

THE TEACHER'S WORD BOOK

By EDWARD L. THORNDIKE

*Professor of Educational Psychology, Teachers College
Columbia University*

PUBLISHED BY

Teachers College, Columbia University

NEW YORK CITY

1921

Copyright, 1921, by Teachers College

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THE TEACHER'S WORD BOOK

THE TEACHER'S WORD BOOK is an alphabetical list of the 10,000 words which are found to occur most widely in a count of about 625,000 words from literature for children; about 3,000,000 words from the Bible and English classics; about 300,000 words from elementary-school text books; about 50,000 words from books about cooking, sewing, farming, the trades, and the like; about 90,000 words from the daily newspapers; and about 500,000 words from correspondence. Forty-one different sources were used.

A measure of the range and frequency of each word's occurrence is given by the credit-number following it. *Range* answers the question, "How many of these forty-one different sources use the word?" or "How *widely* is the word used?" *Frequency* answers the question, "How *often* is the word used?" If this credit-number is 49 or over, it means that the word is in the 1st 1000 for importance. A credit-number from 29 to 48 means that the word is in the 2nd 1000. A credit of 19 to 28 places it in the 3rd 1000. A credit of 14 to 18 places it in the 4th 1000. A credit of 10 to 13 places it in the 5th 1000 (reaching to 5144 to be exact). The other 5000 words are those with credit of 9 (400 words); 8 (503 words); 7 (571 words); 6 (644 words); 5 (883 words); 4 (1045 words); and 3 (810 words).

In the case of the 5000 most important words, the credit number is followed by a number and letter stating in which thousand and in which half thereof the word belongs. Thus "43 2a" means that the word has an importance of 43 and is in the 1st half of the 2nd 1000. "21 3b" means that the word has an importance of 21 and is in the 2nd half of the 3rd 1000.

Within the 1st 500 words there is a further distinction into hundreds, 1a1 meaning that the word is one of the 1st 100; 1a2 meaning that it is in the 2nd 100; 1a3 meaning that it is in the 3rd 100, and so on.

This list is not a perfect measure of the importance of words, for two reasons. First, a word may be very important for a pupil

or graduate to know and yet not figure largely in the world's reading. Second, tens of thousands of hours of further counting would be required to measure the frequency of occurrence of all of these words with exactness. If a complete count were made, there would probably be several hundred words found more deserving of a place in the top ten thousand than some of those now included, and the order of the list would be somewhat changed.

For certain reasons the credits for abbreviations like *in.*, *bbl.*, *yd.*, *etc.*, are probably too low, and far less reliable than those for words. The concordances, vocabularies, and most of the counts made by others have not paid due attention to abbreviations. However, the list as it stands is far better than any that has hitherto been available and will be a help to all teachers in estimating the commonness and importance of words.

The conscientious and thoughtful teacher now spends much time and thought in deciding what pedagogical treatment to use in the case of the words that offer difficulty to pupils. If she is teaching reading she finds, according to Miller, over nine thousand words¹ used in standard Third Readers. Many of these probably should not be taught at all in that grade; others should be explained at the time to serve the purpose of the story but then left to their fate; others should be thoroughly taught and reviewed. This Word Book helps the teacher to decide quickly which treatment is appropriate by telling her just how important any word is. In teaching history or geography or elementary science, almost any book lesson contains one or more words with which some of the pupils will not be familiar. Which are these, and in which cases should the occasion be used to master the word for future use? Decision obviously depends upon how important the word is. In many cases knowledge of how important the word is is all that is needed for decision.

A second practical service of the Word Book is to provide the less experienced teacher with that knowledge both of the importance of words and of their difficulty which the expert teacher has acquired by years of experience with pupils and with books. The beginner at teaching may profitably take the words in any lesson and try to judge how important each is, checking her estimates by the facts of the Word Book. She can thus obtain by a few hours of easy study what would have required

¹ This number includes, however, many derived forms.

months of difficult learning by class-room experimentation; and the experiences of the class-room will be made much more instructive to her.

