

Special Report:

**The 100 Most
Common Words
In
Spoken and Written
English**

By Sab Will

HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The main observations we can make are:

- Spoken and written English are not the same
- Some spoken 'words' like 'erm' and 'mm' do not occur in written English
- We need different English words for different circumstances
- Written English is not enough for effective English speaking
- Many common written words are less important when speaking

IDEAS FOR TEACHERS & STUDENTS

Here are some ideas for using this list in learning English:

- ✓ Learn the words by heart
- ✓ Listen before reading and try to understand everything
- ✓ Listen and repeat aloud until the accent is perfect
- ✓ Do a dictation: listen, write everything down and then check
- ✓ Read aloud to a friend and they write
- ✓ Create new sentences using the key words
- ✓ Write a story including some or all of the key words
- ✓ Print out and cut up the words and use in card games
- ✓ Spell the words aloud and students have to give the example sentence
- ✓ Students test each other: A) says word; B) says sentence
- ✓ Give top ten sentences – students put in order
- ✓ Students give parts of speech for each word
- ✓ Stop recording at random; students guess what comes next
- ✓ Students analyse a newspaper article and look for top written words
- ✓ Students analyse a radio recording and listen for top spoken words
- ✓ Students write a short diary entry without using the top 10 written words
- ✓ Students give a presentation without using the top 10 spoken words
- ✓ Your ideas are welcome!

ABOUT THIS LIST

This list was taken from a search done on the *British National Corpus* of spoken and written English. The spoken aspect is often ignored which is a shame because this is exactly what a vast number of students want to improve in and have great problems with.

HOTCH POTCH ENGLISH

This list is part of the vast range of materials produced for English students and teachers by Sab Will for his popular *Hotch Potch English* and *Fun English Lessons* family of websites, blogs and Facebook pages.

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	Spoken English (listen)	Written English (listen)
1	the (Determiner) "The cat sat on the mat."	the (Determiner) "The dishwasher is broken again."
2	I (Pronoun) "I really love you."	of (Preposition) "Half of 100 is 50."
3	you (Pronoun) "You are a very intelligent man."	and (Conjunction) "We need more money and resources."
4	and (Conjunction) "I want fruit and ice cream."	a (Determiner) "This situation is a disaster."
5	it (Pronoun) "The cheese? It's on the table."	in (Preposition) "We will see you in December."
6	a (Determiner) "This is a hold-up."	to (Infinitive) "Are you going to see 'Avatar'?"
7	's (Verb) "John's handsome." (is) "Peter's got a dog." (has)	is (Verb) "The pound is sinking."
8	to (Infinitive) "I want you to say sorry."	to (Preposition) "Are you coming to Paris with us?"
9	of (Preposition) "Best of luck!"	was (Verb) "The meeting was not a great success."
10	that (Determiner) "I want that one!"	it (Pronoun) "Please send it again."

	Spoken English (listen)	Written English (listen)
11	n't (Negative) "I don't want to fail."	for (Preposition) "This is a message for Mr. Johnson."
12	in (Preposition) "Put it in the fridge."	that (Conjunction) "He thinks that the world is ending."
13	we (Pronoun) "We go on holiday in May."	with (Preposition) "All products come with a guarantee."
14	is (Verb) "What is your name?"	he (Pronoun) "He ought to be ashamed of himself."
15	do (Verb) "I do my homework at night."	be (Verb) "You don't have to be a customer."
16	they (Pronoun) "What time are they coming?"	on (Preposition) "Spread the sauce on the pizza base."
17	er (Unclassified) "Er, I'm not sure."	I (Pronoun) "I was surprised not to hear from you."
18	was (Verb) "I was too sick to go."	by (Preposition) "All packages are sent by DHL."
19	yeah (Interjection) "Yeah, I love that group too."	's (Genitive) "SFR's after-sales service is fairly good."
20	have (Verb) "I have long black hair."	at (Preposition) "The meeting starts at 9 am sharp."

	Spoken English (listen)	Written English (listen)
21	what (Determiner) "What is your favourite colour?"	you (Pronoun) "You will be staying at the Ritz."
22	he (Pronoun) "He won't be here until 7."	are (Verb) "Vegetarians are very welcome."
23	that (Conjunction) "She said that she'd bring the cake."	had (Verb) "We had a great conference this year."
24	to (Preposition) "I'm going to the cinema."	his (Determiner) "His CV seems to be very interesting."
25	but (Conjunction) "It's raining but I'm still going out."	not (Negative) "You may not smoke in the building."
26	for (Preposition) "I've been waiting for 10 minutes."	this (Determiner) "This campaign should work well."
27	erm (Unclassified) "Erm, can I get back to you on that?"	have (Verb) "There have only been a few returns."
28	be (Verb) "Be whatever you want to be."	but (Conjunction) "The train was fast but uncomfortable."
29	on (Preposition) "The cat sat on the mat."	from (Preposition) "Maria will be coming from Italy."
30	this (Determiner) "This car is going to be mine."	which (Determiner) "Which hotel do you want to stay in?"

	Spoken English (listen)	Written English (listen)
31	know (Verb) "I know what you mean."	she (Pronoun) "She will be talking about brand image."
32	well (Adverb/ Exclamation) "Well done!" "Oh well."	they (Pronoun) "They have a very attractive product."
33	so (Adverb) "I hope so." "Don't be so silly."	or (Conjunction) "We can focus on advertising or PR."
34	oh (Interjection) "Oh really?!"	an (Determiner) "Jordi has an interesting suggestion."
35	got (Verb) "I got really sick yesterday."	were (Verb) "There were 12 companies present."
36	've (Verb) "I've never been to Africa."	as (Conjunction) "They arrived as we were leaving."
37	not (Negative) "You can not be serious!"	we (Pronoun) "We are in general agreement."
38	are (Verb) "We are from the UK."	their (Determiner) "Their new car is very nice indeed."
39	if (Conjunction) "I'll pay you if you come."	been (Verb) "There has been a slight problem."
40	with (Preposition) "I'm with my mother."	has (Verb) "The iPhone 4 has two cameras."

	Spoken English (listen)	Written English (listen)
41	no <i>(Interjection)</i> "Oh no!" / "No way!"	that <i>(Determiner)</i> "That excuse won't work this time."
42	're <i>(Verb)</i> "You're absolutely right."	will <i>(Modal Verb)</i> "This will be a great year for us."
43	she <i>(Pronoun)</i> "She told me she was coming."	would <i>(Modal Verb)</i> "A choice would be more interesting."
44	at <i>(Preposition)</i> "I'll meet you at the cinema."	her <i>(Determiner)</i> "Her proposal has been accepted."
45	there <i>(Adverb)</i> "There you are."	there <i>(Adverb)</i> "There are two sides to everything."
46	think <i>(Verb)</i> "I think about you every day."	n't <i>(Negative)</i> "We haven't finalised the deal yet."
47	yes <i>(Interjection)</i> "Yes, I know what you mean."	all <i>(Determiner)</i> "All our options are still open."
48	just <i>(Adverb)</i> "I was just trying to be nice."	can <i>(Modal Verb)</i> "I can use Photoshop and Illustrator."
49	all <i>(Determiner)</i> "All dogs have four legs."	if <i>(Conjunction)</i> "We'll sign if you give us a discount."
50	can <i>(Modal Verb)</i> "Can you call me tomorrow?"	who <i>(Pronoun)</i> "Who is going to take the minutes?"