

# Many Uses: The 100 Most-Frequent Words in Written English

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This list illustrates the multiple uses of words in the core vocabulary, especially the most frequent 100 words in written English. What these many uses mean for reading development is explained at <http://textproject.org/topics/core-vocabulary/>

**Homophones** are words that sound the same but have different spellings and meanings. (Examples are complete.)

**Multiple-meaning words** are words with the same spelling but with different origins and meanings (e.g., *down, just*). Many words are used as different parts of speech and vary in their meaning (*call, may*) but multiple-meaning words have more than one unique entry. (Examples are complete.)

**Idioms** are phrases that do not have a literal meaning. (Only a single example has been given per word. For some words (e.g., *call, said*), there are numerous idioms; for other words, there are none or only the example provided.)

**Compound words** are made up of two root words, which contribute to the meaning of the new word. However, often the precise meaning of the compound word needs to be inferred. For example, *watercolor* does not refer to the color of water. (Only a single example has been given per word. Some words (e.g., *up, one*) are used in many additional compound words. For other words, the example is the only instance.)

	Homophone	Multiple Meanings	Idioms	Compound Words
a			A parting shot	
about		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>relating to a particular subject (prep)</li><li>a little more or less than a number or amount (adv)</li></ul>	Up and about	about-face
after		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>when a particular something has happened (prep &amp; conj)</li><li>later than something (adv)</li></ul>	After all is said and done	afterward



all	awl (tool)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• whole of a thing (determiner, pro)</li> <li>• completely (adv)</li> </ul>	All systems go	all-nighter
an	Ann(e)		Cost an arm and a leg	another
and			And how!	
are				
as			As if	
at			At once	
be	bee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Auxiliary verb</li> <li>• Linking verb</li> </ul>	Be in the way	beside
been	bin		Been all ears	
but	butt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• connect statements when 2<sup>nd</sup> statement adds something different from 1<sup>st</sup> (conj)</li> <li>• except for (prep)</li> </ul>	It's all over but the shouting.	
by	buy bye	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• used with passive forms of verbs to show who did something (prep).</li> <li>• by (adv)</li> </ul>	By the skin of one's teeth	bypass
call	caul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• telephone (v)</li> <li>• action of telephoning (n)</li> </ul>	Call it a day	call waiting
can		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• able to (v)</li> <li>• metal container (n)</li> </ul>	Bite off more than one can chew	cannot
could				
did				
do	dew due		Do the trick	
down		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• from high to low (adv)</li> <li>• soft feathers (n)</li> <li>• grassy field (n)</li> </ul>	Down in the dumps	downbeat
each		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• every one of two or more things (pro)</li> <li>• for or to every one (adv)</li> </ul>	To each his own	
find	fined		Find oneself	



first		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• coming before all the other (adj)</li> <li>• before anything or anyone else (adv)</li> </ul>	First hand	firsthand
for	four fore	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to be given or used by something (prep)</li> <li>• because (conj)</li> </ul>	For ages	forward
from			A far cry from (something)	
had			Had it coming	
has			One has to draw the line somewhere	
have		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• auxiliary verb</li> <li>• saying what something looks like (v)</li> </ul>	Have it made	
he			He who pays the piper pays the tune.	
her		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• belong to female (adj)</li> <li>• object form of she (pro)</li> </ul>	Let her rip!	herself
him	hymn		Good things come to him who waits.	himself
his		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• belong to male (adj)</li> <li>• object form of he (pro)</li> </ul>	A man of his word	
how			How come?	know-how
I	aye eye		If I had my druthers	
if		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• refer to something that might happen (conj)</li> <li>• condition or possiblility (n)</li> </ul>	No ifs, ands, or buts	
in	inn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• used with name of something (prep)</li> <li>• to be contained inside (adj, adv)</li> </ul>	In hot water; in front of the pack; in joke/crowd; have it in for; ins and outs; in with; in that	inbound
into			Out of the frying pan and into the fire	



