



A Parents' Guide
to
Supporting
Children's Spelling

Introduction

Parents often ask how best to support children at home with spelling. The aim of this booklet is to explain the strategies used in school for the teaching of spelling and to provide some ideas on how parents can support at home.

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 extremely hard work. Most children learn spellings for the traditional weekly test and get most spellings right on the day, but forget them when coming to use them in future work; some children just struggle to learn them and just get them wrong.

Studies have shown 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.

Consequently, 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 confidently spell common words accurately and develop a range of strategies to tackle more complex words with confidence.

How do we teach spelling in school?

There are distinct stages through which children progress in spelling and a range of different strategies will be employed throughout school to support the stages. The teaching of spelling begins in early years with the introduction of phonics through the Read Write Inc programme. As children move through school, their phonic knowledge is developed along side learning different spelling patterns, rules and exceptions. The aim is that all children will become confident to use a range of strategies to support accurate spelling in all areas of the curriculum. Whilst a spelling focus may be part of home-learning, weekly lists of spelling words to learn for a test will not be sent home; spelling will be taught in class throughout the week and children will explore and investigate the patterns and rules whilst learning how to apply these strategies in their own writing and also to check for errors.

The aim of this booklet is to provide parents with ideas to support spelling at home. Please do help your child with their spelling both when they are writing (in any subject) as well as to practise the statutory word lists in this booklet.

Foundation Stage

In Foundation Stage, the children are exploring sounds, words and spelling. The letter sounds and shapes are introduced through Read Write Inc and the children are shown how these are linked together to create words. Children are encouraged to "have a go" at writing the words they want to say. 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.

Helping at Home

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.
- Give lots of praise and celebrate attempts to spell words

Key Stage 1, Year 1 & Year 2

In Key Stage 1, the children continue to learn and apply the phonic rules through Read, Write, Inc and also focus on learning to spell "high frequency" words - ie the most common words the children need in their writing. At this stage, the children are also taught to use their knowledge of the sounds that letters make to help them with more tricky words.

Helping at Home

Parents can help by continuing to encourage children to use the phonic sounds they are taught in Read Write Inc as well as supporting children to learn a few high frequency words at a time so that by the end of Year 1, children are to read and spell the first 100 high frequency words and by the end of Year 2, the next 200 high frequency words.

Please see the appendix for the list of high frequency words.

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 possible activities include:

Instead of writing a list of words on paper with a pencil, explore writing the words using different tools or tracing over the letters.

Water Words

Try a pot of water and large paintbrush to write the word two or three times, on the ground outside.

Pipe Cleaner Words

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.

Shape Words

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.

Guess Who?

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.

Key Stage 2, Years 3 – 6

In Key Stage 2, the focus is on developing accuracy as well as a range of strategies for spelling.

Although teachers will highlight spelling errors to children, it is important 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.

Helping at Home

Parents can support children by practising any spelling patterns or spelling investigations which are sent home as part of home learning and also by helping children to read and spell the Y3/4 and Y5/6 word lists.

Please see the appendix for a list of words which children are expected to spell in Key Stage 2.

Remember to make practising the words enjoyable and not a chore. The suggestions below may help.

Look, say, cover, write, check

This is probably the most common strategy used to learn spellings

Look: first look at the whole word carefully and if there is one part of the word that is difficult, look at that part in more detail.

Say: say the word as you look at it, using different ways of pronouncing it if that will make it more memorable.

Cover: cover the word.

Write: write the word from memory, saying the word as you do so.

Check: Have you got it right? If yes, try writing it again! If not, start again - look, say, cover, write, check.

Spelling Rainbows

Choose your 3 favourite crayons to rainbow write your spelling words. Write each word first in pencil then trace over each word three times. Each time you trace, you must use a different colour crayon.

ABC Order

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.

Spelling Paragraph

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.

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!

Fancy Letters

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!

Syllables Spelling

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.

