

# Better Spelling ~ A Guide For Parents



Many parents wonder how they can best support their child at home with spelling. It is hoped this guide will give you useful information so that the support you provide is effective in helping your child to learn to spell.

Learning to spell is a highly complex business. Some children learn to spell effortlessly – most get there in the end, but too many find the process of learning to spell difficult, painstaking and, sadly, boring. The weekly spelling test may be great for those who can already spell, but for others it makes for a daunting experience.

Most children get most spellings right on the day, but forget them when coming to use them in future work, others just get them wrong. For these reasons, it is necessary to have an approach which meets the needs of all children and allows them to develop their skills at an appropriate rate, in order that they can happily spell common words accurately and develop a range of strategies to tackle more complex words with confidence.

Research shows that sending home a list of words to learn in preparation for a weekly test is not the most effective way for most children to learn and many children (although they may have performed well), have forgotten these words just a few hours after the test.

Spelling must be made fun, enjoyable and interesting. Children only really become good at spelling by practising over and over again and for this to be successful it should be done in fun and interesting ways.

There are distinct stages through which children progress in spelling using a range of strategies and multi-sensory teaching and learning.

It is important that you as a parent understand how your child learns best and how to choose the most appropriate activities to help them. It is important to say however, that all children are different and progress at different rates and some will not display the characteristics described in the Key Stage descriptions below. If you are unsure at which stage your child is at, please ask the class teacher who will be happy to advise on appropriate words and activities.

## How do children remember how words are spelt?

There are four main ways that children process the spelling of words:

### Visual

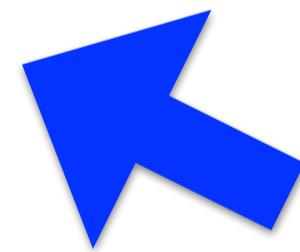
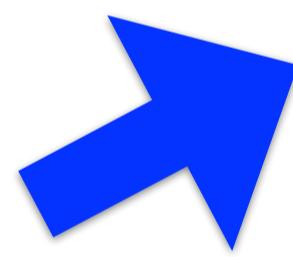
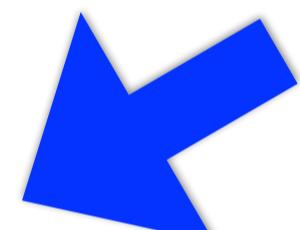
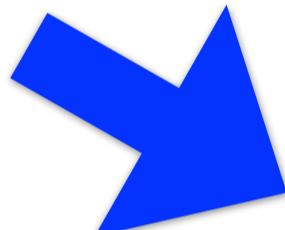
Does it look right?

Writer responds to the shapes of words and the patterns of the letter-strings within words.

### Auditory

Sound it out!

Writer recognises the relationship between sounds and letters or groups of letters, and analyses words in these terms.



### Kinaesthetic

Spelling as a grapho-motor skill

The writer is accustomed to making specific hand-movements to produce particular words or letter strings.

### Linguistic

Why is it spelt like that?

The writer is aware of relationships between words or parts of words, based on meanings, syntax, derivations, etc.

## **Multi-Sensory Teaching and Learning**

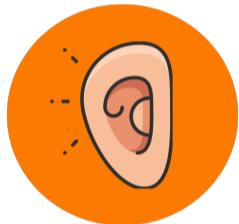
All children have a preferred learning style and by offering them activities which suit them and they enjoy, they can learn more quickly and effectively.

### Visual



By looking at the letter/word as it is said or written, a visual link is created to the manual, oral and auditory channels.

### Auditory



By listening to the phoneme (letter sound) or word as it is said and written, an aural link is created to the manual, visual and oral channels.

### Oral Kinaesthetic



By saying the letter / word as it is viewed or written, an oral link is created to the manual, visual and auditory channels.

### Manual Kinaesthetic



By writing / creating / modelling / tracing the letter / word as it is viewed or spoken, a manual link is created to the oral, visual and auditory channels.

## **Learning Strategies for Spelling**

### Sounding out

Eg. C-a-t, Sh-i-p.

