

Specific Learning Difficulties

Advice on teaching and learning spelling

General Principles to Promote Good Practice

Use a variety of multi-sensory approaches:



Auditory - what we hear



Visual - what we see



Kinaesthetic - how we move



Tactile - what we touch



Olfactory - what we smell

- Know the difference between regular and irregular words and use different methods to teach them (see below).
- A phonic method may be more successful for phonically regular words that can be 'sounded out' such as **cat**, **red**, **clap**, **stop** etc.
- A visual method may be more successful for irregular words that cannot be sounded out such as **said**, **any** etc.

- Be realistic about the number of spellings you give pupils to learn. For some pupils it is better to learn 1-2 spellings successfully than attempt more than they can realistically recall.
- Involve pupils in identifying words they want or need to learn as well as the method of learning them.
- For some pupils you may need to build in opportunities for regular practice, on a daily basis is most effective.
- Remember that pupils will still need to revise words learned in previous weeks.
- Encourage pupils to investigate spelling patterns, rules and conventions. Such as: Adding 'es' to nouns and verbs ending in 'y' (the y changes to an i).



fly – flies, cry – cries, baby - babies

- Don't expect pupils to be able to identify every phoneme in some long words because the vowel sounds may be indistinct (e.g. the 'er' in exercise).
- Plan ways of helping pupils to **transfer** their spelling skills into their written work. (See the end of this leaflet for ideas).
- Teach strategies for simple proof reading.
- Encourage pupils to use interesting vocabulary even if they may make spelling errors.
- Mark written work for content, not just accuracy and punctuation.

Do Not

- Ask pupils to look a word up in a dictionary unless you know that they can do this, or you have taught them how to do it and want them to practise.
- Insist that pupils copy all spelling corrections 3-6 times.
- Give a mixture of different spelling patterns to learn at once.
- Expect pupils to learn several topic or subject specific words at once.
- Correct every spelling in the pupils' work. Instead target key words and let the pupil know in advance what you will be looking for.



day	paint
today	playing
Tuesday	blame
Wednesday	wave
May	change
stay	eighteen
away	main
railway	tray

Ideas for Different Ways to Learn Spelling

Use plastic, magnetic or wooden letters

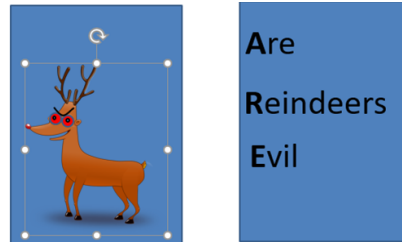
Use plastic, magnetic or wooden letters for regular and/or irregular words such as 'you'.

Pupils can feel the shape of the letters with eyes open and closed. Pupils can practise laying out the letters in the correct order, saying the word or letter names. They can also try doing this with their eyes closed.



Mnemonics

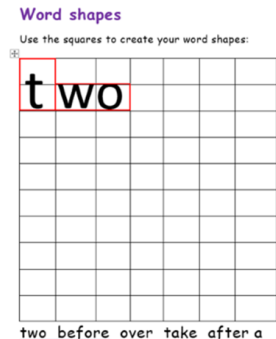
Mnemonics are particularly useful for irregular words that are persistently misspelled such as 'because' (big elephants can always understand small elephants) or w/sh/ could (O U Little Devil). It is most effective if the pupil makes up his/her own mnemonics. The visual image can often include a picture.



It can help if the first word of the mnemonic is the target word (e.g. after = after food take exercise regularly). Do not overuse mnemonics as pupils may find it too hard to remember all the different 'catch phrases'.

Try to get pupils to 'think visually' and 'see' the word

It can be helpful to visualise the word on a wall. The word should be visualised in the pupil's favourite colour. Pupils could also write the word and draw a box around it to become familiar with its shape.



Other visual strategies

- Include chunking a word e.g. theatre = the at re, manufacture = man u fac ture

man u fac ture

- Looking for words within words e.g. there's 'a rat' in separate.
- Adding drawings or symbols as reminders e.g. drawing an arch over the word 'architect'.
- Highlighting the 'tricky' part/s of a word.
- Drawing attention to the difficult part of a word e.g. it is neCeSSary to wear one collar and two socks. I AM an MP in parLIAMent, a cAR is stationARy.
- Making associations:

fibre is used in bread

a piece of pie

a signal is a sign

iron in environment

Link 'regular' words with similar spelling patterns

Link 'regular' words with similar spelling patterns by pictures and stories e.g. label a picture with a house, grounds, clouds, mountains etc. or create **silly sentences** to link similar looking or similar sounding words together so the pattern is remembered e.g. penguin biscuits and fruit juice at the party.