A third service to all teachers, from the most expert to those just beginning their training, is to provide a convenient place to record any useful facts about these words by which teaching can be guided and improved. For example, the teacher may jot down after a certain word "5," meaning that she seeks to secure mastery of that word in grade 5; "g 49" meaning that the strategic time and place to teach the word is in connection with the geography work on page 49 of a certain book or syllabus; "ex. by . . ." to remind her of the devices she has found most serviceable to explain the meaning of the word. The Word Book will thus become a real treasure-house of help in a form readily available.

The teacher may also wisely enter in the list words that are of local importance, such as, for New York City, *subway* and *elevated*.

It should be noted that, except for special reasons, separate entries are not made of plurals in *s*; plurals where *y* is replaced by *ies*; adverbs formed by adding *ly*; comparatives and superlatives formed by adding *er* and *est*,² or *r* and *st*; verb forms in *s*, *d*, *ed*³ and *ing*; past participles formed by adding *n*, and adjectives formed by adding *n* to proper nouns. For example:

<i>boys, girls, berries</i>	are counted in with <i>boy, girl, berry</i>
<i>badly, sadly</i>	are counted in with <i>bad, sad</i>
<i>longer, bravest</i>	are counted in with <i>long, brave</i>
<i>plays, playing, played</i>	are counted in with <i>play</i>
<i>thrown, outgrown</i>	are counted in with <i>throw, outgrow</i>
<i>Austrian, Bavarian</i>	are counted in with <i>Austria, Bavaria</i>

By entering such derivatives under their primary forms, the list is made shorter and easier to use.

Where separate entries do occur, it is because the derived word is likely to offer some difficulty to pupils, and not to be known easily from knowledge of the primary word. Thus *likely* would not be known from *like*; *being* and *building* should probably often be learned independently of *be* and *build*; and *coming* may appear in the work of Grade 1 before there has been enough experience of *ing* to enable the pupil to derive it by himself.

² Including changes of *y* to *ies* and *iest*.

³ Including changes of *y* to *ies* and *ied*.

It should be noted further that this is *not* a spelling list. If it is used as an aid in the construction of spelling lists, the derived forms in *s, ies, ly, er, r, est, st, s, ed, d, ing*, and *n* should be inserted. They may offer notable difficulty in spelling even when easily read and understood by derivation.

A full account of the methods by which this list was selected, of the reliability of the credits attached to the words, and of the uses to which the list may be put, will be found in an article of thirty-seven pages, entitled "Word Knowledge in the Elementary School," by E. L. Thorndike, published in the *TEACHERS COLLEGE RECORD* for September, 1921.⁴

For convenience in certain uses, there is added on pages 127-134 a list of the 2500 words of most wide and frequent occurrence, arranged in five sets of 500 each.

KEY

In the list of words on pages 1 to 126, the numbers in the first column immediately following the column of words are the credit-numbers. Words having a credit-number of 49 or over are found in the 1st 1000 words in importance; those having a credit-number of 29 to 48 are found in the 2nd 1000, and so on; while those having a credit-number of 8 lie between the 5545th and the 6047th word in importance, and so on. A summary of the scheme follows.

CREDIT-NUMBER	POSITION OF WORD
49 or over	1 to 1000
29 to 48	1001 to 2000
19 to 28	2001 to 3000
14 to 18	3001 to 4000
10 to 13	4001 to 5144
9	5145 to 5544
8	5545 to 6047
7	6048 to 6618
6	6619 to 7262
5	7263 to 8145
4	8146 to 9190
3	9191 to 10000

In the case of the 5000 most important words, the credit-number is followed by a second number combined with a letter which indicates in which thousand and in which half thereof the word belongs. Thus 2a means that the word is in the 1st half of the 2nd 1000, 3b means that the word is in the 2nd half of the 3rd 1000. Within the 1st 500 words there is a further distinction into hundreds, 1a1 meaning that the word is one of the 1st 100; 1a2 meaning that it is in the 2nd 100; 1a3, that it is in the 3rd 100; 1a4, that it is in the 4th 100; 1a5, that it is in the 5th 100.

⁴ Copies of this number of *THE RECORD* may be had at 40 cents per copy from the Bureau of Publications, 525 West 120th Street, New York City. The article will also be available later in pamphlet form.

