were to give you Jerry's personal list, you might have to purge it of controversial words! (Just kidding, but it serves to remind us that when we are writing songs and stories for older, struggling readers, we need to write material that is age-appropriate and engaging.)

Wylie, R.E. & Durrell, D.D. Teaching vowels through phonograms. *Elementary English*, 47, 787-791.

37 Basic Phonograms
Wylie & Durrell

Rime	Examples
-ack	back, black, crack, Jack, Mack, sack, shack, stack, tack, track, rack, pack, whack Zack
-ail	fail, frail, Gail, hail, jail, mail, nail, pail, quail, rail, sail, tail, trail, wail
-ain	brain, drain, Cain, chain, gain, grain, main, pain, plain, rain stain, strain, train
-ake	bake, Blake, brake, cake, fake, Jake, lake, make, rake, sake, shake, stake, take, wake
-ale	ale, bale, Dale, Gale, male, pale, sale, stale, tale, whale
-ame	blame, came, dame, fame, flame, game, lame, name, same, shame, tame
-an	an, ban, can, Dan, fan, Fran, Jan, man, Nan, pan, plan, ran, Stan, tan, than, van
-ank	bank, blank, clank, Frank, Hank, sank, tank, thank, yank
-ap	cap, chap, clap, crap, flap, lap, map, nap, rap, sap, slap, strap, tap, trap, wrap, zap
-ash	ash, bash, cash, clash, crash, dash, flash, gash, lash, mash, rash, sash, splash, stash
-at	At, bat, brat, cat, fat, flat, hat, mat, pat, rat, sat, splat, stat, that
-ate	ate, crate, gate, grate, hate, late, mate, Nate, plate, rate, slate, state
-aw	caw, claw, draw, flaw, jaw, law, paw, saw, straw,
-ay	bay, clay, day, gray, hay, Jay, lay, may, pay, play, pray, say, slay, stay, stray way
-eat	beat, bleat, cheat, cleat, feat, heat meat, neat, seat, wheat,
-ell	bell, fell, hell, Nell, sell, swell, tell, well, yell,
-est	best, blest, chest, crest, jest, nest, pest, quest, rest, test, vest, west, zest
-ice	dice, ice, lice, mice, nice, price, rice, slice, splice, twice, vice,
-ick	click, brick, flick, hick, kick, lick, Nick, pick, quick, sick, slick, tick, thick, trick, wick
-ide	bride, glide, hide, pride, ride, side, slide, tide, wide,
-ight	bright, fright, knight, light, might, night, right, sight, tight,
-ill	bill, chill, dill, fill, gill, grill, hill, ill, Jill, kill, mill, pill, quill, shrill, sill, spill, still, till, will
-in	bin, chin, fin, gin, grin, in, kin, pin, sin, spin, thin, tin, twin, win, zin(!)
-ine	dine, fine, line, mine, nine, pine, shine, shrine, twine, wine
-ing	bing, bring, cling, ding, fling, king, ping, ring, sing, sting, string, wing, wring, zing
-ink	blink, brink, clink, drink, ink, kink, link, mink, rink, sink, shrink, stink, think, wink,
-ip	chip, clip, dip, drip, flip, grip, hip, lip, nip, rip, sip, slip, snip, strip, tip, trip, whip, zip
-it	bit, fit, flit, grit, hit, kit, knit, lit, pit, quit, sit, slit, snit, spit, split, zit
-ock	block, clock, crock, dock, flock, jock, knock, lock, mock, rock, shock, sock, stock,
-oke	bloke, broke, choke, coke, joke, poke, smoke, stoke, stroke, woke, yoke,
-op	bop, chop, cop, crop, drop, flop, glop, hop, lop, mop, pop, shop, slop, stop, top
-ore	bore, chore, core, gore, lore, more, shore, snore, sore, store, tore, wore, yore
-ot	blot, clot, cot, dot, got, hot, jot, knot, lot, not, pot, rot, shot, slot, spot, tot, trot
-uck	buck, cluck, duck, Huck, luck, muck, pluck, puck, suck, stuck, struck, tuck, truck, yuck
-ug	bug, chug, drug, dug, glug, hug, jug, mug, plug, rug, shrug, slug, smug, snug, thug, tug
-ump	bump, chump, clump, dump, hump, jump, lump, pump, rump, slump, stump, thump
-unk	Bunk, chunk, clunk, drunk, dunk, funk, gunk, hunk, junk, plunk, punk, sunk, stunk

This table contains examples of single syllable words containing a rime from Wylie and Durrell's list of the 37 most frequently occurring rimes in early grade reading. These words (and others) are counted if they end in the rime (i.e., no plural or possessive marker and no suffix). Thus, count *duck*, but not *ducks* (plural), *duck's* (possessive), or *ducks, ducked, ducking* (verb forms).