

# READING rockets®

## Classroom Strategies

### Word Walls

A word wall is an organized collection of words prominently displayed in a classroom. Word walls provide easy access to words students need. The specific organization of the word wall will match the teacher's purpose: sight words organized by alphabet letter, unit-specific words, new vocabulary words, for example. The most helpful word walls grow and change throughout the year and are used as a learning reference.

 **Share your examples!**

### Why use word walls?

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- They provide a permanent model for high frequency words
- They help students see patterns and relationship in words, thus building phonics and spelling skills
- They provide reference support for children during reading and writing activities.

<b>When to use:</b>	Before reading	During reading	After reading
<b>How to use:</b>	Individually	With small groups	Whole class setting

### How to use word walls

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- Make words accessible by putting them where every student can see them. They should be written in large black letters using a variety of background colors to distinguish easily confused words.
- Teachers and students should work together to determine which words should go on the word wall. Try to include words that children use most commonly in their writing. Words should be added gradually — a general guideline is five words per week.
- Use the word wall daily to practice words, incorporating a variety of activities such as chanting, snapping, cheering, clapping, tracing, word guessing games as well as writing them.
- Provide enough practice so that words are read and spelled automatically and make sure that words from the wall are always spelled correctly in the children's daily writing.
- New information should be added on a regular basis.

- Use content-area material from the curriculum rather than randomly selected words.
- Word walls should be referred to often so students come to understand and see their relevance.

Wondering what words to put on your word wall? Your grade's scope and sequence and curriculum manuals should provide good content guidance for words. Other resources exist too, for example, Jordan School District created lists of words by grade level and content area.

**See word wall lists >**

More printable word wall lists by content area and vocabulary units can be found on the Teach-nology website.

**See word wall lists >**

## Examples

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### Language Arts

See how word walls can be used to help students build their concept of word skills. The Santa Rosa County School District (FL) website provides tips on word choice as well as many examples of real-life classroom word walls.

**See language arts word wall examples >**

Ask students to hunt for words in their reading and writing that fit the phonic or word study pattern being studied. These words can create a word wall that illustrates examples of the different patterns studied. Students could keep a word study notebook to record the known patterns and their new understanding about words, and can play games and activities that apply their word knowledge.

Follow this link for many suggestions for word wall activities, including activities to do in class and activities to do at home.

**See language arts word wall activities >**

Saskatoon Public Schools has developed an extensive collection of word wall resources for teachers.

**More language arts word wall resources >**

### Math

**Word walls in math can provide visual cues and graphic representations of content.** Consider using a math word wall that has three parts: key vocabulary, "in your own words" definitions, and a variety of ways to portray a function. For example, multiplication is portrayed by the following symbols:  $\times$ ,  $*$ , and  $( )$ .

#### Number sense, concepts, and operations word wall

The purpose of the mathematics word wall is to identify words and phrases that students need to understand and use so as to make good progress in mathematics. Mathematical language is crucial to children's development of thinking. If students do not have the vocabulary to talk about math concepts and skills, they cannot make progress in understanding these areas of mathematical knowledge. They need to be familiar with mathematical vocabulary and mathematical terms to understand written and spoken instructions.

**See math word wall resources >**

#### More ideas for word walls in math

Many teachers are familiar with basic word wall strategies including the use of a flashlight (to put the light on words) and a fly swatter (to highlight words). Teachers are also familiar with tested favorites like bingo; I Have, Who Has; and Mind Reader, but they really wanted other ideas. The purpose of this post by Dr. Deborah

Wahlstrom is to identify additional ways to use word walls with mathematics content.

**More math word wall ideas >**

## Science

### Using interactive word walls in science

Science is a vocabulary-intense subject that is dependent on students learning new and often times difficult vocabulary to increase comprehension and help them make connections between and among concepts. When science students are given the opportunity to interact with the vocabulary, they are more likely to remember it.

Ideas for using the words on your wall are only limited by your imagination. Some examples include:

- Students categorize and sequence from largest to smallest (cell, bacteria, yeast, tissue, ribosome, organ, organism, organ system, protozoa, virus) Variation: Students are given vocabulary words, and their classmates must arrange them in the correct order and justify the placement.
- Students remove words from the wall and make connecting statements about the words. The class can then create a summarizing statement, for example: cells make up tissues, and tissues make up organs.

For more ideas like these, read the full post by Toni Enloe.

**See science word wall ideas >**

## Social Studies

Many teachers build their social studies word walls from the curriculum for their grade level. For example, Rockford Public Schools created grade-level lists for social studies.

**See social studies word lists >**

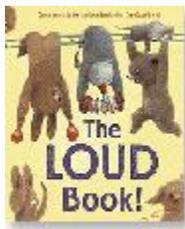
## Special Occasion

Create a word wall for your Valentine's Day writing prompts. Ask your students to brainstorm all the valentine-related nouns and adjectives they can think of — love, friendship, family, friends, hearts, happiness, kindness, Cupid, bow and arrow, roses, flowers, chocolate, hugs, kisses, letters, pink, red.... Need inspiration? Check out this Valentine's Day adjective word study with an example of a magnetic word wall (you'll find lots of other ideas on this web page, too).

**See Valentine's Day adjectives >**

## Children's books to use with this strategy

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***The Loud Book***

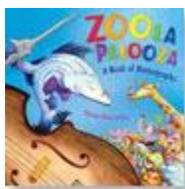
by Deborah Underwood, illustrated by Renata (Houghton)  
Language Arts, ages 4-8

There are many kinds of sounds. Use this book as a jumping off point for loud sounds, onomatopoeic sounds, or use ***The Quiet Book*** (Houghton) for the opposite of loud. These books might also inspire a word wall for emotions (e.g., how does this kind of quiet/loud make you feel?).

