

Spelling

Key issues explained:

- Spoken English consists of 44 phonemes (basic units of speech such as /b/, /sh/, /f/, etc). As there are only 26 letters in our alphabet, one letter cannot represent only one sound. Some letters may have more than one sound (phoneme) such as the /y/, /c/, /g/ for example.
- Of all letters, vowels (a e i o u) are most problematic for spellers as these five letters alone or in combination with other letters (i.e. /ow/, /aw/, /ar/) represent numerous sounds. Understanding and knowing vowel patterns makes for a more reliable sound-spelling association than relying solely on individual phoneme sounds.
- Successful spelling depends so heavily on memory for the correct sequencing of symbolic material. When it comes to symbols as in the alphabetic code some children do not necessarily perceive (visually or phonologically) these symbols the same way that other children do.
- Some children have poor phonological awareness. They struggle to hear the individual sounds and component parts in words. They find it difficult to segment words phonologically and put them into categories which share a common sound i.e. cat, hat, mat, rat, bat.
- Some words have irregular spellings meaning that the rules of phonics are no good as memory prompts.
- The high frequency of many of the irregular words means spelling mistakes are multiplied.
- Confidence and self-esteem are lowered as children keep misspelling common irregular words that keep coming up and that everyone else seems to get right.
- Irregular words are spelt correctly in the spelling test and forgotten in use. This is particularly true for dyslexic children with multi-tasking difficulties. Like a computer that can only run one programme at a time: the irregular words programme crashes as soon as the sentence- writing programme starts to run.

Most Common Written Words

Whurr, from Doyle. "Dyslexia" 2002

<p>a and he l in is it of that the to was</p> <p style="text-align: center;">12</p>	<p>all as at be but are for had have him his not on one said so they we with you 20</p> <p>about an back been before big by call come came can could did do down first from get go has her here if into just like little look made make me more much must my no new off only or our other our over right see she some their them then there this two when up want well went were what where which who will your old 68</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">This area represents 19,900 other words but there is not sufficient space to print them</p>	

An average adult uses about 20,000 different words, some more frequently than others. This chart shows how often we use the commonest of them. The top left box represents up to 1/4 (25%) of the words we read and write. These 12, added to the next 20 make up about one third of the overall words met in ordinary reading. One hundred words go to make up half of the total and so the other half consists of about 19,000 words but we are not able to show these here!

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Techniques for learning spellings

- Different children learn in different ways. There is no blueprint for teaching children to spell.
- Therefore, it is best to use a multisensory approach.

1) Colour writing

It has been shown that the brain remembers it better if you add colour!
Write words in a **joined script** – get the muscles to learn the spelling too.

- Using a blank piece of paper, fold into a concertina (fan).
- Student writes the word in the first section.
- Tutor checks the word.
- Student folds it over and writes it again in another colour.
- Carry on until every other section is used.
- Open the page and look at the colourful writing.

It has been shown that the brain remembers things in chunks (especially in 3's)

2) Syllable chunking – one of the best ways to remember longer words

- First make sure the child knows how to say words in syllables (chunks)
- Say the spelling word together
- Say it again in syllables
- Count the syllables
- Choose a coloured pencil for each syllable
- Write each syllable in a different colour
- 'Take a picture' of the word (imprinting)
- Turn over the page and ask the child questions e.g. which letters were green? Which letters were blue? Which were yellow? Now, spell the whole word out loud.

3) Syllable segmentation – teach your student to segment words rather than look at individual letters e.g. diff-er-ent rather than d-i-f-f-e-r-e-n-t.

- Speak the word out loud (feel the word in their mouth)
- Segment word into chunks (beats)
- Ask: do I recognise any of these segments?
- Ask: do I know how to write any of these segments?
- Write down the segments you know how to write in order.
- Leave a blank for those segments not known and ask a parent to help with those segments.

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4) Visualisation – Some research has shown that visualising spellings is the key to learning them.

