

**220 Names/Faces  
220 Dolch Words  
are too many words for students  
with memories like mine**

by

Don McCabe

AVKO "Great Idea" Reprint Series #601

Copyright © 1995, 1976 AVKO Educational Research Foundation  
3084 W. Willard Road, Suite 601  
Clio, Mich. 48420-7801

Telephone: (810) 686-9283    FAX: (810) 686-1101

## What is AVKO?

AVKO is a non-profit tax-exempt 501 (C) 3 membership organization.

AVKO was founded in 1974.

AVKO is subsidized by donations and grants.

AVKO is open to membership to anyone interested in literacy.

AVKO is run by members from as far away as Hawaii and Quebec.

AVKO's daily operations are handled by volunteers.

AVKO plans to build and operate a model reading research center in a year-around camp setting that would economically and efficiently service the needs of dyslexics of all ages.

AVKO hopes to spread the concept that family involvement in tutoring of literacy skills can be successfully taught in adult community education classes.

AVKO provides newsletters and economical opportunities to pursue individual research projects and to take part in large scale cooperative research projects that have immediate practical applications for helping the literacy movement.

AVKO is attempting to accomplish these goals primarily through the profits generated by the sale of services and special materials developed for the special needs of students, parents, and adults.

**220 names  
220 faces are too many for me  
220 sight words are too many words for  
students  
with memories like mine<sup>1</sup>**

by Don McCabe

As a teacher I have had the terrifying experience of trying to match the names of students with their faces. I was given many tips on how to remember names, but with five classes of nearly 40 students each and with students transferring in and out, every September was a nightmare.

When I became a reading specialist with a caseload of only 50 students, I found I could learn the names quickly. The problem before was that I felt overloaded with too many names and faces. So, when I applied this difficulty to the problem of my students who didn't know the Dolch Basic Sight Vocabulary of 220 Words (Dolch, 1941), I thought it might be easier for them if I limited the number of words for them to learn by sight.

In examining the Dolch list, I found that about 170 of the 220 Dolch words were sufficiently patterned to teach via the word family approach. Words like *all*, *call*, *fall*, and *small* were to be taught as part of the *-all* family. For example, if a student were to miss any one of those four words on a drill, I might ask him/her to write the word **all** ten times with a green felt tip pen.

all  
all  
all  
all  
all  
all  
all  
all  
all  
all

Then I would have the student change the first all to tall by adding a black letter **t** in front of the green all. Then I would have him/her change

---

<sup>1</sup>Abridged versions published in: *The Reading Teacher*, April 1978 & *Speld News* (Australia's Specific Learning Difficulties Publication), March 1979.

the second **all** first to **tall** and then change that **tall** to **stall** by adding a black letter **s** to **tall**. The next **all** would be changed first to **tall**, then to **stall**, and finally to **install**. Other all's became **call**, **recall**, **ball**, **fall**, and so on.

all  
tall  
stall  
install  
call  
recall  
ball  
fall  
mall  
small

To make the list easier to use with students, I use the commercial Dolch cards (Garrard Publishing) available from nearly any educational supplier. I separate out the 179 clearly patterned Dolch sight words. On the back of each card I put other words that fall into the same family pattern.<sup>1</sup>

In the list of words that begin on page five, the words in the left hand column are Dolch words. The right-hand column consists of family words that I write on the back side of the cards.

### Harder Half, Easier Half

Although the Dolch list is often divided into a harder half and an easier half (Dolch Popper Cards), I did not use this convenient division. The reason is that during the process of restructuring the sight words, I became aware of the inherent problem of relying exclusively on frequency counts to determine which words should be taught first. For example, the words *fall* and *small* are in the easier half while *all* and *call* are in the harder half! Dolch designates words as “easy” on the basis of frequency of occurrence.<sup>2</sup>

However, from a phonemic standpoint, the word *all* should be designated easy and taught before *fall* and *small*. Rather than accept the arbitrary division of easier half and harder half of the sight words — which leads to such anomalies as teaching *train* before *rain*, I just mix up all the Dolch words and work with those that the student doesn't know.

---

<sup>1</sup>The current academic jargon is *rime* for word family pattern and *onsets* for the beginning consonants (Gunning, 1995).

<sup>2</sup>See McCabe, *A Common Sense Approach to Controlled Word Lists*, a pamphlet available from the AVKO Foundation.

Using these Dolch words diagnostically, I can find out which word families (rimes), a student needs to learn. Using the cards, I run through the sight words that follow family patterns and find four or five that the student doesn't know—and I stop. I let the student choose which word or words to learn. And I teach my student the words that are on the back of the card as a method of learning the targeted sight word.

The following Dolch words are not listed in the traditional alphabetical order. However, they are in an order. For example, the LONG E sounds spelled ea are grouped together. The LONG E sounds spelled ee are grouped together. The LONG A sounds spelled VCe (Vowel Consonant Silent e) will be together, etc. In this list of 220 words, many of the more common patterns are represented at least once.

### Short A (CVC)

#### Dolch Words

#### Related Family Words

<b>had</b>	ad	bad	sad	dad
<b>bad</b>	Tad	Brad	mad	fad
	lad	glad	pad	

<b>am</b>	ram	Sam	ham	jam
	cram	Pam	slam	swam
	scram	Bam	mam	dam
	clam	Bam-Bam	lamb	

<b>an</b>	Nan	tan	pan	fan
<b>can</b>	scan	Dan	bran	Stan
<b>ran</b>	plan	Van	Fran	Jan
<b>man</b>	clan	van		

<b>cap</b>	nap	tap	rap	lap
	snap	gap	trap	slap
	map	sap	strap	flap
	chap	zap	clap	

## Short A (CVC)

### Dolch Words

### Related Family Words

<b>at</b>	bat	rat	hat	scat
<b>that</b>	fat	brat	Nat	mat
<b>cat</b>	sat	frat	gnat	blat
	pat	drat	Pat	slat
	spat	chat	mat	flat

<b>wagon</b>	wag	rag	tag	nag
	swag	brag	stag	snag
	bag	lag	gag	sag
	drag	slag	shag	jag
	dragon			

## Short A (CVCC)

<b>and<sup>1</sup></b>	land	gland	stand	bland
<b>hand</b>	band	underhand	bandstand	understand
<b>grandmother</b>	brand	overhand	grandstand	misunderstand
<b>grandfather</b>	grand	command	strand	

<b>back</b>	lack	black	sack	tack
<b>black</b>	rack	Jack	stack	attack
	crack	jack	slack	hack
	track	hijack	snack	pack
	smack	quack	whack	unpack
	shack	knack		

<b>thank</b>	bank	Hank	lank	rank
	tank	spank	blank	drank
	shank	Frank	flank	crank
	prank	shrank	clank	sank

<b>after</b>	aft	raft	craft	aircraft
	shaft	rafter	draft	graft

<sup>1</sup>The -and rime rhymes with the -anned rime as in planned, spanned, fanned, etc.