This is the most popular method for teaching spelling. Ask the child to spell out or 'segment' the word they want to spell, then write the constituent sounds. Children use pure sounds.

### Syllabification

Clap out and say each of the syllables. Eg. Re-mem-ber

### Analogy

Making families of words. Eg. Night, fright, sight, slight

### Root

E.g. bi (two) cycle (circle) = bicycle

### Prefixes and suffixes

E.g. Dis-satisfied

### Rules

E.g. „i“ before „e“ except after „c“

Word ending in Y such as fairy/fairies (consonant +y = ies)

Donkey/donkeys (vowel +y = ys)

### Referring to the family words that articulate the ambiguous letters

E.g. Definite - finite, final, infinity

Muscle - muscular

### Sounding out words as they are spelt

Eg. Wed-nes-day

### Words within words

Eg. There is a rat in separate

### Mnemonics

Big Elephants Can Always Upset Small Elephants

## **Stages Of Development**

### **STAGE 1 : Exploring sounds, words and spelling**

**In Reception** we introduce the children to the letter sounds and shapes and show them how these are linked together to create words. Children are encouraged to 'have a go' at writing the words they want to say and they are praised highly for their efforts. Initially their writing is often unreadable to the adult eye (and may resemble 'scribble') although the child will know what he/she means.

At this stage it is vital to value and praise their efforts and to resist correcting spelling or writing words for them to copy or write over the top of. The danger here is that children learn that only correctly spelt words are acceptable, become reliant on adult support and limit their writing to include only words that they know they can spell accurately. As children's awareness of letter sounds increases, more recognisable words will appear in their writing. The following extracts from the Reception document, 'Helping your child learn to write', gives an overview of writing development including spelling.

#### Becoming a writer

In order to write children need to develop various skills, including oral language skills, gross and fine motor skills and phonic skills. They also need to understand that writing is a form of communication and that what they write is for someone to read. They should therefore write for a purpose that is clear to them and stems from their own interests.

#### Oral Language skills

"If a child can't say it, a child can't write it".

- Take everyday opportunities to develop your child's imagination and vocabulary through talking about what you see, feel and experience together e.g. whilst walking through leaves in the park or splashing in the puddles.
- Read and re-tell stories together, talking about the pictures and the story, and explaining any new or unfamiliar words.
- Use puppets to retell stories, or become characters and act out the story.
- Sing songs and rhymes together.

- Engage with children in play and role play.
- Allow family time for talk e.g. dinner time.

### Gross and fine motor skills

Children need to develop the muscles in their arms and fingers before they can hold a pencil to write. There are many fun activities that will help your child develop strength, dexterity and control:

- Painting (with big brushes and water for gross motor skills)
- Threading beads, laces
- Peg boards
- Finger rhymes Play dough
- Cutting
- Writing and doing big movements in the air e.g .with ribbons
- Squeezing sponge balls, stress balls or a small ball of paper
- Bat and ball games
- Pegging things onto a line.
- Using tweezers or sugar tongs to pick up beads, raisins or dried beans.
- Undoing and doing up buttons, poppers etc.
- Transferring small objects from one pot to another.

## Writing for a purpose

Help your child become aware of the writing that surrounds them e.g. signs in the environment, and ensure that children see you writing. Daily activities can all be a stimulus for writing:

- Shopping lists
- Invitations
- Cards Letters
- Notes
- Signs and messages
- Dates on a calendar

## Emergent Writing

- Always praise attempts at writing, and respond positively to your child's mark making (even if it looks like what adults call "scribble").
- Show interest and ask them what they have written.
- Encourage them to point at the marks as they talk.
- As they begin to learn their letter sounds, encourage them to use their sounds in their writing.
- Do not correct their spellings, but celebrate their efforts.

**Above all ensure that your children feel confident that, as writers, they always have your interest, admiration and support.**

## **STAGE 2 : Growing confidence with writing and spelling**

**In Key Stage 1** we encourage parents to help the children learn to spell a range of high frequency (most common) words and to use their knowledge of the sounds that letters make to help them with more tricky words.

