Little Wandle SEND programme: Tricky words
Information for parents and carers

'Tricky words' are words that cannot easily be decoded ('sounded out' and read). This is because some of the sounds in the words are spelled in an unusual way. We teach these words early on as they are among the most common words in English.

Children will practise the words in school until they can read them automatically. They will also read the tricky words in the decodable books that they bring home.

This document lists the tricky words that your child will learn in each phase of their Little Wandle reading programme and explains why the words are tricky.

Some of the tricky words will become decodable later in the programme as children learn different spellings for the sounds. The words in shaded rows have rare spellings and remain 'tricky' throughout.

Terminology

Phoneme: The smallest unit of sound that can be identified in words. We also use the term 'sound'. There are 44 phonemes or sounds in the English language.

Grapheme: A letter or group of letters used to represent a sound in writing. The way graphemes are used to represent sounds in our written language is known as the alphabetic code.

Decode: To break down ('sound out') a written word into sounds then blend the sounds together to read the word.

Digraph: A grapheme made of two letters that represent one sound. An example is the 'sh' in 'shop'. Your child may use the mantra 'two letters, one sound' when they spot a digraph.

Schwa: This is the name for the most common sound in English. It is the unstressed sound that we find in many words and can be spelled in many ways. It makes an 'uh' sound, which varies according to accent. Examples include: th<u>e</u>, bett<u>er</u>, carr<u>o</u>t, b<u>a</u>lloon.

Split digraph: A vowel digraph that is split by a consonant. Examples include 'a–e' as in 'cake' (**ai** sound); 'e–e' as in 'athlete' (**ee** sound), 'i–e' as in 'time' (**igh** sound), 'o–e' as in 'bone' (**oa** sound) and 'u–e' as in 'tube' (**yoo** sound).

Trigraph: A grapheme made of three letters to represent one sound. An example is the 'igh' in 'sight'. Your child may use the mantra 'three letters, one sound' when they spot a trigraph.

Phase 2 tricky words

Tricky word	Tricky part(s)	Why it is tricky?
I	i	The 'i' makes the sound **igh**. **What children know:** In Phase 2, children learn that the letter 'i' can make the sound **i** as in 'pin'.
the	e	The 'e' makes the schwa sound 'uh'. **What children know:** In Phase 2, children learn that the letter 'e' can make the sound **e** as in 'egg'.
is as has his	s	The 's' makes the sound **z**. **What children know:** In Phase 2, children learn that the letter 's' can make the sound **s** as in 'sat'.
put* pull full push	u	The 'u' makes the sound **oo** (as in 'book').
and	nd	Children have not yet learned how to blend together adjacent consonants.
her	er	Children have not yet learned the digraph 'er'.
go no	o	The 'o' makes the sound **oa**. **What children know:** In Phase 2, children learn that the letter 'o' can make the sound **o** as in 'dog'.
to into	o	The 'o' makes the sound oo (as in 'food') or **oo** (as in 'book'). **What children know:** In Phase 2, children learn that the letter 'o' can make the sound **o** as in 'dog'.

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Tricky word	Tricky part(s)	Why it is tricky?
she he we me be	e	The 'e' makes the sound **ee**. **What children know:** In Phase 2, children learn that the letter 'e' can make the sound **e** as in 'egg'.
of	f	The 'f' makes the sound **v**. **What children know:** In Phase 2, children learn that the letter 'f' can make the sound **f** as in 'fish'.

*Depending on regional pronunciation, not all children are taught these words as tricky words.

Phase 3

Tricky word	Tricky part(s)	Why it is tricky?
was	a	The 'a' makes the sound **o**. **What children know:** In Phase 2, children learn that the letter 'a' can make the sound **a** as in 'cat'.
you	ou	The digraph 'ou' makes the sound oo (as in 'food').
they	ey	The digraph 'ey' makes the sound **ai**.
my by	y	The 'y' makes the sound **igh**. **What children know:** In Phase 2, children learn that the letter 'y' can make the sound **y** as in 'yap'.
all	a	The 'a' makes the sound **or**. **What children know:** In Phase 2, children learn that the letter 'a' can make the sound **a** as in 'cat'.
are	whole word	This is a rare spelling of the sound **ar**.
pure	ure	The 'ure' makes two sounds (**yoo** plus the schwa sound 'uh').
sure	whole word	The 's' makes the sound **sh**. The 'ure' makes two sounds (**yoo** plus the schwa sound 'uh').

