

# **BIG WORDS** for **LITTLE KIDS**

*Advanced Vocabulary for Elementary School Children*

Michael Levin M.D.  
Charan Langton M.S.

**Mountcastle Company**  
A Reading Lesson Book

# BIG WORDS FOR LITTLE KIDS

Michael Levin M.D.  
Charan Langton M.S.

Edited by Dina Vainer, Ashley Kuhre  
and Noel Estabrook  
Illustrations by Heather Babcock  
Typeset by Pegin S. McDermott

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Mountcastle Company  
Contact: [mntcastle@earthlink.net](mailto:mntcastle@earthlink.net)  
[www.readinglesson.com](http://www.readinglesson.com)

# BIG WORDS FOR LITTLE KIDS

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## Introduction

*Not to let a word get in the way of its sentence  
Not to let a sentence get in the way of its intention,  
But to send your mind out to meet the intention as a guest;  
That is understanding.*

Chinese proverb, 4th century BC

**B**uilding a vocabulary is the most important task children face during their school years. In preschool years, children learn new words by talking to their parents, older siblings, and friends. As they learn to read, their vocabulary grows with every new book. The ability to read, however, does not always translate into understanding and reading comprehension, which are the ultimate goals of reading.

The current practice in many schools is to expose children to interesting books as a way to improve their vocabulary and reading. But for many children the vocabulary stays virtually still for the first several years of elementary school, despite steady improvement in reading skills.

When children encounter unfamiliar words in their reading, they either skip them altogether or try to guess the meaning by the context. Both approaches are inadequate. The new word never enters the active vocabulary, and the next time the child comes across the same word,

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she would either dismiss it or keep on guessing inaccurate meaning. Incidental learning becomes accidental learning.

### **The advantages of the *Big Words for Little Kids* program**

There are many vocabulary books that use funny stories or selection of new and interesting words in place of a systematic vocabulary approach. When developing the ***Big Words for Little Kids*** program, we took a proven vocabulary learning approach and adjusted it to the level of a younger child. Our approach is systematic and the store of words we teach though challenging, are suitable for a child at this stage of development. We use only the words that young children are likely to encounter in their everyday reading or while listening to the radio or watching television.

This method of teaching vocabulary, known as the generative program, is more efficient and effective than an unsystematic approach. Children using the ***Big Words for Little Kids*** program will learn a systematic approach to learning roots and families of words. After becoming comfortable with breaking the familiar words into their parts – prefixes, suffixes, and roots – students will be able to transfer the meaning of these parts to new words.

In the ***Big Words for Little Kids*** book, your child will learn a variety of methods for attacking unknown words by using his or her knowledge of familiar words. The program teaches the Greek and Latin roots, prefixes, and suffixes of words. Each new root your child learns will enable him or her to learn the meaning of other related words. The combination of generative vocabulary building technique with developmentally appropriate and gradually progressing sets of words makes the ***Big Words for Little Kids*** program an ideal teaching tool for young readers.

### **How to teach with the *Big Words for Little Kids* program**

Each section of the book has a root, a prefix, or a suffix accompanied by four to five examples, a tidbit, exercises, and challenging words. There

are sample sentences for each new word, one using the big word, the second using a familiar alternative.

A short tidbit is a vignette with one of the new words. The two exercises – fill in the blank and multiple choices – do not require writing and can be done verbally.

We also ask that your child make sentences using the “big words.” At the end of each section you will find challenge words. Children should look up these words in the dictionary and try to understand the meaning of the word. For very young children these words might be very challenging indeed and you can skip them.

We suggest you do one section per week.

### **Roots**

Most “big” words in our language came from other languages. There are two languages that gave us most of our scientific and technical words: Greek and Latin. The Greek words came from the language of ancient Greeks and many old roots can be found in the Modern Greek language. Latin roots and prefixes came from Ancient Romans. No one uses Latin, nor the old Greek for everyday speech anymore, but the old languages gave life to several European languages: Italian, Spanish, French, and several others.

The root is the base part of the word, usually in the middle that comes directly from these languages. Often it is has different spellings.

