

Notes

What is a Spelling Strategy?

from North Yorkshire 'Specific Learning Difficulty Handbook'

- ⇒ **A** spelling strategy is a means for a child or young person to retrieve an accurate spelling choice using a method compatible with their learning style. They may choose a different strategy for different words.
- ⇒ **T**he child or young person should always choose their own strategy but this can only be done when they are aware of the different options.
- ⇒ **E**ffective spelling strategies enable the child or young person to retain the sequential look, shape, sound and feel of a word.
- ⇒ **S**pelling should always be linked to a cursive style of handwriting so that the word is felt by the hand movements (kinaesthetic memory). The spellings children and young people say out loud are not always what they write down. Therefore spellings should always be written. After all we only learn to spell in order to communicate in writing.
- ⇒ **A**ccurate spellings are more easily recalled if they link to the child or young person's own writing. The child or young person will remember them if they have a purpose and the child or young person really wants to use and recall that spelling.
- ⇒ **L**earning spellings requires effective memory strategies. Children and young people need to be taught the different strategies of how to remember. **Do not just tell children and young people to 'learn them', but teach them how to learn and remember.**



⇒ Regular revision is essential for the word to be embedded into the long term memory. Before any effective spelling can be achieved a child or young person must be able to hear the different phonemes (smallest unit of sound) within words. Any child or young person who has difficulty with this must have basic phonological awareness training.

Resources:

- Sound Linkage by Peter Hatcher Whurr Publications 19B Compton Terrace, London, N1 2UN, ISBN: 1-86156-176-8;
- Playing with Sounds: A supplement to Progression in Phonics;
- Letters and Sounds: Principles and Practice of High Quality Phonics: Available from the DfES Ref: 00281-2007

Recapitulation

- Columns 2 and 3 are covered and promptee is encouraged to discuss the original error
- The promptee attempts to write the correct spelling in column 4
- When the five words have been written this is checked against column 2
- Every 5th session, promptee is tested against the 20 words dealt with so far

Prompt Spelling: the '5 steps & Recapitulation' are taken from Watkins & Hunter-Carsch 'Prompt Spelling: a practical approach to paired spelling' in NASEN Support for Learning, 1995, vol.10, 3, 133-138.

Prompt Spelling

The procedure for prompt spelling is described below. Each session should last no longer than 20 minutes. It involves paired work with a prompter (a more skilled speller) and a learner, called a promptee.

Step 1

- Underline four words which the student has mis-spelt
- Child and young person (promptee) copies the mis-spelt words into column 1 of a prepared worksheet (worksheet with four vertical columns)

Step 2

- Each mis-spelt word is considered and discussed, identifying letter patterns and/or sounds/syllables
- The prompter says the word in a clear, emphasised way, stressing word beginnings and endings, syllables etc
- The promptee repeats the word in a similar way

Step 3

- Promptee underlines what he feels is wrong
- This is then discussed
- Promptee attempts to correct the error

Step 4

- Using a spellchecker* the promptee checks the attempt
- The correct spelling is then entered into column 2 of the worksheet
- Attention is drawn to the original error and further discussion on spelling rules, phonic blends etc. are stressed

**this may be electronic or software-based, or a dictionary*

Step 5

- Promptee & prompter discuss similar words, emphasising how they are similar
- These are collected and entered into column 3

Look, SAY, TRACE, Cover, Write, Check

1. **LOOK** at the word and **SAY** the word out loud
2. **FINGER -TRACE** the letters **SAYING** the names of the letters
3. **ARM-TRACE** the letters in the air, **SAYING** the names of the letters. Can you do it with your eyes closed?
4. **COVER** the word
5. **WRITE** the word, **SAYING** the letters names as you write – *using joined writing*
6. **CHECK** the word. Is it correct? If so, well done!
7. Now **REPEAT** stages 4-6 3 times even if you got it right the first time.
8. Now **WRITE** some sentences using the word.

Tracking

* This strategy is particularly useful if a child or young person has started to develop a habit of spelling a particular spelling incorrectly.

