

# Does seeing a word help you learn it?

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## What is this project about?

Research has shown that seeing a word helps children learn what a word sounds like and what it means. Similar things have also been found with adults. This is a bit like writing someone's name down if you are worried that you will forget it. It is also similar to the way teachers show you words on the whiteboard when they are describing them. Previous research looked at this when an adult was teaching a child new words one-to-one. This project examined how this works in the classroom when a teacher is instructing a whole class of children.



## What words were learned?

Accolade: *a strong compliment*  
Cataclysm: *a violent event*  
Contrition: *a strong feeling*  
Debacle: *a sudden failure*  
Dormancy: *a sleepy state*  
Epigram: *a witty remark*  
Foible: *a personality weakness*  
Fracas: *a noisy argument*  
Lassitude: *a tired mood*  
Luminary: *an inspirational person*  
Nonentity: *an unimportant character*  
Platitude: *a meaningless comment*  
Propensity: *a predictable behavior*  
Raconteur: *a good storyteller*  
Syncopation: *a musical pattern*  
Veracity: *a truthful situation*

## What was researched?

121 children aged nine to ten years took part in the study. Teachers were asked to teach the sounds and meanings for some words to their classes over two weeks.

Sounds and meanings were taught for half of the words. For the other half, the spelling patterns were also shown. Children were assessed on what they learned about the sounds, meanings and spelling patterns of the words.

## Sample teaching session

1. Point to word (orthography present only)
2. Say word, class repeats
3. Say word and clap, class copies
4. Say definition, class repeats
5. Say word in a sentence, class listens



## What was found?

In this study seeing words did not help children to learn sounds and meanings. However, this strategy can work in more carefully controlled conditions and teachers and practitioners instinctively feel that this strategy should be beneficial.

Why didn't this strategy work? There could be several reasons. It could have to do with the complexity of the classroom environment (noise, visual stimuli, and other distractions) or children could be given greater learning opportunities. Future work will uncover the conditions under which this strategy could be beneficial.