The expectation is that children will have learnt most of these 300 spellings by the end of Year 2. You can help by having fun helping your child choose two or three words at a time to learn. (Appendix 1)

The following activities are suggestions for enjoyable and effective ways for children at this stage to practice spelling. Remember that writing words time and time again is often only successful in the short term and fun, meaningful activities are more likely to lead to correct spelling being stored in the long term memory.

### **Some ideas for activities to support this stage of development**

#### **Cloudy Words**



Materials: Word List Paper Glue Cotton wool Pencil

Choose a word from the list which your child is learning to read and write. Give an example of how the word is used in a sentence and support them to think of another example.

Write the word for your child and ask them to trace over the letters with a glue stick or a finger dipped in glue. Lay cotton wool over the glue until the entire word is covered.

Ask your child to write a sentence on the paper and to draw a picture to go with their sentence. You could do this with other words and make a „cloudy book”. Sand may be sprinkled over the glue in place of cotton wool.

## Pipe-cleaner Words



Materials: Word List Pipe cleaners Paper/card Pencil

In advance write a few words on individual pieces of card or paper.

Ask your child to listen carefully while you say a word. Challenge your child to use the pipe cleaners to form all of the letters they hear. Show your child the word card and support them to use their pipe cleaners to add or change the letters they need to spell the word correctly.

## Water Words



Materials: Words on card or paper Paintbrushes Water

Write several words on separate pieces of card or paper.

Ask your child to write a word two or three times on the patio or path. Repeat with a different word.

Challenge: - can they write a sentence that includes the word?

## Gooey Words



Materials: Re-sealable plastic bags Hairstyling gel or finger paint Masking tape

Fill the re-sealable bag with gel or finger paint. Use masking tape to secure each bag to a table or other flat surface. Invite your child to choose a word from the Word List and use one finger to press the letters of their word into the gel or paint.

Your child can erase their word by gently rubbing the bag with the palm of their hand until it is evenly distributed inside the bag.

## Secret Words



Materials: Word List Large sheet of paper Pencil Scissors

Write three words on a large piece of paper from the word list. Write out the same three words and cut them up. Lay them out in front of your child. Tell your child that one of the words is a „secret word”. Choose a word from the paper and say each one of the letters in random order. Support your child to find the letter. Can they rearrange them to find the „secret word”?

## Snowman



Materials: Paper and pencil

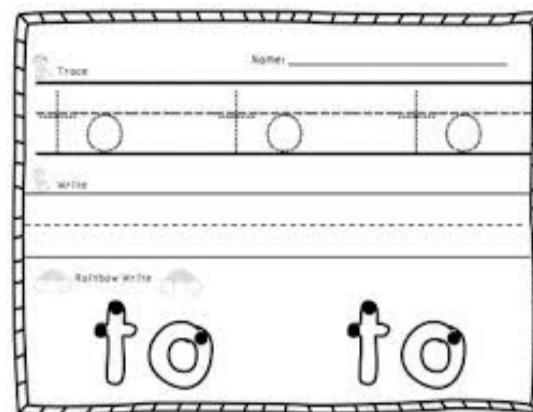
Write a selection of words from the Word List on a large piece of paper. Choose one of the words. Write one or two letters of the word on another piece of paper, with blank lines for the remaining letters.

Ask your child for a missing letter. Write it in if they are correct and if not, draw the head of the snowman.

The object of the game is for the child to guess the word before you have completed the drawing of the snowman.

## **Shape Word**

Materials: Paper Pencil Scissors Word List



In advance, write several words on paper and cut the words following the shape of each letter. Trace around the shapes and cut out a second set without the words. Practise saying the words with your child. Ask your child to match a word with its shape by writing the correct word in its shape.

## **Extra Extra**

Materials: Word List Paper Scissors Glue Magazines/newspapers



Write a selection of words from the Word List in random order on a piece of paper. Read the words to your child. Ask your child to find the word in the magazine, cut it out and glue it to the appropriate word. (Give your child one page from a magazine and check that the words they are searching for are on the page.)