Phase 4

Tricky word	Tricky part(s)	Why it is tricky?
come some	o–e	The split digraph 'o–e' makes the sound **u**.
do	o	The 'o' makes the sound oo (as in 'food'). **What children know:** In Phase 2, children learn that the letter 'o' can make the sound **o** as in 'top'.
have	ve	Children have not yet learned the digraph 've', which makes the sound **v**.
here	ere	The trigraph 'ere' makes the sound **ear**.
like	i–e	Children have not yet learned the split digraph 'i–e', which makes the sound **igh**.
little	le	Children have not yet learned the digraph 'le', which makes the sound **l**.
love	o ve	The 'o' makes the sound **u**; the 've' makes the sound 'v'.
one	whole word	The 'o' makes the sounds **w-u**. The digraph 'ne' makes the sound **n.**
out	ou	Children have not yet learned the digraph 'ou'. Here it makes the sound **ow**.
said	ai	The digraph 'ai' makes the sound **e.**
says	ay	The digraph 'ay' makes the sound **e**.
so	o	The 'o' makes the sound **oa**. **What children know:** In Phase 2, children learn that the letter 'o' can make the sound **o** as in 'top'.
there	ere	The trigraph 'ere' makes the sound **air**.
today	o ay	The 'o' makes the schwa sound 'uh'; the digraph 'ay' is not yet decodable.
were	ere	The trigraph 'ere' makes the sound **ur**.

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Tricky word	Tricky part(s)	Why it is tricky?
what	wh a	Children have not yet learned the digraph 'wh'. Here, it makes the sound **w**. The grapheme 'a' makes the sound **o**. **What children know:** In Phase 2, children learn that the letter 'a' can make the sound **a** as in 'cat'.
when	wh	Children have not yet learned the digraph 'wh'. Here, it makes the sound **w**.

Phase 5

Tricky word	Tricky part(s)	Why it is tricky?
our	our	The trigraph 'our' makes the sound **ow** followed by the schwa sound 'uh'.
their	eir	The trigraph 'eir' makes the sound **air**.
people	eo le	The digraph 'eo' makes the sound **ee**. Children have not yet learned the digraph 'le'.
oh	oh	The digraph 'oh' makes the sound **oa**.
your	our	The trigraph 'our' makes the sound **or**.
Mr Mrs Ms	whole word	These are abbreviations in common use as words.
ask*	a	The 'a' makes the sound **ar**. **What children know:** In Phase 2, children learn that the letter 'a' can make the sound **a** as in 'cat'.
could would should	oul	The trigraph 'oul' which makes the sound **oo** (as in 'book').
house mouse	se	The digraph 'se' makes the sound **s**.
water call	a	The 'a' makes the sound **or**. **What children know:** In Phase 2, children learn that the letter 'a' can make the sound **a** as in 'cat'. They learn that it can make the sound **or** near the end of Phase 5.
want	a	The 'a' makes the sound **o**. **What children know:** In Phase 2, children learn that the letter 'a' can make the sound **a** as in 'cat'. They learn that it can make the sound **o** near the end of Phase 5.
any many	a	The 'a' makes the sound **e**.
again*	ai	The digraph 'ai' makes the sound **e**.
who	wh o	The digraph 'wh' makes the sound **h** and the 'o' makes the sound oo (as in 'food').
whole	wh o–e	The digraph 'wh' makes the sound **h**. Your child has not yet learned the split digraph 'o–e', which makes the sound **oa**.
where	ere	The trigraph 'ere' makes the sound **air**.
two	wo	The digraph 'wo' makes the sound oo (as in 'food').
school	ch	The digraph 'ch' makes the sound **c**.
different*	er	The digraph 'er' makes the sound **r** (with no schwa sound 'uh' before it).
thought	ough	The 'ough' makes the sound **or**.
through	ough	The 'ough' makes the sound oo (as in 'food').
friend	ie	The digraph 'ie' makes the sound **e**.
work	or	The digraph 'or' makes the sound **ur**.
once	o	The 'o' makes the sounds **w-u**.
laugh	au gh	The digraph 'au' makes the sound **ar** (depending on regional pronunciation). The digraph 'gh' makes the sound **f**.

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Tricky word	Tricky part(s)	Why it is tricky?
because	au	The digraph 'au' makes the sound **o**.
eye	whole word	The trigraph 'eye' makes the sound **igh**.
busy	u	The 'u' makes the sound **i**.
beautiful	eau	The trigraph 'eau' makes the sound **yoo**.
pretty	e	The 'e' makes the sound **i**. **What children know:** For 'e', your child has learned the sound **e** as in 'egg' and **ee** as in 'be'.
hour	h our	The word 'hour' has two tricky parts: the 'h' is not pronounced and the trigraph 'our' makes the sound **ow** followed by the schwa sound.
move improve	o	The grapheme 'o' makes the sound oo (as in 'food'). **What children know:** For 'o', your child has learned the sound **o** as in 'dog' and **oa** as in 'go'.
parents	a	The 'a' makes the sound **air**. In Phase 2, children learn that the letter 'a' can make the sound **a** as in 'cat'. In Phase 5, they learn that it can make the sounds **ai** as in 'paper', **or** as in 'ball and **o** as in 'watch'.
shoe	oe	The digraph 'oe' makes the sound oo (as in 'food').

*Depending on regional pronunciation, your child may not be taught the word 'ask' as a tricky word.

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