1. Prepare a sheet similar to the one below.

w h e t h w h a t w l a t c w t t
w a t h y g s w h a t w g a t w
h a t l t h a w w h e t h w a h t
a w w a t w h a t w y w h a t g
s w h a t l w h a t g w h t a w t
l w h e t h w a t w w h a t a t c
h w h t a w h a t t l h t g w a t i
etc

2. Hide the correct spelling amongst the incorrect ones

3. Give the child or young person a highlighter pen and ask them to **track** the line from **left to right** and find all the correct spellings and **highlight them**

w h e t h **w h a t** w l a t c w t t
w a t h y g s **w h a t** w g a t w
h a t l t h a w w h e t h w a h t
a w w a t **w h a t** w y w h a t g
s **w h a t** l **w h a t** g w h t a w t
l w h e t h w a t w **w h a t** a t c
h w h t a **w h a t** t l h t g w a t i
etc

Cued Spelling

The technique comprises of ten steps for learning spelling, four points to remember and a daily and a weekly review.

The ten steps are:

1. Speller chooses word
2. Check correct spelling, put in 'spelling diary'
3. Read the word – together and alone
4. Choose / identify cues that will be meaningful to the Speller and will help with recall
5. Say cues together
6. Speller say cues, Helper writes word
7. Helper say cues, Speller writes word
8. Speller say cues and writes word
9. Speller writes word fast
10. Speller reads word

Each day – speed review

- Speller writes all words for the day swiftly and checks
- Mis-spelt words – do ten steps again

Each week – mastery review

- Speller quickly writes all words for week and checks
- Decides what to do about wrong words (reflect on range of cues identified and their level of helpfulness)

Remember

- Helper covers previous tries
- Speller checks own try
- If try is wrong, to step before again
- Helper praises

If the learner writes a word inaccurately, he is encouraged to delete the word from his memory by erasing it or boldly scoring it out. This prevents the image of the incorrect word remaining and being recalled at some future point. As in paired reading, modelling and praise are essential to the success of cued spelling.

Cued Spelling: the 10 steps are taken from Topping's article 'Cued Spelling: a powerful technique for parent & peer tutoring', in The Reading Teacher, 1995, vol.48, 5,374-382.

Spelling Conventions

Many rules/conventions can be confusing and there always seems to be exceptions which add to the confusion and frustration.

However, some are useful for example:

- For ē sound - **i before e except after c**:
believe, relief, receive
- Plurals of nouns ending in f or fe – usually just **add s**: safe – safes, roof – roofs sometimes change f to v and **add es**: calf – calves, wife-wives, wolf - wolves
- **Add ies** to singular nouns ending in y: lady – ladies, enemy-enemies, try - tries
- **Add es** to nouns ending with ch, x, s, sh:
witches, foxes, businesses, marshes

Mnemonics

Create a **verse, rhyme or sentence** to help remember a Spelling. Don't over use this strategy as children or young people then can't remember the different mnemonics!

eg

said: **Sally-Anne is daft**
or **Sally-Anne is dancing**

any: **Ants never yawn**

necessary: One **collar** and two **sleeves**

! If the child or young person creates their own mnemonic they are more likely to remember it.

Syllabification

1. **Listen** to the word
2. **Clap** or **tap** out the syllables as you say each one

eg. enjoyment =en-joy-ment

(3 syllables)

3. **Listen** to the phonemes (individual sounds) in each syllable
4. **Write** all the phonemes you can hear in each syllable in joined script as a whole word
5. **Check** the word

! Don't forget to teach that **every syllable MUST contain at least one vowel** or the letter 'y'

Word Lists, Posters and Cue Prompts

- **Display** commonly used word lists or subject specific word lists in the classroom
- Remember to **add graphics** to help the pupil know what the word says and to add interest
- Posters with cartoons and comic 'fun' always **engage** pupils
- **Display** cue prompts to help pupils recall spelling strategies

Spelling Boxes

- Use two brightly coloured attractive small boxes, one marked '**Words I am learning**' and the other '**Words I have learnt**'
- The pupil chooses about 5 words to learn which written clearly and accurately on separate pieces of card and placed in the 'Words I am learning' box
- The pupil chooses **any spelling strategy** to learn each word and when confident with the word, moves it to the 'Words I have learnt' box
- 'Words I have learnt' are **revisited** regularly, shaken and a random 3 words are pulled out and given to the parent or spelling buddy to read out. The pupil should be able to write and recall the words quickly and automatically. If they are correctly recalled they are returned to the box. Any not recalled are returned to the 'Words I am learning box'
- It is very important to ensure the pupil sees the process as positive. Explain that it is normal and OK not to have remembered – **NOBODY** should be disappointed or upset; if they are, perhaps a different spelling strategy needs to be considered to help them recall the spelling

Word Shapes

This strategy is useful to learn a group of words. This is particularly liked by learners who have a strong visual learning channel.