A to Acre

a	208	1a1	abuse	21	3b
Aaron	6		abyss	9	
abandon	17	4a	academy	9	
abash(ed)	4		accent	14	4b
abate	10	5b	accept	47	2a
abbey	9		acceptance	9	
abbot	7		access	11	5b
abdomen	5		accessory	4	
Abe	3		accident	26	4a
abed	5		accidental	5	
Abel	5		accommodate	10	5b
abhor	14	4b	accommodation	8	
abide	18	4a	accompaniment	3	
ability	16	4a	accompany	34	2b
abject	7		accomplish	31	2b
able	70	1b	accomplishment	5	
aboard	15	4b	accord	16	4a
abode	17	4a	accordance	8	
abolish	10	5b	according	48	2a
abominable	9		accordingly	20	3b
abomination	5		accost	5	
abound	10	5b	account	63	1b
about	172	1a1	accumulate	3	
above	101	1a3	accurate	3	
Abraham	14	4b	accursed	13	5a
abridge	4		accusation	8	
abroad	23	3a	accuse	22	3b
abrupt	7		accuser	5	
absence	22	3b	accustom	26	3a
absent	25	3a	ache	21	3b
absolute	29	2b	achieve	14	4b
absolve	8		achievement	7	
absorb	8		acid	9	
absorbent	3		acknowledge	18	4a
abstain	6		acorn	10	5b
abstinence	3		acquaint	22	3b
abstract	3		acquaintance	26	3a
absurd	8		acquire	20	3b
abundance	21	3b	acquit	3	
abundant	21	3b	acre	34	2b

Across to Affright

across	84	1a5	adopt	23	3a
act	70	1b	adoption	10	5b
action	36	2a	adoration	3	
active	24	3a	adore	16	4a
activity	7		adorn	17	4a
actor	13	5a	adornment	3	
actress	3		adult	5	
actual	31	2b	adultery	4	
acute	5		advance	45	2a
Adam	13	5a	advancement	8	
Adams	4		advantage	40	2a
adapt	5		advantageous	3	
add	75	1a	adventure	22	3b
addition	28	2b	adventurer	4	
additional	11	5b	adventurous	7	
address	45	2a	adverb	4	
adequate	3		adversary	10	5b
adhere	3		adverse	8	
adieu	8		adversity	7	
adjacent	6		advertise	12	5a
adjective	6		advertisement	7	
adjoin	12	5a	advice	30	2b
adjourn	3		advisable	3	
adjudge	4		advise	29	2b
adjust	9		adviser	5	
adjustment	5		advocate	5	
administer	6		adze	4	
administration	12	5a	Aeneas	4	
administrator	5		aerial	5	
admirable	6		aeroplane	4	
admiral	12	5a	afar	11	5b
admiration	16	4a	affair	34	2b
admire	36	2a	affect	27	3a
admirer	6		affection	21	3b
admission	10	5b	affectionate	10	5b
admit	33	2b	affirm	13	5a
admittance	4		afflict	13	5a
admonish	9		affliction	11	5b
admonition	4		afford	23	3a
ado	6		affright(ed)	12	5a

Affront to Alligator

affront	4		aisle	10	5b
afire	5		akin	4	
afloat	9		Alabama	7	
afoot	4		alabaster	4	
afore	5		alacrity	3	
afraid	54	1b	alarm	29	2b
afresh	4		alas	25	3a
Africa(n)	28	2b	Alaska	4	
after	158	1a1	Albany	12	5a
afternoon	59	1b	albeit	6	
afterward	44	2a	Albert	8	
again	151	1a1	album	6	
against	114	1a1	alcohol	7	
age	71	1b	alcove	4	
aged	9		alder	5	
agency	10	5b	alderman	8	
agent	14	4b	ale	10	5b
aggravate	7		alert	5	
aggressive	4		Alexander	13	5a
aghaſt	4		Alexandria	4	
agitate	5		alfalfa	7	
ago	74	1b	Alfred	9	
agony	16	4a	algebra	6	
agree	47	2a	Alice	19	3b
agreeable	21	3b	alien	7	
agreement	12	5a	alienate	3	
agricultural	14	4b	alight	11	5b
agriculture	24	3a	alike	29	2b
ague	4		alive	41	2a
ah	40	2a	all	203	1a1
aha	4		allay	6	
ahead	20	3b	allege	9	
aid	47	2a	Allegheny	3	
ail	9		allegiance	10	5b
aim	34	2b	Allen	3	
ain't	4		alley	12	5a
air	91	1a4	alliance	6	
airplane			allied	8	
(see aeroplane)			(see also ally)		
airy	13	5a	alligator	7	

