

Directions for activity: Write a sampling of Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 words (1 per index card). Mix up. Distribute to groups. After providing a very simple explanation, invite groups to sort the words into 3 piles.

A simple definition is as such:

Tier 1 words are simple words that children “acquire” without being “taught” (such as: baby, fork, ball, red, Mom).

Tier 3 words are very sophisticated words, and often “content specific” words such as science words, social studies words. These are words (though interesting) that children will not encounter regularly throughout everyday reading (e.g., cocoon, chrysalis, anthropology, paleontologist).

Tier 2 words are everything in the middle. Tier 2 words are the words that tend to give young readers difficulty in school. If these words are not in their oral vocabulary, they are much more difficult for children to decode and understand.

A sampling of Tier 1 words

about
above
also
angry
animal
asleep
baby
bacon
ball
beach
birthday
blue
bridge
brother
candle
carrot
cereal
chocolate
clock
doctor
dry
eight
end
eye
fish
flower

hair
milk
more
mouse
music
pancake
park
play
please
rabbit
rain
spoon
star
strange
wash
yes

A sampling of Tier 3 words:

acellular
bilharzias
calcaneus
carotene
defibrillation
encephalitis
fibroplasias
hemiplegia
infarction
moxisylyte
nephritis
neutropenia
octreotide
quadripareois
quinsy
scirrhous
syndactyly
turbinate
vasculitis
zoonosis

Beck, I. L.,
McKeown, M.
G., & Kucan, L.
(2002).
*Bringing words
to life*. NY:
Guilford Press.

**TIER 2 words
(K-2nd)**

absolutely
absurd
admire
admit
adventure
advice
amazed
amusing
announce
annoy
appear
appetite
appropriate
argumentative
arrive
astonished
autumn
avoid
balcony
beckoned
bellow
biggest
bother
budge
bunch
cautiously
cellar
charming
cherish
chores
clever
clutch
coaxed

comforted
commotion
communicate
complain
concentrate
context
continue
contrary
convince
cozy
craving
creature
critters
cross
crouched
curious
dashed
dazzling
decide
definitely
delighted
description
deserves
detest
devotion
dignified
disagreeable
disappear
disappointed
distance
distinguished
disturb
dread
drowsy
eager
eerie
embarrassed
emergency
emotion
enormous
entirely
envious
envy
especially
essential

examine
except
exhausted
exquisite
extraordinary
faded
faith
familiar
fearless
feast
ferocious
festive
foolish
forlorn
fortunate
gasp
gaze
glance
gleeful
glisten
gloomy
gnaw
grasp
grumpy
hermit
hero
hoist
horrible
humble
ignored
imagine
immense
impatient
impress
impressed
impressive
incredible
informed
initiate
insisted
inspect
instead
investigate
lean
leisurely

lovely
lunge
masterpiece
meadow
measure
menacing
mischief
miserable
morsel
mumble
murmur
mysterious
nestle
nibble
notice
nuisance
opposite
ordinary
panic
partial
patience
peculiar
peer
perfect
persistent
pounce
precious
prefer
prod
protect
prowl
quiver
radiant
rambunctious
raucous
realize
reflection
refreshed
regret
reluctant
remarkable
remind
reply
rescue
resist

ridiculous
rummage
satisfy
scowl
scrumptious
scurry
search
sensible
shabby
shocked
shriek
skyscraper
slump
snarl
snarl
sneak
soaring
soggy
splendid
sprout
squint
sternly
stingy
strange
stroll
struggle
suggestion
surrounded
suspect
suspicious
throbbled
timid
toppled
tour
triumphant
trust
uncooperative
vanished
warn
weary
wisdom
wise
wonder
yank
yelp