1. **Look** at the word
2. **Make** the word using magnetic or wooden letters
3. **Draw** a box around the shape of the word



4. **Remove** the letters
5. **Look** at the shape: Can you **visualise** the letters in the box? What are they?
6. **Check** you are right by putting the letters back in the 'box'
7. Now **write** the word
8. **Draw** a box around it. Does the box look like the first one?
9. **Check** the spelling
10. Now try with a group of 5 different boxes. Can you recognise the word from the box shape?

SOS - Simultaneous Oral Spelling

1. **Say** the **whole word** – say it clearly
2. **Name** the letters in order
3. **Repeat** until you are confident you can do it with eyes shut
4. **Say** the **letter names** and **write** the word down at the same time
5. **Say** the **whole word**
6. **Check** you have written it correctly
7. **Repeat**
8. Do this **each day** for (about) **6** consecutive days

ACE Dictionary

The ACE (Aurally Coded English) Spelling Dictionary is based on identifying the first phoneme that can be heard in a word. Many children with dyslexia find this approach more helpful than using an ordinary dictionary. It is used in a different way to a regular dictionary, which can be off-putting at first, but is well worth the effort for some pupils, particularly in upper key stage 2 and in secondary schools.

Fading Cards

1. Make laminated cards with the whole word on the first card, and then omitting one letter at a time (from either the beginning or end of the word) and replacing them with a line on subsequent cards
2. **Trace** over the letters saying the names of the letters as you write and then say the whole word
3. Complete cards one at a time and in order by tracing over the letters and filling in the missing letters **SAYING THE NAMES OF THE LETTERS** as you write
4. Complete the final card, saying the letter names as you write the missing letters.

ALWAYS WORK FROM LEFT TO RIGHT.

Words Within Words

1. **Look** at the word
2. Can you see any words hidden within the word?
3. There is a rat in **separate**
4. **Say** the whole word
5. **Say** the word **again** but stress the hidden word within the bigger word
6. **Cover** the word
7. **Say** and **write** the word in joined writing remembering the hidden word
8. **Check** the word

Letter String Patterns

1. **Look** at the word e.g. 'stake'
2. **Find** words which are part of the same family with the same letter strings

ake

cake

make

bake

3. **Say** the words
4. **Make** sentences using the words
5. Cover the original target word (stake)
6. **Write** the word orally stressing the highlighted parts
7. **Check** the word

Tactile Writing

Just because you are learning to spell a word, it doesn't mean you need a pen and paper! Try using your finger and practise your spellings in a tray of salt or sand.

1. **Look** carefully at the word
2. **Say** the word
3. Say each letter name
4. **Write** it in joined script in the salt/sand with a finger or pencil top
5. Shake the tray to clear the salt/sand and write again
6. Keep practising

Spelling Arc/Magnetic Letters

- Use an arc to place all the letters out in alphabetical order. It is easier to view an alphabet as a whole in an arc
- Teach that 'mn' are always at the top in the middle of the alphabet. Words beginning with MN are therefore found in the middle of the dictionary/telephone book/index etc
- Place the magnetic letters out in the arc to practise order. Gradually build up the number of letters in order
- The area under the arc is used to practise spellings with the magnetic letters without the constraint of recalling letter formation or orientation

Mapping

This has been a very useful, effective and enjoyable strategy for children in **Upper Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3**. The child is effectively writing the word out several times but in a way that will make them think about the order.

1. **Look** at the word, for example 'said'
2. **Say** the letter names
3. **Repeat** until they can be said with **eyes closed**
4. **Write** the word, missing out each letter in turn - say each letter as you write **including the missing letter!**
5. **Say** whole word
6. **Repeat** until all letters are in place,

Eg. _ **Don't forget to say the missing letters**

'said'

_aid

s_id,

sa_d

sai_

said

Editing Using Highlighter Pens

Use highlighter pens to encourage children to find their own spelling errors when they are proof reading their own work.

- Check the spellings in your work by scanning from the **LAST** word to the first and **highlight** any word that does not look right
- This helps you to focus on the words without reading the sentences
- If you hesitate over a word it is likely to be an error and needs checking
- It is always surprising how many of your own errors you can spot using this method. You will find that you can often self correct many of them unaided

Spelling Buddies

- Encourage children and young people to team up with a partner as a '**spelling buddy**'
- Always have a culture of '**no put downs**' they are there to help and support one another
- A buddy can **observe** and **check** spelling strategies applied by the other
- They can 'test' one another, **work together** with spelling games and check each other's written work



SPELL IT OUT!

Alternative Strategies For Learning To Spell

Compiled by Easingwold EMS 2011