Helping Your Child with 'Tricky Words' in Reception

Key points

- Phonics is the method children use to link sounds to letters to read words, but some words are 'tricky' because they cannot be sounded out.
- Words like 'the', 'I', and 'no' are common exception words that children need to recognise by sight.
- It is normal for children to feel a little frustrated when sounding out doesn't work for these specific words.
- These words appear often in early reading books to help children build confidence and flow.
- Every school may introduce these words at a different pace, so it is a good idea to check with your child's teacher.

Things to try at home

- Play a 'spot it' game by looking for a tricky word together in a favourite storybook.
- Use a finger to trace the letters of a tricky word in some sand, flour, or shaving foam.
- Create simple flashcards and play a quick game of 'snap' or 'memory' with them.
- Point out these words on cereal boxes or street signs during a walk.

Find out more

- Your child's class teacher or the school's phonics lead.
- The GOV.UK website for information on the National Curriculum for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).