### **Prefixes**

A prefix is a letter or group of letters added at the front of a root or “base word” to change its meaning. According to Dr. H. Thompson Fillmer of the University of Florida in the article, “A Generative Vocabulary Program for Grades 4-6,” of the 20,000 most common English words, five thousand have prefixes, and 80% use one of the following prefixes:

- ab- (away from)
- ad- (to, toward)
- com-/con-/co- (with, together)
- de- (away, from, downward)

dis- (not, reversal)  
en- (in, into, to cover)  
ex- (out of, former)  
in- (into, not)  
pre- (before)  
pro- (in favor of, for, before)  
re- (again, restore)  
sub- (under, beneath)  
un- (not, do the opposite of)

## **Suffixes**

A suffix is a letter or a group of letters added to the end of a word to change its meaning. Suffixes may also turn a verb into noun or a noun into an adjective. Suffixes do not change the meaning of the words as much as prefixes do. In addition to universal suffixes, such as -s (book, books), -ed (talk, talked), -ing (call, calling), etc., by the beginning of elementary school the children are already familiar with comparative suffixes -er (tall, taller) and -est (cool, coolest). Other common suffixes are:

-ic, ical (dealing with)  
-ish (like)  
-ist (one who)  
-fy (to make)  
-ly (manner of)  
-ment (result of)  
-al, ial (related to)  
-ism (belief in)  
-less (without)  
-let (little)  
-logy (science of)  
-ness (state of being)  
-or, er (one who)  
-ory, ery (where item is made)  
-ward (in direction of)

We will introduce and reinforce several of these prefixes and suffixes in the **Big Words for Little Kids** book. It is important to engage your child in interactive games by asking them to either guess the meaning of the words by knowing their prefixes and suffixes or create new words. For example, it will be fun for a child to guess the



meaning of the words “dispose” and “disgrace” after learning the prefix *dis-* (which means not) or create a new word with the suffix *-less*, like ice cream-less, jacket-less, or videogame-less.

Children can generate new words by adding familiar prefixes and suffixes to new roots. They can further advance their vocabulary through the study of new words and reading. For our course, we have selected a small subset of roots and words with concrete meaning that are easier for young children to understand.

We welcome your suggestions and hope that you will share your experiences with us.

Best wishes,

Michael Levin  
Charan Langton  
mntcastle@comcast.net

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## UN

The prefix **un** means **not**.

**Unable:** not having the skill to do something

John liked to sit at the piano even though he was unable to play it.

John liked to sit at the piano even though he could not play it.

**Unwelcome:** not wanted, not received kindly, not invited

He felt like an unwelcome guest at his cousin's birthday party.

He felt like a not invited guest at his cousin's birthday party.

**Uneducated:** not schooled, without learning

Anyone who drops out of school will go through life uneducated.

Anyone who drops out of school will go through life not schooled and without learning.

**Unhurried:** not in a rush

Trevor wanted to appear unhurried as he slowly walked up to the door.

Trevor wanted to appear not in a rush as he slowly walked up to the door.

You may create many new words with the prefix **un**.

believable

**unbelievable**

changed

**unchanged**

clear

**unclear**

forgettable

**unforgettable**

known

**unknown**

mask

**unmask**

### Tidbit



In the country of Croatia, a local television station challenged the Guinness World Record for the longest non-stop talk-show. The broadcast which lasted 35 hours will become the longest **uninterrupted** television broadcasting if confirmed by Guinness officials. The previous 33-hour record was held by a television station

from New York City.

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**Fill in each sentence with the correct word:**

Unwelcome      Uneducated      Unhurried      Unable

1. Ben remained silent when the class talked about baseball. He knew little about the game and was afraid to appear \_\_\_\_\_ to others.
2. The young detective felt uneasy and \_\_\_\_\_ in the company of older police officers.
3. When the register at the store broke, the cashier quit. She said she was \_\_\_\_\_ to add numbers in her head.
4. When she practiced shooting free throws in basketball, Carrie found it was best to be calm and \_\_\_\_\_.

**Choose the correct definition:**

1. **Unwelcome**
  - a. not in a rush
  - b. not thankful
  - c. unwanted
  - d. not learned or schooled
2. **Uneducated**
  - a. not in a rush
  - b. unwanted
  - c. not learned
  - d. lazy
3. **Unable**
  - a. not having the skill
  - b. not in a rush
  - c. not learned or schooled
  - d. unwanted
4. **Unhurried**
  - a. not in a rush
  - b. unwanted
  - c. quickly and sloppily
  - d. not learned or schooled

**Make a sentence with each of the following words:**

Unhurried      Unable      Uneducated      Unwelcome

**Challenge Words, look up these words in the dictionary:**

Unabridged      Unsavory      Uncanny

**Nurse:** *How much do you weigh, Sarah?*

**Sarah:** *88 pounds, with my glasses.*

**Nurse:** *Why with glasses?*

**Sarah:** *Because without my glasses I am **unable** to see the numbers.*

---

## LESS

The suffix **less** means **without**.

