

Special Report:

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

By Sab Will

## HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

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### INTRODUCTION

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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

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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

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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

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

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

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

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

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