***Say What?***

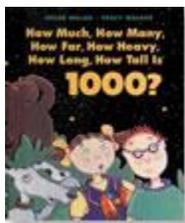
by Angela DiTerlizzi, illustrated by Joey Chou (Beach Lane)  
Language Arts, ages 4-7

Are animals and their familiar animal sounds really trying to say another word in English? (For example, "When a hoes says NEIGH,/does she really mean HAY?") Word walls could be made of rhyming words (or word families) or of animal sounds in English as well as what animals say in other languages.

***Zoola Palooza: A Book of Homographs***

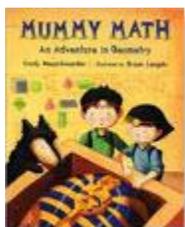
by Gene Barretta (Holt)  
Language Arts, ages 7-10

Homographs make sense in context. A word wall of words that are spelled alike but are pronounced differently (depending on the context in which they are used) may be developed inspired by this funny animal-filled "zoo."

***How Much, How Many, How Far, How Heavy, How Long, How Tall Is 1000?***

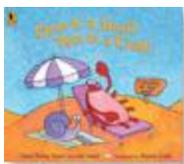
by Helen Nolan, illustrated by Tracy Walker (Kids Can)  
Math, ages 6-9

Terms and comparisons to describe numbers are presented in an engaging story from which word wall content could be developed and expanded.

***Mummy Math: An Adventure in Geometry***

by Cindy Neuschwander, illustrated by Bryan Langdo (Square Fish)  
Math, ages 6-9

Basic geometry is introduced in this story about children who accompany their parents on a trip to Egypt. A word wall of geometric shapes and terms would enhance a math study.

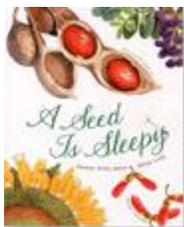


***One Is a Snail, Ten Is a Crab Big Book: A Counting by Feet Book***

by April Sayre & Jeff Sayre, illustrated by Randy Cecil (Candlewick)

Math, ages 4-8

This seeming simple counting book represents a spectrum of math concepts including patterns, addition, and more. Word walls may be made of math functions illuminated or inspired by this book.



***A Seed Is Sleepy***

by Dianna Hutts Aston, illustrated by Sylvia Long (Chronicle)

Science, ages 6-9

How many kinds of seeds do you see? Where are they found? This handsomely illustrated book of seeds provides a poetic look at the myriad types of seeds and plants to complement a classroom study.

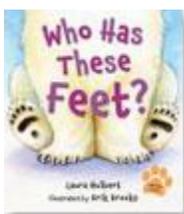


***Where Does the Garbage Go?***

by Paul Showers, illustrated by Randy Chewning (Collins)

Science, ages 6-9

This 'Let's-Read-and-Find-Out Science' follows garbage from the trash bin to various places (landfills, recycling centers, etc.). Common terms are explained and made accessible to children. This title would pair well with Kate & Jim McMullan's *I Stink!* (HarperCollins), a book told from the truck's perspective.

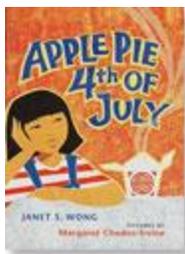


***Who Has These Feet?***

by Laura Hulbert, illustrated by Erik Brooks (Holt)

Science, ages 4-8

Animals to which the feet presented belong are revealed with a turn of the page along with basic information. A wall of animal words, descriptions, or foot functions (beyond standing) is possible. This title would pair well with Steve Jenkins' *What Do You Do with a Tail Like This?* (Houghton).

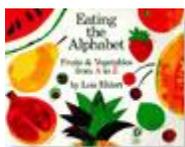


***Apple Pie Fourth of July***

by Janet Wong, illustrated by Margaret Chodos-Irvine (Sandpiper)

Social Studies, ages 4-8

The young Chinese-American narrator fears that no one will want Chinese food on an all-American holiday. Word wall possibilities include food and food groups, emotions, the stuff of the 4th of July (e.g., fireworks, parades, flags, etc.).

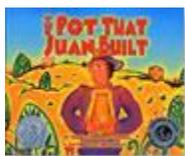


***Eating the Alphabet: Fruits & Vegetables from A to Z***

by Lois Ehlert (Sandpiper)

Social Studies, ages 4-8

Clear depictions of fruits and vegetables are presented with brief information appended. A word wall could be made of fruits & veggies known to the class as well as places from where they come. This pairs well with Gail Gibbons' *The Vegetables We Eat* (Holiday).



***The Pot that Juan Built***

by Nancy Andrews-Goebel, illustrated by David Diaz (Lee & Low)

Social Studies, ages 4-8

A cumulative poem (in the cadence of "The House that Jack Built") chronicles the work and life of Mexican potter, Juan Quezada. Words could center around the culture, the potting process, or art & artists.

## Differentiated instruction

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### for second language learners, students of varying reading skill, and for younger learners

Word walls are a great support for ELLs, and may be organized around a number of concepts, including the alphabet and phonetic sounds, new vocabulary words, sight words, grammar rules, conversational phrases, and writing structures. Words can also be organized by category (for example, academic words, words used often in your classroom, new words students have come across and love).

Copying words from word walls may be difficult for some students. For these students, supply them with the words written on piece of paper. Tape the word wall paper to their desk or writing folder for easy reference.

### See the research that supports this strategy

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Bear, D. R., Invernizzi, M., Templeton, S., & Johnston, F. (2000). *Words their way: Word study for phonics, vocabulary, and spelling*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Morris, D. (1981). Concept of word: A developmental phenomenon in the beginning reading and writing process. *Language Arts*, 58, 659-668.

[http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/word\\_walls/?theme=print](http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/word_walls/?theme=print)

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