is				
it			Don't mention it.	itself
its	It's			
just		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• exactly, immediately (adv)</li> <li>• lawful (adj)</li> </ul>	Just the same (nevertheless); Just now (a moment ago); He's just biding his time.	
know	no		Know a thing or two; know what's what	know-it-all
like		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• similar to (prep)</li> <li>• enjoy something (v)</li> </ul>	Like pulling teeth	likewise
little		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• small in size (adj)</li> <li>• only a small amount (quantifier)</li> <li>• not much (adv)</li> </ul>	A little bird told me	little finger
long		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• measurement (adj)</li> <li>• for an extended time (adv)</li> <li>• to feel a strong yearning (v)</li> </ul>	Before long; so long as; long and short of (the story); so long	long-distance
made	maid		Made of money	taylor-made
make		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to produce something (v)</li> <li>• product (n)</li> </ul>	Make do	make-believe
many			In so many words	
may		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• month (n)</li> <li>• might (v)</li> </ul>	Come what may	maybe
more	moor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• having a quality to a greater degree (adv)</li> <li>• quantifier</li> </ul>	Bite off more than can chew	moreover
most		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Having greatest amount (adv)</li> <li>• quantifier</li> </ul>	Make the most of (something)	most-wanted
my			Love me, love my dog	myself
no	know	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• negative reply to a question (adv)</li> <li>• not any (determiner)</li> </ul>	No dice	nowhere
not	knot		Do not buy that story	cannot



now			Now or never	nowadays
of			Let go of	
on			Hang on a little longer; put on the dog	online
one	won	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>number</li> <li>someone or something (pro)</li> </ul>	One in a million	ne-way
only		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not more than a particular something (adv)</li> <li>specify more than one thing and no others (adj)</li> <li>except that (conj)</li> </ul>	Only have eyes for you	
or	oar ore		It's now or never	either-or
other			Drop the other shoe	
out		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>away from the inside (adv, adj)</li> <li>from inside or through something (prep)</li> </ul>	Tired out; out of order	take-out
over		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>above or higher than something (prep)</li> <li>down from an upright position (adv)</li> </ul>	Take over; think over; over and over	overnight
people			Put people's heads together	
said		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>past tense of say (v)</li> <li>giving more information about something (adj)</li> </ul>	Easier said than done	
see	sea		See the light	see-through
she			Less said, the better	
so	sow sew	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>emphasize what is being said (adv)</li> <li>conj</li> </ul>	So to speak	so-called
some	sum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>quantifier</li> <li>pro</li> <li>determiner</li> </ul>	In some way	something
than		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li></li> </ul>	Larger than life	



that		•	This and that	
the		• determiner • conj	Fill the bill	
their	there they're			
them			If you can't beat them, join them.	themselves
then			Every now and then	
there	their they're	• something exists or happens (pro) • particular place that is not where speaker is (adv)	There, there.	thereabouts
these			One of these days	
they				
this			This is the life!	
time	thyme	• minutes (n) • to do something at a particular time (v)	In no time	timeout
to	two too	• used with basic form of a verb to make infinitive • prep	His back is to the wall.	today
two	to too		Put two and two together	two-faced
up		• toward a higher place (adv, prep) • awake (adj)	Up in the air	upside
use		• do something with something for a purpose (v) • act of using (n)	Have no use for	
very		• emphasize an adjective, adverb (adv) • emphasize reference to a particular something (adj)	The very idea	
was				



water		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clear colorless liquid (n)</li> <li>• to pour water on plant/seeds (v)</li> </ul>	Water under the bridge	watercolor
way	weigh whey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• road, path (n)</li> <li>• long in distance or time (adv)</li> </ul>	In the way	wayside
we	wee			
were	whirr			werewolf
what	watt		What's up?	what-not
when				whenever
where	wear ware			whereby
which	witch			whichever
who			Who do you think you're talking to?	whoever
will		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• used to make future tense (modal v)</li> <li>• deliberate intentions (n)</li> </ul>	Where there's a will, there's a way	willpower
with			Stick with (something)	without
word		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• language part (n)</li> <li>• to use words carefully (v)</li> </ul>	A man of few words	word family
would	wood		As luck would have it	would-be
you	ewe yew		You bet	
your	you're yore		Worth your salt	yourself

**Code:**

adj=adjective

adv=adverb

conj=conjunction

n=noun

prep=preposition

pro=pronoun

v=verb



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