Allow to Angrily

allow	63	1b	ambition	23	3a
allowable	4		ambitious	15	4b
allowance	6		ambush	6	
allure	11	5b	amen	8	
ally	5		amend	12	5a
almanac	5		amendment	16	4a
almighty	13	5a	America	48	2a
almond	7		American	56	1b
almost	90	1a4	amiable	8	
alms	13	5a	amid	13	5a
aloes	4		amidst	4	
aloft	10	5b	amiss	8	
alone	89	1a4	amity	4	
along	99	1a3	ammonia	5	
alongside	5		ammunition	7	
aloof	9		among	106	1a3
aloud	26	3a	amongst	8	
alphabet	5		amount	51	1b
Alps	9		ample	20	3b
already	73	1b	Amsterdam	7	
also	119	1a2	amuse	17	4a
altar	22	3b	amusement	10	5b
alter	21	3b	Amy	6	
alteration	5		an	181	1a1
alternate	8		analysis	5	
although	68	1b	anarchy	4	
altitude	8		ancestor	16	4a
altogether	21	3b	anchor	21	3b
aluminum	3		ancient	37	2a
alumni	4		and	210	1a1
always	94	1a4	Anderson	4	
am	91	1a4	Andes	5	
amain	7		Andrew	14	4b
amateur	4		anecdote	5	
amaze	19	3b	anew	7	
amazement	11	5b	angel	40	2a
Amazon	7		angelic	6	
ambassador	13	5a	anger	36	2a
amber	11	5b	angle	15	4b
ambiguous	3		angrily	3	

Angry to Appreciate

angry	47	2a	any	158	1a1
anguish	11	5b	anybody	21	3b
animal	70	1b	anyhow	9	
animate	8		anyone	20	3b
animosity	3		anything	58	1b
ankle	16	4a	anyway	14	4b
Ann	7		anywhere	15	4b
Anna	12	5a	apace	5	
annal	5		apart	39	2a
Anne	14	4b	apartment	12	5a
annex	5		ape	9	
Annie	6		aperture	6	
annihilate	3		apiece	12	5a
anniversary	10	5b	Apollo	6	
announce	10	5b	apology	4	
announcement	7		apostle	4	
annoy	10	5b	apothecary	4	
annoyance	4		Appalachian	4	
annual	26	3a	appall	6	
anoint	10	5b	apparatus	7	
anon	11	5b	apparel	10	5b
another	116	1a2	apparent	15	4b
answer	91	1a4	apparition	6	
ant	16	4a	appeal	25	3a
antagonist	3		appear	70	1b
antarctic	4		appearance	32	2b
Anthony	5		appease	9	
anthracite	3		appertain	4	
anti	5		appetite	21	3b
antic	4		applaud	8	
anticipate	7		applause	13	5a
Antioch	5		apple	78	1a5
antique	8		appliance	4	
antiquity	10	5b	applicant	5	
antiseptic	3		application	21	3b
Antonio	4		applied (<i>see</i> apply)		
Antony	4		apply	36	2a
anvil	10	5b	appoint	38	2a
anxiety	5		appointment	15	4b
anxious	29	2b	appreciate	13	5a

Appreciation to Ashamed

<i>appreciation</i>	4		<i>aristocratic</i>	7	
appreciative	3		arithmetic	6	
apprehend	8		Arizona	5	
apprehension	6		ark	12	5a
apprehensive	3		Arkansas	5	
approach	43	2a	arm	96	1a3
approbation	4		armful	3	
appropriate	6		armhole	5	
approval	6		armor(ed)	27	3a
approve	30	2b	army	59	1b
approximate	4		arose	27	3a
apricot	4		around	95	1a3
April	39	2a	arouse	11	5b
apron	22	3b	arrange	35	2b
apt	12	5a	arrangement	13	5a
aquarium	4		arrant	7	
Arab	8		array	16	4a
Arabia(n)	14	4b	arrest	18	4a
Aragon	4		arrival	21	3b
arbitrary	5		arrive	57	1b
arbor	9		arrogant	5	
arch	29	2b	arrow	29	2b
archbishop	6		arsenal	4	
archer	6		art	68	1b
architect	5		artful	6	
architecture	6		Arthur	19	3b
archway	4		article	52	1b
arctic	11	5b	artificial	12	5a
ardent	6		artillery	6	
ardor	5		artisan	4	
are	183	1a1	artist	21	3b
area	25	3a	artistic	11	5b
aren't	6		artless	4	
Argentina (e)	8		as	204	1a1
argue	11	5b	ascend	24	3a
argument	19	3b	ascent	5	
Ariel	5		ascertain	7	
<i>aright</i>	4		<i>ascribe</i>	7	
arise	24	3a	ash (ashes)	23	3a
(see also arose)			ashamed	29	2b