Master strategy for teaching spelling
Harry Alder ‘Neuro-linguistic programming’, 1994

- The secret to good spelling is being able to store words in a visual way
- The best way to remember a spelling is to visualise it, a little up and to your left in your mind’s eye, and store that picture
- When you see that word again, it will ‘look right’ or ‘feel right’, or, if it was spelt incorrectly, it will ‘look wrong’ or ‘feel wrong’.
- All top spellers that have been researched use some form of visualisation, usually looking up or straight ahead as they recall a word, then down as they confirmed that it felt right

The Strategy to follow:

- a) First, think of anything that feels familiar or comfortable
- b) Next, for a few seconds, look at the word you wish to remember
- c) See the word in your favourite colour, in a place you really like
- d) Look away from the word, up and to your left, and picture the word as best you can as you try to spell it in your mind
- e) Look back at the word, noticing any letters you have missed and repeat the process until you can picture the whole word
- f) To test yourself, after a short break, visualise the word and write it down
- g) Now look up at the word again and spell it backwards. This will confirm that you are learning through the best, visual strategy (you cannot learn to spell a word backwards if learned phonetically)
- h) For longer words, chunk them down into smaller units of three or four letters. Visualise separate chunks.

5) Mnemonics – A device or system for improving memory. Irregular words cause most trouble for children.

Often it can be more memorable if the child creates his/ her own mnemonics

Silly sentences:

Word
Are

Mnemonic
Are rhinos elegant?

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Beautiful	B oys e at a pples u nder t rees i n F rance u ntil l unch
Because	B ig e lephants c an a lways u pset s maller e lephants
Believe	Never b elieve a l ie
Build	u and i will b uild a house
Busy	This b us is b usy
Business	Do your b usiness in the b us
Could (same for should/would)	C ould o ld u mbrellas l eap d rips?
Does	D addy o ften e ats s weets
Goes	G ranny o ften e ats s weets
Friend	I to the e nd will be your f riend
Great	it is g reat to e at
Intelligent	t ell the g ent to come i n
Island	an island i s l and
Mother	M other ate a m oth
The	o ther lady was his m other
Piece	Eat a p iece of p ie
Present	She s ent a p resent
Special	A s pecial agent is someone in the C IA
Sure	S ave u p r ed e lephants
Wednesday	N es was w ed on W ednesday
Said	S ally A nn is d ancing

6) Look, say, trace, cover, write, check

Word	Look	Say	Trace	Cover	Write	Check
there						
was						

Use joined writing to help the muscles remember how to write the word.



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7) Learning word lists

1. Tutor dictates the whole list to the student
2. Student and tutor tick spellings they already know
3. Try to group the remaining words into patterns if possible (e.g. all 'ai' words together)
4. Colour in 'hot spots' in the words (e.g. want, they, colour)
5. Try to picture the word on a wall, and then 'copy' it down.
6. Use joined up writing to get your hand to remember the word.
7. Try to make up mnemonics
8. Spell the words aloud before writing them down
9. Look at the words one at a time, cover them, try to remember them and write them down.
10. When the number of words becomes too much, and your child's 'brain is full', stop the exercise, and make sure that the words you have worked on have been learned.

8) Learning irregular spellings (words that just don't fit!)

-e.g. they, does, said, many, friend.....

1. Spell the word aloud as you copy it down
2. Look at the word in this first column
3. Cover the word with a piece of white paper
4. Try to SEE the word on the white paper
5. Copy the word as you SEE it onto a second column
6. Make sure the word is correct in the second column
7. If it is not correct, rub it out and repeat the steps
8. Repeat for a third column
9. Take 10 minute break and repeat for a fourth column
10. Repeat a few hours later
11. Repeat a few days later
12. Once a month, test on previously learned words to make sure they are committed to memory.

To understand automaticity, have student write his/ her name with eyes closed. Discuss how the hand just knew what to do. That is the feeling the student should have when writing these irregular words and until that feeling is there, the word is not yet automatic.

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Ways to record and practise problem spellings

- Keep a personal spelling diary of the student's common mis-spellings in a booklet for them to use during any written activity. Build up over time.
- Create a spelling bank of known words or topic words (preferably in alphabetical order).
- Create flashcards or sticky notes of commonly misspelled words and post around student's room, desk area or on the fridge. Practise flashcards every lesson - try to make it a fun activity (sticker rewards?)
- Parents can purchase software such as Wordshark, where you can create a personal list of spellings and select games for the student to play.

Teaching your student to self-correct:

Read in Reverse:

Two steel cables run the length of the bridge. They sweep to the top of the first set of towers where they are anchored. They then slope downward, reaching their lowest point in the middle of the bridge. The cables then climb to the second set of towers. They hang like a pair of jump ropes suspended between the two towers. Vertical steel cables run from the bridge platform and attach to the sloping cables overhead. The platform is suspended, or hung from the cables. This is why the golden gate is called a suspension bridge.

