

# **THE TEST AND STUDY SPELLER**

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The Test and Study Speller by Daniel Starch & George A. Mirick

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**DANIEL STARCH & GEORGE A. MIRICK**

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# THE TEST AND STUDY SPELLER

BY

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## INTRODUCTION

**The Fundamental Problems of Spelling.** — 1. What words should a pupil know how to spell when he finishes the elementary school?

2. In what grade should each particular word be taught?

3. What are the most economical ways of learning and teaching spelling?

These are the three fundamental questions of spelling in our schools. As complete and definite scientific answers to these questions as possible were sought; and, on the basis of these extensive investigations, the words in this book were selected and placed into the various grades, and the lessons planned according to the latest developments in the psychology and pedagogy of spelling.

**The Selection of the Words.** — Which words should a pupil know how to spell? The common sense answer is: He should know how to spell the words that he needs to write as a child, or that he will need to write as an adult. How may we know what these words are? By finding out the words that both children and adults use in their writing.

Recent years have brought forth a number of very extensive tabulations of the words used in writing by various classes of persons and the frequency with which each word is used. The following are the chief studies:

*The Eldridge List.* — Mr. R. C. Eldridge, a business man in Buffalo, New York, reported in 1911 a tabulation of 43,989 running words from four different newspapers in

which he found 6,002 different words that occurred from one to twenty or more times.

*The Ayres List.* — Dr. L. P. Ayres of the Russell Sage Foundation tabulated 23,629 words from 2,000 letters, chiefly business letters, and found 2,001 different words.

*The Jones List.* — Professor W. F. Jones of the University of South Dakota tabulated 15,000,000 running words from 75,000 themes written by 1,050 pupils in Grades II to VIII, in four states, and found 4,532 different words.

*The Cook and O'Shea List.* — Dr. W. A. Cook tabulated 200,000 running words from the family correspondence of thirteen persons and found 5,200 different words.

These four tabulations represent four different fields of writing, each being the most extensive in its field, namely, journalistic, business, juvenile, and private domestic vocabulary. One important type of vocabulary had never been tabulated, namely, the vocabulary of our best current literary writers. Children ought not to be confined to the words which they naturally use (Jones List), nor to adult business vocabulary (Ayres List), nor to newspaper vocabulary (Eldridge List), nor to the vocabulary of ordinary family correspondence (Cook List). An important point in learning to spell is to learn also those words which will enrich a person's vocabulary. Hence, one of the authors made a tabulation (Starch List) of the vocabulary of the best current literary authors. This tabulation is unpublished but is on file in the library of the University of Wisconsin.

*The Starch List* (1915). — Professor Daniel Starch tabulated some 40,000 running words, about 1,000 from each of forty authors in eleven current, high-grade magazines. This yielded 5,903 different words as follows:

3,111 words occurred each, once  
1,009 words occurred each, twice



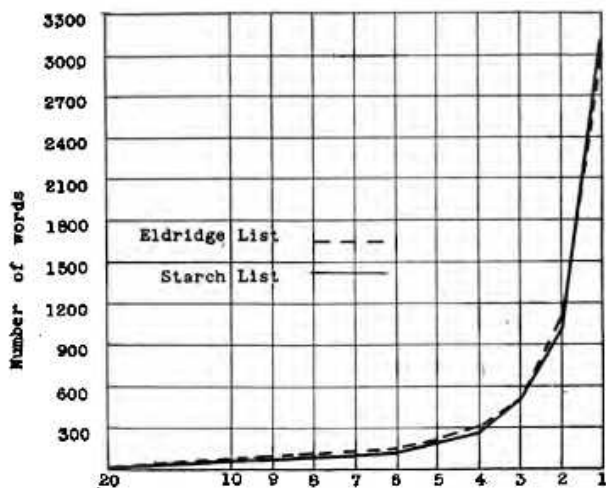
## INTRODUCTION

v

512	words occurred each, three times
280	words occurred each, four times
189	words occurred each, five times
121	words occurred each, six times
97	words occurred each, seven times
82	words occurred each, eight times
53	words occurred each, nine times
255	words occurred each, ten to nineteen times
224	words occurred each, twenty or more times

From these five basic vocabulary investigations, together with a sixth extensive study (the Anderson List mentioned below), the words for this book were selected according to the following plan: All words occurring three or more times in the Starch List, all words occurring three or more times in the Eldridge List, all words occurring seven or more times in the Cook List, and all words in the Ayres 1000-Word List were selected if they occurred also in one other list including the Jones List. This safeguarded against the inclusion of words confined to one type of vocabulary only. For example, the word "cupfuls" occurred twenty-one times in the Starch List but in no other list. Hence it was excluded.

The reason for selecting the words that occurred three or more times in the Eldridge List or in the Starch List was that the words occurring less frequently are relatively rare and constitute a very small part of the running words of ordinary writing. This point may be shown most emphatically by the graphs on page vi, on which the relative number of words of different frequencies is indicated. A remarkably close parallel exists between the Eldridge and Starch Lists. The particular point to note in the graphs is the fact that the sharp bend in both curves occurs between words whose frequency lies between two and three. Beyond



three the curve shoots up very rapidly. This same breaking point occurs in the Cook List between six and seven. Words occurring three or more times in the Starch and Eldridge Lists and seven or more times in the Cook List constitute over nine-tenths of all running words. This process of selection yielded 2,626 words.

*The Anderson List (1917).* — Dr. W. N. Anderson of the University of Iowa tabulated 361,184 running words found in 3,723 letters written by six classes of persons, designated as: professional, business, domestic, miscellaneous, personal, and farming. He found 9,223 different words, from which he prepared a list of 3,105 words by selecting all words occurring a total of five or more times in three or more of the six groups.

This list of 3,105 words was checked against the original list of 2,626 words to ascertain all the words in the Anderson

List which were not among the 2,626 words. This brought 1,137 words which, together with a few other words that the authors felt should be included, have been added to the original list of 2,626 words, making a total of approximately 3,800 words.

This final list of some 3,800 words, brought together in this book, represents, therefore, the selection of the most common words in the English language, and is based on the six extensive and basic vocabulary tabulations made up to the present time. These six tabulations represent substantially all phases of writing, namely, journalistic (Eldridge), business correspondence (Ayres), juvenile (Jones), personal correspondence (Cook), literary (Starch), and varied correspondence (Anderson). These investigations represent an analysis of a total of some 690,000 running words besides the 15,000,000 running words tabulated by Jones.

This list of about 3,800 words, arrived at by scientific investigation and actual experience, constitutes (a spelling list of all words of reasonably common occurrence in actual writing) but not words of uncommon occurrence. (It is obvious that it is not only useless but wasteful of a pupil's time to learn to spell words which he will never use in writing and at the same time neglect to master thoroughly the words he will actually use.)

A discussion of the two other fundamental questions of spelling, — particularly as to the most economical ways of learning and teaching the subject, will be found on the following pages under "Suggestions to Teachers." Considering the great amount of experimental data on hand bearing on the teaching of spelling, the actual improvement in practice would seem to be altogether disproportionate. This lack of improvement is largely due to the fact that the experimental data have been in technical form and have not been accessible to the teacher and supervisor. It is the purpose of the