**Fearless:** not scared, without fear

The knight was fearless even when facing a dragon.

The knight was not scared even when facing a dragon.

**Effortless:** easily, without effort

Kangaroo's amazing jumps looked effortless.

Kangaroo's amazing jumps looked easy, without effort.

**Hopeless:** without hope, not possible

Jenny thought learning big words was hopeless until she tried.

Jenny thought learning big words wasn't possible until she tried.

**Tireless:** without getting tired, hard working, determined

Sam is tireless when doing math. He works on a problem until he gets it right.

Sam is working hard when he does math. He works on a problem until he gets it right.

**Tasteless:** in poor taste, bad manners

Alice finds practical jokes to be dumb and tasteless.

Alice finds practical jokes to be dumb and in poor taste.

There are other words with the suffix **less**:

**Pointless:** without point, without meaning or reason

**Purposeless:** without purpose, without goal

**Heartless:** lacking kindness and feeling, lacking courage

**Useless:** serving no use

### Tidbit



Jet, the dog, is a great example of being **fearless** in the face of danger. His 10-year-old owner, Kevin Haskell, was hiking with his family and his black lab, Jet, when he heard something in the grass. Jet fearlessly jumped in front of his owner to protect him and got bitten twice in the chest by a rattlesnake! Jet saved his friend's life, and had to go to the doctor. Jet soon went home to his family healthy again. Can you imagine a cat protecting its owner from a rattlesnake?

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**Fill in each sentence with the correct word:**

Fearless                      Effortless                      Hopeless                      Tireless

1. At first Jamie's piano playing looked \_\_\_\_\_, but his mom knew that he will be \_\_\_\_\_ with his daily practices and succeed in the end.
2. Lindsey stood \_\_\_\_\_ in front of the tall, scary climbing wall; then she went up all the way to the top. She did it so well that from the ground her climb looked \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. Jack's sister wants to go to medical school and is \_\_\_\_\_ in her studies.
4. The clown made riding the unicycle look \_\_\_\_\_.

**Choose the correct definition:**

1. **Fearless**
  - a. without effort
  - b. having no ears
  - c. not wearing fur
  - d. not scared
2. **Effortless**
  - a. not wanting any help
  - b. easily, without effort
  - c. not afraid
  - d. not having a fort
3. **Hopeless**
  - a. impossible, without hope
  - b. a rattlesnake
  - c. not having a home
  - d. hard working
4. **Tireless**
  - a. a tank
  - b. hard working, determined
  - c. not having to work hard
  - d. not afraid

**Make a sentence with each of the following words:**

Tireless                      Effortless                      Fearless                      Hopeless

**Make four new words with suffix less**

Example: without a brain - brainless, without price - priceless

*To write with a broken pencil is **pointless!***

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## IN

Prefix **in** means **not**. Sometimes this prefix also means **in**.

If the root of the word starts with *m*, *b*, or *p* the prefix **in** changes to **im**.

**Invisible:** can't be seen, hidden

The house is invisible from this side of the hill.

The house can't be seen from this side of the hill.

**Inarticulate:** unable to speak clearly or well, speechless

Jordan memorized his speech because he didn't want to sound inarticulate in front of the whole class.

Jordan memorized his speech because he didn't want to sound like he was unable to speak clearly in front of the whole class.

**Incapable:** not capable, unable, helpless, inept

Darren is incapable of lying to his friends.

Darren is not able to lie to his friends.

**Impossible:** not possible, could not happen or be done, unable to control

It is impossible to live in the same house with my impossible pet parrot.

It is not possible to live in the same house with my pet parrot that no one can control.

**Improbable:** not likely, unlikely to be true, not believable

The story of aliens stealing Lyle's homework was interesting but highly improbable.

The story of aliens stealing Lyle's homework was interesting but highly unlikely.

**Immortal:** never dying, never to be forgotten, unforgettable

Since he was a child, James loved immortal myths of Ancient Greece.

Since he was a child, James loved unforgettable myths of Ancient Greece.

## Tidbit



Pharaoh means "Great House" and is the Egyptian word for king. Pharaohs believed in their **immortality**. They also believed that when a person died they really didn't die. They ordered building of the pyramids in the shape of a first mountain from which the Egyptian believed the earth was created. The Egyptians also believed that the souls of their pharaohs were launched magically through the hole near the tip of the pyramid into the sky, the "**immortal** place".