1. Read the passage from beginning to end to see if it makes sense.
2. Read each sentence from the **END** to the **BEGINNING**.
3. Underline any words that do not 'look, feel, sound' right.
4. Write the correction in the margin.

By reading from the end to the beginning, you are automatically taking away any 'meaning' in the text. Therefore it is much easier for the brain to spot spellings.

Glossary of Spellings

The 100 words most commonly misspelled by children (In order of error frequency)

1) their	26) went	51) mother	76) interesting
2) too	27) where	52) another	77) once

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3) there	28) stopped	53) threw	78) like
4) they	29) very	54) some	79) they're
5) then	30) morning	55) its	80) cousin
6) until	31) something	56) bought	81) all right
7) our	32) named	57) getting	82) happened
8) asked	33) came	58) going	83) didn't
9) off	34) name	59) course	84) always
10) through	35) tried	60) women	85) surprise
11) you're	36) here	61) animals	86) before
12) clothes	37) many	62) started	87) caught
13) looked	38) knew	63) that's	88) every
14) people	39) with	64) would	89) different
15) pretty	40) together	65) again	90) interesting

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16) running	41) swimming	66) heard	91) sometimes
17) believe	42) first	67) received	92) friends
18) little	43) were	68) coming	93) children
19) things	44) than	69) to	94) an
20) him	45) two	70) said	95) school
21) because	46) know	71) wanted	96) jumped
22) thought	47) decided	72) hear	97) around
23) and	48) friend	73) from	98) dropped
24) beautiful	49) when	74) frightened	99) babies
25) it's	50) let's	75) for	100) money

Common words that are frequently confused

- Where and were
- Than and then
- Two, too and to
- There, their and they're
- Will and well
- Quite and quiet
- Accept and except

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Two words that children hear as one word

- A lot
- All right
- In case
- In trouble

Hearing issues/Speaking issues

- Could've for could have 'could of'
- should've for should have 'should of'
- baf / bath wiv / with
- farther / father warter / water

Spelling Rules and Common Spelling Patterns

Each rule should be taught in a practical way giving the chance for students to apply what they have learnt. Most rules have exceptions and it helps to teach the exceptions.

- A) Every syllable must contain at least one vowel
- B) No words in English end in 'i' – we use 'y' instead
- C) The letter 'q' is always followed by 'u'
- D) The letter 'j' is never used at the end of a word – we used 'ge' instead
- E) No word is complete with just 'v' – we use 've' instead
- F) Doubling rule – single syllable words ending in 'f', 'l', 's, and 'z' must have 'ff', 'll', 'ss' and 'zz' (Flossy rule)

G) Suffixing Rules:

- Drop the 'e' rule – like/liked, hate/hating (before a vowel)
- Don't drop the 'e' rule – hope/hopeless, (before a consonant)
- keep the 'e' before 'a' – orange/orangeade, manage/manageable

H) Common word families:

- all ball, call, fall, hall, stall, tall, wall
- ing king, ring, sing, wing,
- ack back, lack, pack, rack, sack
- ay day, hay, lay, may, pay, ray
- at bat, cat, fat, hat, mat, pat, rat
- op hop, mop, pop, top, shop

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- ad bad, dad, had, lad, mad
- ill fill, gill, hi.., kill, mill, pill, will,
- in bin, din, fin, pin, tin, sin, win,
- ump bump, dump, hump, jump, lump
- ent bent, dent, lent, rent , lent , sent, went
- old bold, cold, fold, hold, sold, told
- ook book, cook, hook, look, took
- ell bell, cell, fell, hell, sell, tell, well,
- et bet, get, jet, let, met, pet, set, wet
- ain contain, complain, brain, drain, main, pain,
- aught caught, daughter, naughty, slaughter, taught
- ight bright, fight, fright, light, night, right, sight, tight

I) Silent Letters

- b bomb, comb, crumb, doubt, thumb
- g design, neighbour, sign
- h honour, hour, honest
- k knee, knife, knight, knock, know, knot
- l chalk, calm, walk
- n autumn, column, hymn
- t castle, listen, whistle
- w wrong, wrap, wriggle, write, wrist, wreck, whole

J) Homophones

- to, too, two
- there, their, they're
- here, hear
- are, our
- one, won
- by, buy, bye
- sea, see
- meet, meat
- no, know

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