## **Guess Who**

Materials: Paper Pencil Masking tape Word List



Write some words on paper. Read the words with your child. Ask them to tape a word to your back. You have to ask a question e.g. does it begin with „th“? Can I sound it out? (green word)

Now your child takes a turn to answers your questions. Tape a word to their back.

## Concentration



Material: Paper/card Pencil Word List

Make a set of matching word cards from the word list. Put them on the table face down. Turn two cards over at a time. If they match you or your child can keep them. The winner is the person with the greatest number of words. Make sure your child can read the words they turn over.

## **STAGE 3 : Developing accuracy and a range of strategies for spelling**

In Key Stage 2 most children will be taught through the Better Spelling Programme. The teachers uses this programme to help them tailor spelling development to each child's individual needs. Children will have a set of ten words each week that they focus on to explore new spelling patterns or patterns and rules they are finding hard to master. A record of the words for each half term will be sent home to you. Please encourage your child to practice spelling their words through fun activities at home. Teachers check that the children are then using these correct spellings in their own writing.

At this stage it is appropriate for teachers to point out when certain words are spelt incorrectly, but more importantly, that children recognise for themselves when they have made an error and know a range of strategies for correcting inaccuracies.

By this stage children will have a range of spelling strategies that they will have been taught, to draw on. Children will use the strategy which best suits their learning style and works best for them.

## Supporting children who find spelling particularly difficult

In a few cases, children have particular difficulties with reading and spelling. Your child's teacher will have told you if your child has these difficulties and it is most likely that there will be an Individual Education Plan (IEP) in place which identifies specific, tailored activities that will best help your child learn to spell. You can help by supporting your child with these specific activities rather than the general ones listed below.

### **Activities to support this stage of development**

<b>Spelling Rainbows</b>  Choose your 3 favourite crayons to rainbow write your spelling words. Write each word first in pencil in your literacy log. Then trace over each word three times. Each time you trace, you must use a different colour crayon.	<b>Silly Sentences</b>  Write ten silly sentences using a spelling word in each sentence. Please underline your spelling words! Write your sentences neatly!  Example My dog wears a blue and purple dress when he takes a bath.
<b>Backwards Words</b>  Write your spelling words forwards and then backwards.  Example  where erehw Colour ruoloc	<b>Pyramid Writing</b>  Pyramid write 10 of your spelling words. When you are finished, draw a pyramid around your word.  Home  h ho hom home

<b>ABC Order</b>	<b>Spelling Paragraph</b>
Write your spelling words in alphabetical order. Be sure to look at the first letter of each word. If the first letter is the same, look at the second letter.	Write a paragraph using ALL of your spelling words. Be sure to underline your spelling words in your paragraph. Don't forget a topic sentence and a concluding sentence.
<b>Draw and Label</b>  Draw and label ten of your spelling words neatly. You MUST colour your drawings and labels.  Don't forget to add a lot of great detail. Do your very best work!	<b>Squiggly Spelling Words</b>  Choose ten spelling words.  You are going to write them two times. Write them first in squiggly letters. Then write them once more in regular letters.
<b>Blue Vowels</b>  Write EACH of your spelling words out neatly.  You will need a BLUE coloured pencil. Trace over ALL the vowels in each word with your blue coloured pencil. Vowels= A E I O U	<b>Bubble Letters</b>  Write six or your spelling words in bubble letters neatly. After you write your words in bubble letters, colour your words with a crayon or coloured pencil.
<b>Acrostic Poem</b>  Choose ONE of your spelling words. Write an acrostic poem for that word. You must also ILLUSTRATE your poem.  Example Fun in the sun Fly Laps around clouds  Yes! I'm free!	<b>Adding My Words</b>  1. Choose ten spelling words. 2. Add up each spelling word. 3. Write them neatly.  *Consonants are worth 10. *Vowels are worth 5.  Example  $Said = 10+5+5+10=30$  $There = 10+10+5+10+5=40$

## **Spelling Shapes**

Write each of your spelling words neatly. Then go back and draw a circle around consonants and draw a square around the vowels.