1 syllables	2 syllables	3 syllables
cat	brother	elastic
ball	friendly	correctly

Parts of Speech

Sort your spelling words according to their part of speech:

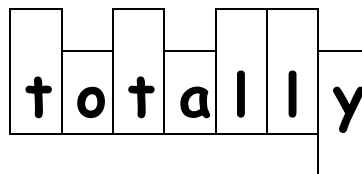
Noun, adjective, verb, other

Make a chart like the one below:

Noun	Adjective	Verb	Other
Apple	Red	Eat	slowly

Word Shapes

Draw around the words making a clear distinction in size where there are ascenders and descenders. Look carefully at the shape of the word and the letters in each box. Now try to write the word making sure that you get the same shape.



Appendix 1

The 1st 100 High Frequency Words

Please help your child to learn to spell these words by the end of Year 1.

the	that	not	look	put
and	with	then	don't	could
and	all	were	come	house
to	we	go	will	old
said	can	little	into	too
in	are	as	back	by
he	up	not	from	day
in	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

Appendix 2

The next 200 High Frequency words

Please help your child to learn to spell these words by the end of Year 2.

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

Appendix 2 cont.

The next 200 High Frequency words

Please help your child to learn to spell these words by the end of Year 2.

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

Appendix 3

Common Exception Words for Year 2

door	even	sure
floor	great	sugar
poor	break	eye
because	steak	could
find	pretty	should
kind	beautiful	would
mind	after	who
behind	fast	whole
child	last	any
wild	past	many
climb	father	clothes
most	class	busy
only	grass	people
both	pass	water
old	plant	again
cold	path	half
gold	bath	money
hold	hour	parents
told	move	Christmas
every	prove	
everybody	improve	

Appendix 4

Year 3 and 4 Statutory Spelling List

Within the Primary Curriculum, children are expected to know and be able to spell this statutory list by the end of Year 4. Of course these are not the only words that children are expected to spell accurately!

accident (ally)	early	knowledge	purpose
actual (ly)	earth	learn	quarter
address	eight/eighth	length	question
answer	enough	library	recent
appear	exercise	material	regular
arrive	experience	medicine	reign
believe	experiment	mention	remember
bicycle	extreme	minute	sentence
breath	famous	natural	separate
breathe	favourite	naughty	special
build	February	notice	straight
busy/business	forward (s)	occasion (ally)	strange
calendar	fruit	often	strength
caught	grammar	opposite	suppose
centre	group	ordinary	surprise
century	guard	particular	therefore
certain	guide	peculiar	though/although
circle	heard	perhaps	thought
complete	heart	popular	through
consider	height	position	various
continue	history	possess (ion)	weight
decide	imagine	possible	woman/women
describe	increase	potatoes	
different	important	pressure	
difficult	interest	probably	
disappear	island	promise	

Appendix 5

Year 5 and 6 Statutory spelling list

Children are expected to be able to spell this statutory list by the end of Year 6. Of course, these are not the only words that children should be able to spell accurately!

accommodate	embarrass	persuade
accompany	environment	physical
according	equip (-ped, -ment)	prejudice
achieve	especially	privilege
aggressive	exaggerate	profession
amateur	excellent	programme
ancient	existence	pronunciation
apparent	explanation	queue
appreciate	familiar	recognise
attached	foreign	recommend
available	forty	relevant
average	frequently	restaurant
awkward	government	rhyme
bargain	guarantee	rhythm
bruise	harass	sacrifice
category	hindrance	secretary
cemetery	identity	shoulder
committee	immediately	signature
communicate	individual	sincerely
community	interfere	soldier
competition	interrupt	stomach
conscience	language	sufficient
conscious	leisure	suggest
controversy	lightning	symbol
convenience	marvellous	system
correspond	mischievous	temperature
criticise	muscle	thorough
curiosity	necessary	twelfth
definite	neighbour	variety
desperate	nuisance	vegetable
determined	occupy	vehicle
develop	occur	yacht
dictionary	opportunity	
disastrous	parliament	

If you have any questions about how spelling is taught, or how you can help your child at home, please ask your child's teacher.

Thank you for your support!