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**Fill in each sentence with the correct word:**

Invisible    Inarticulate    Incapable    Impossible    Improbable

1. The woman who gave us directions was kind but \_\_\_\_\_, we couldn't understand a word of her explanation.
2. The chances to win the lottery were not \_\_\_\_\_, but very \_\_\_\_\_.
3. H.G.Wells novel "The \_\_\_\_\_ Man" is a story about a scientist who didn't want to be seen.
4. Byron broke his wrist and was \_\_\_\_\_ of playing his guitar for a whole month.

**Choose the correct definition:**

1. **Incapable**  
a. not possible  
b. unlikely  
c. not able  
d. never dying
2. **Impossible**  
a. not possible  
b. unlikely  
c. not able  
d. never dying
3. **Improbable**  
a. not possible  
b. unlikely  
c. not able  
d. never dying
4. **Immortal**  
a. not possible  
b. unlikely  
c. not able  
d. never dying

**Challenge Words, look up these words in the dictionary:**

Inadequate

Imperfect

**Nurse:** Doctor, there is The **Invisible** Man in the waiting room.  
**Doctor:** Please tell him that I am unable to see him today.

---

## ANT and ANTI

Latin prefixes **ant** and **anti** mean **against, opposite, or opposing**.

**Antidote:** a medicine used to cure poisonous bites

Carlos was afraid of needles but took the antidote after a spider bit him.

Carlos was afraid of needles but took the medicine that helps fight the poison after a spider bit him.

**Antipathy:** to dislike or be hostile toward someone

The girls worked together on the project in spite of their antipathy toward one another.

The girls worked together on the project in spite of their dislike toward one another.

**Antagonist:** an enemy or opponent, often in a book or story

Lex Luthor was Superman's long-time antagonist.

Lex Luthor was Superman's long-time enemy.

**Antonym:** a word that means the opposite of another word

Everyone knows hot is the antonym of cold, but what's the antonym of warm?

Everyone knows hot is the opposite of cold, but what word is the opposite of warm?

### Confusion Alerts!

1. Do not confuse **anti** with **ante**, which means **before**. We will be learning about prefix **ante** in a later lesson.
2. Don't confuse the prefix **ant** with the insects of the same name, anteater does not mean against eaters.

### Tidbit



Since it was 1965 before the first **antiperspirant** (perspire means to sweat) was invented, people for centuries used deodorants - heavy colognes and perfumes to cover up body odor caused by sweating. Man and women who didn't wash for months covered themselves in flowery scents - which must have smelled pretty gross! Washerwomen would set clothes out to dry on lavender bushes to help make them smell better but that couldn't have helped much. Then came the invention of **antiperspirant** from Aluminum. Now we can run miles and still smell fresh and sweet. Nah!



---

**Fill in each sentence with the correct word:**

Antonym

Antagonists

Antipathy

Antidote

1. Joel had always felt a little \_\_\_\_\_ toward Mike since the time when Mike spilled his entire lunch in Joel's lap.
2. There wouldn't be many good stories if the heroes never faced \_\_\_\_\_.
3. When the teacher asked the class what they thought the \_\_\_\_\_ of sad was, Bridget screamed "summer vacation!"
4. Michael creatively called the weekly soccer games with his best friends an \_\_\_\_\_ to boredom.

**Choose the correct definition:**

1. **Antonym**

- a. hostility or dislike
- b. something unimportant

- c. a person who doesn't like others
- d. opposite meaning to another word

2. **Antagonist**

- a. the opposite of agony
- b. a bad organ player

- c. dislike and hostility
- d. an enemy

3. **Antipathy**

- a. dislike or hostility
- b. disrespectful and rude behavior

- c. a medication that fights poison
- d. opposite meaning to another word

4. **Antidote**

- a. a medication that fights poison
- b. the opposite of a dot, like a circle

- c. opposite meaning to another word
- d. dislike and hatred

**Make a sentence with each of the following words:**

Antonym

Antagonist

Antipathy

Antidote

**Challenge Words, look up these words in the dictionary:**

Antifreeze

Antihero

Antarctic

**The boy is praying:** *Please, please put Canada in **Antarctica**.*

**Mom:** *Why in **Antarctica**?*

**Boy:** *Because that's what I wrote in my test.*

---

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