## **Spelling Riddles**

Choose 5 spelling words and write riddles for these words. Don't forget to add the answer to your riddle.

Example

I cry when I am hungry. I am cute and cuddly. I wear nappies.

What am I?

\*Answer- Baby

## **Rhyming Words**

Choose eight of your spelling words. First write each spelling neatly. Think of a rhyming word for each spelling word. Write the new rhyming word next to your spelling word.

\*Example: Cries Tries

## **Spelling Sort**

Think of a way to sort your spelling words. Write your word sort neatly. You may want to sort your words by: syllables, beginning sounds, part of speech (nouns, verbs, adjectives, other), vowel sounds

The possibilities are endless! Have fun!

## **Spelling Code**

Think of a code for each letter of the alphabet. Write the code neatly.

Example:

A= 

B= 

C= 

Then write as many of your spelling words as you can in your code. You must write the actual spelling word next to the "code word."

## **Upper and Lower**

First write your spelling words neatly. Then rewrite each word, but this time write the vowels in lowercase and the consonants in uppercase.

Example lower LoWeR

<p><b>Across and Down</b></p> <p>1. Choose ten spelling words. 2. Write each word neatly across and down, sharing the beginning letter. Example when</p> <p style="text-align: center;">e n</p>	<p><b>Fancy Letters</b></p> <p>Write each of your spelling words neatly using fancy letters. Your letters can have curly-q's or dots, for example. Have fun and be creative!</p>
<p><b>Spelling Shapes</b></p> <p>Count your spelling words. If you have 10 words, draw 10 different shapes. Then write your spelling words neatly inside each of the different shapes.</p>	<p><b>Silly Spelling Story</b></p> <p>Write a silly spelling story using each of your spelling words. Be sure to underline your words as you use them. If you have time, you can illustrate and colour your silly picture to go along with your silly story!</p>
<p><b>Spelling Scramble</b></p> <p>Write your spelling words with the letters scrambled up.</p> <p>Then, unscramble the letters and write the word correctly next to the scrambled word.</p> <p>Example iabsbe= babies</p>	<p><b>Three times</b></p> <p>Write each of your spelling words out three times neatly!</p>
<p><b>Create an Activity</b></p> <p>Can you think of a fun activity to do with your spelling words? Be sure to give your activity a special name!</p>	<p><b>Syllables Spelling</b></p> <p>Classify your spelling words accordingly to syllables. Clap each spelling word quietly to yourself to see how many syllables you hear. Write a chart like the one below.</p> <p>1 syllable (cat / ball)      2 syllables (brother / friendly)      3 syllables (elastic / correctly)</p>

<p><b>Parts of Speech</b></p> <p>Sort your spelling words according to their part of speech:</p> <p>Noun, adjective, verb, other Make a chart like the one below.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="145 568 891 704"> <thead> <tr> <th><u>Noun</u></th><th><u>adjective</u></th><th><u>verb</u></th><th><u>other</u></th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Apple</td><td>red</td><td>eat</td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table>	<u>Noun</u>	<u>adjective</u>	<u>verb</u>	<u>other</u>	Apple	red	eat		<p><b>Connect the Dots</b></p> <p>Write ten of your spelling words in dots. Then connect the dots by tracing over them with a coloured pencil.</p>
<u>Noun</u>	<u>adjective</u>	<u>verb</u>	<u>other</u>						
Apple	red	eat							
<p><b>Playdough Spelling</b></p> <p>Roll a small amount of play dough into a ball. Turn your ball of play dough into a play dough pancake. Take a toothpick and carefully write a spelling word in the play dough. With your finger, smooth out the word and start over with another spelling word. Write all of your spelling words in this way.</p>	<p><b>Spelling Scrabble</b></p> <p>Spell each of your words with scrabble tiles. Then add up the point value using the numbers on each tile. Write the words in order according to their point value from greatest to least.</p>								
<p><b>Spelling Picture</b></p> <p>Choose ten of your spellings. Draw a picture incorporating all of your spellings somehow into the picture. Ask someone else to guess your spelling words by looking at your picture. As they are looking, try and spell their guesses!</p>	<p><b>Dot, Dash and Count</b></p> <p>Sound out each one of your spellings, how many sounds are in each word?</p>								