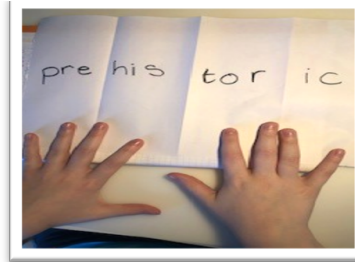


Pronouncing a word incorrectly

Pronouncing a word incorrectly to remember the difficult part (e.g. friend = fri-end, Wed-nes-day, Rasp-berry, Bus-i-ness) may be successful for pupils with good auditory memories. Try chanting the rhythm for a spelling, e.g. Mrs **B** Mrs **E** Mrs **A U T** Mrs I Mrs **F U L**.

Split words into syllables

Split words into syllables e.g. re-mem-ber and ask pupils to write out one syllable at a time. Establish speech/symbol association by saying each syllable clearly while writing.



Remind pupils when they are checking their spellings that each syllable must contain at least one vowel.

Look, say, cover, write and check

Look, say, cover, write and check - read the word, cover the word, write the word and check for accuracy – may work for some pupils.

Remember, left handed children will need the target list of spellings on the right hand side.

Daily Diary Spelling work: Week 6					
Look Say Cover Write Check					
My Words	Thursday	Friday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
throw					
throwing					
three					
throb					
thrill					
Checked					
<small>What I need to remember: Highlight any tricky parts or errors: e.g. ring ring throw throwing three throo thrill thrill</small>					



Simultaneous Oral Spelling

However, Simultaneous Oral Spelling (S.O.S.) is a more multisensory approach and may be more effective. Write the word for the pupil. The pupil then reads the word and writes it, saying the letter names or sounds* as he/she writes. The pupil then reads the word again and checks that it is written correctly. This method can be expanded to include tracing and/or the use of plastic or wooden letters to build the words. The use of cursive writing can help the pupil to learn how to write common letter strings fluently and automatically. This method can be used for regular and irregular words. (*This depends partly upon the age of the pupil and the type of words being learned. Letter names are more useful for irregular words that cannot be sounded out.)

Magical Spelling

Magic Spelling is a technique devised by Cricket Kemp. The technique involves holding up a piece of card with the correct spelling of a word which is moved up to the left of the children, as 95 per cent of the population store visual memory in the left-hand side of their brain.

The card is then removed from the pupils' line of sight, but the word remains in the mind's eye as the image remains in the brain. Pupils can then recite each letter of the word both forward and backwards. For more information on this approach go to the following website: <https://magicalspelling.co.uk>

Some pupils respond well to learning the basic spelling rules e.g. the consonants 'f', 'l' and 's' are doubled at the end of most words of one syllable (e.g. cliff, doll, less). There are online platforms which support reading and spelling. These may include animated rules to illustrate patterns often in an original and highly memorable manner. These include:

Subject	Weblink
Nessy Reading and Spelling	www.nessy.com/us
Sir Linkalot	www.sirlinkalot.org
Spelling Shed	www.spellingshed.com/en-gb
Lexia	www.lexialearning.com/products/core5

The spelling of a word is sometimes more obvious in other words in the same set or family (morphology):

critic - **critical** - **criticise**

music - **musician** - **musical**

sign - **signal** - **signature**

- Etymology - Learning about the origins of words can help explain odd or unusual spellings such as

bicycle = **bi** (two) + **cycle** (circle)

- In addition to learning spellings, pupils will need to develop dictionary skills using appropriate resources.
- Encourage pupils to keep their own personal spelling journals.
- Electronic spellcheckers can be useful for pupils whose spellings are nearly right and who can recognise the correct spelling of a word when they see it.
- Computer programmes can be used to learn to read and spell. Software such as Wordshark, First Keys 3, Nessy or Lexia can be used to practise a variety of spelling patterns.

Transferring Spelling Skills to Writing

Pupils will need help to transfer their spelling skills into their general writing. It cannot be assumed that pupils will do this automatically.

The following are some suggestions for you to try:

- Have a **word bank** available of key targeted words and teach pupils how to use a personal wordbook when proofreading free writing.



- Ask pupils to write spelling words into a sentence context and self-check for accuracy.
- Create short silly stories including all target spelling words- the sillier the better.
- Support pupils in creating a personalised writing guide to use in independent work which includes key spelling examples.



- Give step-by-step instructions to pupils on how to check their own written work for errors.



- Dictate simple sentences using the words that pupils have been learning.
- Use tracking activities (e.g. scanning text to find and highlight target words).
- Use **dry wipe boards** to practise spellings and to try out new words etc.
- Use **phoneme frames** to try out spellings of new words.
- Use **assistive technology software** which include features such as talking spellcheckers, word prediction facilities and word banks to support pupils' writing e.g. **Clicker, TextHelp:Read&Write, Docs Plus, Word Q, Global Autocorrect, Word Talk, Lightkey and Penfriend.**

Letters and Sounds Phase 6 provides opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of spelling rules, investigate spelling patterns and learn a range of spelling strategies through an investigative approach.



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