Ashore to Audible

shore	16	4a	astronomy	3	
asia	28	2b	asunder	10	5b
side	27	3a	asylum	3	
sk	94	1a4	at	203	1a1
sleep	48	2a	ate	33	2b
sparagus	6		Athenian	7	
spect	10	5b	Athens	10	5b
sphalt	5		athletic	11	5b
spiration	6		athwart	4	
spire	8		Atlanta	3	
ss	21	3b	Atlantic	35	2b
ssail	11	5b	atmosphere	11	5b
ssassinate	3		atom	4	
ssault	15	4b	atone	4	
ssay	6		atonement	4	
ssemblage	4		attach	20	3b
ssemble	23	3a	attachment	5	
ssembly	25	3a	attack	33	2b
ssent	6		attain	21	3b
ssert	14	4b	attainment	3	
ssess	4		attempt	38	2a
ssessment	3		attend	57	1b
assign	20	3b	attendance	12	5a
assignment	4		attendant	13	5a
assist	29	2b	attention	35	2b
assistance	17	4a	attentive	13	5a
assistant	8		attest	8	
associate	21	3b	attic	10	5b
association	15	4b	attire	14	4b
assortment	5		attitude	10	5b
assume	20	3b	attorney	13	5a
assurance	11	5b	attract	17	4a
assure	34	2b	attraction	10	5b
assuredly	3		attractive	16	4a
Assyria(n)	6		attribute	10	5b
aster	3		auburn	6	
astonish	23	3a	auction	4	
astonishment	11	5b	auctioneer	3	
astound	4		audacious	3	
astray	6		audible	5	

Audience to Baker

audience	16	4a	away	125	1a2
Aug.	9		awe	17	4a
auger	4		awful	33	2b
aught	8		awhile	20	3b
augment	7		awkward	9	
August	37	2a	awning	4	
Augustus	5		awoke	13	5a
aunt	40	2a	ax (axe)	30	2b
aurora	4		axis	8	
austere	6		axle	8	
Australia(n)	12	5a	Axminster	4	
Austria(n)	11	5b	ay	12	5a
authentic	6		aye	7	
author	27	3a	azure	8	
authority	28	2b			
authorize	7		baa	5	
auto	13	5a	babble	14	4b
automatic	7		babbler	4	
automobile	33	2b	babe	17	4a
autumn	35	2b	(see baby and babies)		
autumnal	4		Babel	4	
auxiliary	4		baby (ies)	61	1b
avail	11	5b	Babylon	9	
available	5		bachelor	8	
avalanche	3		back	133	1a2
avarice	8		backbone	5	
Ave.	3		backward	22	3b
avenge	11	5b	bacon	18	4a
avenger	4		bad	82	1a5
avenue	30	2b	bade	26	3a
average	24	3a	badge	9	
aversion	4		badger	7	
avert	4		baffle	7	
avoid	31	2b	bag	57	1b
await	32	2b	baggage	7	
awake	41	2a	bagpipe	5	
(see awoke)			bail	6	
awaken	14	4b	bait	13	5a
award	7		bake	41	2a
aware	11	5b	baker	18	4a