## Glossary of Spelling Terms

**Consonant** - any letter of the alphabet which is not a vowel.

**Digraph** - Two letters which together make one unit of sound, e.g. sh, th, ee, oa.

**Grapheme** - The written representation of letters which represent the sounds.

**Homophone** - a word which sounds the same as another word but is spelt differently and has a different meaning, e.g. hear and here

**Phonetics** - system of spelling words by representing sounds with syllables

**Phoneme** - the smallest unit of sound in a word, e.g. c/a/t, sh/o/p, t/ea/ch/er.

**Prefix** - small addition to a word made by joining on one or more letters at the beginning, e.g. pre, anti

**Plural** - a plural word refers to more than one thing, e.g. books

**Segmenting** - means hearing the individual phonemes within a word - for instance the word „crash“ consists of four phonemes: „c-r-a-sh“. In order to spell this word, a child must segment it into its component phonemes and choose a grapheme to represent each phoneme.

**Singular** - the name referring to one thing or a group of things, e.g. man, book, flock

**Split digraph** - two letters, which work as a pair, split, to represent one sound, e.g. a-e as in cake, or i-e as in kite

**Suffix** - a letter or group of letters added to the end of a word to change the way you use it, e.g. coward - cowardly

**Syllable** - a combination of one or more vowels and consonants which can make one short word or part of a longer word, e.g. won-der-ful

**Trigraph** - three letters which together make one sound but cannot be separated into smaller phonemes, e.g. igh as in light, ear as in fear and tch as in watch

**Vowel** - there are 5 vowels in the alphabet - aeiou

## APPENDIX 1

# First 100 High Frequency Words

in frequency order reading down the columns

the	that	not	look	put
and	with	then	don't	could
a	all	were	come	house
to	we	go	will	old
said	can	little	into	too
in	are	as	back	by
he	up	no	from	day
I	had	mum	children	made
of	my	one	him	time
it	her	them	Mr	I'm
was	what	do	get	if
you	there	me	just	help
they	out	down	now	Mrs
on	this	dad	came	called
she	have	big	oh	here
is	went	when	about	off
for	be	it's	got	asked
at	like	see	their	saw
his	some	looked	people	make
but	so	very	your	an

# Next 200 High Frequency Words

in frequency order reading down the columns (water to laughed then let's to grow)

water	bear	find	these	live
away	can't	more	began	say
good	again	I'll	boy	soon
want	cat	round	animals	night
over	long	tree	never	narrator
how	things	magic	next	small
did	new	shouted	first	car
man	after	us	work	couldn't
going	wanted	other	lots	three
where	eat	food	need	head
would	everyone	fox	that's	king
or	our	through	baby	town
took	two	way	fish	I've
school	has	been	gave	around
think	yes	stop	mouse	every
home	play	must	something	garden
who	take	red	bed	fast
didn't	thought	door	may	only
ran	dog	right	still	many
know	well	sea	found	laughed

let's	fun	any	better	lived
much	place	under	hot	birds
suddenly	mother	hat	sun	duck
told	sat	snow	across	horse
another	boat	air	gone	rabbit
great	window	trees	hard	white
why	sleep	bad	floppy	coming
cried	feet	tea	really	he's
keep	morning	top	wind	river
room	queen	eyes	wish	liked
last	each	fell	eggs	giant
jumped	book	friends	once	looks
because	its	box	please	use
even	green	dark	thing	along
am	different	grandad	stopped	plants
before	let	there's	ever	dragon
gran	girl	looking	miss	pulled
clothes	which	end	most	we're
tell	inside	than	cold	fly
key	run	best	park	grow