Balance to Bauble

balance	31	2b	bargain	23	3a
balcony	4		barge	8	
bald	9		bark	48	2a
bale	5		barley	18	4a
balk	4		barn	41	2a
ball	76	1a5	barnyard	7	
ballad	8		baron	10	5b
balloon	5		barrel	25	3a
ballot	6		barren	19	3b
balm	13	5a	barrette	4	
balmy	7		barrier	11	5b
Baltic	4		barrow	4	
Baltimore	14	4b	barter	3	
bamboo	8		base	48	2a
ban	4		baseball	10	5b
banana	14	4b	basement	4	
band	57	1b	baseness	5	
bandage	5		bashful	11	5b
bandit	4		bashfulness	3	
bang	10	5b	basin	20	3b
banish	19	3b	basis	14	4b
banishment	10	5b	bask	4	
banjo	4		basket	54	1b
bank	83	1a5	bass	7	
banker	10	5b	bastard	8	
bankrupt	4		baste	5	
bankruptcy	3		bastings	3	
banner	22	3b	bat	19	3b
bannock	6		bath	27	3a
banquet	21	3b	bathe	27	3a
baptism	7		bathrobe	3	
Baptist	6		bathroom	6	
baptize	6		batiste	4	
bar	44	2a	battalion	3	
barbarian	7		batter	7	
barbarous	11	5b	battery	12	5a
barber	12	5a	battle	57	1b
bard	12	5a	battlement	5	
bare	47	2a	battleship	4	
barefoot	8		bauble	5	

Bawl to Bell

bawl	6		beech	8	
bay	52	1b	beef	20	3b
bayonet	7		been	159	1a1
bbl. (bbls.)	4		beer	12	5a
be	206	1a1	beet	11	5b
beach	30	2b	beetle	11	5b
beacon	5		befall	16	4a
bead	22	3b	befell	5	
beading	4		before	159	1a1
beak	12	5a	beforehand	10	5b
beam	44	2a	befriend	6	
bean	30	2b	beg	45	2a
beanstock	6		began	73	1b
bear	92	1a4	beget	9	
beard	29	2b	beggar	24	3a
bearer	10	5b	beggarly	3	
bearing (<i>noun</i>)	6		begin	97	1a3
beast	56	1b	beginner	6	
beat	69	1b	begone	4	
beaten	8		begot	8	
beau	9		beguile	13	5a
beauteous	9		begun	35	2b
beautiful	75	1a	behalf	16	4a
beautify	6		behave	16	4a
beauty	55	1b	behavior	7	
beaver	8		behead	8	
became	48	2a	beheld	22	3b
because	108	1a3	behind	95	1a3
beck	4		behold	37	2a
beckon	10	5b	being	91	1a4
become	88	1a4	belated	4	
bed	105	1a3	belch	4	
bedchamber	3		belfry	3	
bedding	4		Belgian	4	
bedlam	4		Belgium	8	
bedroom	17	4a	belie	4	
bedspread	4		belief	19	3b
bedstead	4		believe	77	1a5
bedtime	6		believer	5	
bee	58	1b	bell	66	1b

Belle to Birthplace

belle	4		betake	4	
bellow	16	4a	Beth	6	
belly	10	5b	bethink	6	
belong	62	1b	Bethlehem	6	
beloved	19	3b	bethought	4	
below	46	2a	betide	5	
belt	31	2b	betimes	6	
bemoan	4		betray	23	3a
Ben	9		betroth(ed)	9	
bench	33	2b	better	105	1a3
bend	40	2a	Betty	18	4a
beneath	39	2a	between	119	1a2
benediction	4		betwixt	8	
benefactor	4		bevel	5	
benefit	30	2b	bewail	10	5b
benevolence	4		beware	14	4b
benign	5		bewilder(ed)	5	
Benjamin	13	5a	bewitch	8	
bent	29	2b	beyond	29	2b
benzine	3		bias	8	
bequeath	6		bib	7	
bereave	6		bible	14	4b
bereft	7		bicycle	16	4a
Berkeley	7		bid	42	2a
Berlin	6		bide	9	
berry	31	2b	bier	6	
berth	5		big (ger, gest)	89	1a4
beseech	11	5b	bill (B)	67	1b
beseem	6		billow	12	5a
beset	9		Billy	23	3a
beside	58	1b	bin	6	
besides	13	5a	bind	36	2a
besiege	12	5a	binder	4	
besought	5		biography	3	
bespeak	4		birch	14	4b
Bess	16	4a	bird	79	1a5
best	107	1a3	birdie	9	
bestow	20	3b	birth	37	2a
bestride	4		birthday	34	2b
bet	9		birthplace	7	